



## ***Wasatiyyah* (Islamic Moderation): A Conceptual Analysis from Islamic Knowledge Management Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

In an environment created by globalization and information affluence, the issue of moderation represents the primary concern of parents, educators, scholars, and leaders. The concept is somehow complicated and is regarded as personal or religious in practice and thought. In fact, there is no definite answer to the question of what constitutes moderation. This paper examines the concept of Islamic Moderation (*Wasatiyyah*), its background and to analyze its common conceptual aspects or principles from the perspective of Islamic Knowledge Management (IKM). This exploration is an initiative to critically review, analyze and (re)construct the existing formulations of IM within contemporary understanding and practices. The focus remains on identifying aspects of the relationship value of knowledge, its functions, and utilization within the practice of IM. From the perspective of this study, IM is viewed as an essential personality trait of an individual that determines organizational productivity and societal stability. In other words, the implications of this study cover various knowledge users who construct their Islamic Moderation Personality.

**Keywords:** Islamic moderation, conceptual, terminological, personality and Islamic knowledge management

### **Introduction**

Due to the current development around the globe and geopolitical changes, the study of the term '*Wasatiyyah*' (Islamic Moderation IM) has evolved greatly in various dimensions and approaches. Earlier, it was only discussed within Qur'anic reference, but now it has attracted the attention of many scholars in various fields such as linguistics, socio-psychology, Islamic development and Islamic capital development, either within the scope of religious contexts or socio-political strategies. This expansion can be inferred from the general opinion of modern scholars about 'religion' as an organized collection of beliefs and cultural systems adopted by a community which becomes part and parcel of their world view and



socio-cultural existence.<sup>1</sup> In this context, the term IM becomes a focal point in examining the true nature of Muslim beliefs and socio-cultural practices throughout their communal life. As a system, it should be adopted and practised accurately and precisely according to the prescription of its revelatory sources. However, this condition of IM raises some curiosity for the global communities, especially in the contemporary context of Islamophobia.

Among the biggest challenges faced by Muslims, individually and communally, is to understand the true conceptual basis of ‘*Wasatiyyah*’ as a terminological term with full values actualized in the practices of Muslims. This is essential before they could apply the concept objectively in their life. For example, Muslims usually use or understand this term as a general concept that can be defined by any individual unconditionally. Consequently, when it comes to practice, they may not always be sure of its form identically and objectively. Extermisim and terrorism makes this phenomenon more evident in today’s world.

Indeed, the concept of IM is one of the most unique within Islamic epistemological understanding. Based on its general and literal definition, it can be regarded as denoting the “middle” such as fair and simple approach, yields towards the best or denoting the state of balancing act that zeroes away from the extreme and the fanatic in every aspect of human life. In this regard, a similar term also exists in many other languages such as ‘*moderation*’ in English and ‘*kesederhanaan*’ in Malay. It can be considered as humanistic conceptual thinking or understanding of a particular area or a system of thought within human communities. However, the issue here is whether this conceptual paradigm is a well-known principle that has been practised only by a certain community? How do community members manage to construct and establish this principle? Therefore, a conceptual analysis focusing on a deeper understanding of the term ‘*Wasatiyyah*’ derived from its authentic sources is crucial.

IM is a multidimensional concept starting from corporeal, psychological, intellectual and spiritual aspects to covering a philosophical sense in nature and a real way of life in practice. It is a comprehensive concept with integrated strategies and balanced requirements for the delights of this world and the hereafter. In other words, it is an inclusive terminological construct and it integrates various values in a balanced structure, it is universal because it affects the total well-being firstly of Muslims and then of all people, indeed of all animate and inanimate beings. IM thus, is a Muslim identity.<sup>2</sup> For this very reason, it is regarded as synonymous with everything that carries the objectivity of “Islam” - in itself as a religion. where the

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<sup>1</sup>Philip. A. Pecorino, *Philosophy of Religion* (online textbook). (CUNY: Queensborough Community College, 2001) Retrieved on June 26, 2016, [http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/SocialSciences/ppecorino/PHIL\\_of\\_RELIGION\\_TEXT/How\\_to\\_read.htm](http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/SocialSciences/ppecorino/PHIL_of_RELIGION_TEXT/How_to_read.htm).

<sup>2</sup>Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur’ān* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980)



principle of justly balanced thought is “a complete and comprehensive understanding of Islam,”<sup>3</sup> and is characterized as being a basic creed in shaping the Islamic way of life, knowledge paradigm, type of action, art of worship and interaction that transforms the culture and the personal character, whether in inter-social engagement, political encounter, religious doctrine and spiritual reality, civilization development and nation building.

## 2. The Background of Conceptual Terminology

The essence of the term *Wasatiyya* has as a concept addressing the issue of what is balanced or just is mentioned in many places in the Qur’ān.<sup>4</sup>

However, there is another statement describing Muslims as those who, when they spend, do so not excessively and not sparingly, but are ever, between that, (justly) moderate. This verse explains that individual Muslim personality and behaviour should be in the form of moderation as demanded by Allah Almighty and should become a trait of an individual personal practice in daily life. In the first verse, Allah the Almighty describes the original trait of a Muslim community. Obviously, this type of community should always be developed, organized and structured according to this fundamental principle and trait. Therefore, both statements can be regarded as conveying a concurrent meaning, in which it describes Muslims as the best nation.<sup>5</sup> Based on these evidences and explanations, if IM were to be practised by an Islamic community, there should not be severely disturbing violence and extremism, an obstacle to peace in the world today.

The term IM is taken and developed from the expression stated in verse 143 in which it has been interpreted in various conceptual meanings; namely, middle

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<sup>3</sup>Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Principles of Wasatiyyah* (2016). Retrieved on 12/9/2016 (<http://www.suhaibwebb.com/islam-studies/the-30-principlesof-wasatiyyah/>).

<sup>4</sup>The most important Qur’ānic statement in this issue is in (al-Baqara 2:143), which means: “And thus, we have made you a just (or balance) community that you will be as witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you.” This verse was revealed together with the verse no. 142 meaning, “The block-headed will say: “What has turned them away from the direction they formerly observed in Prayer? Say, To Allah belong the East and the West; He guides whom soever He wills onto a Straight Way. The two verses were revealed after the migration to Madina, the Prophet (SAW) continued to pray in the direction of Jerusalem for between sixteen to seventeen months. Subsequently, he received the order to pray in the direction of the Ka’bah. This change coursed a gimmick point to the people of books (i.e., Jews and Christian peoples) and some confusion to a new and weak Muslim individual. This revelation is the first answer to the objections of these ignorant people. Their narrow minds and limited vision led them to undue attachment to such formalities as the direction and locale of Prayer. They presumably conceived God to be confined to a particular direction. In reply to their absurd objection the first thing which was explained was that all directions belong to God. Fixing any particular direction for Prayer does not mean that God is confined to that direction. All those who have been favoured with God’s true guidance rise above such limitations of outlook so that it is easy for them to grasp the universal verities of religion.

<sup>5</sup>Al-Qur’ān, al-Furqān 25:67; al-i-Imrān 3:110.



path, just and middle, moderate, the best position, the most honourable, the most perfect, and the alternative selection.<sup>6</sup> This term is also interpreted as referring to the first generation of Islamic community who received direct prophetic training and education. Therefore, they were regarded as the best and exemplary nation that is, moderate in all ways, aspects or demeanour, neither extreme, nor obsessive in their religious beliefs and ethical practices. An example of extremism in religious belief can be observed whenever a person has an inclination to consider a prophet as a son, a representation of God or taking an idol as an intermediary between a human being and Allah the Almighty. In fact, all their actions are in a state of stability, jointly viewed, learnt and worked out to encompass the issues of the world and the hereafter.<sup>7</sup>

Based on the explanation given above, it is clear that the Muslim community by default has been described as a society; an intermediation in function and always positioned in the middle path in commanding action. Based on these descriptions, any Muslim community should always be just in every meaning of justice whether in the meaning of goodness, special advantage and the meaning of intermediation or the meaning of physically being in the middle position.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the Muslim community should be positioning itself in the middle position in any situation. Thus, they should not drift with materialism. It is a place where the Muslim community becomes a functioning model to human beings. It offers balanced spiritual practices in comparison to physical or material aspects throughout their attitudes and actions.<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, the Muslim community will be weakened whenever fanaticism and extremism become their communal trait and behaviour. They become obsessed with a particular approach and method up to the point of acting extremely or committing loosely to become liberals and mindless individuals who undermine religious understanding and its right practices. Both of these tendencies are deviations from Islamic teachings which are just and balanced. Thus, every matter in this world

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<sup>6</sup>Muhammad Kamal Hassan, *Voice of Islamic Moderation from the Malaya World* (Perak: Malaysia, Emerging Markets Innovative Research, 2011); Syekh Muhammad Mutawwali Sya'rawi, *Tafsir Sya'rawi* Trans. Tim Safir al-Azhar (Jakarta, Indonesia: Penerbit Duta Azhar, 2004), 474; Shlahuddin Abdullah Omar Khalid, *Tafsir Mubīn* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasadan Pustaka, 2009), 108; Sayyid Qutb, *Tafsir fi Zilalil Qur'ān*, Trans. Yusoff Zaky Yacob. Kota Bharu, (Kelantan: Pustaka Aman Press Sdn. Bhd, 2000), 295-297; Abu al-Fida Ismail Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Kathīr*. Trans. Shaykh Safiur Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam. 2003); 422-424; Muhammad Hashim Kamali, *Moderation and Balance in Islam: The Qur'ānic Principle of Wasatiyyah* (Subang Jaya, SJ: Ilmiah Publishers, 2010), 7.

<sup>7</sup>Abdullah Basmeih, *Tafsir Pimpinan al-Rahman* (Malay) [Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM)], 2001.

<sup>8</sup>Sayyid Qutub, *Tafsir fi Zilalil Qur'ān*, Trans. Yusoff Zaky Yacob, 295.

<sup>9</sup>M. Q. Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'ān: Memfungsikan wahyudalam kehidupan* (Malay) vol., 2 (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2011), 328-329.



requires stability. When the element of steadiness is absent, various problems will arise and life comes under threat.<sup>10</sup>

In this context, Muslim scholars (especially in Malaysia) generally, agree to define IM based on the manner and purpose of an individual act. This meaning is observed through just, intermediate, and balanced approaches, especially within the context of socio-cultural engagement within a multi-racial community. It is very important for a Muslim to become fair and have the best behaviour within the context of majority versus minority co-existence and to become a person (also a nation) with noble charismatic characteristics, which entitle him to become an exemplary model for socialization in the community, one who acts and reacts accordingly without exceeding limitations and negligence, not excessive in the matter of religion, and also not neglecting duties as a vicegerent of Allah Almighty on earth. Therefore, IM is obviously a fundamental trait of Muslim personality that is in line with the objectivity of human creation purposely functioning to flourish in this worldly life with obedience and worshipping the Almighty Allah and being entitled for paradise in the Hereafter.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it can be concluded that IM, by definition, means denial of extremism against anything that opposes one's personal interest, as it symbolizes triviality in knowledge and inflexibility in facing different issues and questions. In contrast, IM requires an ethical attitude to highlight the characteristics of justice and balance in a structured and scientific manner.

In other words, IM is one of the main characteristics of a Muslim individual's conduct and Muslim community's living style, in many aspects of their daily life. Its reflection can be observed from their acceptance of factuality of worldly life together with their struggle for the Hereafter in a combinatorial approach. It strikes a balance between the requirements of spiritual activities and requirements of material and physical tasks and responsibilities. This is the nature of IM model that was demonstrated and practised by the Prophet (SAW) in educating and shaping his companions where the elements of materialism and spiritualism were always kept in good balance and function. In this regard, IM is an inclusive principle, essential doctrine, dogma, creed, worship, morality, worldview and practice. It is explicitly stated in the Holy Qur'an in a unique style, context and phonetically expressed to explain the values of Muslim nation in a clear demarcation between good and evil, righteousness and viciousness and its advantages for the Muslim community and humanity as a whole.

### **3. Islamic Moderation (IM) as a Precise Terminological Usage**

To get a clearer picture on the discourse of the term, '*Wasatiyyah*' according to Muslim scholars, such as in Malaysia, this study has to structure its interrelated

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<sup>10</sup>M. Kamal Hassan, *Voice of Islamic Moderation from the Malaya World*, 77.

<sup>11</sup>Wahab al-Zuhaili, *Tafsir al-Munir*, Vol. 2. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1991)



aspects of meaning. Indeed, the interpretation of the term begins with an attempt to understand the true meaning of the Qur'ānic usage for the word 'Ummatan Wasatan.' This term is usually used to refer to a justly balance nation.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.1. The Literal Meaning of *Wasatiyyah*

Linguistically, the term '*Wasatiyyah*' is derived from the Arabic word '*wasat*' which means middle or intermediate, such as a place that is located in the middle of equal length around it. It is also used as a praiseworthy attribute, because there are no extreme elements of it, such as generosity which is located between being lavish and griping, bravery which is located between cowardice and blinded bravery.<sup>13</sup> However, this literal definition as stated above cannot be applied out of its linguistic meaning and literal context. If so, it will lead to an understanding that the best quality of anything should be based on the value between bad and good that is between two contradicting values and not the value of good quality itself.<sup>14</sup> Logically, there is no halfway between something good and something bad. This is due to the use of the term *wasatiyyah* which is found only in two situations, first, when it was in between the two positions which are equally bad, as being generous between being lavish and griping. Thus, Islam does not accept the two features, as the Messenger of Allah prohibited the griping attribute in his saying, "The griping attribute put you away from Allah and heaven and even closer to Hell".<sup>15</sup> In the same way, the Holy Qur'ān disapproves any form of lavish attribute.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.2. The Metaphorical Meaning of *Wasatiyyah*

The term metaphorical meaning is used here as opposed to its literal meaning discussed above. In this context, '*Wasatiyyah*' is defined as a word used rhetorically within a specific context and with a specific connotation to express a comparison between two subjects without using connection words 'like' or 'as.' This nature of

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<sup>12</sup>Nizamuddin Al-Naysaburi, *Tafsir Gharab al-Qur'ān Wa Raghaib al-Furqān*, Vol.1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1996), 1: 420; Nasiruddin Abu Said Al-Baydawi, *Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil* Vol.1. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1988), 1:91.

<sup>13</sup>Abdul Hayei Abdul Sukor, *Tafsir Pedomam Muttaqin*, vol.2. (Putrajaya: Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, 2011), 13; Muhammad Ibn Manzur, (n.d.) *Lisān al-Arab* (Beirut: Dar Sadir), 4832; Abu al-Husayn Ahmad Faris, *Majma Qayis al-Lughah*, Vol. 6. (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1979), 108; Muhammad Murtada al-Husayni, al-Zabidi, *Taj al-Arus min Jawahir al-Qamūs*, Vol. 5. (Beirut: Dar al Sadr, 1966), 238; al-Raghib al-Asfahani, *al-Mufradāt li Gharib al-Qur'ān* (Misr: Maktabah al-Anjilu, 1970), 819; Ismail Ibrahim, *Konsep wasatiyyah: Perspektif Islam. Dlm. Konvensyen wasatiyyah anjuran bersama Nadi Dialog Malaysia*, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia dan JAKIM pada 10 hingga 11 Jun 2012), 5

<sup>14</sup>Thair Ibrahim Khudayr al-Shamri, *al-Wasatiyyah fi Aqidah al-Islamiah*. (Beirut: Dar al-Kutuba Islamiyyah, 2005), 20-24.

<sup>15</sup>Al-Bayhaqi, *Shau al-Iman, fi al-Judu wa al-Sakha*, chapter (74) hadith no. 10847, vol. 7, (1990), 428.

<sup>16</sup>Qur'ān, al-A'rāf, 07:31.





comparison might lead to confusion with ‘simile,’ which compares two subjects by connecting them with “like” or “as.” In this regard, whenever, the word *Wasatiyyah* is used in Islamic literature within the context of two conflicting things or positions such as good and bad, it should be understood metaphorically representing every sense of good connotation and values. For example, when it is said, “He/She is in the middle of being lavish and griping,” then that meant that he/she is stingy, wise and brilliant in selecting the needs accordingly.

Additionally, if there are two mutually exclusive matters, then the term *wasatiyyah* refers to the third party and not the one between the two. For example, the saying “Islam is intermediate,” is confusing if its meaning is, Islam is a religion that is located between right and wrong, because it then conveys the message that there are other religions that are better. In this context, *Wasatiyyah* is a metaphorical representation, because there is no other religion more perfect than Islam, while Muslims are regarded as the best nation and Muslim lands are the best living it known in the Quran as the forgiven state.<sup>17</sup> If the balance in the faith is not the best and correct faith, then how the faith that believes in many gods or the one which does not recognize the existence of god at all can be regarded as the best, true and correct faith? Therefore, the faith of monotheist is fair and modest as it is located between two extreme ideologies, namely the polytheistic faith and faith without God.

### 3.3. The Epistemological Meaning of *Wasatiyyah*

For the purpose of justifying the true nature of the term ‘*Wasatiyyah*,’ an epistemological elaboration is given below. For this purpose, this study addresses the following questions:

- a. What is ‘*Wasatiyyah*’?
- b. Who applies it?
- c. Why is it applied/done?
- d. What is its impact?

From the epistemological point of view, the term ‘*Wasatiyyah*’ cannot be defined as having a general or undistinguishable meaning and reference. This fact is due to the concern about the true conceptual meaning of any term and how the term has been conceptualized. For example, the term ‘*Wasatiyyah*’ has been defined as taking a middle path approach, which means performing obligations and duties in a moderate, balanced, and fair way in line with the requirements of religion as Islam is very concerned with a comprehensive balance and moderation in all aspects of life.<sup>18</sup> In other words, belief in Islamic principles should be reflected in a balanced policy

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<sup>17</sup>Al-Qur’ān, al-Miada 05: 3; al-i-Imrān 3:19; Zulkifli Mohamad al-Bakri, *Wasatiyyah Konsep dan Pelaksanaanya* (Kuala Lumpur, KL: Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah Malaysia, 2011), 101.

<sup>18</sup>Haron Din, *Islam: Keadilan Membebaskan Manusia* (Islam: Justice Free Man, English) (Selangor: PTS, 2007), 44-49.



between the spiritual objectivities and the physical requirements. This is due to the fact that Islam is a religion of nature. Its practices cannot be contradictory with the nature. It does not permit any act to contradict human instinct, passion, and strength in vain. Instead, instinct needs to be pushed with a good purpose so that people can master it for a healthy development. The inclination to spiritual and physical attitude is unhealthy and unrealistic for the realization of security, prosperity and happiness in this world and the hereafter. However, giving all these explanations about the meaning of the term answered all the epistemological questions above. For that reason, a comparison between the three types of meaning of the word is given below:

**Table 1.** An Analysis of the three types of meaning for the word ‘*Wasatiyyah*’

Aspect of Meaning	Description	Remarks
1. Literal Understanding	Middle place and intermediate action is the basic original meaning for ‘ <i>Wasatiyyah</i> ’	This meaning cannot be applied out of its linguistic contextual usage.
2. General Understanding	Just and balance used in every aspect of life and action.	A term cannot be used with a general or undistinguishable meaning and reference.
3. Epistemological Understanding	Holding the totality of Islamic principles effectively and successfully.	A term should represent its original nature, method of application and limitation.

For a justification of a term as a distinct category in lexical items, we have to look in two areas; firstly it’s referential meaning, secondly the nature of this reference. For this reason, any study on terminology has to address its basic conceptual meaning. In other words, a term has twofold meaning. Firstly, it is a representation of a conceptual discipline concerned with the principles and methods governing the application of its concepts and their designations (such as references, names, and symbols) in certain subject fields. Consequently, it should have a clear distinction between its entities in the external world and its conceptual structure, which are the units of knowledge that constitute the mental representation of objects and designations of concepts, which can be terms, names and symbols. Secondly, it is a representation of belonging or attaching to a degree of special unit within the special language of an individual subject field.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. Islamic Moderation and the Role of Knowledge

The term IM is a translation for the term ‘*Wasatiyyah*’ in Islamic authentic literatures. Obviously, the term carries various multiple meanings. Consequently, it becomes vague and unusable unless with accurate functional knowledge. Therefore,

<sup>19</sup>J. C. Sager, “In Search of a Foundation: Towards a Theory of the Term,” in *Terminology*. 5 no.1 (1983): 41-57.





knowledge is widely recognized as a critical development resource irrespective of field and scope such as religion, economic sector or type of human actions and practices.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, human cognitive abilities rely on or interact with what is known as knowledge. It is the mechanism which people use to navigate their world, solve problems, and comprehend surroundings and to make decisions or suggestions. Knowledge is the range of one's information, data existence and understanding towards the circumstances or condition of apprehending truth or fact through reasoning. It is significant to emphasize that data, information, and knowledge are academically not interchangeable concepts. Therefore, each of them should be learned through a different technique and methodology. However, due to many reasons and different circumstances, the terms 'knowledge,' 'sciences' and 'information' have been used synonymously or interchangeably in many contexts. They might refer to a particular understanding (theoretical or practical) or skill acquired by a person through experience or education and so on.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4.1. Self-Knowledge

Self-knowledge is a term used in psychology to describe the information that an individual draws upon when trying to find an answer for any question in his/her mind. In this regard, Cooley proposes a three-step self-knowledge process; starting from trying to imagine other's perception, followed by imagination of their evaluations and finally, identifying self-feeling whether good or bad in accordance with self-imagination and judgment.<sup>22</sup> Kinch adapted these ideas to explain how people acquire self-knowledge.<sup>23</sup> In this regard, it is obvious that people think of themselves in a variety of ways. Their way of thinking shapes their personality and attitude towards others. As we know, personality is a set of individual differences that are affected by the development processes of an individual such as certain attachment values, habits and skills. According to Peter, understanding others has been a chief task of humans since they became self-conscious and first began drawing on cave walls or telling stories around a fire.<sup>24</sup> In other words, self-knowledge shapes an individual's identity and personality.

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<sup>20</sup>K. E. Sveiby, *The New Organization Wealth* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1997); T. H. Davenport, and L. Prusak, *Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage what They Know* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1998)

<sup>21</sup>H. D. Thomas, and P. Lawrence, "Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage what they Know," in *Ubiquity: An ACM it Magazine and Forum*, 2000. Retrieved December 25, 2013 ([http://www.acm.org/ubiquity/book/t\\_davenport\\_1.html](http://www.acm.org/ubiquity/book/t_davenport_1.html) )

<sup>22</sup>C. H. Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Scribner's, 1902)

<sup>23</sup>J. W. Kinch, "A Formalized Theory of the Self-Concept," *American Journal of Sociology*, 68 (1963): 481-486.

<sup>24</sup>J. G. Peter, "Individual Personality is Best Understood as Process, Not Structure," Seminar Paper on *Cultural Psychology of Personality* (Belmont University, 2016) Retrieved on 20 February,

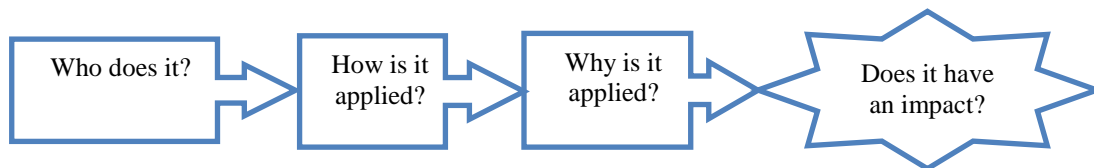


## 4.2. Social Knowledge

The term social knowledge refers to social representation. Therefore, it is different from self-knowledge. Its fundamental principle is based on identifying the functional status of any knowledge according to the collaborative nature of a social group. It is arbitrary and only knowable by being told or demonstrated by other people. Its sole function is to know how to act within an adequate expression of social needs and requirements. In fact, “the only truly ubiquitous factors in cognitive developments – be it in the history of science or in the ontogeny of mind – are of a functional, not a structural kind.”<sup>25</sup> As a practitioner of IM, a person should always stand in the middle while deeply and seriously considering the surrounding matters. In other words, the person is not supposed to solely consider his/her self-personal knowledge.<sup>26</sup>

### 5. Knowledge Purification in Islamic Moderation’s Understanding and Practices

From the above discussion, it is obvious that a person, especially a Muslim should be equipped with more than one type of knowledge. In other words, a person’s learning has become one of the most important concerns in the practice of Islamic Moderation. It has been more or less assumed that a person who knows more performs more and is often more successful. This simple deduction has enabled a construction of a conceptual framework in an effort to improve understanding, application and practices of IM.



**Figure 1:** Conceptualizing the Role of Knowledge Purification in IM Practices

Based on the above figure, an IM practitioner has to answer all questions highlighted accordingly and systematically, starting from: who does IM’s conceptual practices? Then how is the concept constructed? Followed by why has it been constructed? Finally, does it make a serious impact upon its users?

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2017 [http://www.communication.aau.dk/digitalAssets/196/196355\\_giordano-personality-as-process.-for-june-1-seminar-.pdf](http://www.communication.aau.dk/digitalAssets/196/196355_giordano-personality-as-process.-for-june-1-seminar-.pdf)

<sup>25</sup>J. Piaget, and R. Garcia, *Psychogeneseet Histoire des Sciences* (Flammarion: Paris, 1983), 38.

<sup>26</sup>A. E. Achabe, “Social Knowledge, Identities and Social Practices,” *Papers on Social Representations*. 2, no. 2 (1993):117-125. Retrieved on 25/2/2017, [http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/psr/PSR1993/2\\_1993Echeb.pdf](http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/psr/PSR1993/2_1993Echeb.pdf).



This is the movement flow of how to conceptualize the role of knowledge purification in obtaining a comprehensive understanding of IM practices. It starts by answering why IM should be practised by every Muslim, then is followed by discovering how as a condition it is used to obtain a true understanding of it's origin and purposes. Finally, every Muslim should be able to realize the impact of IM practices. The answers to all of these questions can only be obtained through the application of Islamic Knowledge Management (IKM) Practices.

## 6. Islamic Moderation from Islamic Knowledge Management (IKM) Perspective

### 6.1. Knowledge

The significance of knowledge is increasingly seen as a primary business asset within the contemporary globalized networking. The basis for individual and organizational success is centred around working with knowledge and knowledge workers, where its performance is heavily reliant on knowledge work in mobilizing the knowledge workers. Peter Drucker (born in 1909 and known as the Father of Management), mentioned that the source of wealth is something specifically referred to as human knowledge. The application of knowledge to tasks that are already known can be called as productivity. On the other hand, if knowledge application is imposed onto the tasks that are new and different, we call it innovation. In this regard Drucker successfully enhanced the concept of 'knowledge implementation' and 'knowledge innovation,' thus both concepts have been virtualized in real organizational practice and fully recognized world-wide based on their importance and practical contribution.<sup>27</sup>

### 6.2. Islamic Knowledge (IK)

Islam is considered as a religion of knowledge. The notion of Islam itself means a 'manner of full submission' to God the Creator. This is a useful reference point to begin a discussion on the Islamic conceptualization of knowledge management. The first supposition of the Islamic knowledge is strongly related to and assimilates the notion of knowledge (*'ilm*) that has been mentioned in the Qur'ān and *Hadith* as the fundamental principle of beliefs and practices. In Islam, the definition of knowledge is not confined to only epistemological concerns but also includes ethical truthfulness and other dimensions of objectivities in knowledge application. Therefore, a Muslim regards knowledge as God-given to mankind and as guidance for every theoretical endeavor to elaborate an Islamic paradigm, and intrinsically related to the fundamental concept of obligation (*taklīf*) as drafted by the Qur'ān and the Prophetic (*SAW*) tradition. This understanding is vital in structuring

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<sup>27</sup>H. D. Thomas, and P. Lawrence, "Working Knowledge: How Organizations Manage what they Know," ([http://www.acm.org/ubiquity/book/t\\_davenport\\_1.html](http://www.acm.org/ubiquity/book/t_davenport_1.html) ); J. Movizzo, *Executive Summary Introduction to the Learning Organization: Managing Knowledge for Business Success* (New York: The Economist Intelligence Unit and IBM Consulting Group, 1995)



Muslim worldview toward all aspects of individual belief, societal behaviour and cultural domain.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) encouraged the acquisition of knowledge by saying, “Verily, the men of knowledge are the inheritors of the prophets.” Indeed, the value of a man is the value of his knowledge. The Prophet also placed great emphasis on learning, when he stated in a well-known *hadith* that, “One who goes out to search for knowledge is to the cause of Allah till he returns.” The Qur’ān also ordered human beings to read as a mechanism in seeking knowledge. It should be done in the Name of the Lord, the Creator, and the Most Generous who has taught by the pen, and has taught man that which he knew not. The command here is not just to collect knowledge and information, but also direct man to organize, plan and manage properly the knowledge given to him.<sup>28</sup>

Islam regards knowledge as a mean of attaining virtue in this world and the Hereafter, harnessing its nature to the service of man. This understanding however is not to frame human beings to stick to the same knowledge that exists in the past. This is against the nature of knowledge itself, which encourages creativity and innovation and not to lead human beings to become self-complacent. Therefore, what is morally good for man and what is materially useful for him/her are also included as knowledge. It contains the prerogative of religion, the revelation, and inductive intellect.<sup>29</sup> This Islamic knowledge is self-conscious to human beings through Qur’ānic reasoning and justification. What is materially useful is similarly essential to what is morally good. Man needs both science and religion to pay for his/her accountability as a vicegerent in this world. Indeed, what man needs is science but comprehensively structured by religion. In a different sense, religion indeed provides fulfilment towards science and philosophy. Obviously, Islam regards ‘education and knowledge’ as part of the necessities for human beings to seek, similar to food, water, and shelter. Therefore, all Muslims have to search, acquire, develop and manage knowledge throughout their life. Along with rapid development and expansion of knowledge is the deeper conceptual foundation of IKM for the global Muslim individual, community, and inter-organizational networking. Due to the intricacy of today's modern world, we will try to put forth the fundamental understanding of the practices of IKM, especially within the context of IM.

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<sup>28</sup>B. Y. Muhamadul, “Islamic Conceptualization of Knowledge Management,” *American Journal of Economics and Business Administration* 3, no. 2 (2011): 363-369.

<sup>29</sup>Qur’ān, al-Fussilāt 41:53; Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1986) (Retrieved on 30 Jan 2014 from <http://www.library.wise.edu/guide/sosialreligion/islam/html>). “Saeed Sheikh Dissertation” (Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, 1986)



### 6.3. Islamic Knowledge Management (IKM)

After a discussion on knowledge and foundation of knowledge management, we come to discuss the basic foundation of Islamic Knowledge Management (IKM). In Islam, all knowledge is regarded as Allah's gifts to the knowledgeable worker. Muslims believe that Allah's knowledge is infinite. This applies to both the worldly life and the Hereafter. That is the reason; His Divine Names is the All-Knowing, the One who knows and hears everything.<sup>30</sup> There are other names for Allah Almighty, which reflect His attributes such as *Al-Khabeer* (the All-Aware), *Al-Hakeem* (the Wise), *Ash-Shaheed* (the Witness), and *Al-Muhsiy* (the Reckoner). To summarize, His Knowledge encompasses generalities and minor details. Indeed, humans only have a small part of Allah's knowledge and from this small portion Muslims have to contribute positively to human development and prosperity, economically as well as spiritually. Thus, knowledge management in Islam is very much related to the objectivity and function of knowledge, especially in terms of conceptualizing 'human belief system' and reaching its ultimate recognition toward 'Oneness of God.' In this regard, IKM can be defined as a systematic process and tool in identifying knowledge with the purpose of cultivating its branches in according to its conditional context of the situation in helping mankind to become effective users of knowledge. Islam in this regard looks towards IKM's construction and application as an important vision and mission for human development and survival as vicegerents of God, in which it should be bound by its intellectual wisdom, spiritual strength, mental ability, and even socio-cultural conditions of scientific creativity. Obviously, IKM carries some holistic principles in dealing with knowledge such as specific realization, optimistic view upon knowledge existence, its boundaries, categories and types. These principles lead IKM practitioners to deal with knowledge as part and parcel of their life activities and routine.<sup>31</sup>

### 6.4. Modelling Islamic Moderation Practices

In the context of conceptualizing IM understanding and practices, IKM should be regarded as a strategic theory anticipated for its accurate application based on "knowledge intensive processing action." In other words, IM practitioner should be regarded as an expert in order to establish a comprehensive and integrated knowledge application, culture, commitment and management practices, especially for the purposes of human development and survival as vicegerents of God. For example, those who have such knowledge, in the Qur'an, Allah mentions them as '*ulu al-albāb* – (referring to the ones who can integrate that knowledge with the sharpness of their 'aql to remember Allah more (*zikr*) to increase their level of

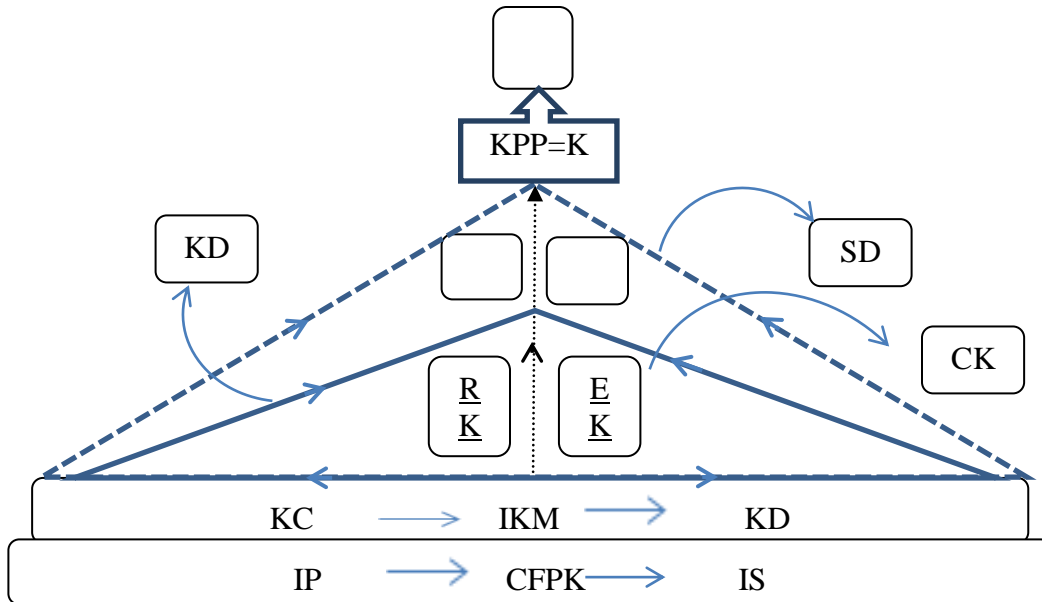
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<sup>30</sup>Qur'an, at-Tahrim 66: 3. He, the Almighty says, "Verily, He, only He, is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower."

<sup>31</sup>B. Y. Muhamadul, "Islamic Conceptualization of Knowledge Management," *American Journal of Economics and Business Administration*. 3, no. 2 (2011): 363-369.



*Taqwa* to Allah). Furthermore, Islam regards ‘education and knowledge’ as basic necessities for the human beings like food, water and shelter. The following figure describes the model for IM practices that a Muslim has to look for, acquire and develop to become a successful vicegerent in fulfilling his/her duties and tasks on earth. In other words, the true practices of IM can only be obtained through the process of increasing the knowledge purification level (KPL). In this context, it is obvious that IM without KPL is void proclaim of practices.



**Figure 2:** Three Dimensional Foundation of IKM.<sup>32</sup>

(W=*Wasatiyyah*; CFPK=Core Foundational Basis and Principles of Knowledge; IKM=Islamic Knowledge Management; KPP=Knowledge Purification Practices; KPL=Knowledge Purification Level; KDP=Knowledge Development Pyramid; SDP=Spiritual Development Pyramid; CKS=Classifications and Types of Knowledge and Sciences; HP=Heart Purification; WP=Worship Purification; RK=Revealed Knowledge; EK=Explicit Knowledge; TK=Tacit Knowledge; IK=Informational Knowledge; KC=Knowledge Concentration; KD=Knowledge Diffusion; IP=Inter-personal; IS=Inter-social)

The figure above shows that an individual Muslim should sustain enough CFPK. It should be properly organized and managed to become an effective element of human development, survival and production. KPL represents the index level of achievement obtained by an individual in his/her effort and struggle to search for,

<sup>32</sup>Adopted from A. Boynton, “Knowledge Management Map - Exploring Opportunities in Knowledge Management,” *Knowledge Management Symposium*. Leveraging Knowledge for Business Impact (Sydney: IBM Consulting Group, 1996); Ibn-i-Qayyim, *Miftah Darul Sa’adah* (Beirut: Dar al-KotobIlmiyyah, 1998); B.Y. Muhamadul, “The Foundation of Islamic Knowledge Management Practices,” in Veland Ramadani, *Entrepreneurship and Management in an Islamic Context* (2016): 91-117. Springer International Publishing Switzerland, 2016. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-39679-8\_7.





learn and purify the knowledge and sciences throughout his/her life. In other words, any achievement and development of knowledge without any behavioral purification is regarded as zero knowledge. In addition, RK and TK represent a type of knowledge compartment in knowledge classification. The term 'purification' used here is to denote the broad and holistic meaning of engaging and working with knowledge. If a person, for example, obtains any knowledge but with zero impact on his/her inner self, this means that knowledge has not yet purified him/her or the level of purification remains at the bottom. The ultimate goal of this purification process is to achieve the higher level of recognition of the absolute truth. SDP and KDP, on the other hand, can be measured through contextual applicability of knowledge. CKS should also be in accordance to knowledge compartment of worldly classification. Their development and purification should be integrated

Drawing from the above discussion, the proposed model of IKM takes a strategic view of individual and organizational information searching processes and knowledge development activities. As we know, the process of human capital development and organizational progress should start with adequate knowledge construction structure or knowledge management strategies (KMS). In chaos theory, quantum leap in development happens by introducing a singularity. In this context, chaos is regarded as a science of the 'global nature of systems,' and so it can be observed across many disciplinary fields; from ecology to medicine, electronics, and the economy. It is a theory, method, set of beliefs, and the way of conducting scientific research.<sup>33</sup>

In this regard, IKM should be considered as a strategic theory intended specifically for IM's application and practices. Any effective strategy should be based on "knowledge intensive processing action," in which it depends on some human expert intervention in order to establish a comprehensive and integrated knowledge application that composes of cultural awareness, self-commitments and management ability, in particular for the purposes of human development and survival as vicegerents of God. Unfortunately, this fact is seldom discussed academically and comprehensively even within Islamic discourse.<sup>34</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

IM is a unique socio-cultural conceptual approach that describes the inner traits and characteristics of Muslims, individually and collectively. However, it is not an identical concept that enables an individual to apply it on a straight path without

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<sup>33</sup>James, Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (New York: Viking, 1987)

<sup>34</sup>Qur'ān, al-i-Imrān 03:191 describe those who remember Allah while standing, sitting and lying down on their sides, and think deeply about the creation of the heavens and the earth. Consequently, he/she consciously realise that this existence is created with purpose and logically convinced that whoever been thrown to the Hill Fire, indeed he/she was disgraced by him/herself.



prior establishment of its core foundational bases and principles of knowledge as a step towards identifying its entities in the external world and its conceptual structure. On the other hand, this type of analysis should be conducted comprehensively and systematically to get effective findings. In other words, its true conceptual understanding and its functional application can be structurally identified. Therefore, Muslims as practitioners of IM, should always stand in the most effective position, function and have deep consciousness about the surrounding matters, accurate judgment and comprehensive knowledge about the pros and cons of a matter, whether it is just, true and valid. This sort of standing and ability qualifies the practitioner to become a witness in giving true explanation or evidence towards others whose circumstances are less qualified, especially in terms of good conduct and appropriate action that suit its needs and objectives. For instance, an IM practitioner should be able to stand at the most effective position between two extremes, neither in harshness nor in leniency. Based on these criteria, an individual Muslim must always try his/her best to be effective in maintaining an accurate balance in dealing with the external world or participate in a socio-cultural engagement, which is equivalent to mutual conduct, normal and calm attribute. Within a given situation, he/she should be able to put things in an appropriate place or give something to the one entitled to it, based on the principle of justice or being just. From here also, the person is regarded as being able to put something in its right place in the hierarchy, balanced and in the middle state between two contrasting extremes, neither having the attitude of excessiveness in terms of embracing personal faith or obsession.

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