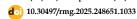


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Motivation in Islamic Thought: A Thematic Analysis of Javadi Amoli's Perspective

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore and develop a comprehensive Islamic framework for understanding human motivation, drawing from the works of Grand Ayatollah Javadi Amoli. By conducting a thematic analysis of his writings, this research aims to fill gaps in Islamic management literature by identifying core principles of motivation that incorporate spiritual and practical dimensions. The study seeks to provide insights into how Islamic thought can inform motivation in both personal development and organizational settings, contributing to the broader field of Islamic management and its application in contemporary organizational contexts.

Design/methodology/approach: This study employs a thematic analysis based on the framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The research focuses on analyzing the extensive works of Grand Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, particularly his views on human motivation. Approximately 40,000 pages of his writings were reviewed to extract relevant themes. The research followed a step-by-step thematic analysis process, including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, and identifying overarching themes. These themes were then refined to build a comprehensive Islamic motivational model that addresses spiritual, ethical, and practical dimensions of human behavior and management.

Findings: The study identified three major themes in the Islamic conceptualization of motivation: the flourishing, regulation, and adjustment of motivations. These themes highlight the balance between spiritual and worldly motivations within Islamic teachings. The role of practical intellect (aql 'amali) was found to be central in managing human desires, harmonizing internal conflicts, and guiding actions toward ethical outcomes. The findings suggest that Islamic motivational frameworks offer holistic approaches that integrate spiritual awareness with practical organizational strategies, making them applicable in modern management contexts while fostering personal growth.

Originality/value: This study offers a novel contribution by developing a comprehensive Islamic motivational framework based on the in-depth thematic analysis of Grand Ayatollah Javadi Amoli's works. While existing literature on Islamic motivation focuses predominantly on needs-based models, this research goes beyond by incorporating spiritual, ethical, and practical dimensions into the understanding of motivation. It introduces the concept of practical intellect ('aql 'amali) as a central element in managing human desires, providing a more holistic view of motivation that integrates both personal and organizational development, making it applicable to contemporary Islamic management practices.

Keywords

Motivation, Islamic Management, Grand Ayatollah Javadi Amoli.

Introduction

Motivation has long been a central topic in managerial literature, recognized for its pivotal role in enhancing productivity, engagement, and performance across organizational contexts (Howard et al., 2021; Hoxha & Ramadani, 2024). Traditionally explored through psychological and behavioral lenses, motivation is increasingly understood as a multidimensional construct that intersects with cultural and spiritual domains. This broader perspective has prompted scholars to extend their inquiry into the realm of Islamic human sciences, where motivation is regarded not only as a psychological mechanism but also as a deeply ethical and theological concern.

The Islamic worldview provides a rich epistemological foundation for understanding human motivation. Rooted in divine purpose and moral accountability, Islamic teachings emphasize perseverance, sincerity (ikhlāṣ), and the pursuit of excellence (iḥsān) as motivational ideals. Spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage are imbued with motivational significance, serving as both personal disciplines and communal reinforcements of purposeful behavior (Fatima et al., 2017). An expanding body of research on Muslim learners and professionals indicates that Islamic religiosity positively predicts academic and occupational engagement, with intrinsic religious beliefs often enhancing focus, resilience, and long-term commitment (Khalid et al., 2020; Selim & Abdalla, 2022).

Notably, studies demonstrate that integrating faith-based values into educational and organizational settings can deepen individuals' sense of purpose and motivation (Ito & Umemoto, 2022). These findings suggest that Islamic spiritual frameworks not only complement but also enrich existing motivational theories by offering a holistic understanding of human will—one that binds personal aspiration to divine intention. Thus, the exploration of motivation within Islamic contexts is not merely a cultural adaptation of Western theories, but a fundamentally distinct paradigm that warrants independent scholarly investigation.

For example, religious experiences like the Arbaeen pilgrimage exemplify a deeply rooted, spiritually driven motivational framework. Participants in this pilgrimage act within a narrative grounded in Shia Islamic themes of sacrifice, justice, and communal solidarity (Husein, 2018). Such expressions of faith-based motivation demonstrate the power of religious conviction to sustain extraordinary levels of commitment and endurance—traits that are highly valued in both personal development and organizational performance.

Despite the evident compatibility between Islamic teachings and motivational theory, a comprehensive model grounded in Islamic thought remains underdeveloped. Scholars face a wide range of interpretive approaches and methodological challenges, particularly when analyzing motivation through specific theological lenses, such as that of the Twelver Shia tradition. This school of thought emphasizes divine justice, spiritual accountability, and the cultivation of moral virtues, all of which point to unique motivational pathways.

Furthermore, findings from contemporary psychological research add additional layers of complexity. While meta-analyses affirm that intrinsic motivation is closely linked to positive learning outcomes (Howard et al., 2021; Toste et al., 2020), applying these findings to faith-based contexts requires accounting for other variables—such as religious identity. communal expectations, and eschatological beliefs (Alzaareer & Abdalla, 2023). For instance, Islamic schools frequently integrate spiritual and academic goals, reflecting a more comprehensive view of motivation that transcends standard educational paradigms.

In light of these complexities, simplistic applications of Western motivational theories to Islamic contexts risk yielding superficial or culturally incongruent results. There is, therefore, an urgent need to construct nuanced, theologically grounded models that resonate with the lived experiences of Muslim individuals and communities. This study seeks to contribute to that effort by examining motivation through the lens of the Twelver Shia school of thought, specifically focusing on the perspective of Ayatollah Javadi Amoli-a prominent faqih and interpreter of the Qur'an within this tradition. It aims to illuminate how the core beliefs and practices articulated in his thought can inform a distinct and coherent motivational paradigm.

The following assumptions are considered in the research:

- Given the impossibility of exhaustively studying the views of all Shia scholars, this research focuses on the opinions of Grand Ayatollah Abdullah Javadi Amoli.
- The objective of this research is to identify the motivational mechanisms endorsed by Islam and comprehend Islam's approach to motivation. This study is not limited to the methods of preaching and religious exhortation aimed at human spiritual development but seeks to identify a broader discourse on motivation applicable in diverse domains.

The study begins with a review of the existing theoretical literature on motivation in Western thinking and Islam, followed by an examination of the research methodology employed. Subsequently, through content analysis of the works and themes extracted, the primary approaches of Islam toward motivation are discussed.

1. Motivation Theories in Western Scholarship

Motivation is a critical concept in social science literature, influencing a wide range of human behaviors and outcomes. It plays an essential role in understanding goal-directed activities, work performance, learning processes, and creative endeavors. Scholars from various disciplines have contributed to the theoretical development and practical understanding of motivation, resulting in a rich and multifaceted body of knowledge. Foundational theories include social cognitive theory, which emphasizes internal influences like self-efficacy and goals (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020), as well as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, self-determination theory, and expectancy-value theory, each of which highlights distinct psychological drivers. In work and organizational contexts, motivation is shaped by personal motives, traits, and environmental conditions. Social dynamics such as collaboration and competition also play influential roles. Meta-analytic studies confirm a moderate positive relationship between motivation and academic performance (Hur, 2018; Alrawahi et al., 2020).

One of the earliest and most influential perspectives on motivation in the Western tradition is that of Max Weber. His framework centers on a typology of rationality—practical, theoretical, formal, and substantive—which he used to analyze human action and social organization. Weber's typology provides insight into how individuals balance economic goals with value-driven objectives, especially in contexts like social entrepreneurship and tourism development (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017; Mody et al., 2016). Furthermore, his concept of charisma explores the social and temporal dimensions of leadership and motivation, emphasizing the role of collective expectations in shaping human behavior (Barisione, 2023).

Skinner's behaviorist approach to motivation emphasizes the role of external stimuli and reinforcement in shaping behavior. Rather than viewing motivation as an internal drive, Skinner argued that behavior is influenced by the consequences it produces. Positive reinforcement, such as rewards or praise, increases the likelihood of repeated behavior, while punishment or the absence of reinforcement diminishes it. This view has had a lasting impact on education and training, particularly in behavior management and classroom engagement strategies (Barber et al., 2017).

Abraham Maslow introduced the hierarchy of needs, a motivational model proposing that individuals are driven by the need to satisfy a progression of needs—from basic physiological survival to self-actualization (Healy, 2016; Bridgman et al., 2019; Kaufman, 2018). Despite its enduring influence, Maslow's model has been critiqued for its individualism, linear structure, and cultural limitations (Acevedo, 2018; Yu, 2022). Still, it remains foundational in management, education, and psychology, offering a structured lens through which to view personal development and well-being (Montag et al., 2020).

David McClelland expanded on Maslow's ideas by proposing the Need Theory, which identifies three dominant motivational drives: achievement, affiliation, and power. McClelland emphasized that individuals vary in the strength of these needs and that motivation can be optimized by aligning tasks and rewards with a person's dominant need. Recent neuroscience research supports the theory, indicating that targeted rewards stimulate specific brain regions related to motivation, further validating a tailored approach in organizational settings (Rybnicek et al., 2019).

Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory differentiates between motivators and hygiene factors. While motivators like achievement and recognition drive satisfaction, hygiene factors such as salary and job security prevent dissatisfaction but do not actively motivate. Herzberg's framework underscores the dual pathways to improving employee satisfaction and has been widely applied in sectors like healthcare and hospitality to inform motivation and retention strategies (Ser & Webber, 2024; Hur, 2018; Alrawahi et al., 2020).

Victor Vroom contributed Expectancy Theory, which suggests that motivation is a function of three variables: expectancy (belief that effort leads to performance), instrumentality (belief that performance leads to outcome), and valence (value placed on the outcome). His model has been effectively applied to diverse fields, including leadership, addiction recovery, and entrepreneurship, showing how perceived contingencies influence goal-directed behavior (Yoes & Silverman, 2020; Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2017).

Albert Bandura's advanced social cognitive theory emphasizes selfefficacy, the belief in one's capacity to succeed, as a critical factor in motivation. Bandura's model highlights reciprocal determinism, the dynamic interaction between personal, behavioral, and environmental influences. Outcome expectancy, or the belief that a certain behavior will lead to a Richard Ryan and Edward Deci's Self-Determination Theory focuses on the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Their distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation underscores the importance of internal satisfaction for long-term engagement and well-being. SDT has been widely applied in education, healthcare, and organizational behavior, offering a robust framework for nurturing motivation through supportive environments (Hope et al., 2018; McEown & Oga-Baldwin, 2019).

2. Foundations of Islamic Perspectives on Motivation

Islamic theories of motivation offer a distinct paradigm that merges spiritual beliefs with psychological and organizational principles, providing a rich alternative to conventional Western models. Rooted in the Qur'an, Hadith, and centuries of Islamic scholarship, this perspective emphasizes the spiritual, moral, and communal dimensions of human behavior. Much of the existing literature in this area has emerged from Sunni scholarly traditions, which have predominantly shaped the discourse on Islamic motivation theory to date. This presents an opportunity to further broaden the conversation by incorporating perspectives from other Islamic traditions, such as Twelver Shi'ism.

A central tenet of Islamic motivation theory is its emphasis on the inner state of the nafs (self), which plays a crucial role in determining a person's moral and motivational orientation. The Qur'an describes three primary states of the nafs: al-nafs al-nutma'innah (the tranquil soul), al-nafs al-lawwāmah (the self-reproaching soul), and al-nafs al-ammārah bi-al- $s\bar{u}$ ' (the soul inclined to evil). Each state represents a different level of moral and spiritual development, which directly influences motivation. Optimal motivation, according to Islamic theory, is achieved when the soul reaches a tranquil state through sincerity, self-discipline, and alignment with divine guidance (Cader, 2016).

Underlying this framework are the concepts of $tawh\bar{\iota}d$ (monotheism) and $\bar{\iota}m\bar{a}n$ (faith), which serve as the foundation of a believer's motivational orientation. The drive to perform good deeds, seek knowledge, and pursue excellence is deeply tied to the individual's relationship with God. Motivation, in this view, is not simply a psychological impulse but a manifestation of one's faith and spiritual commitment. Moderating factors such as sincerity ($ikhl\bar{a}s$), patience (sabr), trust in God (tawakkul), and

adherence to prophetic traditions (sunnah) shape the consistency and quality of this motivation (Cader, 2016).

In comparative terms, some scholars have attempted to align Islamic motivation theory with Western frameworks, particularly Maslow's hierarchy of needs. While there are surface-level parallels—such as the progression toward self-actualization—Islamic theory introduces a fundamentally different logic. It prioritizes spiritual fulfillment and divine accountability over individualistic self-enhancement. For example, in contrast to Maslow's top-tier goal of self-actualization, Islamic motivation centers on tagwa (God-consciousness) and moral excellence as ultimate aims (Rasli et al., 2022).

This spiritually integrated model also has practical implications in the field of human resource development (HRD). Researchers have argued that Islamic principles offer a valuable framework for holistic employee development, promoting motivation through ethical leadership, community orientation, and meaningful work. By embedding values such as justice, integrity, and collective welfare into HR practices, organizations can foster intrinsic motivation and long-term engagement (Khan & Sheikh, 2012).

A particularly innovative contribution to this field is the concept of the Islamic Locus of Control (ILoC), which reinterprets traditional psychological theories through an Islamic lens. ILoC posits that individuals believe they are accountable for their actions while simultaneously recognizing divine will. This duality cultivates a sense of personal responsibility and resilience, helping individuals maintain motivation even in the face of setbacks, as they view both effort and outcome as intertwined with divine wisdom (Zakiy et al., 2024).

Knowledge sharing within academic and professional settings has also been examined through the lens of Islamic motivation. Studies have shown that intrinsic drivers, such as the pursuit of ikhlās (sincerity) and the value of brotherhood, motivate individuals to share knowledge freely. These findings underscore how Islamic teachings encourage behaviors that contribute not only to personal growth but also to communal enrichment (Mansor & Jaharuddin, 2021).

3. An Exploration of Motivation from an Islamic Perspective: A Blended **Approach**

A review of scholarly literature on motivation from an Islamic perspective reveals a rich tapestry of ideas and interpretations developed over centuries. Despite the depth and breadth of these contributions, they have not received sufficient attention in broader academic discourse. This essay synthesizes the perspectives of experts and researchers from both Sunni and Twelver Shia traditions, blending their insights to present a cohesive understanding of Islamic motivation. The discussion highlights shared themes, unique contributions, and practical applications derived from Islamic teachings.

3-1. The Spiritual Foundation of Motivation

One of the most prominent themes in Islamic motivational theory is the spiritual dimension of human existence. Scholars across traditions emphasize that Islam offers a robust framework for motivation by integrating material and spiritual needs. For instance, Muhammad Fathi al-Sayyid Qasim (1995), a Sunni scholar, argues that work in Islam is considered a form of worship (ibadah), fostering intrinsic motivation rooted in devotion to God. Similarly, Aghapiroz (2003), from the Twelver Shia tradition, identifies religious beliefs as key motivators, asserting that Islamic principles introduce unique variables that shape human behavior. Both perspectives underscore the centrality of faith in driving motivation, whether through the concept of "work as worship" or the pursuit of divine proximity.

This spiritual foundation is further reinforced by Alawneh (1998), who posits that motivation in Islam stems from knowledge of God, self-awareness, and one's relationship with the world. His Sunni-inspired analysis aligns with Bakhshi's (2001) Twelver Shia emphasis on the role of the afterlife in decision-making, highlighting how long-term spiritual goals influence short-term actions. Together, these scholars illustrate how Islamic teachings encourage individuals to prioritize eternal rewards over temporary gains.

3-2. Ethical Conduct and Moral Behavior

Another shared theme is the inseparable link between motivation and ethical conduct. Kaviani and Karimi (2011), drawing from the Twelver Shia tradition, explore the relationship between needs and ethics in their comparative study of Allamah Tabatabaei and Maslow. They argue that moral behavior is a significant source of motivation in Islam, reflecting the integration of spiritual and ethical dimensions. This perspective resonates with Mubarak's (as cited in Branine, 2011) Sunni-inspired observation that classical Islamic scholars like Ibn Khaldun and al-Ghazali emphasized similar principles centuries ago.

Furthermore, Allamah Ja'fari (Javadi Amoli, 1992) raises a critical question often overlooked in discussions of motivation: who is qualified to motivate others? His inquiry invites reflection on the ethical and spiritual prerequisites for effective leadership and mentorship, a theme echoed by

Hosseini (2011), who discusses the interconnectedness of human forces and the importance of harmonizing individual and collective motivations. These insights highlight the ethical responsibility of leaders to inspire and guide others in alignment with Islamic principles.

3-3. Material and Spiritual Needs

Islamic motivational theories also emphasize the dual fulfillment of material and spiritual needs. Ramzgoyan and Shabani (2003), from the Twelver Shia tradition, propose that fulfilling material needs prepares individuals for better work performance, while addressing spiritual needs enhances motivation and satisfaction. Their work complements Sulaiman et al.'s (2014) Sunni-inspired identification of key Islamic concepts such as worship, knowledge, free will, faith, piety, trust, and righteous deeds, which collectively define motivation from an Islamic perspective.

Similarly, Shojaei (2007) critiques Maslow's hierarchy of needs, arguing that it overlooks spiritual dimensions. He designs an alternative hierarchy tailored to Islamic spiritual needs, emphasizing the centrality of faith and divine proximity. This critique aligns with Ahmadnia Alashti et al.'s (2013) Quranic model of motivation, which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding motivation within an Islamic organizational context. Both approaches underscore the importance of balancing worldly responsibilities with spiritual aspirations.

3-4. Practical Strategies for Motivation

Scholars from both traditions offer practical strategies for enhancing Islamic frameworks. Al-Sayvid Oasim (1995) recommends strengthening religious beliefs through early education, promoting the idea of "work as worship," and fostering loving and just relationships between superiors and subordinates. These strategies are echoed by Sabbaghian (2001), who examines mechanisms for employee motivation in Nahj al-Balagha, identifying specific practices derived from this seminal text.

Oravi-Yazdani (1993) bridges Islamic and Western motivational theories. proposing modifications to align them with Islamic principles. His work complements Khalili Tirtaschi's (2003) critique of false needs, advocating for the fulfillment of true needs as defined by Islamic teachings. Together, these scholars provide actionable insights for leaders and managers seeking to inspire and motivate others within an Islamic framework.

3-5. Reflections on the Literature: Gaps and Future Directions in Islamic Motivation Studies

Although this review does not explicitly aim to criticize prior works, the act of reviewing literature inevitably involves assessing the current state of the field. Such evaluations are essential for identifying research gaps, informing future directions, and uncovering conceptual or methodological limitations (Torraco, 2005). Several key observations have emerged from this analysis.

Despite the broad conceptual range of motivation studies, research in Islamic contexts has disproportionately centered on the concept of "need." Other related aspects, such as goal orientation, cognitive processes, or environmental factors, have received comparatively less scholarly attention. This emphasis appears to stem from two sources: the widespread influence of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the sheer volume of literature on needsbased frameworks. Notably, Islamic motivational studies frequently engage with Maslow's theory, often juxtaposing it with Islamic teachings. A more systematic investigation into this trend may yield valuable cross-cultural insights.

This focus on needs also explains why content theories dominate Islamic motivational literature, whereas process theories remain largely underexplored. Beyond cursory references, few studies investigate the mechanisms and dynamics underlying motivation from an Islamic perspective. As a result, the field remains in need of deeper, process-oriented frameworks that can explain how motivation unfolds over time and across contexts.

Another recurring challenge in Islamic management literature is the lack of attention to organizational realities. Two general schools of thought can be identified. The first, represented by scholars such as al-Sayyid Qasim (1995), argues that Islam provides a more comprehensive motivational system than contemporary theories. He asserts that religious frameworks offer enhanced potential for inspiring employees, for example, by regarding work as worship. However, as Alizi and Muhammad Zaki (2005) note, the efficacy of such religious motivators depends heavily on an individual's level of faith. None of the theories reviewed, however, addresses the organizational responsibility to nurture or enhance this faith, nor do they offer mechanisms to support motivation through spiritual development.

The second group, including Ahmadnia Alashti et al. (2012), views faith itself as a causal factor in motivation. Yet this perspective raises practical and philosophical questions. If spiritual awareness is assumed to directly enhance motivation, does it imply that organizations should actively work to

elevate employees' spiritual states? And would such practices be universally acceptable across diverse professional environments? These issues warrant closer scrutiny, particularly in current organizational settings.

This tension reflects a deeper epistemological model underpinning Islamic management literature, one that emphasizes the human-divine relationship and the primacy of piety and spiritual alignment. While valuable for personal and ethical development, such models may fall short in addressing the practical needs of managers operating in worldly, resultsoriented contexts. For instance, motivating individuals to engage in civic service or community defense cannot always be framed exclusively in terms of piety or remembrance of God. If Islamic management is viewed solely as a spiritual guide, comparisons with Western theories become irrelevant. However, if the goal is to provide actionable tools for managing people and organizations, a balance must be struck between spiritual ideals and pragmatic strategies.

To advance the discipline, Islamic motivation studies must move beyond abstraction and engage more deeply with the lived experiences of individuals and institutions. This involves developing models that integrate spiritual values with empirical insights, offering a holistic understanding of human motivation that encompasses both moral aspiration and worldly responsibility. Such an approach can respect human dignity while also enhancing effectiveness and engagement.

Another issue in the literature is the insufficient distinction between Islamic perspectives and dominant Western models. Many scholars assert that human needs in Islamic thought closely mirror those in secular theories, with the addition of certain religious dimensions. However, these additional elements often lack operational frameworks or practical application. In many cases, scholars merely classify needs into numerous categories without explaining their implications. For example, Bakhshi (2001) identifies ten categories of human needs and later adds an eleventh, but without critical analysis or justification. A more rigorous interrogation of these classifications could significantly enhance scholarly discourse.

one study—by Mohammadi and Mazrouei (2006)—has systematically reviewed motivation theories in Islamic management. While useful, it lacks the depth of critical analysis needed to meaningfully evaluate the field. Consequently, Islamic motivation theory remains underdeveloped and fragmented.

Using Sandberg and Alvesson's (2011) typology of research gaps consisting of lack of consensus, blind spots (unexplored areas), and application-based extensions—Islamic motivation studies appear most affected by the second category: blind spots. This study aims to address these underexplored areas by re-examining and expanding the theoretical and practical dimensions of motivation within the Islamic human sciences.

4. Research Methodology

The starting point for this section concerns the researcher's methodological approach to developing an Islamic model of motivation. In adherence to foundational Islamic principles—particularly the religious injunction that only those with scholarly qualifications may interpret sacred texts—researchers working within Islamic humanities must either possess the requisite religious expertise themselves or rely on the authority of a recognized scholar. The former path requires progression through the rigorous stages of *ijtihād*, along with specialization in the Islamic sciences. The latter involves the use of secondary data and presumes the scholar's legitimacy and depth of knowledge in the field.

Given the complexity and depth required to interpret primary Islamic sources, this study adopts the second approach. It draws upon the scholarship of Grand Ayatollah Abdullah Javadi Amoli, a distinguished contemporary figure in Islamic thought. Born in 1933, Grand Ayatollah Javadi Amoli is an eminent Iranian faqih, theologian, philosopher, and interpreter of the Qur'an. His intellectual legacy spans various domains, including philosophy, theology, feqh, and 'irfān. Renowned for his comprehensive command of both transmitted (naqli) and rational ('aqli) sciences, his work continues to shape modern Islamic discourse. Given his extensive contributions and scholarly authority, his corpus provides a robust and credible foundation for this research.

This study applies thematic analysis as outlined in the Braun and Clarke (2006) model, which is widely recognized in qualitative research for its structured yet flexible approach. The analytic process followed these six key stages:

Familiarization with the Data: In the initial phase, the researcher engaged in an extensive reading of the selected texts to gain a holistic understanding of their content, structure, and underlying concepts. For this study, 93 volumes of Grand Ayatollah Javadi Amoli's published works were reviewed, amounting to approximately 40,000 pages of material. This phase established the groundwork for identifying meaningful patterns.

Generating Initial Codes: Relevant segments of the text were systematically identified and assigned descriptive codes. These codes captured recurring ideas, concepts, and arguments within the source material.

Searching for Themes: The resulting codes were then organized into broader thematic categories. These preliminary themes represent recurring motifs or conceptual groupings that emerged from the data. A selection of these initial themes is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: preliminary Themes and Associated initial Codes Identified in Javadi Amoli's Works

Theme	Codes Employed	
Nature	- Multiplicity	
	- Diversity	
	- Empiricism	
Flourishing	- Awakening	
	- Self-Knowledge	
	- Insight	
	- Affirmation	
Human Self	- Nature	
	- Innate Disposition	

Theme Review: This phase involves the examination of various themes. After refinement and editing, the primary themes and their interrelationships are established. Within this model, the principal themes serve as the foundation for the final narrative, while sub-themes are utilized to elucidate the narratives associated with each main theme. Table 2 presents the primary and secondary themes of the research.

Table 2: Primary and Secondary Themes of the Research

Primary Themes	Secondary Themes	
	- Confirmatory Knowledge	
Flourishing of Motivations	- Complementary Knowledge	
Flourishing of Motivations	- Immorality (Fujūr)	
	- Piety (Taqwa)	
	- Multiplicity of Desires	
Regulation of Motivations	- Human Unity-Oriented Identity	
Regulation of Motivations	- Disorder of Will	
	- Practical Reason	
	- Self-Discipline	
Adjustment of Motivations	- Prescriptions (Aḥkām)	
	- Ethics	

Establishing and Identifying Themes: At this stage, the developed themes are finalized, and their definitions are established. The subsequent section of the article undertakes the task of elucidating the final themes.

5. Exploring Human Motivation from an Islamic Perspective: Insights from Grand Ayatollah Javadi Amoli

At the culmination of the research process, several core questions emerged, each reflecting a principal theme in the discourse on human motivation from an Islamic perspective. To address these inquiries meaningfully, it is essential to first present key foundational concepts derived from the thought of Grand Ayatollah Javadi Amoli.

5-1. Components of the Human Soul

According to a specific classification drawn from Islamic philosophical anthropology, the human soul is composed of three essential faculties: cognition, volition, and action. In addition, *fitrah* (innate disposition) and nature ($tab\bar{t}$ 'ah) are understood as two internal capacities within the soul.

Grand Ayatollah Javadi Amoli (2005a) explains the relationship between these elements as follows:

"Fitrah and nature are both spiritual faculties of humans; however, *fitrah* represents the exalted mode of existence of the human soul and holds a higher ontological rank compared to nature. Nature encompasses the administrative forces of the human soul responsible for the natural affairs of the material body—not merely the physical mass and material body that do not persist after death... The human soul, endowed with the selection power granted by God, can either make *fitrah* or nature dominant in various dimensions of its existence (i.e., cognition, volition, and action). Undoubtedly, the dominance of *fitrah*, due to its alignment and harmony with the Divine spirit and the celestial trust bestowed upon humans, renders one's character divine. Conversely, if nature—which is connected to the material body and the earthly realm—dominates a person, it inverts and reverses them toward the world of matter and nature."

Thus, while *fitrah* is associated with nobility and alignment with divine purpose, nature is often linked to traits such as greed ($man\bar{u}$) and impatience ($jaz\bar{u}$).

5-2. Human Propensities

Human beings, like all other creatures, possess propensities structured around attraction and repulsion. Javadi Amoli (2005a, p. 196) notes that:

"Attraction and repulsion exist in all types of beings; however, the more perfect a being is, the more refined its attraction and repulsion become, acquiring subtler names."

He delineates levels of these propensities ranging from base desires to ethical and spiritual forms—such as love and hatred, and ultimately, allegiance (tawallī) and disavowal (tabarrī). These faculties of attraction and repulsion not only shape behavior but also represent the underlying motivational forces behind both engagement and avoidance.

5-3. Volition and Human Action

Another crucial aspect of human motivation is volition (irādah). Javadi Amoli (2005a, p. 196) emphasizes that humans act not merely out of inclination (mayl) but through deliberate volition. This observation underscores the importance of analyzing how volition is formed and how it influences behavioral outcomes.

5-4. Nonlinear Relationships in Motivation

Motivational variables in Islamic thought often resist simple causal or linear modeling. For example, piety (taqwā) may serve both as a cause and a result of righteous motivation. As Javadi Amoli (2003, p. 13) explains:

"A person attains tagwā primarily through sound thinking and righteous motivation."

Thus, piety is not merely a motivational outcome but also a condition through which true motivation is cultivated.

6. The Enhancement of Motivations

Islam recognizes human vulnerability to error and ignorance. Consequently, one of the primary purposes of divine revelation is to awaken and guide the human soul toward sound motivations that might otherwise remain dormant or misdirected. Divine revelation plays a dual role in enhancing human intellect and motivation: through confirmation and development.

6-1. Confirmation of the Intellect

Divine revelation confirms truths that intellect can, in theory, grasp independently. However, due to human susceptibility to error, such confirmation serves as a safeguard against misjudgment and fragmentation of thought. While pure intellect does not err, human intellect is often compromised by external influences. In this context, Divine revelation offers epistemological clarity and consistency.

6-2. Development and Guidance of Intellect

Beyond confirmation, Divine revelation also extends and enhances the intellect by offering detailed guidance on matters beyond its reach. These include theological knowledge, rituals (e.g., prayer, fasting, pilgrimage), and socio-political rulings such as penal codes, commercial ethics, governance, and civic responsibilities. Divine revelation thus not only complements reason but also fills its epistemic gap, leading to a more comprehensive motivational framework grounded in both divine wisdom and rational reflection.

7. The Regulation of Motivations

In addition to stimulating motivation, Islamic teachings provide mechanisms for regulating and harmonizing motivational drives. The multiplicity of desires and faculties within the human being can lead to internal conflict and disintegration if left unchecked. Javadi Amoli describes this danger vividly:

"The human being is composed of a factor of 'multiplicity,' called nature, and a factor of 'unity,' called the supernatural soul. If one amplifies their natural aspect, they will find nothing but discord and conflict." (Javadi Amoli, 2001, p. 23)

"Inclination towards the world of multiplicity is the foundation of all discord... Love for [the world] is considered the root of all sins." (Javadi Amoli, 1999, pp. 3–392)

"They forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves" (Qur'an 59:19) is understood as a warning that neglect of the divine results in a fragmented, disoriented identity. (Javadi Amoli, 2005a, p. 228)

Regulation of internal drives is essential to preserve unity of purpose and strengthen willpower, which is central to moral action. A dispersed will weakens resolve and results in the failure to actualize higher aims:

"Humans do not have two axes of will... Therefore, if someone combines several desired objectives within the domain of their will, that combination is broken, not sound." (Javadi Amoli, 2009, p. 153)

8. Adjustment of Motivations

Islamic teachings do not seek the suppression of all desires, but rather their proper regulation and refinement. Certain motivations are seen as misaligned with human dignity and divine purpose, and these are subject to transformation through *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification) and ethical training.

8-1. As Javadi Amoli (2011, p. 95) notes:

"The source of human perfections... is abandoning carnal inclinations; and the origin of human deficiencies is the liberation of the soul in the path of satanic desires."

Desires, when regulated by the *fitrah*, serve human flourishing rather than detracting from it:

"The purpose of the Shariah is the adjustment of instincts and carnal desires, not their suspension." (Javadi Amoli, 2005b, p. 219)

Ultimately, the 'aql-i-'amali (practical intellect) plays a critical role in managing internal faculties, guiding human beings toward the actualization of their true potential within a divine framework.

Main Theme	Issue of Concern	Functions	Tools
Flourishing of Motivations	Scientific ignorance regarding good and evil; weakness in individuals' existing motivations	Assisting in activating correct motivations; helping eliminate incorrect motivations	Education; use of motivational tools such as glad tidings (tabshīr), warnings (indhār), admonition (maw'iza), testing (imtihān), invitation (da'wah), etc.
Adjustment of Motivations	Presence of incorrect motivations; need to strengthen correct motivations	Weakening or eliminating incorrect desires; strengthening correct motivations	Legal rulings (ahkām); ethics (akhlaq)
Regulation of Motivations	Multiplicity of desires; lack of harmony between desires	Strengthening the will; enhancing decision-making ability	Strengthening and cultivating practical intellect ('aql 'amali)

Table 3: General Framework of Motivation in Islam

9. Discussion: Comparing Javadi Amoli's Perspective with Western and **Islamic Motivation Theories**

9-1. Comparison with Western Theories of Motivation

Javadi Amoli's perspective introduces a theocentric and ethical foundation to human motivation that contrasts significantly with the psychocentric and individualistic orientation of Western models. While both paradigms seek to explain human behavior and performance, their underlying assumptions, goals, and mechanisms differ.

Points of Convergence:

- Like Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan), Javadi Amoli emphasizes internal motivation, but this is framed as alignment with fitrah and divine purpose, rather than psychological autonomy or personal satisfaction.
- The notion of goal-directed behavior and will-power regulation echoes Bandura's concept of self-regulation and self-efficacy though in Javadi's view, volition is deeply moral and spiritually accountable.
- Maslow's self-actualization loosely parallels the flourishing of the soul (nafs al-mutma'innah) in Islamic thought; however, where Maslow ends with human potential, Islam transcends it with divine proximity (qurb ila-allah).

Points of Divergence:

- Western theories largely separate motivation from morality; in contrast, Javadi Amoli asserts that ethical orientation is intrinsic to any valid motivation.
- Linear models like Maslow's hierarchy or Vroom's expectancy theory are inadequate for the nonlinear spiritual dynamics in Javadi Amoli's thought, where cause and effect can be reciprocal (e.g., taqwā both causes and results from righteous motivation).
- Most Western models lack a concept of Divine revelation as a source of motivational enhancement. In Islamic thought, divine guidance confirms and corrects human tendencies.

9-2. Comparison with Other Islamic Scholars

Javadi Amoli's perspective stands out even within Islamic scholarship due to its depth of metaphysical, philosophical, and exegetical reasoning. While other Islamic scholars address motivation from ethical or theological perspectives, his model synthesizes them into a structured, tripartite system: flourishing, regulation, and adjustment.

Common Ground with Sunni Scholars:

• Both traditions agree on the centrality of taqwā, ikhlāṣ, and divine accountability.

- Scholars like Alawneh (1998) and al-Seyyed Qasim (1995) emphasize work as worship ('ibādah), aligning with Javadi Amoli's view of purposeful, ethical action.
- Like Bakhshi (2001), Javadi critiques Western models for ignoring the afterlife and spiritual consequences of action.

Distinct Contributions from Javadi Amoli:

- His use of 'aql 'amali (practical intellect) as the regulatory mechanism of motivation is relatively absent in literature, which tends to prioritize nafs, galb, and tagwa without a systematic role for rational ethics.
- While many scholars critique Maslow (e.g., Shojaei, Alashti), few offer a reconstructed hierarchy or framework grounded in Islamic metaphysics as robustly as Javadi Amoli.
- Javadi brings in the concept of unity vs. multiplicity—suggesting that fragmented motivation reflects a deeper ontological disorder caused by the dominance of tabī'ah (nature) over fitrah (divine disposition).

Ultimately, Javadi Amoli's Perspective offers the following distinct advantages

- Holistic Integration: Combines spirituality, ethics, cognition, and behavior in a unified structure.
- Nonlinear Dynamics: Reflects real human experience—where growth is cyclical, and moral states feed into motivation.
- Applicability: Offers practical tools while remaining grounded in theological depth.

Javadi Amoli's perspective represents a paradigm shift in understanding motivation—not merely as a set of impulses to be managed or needs to be satisfied, but as a sacred human capacity that must be guided, purified, and aligned with divine purpose. In doing so, it complements, critiques, and expands both Western and Islamic models. This framework challenges modern organizations, especially in Muslim societies, to rethink how they inspire action—not just for efficiency or success, but for ethical flourishing and spiritual development.

10. Conclusion

Despite the significance of motivation in shaping the foundations of Islamic management, further research is necessary in this field. A review of the literature reveals that while there are a notable number of published articles on this topic (compared to other aspects of Islamic management), a definitive understanding of how to approach motivation from an Islamic perspective remains elusive.

This paper presents an attempt to establish a comprehensive framework for addressing the issue of motivation from an Islamic viewpoint, drawing upon the works and insights of Grand Ayatollah Javadi Amoli. The key findings of this study are as follows:

The Islamic perspective on motivation encompasses three primary themes: the flourishing of human motivations, the regulation of motivations, and the adjustment of motivations. Focusing solely on one of these areas cannot adequately represent the holistic view of motivation offered by Islam.

Practical intellect ('aql 'amali), a fundamental faculty of human existence, plays a pivotal role in managing and guiding human motivations. A more precise understanding of Islam's view in this regard requires a thorough study of practical intellect and its characteristics.

Religious thought distinguishes between the faculties of attraction and repulsion. The faculty that generates motivation and desire for something is distinct from the one that causes detachment and aversion.

Just as it is essential to study the factors that drive motivation in Islam, it is equally important to explore the factors that lead to demotivation or loss of motivation.

The framework proposed in this paper provides a valuable foundation for advancing the discourse on motivation from an Islamic perspective. To do so, focused research efforts are required, and a holistic approach to the entire issue of motivation within the context of Islamic thought is necessary.

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