Towards Proposing an Islamic Personality Index

DR. MOHD ABDUL ALAM
Post Doc Research Fellow, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Kulliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia.
PROF. DR. DAWOOD A. AL-HIDABI
Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Kulliyyah of Education
International Islamic University Malaysia

Abstract

This article attempts to define Islamic Personality and propose a model of Islamic Personality and method to evaluate an individual's Islamic Personality. It provides a brief background behind the need and concept of a holistic Islamic Personality Model and index. This is followed by a conceptual and operational definition of the holistic Islamic Personality Model. The following section provides the sketch and related literature that helped inspire the proposed holistic Islamic Personality Model. Finally, a set of quantitative and qualitative questions have been provided which help to measure an individual's holistic Islamic Personality considering the conceptual and operational definition.

Introduction

An Islamic Personality index is a means to measure the religiousness of a Muslim individual. Personality Indexes and Religiosity scales begin with defining ideal Islamic Personality traits and then propose measures to evaluate these traits in an individual. Personality Indexes or religiosity scales have been in academia for several decades now but have mostly focused on Christian religiosity studies. Since the last decade, Muslims have introduced several religiosity scales (Masood, 2018; Mahudin, Noor, Dzulkifly and Janon, 2016; Othman, Hamza and Hashim 2015; Ammar, Ahmed and Nordin, 2012; Krauss, Hamza, Juhari, and Abd. Hamid, 2005) to define and measure Islamic

personality traits in an individual. This was needed because studies (Abu Raiya, Pargament, Mahoney, & Stein, 2008) have shown that Islam plays a central role towards the well-being of a Muslim and therefore it is necessary to understand how far an individual is influenced by Islam. A review of over five of these Muslim religiosity scales and Islamic Personality Indexes has shown that most Muslim religiosity scales attempt to define and evaluate Islamic personality traits through an understanding and practice of pillars of Iman and Islam and the concept of Ihsan. The authors argue that most of these Muslim religiosity scales define an Islamic personality through a traditional and limited understanding of the pillars of Iman and Islam and the concept of *Ihsan*. The authors recommend that the understanding of pillars of Iman and Islam and the concept of Ihsan should be re-examined and expanded based on the works of Al-Faruqi (1982), Iqbal (Dar, 2013) and Mawdudi (1985). Furthermore, good morals and avoidance of bad morals have been stressed in most Muslim religiosity scales when identifying Islamic traits but again in a traditional sense only. By traditional sense we mean that the relation and impact of good and bad morals on a society's overall social, political and economic growth is not taken in to account. Therefore, the authors suggest that when defining Islamic personality traits, good and bad morals should not be seen just from a traditional sense of good and evil but understood in a larger scope connecting them to the holistic growth or gradual decline of society as expounded by Ibn Khaldun (2015). Finally, the role of spirituality in current Muslim religiosity scales when identifying more Islamic personality traits, has been relegated to prayers and the concept of Tawakkul only, while the influence of Sufi poets on Islamic spirituality such as Attar, Rumi and Hafiz have not been studied to further derive Islamic personality traits. The authors suggest that Islamic Sufism be given a small place in the overall architecture of an Islamic personality to counter the materialistic forces and also to heal from the constant onslaughts of modern-day anxiety and depression. Thus, this article attempts to carve out new dimensions of Islamic personality traits and propose criteria to measure them based on a deeper and wider understanding of the pillars of Iman and Islam and the concept of *Ihsan*.

Basis of an Ideal Islamic Personality

Tawhid is the conceptual basis of most Islamic Personality Indexes or Muslim Religiosity scales. However, Ismail and Tekke(2015) have suggested that *Nubuwa* i.e. Prophetic tradition must also be incorporated while formulating a conceptual framework for an Islamic Personality. Yet, they also mention that according to Nursi, the prophetic tradition will merge into the tawhidic explanation of an Islamic Personality because the concept of *Nubuwa* emerges from the idea of *tawhid* itself. In this case, it is fair to state that the foundation of the conceptual framework of an Islamic Personality Index or Muslim Religiosity scale lies in *Tahwid* and *Nubuwat* or just *Tawhid* itself.

In this respect, Krauss et al (2005) mentioned that their religiosity-personality scale is based on two constructs i.e., Islamic Worldview and Islamic Personality. Islamic Worldview entails understanding the pillars of Iman while the Islamic Personality entails practicing the five pillars of Islam along with maintaining good relationships with society and the environment. Under the pillar of Islam, they have categorized two forms of worship i.e., general and special worship. They have maintained that special worship means excellence in conduct towards society and the environment. Mahudin, Noor, Dzulkifli and Janon, (2016) have based their conceptual definition of Islamic Personality on the Hadith Jibril explains, the pillars of Iman, Islam and Ihsan, where they have defined 'Ihsan' as,

> "The final level, Ihsan, in contrast to the previous levels, is the inner dimension where a person performs supererogatory acts of worship in his/her devotion to Allah SWT. This can be seen as a spiritual transformation from the exoteric to the esoteric to be an *insan kamil* (a perfect or universal human) or the actualization of virtue and goodness, in line with the role that God has decreed for humans. Ihsan, therefore, is the highest level that could be attained by a person, and by achieving it, a Muslim is assumed to have submitted.".
>
> (Mahudin et al, 2016, pg 113).

While Mahudin et al(2016) have used "supererogatory acts of worship" to describe Ihsan and stressed that this form of worship is the highest level of actualization of virtue and goodness towards self and society, Krauss et al(2005) have explained the same idea by using the word "special worship" under the pillars of Islam. Thus it is fair to conclude that Krauss et al(2005) and Mahudin et al(2016) stress the importance of Iman, Islam and Ihsan when formulating a conceptual definition of Islamic Personality or Islamic Religiosity. It is necessary here to mention Al-Attas(1999) and his idea of a perfect human being. He terms such a man as a man of 'adab'. According to Al-Attas, a man of Adab uses his reason, logic and revealed knowledge to recognize and acknowledge the "proper places of things in order of creation, such that it leads to the recognition and acknowledgement of the proper place of God in the order of being and existence."

Based on these explanations, it may be safe to state that the basis of understanding Islamic Personality traits and the methods to evaluate these traits in a Muslim individual must stem from the pillars of Iman and Islam and the concept of Ihsan. The authors strongly agree to this idea while stating that the understanding of the pillars of Iman and Islam and the concept of Ihsan may need a deeper look to carve out personality traits that were perhaps missed by other scholars in this field.

Defining an Ideal Islamic Personality

Regarding the definition of an Islamic Personality, Al-Attas(1999) defines as follows:

> It is acquisition of the good qualities and attributes of mind
> and soul; it is to perform the correct as against the erroneous
> action, of right or proper as against wrong; it is the
> preserving from disgrace. (pg. 17)

Similar to Al-Attas, Ismail and Tekke(2015) have stressed on good deeds when defining traits of an Islamic Personality. They say:

> Taken all together, integrative Islamic personality was
> operationalized through item statements relating to two main
> category of personality manifestation. The first category is
> called the striving in belief, "*Tawhid*" and "*Nubuwwa*". This
> includes completely: the testification of the Oneness of Allah

and the Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah (*shahadah*). The second category is called "spiritual striving" and refers to self was incorporated into mind, body, heart, soul and spirit. Strivings, in general, are consciously accessible and personally meaningful objectives that people pursue in their daily lives. Strivings, in this study, are in line with the virtuous behavior. (pg 165)

Othman, Hamza and Hashim (2013) have specifically defined five qualities for an Islamic personality. They are as follows:

"Based on the extensive review of the literature, a few themes for Islamic Personality Model emerge; namely, 'al-rushd', which include diligence, thrift, moderation and balance; 'hijab', which reflects caring for one's good name, abstaining from committing sins, patient and *tawakkal* that means whole-hearted (emotional stability); *Mushawarah*, which means consultation (agreeableness); refraining from talking unproductively and displaying modesty; teamwork, consultative, participative, egalitarian (equality); and spirituality, which include *ibadah* (prayers), amanah (honesty), and *ilm* (knowledge). These muslim traits can be initially used as guidelines in further refining the dimensions of Islamic Personality Model. (pg 118)

Masood (2018) and Ammar, Ahmed and Nordin(2012) refer to the Quranic verse 2:177 when explaining the practical aspects of an Ideal Islamic Personality:

"Righteousness is not just that you turn your faces toward the
east or the west; but it is righteousness- to believe in Allah
and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the
Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him,
for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for
those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast
in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts
which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or
suffering) and adversity, and in war. Such are the people of
truth, the Allah-fearing. (Al-Quran, 2:177)"

Based on the above explanations, some traits of an Islamic personality can be that can be a Muslim
individual believes in Allah(swt) and worships none but Allah swt, believes in the six pillars of Iman,
practices constantly and as strictly as possible the five pillars of Islam, has excellent moral character
which encompasses several habits including *tawakkul* on Allah and exercising restraint, consultative
and agreeableness in nature, magnanimity, trust, patience, the motivation to serve those in need, to
enjoin good and forbid wrong.

Criteria for an Ideal Islamic Personality

The above Islamic personality traits identified were based upon pillars of Iman, Islam and the concept
of Ihsan which is the norm in most Muslim religiosity scales. Yet, as the authors had argued earlier, a
deeper and wider understanding of pillars of Iman, Islam and the concept of Ihsan is needed to further
derive Islamic Personality traits that were perhaps not identified earlier.

The authors have proposed the term, "foundational adherence" to the pillars of Iman and Islam and
the concept of Ihsan when these items are being seen from an important yet traditional and limited
sense. The authors have coined the words, "expansive adherence" to the pillars of Iman, Islam and
concept of Ihsan when trying to understand these items in a wider and deeper context.

Therefore, each item, "Iman, Islam and Ihsan" will have two components when deriving Islamic
Personality traits. Figures 1 and 2 explain this difference accordingly.

Figure 1: Traditional architecture of Islamic Personality Traits
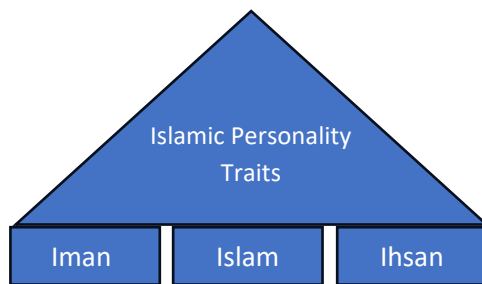
Figure 2: Authors' proposed architecture of Islamic Personality Traits
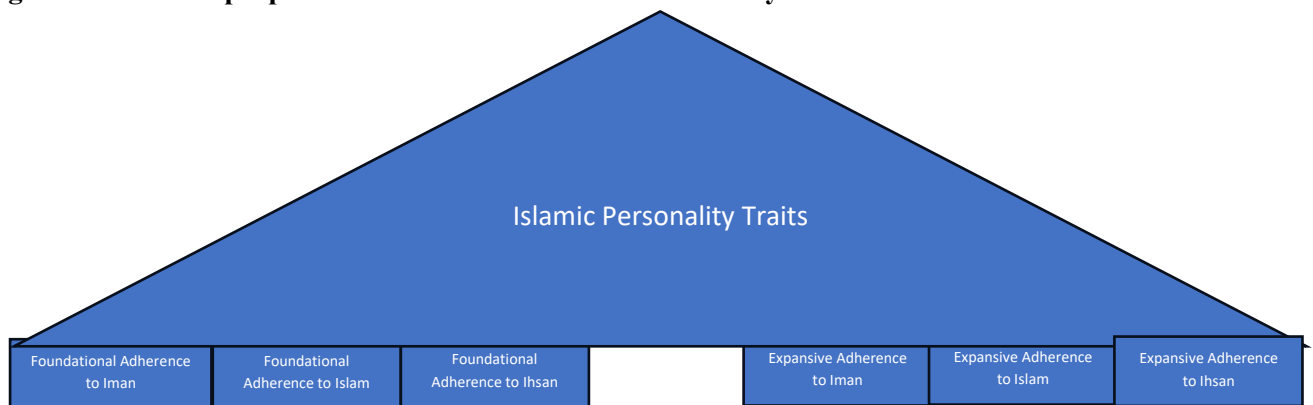
The authors propose relevant literature that should be read to understand Foundational and Expansive Adherence to pillars of Iman, Islam and the concept of Ihsan.

Below is a list of literature that may help in understanding the foundation and expansive understanding to the pillars of Iman, Islam and Ihsan:.

1. Foundational adherence to the pillars of Iman

    a. This means the individual does not commit ritualistic kinds of shirks such as grave worship, wearing amulets or believing in superstition. *(Fundamentals of Tawhid by Bilal Phillips)*

2. Expansive adherence to the pillars of Iman

    a. This means the individual understands the Mawdudic definition of difference between a Muslim and a Kafir. *(Selections from Let Us Be Muslims)*
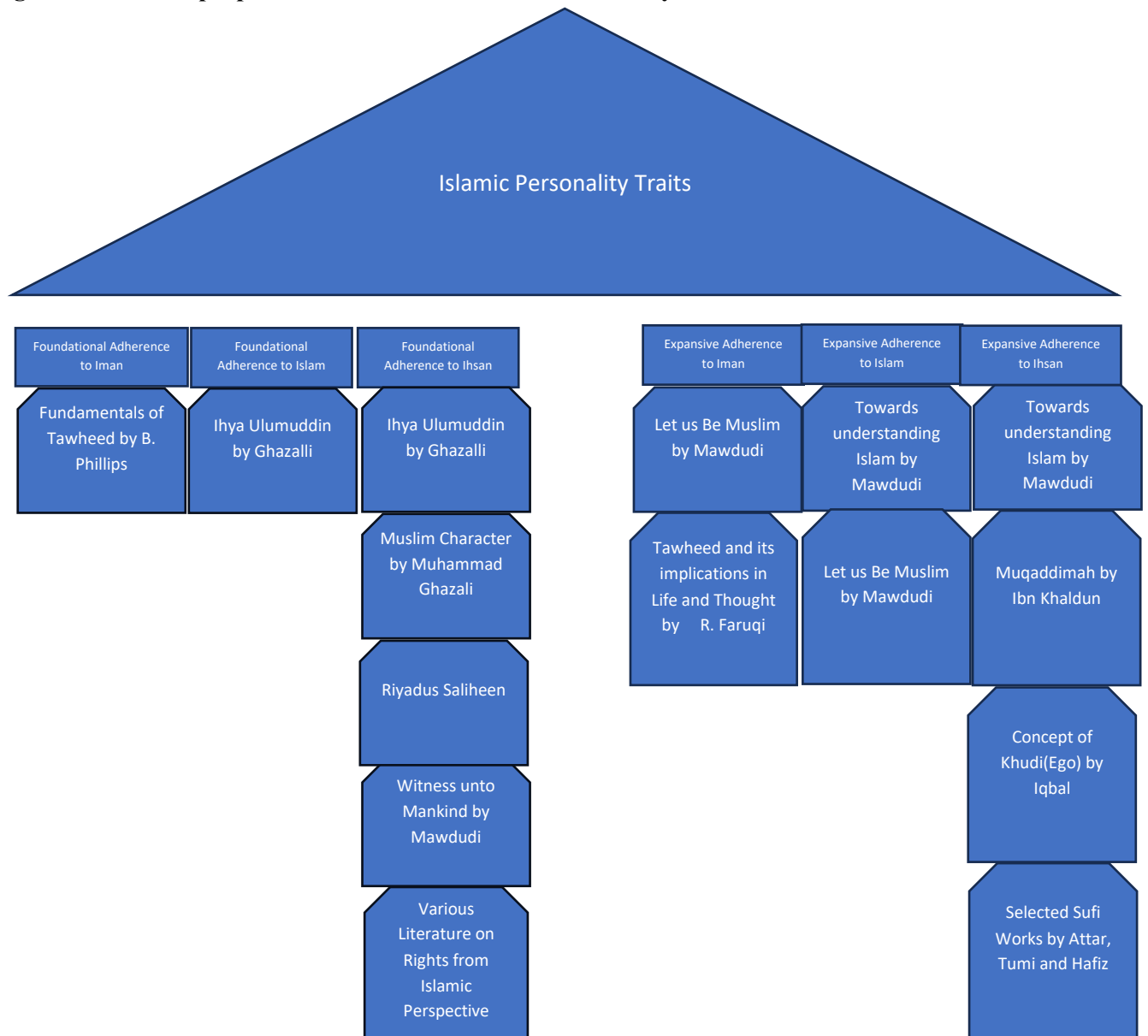
  b. This also means the individual understands Ismail Faruqi's implication of Tawhid in life and thought. *(Tawhid and Its implications in life and thought by Ismail Faruqi)*

3. Foundational Adherence to Pillars of Islam

  a. The means individual has fully engrained the meaning and purpose behind five pillars of Islam as taught by Imam Ghazali in Ihya Ulumuddin. (Ihya Ulumuddin by Imam Ghazali)

4. Expansive Adherence to the pillars of Islam

  a. This means individual incorporates the Mawdudic definition of pillars of Islam ie they are means to an end and not an end in itself. *(Selections from Towards Understanding Islam and Let Us Be Muslims)*

5. Foundational adherence to the pillars of Ihsan

  a. Good Moral traits

   i. This means individual possesses the following nine traits based on the work of Muhammad Ghazali – tolerance and pardon, etiquettes of conversation, honesty, trustworthiness, fulfillment of a promise, sincerity, patience and pondering over good. *(Muslim Character by Muhammad Ghazali)*

  b. Avoid negative moral traits

   i. This also means individual avoids the following five negative traits – rancor and enmity; greed for food and lust, love of wealth, love of power and show, pride and self-praise. (Selections from Muslim Character by Muhammad Ghazali and Ihya Ulumuddin by Imam Ghazali)

  c. KID Traits

   i. *Khidmah*: This means individual performs community service. *(Selections from Muslim Character by Muhammad Ghazali and Ihya Ulumuddin by Imam Ghazali)*

ii. *Islah*: This means individual conducts the practice enjoining good and forbidding wrong towards family and friends. *(Witness unto mankind by Mawdudi)*

iii. *Dawah*: This means individual offer dawah to non-Muslim friends. *(Dawah Training Manuals)*

d. Rights traits

  i. This means individual understands the following rights from an Islamic perspective and advocates for them: Human rights, Women rights, Minority rights, Labour rights, Animal rights and Environmentalism

6. Expansive adherence to the pillars of Ihsan

a. This means the individual understands the influence of a luxurious and serene life towards the downfall of a society in terms of morality and power. *(Muqaddimah by Ibn Khaldun)*

b. This also means the individual is impatient to meet Allah(swt) and behold His glory. *(Selected works of Sufi poets including Rumi, Attar and Shams Tabrez)*

c. This also means the individual is proud(fakhr) to be a Muslim and believes that foundational and expansive adherence to the pillars of Iman, Islam and Ihsan will lead Muslims to a glorious and successful state in this world. *(Selected works of Iqbal)*

It must be noted here that the recommended literature under each item is only a recommendation and by no means exhaustive or even obligatory. There is various literature in the Muslim world regarding the foundational and expansive meanings of the pillars of Iman and Islam and concepts of Ihsan. Below is a figure to explain how the recommended literature helps to understand the foundational and expansive understanding of the pillars of Iman and Islam and the concept of Ihsan to derive the Islamic Personality Traits.

Figure 3: Authors' proposed architecture of Islamic Personality Traits

Islamic Personality Traits

Foundational Adherence to Iman — Fundamentals of Tawheed by B. Phillips

Foundational Adherence to Islam — Ihya Ulumuddin by Ghazalli

Foundational Adherence to Ihsan — Ihya Ulumuddin by Ghazalli; Muslim Character by Muhammad Ghazali; Riyadus Saliheen; Witness unto Mankind by Mawdudi; Various Literature on Rights from Islamic Perspective

Expansive Adherence to Iman — Let us Be Muslim by Mawdudi; Tawheed and its implications in Life and Thought by R. Faruqi

Expansive Adherence to Islam — Towards understanding Islam by Mawdudi; Let us Be Muslim by Mawdudi

Expansive Adherence to Ihsan — Towards understanding Islam by Mawdudi; Muqaddimah by Ibn Khaldun; Concept of Khudi(Ego) by Iqbal; Selected Sufi Works by Attar, Tumi and Hafiz

Relevance of recommended literature and the need for an expansive understanding of Iman,

Islam and Ihsan.

<u>Foundational and Expensive understanding of pillars of Iman</u>

One of the best books to have a foundational and practical understanding of Iman is Bilal Phillips book, "Fundamentals of Tawheed" (Phillips, 2006). This book helps to explains the basics of *tawheed* from a traditional perspective and includes mention of most types of shirks with references from Qur'an and Hadith to refute common beliefs and practices of *shirk* amongst some Muslims. Yet, what it does not include is the deeper impact of the philosophy of *tawheed* in an individual's life and in arts and science. This is where the expansive understanding of Iman in terms of Tawheed is necessary and that's why we suggest selected works of Mawdudi on *Tawheed* (Mawdudi S. A., 1985). Mawdudi explains how the concept of *tawheed* can change not only a person's outlook about God but also in relation to people and the state. While Mawdudi explained about the impact of Tawheed in public life to relations with the state, Al Faruqi digs in deeper to explain how the concept of Tawheed influences the arts and science in his ground breaking book, "tawheed and its implications in life and though". Therefore, the authors believe that these three scholars' works(Phillips, 2006; Mawdudi, 1985, Faruqi, 1982) on tawheed may help to complete the circle in understanding the foundational and expansive understanding of Iman.

The above holds true when trying to under the five pillars of Islam as well. While Imam Ghazali's Ihya Ulumuddin (Al-Ghazali, 2015), explains in detail about the five pillars of Islam, the influence of these pillars is limited to the personal life and more intimately towards the soul. However, a question arises as to what happens to the public life of a person especially in terms of the organization of society and state when the five pillars of Islam and understood deeply and practiced strictly. This is where Mawdudi's "Khutbaat" or the English name of the same book, Let us Be Muslims (Mawdudi S. A., 1985) comes into play. If Ghazali's work can be seen as the revival of Islamic Sciences in the medieval world then surely the same holds true for Mawdudi's works on bringing Islamic awareness in the modern world. Mawdudi explains in interesting examples how the five pillars of Islam not only transform a person's soul but also the soul of a society and state. Therefore, we recommend creating

Islamic personality traits under Pillars of Islam by studying both Ghazali and Mawdudi so that both the personal and societal and state impact of the pillars of Islam can be understood.

Under the concept of Ihsan, most Muslim religiosity scales have focused on extra ibadat through the extra prayers and also relations with people and conducting of business affairs. The authors recommend the work of Imam Ghazallai's Ihya Ulumuddin in this section as well while adding popular books such as Muslim Character by Muhammad Ghazali and selected works from Riyadus Saliheen (Al-Nawawi, 1999) in understanding and carving out personality traits stemming from foundational understanding of Ihsan. The authors have no qualms with this but categorize such practices of extra worship, and good manners and etiquettes under the foundational understanding of Ihsan. The only thing missing perhaps from both Ghazali's book and perhaps even from Riyadus Saliheen(atleast in a concentrated nectarized version) are the issues of rights from Islamic Perspective. In the 21st century, a muslim should be aware of rights pertaining to humans, women, children, animals, laborers, etc. The authors would like to add awareness and the need to strive for human rights, women rights, minority rights, labour rights and environment rights as fundamental qualities of an Ideal Islamic Personality. Some may argue that this is already included in the enjoining of good and forbidding aspect of personality. However, as studies have shown (An-Naim, 2004; Feryal, 2010), the idea of human, women, minority, labour, animal and environment rights are not fully entrenched in Muslim countries. Thus, it is necessary to separately stress the importance of rights in a holistic Islamic Personality Model.

Yet, the big danger in this connection is to be wary of influence of western and secular understanding of rights. Muslims have written extensively on the issue of rights from Islamic Perspective and the authors encourage readings on rights from Islamic Perspective. One specific source that can be read on this matter is the Cairo Declaration of Islamic Human rights (Ministers, 1990) which is more exhaustive and equitable than even the UN's Human Rights charter (Mwanburi & Fahm, 2018).

One more point missing from the foundational understanding of the concepts of Ihsan and therefore from the works of Imam Ghazali, Muhammad Ghazali and even Riyadus Saliheen is the impact of good and bad deeds on the society's growth and decline. For instance, all the sources preach about the

importance of not associating oneself too much with wealth and fame and yet the impact of this attachment on society's growth and decline and especially the state is not touched upon in an exhaustive manner. Hence, the authors recommend Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah (2015) theory of a society's attitude towards materialism and the growth and decline of a state. In the context of spirituality, the idea has been relegated to the idea of tawakkal and prayers. The influence of sufism on Islamic spirituality has been ignored. The authors recommend that spiritualism in the garb of sufism can be moderately encouraged to Muslim individuals. While Islam rejects monasticism, modern and moderate Islamic sufist traditions are not identical to the rigid and isolative versions of sufism in other religions (Lings, 1975). Furthermore, Islam has always been credited to play an inspirational role in an Islamic state's growth with Muslim empires expanding from Arabia to Europe to Africa to South Asia (Assad, 1982). Iqbal had succinctly explained this concept in his theory of the "Khudi" of the "Self Ego" and how it provides intrinsic motivation to a Muslim individual in both his private and public life (Dar, 2013). Similar to Ibn Khaldun, Iqbal believed that the self-ego as explained him, would have a direct impact in the state's holistic growth. Thus, the concept of 'Khudi' or 'Fakhr' or "Self Ego" should also be incorporated in the literature to be studied to carve out Islamic personality traits under the category of expansive understanding of Ihsan.

Proposed questions to evaluate Ideal Islamic Personality based on identified criteria

Religiosity scales are incomplete without a set of questions that participants need to answer in order to gauge their religiosity levels. The authors have selected Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) to gauge the personality indexes of Muslim participants because MCQs help to give deeper understanding related to higher order cognition i.e. 'involve uncertainty, application of multiple criteria, reflection and self-regulation' (Liu, Wald, Daskon, & Harland). Indeed, in the measure of muslim religiosity scales, there is an area of uncertainty, reflection and self-regulation. Furthermore, if these scales are to be deployed on a large number of participants, then even in practical terms, MCQs are easier (Geethu & M, 2023) to handle rather than open ended or semi structured questions. The questions below target the knowledge and behavior of participants with respect to foundational and expansive understanding and practice of pillars of Iman and Islam and the concept of Ihsan. Therefore, each question is

categorized under its respective category to make it easy for the reader to understanding which

question reflects which aspect of the Islamic Personality traits.

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