



# Human resource management based on the index of Islamic human development

## *The Holy Quran's approach*

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – Human development is the most modern development approach. However, the proposed human development indexes for implementation of Islamic human resource management (HRM) do not suffice to realize the Islamic developed society. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the economic-managerial indexes of human development based on HRM from the viewpoint of Islam and *The Quran*.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This paper applies the hermeneutic method and considers the question: “what are the proper human resource (HR) economic-managerial indexes from the viewpoint of Islam?”.

**Findings** – Referring to the Islamic development basics and goals, it analyzes economic interaction among Muslim activists in an objective situation of the human development from the viewpoint of Islam and finally, it proposes human development economic-managerial indexes among other required indexes, through planning an acceptable economic quasi-system.

**Originality/value** – In the Islamic approach, human development occurs when a person's capacities improve so that he/she becomes able to manage internal and external contradictions and conflicts; and steps forward in the route of the faith and the righteous deed and in the space of the widespread justice to reach the God proximity and to replace the natural life by the *Hayat-e-Tayyebah*.

**Keywords** Islam, Human resource management, Human development index, Islamic approach, Beliefs  
**Paper type** Research paper

### 1. Introduction

Human resource management (HRM) is used to refer those activities conducted in order to attract and coordinate HR in each country (Scroggings and Benson, 2010). HR is among the most important capitals. This resource is so crucial that the countries assume it as the first planning priority for their future. HR managers in various countries lead their countries toward the realization of the future goals based on the dominant values. Naturally, the value system varies in different countries and especially in Islamic and non-Islamic countries. Such a difference requires that the countries conduct a great deal of attempts and researches aiming at acquiring conformity between this science and their own value system (Mellahi and Budhwar, 2010).

On the other hand, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (1991) points in its report to the concept of human development; its difference with HR development; and introduces the human development index; then it defines these concepts as follows: human development is a process in which the people's options increase; HR development or human capital management is a set of activities such as attraction, providing,



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education and training, increase of knowledge and efficiency and motivating which lead to HR development. With regard to the above definitions, we may state the differences of the two concepts: human development emphasizes on the options' power and human's option range, while the HR development thinks of the power of creativity, pioneering, productivity in the light of developing the knowledge and skill acquiring. Actually, HR development in the form of a social process is a facilitator of realizing the human development. Human development index for evaluating, measuring and comparing the countries' development scale is achieved from the harmonious average of the following three indexes:

- (1) income per capita (measures the economic situation and possessing the worldly welfare);
- (2) life expectancy at the beginning of the birth (measures the health situation); and
- (3) literacy rate (measures the level of the knowledge and wisdom) (UNDP, 1990).

The question asked by each Muslim researcher is: "may we create a developed Islamic society relying on those indexes, so that in such society, human development is realized out of the Islamic thought fundamentals?". Apparently, the answer may not be positive; because it is for certain that the Islamic thought fundamentals differ from those accepted and noted by the development experts and the global dominant approach. Especially, this approach is based on the liberal capitalism economy dominated over the open market in economic-managerial aspect of the human development; and the economic interaction and the related system accepted by the Islamic thought – both inside and outside of it – differ seriously from those in liberal thought.

Therefore, in order to realize the favorable Islamic society and to achieve the religious development, one has to answer the following basic question: what are the economic-managerial indexes of the human development based on HRM from the viewpoint of the Islam and *The Quran*? The answer relies on the presumption that the *Holy Quran* has called itself the book of human guidance (*The Holy Quran*, Chapter Al-Bagarah (2) Verse 2). It has not refrained from any guidance and stated whatever provides and secures human's real perfection (*The Holy Quran*, Chapter An-Nahl(16), Verse 69). Therefore, the concept of human development which is an index of conditions for acquiring a better and superior life may be implied from *The Holy Quran* text; also indexes proportionate to the Islamic thought can be formulated and presented for various HR aspects including economic-managerial one, relying on *The Quran* cognition.

So, Section 2 considers the literature with the HRM core and with an Islamic approach and with regard to the Islamic requirements of the human development. Section 3 has been devoted to methodology and the basic model for the Islamic human development index planning. Section 4 presented the quasi-system of the economic action along with the proportionate Islamic human development indexes. The Section 5 is conclusion.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Reconstruction of the HRM based on the Islamic thought

Undoubtedly, the human beings are both the target and the agent of the development in humanitarian interpretation of the development. Attempt to achieve development through investing on HR and stressing on human faculties and capabilities is not only acceptable but also is the unique way of development based on the economic justice; because in one hand, the labor force receives the wage proportionate to the productivity

and training is among the most important factors of efficiency (productivity), based on the theory of micro-economy (Wang, 2008) and on the other hand according to the Islamic tenets, the economic justice identity is responsibility and credentials. In other words, the purposeful management and training in various fields increase the human's skill, efficiency and income deserve and as a result provide human with economic growth facilities. Therefore, overcoming the poverty, just distribution of income and the economic growth are formed in the route of HRM (Okpara, 2008). The following verses of *The Holy Quran* reveal that human being is the basic and central nuclei of the development and the natural resource' utility:

The Holy Quran, Chapter Al-Hajj, (22), Verse 65: To Him belong all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.

The Holy Quran, Chapter Ibrahim, (14), Verse 34: He has *also* subjected to you the sun and the moon, both performing their work constantly. And He has subjected to you the night as well as the day.

The Holy Quran, Chapter Hud, (11), Verse 61: And a curse was made to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection. Behold! *The tribe of 'Ad* behaved ungratefully to their Lord. Behold! Cursed is 'Ad, the people of Hud!

So, an intellectual man may play his role in development process when utilizes the nature efficiently under HRM and through proper education and efflorescence of human values in his interactions, and so he may achieve the sustainable development. In this approach, HR is the basis for the capital and the natural resources are the side-factors of the economic-social development. Therefore, the HRM system is in a general sense the facilitator of the development process (Branine and Pollard, 2010). By the way, human-centrism based on the Islamic tenets differs essentially to that in any other economic development theories.

Since the education and training system of the Islam emphasizes on the relation between an individual and the creator, faith and believe in God as well as relation with oneself and self-refinement. In other words, efflorescence of human capabilities and potentials is not one-dimensional, but it covers all aspects and dimensions including human's social, individual, physical, spiritual and material needs. That is why, the Islamic HRM system emphasizes on human capability in scientific, skill and behavioral aspects for achieving the economic growth and lastly stresses on extending human's options in spiritual and material needs. It is so, because in Islamic tenets, human is not degraded and any activity towards HR development is integrated (Khan *et al.*, 2010).

### *2.2 HR index*

Achieving a better life has been an essential goal in development process. There have been many approaches among the authors to meet this goal in development process. There have been two approaches of economic welfare and basic needs, before the HR concept appears (Ranis *et al.*, 2000). The economic welfare approach considers the consumption of goods and services as the basis of a better life. As you see, it ignores human's spiritual and moral needs and mental capacity growth in development process. On the other hand, the basic needs approach assumes the providing minimum material and immaterial requirements as the criterion of a better life, i.e. a set of minimum goods and services. It also ignores the human's material and immaterial (mental) capacities in this process. Considering the many criticisms on these approaches,

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the human development approach was accepted as the superior and dominant approach in international communities (Dar, 2004). Iran's various five-year development plans also have been compiled on this basis and with regard to the related indexes.

In human development approach, extending the human's options according to his or her will means to have a better life; but in interpretation of this approach some requirements have been mentioned including: equal opportunities, sustainability in the form of responsibility for the future generations and productivity in the framework of the HR investment (Engineer *et al.*, 2008). This approach which is derived from the classic economy view toward the human nature and behaviors, considers human's unique motivation as personal benefit. Such a human as a producer and vendor of the goods and services tries to reduce expenditures and costs and to increase utility and benefit; and as a consumer tries to maximize the preferences. In this space, the prices market determines the human economic behavior and such a human naturally seeks just benefit. On this basis, the economic development consists of two main factors: the increase of income per capita and distribution of the worldly welfare. Also, reliance on the modern sciences and techniques in production processes forms its essence (Silvia and Choudhury, 2006).

Nonetheless, the prevalent values and the worldview may not be ignored in reprocess of the development or its nature. Amartya Sen suggests that development is a process which extends people's capabilities and credentials in a valuable way". Therefore, it is the dominant culture that determines the value, acceptance or legitimacy of a method in extending the capabilities and credentials (Choudhury, 2006). Although some authors including Amartya Sen have considered development as human-centrism and its goal as human welfare, it must be known that human's felicity which is realized in the light of human development differs with Islamic approach on human and his felicity which is called the healthy and pure life or "Hayat-e-Tayyebah". If human being improves his spiritual and innate trends, he will be really felicity; he is indeed successful who causes the self to grow (*The Holy Quran*, Chapter Al-Shams (91), Verses 1-9); and if he ruins the self with the sin, he will fail; and he is indeed one who stunts to (*The Holy Quran*, Chapter Al-Shams (91), Verse 10).

### *2.3 Islamic view to human development*

From the view point of the Islam, human being faces two groups of inner and outer contradictions and he has to overcome them in order to achieve development. Meanwhile, the crucial point is that the inner contradictions are more fundamental in comparison to outer ones, which are the apparent aspects. It means that the human would not be able to solve inner contradictions and conflicts, except that he previously solved the outer ones (Weir, 2008; Ali, 2010). So in Islamic thought basics, the favorite human development is the same as the pure and healthy life or Hayat-e-Tayyebah and the faith and the righteous action are the key to entrance this life: (*The Holy Quran*, Chapter Al-Ra'd (13), Verse 11; *The Holy Quran*, Chapter Al-Nazi'at (79), Verses 40-41; *The Holy Quran*, Chapter Al-Nazi'at (79), Verses 37-39; *The Holy Quran*, Chapter Al-Hujurat (49), Verse 7).

Based on *The Quran's* cognition style, the faith is defined as:

[...] changing the knowledge acquired by cognition into inner belief as a result of which the human self relates to the knowledge derived from the cognition and makes the self believe it.

These concepts of cognition and faith determine the kinds of trends, norms, values, behaviors and activities (Qureshi, 2009). Development from the view of the Islam is a process in which human's social and individual life will be developed qualitatively and quantitatively based on the pure Islamic thought to satisfy human's basic needs (Spiritual and material in all aspects of the life). Accordingly, the Islamic human development is the process of extending the human capacities through justifying the instincts and satisfying human spiritual and material needs through observing Islam's comprehensive orders for enhancing the faith and righteous deeds on the general justice arena aiming at achieving the Hayat-e-Tayyebah (Qureshi, 2009).

Therefore, considering the cognitive bases of the Islamic thought, we will propose a comprehensive definition for development concept and its proportionate human development, through derivation from the general theory of action and designing a quasi-system of economic interaction among the Muslim activists under the developed conditions where the Islamic culture and tenets have been internalized by the activists' individual personalities; then the main indexes of the favorite economic-managerial action have been planned and suggested. So, these indexes will be coordinated and will be in close relation with other aspects of the human development. We may promote the balanced human development in the Islamic society in a coordinated way through measuring those indexes in program studies.

### **3. Methodology**

The main goal of this research is to explain the human development's economic-managerial indexes from the viewpoint of the Islam, stressing on *The Holy Quran* to develop HR. This research is an applied one with regard to the kind, nature and the main goal of the research and is conducted using a hermeneutic method.

#### *3.1 Hermeneutic method*

Generally, the hermeneutic method is a science whose addressee is human and attempts to bond human life with the understanding the inter-human relations. Its key words are: meaning, language, relation, interpretation and implication. Hermeneutics is against the positivism and the experimental methods with the emphasis on understanding against expressing and cognition as the departure point. Attention to presumptions and pre-implying in the research and interpretation process and emphasis on bias among the researchers or the interpreters before, and during the research or the interpretation are among those bases of the hermeneutics which are exactly against the positivism and experimentalism (Mathias and Teresa, 2006).

According to the last classifications based on the hermeneutics nature and function, there are three distinct kinds of hermeneutics (Hansson, 2005): methodological, philosophical and critical hermeneutics. Methodological hermeneutics as implied in this research is a method to find out the subject of humanities sciences. It discusses about the meaning and being meaningful; it is an instrument for understanding the meaning. On the contrary, the philosophical hermeneutic seeks for the nature of interpretation and understanding. In this kind of hermeneutics, the question is that "how does understanding become possible?" rather than "how do we know?" or "what is the existence aspect of the creature whose presence depends just on the understanding?" Actually, the philosophical hermeneutic questions and deny the fundamental assumption of the methodological hermeneutic that states "hermeneutics is a method for understanding" and tries to explain

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the phenomenology of the human existence and to reveal that the understanding is itself the cosmological background.

The third kind of hermeneutics is the critical one whose main representative is *Habermas*. It concentrates neither on methodology and epistemology nor cosmology and phenomenology; but it thinks more to make people under-yoke free, and emphasizes on talks among the people and creating the mutual understanding in society. The assumption of the critical hermeneutic is that “the human communication ability is a cause sustaining the social life along with understanding which may be repressed by factors such as power and wealth which in turn hinder understanding in society (Small and Mannion, 2005).

### 3.2 Action theory

In sociology, the general theory of action has been scientifically explained by *Parsons* more than any others. It interprets the social action (including economic action) with the activist’s intellect, i.e. the activist’s understandings of environment, thoughts, wishes, sentiments and motivations which lead him or her to react against the others’ actions, are bases of the interpretation and explaining the social action theory (Verstegen, 2011).

Therefore, any social action is formed by four main components: activist, situation, symbols and rules (norms and values) and each action system possesses four fundamental functions: adaptation, goal attainment, integration and preserving the culture and symbolic patterns (Lyons, 2009). Analyzing the human economic action by the mutual action theory, we find out that the economic processes have non-economic aspects which are ignored in classic economics; it limits its subject to a special kind of human action, that is scientific or intellectual economy (regardless of its aspects) and deletes any economic behavior contrary to intellectual economy from its consideration domain (Fontaine, 2008).

Therefore, despite of the classic economical analyses, in general analysis of the mutual action, it must be noted that the economic action is an aspect of the social activists’ behavior defined by motivations and norms in cultural patterns aiming at realizing the objectives of the cultural system; it attempts to meet the spiritual and material needs through mobilization of the sources for production, distribution and consumption of the goods and services. In this way, making a research pattern based on the principles or pre-known knowledge related to understanding and expressing the research subject from the context of the *Holy Quran* and through profound studying the verses, we collected and analyzed the required information using logical reasoning or implying comparison. Then, we extracted and explained the indexes for the main components of the quasi-system using derivation from the general action theory, along with the analysis of the Muslim activists’ mutual action in the economic system derived from the Islamic thought.

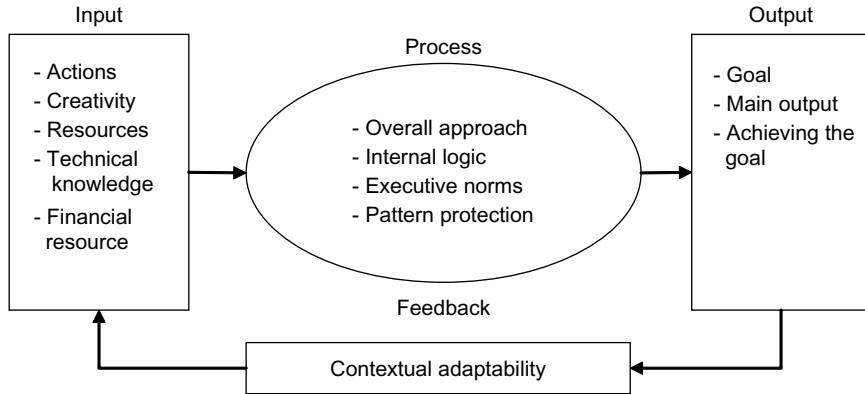
## 4. Planning indexes of the Islamic human development

### 4.1 Quasi-system of economic action in human development

The quasi-system of the economic action shown in Figure 1 shows the following components: dominant relations, internal logic (core-rule) of the execution norm in applications, the main expectation of the activists, main function, the whole finding for the optimum function and the main output. To explain this function, it must be mentioned that some part of the basic and real needs of the human relate to the physical and material aspects; although they are at the second rank of priority in comparing to spiritual needs. However, in practice and in life reality there remains no background for conducting the spiritual activities unless there is a proper condition for human life



Figure 1.  
Quasi-system of  
economic action



and survival. So it must be said that “what is heinous from the viewpoint of Islam is the selection of the world as the main goal of the life”.

This quasi-system has three principles that will be institutionalized in this system:

- (1) widespread and comprehensive vicar in capturing and processing the material values and blesses;
- (2) widespread and comprehensive justice in distribution of the material values and blesses; and
- (3) satisfying basic needs and consumption of the goods and services; so that the belief and piety are formed according to the opinion of *The Holy Quran* (Chapter Al-A'raf (7), Verse 96), and proportionate to this system.

Therefore, in planning the economic-managerial indexes of the human development, one must consider and study the components of this quasi-system, in order to show its proper function according to the human development conditions assumed by Islam. The principle indexes suggested according to the general explanation of Islam-centered economic action quasi-system are as follows: sufficiency and confidence to meet the basic needs, sustainable welfare, active participation (economic), kosher livelihood, justice and equality (in distribution of the material values and economic opportunities), construction and amendment and donation.

#### 4.2 Explanation of the economic indexes

*Sufficiency and confidence.* With regard to *The Quran's* explanation about the economic system in human development, this system is in charge of providing the required material preliminaries to continue and promote the spiritual life. Some part of these preliminaries is providing the fundamental needs, which secure the sustainable life. Islam believes that satisfying the educational, communicational [...] needs ought to be proportionate to the individual's social positions and dignities and it must observe the sufficiency principle. The sufficiency principle means overcoming the poverty and refrain from prodigality. Moreover, the goal of the Islam is to meet the material needs in order to concentrate on the basic problem of the life which is spiritual perfection; this index may be studied by the following side-indexes:

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- individuals' capability in providing educational expenditures;
  - economic security situation and the share of basic expenditure in the income per capita; and
  - individuals' situation in accessing to basic goods.

*Sustainable welfare.* In human development considered by the Islam, the believer must access to all kosher divinely gifts and luxury and they must be applied so that they become the cause of honor for the Islamic country and be an immitigable pattern for the other countries. Therefore, sustainable welfare is another index for the developed human life or Hayat-e-Tayyebah. The following side-indexes can be applied to measure this index:

- variation in insurance and coverage coefficient;
- entertainment and sport spaces per capita;
- the percentage of resources of the public budget devoted to welfare affairs;
- the percentage of population uses these entertainments; and
- sport spaces and the percentage of the family income spent in sport and tourism activities.

*Active participation.* Work and attempt to meet the livelihood through the legitimate ways are considered in Islamic economic culture as jihad (fighting in God's way); and are among the most valuable worships. On the other hand, not to work and acceptance of poverty are seriously reproved and criticized. So, active participation in economic activities and presence in dynamic process of the wealth production and in promotion of the Islamic society's economy are among the human development cues in Islam. The related side-indexes are as follows:

- The rate of employment and the proportion of illegal to legitimate economic activities.
- Economic crimes rate among the actors in economy.
- Proportion of those who act in non-productive to productive jobs.
- Proportion of the still and stagnant to productive capitals.

*Kosher livelihood.* Kosher livelihood is among the Islamic economy tenets. In *Quran* culture, illegal livelihood is so bad that a divinely narration "considers the worship along with the illegal livelihood as carrying water with a hole dish". The kosher livelihood is one that in which the individual acts in the framework of law and religion without any illegitimate act. Among the kosher livelihood's side-indexes we may name:

- Economic crimes situation in justice courts and the situation of the economic corruptions (bribery, rip, etc.).
- Presence of hoarding and fraudulent contacts percentage among the economy activists.
- The amount of observance of legal and legitimate payments (Khoms, Zakat, Tax and Tolls).
- The quality of observance of the obligatory standards in good production and services.



*Justice.* The violent and unlimited and uncontrolled competitions of the modern free markets and the greedy deployment of the nature will be overcome through economic justice and observing the piety principles. Also, in this way, we may solve the problems such as: the groups and people's class gap, unequal opportunities in access to natural gifts among the people of one generation and various generations. The side-indexes of the justice are as follows:

- gender equalities (proportion of the occupation opportunities among females to males);
- regional equalities (proportion of the economic growth and other indexes in various regions);
- racial equalities (equal opportunities for all races);
- classes equality (dozen coefficient among the various classes of the society);
- situation of economic competition (presence of cooperation companies, NGOs and cooperative institutions); and
- situation of the inter-generation balances (environmental damages).

*Construction and amendment.* Possessing the land aiming at development, construction and feeling responsibility against all creatures are among the consequences of the human development from the Islam's viewpoint. In this form of development, we will observe the continuation of the amending all gifts and improving the infra-structures related to satisfying welfare and fundamental needs and human development and perfection are accompanied by the amending human functions and possessions (*The Holy Quran*, Chapter Hud (11), Verse 88). The construction and amendment indexes have the following side-indexes:

- construction budget relative to the current budget;
- income per capita and inflation rate;
- productivity rate and the foreign trade balance;
- local technology and technical knowledge production rate in economic and industrial activities; and the rate of invention patents; and
- self-sufficiency rate and reduction of economic dependency.

*Donation.* This is for the God sake or consuming some part of the income for meeting others' needs is among the believers' characteristics and prerequisites of the faith and achieving the development in Islam. Devotion for others even if one is himself in need is a cue of penetration of the faith in the believer's heart and in an expression of the highest development level in Hayat-e-Tayyabeh. The related side-indexes are as follows:

- public participation in the public-utility activities;
- the amount of devotion registration; and
- public participation in compensation of the natural disasters.

## 5. Conclusion

Human has two kinds of needs: material and spiritual ones, containing animal (material) and ultra-animal (spiritual) aspects. If these needs are satisfied in a correct and appropriate way, he/she will acquire his/her natural and spiritual perfection.

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So, the material aspect is perfect when it is at the service of the spiritual dimension; and the spiritual perfection means that the natural human achieves the innate life and becomes the symbol of the God. According to the principles and assumptions of the development in Islamic approach, development is defined as a process in which human's individual and social life changes based on the pure Islamic thought, fundamentally to meet spiritual and material needs in all aspects of the life. Also, human development from the viewpoint of Islam is, "the process of extending the human capacities through the justification of instincts and meeting material and spiritual needs aiming at overcoming the internal and external contradictions based on the Islam's comprehensiveness. The purpose of this process is the growth of the faith and the righteous deeds in the way of comprehensive justice to achieve the Hayat-e-Tayyebah.

Therefore, according to the principles of the human development in Islamic approach, the indexes considered by international communities for measuring human development are not suitable; because they are based on the prevalent approaches toward human development, i.e. extending the human's options for a better life. In Islamic approach, human development occurs when his capacities improve so that he becomes able to manage internal and external contradictions and conflicts; and step forward in the route of the faith and the righteous deed and in the space of the widespread justice to reach the God proximity and to replace the natural life by the Hayat-e-Tayyebah.

One of the main aspects of the human development in Islam is economical-managerial dimension which is in charge of satisfying human needs and facilitation of solving the internal and external conflicts to achieve the spiritual perfection. To determine the basic indexes of this aspect, we applied the theory of mutual action and the development principles of the Islam extracted in hermeneutics of the economic action quasi-system under the conditions of the realized human development. These indexes consider and measure the most vital dimensions of the economical-managerial aspect of the human development which are as follows: sufficiency and confidence (in meeting the basic needs), sustainable welfare, active participation (economic), kosher livelihood, justice (in distribution of material values and economic opportunities), construction and amendment and donation.

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