Elements of management using the psychology of forgiveness during the covid 19 pandemic from an Islamic perspective


Abstract--The paper presents a Forgiveness is one way to resolve conflicts that occur between individuals, groups, and even among nations/countries. The topic of forgiveness used to be almost the exclusive domain of philosophers and theologians. In the last three decades, however, considerable attention has been paid to forgiveness by a host of professionals including educators, psychologists, therapists and health practitioners. The article also examines the application of “forgiveness” with an emphasis on Islamic perspective as a treatment method to improve interpersonal relationships and to enhance problem-solving skills in the resolution of difficulties and internal conflicts such as resentfulness toward others in particular. Forgiveness is shown to improve psychological well-being, life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, gratitude, and internal locus of control. Due to developments in positive psychology, the theme of forgiveness has increasingly been observed in psychological studies in recent years. Forgiveness has now become one of positive psychology’s favourite topics. It is conceived as an element of religiosity and hence studies focus on the relation between forgiveness and religiosity.

Keywords: psychology forgiveness, Islamic perspective, covid 19 disease

I INTRODUCTION

1 Research Centre for Quran and Sunnah, Faculty of Islamic Studies, UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.
2 Research Centre for Theology & Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor, Email: zaizul@ukm.edu.my
3 Research Centre for Theology & Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies and Institute of Islam Hadhari, UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: a_yunus@ukm.edu.my
4 Senior Lecturer, Sharia Research Centre, Faculty of Islamic Studies and Institute of Islam Hadhari, UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: izhar@ukm.edu.my
5 Research Centre for Da’wah and Leadership, Faculty of Islamic Studies, UKM Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.
6 Research Centre for Theology & Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor
7 Faculty of Islamic Studies. Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah, Perak, Malaysia.
8 Centre for Education, Da’wah and Islamic Civilization Studies, Faculty of Contemporary Islamic Studies, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin.
9 Department of Da’wah and Human Development, Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.
10 Department of Da’wah and Human Development, Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.
11 Department of Aqidah and Islamic Thought, Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.
12 Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka Campus, Malaysia.
Over the past few decades, research on forgiveness has increased (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010; Jacinto, G. a., & Edwards, B. L. (2011); Praptomijati, A., & Subandi, M. A. (2020). The topic of forgiveness used to be almost the exclusive domain of philosophers and theologians. In the last three decades, however, considerable attention has been paid to forgiveness by a host of professionals including educators, psychologists, therapists and health practitioners (Reed, G. L., & Enright, R. D. (2006); Orbon, M., Mercado, J., & Balila, J. (2015); Mary, E. M. (2015). However, the vast majority of this research has focused on forgiveness of others (Al-Muhasibi (2003); Al-Jawziyyah, Ibn Qayyim. (2001). Humans are creatures of weakness in many matters, in fact weak in all things (ji kulli syayin). That is the meaning of ‘weakness’ as understood by Abu Ishaq al-Naysaburi in interpreting Surat An-Nisa Verse 28 on the nature of humans which states: “Man was created weak.” (Tafsir al-Kasyf wa al-Bayan, Juz 3, 2002, p.291) and that weakness is with him in everything he does. Such is the nature of Man, that Allah S.W.T always considers His creations’ weakness in observing His commands and avoiding His prohibitions. It is this nature of weakness and limitation that causes Man to sin. Yet even if a Man’s sins were as vast as a desert, the door of repentance and return to Allah S.W.T is always open for him as Allah S.W.T is the Most Forgiving and Most Merciful. Countless mentions have been made of Allah’s nature of forgiveness and mercy towards his servants who have sinned, such as (inna Allah ghafur al-raham; wa kana Allah ‘afuwwan ghafura; wa Allah ghafur al-rahim) which clearly shows His acceptance of sincere repentance from His servants.

Prophet Muhammad as His Messenger was also taught to be an example of this virtue. As mentioned in Verse 159 or Surat Ali’Imran, “So by mercy from Allah S.W.T, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah S.W.T. Indeed, Allah S.W.T loves those who rely [upon Him].” This verse explains about not only Allah’s command to Prophet Muhammad S.A.W to forgive others, but also to ask for forgiveness for their sin of turning away from Allah (Tafsir Fakhr al-Razi, 1:p.1290). Allah’s command to forgive the wrongs of others as seen in the verse above was deeply ingrained in the virtuous life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. He reminds us to always practise forgiveness in our daily lives, which will be explained further in this text (Soleh A Khudori, (2009); Ab Rahman, Z. et al (2018); Salasiah Hanin Hamjah et al. (2020).

II FORGIVENESS TRAVELOGUE DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC

Before we can explore the meaning of forgiveness that is compelled in the Quran and Hadith, it is important to explain the word ‘forgive’ itself. The word ‘maaf’ in Malay is borrowed from the Arabic word (al-‘afw) which is the masdar form of (‘afa – ya’fu – ‘afwan), meaning “to destroy or make disappear”. (Ibn Manzur: Lisan al-Arab, XV, p.72; Imam Malik Masyhuri, (2005); Soleh A Khudori, (2009). According to Maqaysi al-Lughat, the word ‘Afw made up of the letters (‘ain – fa – waw) originally had two meanings. The first, ‘to abandon’ (tark al-syai’in) and the second, ‘to search’ (thalab al-syai’in). What is referred to in this context is the first, meaning to leave or to not give (a consequence) for another person’s wrongdoing. Imam Malik Masyhuri (2005); Soleh A Khudori, (2009).

For example: ‘Afw Allah ‘an khalqihi, which means Allah does not punish His creations for their sins. Al-Khalil states that when someone deserves a punishment but you do execute the punishment, then that means you have forgiven them. (Ibn Faris: Maqaysi al-Lughat, IV, p.47).
As previously mentioned, Allah did not just command the Prophet to forgive others who have committed wrong, but to go as far as to ask for forgiveness for them from Allah for their wrongdoing and continue to consult them on matters (musamawarah). Prophet Muhammad fulfilled this command as seen in his consultation with them during the Battle of Uhud. Other than the verse above, Allah’s command to forgive others can also be found in Verse 22 in Surat An-Nur: “And let not those of virtue and wealth among you swear not to give [aid] to their relatives and the needy and the emigrants for the cause of Allah, and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

Aisyah stated that the Verse above was revealed in relation to the case of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq who swore to no longer provide for Misthah, the son of his maternal aunt who had no wealth but what Abu Bakr provided for him, as a result of Misthah’s slanderous lies against Aisyah. After Aisyah’s innocence was finally proven, Allah sent a revelation for Abu Bakr to open his heart and forgive Misthah for his misdeed (wa ‘lya’fu wa ‘lyashfahu), as Misthah was dependent on him. Allah S.W.T assured that those who forgave others would also be forgiven by Him. Abu Bakr then promised to never cease to provide for Misthah as he only hoped for Allah’s forgiveness for his sins (H.R. Al-Bukhari).

Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. is a Messenger who upheld Allah’s commandments by teaching and practising them in his daily life, as can be seen in many hadith. One such hadith from Abu Hurairah, the Prophet says, “Charity does not decrease wealth, no one forgives except that Allah increases his honor, and no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises his status.” (H.R. Muslim). Thus, a truly righteous person must always forgive others. It is a difficult task for those whose hearts are dark and hardened, but not so for those whose hearts are soft and virtuous.

The moment a person’s heart decides to forgive another for their transgressions, often the voice of nafs and anger would interfere: “Why should you forgive this person who has repeatedly wronged you, shamed your family, never helped you in times of need, betrayed you in times of sadness?” This voice hinders us from granting the forgiveness we had initially intended.

To overcome this hindrance to forgiveness, we must remember Allah’s promise in His Revelation to Abu Bakr: “Would you not like that Allah should forgive you?” Upon finding out that Allah S.W.T would forgive him for his sins if he forgave Misthah, Abu Bakr immediately decided to continue to provide for him. Abu Bakr stated then: “Wa Allahi, Inni La`uhibbu an yaghfira Allahu li (Yes, by Allah, I would like that Allah forgive me.) (H.R. Al-Bukhari). Why would Abu Bakr choose forgiveness over his anger to Misthah? Misthah’s wrongdoing was immense as he had spread slander and lies about Abu Bakr’s daughter Aisyah, wife of Rasulullah. But of course, Abu Bakr realized his anger was meaningless compared to Allah’s forgiveness of his sins (al-Ghazâlî, al-Muḥasibî (1990 & 1991; Al-Nadwa (1994) al-Nadawi, Abu al-Hasan (2000). If we reflect on ourselves, how often are we hurt by others and choose to wallow in revenge and enmity rather than grant forgiveness?

At times when we are blinded by hurt and anger, we should turn to the Prophet’s reminder that Allah will raise our status if we decide to forgive (Al-Ghazâlî (2000); Imam Malik Masyhuri, (2005); Soleh A Khudori, (2009); Ab Rahman, Z. et al (2018); Salasiah Hanin Hamjah et al. (2020). The Prophet forgave those who were cruel towards him. Forgiveness will free us from feelings of revenge, anger and its meaningless consequences. Another tale on how the Prophet showed forgiveness was during the Battle of Uhud, according to HR Bukhari. Abdullah ibn Mas’ud reported: I saw the Messenger of Allah S.W.T tell the story of a prophet who was beaten by his people and he wiped the blood from his face, saying: “My Lord, forgive my people for they do not know.”
III COMMANDMENTS ON FORGIVENESS IN THE QURAN AND HADITHS IN DISEASE

“And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it, but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation – his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers.” (Surah Asy Syura: 40)

“... But if you pardon and overlook and forgive – then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” (Surah At Taghaabun: 14)

“And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous. Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people -and Allah loves the doers of good.” (Surat Ali’Imran: 133 – 134)

“Charity does not decrease wealth, no one forgives except that Allah increases his honor, and no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises his status.” (HR Bukhari and Muslim)

Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. once said: If anger has oppressed you, then heal it with forgiveness. On the Day of Judgment, a caller will say: Who amongst you are the people of kindness? And no one stands except those who were forbearing when oppressed, patient when aggressed and forgave when offended. The Angels then say: Enter Paradise, how excellent a reward for the (pious good) workers. Are you not aware of Allah’s revelation: “… those who forgive and mend [relationships], then rewards await him from Allah.” (A’lâmuddin hal. 337)

Prophet Muhammad: “Pardoning is incumbent upon you, for verily pardoning others only increases a servant’s honour, so pardon each other’s faults and Allah will grant you honour.’” (Al-Kahfi V. 2 p. 108, no. 5)

Prophet Muhammad: Whoever that fills their heart with forgiveness will live a long life. (A’lâmuddin hal. 315)

The Prophet said: “Excuse the lapses of those who make mistakes frequently and Allah will protect you against misfortunes.” (Tanbihul Khawathir, V. 2 p. 120)

“... and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” (Surah An-Nur: 22)

“Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good and turn away from the ignorant.” (Surah Al-A’raaf: 199).

The practice of asking for and giving forgiveness is a virtue in Islam (Al-Jawziyyah, Ibn Qayyim. (2001). In Malaysia, a Malay tradition during Eid is asking for forgiveness from one another with the phrase: ‘Maaf zahir dan batin’. Therefore, it is important to find the true spirit of forgiveness as Eid Al-fitr approaches. There are times when we find it is too difficult to forgive someone who has wronged us. We become so embroiled in that one unpleasant incident from long ago, and it continues to affect our relationship with them. This is in fact a discreet disobedience towards Allah’s command to love and do good to each other. The Prophet said: “None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself.” (HR Bukhari, Hadith 13)

Forgiveness is when someone who is capable of returning a wrong that was done to him or to ask for compensation from the person in the wrong (Al-Muḥasibī (2003); Al-Jawziyyah, Ibn Qayyim. (2001); Sharifah Fatimah (2012); Syaikh Ahmad Farid (2013); Sharifah Basirah dan Che Zarrina (2015); Ab Rahman, Z. et al (2018), decides not to do so and instead sincerely forgives them in order for Allah SWT to be pleased.

In the al-Qur’an, there is a narrative that would even better illustrate the meaning of forgiveness. Prophet Yusuf A.S was the most beloved of Prophet Yaqub A.S’ children, which led to him being envied by his siblings.
And so they betrayed Nabi Yusuf and threw him into a well. However he was saved by a group of travellers from Egypt who brought them with him there. Eventually Prophet Yusuf A.S. became a highly regarded ruler of Egypt. Fate later reunited him with the siblings who had betrayed him. With the power he had, he could have easily sentenced them to a severe punishment. However, his forgiving nature prevented him from doing so, as recounted in the Quran:

_They said (with surprise): “Are you indeed Yusuf?” _

_He replied: “I am Yusuf, and this is my brother (Bunyamin). Allah has certainly favoured us. Indeed, he who fears Allah and is patient, then Allah does not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good.” _

_They said: “By Allah! Certainly Allah has favoured you over us (because of your taqwa and patience); and indeed we have been sinners.” _

_Yusuf said: “No blame will be placed upon you today (about your wrongdoing), may Allah forgive you; and He is the most merciful of the merciful.” (Surah Yusuf: 90-92) _

**IV CONCLUSION**

Therefore the phrase ‘maaf zahir dan batin’ (literally translated as: forgive me for my physical and spiritual wrongdoings towards you) that we often say at the time of Eid must be spoken with sincerity instead of for mere tradition. Forgiving others and asking for forgiveness are great acts of joy, it is not easy to forgive someone who has hurt us especially if they simply forget about it, and act as if nothing happened.. it is very challenging. But, if we want to succeed, we must strive for a positive change and forgive the negative things that chain us remove the hate and forgive and forget their wrongdoings towards us. With that, we can be positive and free ourselves from negativity.

**V ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This study received the support and funding from the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia through the research code EP-2018-015 and EP-2019-007. Appreciation is also conveyed to the CRIM (Centre for Research and Instrumentation), Centre of Aqidah and Global Peace, Faculty of Islamic Studies, UKM, Faculty of Economy, MPOB, YTI, Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, UKM and USAS (University of Sultan Azlan Shah) as well as all those who have made this research a success.

**REFERENCES**


35. Imam Al-Ghazali, Ihya Ulum Al-Din, III, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Islamiy, Bairut, 2000., hlm. 4


