AL-GHAZALI’S AND MASLOW’S APPROACHES IN RESOLVING THE CONFLICT OF HUMAN’S LIFE NECESSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Human’s need or will is referred to a person’s desire which is born from an innate feeling to possess or achieve something, irrespective of whether it involves the affairs of this world or the afterlife. Thus, each individual almost indefinitely possesses their own needs and desire. Be that as it may, it is humans themselves whom will choose to follow such needs and desire, be it good or evil in nature or intention. This is similarly true with their effort towards the fulfilling of their needs which is intertwined with desire.

The concept of human’s hierarchical needs was proposed by Abraham Maslow to indicate the pursuit of fulfilling one’s need in life. However, the elements of self-satisfaction, happiness and a sense of acceptance are not fully achievable within the precepts of Maslow’s concept. Yet, the concept of Human’s will as proposed by al-Ghazali, especially in the pursuit of fulfilling life’s necessities is seen to cover all the three elements as needed by human beings. As such, the concept of human’s desire which is consistent with life necessities should be known and understood by each individual and be prioritized, in order to be properly highlighted in academic research.

Thus, this qualitative research, by using content analysis method, has found that al-Ghazali’s approach as being more focused on the concept of iman (faith) as well as aspects of divine revelation towards fulfilling life’s necessities, and are aligned with human’s desires. Though Maslow’s idea towards life necessities is seen as more
systematic by proposing a hierarchy of human needs, the proposed concept however, is seen to fulfil the needs through focusing mostly on the cognitive and the lust or desire elements. Thus, this research has also submitted a proposal that seeks to comprehensively address the concept of human’s desire and its relations to basic life needs through a combination of al-Ghazali’s and Maslow’s approaches, in the hopes of therein reducing the conflict between one’s desire to their pursuit of fulfilment as best as possible and in line with the guidance of Islamic teachings.

**Keyword:** Al-Ghazali, Maslow, Conflict, Life Necessities, Human’s Will


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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of human’s desire as meant by al-Ghazali is referred to as a deep desire and sense of deep love as possessed by someone in their pursuit to achieve happiness in the Hereafter and in meeting with the Almighty Creator, Allah so much so that the pleasures and delights of this world is left to felt mundane (al-Ghazali, 1975: 135, Syed Hadzrullathfi et al., 2010: 37). He further asserts that a lack of Faith, or iman in its Arabic form (of which this paper will subsequently refer to as) towards Allah serves as the main obstacle for a person to achieve the concept of human’s desire (al-Ghazali, 1975: 135).

Whilst in terms of man’s life necessities, which also involves the aspects of physiology, safety or security, social and self-actualization had also been debated by al-Ghazali in depth in his writings. Although it must be mentioned that the terms used by al-Ghazali are different from the terms used by Maslow, but they have the same conceptual forms and meanings which are about what deemed as necessary needs in their daily life. This shows that human’s life necessities as discussed by al-Ghazali also consists of food, clothing, homes and so on – of which is explained further in his book, *Minhaj al-‘Abidin* regarding topic ‘Uqbah Praise and Gratitude’ (Engku Ali, 1996: 277).

Maslow’s pioneering humanistic theories contains links which leads to the construction of his hierarchal needs as introduced. The hierarchy is also known as the needs pyramid theory which comprises of the basic levels of needs and goals for an individual (Nor Nazimi et al., 2017: 278). In fact, should those needs be fully met, it directly leads the individual to be able to self-motivate themselves to the next or higher level, especially in the pursuit of self-actualization or perfection. Similarly, if the human soul or self is disturbed and a sense of uncertainty presents in them, then those requirements are not met in full. The human needs hierarchy according Maslow contains elements of physiology, safety and security, social/love, self-esteemed and self-actualization.

As such, Maslow also emphasizes the motivational element of mobilizing humans to achieve self-actualization or perfection. In Maslow’s needs theory, humans are required to meet the basic needs first before attaining self-actualization (Maslow, 1970: 30). Concerning this element of motivation as indicated by Maslow, it is said as having to do with the concept of human desire. This is because motivation is also described as a necessity, a desire, which functions to activate energy to one’s behavior and give direction (Maslow, 1970: 48; Huitt, 2001: 79). Therefore, the authors of this paper understand that in order to meet the needs of
life, inevitably human beings must achieve it based on the concept of the desires as contained within each individual.

2. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

2.1. Conceptual Proposal of Human Desires and Basic Needs through the Al-Ghazali and Maslow Approaches

The authors’ focus as a solution to the concept of human’s desires and needs is primarily based and in line with the hierarchical needs of life as proposed through the approaches of both al-Ghazali and Maslow. The combination between these two theories is adapted to the three elements that are built on real happiness, personal self-satisfaction and the concept of acceptance.

These three elements are built to attain the concept and fulfilment of human needs, which a person should possess, and are in line with Islamic law in order to move on with life. The ultimate goal, as it is, is to achieve the pleasure of Allah SWT and to strive to be the cautious believer, both in this world and the hereafter. The authors’ attempt to present this solution as one of the contributions in highlighting Islamic knowledge that not only combines with Western psychology – but indicates a complementary coexistence between the two - which can be adopted as a guide towards addressing the concept and conflicts of human needs as well as desires.

This is since according to Maslow, researches on the elements or aspects of personal satisfaction and basic happiness are difficult to achieve in one’s effort to meet the needs of life. In terms of the element of acceptance, it is also less than satisfactory. Therefore, the authors seek to build a comprehensive solution to the concept of human desires and needs, which must be possessed and understood by an individual and is in line with the necessities of life. This is also since Maslow’s theory of man’s hierarchy of needs is systematic and applicable in life. What this means is that every level of the hierarchy has its own functions and significance.

Thus, the construction of the proposed method – which is based upon the theories introduced by al-Ghazali regarding the concept of human desires and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs perspective. The authors therefore propose a fusion of the two and a settlement as can be seen in Figure 1:
Figure 1: Method for Solving Human’s Will which is Consistent with Life Necessities by Adopting Al-Ghazali’s and Maslow’s Approaches

This framework of solution seeks to explain that the fulfilment of human needs can be fulfilled based upon Maslow’s hierarchy of needs but also stressing that it be further reinforced through Al-Ghazali’s theory (as visible through Figure 1), whereby the latter is primarily based upon Islam, *iman* and *ihsan*. The main goal is towards the achievement of all three elements namely real happiness (A), self-satisfaction (B), and the concept of acceptance (C) in order to preserve a sustainable human existence. All three elements can be accomplished if humans were to meet their physical, cognitive and emotional needs.

This is because the three elements, if attained through Maslow’s approach alone, is not able to solve the problem and conflict of the human needs and desires as a whole. This is since the attainment of life’s needs be fulfilled or mandated by mere lust, will lead to human’s excesses in the management of their worldly affairs.

Additionally, if Maslow’s self-actualization is deemed the most perfect stage for humans in their bid to meet their hierarchy of needs, upon fulfilling the other stages such as physiological needs, security, psychological or social as well as self-fulfillment, then human beings will invariably experience unnecessary dissatisfaction or indifference later onwards in life. This is since self-actualization is difficult to achieve when people are constantly working only to fulfil those needs solely.

Therefore, in fulfilling basic human needs, and are in lined with the aforementioned three key elements, al-Ghazali dominates his theory on the basis of three main principles - Islam, *iman* and *ihsan*. What this implies is that only when based upon these three main principles can the basic human needs be fulfilled harmoniously within order and permissible with the demands of the Sharia.

This is because if the will and desires of man, within part of life’s basic necessities is based upon *iman*, it will bring forth for people to carefully think and scrutinize prior to acting upon an issue. Iman or faith must be the compass which guides upon the realization of one’s desires and needs. Thus, al-Ghazali asserts that *iman* must always be nurtured with values of sincerity and truth in order for its growth - in the administering of one’s state of affairs (al-Ghazali, 1975: 135).
Al-Ghazali’s and Maslow’s Approaches in Resolving the Conflict of Human’s Life Necessities

In addition, the strength of one’s iman also depends on the resoluteness of a Muslim’s inner self and belief. In other words, an indication of a strong belief on the existence of the Almighty God as stated within the Quran and the al-Sunnah as well the fending away ideas or acts that erodes a belief of God’s Oneness and attributes of His perfection. Furthermore, the ideal human is also a person who prioritizes the faith or his or her personal desires and lust. When one prioritizes iman and faith as the goal and course of life, this will invariably reap the rewards and blessings of God. This is since a person with faith as his guiding course will surely act rationally and within reason as compared to a person with excessive lust, whom will consistently act waywardly or worse, with evil intentions.

Further to that, the element of Islam is also an essential and imperative element which serves as a platform within the principles and necessities of life. In other words, with actions that place Islam at the base of a life and principle of religion as well as faith. As it is understood per the Quran and the Sunnah, Islam is the most noble and true religion in the sight of Allah. Moreover, according to Islam and its adherents. Humans will cease to be perfect unless its faith is not in tandem with the one true religion.

Therefore, in order to develop mankind, befitting his position as bestowed by God, their faith-based values must be harnessed, which means the harnessing, development and control of his heart, spirit and desires. Humans who make Islam as the base and moral compass of guidance in a life of religiosity, in addition to pursuing Islamic principles in their conduct and livelihood, represents a man of excellence in terms of faith, life and virtue.

In fact, the appreciation of Islam will also bring humanity to the goal and direction of the true and correct way of realizing the real purposes of human existence in this world, taking into account all the elements in humanity namely physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional. Sayyid Qutb (1983) in Zulkifli and Nor Salimah (2005) viewed that all human life should be based on a religion that contains a life system that fits humanity in all aspects of life (Zulkifli & Nor Salimah, 2005: 2).

In addition to making the third foundation, ihsan, as a guide in fulfilling the self-needs and necessities of life is also deemed a necessary action. The concept of ihsan can be understood as the meaning of the best or the intent to do deeds of quality via a high level of consciousness in which every action is under the scrutiny and judgment of Allah.

Similarly, ihsan as a concept can also be understood as being under the observance of Allah SWT in one’s every worship performed. This devotion to Allah that is implemented according to the virtue of ihsan is done solely and sincerely due to Allah alone, not because of any other. Therefore, all the rituals performed will be more focused given one feeling more devout in worship, therein with full sincerity.

Such a concept is thus much relevant given assertions that for those living in the majority of the Muslim communities, it is only Islam and iman being visible, with ihsan as if it had vanished (Jahid, 2017: 9). Therefore, this should be given due attention since it is the principles of ihsan that serves as a reflection on the character of a Muslim.

In this way, this paper discovers that among the weaknesses found were how the three basic principles, namely the concept of iman, Islam and ihsan were unaccounted in Maslow’s theory. This can cause people to overwhelm their self-needs without limitations, thus rendering them unable to experience the concept of self-satisfaction or actualization and ultimately, a sense of acceptance and true happiness.

3. CONCLUSION
As a matter of fact, when examined, the neglect of the spiritual element causes the discussion of human needs will continuously be debated without ever achieving proper closure given the ultimate cause and sensate culture having dominated and overwhelmed man’s life. This is because Western materialism focuses more on the pursuit of self-needs or the demands of individuals which lingers around the pleasure of lust, wealth ranks, degree and power (Solahuddin, 2012: 125).

Although it is undeniable that the theory introduced by Maslow has also succeeded in motivating humans to succeed, but the neglect of the spiritual elements, especially the elements of iman, Islam and ihsan, will continuously make human beings unable to achieve self-actualization and sense of acceptance in life. This is because their efforts to fulfill the desires and necessity of life being in a state of unceasing nature.

That being said, this paper does not rule out that the Maslow's living requirements hierarchy can also be applied in the preservation of a sustainable human life. In fact, the hierarchy is also seen as being systematic and each of the levels possessing its own functions and importance. Therefore, in the proposed method of solution, as built by the authors, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory is also included as one of the elements which needs to be met in order to achieve true happiness, self-satisfaction and a sense of acceptance.

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