

INTEGRATING SPIRITUAL DIMENSION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

Sapia Moalam Abdulrachman ^a

^a College of Law, School of Government and International Studies , COLGIS, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia.

^a Corresponding author: sapia@uum.edu.my

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Abstract: The quest for sustainable development continues since the 1987 Conference at Ottawa, Ontario. Scholarly discussion on the subject matter is rich with concepts and strategies on how to attain the goals of sustainable development. In these discussions, however, very little emphasis is given to the human factors contributing or hindering the goals of sustainable development. Along this line, the paper expounds on the human factors particularly behavioral component hindering sustainable development and consequently proposes a holistic approach to address the problem.

It assumes that the continued downgrading of moral values in the society directly and indirectly contributes to the environmental hazards which eventually will make life in the future difficult. It's direct consequences are due to lack of discipline among the people which are manifested in their household, agricultural, and business practices that endanger environment. The indirect damages are results of natural disasters. Although, the causes of disaster cannot be accounted by moral issues alone, religious teachings especially Islamic ones reveal that natural disaster can be minimized if the people perform their responsibilities with faith in God as the primordial I motivator.

Along this line, a holistic approach to sustainable development that integrates the structural-organizational development strategy and behavioral development strategy is proposed. Through discipline among the people and good governance sustainable development may be pursued through collaborative and cooperative undertaking between and among the various stakeholders.

In conclusion, the Islamic concept of sustainable development is meeting the totality of human needs

in all generations while at the same time fulfilling the responsibilities of men to himself, to his fellowmen and to God.

Keywords: behavioral development strategy, good governance, sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

The growing interest in sustainable development is a worldwide phenomenon. Both developed and underdeveloped countries, for several years, if not decade, have been searching for appropriate strategy to attain sustainable development.. In fact, many conferences, forum, and seminars, both domestic and international, have been held to discuss "how sustainable development can be attained. Development programs nowadays are aimed towards sustainable development. Various organizations whether government, non-government or private in nature have been working towards attainment of some kind of development, yet, very little positive impact is felt at the bottom line. Some of its impact remains at certain level of the society's hierarchy.

While the search for development, as a goal continues, the number of people suffering from underdevelopment also increases. The trend in poverty situation in most underdeveloped countries proved the intensity of the problem. For instance, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Report last September 15, 2011 revealed that more than half of the 28 countries live below US\$ 2 a day. Several interrelated or different phenomena account for the growing underdevelopment. Apparently, among other factors, people's behavior - inside and outside

the government assumes a critical role in explaining the situation.

Another thing that aggravates the problem is the occurrence of natural calamity or disaster, which destroys huge infrastructures, shelters, public amenities, properties and killed millions of people, thus negating the positive impacts of development efforts. Further, internal and external conflict in various countries also damages lives and natural environment. Both – war and disaster could be due to human unscrupulous deeds. But disaster is largely due to something beyond the comprehension and control of human beings. Indeed, there are lots of things that cannot be bought by money, cannot be coerced by power and are beyond the human mind to comprehend. These are the unknowns, which only the Almighty Creator knows.

In view of the above cited circumstances and considering that very few literature on sustainable development deals on the role of spiritual dimension, hence, this study. **The paper aims to formulate an Islamic development strategy that is sustainable.** To attain this objective, **the following research questions were dealt with:** (1) What is the Islamic concept of sustainable development? (2) What are the obstacles to sustainable development according to Islamic perspective? (3) What development strategy can be derived using the Islamic perspective?

In order to answer the above-mentioned research questions, unobtrusive research design, specifically documentary analysis was utilized. Provisions from the Qur'an, traditions of Prophet Mohammad (hadith), experiences of credible Muslim authors coupled with author's logical inferences of her own observation were the main source of data.

At this point, it make sense to provide a review of relevant literature that helps support the main argument of this paper.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This portion of the paper consists of four parts, namely: The UN Concept of Sustainable Development, Religion and Science, Moral

Character Building and Behavior, and Good Governance.

United Nations' Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development(SD) is a relatively new variant of development, which according to the United Nations in its Brundtland Report (1987), is meeting "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."It is a pattern of resourceuse, that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environments that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come (sometimes taught as **ELF**-Environment, Local people, Future). (Wikipedia). Accordingly, this concept of development has two basic components, namely: (a) concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and (b) the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs." (World Commission on Environment and Development).

The Commission conceives development as having no boundaries in terms of space and time. It is premised on the concept that the world and quality of life are both systems. The whole world is a system and as such, the sub-systems affect each other. If the air in Africa becomes polluted, it is not only the Africans that will suffer its damages but other countries as well. Similarly, being not bounded by time, the practices in today's generations will not only affect them, rather it's effect will be continuously felt by future generations. This is the essence of sustainable development.

In its 2005 World Summit, the United Nations considers social development, economic development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development (UN Outcome Document, 2005). Figure 1 was used by Wikipedia to illustrate the interrelatedness of the concepts

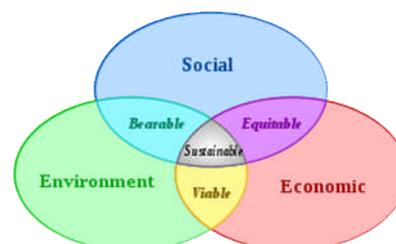


Figure 1: Interrelatedness of Social and Economic Development, Environment Protection and Sustainable Development (UN Document, cited in Wikipedia).

As shown in the model, the intersection between the social, economic and environment protection is sustainable development. The overlap between social and environment is bearable, meaning the means to protect the environment must be bearable to the society. And the overlap between environment and economic is viable. Moreover, the overlap between social and economic is equitable, meaning economic benefits must be equitably distributed in order to make the impact sustainable. Limiting the elements of sustainable development to such three components has gained considerable arguments from various international forums. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Convention on Biological Diversity, for instance, argued that there are four pillars of sustainable development and the fourth being cultural. Further, the Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2001) further elaborates that cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature.

The cultural dimension is indeed a significant pillar of sustainable development because, among other components, the culture of an individual mirrors his spiritual characteristics and further exhibits the way such person behaves and acts.

Religion and Science

The liberalist's point view of the world separates religion from the secular dimension. However, the Islamic world view considers religion and science as closely compatible. Culture varies, and so with religion, but, all religions have common denominator. This denominator is "the belief in the existence of a Supernatural being that governs the world and the things therein (including the human being), and as such the world has to function according to the systematic guidance of that Supernatural Being."

As pointed out by Abdul-Matin (2010), "The compatibility of religion and science is important because much evidence showing that human beings have been polluting the earth comes from scientific inquiry". What is not known to many is that these things have long been provided in the Qur'an and that Allah provides guidance to make these impacts positive. In his book entitled "The Bible, The Qur'an and Science" Bucaile wrote "There are statements in the Qur'an whose meaning can only be understood through modern scientific investigation." Some of these statements include : the existence of the universe, the bodies of water meeting and not mixing as well as the development of the fetus in the womb of the mother. For Muslims and Non-Muslims, it is an act of faith to be sustainable.

Moral Character Building, Human Behavior and Self-Discipline

Although the study of moral education is rife with controversy its significance to everyday human life cannot be overemphasized. In fact, scholarly writings and discussions on moral issues started as early as the Aristotle's Nichomacean Ethics and Socrates' Meno and continues to the modern times.

Moral education is premised in the idea that certain moral values, virtues and vices such as justice, honesty, integrity, kindness, patience, perseverance and etc. are the basis to moral behavior. Although various cultures around the world vary in their definition of moral values, to a certain extent, there are similarities. For instance, Kohlberg (1989) asserted that certain principles of justice and fairness represent the pinnacle of moral maturity since these two are found in different cultures and subcultures around the world. Moral education had been gaining greater importance not only by psychologists but rather among other social scientists and practitioners as well. In concluding his study on building moral character among American students, Huitt (2004) said "The development of vision, character, and competence in our young people is necessary to allow our nation to continue its role of world leaders into the 21st century . . .". Similarly, Hurst R. Anderson, then President of the American University, stated

I don't see how it is possible for the individual who is an administrator in this period to divorce the technique of administration from a fundamental philosophy of personal and social life. You can do it in superficial sense, but every time you make a decision about an administrative problem, or any time you seek to resolve an administrative tension, you have to resolve it in terms of some assumptions that lie at the heart of what we call a philosophy of personal and social living (Anderson in Denhardt, 1988:7).

At this point, let us examine some approaches to moral development. To start the discussion, let us get to know what is moral character?

Moral character refers to "disposition to express behavior in consistent patterns of function across a range of situations" (Pervin, 1994:108). To say that a person is honest, for example, he/she must exhibit such characteristics in various occasion. The basis of character are usually moral values. Moral values are absolute statements of what is right and wrong action. These are standards of good and evil, which govern an individual's behavior and choices (Wikipedia). These are usually translated into beliefs and

consequently manifested in actions. Although different societies have different cultural values, there are universal moral values that are common to all societies. Some of these values may include: cleanliness and orderliness, honesty and integrity, respect for the rights of others, and modesty. In concluding their study on moral character and development among children, Asthon and Huitt (1980) emphasized the importance of teaching moral values in schools and in the community and I quote.

"We must acknowledge that there are some absolutes with respect to morality and character as accepted by commonalities among members of specific communities, major world religion and moral philosophers. We, therefore, have an obligation to teach these in the family, in our religious organization and to support their effort in our communities." (Asthon and Huitt, 1980).

The study of Asendorpf and Nunner-Winkler (2002) proved that moral motive strength and inhibition predicted low cheating and low nonverbal rivalry among children ages 5 to 8 years old.

To provide a theoretical background on moral development, the Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development is included in this section. This model is anchored on developing moral character among children. It consists of three levels – pre-conventional level, conventional and post-conventional, autonomous or principled level. Every level consists of certain stages. Level 1 consists of stage 1 – punishment and obedience and stage 2 – instrumental relativist. Level 2 consists of stage 3 – interpersonal concordance and stage 4 – law and order. Level 3 consists of stage 5 – social contract and stage 6 – universal ethical – principle orientation. Moral development in this model is a long process starting from childhood, adolescents and adulthood. It is not merely gaining more knowledge, but rather consists of a sequence of qualitative changes in the way an individual thinks. As an individual experiences constraints in every stage, he/she organized his thoughts according to the constraints. There is a rationalization process that takes place in every stage. The model requires exposure of the individuals to real life situation in order to develop his character.

The above model of moral character development described above considered moral value formation as the initial stage of character molding. It necessitates that an individual is conscious of his responsibility to himself, to his family, to the community and to God. Accordingly, the factors influencing character and moral development include: heredity, early childhood experience, modeling by important adults and older youth, peer influence, physical and social environment, the communications media, what is taught in schools and other institutions, and specific

situations and roles that elicit corresponding behavior (Campbell, 1982).

Since our objective in moral character building is to effect on the behavior of people, it makes sense to review what psychologists say about human behavior. The theory of "Stimulus Response Model," stipulates that "when an individual perceives a stimulus or cue in his environment, his response to the stimulus depends on the evoked set, which consists of his **values, attributes and self-concept**" (Carol and Tosi, 1977:65). It can be said that moral behavior is expected more upon a person who possesses moral values than one who does not.

Another theory on individual behavior that supports the assumption on the importance of developing moral values is the "Expectancy and Reinforcement Model". It states that the probability that a behavior will occur can be predicted from information about two factors: expectancy (the individual estimate of the probability the behavior will lead to reinforcement); and reinforcement value (the subjective value he or she attaches to their reinforcement) (Baron, 1983:94).

Still another theory of human behavior is the "Co-orientation Model" by Bellone and Nigro (1980). The model is based on the assumption that communicative acts between A and B (or more than two actors) permit them to orient themselves to one another and simultaneously to the subject of the communication (Abdulrachman, 2006:69). It emphasizes on the role of the social environment to the behavior of individual. This model is illustrated in the figure below.

Notwithstanding other predictors, individual behavior is a factor of one's value system, abilities, motives, expected outcome, and influence of the social environment. In addition, on the basis of the foregoing theories discussed, it is posited that one of the tangible indicators of moral character development is self-discipline individuals. At this point, it makes sense to discuss self-discipline.

Self-discipline is the ability to get one-self to take action regardless of his/her emotional state. It is the willingness to follow legitimate rules and regulations even if these are against one's volition. There are five pillars of self-discipline, according to Wikipedia, and these are: Acceptance, Willpower, Hard Work, Industry and Persistence. Acceptance is accurate, conscious perception of things and objects followed by acknowledgment of such perceived object (Wikipedia).. Willpower is your ability to set a course of action and ensure commitment to execute it (Wikipedia). According to Vince Lombardi (cited in Wikipedia): *"The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will"*. Hard work is

the ability of a person to exert effort in anything he/she does. It is said that “The big secret in life is that there is no big secret. Whatever your goal, you can get there if you’re willing to work” (Oprah Winfrey cited in Wikipedia). Industry is making use of time to do anything productive or unproductive at the moment (Wikipedia). It is reflective of a person who is full of initiative to do something in its proper time. Persistence is the ability to maintain action regardless of your feelings (Wikipedia). According to Calvin Coolidge and I quote

Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men without talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan “Press On” has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race (Calvin Coolidge cited in Wikipedia).

It can be deduced from the foregoing that a self-disciplined individual is one who is

- (a) consciously aware of his duties and obligations and is willing to do it at appropriate time with utmost dedication. He knows, for instance, that as a human being his rights end where the rights of others begin. He is committed to follow rules and regulations especially the Divine Law. He is conscious of what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. He is able to distinguish the truth from falsehood.
- (b) Good follower. He obeys rules and regulations.
- (c) Full of energy and foresight. He is a proactive person. He plans his activities in advance and do what he can possibly do at present.
- (d) Time-conscious. He does not let a time to pass without doing something. He is a productive person.
- (e) Capable of doing his assigned task even if he is not emotionally stable at the time. He can control his emotions while at work.

If the above characteristics are developed among the people through the socialization process at home, teaching-learning in school and community organizations as well as through effective policy enforcement, the human factors hindering sustainable development could be minimized if not eliminated, especially so if government officials become accountable, transparent, responsible, service-oriented, and above-all God-fearing. This assumption is premised on the idea that if members of the society become self-disciplined, there would be less indolent, naughty, law-violator, and corrupt public officials. Laws on environment protection, preservation and conservation could be efficiently and effectively enforced when there is cooperation from the civil society and the law enforcers have the

political will to attain the vision of sustainable development. Thus, the problem on illegal cutting of trees, use of dynamite and electricity in fishing, and throwing of solid waste materials anywhere are at least minimized if not eliminated. Indeed, there is a strong significant association between moral character development and good government. As stated in one of the rules of conduct formulated by then Jose P. Laurel, late Filipino Constitutionalist, “The foundation of good government is morality and the basis of morality is righteousness which is divine” (in Quirino, 1991:24).

Good Governance

Governance had been defined as “**the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented).**” (Wikipedia). The concept of good governance is not new. A review and analysis of the Qur’an revealed that good governance has been practiced even before civilization. This was evident in the governance of the ancient times (that of Moses, Taloot, Dawood and Solaiman). The descriptions in the Qur’an of how these Prophets governed their generations were exemplary manifestations of good governance (Naqvi and et.al). In other words, long before the term good governance appear in the current literature, it is already described in the Qur’an. In the contemporary world, however, good governance is mostly associated to the democratic liberal states because of their level of development.

Good governance, as defined by United Nations, consists of eight characteristics such as: participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It may be useful to give a detail description on how these characteristics of good governance can facilitate the attainment of sustainable development.

Participation allows the involvement of all stakeholders in policy formulation and implementation of sustainable development program. When there is **rule of law**, governments, as main actors, have the power to regulate people’s behavior in relation to environment protection and spearhead institutional linkages. Similarly, when governance is **transparent** decisions and actions are complementary to the rule of law. Further, **responsiveness** facilitates the provision of the needs of the poor and other stakeholders at reasonable time. When governance is **consensus-oriented** broad and long-term perspective on what is needed for sustainable human development and how to achieve the goals of such development is arrived and agreed upon. Moreover, **equity and inclusiveness** allows all groups, but, especially the most vulnerable have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being. **Effectiveness and efficiency** make processes and

institutions produce more results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. And lastly, **accountability** ensures that all stakeholders – private sector, government, civil society and individuals are jointly accountable to take care of the environment.

To conclude this portion, it is important to mention that the Islamic teachings are absolutely consistent with the above-mentioned characteristics. The traditions of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and His four Calips provided evidence on how faith in God help in inculcating good governance in the society. In other words, the most effective method of inculcating moral character and good governance in the society is through religious teachings. It appears theological in nature. But theology is an integral part of human life without it life becomes meaningless. As pointed by an English moralist “Some would divorce morality from religion, but religion is the root without which the plant of morality will die” cited in Montemayor, 1985:14).

The succeeding discussion presents the answers to the research questions based on literature review and critical analysis of world situation.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This portion consists of three parts, namely: The Islamic Perspective of Sustainable Development, Obstacles of Sustainable Development, and Strategy Towards Sustainable Development.

On the basis of the review of Islamic literature particularly the Qur’an, hadiths (traditions of Prophet Mohammad, pbuh), existing literature written by Muslim scholars coupled with observations of the author, the Islamic Perspective of Sustainable Development and the Hindering Factors to Sustainable Development are presented in the succeeding discussion.

Islamic Perspective of Sustainable Development

Islam encompasses the whole aspects of humanity. The universe, the earth, the things in between and the humanity were all created by God and that all creations were made to follow a system. The totality of man’s life is composed of different interrelated sub-systems and the over-all coordinating mechanism is the spiritual component. The physical, social, cultural and economic aspects of life are aimed to attain the objective of the spiritual dimension. As stated in the Qur’an “ There is no other purpose of creating human beings, but to worship God. In other words, the world is a means to attain a sustainable quality of being in the life hereafter. Worshipping God, in Islam, does not only refer to the sacred duties of praying, giving zakat, performing haj and others., but it also includes among others the care of environment, obedience to law, proper disposal of waste, and living a modest life.

To reckon the model of sustainable development postulated by UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Convention on Biological Diversity included culture as the fourth element. The proponents argued that culture mirrors ones spiritual character. It is the roots of development which is understood not simply in terms of economic growth but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence. Since culture is part of a bigger and more significant dimension of man’s life, a more encompassing holistic model of sustainable development is hereby forwarded. In this model, there are five pillars of sustainable development, namely: (1) socio-cultural development, (2) economic development, (3) political development, (4) environment protection, and (5) spiritual development. This concept is shown in Figure 3.

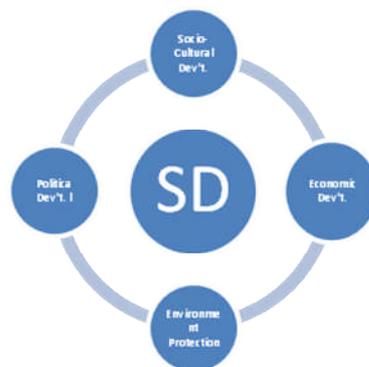


Figure 3: Proposed Model of Sustainable Development

This proposition is anchored on the idea that religion and science are perfectly compatible. As argued by Abdul-Matin and I quote God, through messengers and scripture, has given humans a clear directive to take care of the Earth. This directive is both spiritual and scientific. Through science, we come to know more about creation and how to best take care of it. (Abdul-Matin, 2010, 4).

There are several manifestations in the Qur'an proving the compatibility of Islam and Science. An American born citizen, son of converts to Islam, and native New Yorker, Abdul-Matin who spearheaded the Green Deen Movement (an organization that is actively involved in protecting and preserving the natural environment in New York, Southern Virginia and Nebraska) wrote "In order to grasp Islam's commitment to the Oneness of all things (and how this commitment can be used to advocate for the environment), it's helpful to understand some of the core spiritual principles and practices that align Islam and the environment so closely" (Abdul-Matin, 2010:5). These ethical principles of Islam, which according to Abdul-Mutin, many scholars of Islam have studied and discussed and were recently codified and presented to him by Faraz Khan, a brilliant young scholar of Islam and environment include the following: (1) Understanding the Oneness of God and His Creations (*Tawhid*) (2) Seeing signs of God (*ayat*) everywhere (3) The Concept of a Steward (*khilafat*) of oneself, of others and of the Earth (4) The Concept of Trust (*amanah*) we have with God to be protectors of the planet (5) The Concept of Justice (*adl*) in treating the natural world and the people (6) Living in balance with nature (*mizan*).

The above principles of Islam were lengthily discussed by Abdul-Matin in his book entitled "Green Deen: What Islam Teaches About Protecting the Planet". Writing about Islam and Environment, he said and I quote **The compatibility of Islam and science is important because much evidence showing that we have been polluting and negatively affecting the planet comes from scientific inquiry. For years, scientific evidence has been telling us that our choices have led to rampant pollution and climate change. Too much carbon in the atmosphere has led to a steady rise in global temperatures. Those who deny climate change have asserted that it is hubris for humans to think they can change what God has already created. In Islam, however, God clearly tells humans that they can have an impact on what He has created . . . and He provides guidance on how to make this impact a positive one (Abdul-Mutin, 2010:4-5).**

In addition, God, through His messengers and scriptures has given humans a clear directives to take care of the Earth. This directive is both spiritual and scientific (Abdul-Matin, 2010). As a concluding statement to this portion, let me mention some citations on the works of Ibrahim Abdul-Matin – GreenDeen.

While there are many belief systems on this planet, few have been as deeply maligned as Islam in recent years. In that context, it is a beautiful and powerful call that Ibrahim Abdul-Matin puts out to his community and to the world, crying out that within Islam are the very tenets which are needed to save the world – for Muslims and non-Muslim. It is an act of faith to be sustainable . . . that is the essential truth which this book teaches us all. Adrienne Maree Brown, Executive Director, The Ruckus Society

Ibrahim Abdul-Matin is one of the premier scholars and practitioners joining the green economy to Islam. His work reminds environmentalism of the spirituality in deep ecology and provides a pathway for an economic system to work within a framework of reverence. Nikki Henderson, Executive Director, People's Grocery

Green Deen shows how the authentic religious values and practices of Islam should lead to wholesome, healthy, and compassionate lifestyle that benefits all living things. Ingrid Mattson, President, The Islamic Society of North America and Director of the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for The Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations At Hartford Seminary

After a discussion on the Islamic perspective of sustainable development, it is logically important for us to be conscious and aware of the obstacles to sustainable development. Using the Islamic perspective, the succeeding discussion dwells on these obstacles.

Hindering Factors to Sustainable Development

Advancement in technology has further improved the quest for sustainable development yet some obstacles in pursuing such goal cannot be avoided. These obstacles or hindering factors to sustainable development maybe categorized into two interlocking factors, such as: the human factors and non-human factors. While both factors work hand-in-hand in hindering sustainable development, one is likewise affecting the other. The human factors inhibiting the attainment of sustainable development include the following: (1) conflict within country and war (2) lack of self-discipline among the people. (3) downgrading of moral values and growing intensity

of immoral practices among the people. These are simultaneously becoming rampant and are closely interrelated. One who adheres to moral values has higher probability of acting morally than the others. In the same manner, one who is self-disciplined individual tends to be morally upright. How do these behaviors inhibit the attainment of sustainable development? Conflict within country is becoming rampant. It usually resorts to killing and damage to properties. A very recent example is the case of Libya. Similar event had happened to other countries. Fighting between rebel groups and government forces in some countries like the Philippines is also another example of conflict that led to huge damages to people's life and environment.

Lack of discipline similarly hinders the attainment of sustainable development. A person who lacks self-discipline is characterized as one who (1) does not accept responsibilities. He relies on other people's work, (2) indolent, (3) does not have direction in life; (4) does not have initiative to do things right. (5) unmindful of the effect of his action to others. He is self-centered person, (6) frequently disobey rules and regulations. The first four characteristics contribute to growing intensity of poverty situation. While the last two characteristics lead to the proliferation of practices which endanger natural environments such as: illegal cutting of trees, scrupulous disposal of solid waste, use of dynamite and electricity in fishing, smoke bleaching, air pollutants, and other practices that endanger natural environment. Hence, the proliferation of these practices makes the goals of sustainable development untenable.

Corollary to lack of discipline is the downgrading of moral values coupled with proliferation of immoral practices among the people. Economic values has become dominant over and above non-material objects including spiritual values to the extent that one is willing to do anything just to attain his own welfare. Indeed, deterioration of moral values among the people contributes to the proliferation of illegal activities that are harmful to the society like drug trafficking and human trafficking. Moreover, it contributes to the heightened unethical behavior among public servants like predominance of personal interest over public interest, use of government financial resources intended for development for personal aggrandizement, lack of political will to pursue the vision of sustainable development, lack of concerted and sincere collaborative efforts among the various stakeholders and absence of good governance. Corruption in government has become a worldwide problem. Lots of government financial

resources go to corruption. In Nigeria alone during the Presidency of General Sani Abacha (1993 to 1998), more or less US\$ 3 to 4 billion was reported to have been stolen by him (Wikipedia). In addition, from 1960 to 1999, some US\$400 billion was reported to have been stolen by Nigeria's leaders from the national treasury (Wikipedia). Other countries may also have similar experience. They differ only in intensity. A corrupt dictatorship typically results in many years of general hardship and suffering for the vast majority of citizens as civil society and the rule of law disintegrate (Wikipedia).

Furthermore, deterioration of moral values has more in-depth consequences to people's lives. When moral values become downgraded, people tend to become unmindful of their responsibilities to God. They tend to set aside the Law of God and make their own caprices as their primary consideration in all their endeavors. Nowadays, some immoral behavior, which are forbidden by most religions have become part of the normal life or at least tolerated by the society. These include: living together of unmarried man and woman, homosexuality, corruption in government and others. Others have made robbery, kidnapping, and child labor as their occupation or source of income. Another thing that manifests the downgrading of moral values is increasing number of rape and murder cases involving close relatives. Judging this phenomenon on its spiritual dimension, it can be said that people have become sinful.

The other factor hindering sustainable development is natural disaster. A natural disaster is the effect of a natural hazard (e.g., flood, tornado, hurricane, volcanic eruption, earthquake, heat wave, or landslide). It leads to financial, environmental and human losses. (Wikipedia). The world has experienced various types of disaster, such as: geological, hydrological, meteorological, fires, health and space disaster as can be seen in the table 1. Let us try a closer look on the trend of these disasters.

Aside from the above enumerated types of natural disaster, another type of disaster that directly concerns human beings is health disaster. Health disaster is classified into: epidemics and famines. An epidemic is an outbreak of a contractible disease that spreads at a rapid rate through a human population while famine refers to widespread scarcity of food. Both are greatly caused by extreme poverty condition. Although there may be no exact figure as to the number of people dying because of epidemics and famine, yet, certainly the number is not acceptable to human mind.

Table 1: The world experienced various types of disaster, such as: geological, hydrological, meteorological, fires, health and space disaster

Type of Disaster	Places Affected	Damages/Death
Earthquake	India, Japan, Chile, China, Indonesia and Pakistan	More or less 160,000 death And 12,000 missing
Volcanic Eruption	Pakistan, US, Mumbai, Mozambique and Huang He	More or less 14 M homeless Several thousands death Property damages
Blizzard	US, Iran, North America, and Afghanistan	No estimate recorded
Cyclone, hurricane, tropical cyclone and typhoon	Bhola and US	No estimate recorded
Drought	Chin, Australia, India and Soviet Union	Ore or less 20 M people died
Tsunamis	Thailand, Alaska, Chile, Indonesia and Japan	No estimate recorded
Wildfires	US and Australia	No estimate recorded

Source: Data are collected from wikipedia.

Disaster could be due to human factors and/or physical environmental factors. Some of the human factors include: abuse of human rights to the extent that use of natural resources (like trees, rivers, seas, and lakes) are abuse, mismanagement of solid waste disposal, and immoral behavior. While not all of these factors are moral in nature, there is a growing trend towards linking these and related problems like corruption to moral degeneration.

Human beings are endowed with rights such as civil rights, economic, social and cultural rights. These rights may be enjoyed by human beings subject to the provisions of legal laws and more so of the Law of God. Unfortunately, however, in the spirit of democracy or freedom, some human acts are not being subjected for regulations by society or government. And because of this limitation people tends to forget what God forbids and requires of them. They have assaulted the Earth in pursuit of economic gain to the extent that they incurred negative impact on it. This is clearly manifested in the provision of the Qur'an which states

Corruption has appeared on the land and in the sea because of what the hands of human have wrought. This is in order that we give them a taste of the consequences of their misdeeds that perhaps they will turn to the path of right guidance. (Sura Arrum, Verse 41).

The other cause of disaster is natural phenomenon most of which are still unknown to human mind. Nevertheless, it is important to consider a general rule which states "When you are in doubt seek guidance from the Almighty – God". This is

referred to as fundamentalism. Contrary to the meaning given by some people, fundamentalism is making the Law of God as the final reference point or benchmark in any form of endeavor. As a Muslim, the author makes use of the Holy Qur'an as reference. The question that may be raised is "Do the provisions of the Holy Qur'an have scientific basis?" This particular issue is substantively and theoretically justified by Dr. Maurice Bucaille in his book entitled "The Bible, The Qur'an and Science". Inspired by his motivation to learn the true religion, he studied and learnt Arabic and the Qur'an. He found out certain "statements on natural phenomena whose meaning can only be understood through modern scientific knowledge" (Bucaille, 2). It goes to show that Qur'anic verses have scientific explanations.

No one, no matter how genius and powerful and wealthy, can prevent natural disaster such as: typhoons, tornados, volcanic eruptions, floods and others. These are beyond the control of human beings, but, we can ask indulgence from the Supernatural Being – God almighty to save us from these disasters.

The Holy Qur'an provides that if man continues to make sins, God will create disaster in this world. I suppose other Holy Testament contains similar provision. An illustration to this was during the time of Noah. When people continued to disobey the guidance revealed by God to Noah, there was extreme flood all over and only those who followed the order of Noah were save from the disaster

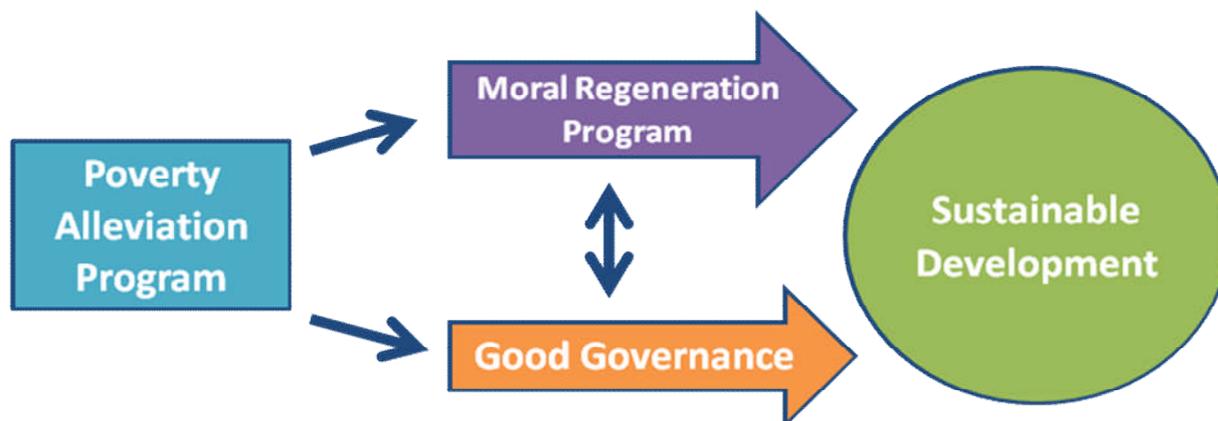


Figure 4: Relationship Between Poverty Alleviation Program, Moral Regeneration Program , Good Governance and Sustainable Development

As stated in the Holy Qur'an

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن كَذَّبُوا فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

“If the people of the town has but believed and (truly) feared Allah, We should indeed have opened to them all kinds of blessings from the heaven and the earth (Sura’raf, Verse No. 96, translated by Ali, 1946:1768).

Recommendations

On the basis the preceding discussions, an Islamic Strategy Towards Sustainable Development is hereby forwarded.

This strategy is an integrated and comprehensive approach to sustainable development which includes, among others, moral character development anchored on the spiritual dimension of life. It is based on the idea that a development strategy devoid of spiritual component can be likened to a body without a brain.

This strategy is composed of three major components, namely: poverty alleviation program, moral regeneration program and good governance program. The figure 4 illustrates this concept.

A development strategy that addresses the basic human needs is a pre-requisite to this approach because when majority of the people suffers from poverty it creates imbalance and consequently tension and economic crisis. This proposal is premised on the idea that first and foremost the biological needs of man have to be satisfied before asking him to act morally. As pointed out by Asendorpf and Nunner-Winkler, “abstaining from immoral behavior may occur for reasons other than moral concerns, inhibition, or impulse control, such as lack of motivation, fear of sanction, or a failure to think of nonmoral strategies for satisfying own desires’ (Asendorpf and Nunner-Winkler,

2002:1233). As such, the basic needs of the people have to be satisfied before attempt at developing their

moral values is initiated. The program that caters to the needs of the poor sector of the society is necessary in form and substance. It may include, among others, agro forestry, mixed farming, crop rotation, multiple cropping, inland fishing and entrepreneurship. However, it is recognized that this argument could be put into reality when there is good governance.

Regarding moral character building, educators stated that this should include developing: (1) moral responsibility and sound ethical and moral behavior; (2) **capacity for discipline**; (3) a moral and ethical sense of the values, goals, and processes of a free society; and (4) standards of personal character and ideas (Huitt, 2004).

Self-discipline and good governance are both considered as pre-requisites to the attainment of sustainable development and that the two can be attained when the level of morality is high. The above assumption is cognizant with Dwivedi’s contention when he said “Morality has been a guiding force in the history of humankind, particularly in statecraft, that is, how we governed, our relationship with others both individually and collectively, and our understanding of the nature and destiny of humankind (Dwivedi in Abdulrachman, 2006:38). He further explained that The confidence

and trust in the democracy can be safeguarded only when the governing process exhibits a higher moral tone, deriving from the breadth of morality. (Dwivedi in Abdulrachman, 2006:39).

Considering what has been said earlier regarding the relationship between morality and religion, it is argued that the goal of moral regeneration can best be attained if it is anchored on religion. Belief in the oneness of God can be the starting point to bring together people of different religions and work for a cause – the protection of the environment through discipline among the constituents and good governance. Moreover, good governance minimizes the hindering human factors to sustainable development like corruption, widening disparity between the poor and the rich, malpractices on the use of natural resources. It is therefore responsive to the needs of the present and future generations.

It should be emphasized at this point that putting the above assumptions to reality depends largely on the personality and commitment of nation's leaders. As discussed by Imran Haider Naqvi and et al (2011), the governance in the ancient times particularly those of Moses (AS), Taloot (AS), Dawood (AS), Solomon (AS), and Mohammad (PBUH), as narrated in the Holy Qur'an, demonstrated the significant role of leadership personality and pious character in attaining the society's development. These Islamic leaders of the ancient times were able to restructure and change behavior of people because they were chosen by God and they received guidance from God.

Finally, to lend credence to the findings and assumptions of this paper it is suggested that further studies be conducted on the role of religion in attaining sustainable development.

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