

Self – Accountability: The Link between Self-Accountability and Accountability in Islam

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This paper argues that if it is hard to find an accountable institution or even person, it is imperative to look for accountability that emerges from self depths of belief. As Juergensmeyer (2010) states :

The global rise of religious politics is found in every religious tradition, spurred on by the widespread perception that secular nationalism is an ineffective and insufficient expression of public values and moral community in a global era in which traditional forms of social identity and political **accountability** are radically transformed (p.262).

Undeniably, what public administration needs is accountability that emerges from inside as a moral or beyond that, as worship. Hence, this paper discusses the relationship between self-accountability and accountability in Islam as a type of religion that shapes accountability differently and how this religion shapes accountability? Yet public administration has faced many challenges and citizen participation could be one of many factors impacting public administration. Citizens realize that they need to be efficient members in the society by being more than recipients. Alkadry& Elias (2011), Callahan (2007), Henrik, & Esmark (2009) and Arnstein(1969) believe in citizen participation as a real implication of democracy. Citizen participation in making decisions which are related to what they need is the hope for reforming the defects in public administration. They, like many scholars, recognize that neither hierarchy nor restricted control can achieve efficiency and effectiveness; rather, they think bureaucracy might deform public service.

On the other hand, the conception of network governance evokes debates regarding its importance to democracy (Catlaw,2007; Henrik, & Esmark, 2009; Nickel, 2009). Many scholars such as Bogason (2006) and McSwite (2009) consider network governance or social network as a development of knowledge and adaptation to surrounding complexity environment. However, Bogason (2006) and Throne (2009) raise the conflict occurring between applying real democracy through expansion of citizen participation and losing the accountability. They think responsibility could be lost in light of intertwined agencies and obligations. Wilson (1996) puts his figure on crucial point when he raises the question of how can government trust and delegate power and still maintain accountability?

Accountability is the most complicated issue in the public sector. Many scholars provide appreciated work to set up strong accountability. Weberian bureaucracy is one type of theory to apply strong control, however, there are technical, political and managerial accountability in any public agencies (Callahan, 2007; Romzek & Dubnick, 1987; Eikenberry, 2007). These accountabilities are conflict each other and then blur boundaries of accountability more than apply strong accountability (Romzek & Dubnick, 1987). Bovens (2010) **states that “accountability is used primarily as a normative concept, as a set of standards for the evaluation of the behavior of public actors”** (p.946). Interestingly, **accountability** studies sometimes give attention to normative issues, and take their eyes away from the need for real accountability which emerges from internal and personal behavior. Linda Galindo (2010) points out that the major problem in business today is serious lack of accountability and personal responsibility. She also states that to overcome this bedrock, personal accountability has to be created. Here, this paper aims to discuss self-accountability and address the role of Islam in shaping self- accountability.

What is Accountability?

Accountability in public administration usually indicates bureaucratic accountability which means strong control from top to bottom. As Madison and Hamilton (1959) point out:

“If men were angels no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administrated by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: You must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control of the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precaution” (p.337)

Strong control could apply to accountability in different ways. However, accountability has tended to be financial in nature which, as Martin & Frahm (2010) argue, is due to the focus on financial accountability, the concept of accountability has reduced to secondary importance. The concept of accountability then expands to include efficiency, quality and effectiveness. In doing so, Bovens (2010) **defines accountability** or, more precisely, being accountable, “is seen as a positive quality in organizations or officials” (p.946) and “as one of the core attributes of good governance” (Emdadul Haq, 2010, p.26). Afifuddin & Siti-Nabiha (2010) states that accountability is “A relationship which involves the giving and demanding of reasons for conduct” (p.1134) and this relationship could be between individuals, groups, government, organizations, in direct or indirect ways.

Roberts (1991) turns our attention to crucial points that different forms of accountability produce diversity of senses of ourselves and our relation to others. (1991, p. 385). He claims that those differences are created by two forms of accountability which are: hierarchical and socializing. Roberts portrays hierarchical forms of accountability as disciplinary power gives an individual sense of self. Roberts (1991) suggests that beside the individualism that hierarchical accountability produces, socializing forms of accountability are other possibilities of accountability which can set up a more rational grounded agreement. These socializing forms of accountability also aim at confirming the self, and, though, at the same time they openly admit the interdependence and mutual relations of the self and the other. Briefly, while socializing forms of accountability rely on informal relationships with wide communication, the hierarchical form focuses on individualism and formal relationships with others.

Yet, Finer (1941) believes accountability has two meanings that can be applied separately: “X is accountable for Y to Z” and accountability is “an inward personal sense of moral obligation” (p.336). Islam, however, combines these two meanings to achieve a unique accountability. Accountability in Islam is a relationship between two parties. Specifically to be accountable to Y for Z, Y in Islam, though, is not another agency or the top of the hierarchy, it goes beyond that and emerges as a moral obligation. Emdadul Haq (2010) confirms this principle in the following statement:

Accountability to Allah for all activities is vital to a Muslim's faith. Shari'a specifies how business should be conducted, organized and governed. Under Islam, the paramount rule in business is honesty, just measurement and fair dealing with the customers. Such obligations impose a responsibility on the business community to adhere to moral accountability under Islam (p.26)

Accountability in Islam:

Islam is a religion which has special principles. However, as Cismas (2010) affirms that the definition of “religion” is hard to address, but it is possible to deal with its concepts. Accordingly, three concepts may arise: religion as belief, identity and a way of life. While religion as a belief stresses principles and shapes a state of mind, religion as identity “emphasizes affiliation with a group, shared history, cultures, ethnicity and traditions” (p.23). The third concept reflects religion as a prominent characteristic. It is a consequence of the existence of a believer, so it is no difference between principles and life; they are identical explicitly and implicitly.

Samuel & Stewart (2009) point to the importance of establishing sustainable accountability. They add that most of thinkers believe there is no sustainable accountability, they are far from the reality because they were looking for enforced accountability and they ignore accountability that comes from deep belief or persuasion as moral and ethics. It is undeniable that ethics and values are observed differently, but if those ethics and principles are bred from one strong and a unity of resource as Holy Quran in Islam, the conflicts would disappear.

Lewis (2006) states that “Accounting in the broad sense is central to Islam, since accountability to God and the community for all activities is paramount to a Muslim’s faith” (p.2). The word “hesab” which means accountability is repeated more than eight times in different verses in Quran (Askary and Clarke, 1997).

He also adds that accountability in Islam is as a comprehensive ethic can be formulated based on shariah. The Arabic word shariah has a literal meaning which is the legal guide for behavior according to the Holy Qur'an and the hadith. It is, in simple words, the way of life. Moreover, Sulaiman (1997 & 1998) states that how people actually behave or how they believe they should behave, is affected by the Islamic faith. Therefore, as Al-Humaidhi (1988) states the mainstream of accountability in Islam is addressed on two levels. One level is every individual is accountable for his or her actions. The second level includes "the accountability for individual and objects under their charge"(p.13). Additionally, Muslims administrators are supposed to be self-accountable in addition to applying administrative principles such as responsiveness, equality, hard work and virtue which are highlighted in Shariah.

Islam links accountability, "hesab" and trust. Shariah specifies what is being entrusted to individuals who are trustees for what they have been given by God such as goods, positions and property. Individuals have to apply what shariah determines, and individuals' achievement in the hereafter depends upon their performance in this world. In doing so, "every Muslim has an 'account' with *Allah*, in which is 'recorded' all good and all bad actions, an account which will continue until death, for *Allah* shows all people their accounts on their judgment day"(Lewis, 2006, p.3).

The concept of accountability is derived from Al-Quran and is the powerful of Islamic system of business which means accountability in front of Allah (SWT) not only in this world but also in the hereafter. Accountability to Allah (God) reflects trustworthiness which includes both instruments and goals. The instrument is that what is started with to enhance efficiency and effectiveness then by the time is transferred to be goal itself (Abbasi et al., 2010, p.233). As Al-Quran plainly explains: "Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it!! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it!!(Al-Quran,99:7-8). And also Allah (SWT) says: "Nor can a bearer of burdens bear another's burden. If one heavily laden should call another to bear his load, not the least portion of it can be carried by the other, even though he be nearly related". (Al-Quran, 35:18).

Islam gives great concentration to accountability; it goes beyond actions or thoughts to include even attention. It is stated in different verses of the Holy Quran such as: "God will not call you to account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts; and he is Of-forgiving, Most-Forbearing" (Al-Quran, 1: 225). "To God belongs all that is in the heaven and on earth. Whether you show what is in your minds or conceal it. God call you to account for it. He forgives whom He pleases, and punishes whom he pleases, for God has power over all things" (Al-Quran, 1:284).

The Prophet Mohammad, may peace be upon him, emphasizes responsibilities and clarifies the intertwined responsibilities of applying real accountability. He said that: "Beware that every one of you is a shepherd and every one of you is shepherd and everyone is answerable with regard to his folk. The caliph is a shepherd over the people and shall be questioned about them. A woman is a guardian over the house hold of her husband and his children and has to be questioned about them. A slave is a shepherd over the property of his master and shall be questioned about it". Then he, may peace be upon him, adds: "beware that every one of you is a guardian and every one of you shall be questioned with regard to his trust". Afifuddin & Siti-Nabiha (2010) add that these verses apply to all organizations, not just personal accountability. "That means that organizations should comply with all the applicable laws and ethical standards adhere to the organizations' mission" (p.1136).

Responsibility is also stated in Islam. Both leaders and administrators should know "their responsibilities, their targets, what they needed to do to get which rewards and what the consequences would be if they made mistakes"(Abbasi et al., 2010, p.234) This statement is in conjunction with the words of the prophet Muhammad peace be upon him: "Whenever God makes a man responsible for other people, whether in greater or lesser numbers, he will be questioned as to whether he ruled his charges in accordance with God's decrees or not. And that will not be all. God will question him even about his family members."

Finally, accountability in Islam is not limited to personal duties but also Muslims are accountable to Allah for the society. As Lewis (2006) states that:

Individuals are expected to feel socially responsible for others in the community. One cannot enjoy life while others cannot. In general, the aim of the Islamic economic system is to allow people to earn their living in a fair and profitable way without exploitation of others, so that the whole society may benefit. Islam also emphasizes the welfare of the community over individual rights" (p.5).

Link between accountability in Islam and self accountability:

It is known that accounting is perceived to be goal and fact oriented rather than emotional or moral. Yet on the other hand, accounting is based upon essential measurements which could be imperfectly considered as having absolute results when, in fact, they practically serve some goals well and others only poorly (Sulaiman, 2001). Moreover, Passyn & Sujan (2006) state that the ability to act based upon performance measurements is different from the aspiration to act inherent in self-accountability. They add that individuals must feel responsible and motivated to act if action is to occur although they might feel capable of action.

Depending on an empirical study, Passyn & Sujan (2006) report that emotions possess facilitative effects that enhance self-accountability dimensions, such as guilt and regret, on intentions and practical coping. They add that even though the perception of self-accountability motivates intentions, the drive for implementation or achievement requires the additional impetus of an emotional experience. An emotion requires a confluence of appraisal. They also examine the role of high self-accountability emotions in enhancing compliance with fear appeals. They find that relative to straight fear appeals or adding hope, which ascribes low accountability to the self, action-facilitative coping, intentions, and behaviors are enhanced by adding guilt and regret, all of which induce feelings of high self-accountability. Consequently, depending on previous results, it has to be noted that self-accountability is a mix of fear, hope, guilt and regret founded on frequent self evaluation.

From a psychological perspective, Coelho (2010) states that confession and repentance are important to enhance self-accountability, significant to rehab behaviors, and require different steps. He emphasizes that the recognition that one has done wrong or not similar to their deepest values is the first step to enhance self-accountability. The next step is deciding to change in order to obtain self-satisfaction as a response to the expression or confession of the painful truths about the self. "Vital to this confession is some expression of regret or remorse for what one has done or caused"(p38).

Self accountability is a unique facet of Islamic administration and it is attributed to a great principle which covers not just administrative chores but also individual and social acts. This principle is established from the idea that the existence of human life is a basis for the worship of God, and therefore, all the administrator's work, actions and even gestures are related to whether he obeys God's orders and avoids God's prohibitions or not. This knowledge then holds him accountable for his work to his creator, the creator of this universe. From this point of view, self-accountability is considered as a first line of defense to face administrative corruption. Furthermore, self-accountability in this conception helps the administrator to avoid oppression and act fairly.

An example of such constraint is seen in the story of Omar Bin Alkhatib, the second caliph in Islam. Omar Bin Alkhatib could not sleep because he feared if an animal in Iraq even stumbled because he did not settle its way, then his God would ask him about it. Even though Omar Ben Alkhatib was a ruler, he felt he was responsible about everything including animals in his kingdom. His awareness is outstanding and represents his immeasurable accountability despite his being in the top of the iron triangle. What made Omar Ben Alkhatib self-accountable is exactly what is needed in public administration.

Another historical example of self accountability is the story of Omar Ibn Abdualaziz, one of Amoy's caliph. When he, became a caliph, his wife found him crying. "What happened that made you crying?" she asked him. He answered" I have been a ruler of Mohammad's Ummah so I remember poor, hungry, sick, and oppressed people in addition to elders and strangers and I believe my God will ask me about them ... then I cried"(Saiadalahel,1994). It is clear that Omar Ibn Abdualaziz had deep faith and strong fear from Allah that made him accountable.

According to the previous discussion, accountability in Islam depends on special and spiritual relationships to cultivate self accountability. It depends on fear from God's punishment, hope and desire to obtain God's satisfaction. It needs frequent "hesab" to evaluate what is done and then confession and repentance. If self-accountability is shaped by those principles (fear, hope, confession and repentance), a spiritual relationship with God with strong and deep faith will make it more effective.

Self accountability might be considered as a distinguishable type of accountability. The study concludes that Self-Accountability is self-monitoring and appraisal emerges from fearfulness and frequent self-blaming and evaluating for any mistake whether small or big.

Accordingly, Self- Accountability in Islam originates from inside the human heart because fearing God's wrath and seeking God's satisfaction is also conscience' control. If the conscience controls work, sayings and intellect, then administrative control, control of the community and control of the judiciary would be reduced to a minimum.

Conclusion

It seems to be hard to ignore Network governance as a consequence of the progress of life, paradigm and consciousness; however, the more complicated issue is how public administration can adapt to these changes while maintaining accountability. If network governance is partly the exact tendency toward public sovereignty and citizen participation, it is more than necessary to find a remedy for accountability's dilemma. Moreover, if it is hard to find an accountable institution or even person, it is imperative to look for historical spiritual cases and then examine the motives. It is worthy to note that self- accountability is necessary to enhance actions, work, and relationships with others. If the development leads us to adapt new method, and establish new theory and apply new practices, the consideration of self- accountability has to be established and infused.

However, even though this paper discusses the link between self- accountability and accountability in Islam, the subject needs more studies and deep examination. More importantly, we need to know how to spread up the idea of interreligious knowledge. Notably, Young (2009) stress that learning from religions theology and their phenomenological and historical events will enhance the knowledge and that what we need in deed for progressive movement.

The notion, that **religion** is fundamentally significant even though it might be not acceptable in modern liberal, secular society, has to be addressed and raised. Wender (2009) supports teaching students religious ethics and he thinks that it is pedagogically enriching for students. In teaching about such humanistic topics as politics, administration, and modern world history, it is required to infuse ethics. Moreover, Sulaiman (1997) suggests that religious teachings may impinge on how people should ideally behave. Undeniably, political and economic ideologies and practices, such as liberal capitalism, are taught in schools and have indoctrinated children from elementary school with ambiguity about ethics, which results in individualism and selfishness. Thus, in order to establish a real democratic society, progressive administration, and flexible government, self-accountability has to be taught since childhood. Moreover, self- accountability deserves to be taught in schools as one of the most important principles.

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Islamic resources

All the verses are translated from The Holy Quran.

All prophet Mohamad's sayings are translated from Sahih Al-Bukhary.