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**THE CONCEPT OF *SA'ĀDAH* ACCORDING TO ISLAMIC,
WESTERN, AND GREEK VIEWS**

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Abstract

Sa'ādah in Islam literally means happiness. In a broader sense, it also means a combination of peaceful and tranquil as well as being in luck. The concept of *sa'ādah* has always been a topic of interest among the researchers local and foreign alike to better the livelihood of mankind, thus indicating the necessity of *sa'ādah* in present times. Societies have a shallow understanding on the concept of *sa'ādah* that it needs to be clearly discussed from Islamic, Western, and Greek perspectives. This research therefore aims to discuss the concept of *sa'ādah* as per the views of the scholars selected from the Islamic, the western and the Greek disciplines. The discussion uses content analysis method by referring to the works and literatures penned by the above mentioned scholars pertaining to the concept of *sa'ādah*. Thereafter, the data are analyzed using comparative method of which similarities and differences of the views on *sa'ādah* are identified. The finding of the research show that there are a number of similarities among the views of the Islamic, the western and the Greek philosophers. However, this research also finds that the Islamic view of *sa'ādah* is more comprehensive because it encompasses happiness in the present world as well as the hereafter.

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Keywords: *Sa'ādah*, happiness, views, Islam, Greek, the west.



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1. Introduction

Happiness comes in many forms as people perceive happiness differently. Some perceive happiness in terms of contentment, satisfaction, peace of mind, and fulfilment. Others view happiness in terms of enjoyment, pleasure, and fun. In fact, satisfaction is just a general explanation for happiness. It can be subdivided into specific areas, for example, daily routine that someone does to make him/her feel satisfied and happy (Argyle, 1985; *see also* Amalia et al., 2016).

Happiness in human beings always relates to their achievement of something of material. They will strive to reach a goal that they set for specific purposes in their life. When the target is reached, happiness ensues because after the struggle, they finally succeed. However, the satisfaction from this achievement is only temporary. There will come a point where one would think that true happiness can only be achieved through religious means (al-Qaderi, n. d., p. 4). The previous statement suggests that the achievement of a person's major goals in life is a necessary precondition to happiness. For those who have major goals in life but are unable to achieve them, they will not be happy. Apart from achievement of major goals in life, happiness also means free from any major distress (Telfer, 1980).

It can be concluded that the perception of happiness is limited and related to certain conditions that can trigger happiness. In reality, the meaning of happiness has a broader context. It relates to the life in this world and the hereafter. Happiness can in fact last forever. This paper discusses the views of happiness from selected scholars and explains the meaning of true happiness according to Islamic, Western, and Greek scholars. In order to analyse the study systematically, four research questions are addressed in the subsequent sections.

To answer the research questions, the discussion uses content analysis method by making references to the work and literature of selected scholars with regard to the concept of *sa'ādah*. There are three categories of *sa'ādah* that will be discussed, thus defining the boundaries of the study. The three categories are the interpretation of the concept of *sa'ādah*, the sources of *sa'ādah* (happiness), and the stages of happiness according to Islamic, Western, and Greek perspectives.

1.1. The concept of *sa'ādah*

The trilateral root of *sa'ādah*, *sīn 'ayn dāl* (سَيْدَل) occurs twice in the Quran, in two derived forms. Both words refer to happiness, once in the form of I verb *su'idū* (سُعِدُوا) and another one refers to the noun *sa'iḍ* (سَيْدَ). The term *su'idū* means 'were glad' in verse 11:108:3 in the Quran (Dukes, 2009–2017). Based on *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, the term *su'idū* in this verse means 'blessed'. Those who are blessed in this verse refer to the followers of the Messengers and as a reward for them, their final abode will be paradise, where they will remain there forever (Ibn Kathīr, 1999, p. 2378). The noun *sa'iḍ* (سَيْدَ) is mentioned in the verse with the term *wasa'iḍun* (وَسَيْدِيْدُونَ) which means 'and (the) glad' in verse 11:105:10 in the Quran (Dukes, 2009–2017). Based on *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, the term *wasa'iḍun* in this verse means 'blessed and happy' (Ibn Kathīr, 1999). *Sa'ādah* means happiness, bliss, felicity, welfare, well-being, and well (Baalbaki, 1995, p. 633).

Based on the discussion, *sa'ādah* means 'happiness and blessed'. Those who are blessed are usually happy with their lives because they live in God's mercy. The happiness they gain comes from the right choice to follow the straight path. To make their happiness everlasting, God grants paradise as the final abode for them, as a reward for their patience in following the Messengers.

2. Problem Statement

The concept of *sa'ādah* or happiness has always been a topic of study that generates interest among researchers. Happiness is defined as a constant feeling of pleasure, gratification, generosity, and delight, arising from the contentment of one's self, life, and belief that one will have a blissful destiny (al-Sheha, 2009). The lack of understanding of happiness may lead individuals to achieve happiness in a wrong way. The achievement of happiness must be clearly known by each individual. In order to achieve happiness, the mind must be clearly guided by revelation. Revelation is a basis of knowledge that functions as a leading foundation to guide the human mind. Therefore, the one with mind clarity may attain happiness with the guidance from revelation (Sulaiman, 2017). This study focuses on how happiness can be attained.

The pursuit of happiness is also different according to cultures. According to Ford et al. (2015), the pursuit of happiness may produce higher comfort in cultures that encourage a socially absorbed pursuit of happiness. The different perspectives of happiness according to Islam, the West, and the Greeks are often misinterpreted, warranting further explanation on how those scholars define happiness (*sa'ādah*) (Sabjan, 2019). Discussion on their perspectives can lead people to understand clear comparisons among those scholars.

The concept of happiness in Islam relates to well-being in all aspects such as social, economic, political, and religious (Abde & Salih, 2015). Apart from that, Amalia et al. (2016) measures happiness in terms of health, education, profession, income, family, harmony, availability of free time, social relationships, housing conditions and assets, state of the environment, security, and happiness in religion.

In order to comprehend the complete explanation about happiness according to Islamic views, the comparative points of happiness (*sa'ādah*) need to be addressed in this discussion i.e. from the western and the Greek views. Happiness is also associated with the 'quality of life' or 'well-being'. It represents the fact that life is good, and can be defined through the classification of the conditions of life (Veenhoven, 2015). Meanwhile, valuing happiness in an extreme manner is not good and might relate to serious psychological health; particularly because of unfeasible expectation about happiness that triggers dissatisfaction in optimistic conditions (Gentzler et al., 2019).

Based on the previous statement, there are reasons why people do not feel happy; happiness is understood and perceived in many ways. Thus, this paper concentrates on happiness and how humans can identify and implement the meaning of happiness in their life by focusing on the concepts of *sa'ādah* from the Islamic, the western, and the Greek views.

3. Research Questions

The questions of this study are as follows:

- 3.1.** What is the concept of *sa'ādah* according to Islamic scholars?
- 3.2.** What is the concept of *sa'ādah* according to western scholars?
- 3.3.** What is the concept of *sa'ādah* according to Greek scholars?
- 3.4.** Are there any similarities and differences on the concept of *sa'ādah* (happiness) from the views of the Islamic, western, and Greek scholars?

4. Purpose of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- 4.1. To study and examine the concept of *sa'ādah* according to Islamic, western, and Greek viewpoints.
- 4.2. To identify similarities and differences on the concept of *sa'ādah* based on Islamic, western, and Greek scholars' schools of thoughts.

5. Research Methods

The discussion uses content analysis method by referring to the work and literature penned by the above-mentioned scholars pertaining to the concept of *sa'ādah*. Content analysis is an objective, systematic, and quantitative method of external communication research. In content analysis, the procedures used are sampling and categorisation. Sampling refers to the works and literature from the Islamic, western, and Greek scholars that are distinctively selected in relation to the concept of *sa'ādah*. In categorisation, the content analysis must reflect the purpose of the study. Categorisation is also used to make comparisons among the scholars regarding the concept of *sa'ādah* during data analysis to identify the similarities and differences. The categories must also be functional and easy to manage (Idid, 1992).

The collected data from content analysis were analysed by categorising the discussion on the concept of *sa'ādah* into three aspects: interpretation of *sa'ādah*, sources of *sa'ādah* (happiness), and stages of happiness (*sa'ādah*) according to Islamic, Western, and Greek views. Then, the concept of *sa'ādah* according to these three viewpoints were identified and examined. From the analysis, the similarities and differences on the concept of *sa'ādah* (happiness) from the views of those scholars (Islamic, western, and Greek) were also identified. From the discussion, content analysis was chosen because the researcher could optimise time and budget as they just needed to document the related works and literature. It was also chosen because the data will always be secure and they can be used as a long-term analysis (Idid, 1992, pp. 115-116).

6. Findings

The discussion on the findings is based on the two objectives mentioned in previous section.

6.1. The concept of *sa'ādah* according to Islamic, Western, and Greek viewpoints

Based on Islamic views, happiness is clarified through the term *sa'ādah*. *Sa'ādah* in Islam alludes to happiness in the present world and the hereafter. The opposite term of *sa'ādah* is *shaqāwah* which means bad luck and great misery. In terms of the hereafter, *sa'ādah* means ultimate happiness (Al-Attas, 1995; see also Abde & Salih, 2015; Sabjan, 2019).

Sa'ādah in the hereafter is closely related to life in the present world in three situations. First, it relates to the self, such as knowledge and good character. Second, it relates to the body such as good health and personal safety. Third, through external affairs of the self and the body such as wealth and other factors that can improve the well-being of self, body, and external matters and situations in relation to them. Happiness in the present must be interpreted and guided by a source of religion that is called revelation (Al-Attas, 1995).

According to al-Ghazālī (1983), the happiness in the hereafter is eternal, it remains unchanged through the passing years. The sources of happiness and safety can be achieved through knowledge and good deeds. Good deeds complement knowledge whereby through knowledge, good deeds can reach the goal (al-Ghazālī, 1983). The examples of knowledge are the knowledge of self, the knowledge of God, the knowledge of this world, and the knowledge of the next world. Good deeds include performing allowed music as aids to the religious life, self-examination and recollection of God, as well as marriage that forms a part of religious life and act of love towards God (al-Ghazzali, 2004; al-Ghazali, 2001). Another way to achieve happiness is through speaking good words. One of the most effective ways to guard from saying bad words is to abstain from argument and disagreement as much as possible. Therefore, it is advisable to always be patient so that the heart is always in a peaceful condition (Al-Idrus, 1993).

Islam views that there are three stages of happiness. The first two phases are achievable by humankind in this present world. Meanwhile, the last one can only be attained in the hereafter. The first one is happiness at the stage of desire, which is the case when people achieve all of what they want and need. The second one is happiness at the spiritual stage, which directs to the eternal feeling of happiness, felt in full consciousness, that which becomes the fundamental factor of life in this world. Through this spiritual happiness, one is unaffected by mistakes and is not dismayed upon encounters of hardship due to his/her belief in destiny. When this second stage is accomplished, it has a similarity with the first stage; i.e. when material things that someone desires decrease and all the current needs are sufficient. Happiness in this second stage prepares for happiness in the third stage that shall take place in the hereafter, namely the ultimate happiness, whereby one experiences by way of seeing God (Al-Attas, 2014).

Sa'ādah, according to western views is called happiness. In the discussion of happiness, it is divided into two sections: first, the causes of happiness and second, the causes of unhappiness (Russell, 1930). The source of happiness according to western views, is meditation. Meditation can lead to happiness. Those who practise meditation would always evaluate their wrongdoings, foolishness, and weaknesses (Russell, 1930). Another source of happiness can be found in education. Education, at its most useful, ought to help students to do well physically and spiritually. One of the weaknesses of modern higher education is too much training to obtain certain skills but too little focus on the enhancement of the mind (Russell, 1930). In order to alleviate this issue, there is a suggestion that educational institutions must emphasize more on fields other than the technical areas of education (Ben-Shahar, 2007).

Apart from meditation and education, other sources of happiness are enthusiasm, affection, family, work, impersonal interests, and efforts and acceptance. Enthusiasm is the most common and distinctive mark of happy individuals. By having enthusiasm, the more things they are fascinated with, the more chances of happiness they could have, and the less they feel at the mercy of fate. If they lose one thing, they can focus on other interests.

Another source of happiness is affection. Affection is a great sign of people's happiness since childhood although they tend to take it for granted. Children whose parents are constantly showing affection towards them regard it as a law of nature. The affection will soon encourage the adventurous side of them (Russell, 1930). Family is also a source of happiness. Affection of parents for children and vice versa is one of the greatest factors of happiness. The value of parental affection towards children exists mostly due to the fact that it is more trustworthy than any other affections (Russell, 1930).

Working is also a source of happiness. Work functions as a method to avoid boredom. Work also provides opportunities for success and options for ambition (Russell, 1930).

Happiness could also be sourced from impersonal interests. An impersonal interest is a minor interest that fills up the free time and invokes peacefulness from the pressures of more urgent endeavours (Russell, 1930). Other foundations of happiness are efforts and acceptance. For men and women, happiness is viewed as an accomplishment rather than an endowment of the Creator. In achieving this accomplishment, both internal and external efforts must play a major role. Acceptance has a part to play in the conquest of happiness, as well as efforts (Russell, 1930).

In discussing of the stages of happiness from the western viewpoint, the causes of unhappiness are mentioned first. Solutions are then suggested on how humans can overcome unhappiness and avoid it. Rationally, the discussion guides humans to find the causes of their unhappiness and solve them by themselves, and it will bring them to subsequent stage, which is happiness. There are several causes that lead to unhappiness such as Byronic unhappiness, competition, boredom and excitement, fatigue, envy, the sense of sin, persecution mania, and fear of public opinions. Byronic unhappiness refers to those who hold the opinion that a man who enjoys being unhappy is not sorrowful. To cure this problem, one must contemplate on something else instead (Russell, 1930). In terms of competition, one insists on being successful, otherwise he/she will experience anxiety instead of happiness. The feeling of success can lead to happiness (Russell, 1930).

In the aspects of boredom and excitement, enduring boredom will actually lead to happiness. Fatigue also leads to unhappiness due to worry, but worry could be restrained by exercising improved principles of life and more rational control (Russell, 1930). Envy leads to unhappiness as well. Whoever wishes to experience happiness needs to increase admiration and decrease envy (Russell, 1930). A sense of sin is another source of unhappiness. This is because one will encounter deep regret and penitence after committing sinful acts. To cure the painful feelings, one is recommended to perform self-contemplation an hour a day (Russell, 1930).

Persecution mania also leads to unhappiness. Persecution mania happens when individuals think that others want to hurt them, or lock them up, or inflict serious harms on them. This problem can be handled through correct identification of the source of trouble and the awareness that its origin exists within themselves and not in the assumed malevolence or harshness of others (Russell, 1930). Fear of public opinions is another cause of unhappiness. This happens due to the differences in opinions and thoughts in groups or individuals. The only best remedy to alleviate the unhappiness is through the increase of acceptance on the part of the public (Russell, 1930).

Sa'ādah, according to Greek views is called *eudaimonia* (happiness). According to Aristotle (1951), happiness (*eudaimonia*) was once known to be tangible and apparent, such as pleasure or luxury or reputation. Happiness seems to matter more than anything else. Happiness refers to something that humans choose always for its own good and never for the good of something else. Apparently, happiness is eventual and self-sufficient, and perceived as the ending and the target of all that humans do (Aristotle, 1951). Happiness, although not god-sent, occurs as an outcome of virtue or some kind of knowledge or practices. It is one of the blessed elements in the world, because it is bestowed as well as perceived as the ending and target of righteous behaviours of a top achievement, which is divine and most glorified. The source of this

happiness is through learning and perseverance. These make everyone capable to obtain happiness (Aristotle, 1951).

In the stages of happiness according to Greek views, in order to gain persistent happiness, humans must be involved in certain virtuous activities such as contemplation. Happiness must be experienced without any vital changes, whereas a living person may encounter many turns of fate. Righteous activities could develop into happiness. Since they are involved in virtuous activities and contemplation, they will face the changes of fate as they are really good and faultless (Aristotle, 1951). As happy individuals will dominate all genuinely good things, they must have social communication. Clearly, it is preferable to live with companions and respectable people than with strangers and chance associates (Aristotle, 1951). If happiness is the action in conformity with virtue, then such virtue is as unique as the ideal part of human. This is the instrument in which action, when in line with its own appropriate virtue, will embrace happiness. Such action, as previously specified, is embodied in contemplation (Aristotle, 1951; *see also* Holowchak, 2004).

From the previous justification, absolute happiness is a kind of contemplative activity. Contemplation is the closest to God's activity that will most exactly demonstrate the essence of happiness. Those who engage in an enlightened activity that polish their reason and place it in a perfect condition, are probably most adored by God. At the same time, they behave properly and nobly. Accordingly, they are the most loved by God, and consequently the happiest among human beings (Aristotle, 1951).

From the discussion, the term of happiness in Islam is *sa'ādah*. *Sa'ādah* means happiness and blessed from the Islamic viewpoint. There are three stages of happiness in Islam. The two early stages are attainable in the present, and the last one is earned in the hereafter. *Sa'ādah* can be attained from knowledge and good deeds.

The term *sa'ādah* from the western viewpoint refers to happiness. The sources of happiness come from meditation, education, enthusiasm, affection, family, work, impersonal interests, efforts and acceptance. Apart from that, the stages of happiness include the causes of unhappiness and how to cure them in order to move to the next stage, happiness.

The term *sa'ādah* from the Greek viewpoint is *eudaimonia*. In the discussion of happiness, it is described as something eventual and self-sufficient, and it is the final purpose of all human beings. Happiness can be gained through knowledge (learning) and consistency (perseverance). In order to gain persistent happiness, humans must be involved in certain virtuous activities such as contemplation. Happiness consists of humanistic activities that are the best, the virtuous, and the delightful of all things. Happiness must be accomplished, at the same time, it is also a gift from God to those with noble and righteous character. Happiness does not need any crucial change, as it is the righteous activities that evoke happiness.

This subsection has answered the research questions numbered 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and the purpose of the study numbered 4.1.

6.2. The similarities and differences on the concept of *sa'ādah* based on Islamic, Western, and Greek scholars' schools of thought

In the discussion of the interpretation of *sa'ādah*, those scholars hold the similar view that *sa'ādah* (happiness) is a final purpose for humans in this world and the hereafter. In this category, interpretation

from the Islamic view is all-inclusive as the discussion of happiness encompasses both the hereafter and this present world.

- Based on Islamic views, the term *sa'ādah* refers to happiness in the hereafter and in the present world.
- Based on western views, the term *sa'ādah* refers to worldly happiness.
- Based on Greek views, the term *sa'ādah* refers to happiness as the final purpose of human beings.

This discussion has answered the research questions numbered 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and the purpose of the study numbered 4.2.

In the discussion on the sources of *sa'ādah* (happiness), those scholars hold the similar view that *sa'ādah* (happiness) can be obtained through knowledge (Islamic views), education (Western views), and learning (Greek views). The scholars also hold the same opinion that contemplation activities such as self-examination, recollection of God, the love of God (Islamic), meditation (western), and contemplation as a virtuous activity (Greek) can bring ultimate happiness to human beings. In addition, those scholars have similar opinion about the necessity of communication and relationship with other people which can lead to happiness. According to Islamic views, forging relationship with other people is encouraged by speaking good words and avoiding conflicts. From the western viewpoint, family is the main factor of happiness as the state of isolation is not encouraged if someone wants to be happy. From the views of Greek scholars, a happy person is the one who holds social communication. Apart from that, happiness can be obtained from other good deeds such as listening to music that are allowed in Islam (Islamic views), work (western views), and any righteous actions (Greek views). This discussion has answered the research question numbered 3.4 and the purpose of the study numbered 4.2.

In the discussion on the stages of happiness, those scholars have the same opinion on how to attain happiness phase by phase. The Islamic scholars are of the view that the stages of happiness consist of happiness in this world and the hereafter. The western views approach the stages of happiness by explaining the causes of unhappiness, how to solve them, and avoid them. The discussion on the sources of happiness is beneficial to guide humans to achieve happiness and maintain it during their lifetime. According to Greek views, evidently, happiness is the final aim for human beings and the discussion on the stages of happiness has shown how to gain happiness and maintain it. In this category, the interpretation from Islamic views is comprehensive as the discussion on the stages of happiness include the hereafter and this present world. This discussion has answered the research question numbered 3.4 and the purpose of the study numbered 4.2.

According to Islamic views, happiness in the present world and the hereafter are inter-connected. The explanation from the western views focuses on the factors of happiness and unhappiness. The Greek scholars explain happiness as the final purpose of human beings and the means to achieve it are through virtuous activities. Typically, happiness relates to the enhancement of mind or reason through contemplation activities and righteous actions. All the viewpoints have similarities in certain aspects. The combination of opinions of all scholars can lead human beings to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter.

Table 01. The concept of *sa'ādah* according to Islamic, Western, and Greek views

Schools of thought / Categories	Islamic	Western	Greek
1. Interpretation of the term of <i>sa'ādah</i>	Happiness in the world and hereafter.	Worldly happiness.	Happiness as final purpose of human being.
2. Sources of happiness (<i>sa'ādah</i>)	Knowledge and good deeds.	Meditation, education, enthusiasm and so forth.	Learning and perseverance.
3. Stages of happiness (<i>sa'ādah</i>)	Three stage of happiness: two in the world and the hereafter.	From unhappiness to happiness.	Consistency in virtuous activities.

Table 01 shows the summary of this discussion regarding the concept of *sa'ādah* according to Islamic, western, and Greek scholars' schools of thoughts.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Key findings

Based on Islamic views, happiness enables human to feel at peace in the world and the hereafter. Happiness comes from two sources; knowledge and good deeds which can be acquired at an early age. The stages of happiness being discussed show that human beings can use them as a final target to achieve happiness in the world and the hereafter.

Based on the western views, happiness has to be toiled rather than being perceived as a gift of God. The factors of unhappiness need to be identified and rectified to ensure lasting happiness. Essentially, unhappiness can be cured.

Based on Greek views, happiness is the final purpose for all human beings. The sources of happiness come from learning and consistency. Continuous engagement in virtuous activities ensures that humans will be in everlasting happiness. Virtuous activity is a righteous action such as contemplation, application of reason, and enhancement of the mind.

7.2. Limitations and future directions

The present research recommends future direction. First, the present research discusses the concept of *sa'ādah* according to Islamic, western, and Greek views, with reference to the views of classic scholars such as al-Ghazālī and Aristotle. Future research could focus on the views of modern scholars whom discuss the concept of *sa'ādah*.

Second, this present research only focuses on the concept of *sa'ādah*. Future research could examine other concepts related to happiness in Islam such as *hasanah* (good), *tūbā* (blessedness), and *matā'* (enjoyment).

Third, the present research discusses the concept of *sa'ādah* according to the thoughts of those scholars in a content analysis method. Future research could focus on identifying the concept of *sa'ādah*

according to social class in societies and making comparisons in a fieldwork study. Reasons for similarities and differences in their opinions in terms of *sa'ādah* could be explored.

7.3. Concluding remarks

The findings of the research have shown that there are a number of similarities among the views of Islamic, western, and Greek philosophers. This research concludes that the Islamic views of *sa'ādah* is more comprehensive because it embraces happiness in the present world as well as in the hereafter.

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