

THE EFFECT OF PIETY ON ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR (OCB) FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: A STUDY OF PROFESSIONALS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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ABSTRACT

Although Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) has received much attention from contemporary researchers, very little research has been done from religious perspectives. This research attempts to enrich the understanding of OCB from Islamic Management perspective, particularly the application of Piety (Taqwa). The exploratory study consists of six intensive interviews, three academics and three practitioners, who were selected from two South-East Asian countries; Malaysia and Indonesia. The respondents represent prestigious academic institutions and top private organizations. The findings from the interviews led to the following propositions that; (1) there is a nexus between OCB and Taqwa; (2) Taqwa and other Islamic principles may serve as antecedents or enabling factors to OCB; and (3) Taqwa should be operationalized for contemporary business research.

Keywords: OCB, *Taqwa* (Islamic Piety), Islamic Management, Southeast Asia, professionals

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, studying individual behavior in the workplace has attracted a great deal of attention from researchers. Different types of behaviors have been explored when analyzing this concept. These behaviors include “pro-social behavior”, “extra-role behavior”, and “organizational citizenship behavior”. A common objective of these studies has been to define a type of individual behavior which is believed to contribute to the long-term success of the company, and which had previously been neglected when assessing employee performance (Dyne et al., 1994).

“Organizational citizenship behavior” has been used to describe the extra-role behaviors that are important to an organization, but fall outside the formal job descriptions (Bateman & Organ, 1983). Organ’s (1988) definition stresses on three features of OCB: (1) the behavior must be voluntary, thus, neither role-prescribed nor part of the formal duties; (2) the behavior benefits the organization from the organizational perspective; and (3) OCB is multidimensional

in nature. In other words, OCB is an employee's beneficial behavior that managers expect, but cannot demand as part of the job (Motowidlo, 2000).

The reasons and causes for which some employees engage in OCBs have attracted the attention of contemporary researchers. Bateman and Organ (1983) assert the idea of positive relationship between OCB and job satisfaction, emphasizing that employees who exhibit OCB have higher job satisfaction. In addition to this, other researchers have stressed on various aspects of OCB for example, commitment of organizations to their employees (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986), perception of fairness (Folger, 1993; Martin & Bies, 1991; Moorman et al., 1993; Tepper & Taylor, 2003), perception of pay equity (Organ & Konovsky, 1989), the idea of Intrinsic and extrinsic job attitudes (Organ & Ryan, 1995; Williams & Anderson, 1991), procedural justice (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Tepper & Taylor, 2003) and procedural justice (Organ, 1988). In all explanations and reasons presented, the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) was the most accepted explanation provided by scholars whose research focused around this theory. The social exchange theory holds that individuals always have the tendency to try to reciprocate their actions to others as they have done to them. Therefore, at any point in time an organization makes its employees happy, they will try to reciprocate goodness to the organization by exhibiting OCBs.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

However, the social exchange theory (together with all the aforementioned reasons behind the exhibition of OCB by employees) has not adequately addressed a comprehensive account of characteristics that makes employees to exhibit OCB at the workplace. In other words, there has not been sufficient research for determining a comprehensive 'characteristics' that can mediate an individual employee's choice to go beyond that required to perform his/her immediate job role (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000).

Yet again, most of the assertions presented are relative, and the factors relate to some other reciprocal action by an individual or organization before the employee exhibits OCB. This implies that an employee can exhibit OCB in one organization but may not necessarily do the same in other organizations. Conversely, Rokeach (1973) posits that beliefs and values are what shape people's attitudes about everything around them, which in turn determines how they behave in any given situation. There are many sources of values such as culture, society, family and personal experience. Religion is a fundamental element that shapes the cultural, societal and ethical values, in all components of the society. Therefore, in an attempt to narrow this research gap, this paper focuses on the concept of *Taqwa* (an Islamic religious principle related to piety), as one of the possible antecedents or enabling factors that influences Muslim employees' propensity to exhibit OCB regardless of cultural and social backgrounds.

In order to address the research gap, the following research questions are developed for this study:

- (1) What are the meanings & conceptual definitions of *Taqwa* as understood by the respondents?
- (2) What antecedent factors of *Taqwa* can be applied to enhance OCB among employees?
- (3) How the concept of *Taqwa* be operationalized (measured) through mainstream research?
- (4) What is potential for the nexus between *Taqwa* and OCB?

- (5) What are the peculiar characteristics of *Taqwa* that may serve as antecedent factors to the development of OCB?

Since this study attempts to capture the nexus between *Taqwa* and OCB, it would contribute to the understanding of OCB in general, as well as from Islamic Management perspectives in particular. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this study is among the pioneering works that explores OCB from an Islamic Management perspective. Findings from this study could be used to make significant organizational decisions, since these findings may point to the likelihood that *Taqwa* and its relevant characteristics may serve as antecedent factors to the development of higher levels of OCB among Muslim employees.

ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR

While exploring the concept of OCB, two main approaches were identified in literature. Organ (1988), along with some predecessors who worked on this topic, considered this type of behavior to be an "extra-role" behavior – individual contributions in the workplace that go beyond the specified role requirements and are not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system. Another stream of research suggests that OCB must be considered separately from work performance, thus obviating the problem of distinguishing between "role" and "extra-role" performances (Graham, 1991). In this view, OCB must be conceived as a global concept that includes all relevant positive behaviors of individuals within an organization.

However, distinguishing between "role" and "extra-role" performance can be difficult, owing to several factors. First, managerial and employee perceptions of the employees' performance and responsibilities do not necessarily correspond. Second, employees' perception of their responsibilities and performance is influenced by their satisfaction in the workplace (Morrison, 1996). Organ (1988) defined OCB as discretionary behavior directed at individuals or at the organization as a whole, which goes beyond the existing role expectations and benefits or is intended to benefit the organization. This definition stresses three main features of OCB. (1) the behavior must be voluntary; that is, neither role-prescribed nor part of the formal duties; (2) the behavior benefits the organization from the organizational perspective. The important point here is that OCBs do not simply occur haphazardly within an organization, but are behaviors directed towards, or seen as, benefiting the organization (Van Dyne et al., 1995); and (3) OCB has a multidimensional nature. In other words, OCB is an employee's beneficial behavior that managers want, but cannot require (Motowidlo, 2000). As held by Netemeyer et al. (1997), the key elements of OCB are: (1) a type of behavior that goes beyond what is formally prescribed by the organization; (2) a discretionary type of behavior; (3) behavior not directly rewarded or recognized by the formal structure of the organization; and (4) behavior that is very important for the company performance and operational success.

Research exploring OCB and an organization's overall performance has also found significant relationship. Organizations whose employees demonstrate OCBs enjoy higher managerial productivity; the efficient 'on-boarding' of new hires; improved strategic planning, business processes and the allocation of key organizational resources; and the frequency of communication between and across work groups (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997). There is yet another research into the relationship between OCB and its antecedents; those factors that determine an individual or work team's propensity to demonstrate OCBs when at work (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004). In one such study, Van Dyne, Graham and Dienesch (1994) identified six key characteristics underpinning employee's willingness to display OCBs: positive job attitudes,

shared workplace values, the amount of motivating job characteristics, length of tenure, job level and, a low incident of employee cynicism.

The positive contribution of OCB to organizational performance is widely accepted by the literature (Podsakoff and Mackenzie, 1994, 1997; Podsakoff et al., 2000). However, it remains unclear what the mediating factors of OCB are. Most research to date has been focusing on exploring the mediating relationship of employee job satisfaction to OCB (Chiu & Chen, 2005). Behaviors with the essence of going above and beyond the formal job description include cooperation with co-workers or other members of the organization, participation in activities for additional organizational responsibility, creating a favorable climate for the improvement of the organization, and other similar activities (Katz & Kahn, 1966)

Understanding the comprehensive account of the ‘characteristics’ shown to mediate an individual employee’s choice to go beyond just that required to perform immediate job role, can be extremely valuable for service management and organizations in general. Determining why individuals engage in OCBs has occupied a substantial amount of research attention in both organizational behavior and social psychology (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986; McNeely and Meglino, 1994). Most research on OCB has focused on individual antecedents. Bateman and Organ (1983) for instance, suggested that there is a relationship between OCB and satisfaction. O’Reilly and Chatman (1986) suggested commitment. Folger (1993), Martin and Bies (1991), Moorman et al. (1993) and Tepper and Taylor (2003) suggested perceptions of fairness. Organ and Konovsky (1989) suggested perceptions of pay equity and Organ and Ryan (1995) and Williams and Anderson (1991) suggested intrinsic and extrinsic job attitudes.

However, in all, the most accepted theoretical approach to explaining why individuals tend to exhibit OCBs is social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which contends that individuals will attempt to reciprocate those who benefit them. An implication of procedural justice can be made from recent literature (e.g. Podsakoff et al., 2000; Tepper and Taylor, 2003) who suggests that employees perform OCBs with greater frequency when they perceive as fair the means by which organizations and their representatives make allocation decisions. According to Organ (1988), employees interpret procedural fairness to mean that their employer can be trusted to protect their interests. This in turn, induces an obligation to repay their employer through the exhibition of OCBs.

Hitherto, there has not been sufficient research undertaken to determine a comprehensive account of the ‘characteristics’ in a more absolute way, that can be shown to mediate an individual employee’s choice to go beyond just that required to perform immediate job role (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Studies exploring the specific factors contributing to employee discretionary effort remains of significant interest to organizational behavior research (Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997). The works of Bienstock, Carol and Rachel (2003) suggests that service employee perceptions of how they are treated by the service organization, i.e. what organizational rights they receive, are positively associated with OCB. The research further demonstrated that OCB results in more effective service delivery to organizational standards and enhanced customer perceptions of service quality. The above studies had thrown light on some of the factors that will motivate employees to work beyond the required job role.

However, it can be deduced from the preceding arguments, that sufficient amount of the literature exposed some of the factors that will serve to motivate employees to work beyond the required job roles but did not throw much light on the comprehensive characteristics that mediate

the employee OCB. Also, most of the factors are dependent on an induction of a reciprocal behavior from a person or an organization and not absolute, whereby the employee has the tendency to exhibit OCB in other organizations. One important factor that has not been explored sufficiently as an antecedent of OCB is religiosity from Islamic perspective. Religiosity from Islamic perspective is founded in the concept of *Taqwa*. This study therefore, attempts to capture the understanding of experienced informants (both academicians and practitioners) about what *Taqwa* really means to them and how it is practiced in contemporary institutions. In addition to this, this research attempted to identify the likelihood of *Taqwa* serving as an antecedent or enabling factor to OCB.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The exploratory research design was deliberately made flexible in order to maximize the collection of intensive and high quality information for the success of the study. In all interactions with informants, the researchers revealed no preconceived idea about what responses might be expected. The interview guide was designed to encourage participants to contribute their own ideas and share their experiences with relevant examples and by providing their own experience-based views on the relevant issues.

Qualitative Research Method

The in-depth interviews are considered to be the best means to describe and understand respondents' views of the OCB and *Taqwa*. This is in line with Schaltzman's and Strauss's (1973) assertion that "The interview must be used to provide context and meaning". Their justification of the interview as a critical qualitative tool is pertinent to this study. Qualitative methods provided the means to gather details of the *Taqwa*-OCB nexus. The keenly felt nature and specificity of responses provided the substance of the descriptions that contributed to affective material for the *Taqwa*-OCB research. The *Taqwa* concept is increasingly being presented as a complex phenomenon, and has several definitions depending on the individual's experience. Many of the detailed, personal and reflective stories told by participants demonstrated the interaction of numerous meanings ascribed to the concept of *Taqwa*. Many of the responses were complex and multifaceted.

Sample Design

A sample of six experienced academicians from renowned academic institutions and skilled & experienced practitioners from prestigious private organizations were chosen for the study. The justification for these choices was to explore the meanings ascribed to *Taqwa* and OCB by scholars as well as by practitioners, who are professionals in private institutions. Although time and budget constrains did not allow for a large sample from various countries of the region (Southeast Asia), the researchers were privileged to choose the knowledgeable and experienced professionals from Malaysia and Indonesia by using their personal and professional networks.

While the aim of sampling in a survey or experimental study is to select a representative sample of the population for generalization and prediction purposes, the aim of selecting organizations in this exploratory study is to test new ideas and interpretations. Hence, as asserted by Cooper and Schindler (1998) the sample needs not to be representative of a larger population as in the case of survey or experimental studies.

The respondents from the academicians' category consisted of two males and a female. Out of the two males, one is Malaysian and the other is Indonesian. With the exception of one, who is an emeritus professor, the other two are full professors. All of the academicians are renowned researchers in Universities of Malaysia and Indonesia. The informants under the practitioners' category consist of one male and two females. Out of the two females, one is Indonesian and the other is Malaysian. All of the practitioners are graduates and full-time employees (in senior managerial positions) with not less than ten years of working experience with private organizations. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with respondents from Malaysia, and pre-scheduled telephone interviews were conducted with respondents from Indonesia. All participants were Muslims by faith, and thus, religious belief played an important role in their professional conduct. There was a general consensus among the participants that as Muslims, it was incumbent upon them to observe *Taqwa* and its practice not only in their organizations but throughout their lives. This could be found later in the results of data analysis section of this paper.

Data Collection

The pre-scheduled personal interviews were conducted at the offices of participants' preferred locations. An informed consent notice was also presented to each participant for signing before the start of the interview. The total duration of each interview was 40-60 minutes (without any break). Thus, the total amount of time spent for interview purposes amounted to approximately six hours. A list of questions (Appendix A) was used at the start of the interview to guide the informants' participation. The questions were open-ended and derived from the literature reviews, a summary of which has been presented in previous sections. The participants were encouraged to express their thoughts freely on issues pertaining to their beliefs, knowledge and practices. All the interviews were audio recorded (with permission) and then transcribed at the early stages of the data collection. Notes were also taken during the interviews to capture informants' emotions such as nodding, laughter, smiles, frowns and other indicators, which aided in the data analysis.

Data Integration and Analysis

The data collected through interviews were transcribed and then integrated. All the data acquired were examined and categorized recombining the evidence to address the research questions of this study. The identity of the research participants will remain confidential in line with the ethical norms and considerations. A coding process was utilized for this purpose. For instance, the two categories of academicians and practitioners were coded as A and P respectively. The individuals from these categories were coded as A1, A2, A3, P1, P2 and P3. The coding process was utilized to ensure confidentiality of the names, positions and organizations of the research participants. Constant comparative analysis of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was conducted to generate themes as they relate to the informants' perceptions of the understanding of *Taqwa*-OCB nexus and its practices in their various organizations.

Results and Discussion

The structure of reporting the results of this exploratory study has been organized in context of the five key issues that are covered by the research questions. The main issues are: the definition of *Taqwa*, the practical application of *Taqwa* in contemporary organizations, the

operationalization of Taqwa, the definition of OCB and the possible link or nexus between Taqwa and OCB.

The focus of the reporting structure was to explore the extent to which informants ascribe meaning to Taqwa and the possibility this may serve as antecedent to OCB. The results are presented categorically to match with the main purpose of this study.

Definition of Taqwa

Although there were several definitions that respondents ascribe to Taqwa, most of the respondents agreed upon certain aspects or dimensions encompassing the definition in one way or the other. Almost all six respondents highlighted the obedience dimension in the definition of Taqwa. Respondents have the following to say:

“Taqwa is .. a religious belief...which is important in Islam. Taqwa... in Islam is one of the interpretations of Islamic insight people would understand...that is...surrender to the will of God. Surrender to the will of God is basically what Taqwa is...You can only do this when you truly believe in Him and trust Him” (A1).

“But in brief, in my humble understanding about Taqwa, it means that Taqwa is to be conscious of the existence of Allah, acting toward pleasing Allah, fear Allah and seek protection from the anger of Allah and His punishment. This protection is realized by doing what Allah commands, and refraining from everything that Allah forbids. In brief, this protection is realized by obeying Allah which emanates only from the correct and strong belief in Him. This belief comprises the genuine love of Allah as well as the genuine fear of Him....” (P1).

Similarly, another respondent said:

“I think Taqwa is whereby a Muslim intentionally evades actions that lead to Allah`s fury and displeasure and at the same time deliberately undertakes steps and acts that will gratify Allah as mentioned in Sura Al-Imran. In other words, it permits a person to be always conscious of both Allah's all-encompassing knowledge and characteristics and a reminder of their relationship and responsibility to Allah as his creation and servant. Hence, it explains that the way to Taqwa is through obedience of Allah, avoiding disobedience, and striving to stay away from doubtful matters” (A2).

In much the same way, respondent (P2) mentioned that:

“Taqwa is a concept of doing everything the right way according to Sunnah and Hadits for your akhirat (the Hereafter). It is about doing ... whatever Allah asks you to do and moving away from all that Allah has warned against. It is also about following keenly what the Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu alaihi wasallam...”

Thus, the obedience dimension has been emphasized in the definition of Taqwa whereby mankind have to fear Allah, obey the commands of Allah and move away from all that Allah has forbid us. In line with obeying Allah is also to obey the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Conversely, some of the respondents have also highlighted another dimension in the definition of Taqwa which is Ethics. For instance, respondent (P3) stated that:

“..... I think Taqwa is one of the fundamental principles in Islam, it’s an awareness of Allah’s attributes, His Might and Power”. It implies self-restraint, guarding oneself from all sins, wrong deeds, and injustice. Taqwa is action, doing of good deeds, positive actions in preparation for the Hereafter, the next life. A shield to protect oneself. Taqwa is also the only basis by which people are considered better by God to others in Islam.

Similarly, another respondent said:

“when people believe in God, people believe in Islam, they have Iman (faith), they would perform their religious obligations. The religious obligation is the form of prayers (solat), shahadah, or fasting...or giving zakat and pilgrimage...these are things which are important in Islam. When people do these things, and these people are in the organization, they would also be ethical” (A1).

This preceding discussion leads us to the understanding that when people possess *Taqwa*, there is a high tendency that they will be ethical in their actions, both at home and at the workplace.

The Practical Application of *Taqwa*

Taqwa is a religious principle, making it challenging to quantify. Its exhibition speaks volume in contemporary organizations. There is a consensus in the views of the respondents regarding the practical application of *Taqwa* as an individual responsibility, which when observed in its essence may yield positive outcomes to the individual as well as the organization.

For example, respondent (P1) mentioned that:

“I think you refer Taqwa as a social perspective, though it also relates to individual perspective, as what we do to our surroundings will depend on how good we understand the guidelines provided by Allah through Qur’an the Kalamullah to treat and act with others and how deep is our relations with Allah. In other words, what I want to say is that, the level of Taqwa that we have will determine the level of goodness we apply to our surrounding and to our social life. An organization is part of our social life and I surely believe that Taqwa plays an important...if not the most important... role in an organization. For instance, an employee who has Taqwa will fear Allah, and therefore, he will apply it in his role as an employee. To make it simple, such employee will not dare to do corruption, to be dishonest at work, to cheat his/her boss, to commit haraam acts such as bribery, burglary in any forms even the smallest form like misuse the office phone, play truant. Further, this type of employee will tend to think about making improvement for the effective operation of the company where he is working, and if necessary, make inventions in order to create a better and more effective company operation”.

This aforementioned assertion by respondent (P1) is in line with another respondent’s who said that:

“....As I mentioned in point 1 above, when one has a full Taqwa, he/she would never commit wrong deeds. In an organization, an employee with full obedience to Allah will demonstrate his/her Taqwa in a way that he/she will obey the organization’s policies /regulations. The employee will perform the assigned tasks thoroughly in accordance with his/her roles and responsibilities; he/she will insist on openness and transparent

manner, he/she would not “steal money”, would not commit corruption, collusion, and nepotism. In terms of discipline, one would not dare to come to work late because he/she knows that it is against the company regulations. One with a fully-charged Taqwa will help achieve the company’s targets and productivity....I think....” (P3).

In a similar way, another respondent commented:

“Taqwa is the driver for all human’s behavior in their entire lives, so in the organization or a group... Taqwa can be the driver for organization behavior. For example, Taqwa can make employee very punctual because they are paid for their timeTime is the goods the employee sells, salary is the price the company pays for buying the time. So when they are not punctual, they feel like they received the money but did not give the ‘goods’ in return. Again...Taqwa can drive people to work on their best/highest capability regardless the salary they received, because work is ‘one way to worship Allah’ and salary which is Rizq... is from Allah and not from the company. They do their best and let Allah decide the rest. Taqwa can prevent employees from making any intentional fraud and or irregularity because their responsibility is not only to their supervisor but also to Allah” (P2).

In addition to this view, respondent (A1) also put forward a contention that:

“...The role of Taqwa. Well, first of all, Taqwa is in the individual or individuals. The people who make up the organization are individuals. When individuals get together, they form an organization. In Islam...in my understanding each individual is striving to have what is called...the barakah (the mystical reward)...through ibadah (good deeds). So the concept of Taqwa and barakah...in an organization are related... When people believe in God, they have Iman, they do the right and avoid the wrong. By doing so, they create trust. This trust leads to smooth running of the organization, which nowadays we call synergy (i.e. getting greater than expected results) or barakah...In other words, Taqwa forms the basis for fairness which leads to trust and synergy”.

The individual responsibility towards the application of Taqwa in organizations is a strong requirement in Islam as highlighted by the respondents. And when observed effectively, like one respondent said it will be translated into “*barakah*” which is the mystical condition in the life of the person or the organization.

Nonetheless, the social responsibility aspect in the application of Taqwa has also been emphasized by some of the respondents. For example, respondent (A2) said:

“From my point of view, Taqwa plays an important role in organizations as well as our societies. Because for example, first let us look back at the definition of Taqwa. I said it is a person intention to obey Allah and avoiding disobedience. Coming back to the organization, if the workers hold to this principle, I think the companies will generate more profit and the whole world will have and enjoy the benefits. What do I mean by this statement then? For example, as a Muslim, we will try to increase the Taqwa in our hearts. Let all of us be truthful and sincere in our relationship with Allah, that we always seek Allah’s pleasure and ridha (blessings) in this life. Let us be humble among ourselves, treating others with kindness and compassion”.

In line with this, another respondent shared her experience with the emphasis on the social responsibility aspect in the practical application of *Taqwa*. She mentioned that:

“Taqwa can play a role as enforcement for people to be good...especially being a good worker in the organization. They restrict themselves not to go beyond the things that they are not supposed to do or behave. ...They help each other, give good cooperation and unity, try not to manipulate the work or situation. They practice the rules and regulation provided in the organization...honesty, sincerity...and... The most important, they believe and have faith that they do their jobs that intentionally in sincerity for God. So, they are doing good deeds and practice good values to everyone in the organization. Because they know what they will get returns later on....” (A3).

The foregoing discussions, thus, concludes the standpoint of Islam regarding the practicality of the application of *Taqwa* as a social responsibility. This implies that to practically apply *Taqwa* in one's organization is a social act that every Muslim should try his/her best to observe, as doing so may bring goodness to oneself and the entire society.

Operationalization of *Taqwa*

In terms of the operationalization of *Taqwa* or in other words how *Taqwa* can be measured or quantified to assist individuals and organizations in general to know their performance on the *Taqwa* scale, almost all the respondents reached a consensus that *Taqwa* can be operationalized, irrespective of the challenges inherent in the process. Respondents mentioned that spirituality which is closely related to or a subset of *Taqwa* in this case, has been subjected to measurements in the western world (Naail et al., 2010). Similarly, *Taqwa* also can be operationalized along the same line. Respondents have the following to say:

“Spirituality has been measured in western literature...They used scales. Of course they measured spirituality from the Christian or Judaism perspective. In Islam, spirituality is Iman or strength of belief in Allah. Strength of belief has its manifestations in what a person does, such as prayers, payments of zakat, fasting etc. Promptness of solat can be measured, regularity of payment of zakat can be measured...Iman (faith) is an important aspect of Taqwa. One of my former students had prepared an instrument for this” (A1).

Similarly, another respondent said:

“...We can increase Taqwa! It can be put into practice in modern organizations. Why not? Taqwa is not something out-dated and will never be. I believe as a Muslim it is a built-in and default part of human being. Anyway, I see a trend in many countries now that companies are trying to embrace and adopt spirituality to smoothen their operation. In Indonesia, where I work and live, I see a very strong tendency of companies trying to adopt spirituality in some regions applying Shariah law, they even have a one day ImTaq which stands for Iman and Taqwa day, which is on Friday to have all employees and students to only learn about Islam. This, I believe, is an effort to instill ‘Taqwa’ in the heart of each employee or student....” (P1).

Nevertheless, some respondents have registered their awareness regarding the likely challenges that may ensue in the process of the operationalization of *Taqwa*. The following respondents have these to say:

“...I think the concept...can be put into practice in modern organization...Sometimes I perceived in this modern world..with modern people..in modern organizations, they may have different main intention of being there or working... There are so many influences or ...the surroundings now are different...People almost forget the concept of Taqwa.. and... I think this may pose some difficulty as some people think that Taqwa is a latent variable ...and above all an Islamic concept. What can be done to operationalize it? If it poses difficulty....” (A3).

In a similar assertion, respondent (P2) stated that:

“Of course, it can.... it is very clear the concept of Taqwa is not something impossible to implement but it might be hard to achieve. But, it can be very easy. The challenge will be more likely on how to develop Taqwa in to each person. Each human being has a pre-born disposition to do the right thing and this is a basic human characteristic. At this point, the concept of Taqwa will be easy to implement. But there is also... I think...an uncontrollable variable, I mean a challenge... that...I personally think it will influence this, and that is the concept called ‘hidayah’. You can try to develop a character and try to put the concept of Taqwa in to anybody’s brain and heart, but since it is the right of Allah to give the Hidayah (guidance) how would we optimize the character development process?...But if Allah gives Hidayah, it is easy...”.

Although these respondents have agreed to some extent regarding the operationalizability of *Taqwa*, their aforementioned contentions have thrown much light on some of the inherent challenges that might be faced in the process of the operationalization. To this effect, we are led to the belief that in our contemporary world, *Taqwa* can be measured just as spirituality in the west, but with limitations such as the “hidayah” aspect as captured by respondent (P2). Again, the knowledge of the challenges is a solution in itself towards the operationalization of *Taqwa*. This may be considered imperative in giving a unique direction to researchers in the field of *Taqwa*.

The Definition of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Respondents have defined OCB in several ways. All definitions provided seem to share a common nucleus due to the fact that all encompass positive outcomes to individuals as well as to the overall organization. Respondents defined OCB as follows:

“... organizational citizenship behavior...OCB is basically the conduct of people in an organization, how close they are to the organization and....how much they are willing to contribute toward that organization’s well-being...” (A1).

“OCB is a set of workplace behaviors that exceed one’s standard/basic requirements or beyond the required job/duty. There is a philanthropy or altruism, triggered by something from inside, certain belief that make one work voluntarily and does not expect for certain compensation. For instance, let’s say my job description as a translator is to translate the given documents in certain deadline. If I practice OCB, then I will not just translate and use the provided resources around me by the company, but I will also get my own

resources outside, such as resources person, doing my own research for accurate terms of the translated topic...er.. and maybe I will finish my job long before the actual deadline due. I manage to accelerate my job in any way I can including... maybe, take it home and work on it... because then I can complete it much sooner and then take other jobs to help the unit where I work to work faster and finish all translations much faster. Or, I may choose to help my colleagues who are not done with their translations or get difficulty in using our software or find terms. And I do all these voluntarily, because I believe that this is a good thing to do and in Islamic point of view, I please Allah and I therefore will get a reward” (P1).

A similar definition of OCB by another respondent (A3) said:

“I guess it’s about the identity with the organization. What I mean is...a special behavior in the organization...how they behave that can benefit the organization directly or indirectly. Like an employee putting much effort beyond the call of duty, just to help the organization...”.

Respondent (P3) also defined OCB as:

“OCBs are special, individual behaviors which are beneficial to the organization but not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system. According to some HR subject matter, OCBs are thought to have an important impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of work teams and organizations, therefore contributing to the overall productivity of the organization”.

In one way or another, all preceding definitions of OCB by respondents are in line with Bateman and

Bateman and Organ (1983) coined the term “OCB”. They described OCBs as the extra-role behaviors that are important to a functional organization, but fall outside the formal job descriptions. The aforementioned unanimous consensus of the respondents regarding the definition of OCB leads us to the belief that it is a known concept that organizations admire and for that matter, knowing its antecedents may pose great positive impacts on organizational overall performance.

The Nexus between OCB and *Taqwa*

There was a unanimous unequivocal agreement regarding the positive link between OCB and *Taqwa*. From their experiences, respondents mentioned that they believe, that a person who scores high on the scale on *Taqwa*, will also exhibit high OCB. For instance, respondent (A1) mentioned that:

“.....this Taqwa resides in people. In an Islamic organization where a majority or core of the employees are Muslims we expect them to have Taqwa. People with Iman have to do good, to be better citizens...better OCB. Work is Ibadah (worship), so there is a connection, the higher his/her Taqwa is, I would expect that person to be a better citizen of the organization...more responsible...”.

Likewise, another respondent (P1) clearly mentioned that there is a positive link between OCB and *Taqwa*, where she said:

“I think...erm...The higher level of Taqwa a person has, a higher level of OCB the person also has. Because with Taqwa in the heart, people will work voluntarily and only for the sake of Allah. They will manage to always do the best in their work, keep being honest and loyal to the company, innovate more to help accelerate the job and finally get the best results”.

The assertion of respondent (P2) on the nexus between Taqwa and OCB cannot be overemphasized:

“People with Taqwa, will only do something that brings benefit to them, their community, their organization, and most of all their future life which is akhirat (the Hereafter). Taqwa will lead a person to act beyond what is required by their job description because the more good thing they can bring to the organization, the more reward they’ll get for their akhirat...”.

Similarly, another respondent commented:

“Yes sure, there is a link between Taqwa and OCB. I will put it this way...an example of OCB is helping co-workers or communicating changes that affect others, and actively participating in group meetings or representing the organization positively to outsiders. Taqwa is whereby we will always obey Allah and avoid disobedience. So, there is a definite link between these two principles, whereby if a worker holds the concept of Taqwa to Allah, he/she will definitely perform his work more than he/she is supposed to do” (A2).

To summarize the above findings and discussions, it is noted that all the respondents unanimously agreed on the contention of a possible nexus between *Taqwa* and OCB. This suggests that *Taqwa* could be an antecedent factor to OCB. In other words, when a person has high *Taqwa*, there is a greater tendency that he/she may develop and exhibit higher level of OCB. OCB is becoming an increasingly important topic of discussions in contemporary literature as well as in the areas professional practice. Given the present challenges emerging in the business world, organizations are increasingly showing keen interests to determine the antecedents and enabling factors of OCB.

CONCLUSIONS

In the past, most research on OCB was conducted from European and American perspectives that emanate from the Western value systems. What has not been explored sufficiently in this field, is the potential of looking at the phenomenon from other socio-cultural & religious contexts, and specifically from the Islamic perspectives. This study, therefore, has sought to narrow this research gap by attempting to developing & presenting new knowledge through the findings from an in-depth study of important issues pertinent to OCB from religious perspectives in the East. It has particularly focused on some relevant issues that represent the viewpoints of Muslim professionals, as the believers of one of the major religions of the world, i.e. Islam. Due to this, the study has set pioneering role into determining the antecedents of OCB from the two major sources of knowledge: *Qur’an* and the *Sunnah*, which when followed is expected to result in higher levels of outcomes.

By conducting in-depth interviews with selected senior academicians and practitioners in Malaysia and Indonesia, it points to two propositions. Proposition 1: *Taqwa* is linked to OCB. In other words, there is a nexus between *Taqwa* and OCB. Proposition 2: *Taqwa* may serve as an antecedent and enabling factor to OCB. These two propositions could lead us to the final proposition that *Taqwa* can be operationalized in contemporary business research.

HRD scholars and professionals may use the findings of this research to justify their efforts in designing, developing, and implement appropriate learning and performance improvement interventions, so that *Taqwa* could be enhanced continuously among Muslim employees. This could lead to attaining high ethical and moral values of employees that might control many undesirable behaviors (greed, corruption, disobedience, etc.) of employees that are negatively affecting contemporary organizational performance. In addition, non-Muslim professionals and employees can also take relevant initiatives in this regard, particularly the research findings will provide new insights to the people of other faiths in proper understanding Muslim employees' values and expectations. The increased understanding of the values and organizational perspectives of people from various faiths will help in developing increased tolerance among members of increasing multi-cultural, multi-religious organizations of today's changing social and business environments.

In future, this research could be replicated in other contexts (other Muslim majority countries with different socio-cultural values), and study the impact of several contextual variables in this regard. Since this is the first research on the contemporary issues of religion and OCB, findings from this study may trigger more research interests among the current and future scholars who might be interested in this field.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe the concept of *Taqwa*?
2. What role do you think *Taqwa* plays in organizations? Can you give some examples please?
3. Can the concept of *Taqwa* be put into practice in modern organizations, in other words, can the concept of *Taqwa* be operationalized? Please explain further.
4. How would you describe Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)?
5. From your point of view, where is the nexus or link between *Taqwa* and OCB? Please elaborate further.

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