

**FLATTERING, FLATTERY, AND HYPOCRISY: A CLOSER LOOK AT THESE MEANINGS IN AL-QURAN, AL-SUNNAH, AND THE ENGLISH LITERATURE**

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<b>Abstract</b>	<p><i>As concepts, flattering, flattery, and hypocrisy could be misinterpreted. While flattering is 'saying nice things about someone or something', flattery is praise that is not sincere. Precisely, this paper explains the meaning differences among the Arabic term nifaq as well as the English terms namely: (flattering, flattery, and hypocrisy). This paper highlights these concepts from Al Qura'an and Sunnah perspectives as well as the English literature. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to make these terms clearly defined and conceptualized and enlightens managers in the different organizations and companies about these concepts so that they are more aware of them. While giving flattering remarks to others could be acceptable, good, and should be encouraged in organizations, flattery and hypocrisy should be unacceptable and should be avoided. The objective of this conceptual paper is to highlight and pave the way for other research studies that can validate instruments for nifaq from Islamic perspective, that is to say, in Al Quran and Sunnah. Qualitative research design was used to obtain the data of this study. Content analysis was the qualitative research technique used in this study. The results of this study showed a difference in meaning between the concepts discussed in the study and therefore these terms were well defined and conceptualized. The results also showed that Arabic is richer compared to English when it comes to hypocrisy and other relevant concepts such as mudahanah, mujamalah, and mudarah, that is to say, there are more synonyms for some of these concepts in Arabic than in English.</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>Faltering, flattery, hypocrisy, Al-Quran, Sunnah.</i></p>
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**INTRODUCTION**

Although flattery involves complimenting and deception, people cannot flatter themselves. Moreover, flattery is a failed attempt to create a personal relationship, unlike friendship, it is not necessarily mutual. In normal cases, it cannot be mutual (Eylon & Heyd, 2008). Not all flatterers do flatter to get a materialistic benefit. In this case, flattery is very bad and harmful. However, some people do flatter to get some attraction, so it is psychological. Flattery is different from hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy, as defined by English Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, is 'behavior in which someone pretends to have moral standards or opinions that they do not actually have'. In Arabic, hypocrisy is referred to as 'Nifaq' /nifa:q/, which is defined by the Arabic Al-Ma'ani Dictionary as 'showing the opposite of what one's feels or intends to do'.

For example, one who is dishonest and disloyal to an organization, but shows he is honest and loyal is called 'Munafiq' in Arabic, that is hypocrite. Hypocrisy is a very critical and serious phenomenon as it has very harmful consequences; the consequence would basically be doing harms to people and other resources. In fact, Allah Taala has warned us in many situations as mentioned in many parts of the holy book (Al-Quran) to beware of hypocrites. Allah has also highlighted the danger of being hypocrite. For example, Allah says:

﴿بَشِّرِ الْمُنَافِقِينَ بِأَنَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا﴾

Which means, "to the hypocrites give the glad tidings that there is for them (but) a grievous penalty". (al-Quran. An-Nisa': 138).

However, there are other concepts such as flattering and flattery in English as well as *mujamalah*, *riyaa*, *mudahanah*, and *mudarah* in Arabic. This conceptual paper attempts to highlight the definitions of these concepts so that people do not get confused about them. These norms of behavior have been discussed globally as they are human norms of behavior. For example, in a beautiful simile, Josh Billings, the 19th century American humor writer, likened flattery to cologne water.

He wrote that; "Flattery is like cologne water, to be smelt, not swallowed". New research suggests that business leaders - especially if they're women or minorities - ought to heed Billings' advice. Underlings tend to flatter bosses, and that makes sense - given basic psychology (we like to be liked), and research showed that close employee-boss relationships increase promotions. But quite often, those compliments come from a place of resentment (Keeves et. al., 2006). What leads to a better relationship with the boss, that is to say, the antecedents to a better boss-employee relationship is not within the scope of this paper. However, flattery could be some employees' method to get better relationship with their bosses.

Flattery is common in its cross-cultural prevalence though it is not considered by modern theoreticians as the worse moral vices. As mentioned in Eylon and Heyd (2008), flattery is unidirectional, like the hierarchical relations on which it depends. For example, although rulers, bosses and teachers can compliment their subjects, subordinates and students, they cannot be said to flatter them. However, flattery and complimenting are two different concepts that other authors and philosophers tried to differentiate. For example, Aristotle's had a general formula to distinguish between flattery and complimenting and between flattery and servility.

This led to a general mapping of the two ideal types of flattery: (1) the manipulative and (2) the obsequious. The manipulative corresponds to Aristotle's description of excessive friendliness aiming at one's own advantage while the obsequious refers to the person who suffers from the same excessive need but has 'no end in view'. In addition, flattery was discussed as a theme in the English literature in general and in William Shakespeare works in particular.

Thus, this conceptual paper highlights flattery as a concept. In addition, it sheds light on the concepts hypocrisy, known as *nifaaq* and other concepts such as *mudarah* and *mura'ah* in Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah as well as the English literature. This paper is a conceptual paper in nature, but it paves the way to other research works to be conducted. Other research can be done to validate a measurement for such phenomena and later examine the relationship between such norms of behavior (phenomena) and performance of organizations or companies.

#### DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPTS

Before the concepts of hypocrisy (*nifaaq*) and flattery (*mudahanah*) are highlighted in the Quran, Sunnah, the Arab literature, the English literature, and the Malaysian literature, it is important to highlight the definition of these concepts.

### Flattering

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines flattering as saying nice things about someone or something. In Arabic, it is equivalent to the term *mujamalah*, which, according to *Al-Mu'jam Al-Arabi* (the Arabic dictionary), means to say nice words that show much respect to someone. However, the term (*itra'*), in Arabic, is to mention the best traits in someone to him or to her. For example, when a poet mentions the best traits in a king, we say that such a poet is practicing *itraa'* for that king.

### Flattery

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines flattery as praise that is not sincere, especially in order to obtain something from someone. The English idiom says; flattery will get you everywhere or nowhere, which means that praise that is not sincere will or will not get someone where he/she wants. The term that is similar to 'flattery' is called *tamalluq* in Arabic. The Arabic Dictionary (*Al-Ma'ani*) defines the verb *tamalluq* which means practiced flattery as being nice to a person and saying sweet things to him/her unsincerely.

### Hypocrisy

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines hypocrisy as behavior in which someone pretends to have moral standards or opinions that they do not actually have. The Arabic equivalent term for hypocrisy is called *nifaq*, which is highlighted in the section below.

### Nifaq

The Arabic dictionary (*Mu'jam Al Ma'ani Al-Jami'*) defines *nifaq* as showing something opposite to what is hidden. The concept *nifaq* was mentioned in the Holy Quran. In verse 97 in Surah At-Tawbah:

Which means, "*The Arabs of the desert are the worst of Unbelief and hypocrisy*" (al-Quran. Al-Tawbah: 97).

Here, it is worth mentioning that Aa'rab (Arabs of the desert) are different from Arabs. Arab is called (Arabi) in Arabic while (Arab of the desert) is called (Aa'rabi). *Nifaq* is the noun of the verb '*nafaqah*'. According to the Arabic dictionary (*Mu'jam Al-Ma'ani Al-Jame'*), it has two meanings: (1) someone showing the opposite of what he/she hides and (2) hiding atheism and showing belief. Allah has described the Arabs of the desert as more extreme in '*nifaq*' as stated in verse 97 in Surah At-Tawbah.

## INTRODUCTION ABOUT HYPOCRISY IN ISLAM

Hypocrisy, as highlighted by Muslim scholars, is of two types: small hypocrisy and big one. The big hypocrisy is when one becomes no more among Muslims. This type of person hides atheism while shows faith and belief or when someone is sarcastic about prophet Muhammad PBUH or the companions of Prophet Muhammad. The evidence for this is what was mentioned in verses 66 and 67 in Surah At-Taubah (The Repentance) when Allah says:

﴿لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا قَدْ كَفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ إِنَّ نَعْفَ عَنْ طَائِفَةٍ مِنْكُمْ نُعَذِّبُ طَائِفَةً بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ (٦٦)  
الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

Which means, "*If you do question them, they declare (with emphasis): 'We were only talking idly and in play. Say: 'Was it at Allah, and His Signs, and His Messenger, that you were mocking?'(65). Make you no excuses: you have rejected Faith after you had accepted it. If we pardon some of you, We will punish others amongst you, for that they are in sin (66)*" (al-Quran. Al-Tawbah: 66-67).

They second type of hypocrisy is smaller. It does not get the one practicing it out of Islam. The one under this category could have one of four traits as mentioned in Hadith Abdullah bin Amru : (1) he lies when he talks, (2) he gives empty promises, (3) he would cheats when he is given trust, and (4) and he would not tell the truth (Markaz Al Fatwa, 2018).

### **HYPOCRISY IN AL-QURAN**

In the Quran, hypocrisy and hypocrites were mentioned in 33 different aspects. They were mentioned in 13 Surah and in 79 verses. One Surah of Al-Quran is named Al-Munaafiqun, which means 'the Hypocrites'. This Surah is about a very critical feature of the social life. It is about the wiles and mischief of the hypocrite element in any community and the need of guarding against it and against the temptation it throws in the way of the believers. It is worth mentioning here that the battle of Uhud (Shawwal A.H.3) unmasked the Hypocrites in Madinah (Ali, n.d.)

As for the traits of hypocrites as stated in Quran, they are many. In fact, hypocrites are considered the most dangerous category of people in any society. The following traits were found in Al-Quran.

#### **Being Ill-Hearted**

Hypocrites, as described in the Quran, have no courage to show their real stand. They are unable to show they are good believers nor are they able to show the real disbelief. The reason behind this is that they are ill-hearted. This was stated clearly in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 10. Allah says:

﴿فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا وَهُمْ عَدَابٌ آلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ﴾

Which means, "In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease: and grievous is the penalty they (incur), because they are false (to themselves)" (al-Quran. Al-Baqarah: 10).

#### **Doing Harm Yet Pretending To Do Well**

Hypocrites, as described in the Quran, are people who do others harm, yet they claim doing good to others and making peace. For example, Allah says:

﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ﴾

Which means, "When it is said to them: 'make not mischief on the earth, 'they said: 'Why, we only want to make peace!'" (al-Quran. Al-Baqarah: 11).

#### **Being Arrogant**

When they call others to be good, they do it in an arrogant way, a way to show off while looking down at other people who try to do good deeds. Allah Taala says:

﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا كَمَا آمَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

Which means, "When it is said to them: 'Believe as the others believe', they say: 'Shall we believe as the fools believe?' Nay, of a surety they are the fools, but they do not know" (al-Quran. Al-Baqarah: 13).

#### **Taking Different Views (Colours) According To Their Interests**

Hypocrites, as described in Quran, are those people, who are cunning and malicious. They take different stands according to their own interests. For example, before good people, they show they are good, but when they are alone, they are being themselves, bad people. Allah has clearly stated that in verse 14 in Surah Al-Baqarah. Allah says:

﴿وَإِذَا لَفُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِئُونَ﴾

Which means, “And when they meet those who believe, they say: ‘we believe; , but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say: ‘We are really with you; we (were) only jesting” (al-Quran. Al-Baqarah: 14).

### **Betrayal And Not Keeping Their Promises**

Hypocrites never keep their promises and always shows they are not worth trust. They, for instance, promised God, yet did not keep their promises and so do they with people. Therefore, hypocrites must be cautioned. This is obvious in verses 75, 76 and 77 in Surah At-Taubah (The Repentance). Allah says:

﴿وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ عَاهَدَ اللَّهُ لَئِنْ آتَانَا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٧٥) فَلَمَّا آتَاهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ بَخِلُوا بِهِ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ (٧٦) فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهُ بِمَا أَخْلَفُوا اللَّهَ مَا وَعَدُوهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ﴾

Which means, “Amongst them are men who made a covenant with Allah, that if He bestowed on them of His bounty, they would give (largely) in charity, and be truly amongst those who are righteous (75), but when He di bestow of His bounty, they became covetous, and turned back (from their covenant), averse (from its fulfilment (76), So He has put as a consequence hypocrisy into their hearts, (to last) till they Day whereon they shall meet Him: because they broke their covenant with Allah, and because they lied (again and again (77))” (al-Quran. Al-Tawbah: 75-77).

### **Their Loyalty To The Unbelievers**

Hypocrites are always flattering those unbelievers. They are always ready to do anything bad to achieve their goals and interests. In verse no.139 in Surah Al-Nisaa’, Allah says:

﴿الَّذِينَ يَتَّخِذُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَلِيتَعُونَ عِنْدَهُمُ الْعِزَّةَ فَإِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا﴾

Which means, “Indeed, to those who take for friend’s unbelievers rather than believers: is it honour they seek among them? Nay, all honor is with Allah” (al-Quran. Al-Nisa’: 139).

### **Demotivating And Destabilizing The Society**

In verse no.12 in Surah Al-Ahzab, Allah says:

﴿وَإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا﴾

Which means, “And behold! The Hypocrites and those in whose hearts is a disease (even) say: ‘Allah and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusions!’ This clearly shows that hypocrites are always trying to spread fear and doubt in the hearts of believers and they always doubt the promises of Allah SWT and Prophet (PBUH)” (al-Quran. Al-Ahzab: 12).

The goal of the hypocrites is certainly to to create uncertainty and making people not trust the leadership.

### **Being Sadist And Feeling Happy When The Believers Face Crises**

The hypocrites do not wish the believers any good. They even feel very happy when the believers are in bleak times. In verse no.120 in Surah Ali ‘Imran (The Family of Imran), Allah says:

﴿إِنْ تَسَسَّكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ وَإِنْ تُصِيبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ﴾

Which means, “If aught that is good befalls you, it grieves them; but if some misfortune overtakes you, they rejoice at it. But if you are constant and do right, not the least harm will

their cunning do to you; for Allah compasses round about all that they do” (al-Quran. Ali ‘Imran: 120).

### Escaping When Faced With Challenges And Hardships

When the believers and the hypocrites are faced with hardships and challenges, the hypocrites will be the first to escape; therefore, they are unreliable. This has been highlighted in verse no.12 in Surah Al-Hasyr (The Gathering or Banishment), Allah says:

﴿لَئِن أُخْرِجُوا لَا يَخْرُجُونَ مَعَهُمْ وَلَئِن قُوتِلُوا لَا يَنْصُرُونَهُمْ وَلَئِن نَصَرُوهُمْ لَيُوَلِّنَ الْأَذْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يُنصَرُونَ﴾

Which means, “When they are expelled, never will they go out with them; and if they are attacked (in fight), they will never help them; and if they do help them, they will turn their backs; so they will receive no help” (al-Quran. Al-Hashr: 12).

### Not Abiding By And Not Implementing The Law Of Allah

In verses 60 and 61 in Surah An-Nisaa’ (The Women), Allah says:

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَحَاكَمُوا إِلَى الطَّاغُوتِ وَقَدْ أُمِرُوا أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِهِ وَيُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُمْ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا (٦٠) وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ رَأَيْتَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْكَ صُدُودًا﴾

Which means, “Have you not turned your vision to those who declare that they believe in the revelations that have come to you and those before you? Their (real) wish is to restort together for judgement (in their disputes) to the Evil One, though they were ordered to reject him. But Satan’s wish is to lead them astray far away (from the right) (60). When it is said to them: ‘Come to what Allah has revealed, and to the Messenger’ you see the Hypocrites avert their faces from you in disgust (61)” (al-Quran. Al-Nisa’: 60-61).

This shows that the hypocrites do not abide by the rules that Allah set because these rules are not in line with their own interests. These hypocrites want only what goes in line with their own interests.

### Asking Others To Do Bad And Avoiding Doing Good

As stated in verse 67, in Surah At-Taubah, Allah says:

﴿الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

Which means, “They hypocrites, men and women, (have an understanding) with each other: they enjoy evil, and forbid what is just, and are close with their hands. They have forgotten Allah; so He has forgotten them. Verily the Hypocrites are rebellious and perverse” (al-Quran. Al-Tawbah: 67).

This shows that the hypocrites will always urge people to do bad and forbid people from doing good.

### HYPOCRISY IN THE SUNNAH (THE HADITH SAHIH)

The traits of the hypocrites were highlighted in the Sunnah. Different hadiths (sayings of prophet Mohamed as reported by prophet companions) were mentioned in this regard. The traits below were highlighted in the hadith:

#### Envy

Abu Hurairah, may Allah bless him, narrated:

{ قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: لا يجتمعان في النارِ مُسلمٌ قتلَ كافرًا ثمَّ سدَّدَ وقاربَ، ولا يجتمعانِ في جوفِ مؤمنٍ غبارٌ فيسبيلِ اللهِ وفيحِ جهنَّمَ، ولا يجتمعانِ في قلبِ عبدٍ الإيمانُ والحسدُ }

Which means, "I heard Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says: There are two traits that cannot be found in the heart of a follower: true belief and envy" (Hadith. Al-Nasa'i. 1477).

### **The Fear Of True Believers To Become Hypocrites**

Al Hassan narrated:

{ والله ما مضى مؤمن ولا بقي إلا وهو يخاف النفاق , وما آمنه إلا منافق }

Which means, "there is no true believer who does not fear hypocrisy or does trust hypocrites" (Hadith. Al-Bukhari. *Al-Iman Book, Bab 1.* 1656).

This shows that true believers are those who are always worried to fall into any hypocrite act and that people who do not worry or are not concerned with becoming hypocrite are those who are hypocrites.

### **Hypocrites Have Two Faces**

Abu Sha'tha' said, Abdullah bin Umayr, may Allah bless both him and his father, some people went out of Marwan house, he said: *Where did those people come? They said: we went out of Emir Marwan, he said: so you agreed with whatever right he said and disagreed with whatever wrong he said: they said: 'no, not at all, when he said something wrong, we agreed with him by saying 'you're right' but when we left his house, we said among ourselves, may Allah curse him, he is insincere and liar'* (Sahih Muslim). Abdullah (Fath Al-Bari, 13/615) said, 'we used to consider those like them hypocrites during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)' (Sunan Ibn Majah).

Abu Huraira, May Allah bless him said narrated:

{ قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم : تجد من شر الناس يوم القيامة عند الله ذا الوجهين الذي يأتي هؤلاء بوجه وهؤلاء بوجه }

Which means, "You will find the worst people to Allah in the Day of Judgement are those who have two faces: who show some people one face while show others another face" (Hadith. Al-Bukhari).

Explaining this, Al Qurtubi said, those people who have two faces are the worst people because they are like hypocrites, who are full of flattering and telling lies as well as doing others harm and mischief. An-Nawawi said, people who have two faces are those who tell different people what satisfies them, which is hypocrisy, which is complete lies and deceit to get to know the secrets of those different groups of people and it is a prohibited flattery (Fath Al-Bari, 13/615).

### **Not Following The Rules Of Allah And Falsifying What Prophet Muhammad Stated**

Abu Said Al-Humairi narrated:

{ عن أبي سعيد الحميري قال: كان معاذ بن جبل رضي الله عنه يتحدث بما لم يسمع أصحاب رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ويسكت عما سمعوا، فبلغ عبد الله بن عمرو ما يتحدث به، فقال: والله ما سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول هذا، وأوشك معاذ أن يفتنكم في الخلاء، فبلغ ذلك معاذًا، فلقيه فقال معاذ: يا عبد الله بن عمرو، إن التكذيب بحديث عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم نفاق وإنما إثمه على من قاله }

Which means, “Muaz bin Jabal, may Allah bless him, was talking about things that the companions of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not hear of and keep silent about what they heard, then Abdullah bin Amru knew what he was talking about. Abdullah bin Amru said: ‘I swear to Allah, I have never heard prophet Muhammad saying that. Muaz knew about this, then said; ‘Oh Abdullah bin Amru, claiming what prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said is considered ‘hypocrisy’ and it is a sin to whoever did it” (Hadith. Al-Bukhari. Bab Ma Qila fi Dhi al-Wajhayn).

### Telling Lies

Abdullah bin Amru, May Allah bless him and his father, narrated:

{عن عبد الله بن عمرو رضي الله عنهما، قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: أربع من كنَّ فيه كان منافقًا خالصًا، ومن كانت فيه خصلةٌ منهنَّ كانت فيه خصلةٌ من النفاقِ حتى يدعها: إذا ائتمنَّ خان، وإذا حدَّث كذب، وإذا عاهد غدر، وإذا خاصم فجر}

Which means, “Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “There are four traits that whoever has was fully hypocrite even if he/she claims to fast, pray and be a muslim and if he/she has only one trait out of these four, he/she would be having a trait of hypocrisy unless he/she gets rid of that trait. These four traits are (1) if he/she talks, he/she lies, (2) if he/she is given trust, he/she will prove he/she is not trustworthy, (3) if he/she takes a commitment to do something, he/she will not be committed (in other version of the hadith, if he/she promises, he/she will not fulfill their promise), and (4) when he/she has a disagreement with you, he/she will exaggerate in doing you harm (for example, he/she may reveal few secrets you told him/her once or he may even say bad things about you that are not true)” (Hadith. Muslim).

### Not Being Trust Worthy When They Are Trusted

Abdullah bin Amru, may Allah bless him and his father, narrated:

{عن عبد الله بن عمرو رضي الله عنهما، قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: أربع من كنَّ فيه كان منافقًا خالصًا، ومن من كانت فيه خصلةٌ منهنَّ كانت فيه خصلةٌ من النفاقِ حتى يدعها: إذا ائتمنَّ خان، وإذا حدَّث كذب، وإذا عاهد غدر، وإذا خاصم فجر}

Which means, “Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “There are four traits that whoever has was fully hypocrite even if he/she claims to fast, pray and be a muslim and if he/she has only one trait out of these four, he/she would be having a trait of hypocrisy unless he/she gets rid of that trait. These four traits are (1) if he/she talks he/she lies, (2) if he/she is given trust, he/she will prove he/she is not trustworthy, (3) if he/she takes a commitment to do something, he/she will not be committed (in other version of the hadith, if he/she promises, he/she will not fulfill their promise), and (4) when he/she has a disagreement with you, he/she will exaggerate in doing you harm (for example, he/she may reveal few secrets you told him/her once or he may even say bad things about you that are not true)” (Hadith. Al-Tirmidhi).

### Laziness To Perform Prayer In Group

Missing the prayer in group in the mosque due to laziness is one of the traits of the hypocrites. As narrated in Sunan Al-Nasa’i, Ubai bin Ka’ab, may Allah bless him, said:

{صلى رسول الله يومًا صلاة الصُّبح فقال أشهد فلانُ الصَّلَاةَ قالوا لا. قال فلانُ قالوا لا. قال إنَّ هاتين الصَّلَاتينِ من أثقل الصَّلَاةِ على المنافقينَ ولو يعلمونَ ما فيهما لأنَّوهما ولو حبواً والصَّفُّ الأوَّلُ على مثلِ

صَفِّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَلَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ فَضِيلَتَهُ لَا يَتَدْرَأُ مَعَهُ صَلَاةُ الرَّجُلِ مَعَ الرَّجُلِ أَزْكَى مِنْ صَلَاتِهِ وَحَدَهُ صَلَاةُ الرَّجُلِ مَعَ الرَّجُلِينَ أَزْكَى مِنْ صَلَاتِهِ وَمَا كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ فَهَوَ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ {

Which means, "Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) performed subuh prayer (morning prayer) and noticed people few and when prophet finished the prayer, he asked us about certain people who have not come to prayer, then prophet Muhammad said : 'morning and night prayers are the most difficult ones for those who are hypocrites, but if people know the importance of these prayers, they will certainly perform it in group (in the mosque) even if they crawl to the mosque" (Hadith. Al-Nasa'i).

In another hadith , someone from Prophet Muhammad companions said prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that Subuh (morning) and isha' (night) prayers are the prayers that the hypocrites do not consistently perform them in the mosque in group. Another hadith by Abu Al Ja'd Al-Damiri, who said: prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said whoever misses Friday prayer 3 times consistently without a reason is a hypocrite (Hadith. Al-Tirmidhi).

### Having Bad Traits And Lack Of Religious Knowledge

Abu Hurairah, May Allah bless him, narrated:

{عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: خصلتان لا تجتمعان في منافق: حسن سمت ولا فقه في الدين}

Narrated by Abu Hurairah -May Allah bless him- said: Prophet Muhammad said -Peace be upon him -, "There are two traits that if one has, he/she will definitely be a hypocrite. These traits are, (1) bad traits and manners as well as (2) lack of knowledge in Islam" (Hadith. Al-Tirmidhi).

### Stinginess

Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri narrated:

{عن أبي سعيد الخدري قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: خصلتان لا تجتمعان في مؤمن: البخل، وسوء الخلق}

Which means, "Narrated by Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri -May Allah bless him- said: Prophet Muhammad said -Peace be upon him-, "Two traits that will never meet in Mu'min: stingy and bad behaviours" (Hadith).

This has been highlighted in the hadith of Abu Huraira, May Allah bless him, who said: prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: just like dust for sake of Allah and Fire of Hell cannot meet, both stinginess and belief cannot also meet in one person" (Sahih Al-Jami').

### FLATTERY IN THE SUNNAH

As cited in Muslim Ad Netwrok (2018), in the hadith 'A'ishah reported that a man requested an audience with the Prophet. The Prophet said, "What a foul tribesman that one is". But when the man entered, the Prophet was cordial and pleasant to him. When the man left, another asked permission to meet with him. The Prophet said, "What a good tribesman that one is." But when he entered, the Prophet was not nearly as cordial with him as he had been with the first. When he left, 'A'ishah asked, "You said what you did about the first man, yet you met him cordially. And you said what you did about the second one, and yet you were reserved with him." The Prophet said, "O 'A'ishah, the worst kind of people are those whose vulgarity must be avoided".

The Prophet of Allah (PBUH), ordered us to throw dust in the faces of those who flatter. 'Ata ibn Abi Rabah reported that when a man praised another in the presence of

Ibn 'Umar, Ibn 'Umar began tossing dust in the direction of his face, saying, "The Prophet of Allah (PBUH) said, "If ever you encounter those who flatter, throw dust in their faces". 'Adi ibn Artah said, "If ever one of the Companions of the Prophet of Allah (PBUH), was praised, he would say, 'O Allah, do not take me to task for what they say and forgive me for what they do not know about".

The hadiths mentioned above showed that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not accept flattery as it is not sincere.

### **FLATTERY IN THE ENGLISH LITERATURE**

Flattery has also been highlighted by researchers and by the English famous playwright, William Shakespeare. The section below sheds light on the phenomenon 'flattery' in the literature as well as in William Shakespeare works. Researchers have studied the 'flattery' phenomenon.

For example, according to Chan & Sengupta (2010), flattery is one of the oldest and most commonly used of persuasion methods and it also is an art of offering pleasing compliment. Flattery can be defined as communicating positive things about another person without regard to that person's true abilities or qualities. According to Chan & Sengupta (2010), human beings have a basic desire to believe in good things about themselves so the target of the flattery evaluates for the flatterer are positive (Chan and Sengupta, 2010).

According to Tranctink & Rao (2001), flattery is a social behavior by praising a target person to secure a benefit to the flatterer. The use of the terms 'flattery' or 'ingratiation' is a legitimate and oft- used interpersonal communication although it arouse negative meaning in everyday usage. They further explained that though flattery is insincere, the flattered people tend to believe the flatterers and thus they believe favorably in. Moreover, they mentioned that flattery produces a positive effect in the target, and increases their importance and feeling of power. Thus, the dynamics of social interaction, lead the target to increasingly like the flatterer and to judge the performance of the flatterer more favorably through reciprocation norms.

Flatterers and 'yes men' have always abounded near sources of power (Tranctinky & Rao, 2001). Reading William Shakespeare literary works, it is clear that he talked about flattery in different plays he wrote. In Pericles Helicanus (Act I, scene ii) warns:

*They do abuse [wrong] the King that flatter him,  
For flattery is the belows blows up sin,  
The thing the which is flattered, but a spark  
To which that blast gives heat and stronger glowing;*

Flattery can take place anywhere and with anyone. Even with kings and Sultans, there are those who flatter as well as those who are flattered. In Julius Caesar (Act II, scene i) Decius explains how he will delay Caesar with flattery:

*That unicorns may be betray'd with trees,  
And bears with glasses [mirrors], elephants with Holes [pits],  
Lions with toils [nets], and men with flatterers;  
But when I tell him he hates flatterers  
He says he does, being then most flattered.*

However, despite the fact that Wiliam Shakespeare highlighted the 'flattery' phenomenon, he highlighted it beautifully in the last part of his poem The Passionate Pilgrim written below:

*Every one that flatters thee  
Is no friend in misery.  
Words are easy, like the wind,  
Faithful friends are hard to find:  
Every man will be thy friend,*

*Whilst hast wherewith to spend;  
But if store of crowns be scant,  
No man will supply they want...  
He that is thy friend in thy indeed:  
He will help thee in they need:  
If thou sorrow, he will weep;  
If thou wake, he cannot sleep;  
Thus of every grief in heart  
He with thee doth bear a part.  
These are certain signs to know  
Faithful friend from flatt'ring foe.*

These lines mean that anyone who flatters others will never be their true friends in bleak times. However, when one is financially rich or powerful in terms of position, other people would tend to be close to them. However, if one becomes poor, people would tend to be far away from him/her. The real friend is the one who helps us when we are in need of him/her and the one who will be torn due to pain he feels just because we are in pain.

### **FLATTERY AND OTHER CONCEPTS**

What makes flattery confusing to others to fully understand is the fact that flattery itself is an 'ordinary vice' in a double sense. Though flattery is different from flattering and from complimenting, flattery itself is practiced by someone who 'compliments' someone else. However, the intention of the flatterer is to get a favor from the flatteree. Flattery also differs from servility, which is a general psychological disposition because the flatterer must create the appearance of paying an honest compliment.

Moreover, flattery was conceptualized as of two different types or there are two scenarios of flattery. The first one takes place when the flatterer acts with cool design, aiming at achieving a particular favor or personal benefit as a consequence of the favorable attitude the flatteree would (presumably) develop towards the flatterer. Flattery of the second type is psychologically more complex. It is an attempt to create some personal relationship in order to partly overcome a hierarchical gap. Unlike the first one, it does not seek a material benefit and is partially sincere, but only personal attention and reciprocal appreciation (Eylon & Heyd, 2008).

### **CONCLUSION**

Flattery, as a phenomenon, could be confused with other meanings / concepts such as complimenting, flattering (as in giving flattering remarks, which is acceptable), and hypocrisy. Flattery is not of one type; it is of two types as explained above. Flattery is a universal phenomenon / vice that has been discussed not only in Al-Quran, Al-Sunnah, but also in the English literature.

These phenomena or norms of behaviour are universal and they could have a negative impact on the individual, group, or/and organization. Such phenomena especially *nifaq* (hypocrisy) have been comprehensively highlighted in the Quran and Sunnah due to the dangers of the hypocrites and the harm they could do to individuals, groups, organizations, or the society as a whole.

Thus, it is vital to look at how we can validate an instrument from Islamic perspective, based on Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah, that can measure these concepts so that we can pave the way to more studies that can look into the relationship between employees' flattery to their bosses and their bosses' satisfaction with them or between hypocrisy and employee performance.

It was also found that Arabic has more flattery-related synonyms compared to English. This could be an opportunity for other researchers to look into flattery-related concepts in the Arabic literature so that new measurements on new concepts can be developed.

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