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Prophetic Leadership and Management
(An Analytical Review of Islamic Perspectives)

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is a crucial and indispensable management role that helps in directing an organization's resources into a direction that proves to be beneficial in the long run for them, all done with an intention of improved efficiency and achievement of goals. However, Leadership and its various management styles in the modern world continue to change with the changes in moral and ethical values. This paper is located within a conceptual framework of Leadership in Islam and the Prophetic Teachings that shed light on the characteristic of Leadership. It explores the concept of Leadership in Islam with extensive detail on the precise teachings and leadership styles of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). An abundance of journal articles have been thoroughly sought and looked at in order to first and foremost, understand the basic traits of Leadership in Islam, an in-depth analysis of Strategic Leadership by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and following this, the exploration of actual events that took place in the life of Muhammad (PBUH) that demonstrated various aspects of Leadership Styles.

Keywords: Leadership, Management, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Islamic Perspective, Qurān, Sīrah..



1. Introduction

The noun “leadership” or its definitions are not explicitly mentioned in the Quran. However, derivatives that can represent leadership in a broader sense are used, such as the term *imām*¹. The Quran denotes that leadership on earth began when Adam was created by Allah almighty. For Adam to carry out this responsibility, God granted him the knowledge that enabled him to lead the first humans and be a successor on earth. Through this we can develop an understanding that knowledge is a precursor for leadership. The framing of this “leadership” role in the Qurān is portrayed as a responsibility rather than a privilege, which in turn establishes the purpose of responsibility as a test of one’s behavior and demeanor. Both being very important traits for sound leadership as compared to the titles and labels of leaders. Some attributes that shape leadership which are aforementioned in the *Qurān* through the stories of Prophets and Messengers are; sincerity, justice, compassion, effective communication, patience, gentleness and perseverance, along with many other attributes. The *Hadīth* however, talks about the forms of leadership and the responsibility entrusted to humans, as a vicegerent of God, on earth. A hadith from Al-Bukhari and Al-Muslim clearly mentions “You are all responsible and each will be asked about his responsibility [...] and a leader is accountable for this subjects”². The concept of leadership is reiterated in a paper by Abbas Ali³ which aptly quotes a Sahīh Muslim *Hadīth*, “A ruler who has been entrusted with the affairs of the Muslims, but makes no endeavor for their material and moral uplift, and, is not sincerely concerned for their welfare will not enter paradise along with them”. The above hadith with its significance, explains that “leadership” is all about trust. A great scholar, historian, philosopher and sociologist of the fourteenth century, Ibn Khaldun, with his knowledge from the Quran and Prophetic examples, argues that certain traits are needed “to sustain leadership and institutionalize it”⁴. These traits mentioned by Ibn Khaldun are unquestionably molded by his in depth studies of religious text and the lives of the Prophets in Islam, out of which the following traits have been condensed and extracted: Forgiveness of error, patience & perseverance, generosity, hospitality toward guests, patience in unpleasant situations, maintenance of the indigent, reverence for old men & teachers, execution of commitments, respect & adherence to the obligations of *Sharī’ah* law, consideration to the needs of followers, meekness, fairness, avoidance of deception and fraud⁵.

Management is a combination of thorough planning, organizing, staffing, leading, motivating and controlling with an aim to accomplish organizational goals via the utilization of various

¹ Nezar Faris and Mohamad Abdalla, “Leadership in Islam Based on Primary Sources,” *Leadership in Islam*, November 28, 2017, 9–25, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66441-5_2

² *Ibid.*, 11-12.

³ B. Metcalfe and F. Mimouni, “Leadership Development in the Middle East,” Undefined, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.4337/9780857938114>

⁴ Yusuf M. Sidani, “Ibn Khaldun of North Africa: An AD 1377 Theory of Leadership,” *Journal of Management History* 14, no. 1 (January 11, 2008): 73–86, <https://doi.org/10.1108/17511340810845499>.

⁵ Sidani, *Ibn Khaldun Theory of Leadership*, 75-77

resources.¹ These are all standard procedures of the management process in general, however, when the Islamic Guidelines are incorporated within and followed, it becomes Islamic Management. Moreover, Islamic Leadership is a crucial aspect of Islamic Management. Any corporation or organization, regardless of its size, if it thoroughly follows and ensures good leadership, the organization is bound to grow in a positive way. The importance of Leadership is specifically applicable in times of changes.² Owing to the globally competitive market in today's era, sometimes organizations and their leaderships often engage in practices that are deemed unethical. In both business and social organizations, these activities may lead to corruption, bribery and various other kinds of illegal practices and all these just with one common aim and intention, which is to maximize profit. However, Islamic Leadership certainly does not engage in such acts because they are not just responsible towards their organizations, but they hold a massive responsibility towards God itself. According to the Prophet (PBUH), leadership in Islam is not kept for small elite. Rather, "Depending on the situation, each person takes a position with a single wave of shepherd" and occupies a locus of leadership.

A fundamental perspective of leadership in Islam is focused and based on leadership aptitude, originality and innovation, talent grooming, encourage productivity according to *Shari'ah*. The essential driving forces in Islamic leadership, such as consultation, justice, honesty, integrity and trust has a major impact on any organization's goal attaining strategies.³

The above introduction gives us an insight into the religious texts that explain the nature of leadership and sheds light onto the broader sense of leadership and management in Islam. However, there are three most salient and sought after traits of leadership that can be extracted from the Qurānic and Prophetic examples and have the most repetition in the religious texts, and is believed to be a must for an extraordinary leader.

2. Sincere Advice (*Nasīha*) & Sincerity (*Ikhlās*)

The most important and central concept of being a Muslim and a leader starts and ends with sincerity in one's connection with Allāh and the relations with fellow beings. In the paradigm of *Qurān* and *Hadīth*, and as mentioned above, sincerity and sincere advice is an essential component to leadership. The *Qurān* constantly repeats this theme of sincerity when addressing the role of Prophets, an iconic example being "I am delivering my Lord's messages to you. I am your sincere and honest adviser"⁴. Hence we can arrive to a conclusion that sincerity is an internally driven

¹ M. Milon, "Islamic Perspective of Leadership in Management; Foundation, Traits and Principles," September 1, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.34104/cjbis.019.01727>.

² Mohammad Toriqul Islam Jony, "The Impact of Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-Faire Leadership Styles on the Success of the Organization: A Study on the Different Popular Restaurants of Mymensingh, Bangladesh," *Canadian Journal of Business and Information Studies* 1, no. 6 (December 20, 2019): 28–38, <https://doi.org/10.34104/cjbis.019.028038>.

³ Shuvro RA, Saha S, and Alam MJ, "Islamic Perspective of Leadership in Management; Foundation, Traits and Principles," September 1, 2020, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.34104/cjbis.020.01011>.

⁴ Al-Qurān 7:68.

act of the heart which is judged only by God, and in turn is reflected externally through the actions and behavior of a leader. Significant research denotes that 'perceived' sincerity had a positive outcome on the followers of a leader. A study¹, examines the cognitive reactions of a follower to the apparent sincerity of a leader's emotions. The result of the research was astonishing, as it deduced that sincerity albeit being an important factor for leading roles, was not the only factor that mattered. The research concluded that, a leader that is distinguished as sincere but is otherwise incompetent, is unlikely to gain and maintain follower support.

3. Forbearance

The term "forbearance" is used to express the clemency on the part of a person in power, as expressed by Nelson and Dyck ². This is one of the most important attributes required for leadership. They further elaborate this trait as "a practice of leaders who choose not to employ their full sanctioning power against the vulnerability of followers". One of the most significant instance of forbearance in the life of Prophet Muhammad which reiterates this concept is his response to the public of Mecca after returning to it victoriously³. In this instance, the Prophet Muhammad with his utmost forbearance, let go of the prisoners of war and did not charge them with any repercussions. Such was the pristine demeanor of our Prophet Muhammad, and the Prophets that came before him.

4. Kindness

Another very important concept which is central to Islam and leadership, is kindness. A book by 'William Baker and Michael O'Malley', *Leading with kindness*⁴, extensively denotes that kindness in leadership can inspire, spur continuous growth, establish a helpful environment and set an example for future leaders. And, from an Islamic perspective, Prophet Muhammad as a leader, showed a prodigious level of kindness towards every interaction with any living creature. The Quranic literature gives especial value to kindness as it describes the personality of the Prophet in the following:

"By an act of mercy from God, you [Prophet] were gentle in your dealings with them - had you been harsh, or hard -hearted, they would have dispersed and left you - so pardon them and ask forgiveness for them. Consult with them about matters, then, when you have decided on a course of action, put your trust in God: God loves those who put their trust in Him".⁵

Many religious scholars have extracted various lessons from this verse, but particularly, a study

¹ Arran Caza et al., "How Do You Really Feel? Effect of Leaders' Perceived Emotional Sincerity on Followers' Trust," *The Leadership Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (August 2015): 518-31, <https://doi.org/>.

² George Nelson and John Dyck, "Forbearance in Leadership: Opportunities and Risks Involved in Cutting Followers Some Slack," *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (February 2005): 53-70, <https://doi.org/>.

³ Faris, *Leadership in Islam*, 15-16

⁴ 'William F Baker and Michael O'malley, *Leading with Kindness : How Good People Consistently Get Superior Results* (New York: American Management Association, 2008)'.

⁵ Al-Qurā 3:159.

¹has narrowed down four attributes for a warmhearted leader:

1. Can overlook mistakes and failures, and take opportunity to see these mistakes as a learning.
2. "Do not beat their followers over their head with their mishaps, but rather ask for Allah to forgive them".
3. No exclusion from *shūrā*, but will consult them again in the future while putting their trust in Allah (*tawakkul*)
4. "Perseverance in the path of Allah, with *sabr* (patience) and without any decrement in their own *imān* [faith] and level of *taqwā* [piety]".²

These lessons reiterate the true nature of kindness, and how being kind is an integral part of road to being an extraordinary leader. By observing the life of our Prophet, we come to an understanding that kindness is a prerequisite to being a great leader. In a book called "The 100, Placement of the Most Influential People in History", according to Hart³, "Muhammad help find one of the world's great religions, and became an effective political leader in the process". Even after centuries and decades his influence is still powerful and exists even till today. Other than this, Thomas Carly in his book "On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History" Chose Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as "The owner of the great man leadership theory" a hero as a Prophet. Furthermore, Carlyle said "Muhammad is by no means the truest of Prophets; but I do esteem him a true one". In code of leadership of Dave Ulrich to him, Prophet Muhammad's Is analyzed based on his strategic leadership by undermining his leadership character in various contexts in order to identify his leadership abilities and styles as a result of the intellectual, individual, and social agenda. Also, this will show the effectiveness of his leadership and his suitability to be one of the top leaders in history through the code of leadership of Dave Ulrich to him.

5. Islamic Frame of Reference of Leadership in Management; the Foundations, Traits and the Principles

It is extremely crucial to note that in regards to how businesses operate in today's word, the owners and leaders are expected and required to be norm oriented as well, rather than solely being profit oriented.⁴

And with respect to the aspects that have been discussed in the Introduction, the leaders today should possess exceptional managerial and leadership skills and all this is to be done with a clear aim to uphold the moral values of the civilization. Leadership from the Islamic perspective places great emphasis on proceeding with absolutely any action that promises productivity but in a

¹ Rafiq Beekun, "Core Principles of Islamic Leadership: Empathy and Compassion towards All," The Islamic Workplace, June 5, 2011, .

² Al-Qurān 32:24.

³ Gouher Ahmed and Nabeel Al Amiri, "An Analysis of Strategic Leadership Effectiveness of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Based on Dave Ulrich Leadership Code," Research Gate, June 2019, 8-27

⁴ MT Islam and MJ Alam, "Islamic Perspective of Leadership in Management; Foundation, Traits and Principles 2," September 1, 2020, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.34104/cjbis.019.0109>.

positive and ethical way, in a way that aligns with the morals that have been set by the respective institution.

The essential driving forces in Islamic leadership, such as consultation, justice, honesty, integrity and trust has a major impact on any organization's goal attaining strategies. ¹

5.1. The "Four Functions of Management"

1. 'Planning'
2. 'Organizing'
3. 'Leading'
4. 'Controlling'

The roles mentioned above are all predetermined sets of actions that will be entirely influenced by and dependent on the leader and how they carry it out in order to attain organizational goals. Similar to a conventional perspective, an Islamic point of view sees a leader as a dominant team member that is given a particular rank and is expected by the other team members to demonstrate consistency when it comes to work obligations. A leader's performance and demonstration of achieving objectives should not be underestimated at any cost because they will hold the responsibility of exemplifying ethical and moral values in a manner that will influence the organizational culture in the long run. Consistently positive leadership and its successful execution will not just influence the management but also the establishment of organizational values.

There is great emphasis on the importance of efficient leadership as it reflects on our social activities greatly. It is a perfect instance of 'Leading by Example' as people will automatically follow leaders that demonstrate enthusiasm when it comes to their work obligations. As a matter of fact, one of the research papers reviewed contained the 'Aspects of Leadership portrayed by Heads of State in forty seven states' in which where the nations are a Muslim Majority Nation and observed their congruence with the organizational concept of Islam. ²

5.2. The Leadership Code proposed by Dave Ulrich

According to 'Dave Ulrich (born 1954), an American writer and management consultant', and Smallwood (2008, pp. 2-3), successful leaders should follow the lead of the concept that;

1. The result is in line with the purpose.
2. The foundational repercussions that include; shaping the future, making things happen, managing others and demonstrating personal knowledge.
3. Building leaderships over leaderships.
4. Ensuring long term sustainability of the leadership style.

Furthermore, Ulrich and Smallwood also conducted various interviews that were extensive in nature with CEOs, experienced managers and consultants. Following these, Ulrich and his team

¹ Shuvro RA, Saha S, and Alam MJ, "Islamic Perspective of Leadership in Management; Foundation, Traits and Principles," September 1, 2020, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.34104/cjbis.020.01011>.

² Hamidifar F., "A Study of the Relationship between Leadership Styles and Employee Job Satisfaction at Islamic," September 1, 2020.

completed what they had found to be "The Leadership Code"¹.
The Leadership Code is organized around five rules that all leaders must follow;

Table 1: The rules of the leadership conduct (Ulrich and Smallwood, 2008)

Rule	Explanation
1	Shape the future Leaders are strategists. They figure out where the organization needs to go and how to reach to the desired future.
2	Make things happen Leaders are executors. They translate strategy into action, change, make decisions, delegate, and ensure that teams work well together.
3	Engage today's talent Leaders draw talents and engage them to do their best to achieve the short term results.
4	Build the next generation Leaders develop competent human capital to achieve the longer-term results.
5	Invest in self Leaders are learners from success, failure, assignments, books, classes, and people. It is placed at the heart of the Leadership Code (see fig.1)

Fig. 1: The leadership Code



Source: The leadership Code, five rules to lead, by Dave Ulrich

6.

Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Mission, Vision and Values

6.1. His Vision

The most significant and crucial aspect of Muhammad's (PBUH) view is that Allah is one. And that there is no living being or anything for that matter that is superior to him. This fact is stated in The Holy Quran, "Say that He is Allāh, the One. Allāh is Self-Sufficient Master, whom all creatures need, he begets not, nor was He begotten, and there is none coequal or comparable unto Him".²

Furthermore, His vision had a special outlook and position and honors for human beings among all other creatures. This uprightness is enforced in *Qurān*: "And indeed We have honored the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with lawful good things, and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with

¹ Gouher Ahmed and Nabeel Al Amiri, "An Analysis of Strategic Leadership Effectiveness of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Based on Dave Ulrich Leadership Code," Research Gate, June 2019, 12-42.

² Al-Qurān 112.

a marked preference”.¹

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) did not discriminate whatsoever, regardless of what the circumstances were or would be. He invited all people with no restriction to social class, color, race or even ethnicity which at the time was considered against the common beliefs and values of the folks at his time.

6.2. His Mission

His Mission was divided into three directions;

1. Clearing and sorting all misconceptions and collectively calling on people to refrain from indulging in idol-worship and other evil sins or deeds, and believe in the oneness of God that is Allah. The God said in the Qurān: “O Prophet Verily, We have sent you as a witness, and a bearer of glad tidings, and a warner”.²
2. Guiding people and teaching them about Islam. Allah mentions in the Quran: "The God who sent among the unlettered ones a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His Verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Qur'an, and the wisdom, and verily, they had been before in manifest error"³.
3. Being able to differentiate between Right and Wrong.

6.3. His Values

In order to understand the gist of what Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) values really were about, we have summarized his teachings regarding the Oneness of Allah, regarding his followers and himself as the most crucial ones on top. These are as follows; ⁴

- 1) Muslims are to pray and worship one God. God said in Quran: "You have a good example in the Messenger of Allah for those who fear God and the Last Day and remember Allah much".⁵
- 2) The utmost main morality and standards of righteousness. The God described him in the Quran: “And verily, you are on an exalted standard of character”. Further, Muhammad said "The perfect believers are those who are on high ethical standards"⁶ to encourage his followers to comply with those high standards.
- 3) Peace. The God described Muhammad and his followers in Quran: “And the worshippers of the Lord, who walk on the earth humbly, and if the ignorant speak to them, they say

¹Gouher Ahmed and Nabeel Al Amiri, “An Analysis of Strategic Leadership Effectiveness of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Based on Dave Ulrich Leadership Code,” August 2019, 13–15, <http://jiscnet.com/journals/jisc/Vol 7 No 1 June 2019/2.pdf>

² Al-Qurān 33:45.

³ Al-Qurān 62:2.

⁴ Gouher Ahmed and Nabeel Al Amiri, “An Analysis of Strategic Leadership Effectiveness of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Based on Dave Ulrich Leadership Code,” Research Gate, June 2019, 11–32., Yusuf M. Sidani, “Ibn Khaldun of North Africa: An AD 1377 Theory of Leadership,” Journal of Management History 14, no. 1 (January 11, 2008): 73–86, <https://doi.org/10.1108/17511340810845499>.

⁵ Al-Qurān 33:21.

⁶ Al-Qurān 68:4.

“peace”¹. Furthermore, Muhammad told his followers to “Spread peace among them.

4) Justice. Believers and Disbelievers Appreciated Muhammads equality and equity for all².

7. Events and Situations in Prophet Muhammad (PBUH’s Life

In order to gain a clearer insight of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)’s way of demonstrating his leadership and his overall conduct, we analyzed in depth the various aspects of his life. This analysis was done in hopes to understand and gain a more precise understanding of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)’s leadership styles. The circumstances mentioned below have been extracted from the book namely, “The Life of the Prophet Muhammad” by Leila Azzam & Aisha Gouverneur.

7.1. Situation 1:

“In Muhammads eyes there was only one creator of the moon, sun, the sky and the living beings therefore they all should worship to only Allah. He was so dedicated that he went to the cave “Hira” for a few days thinking of solutions for his questions”

7.1.1. Analysis:

This situation clearly explains that Muhammad (PBUH) had an entirely different and opposing point of view as compared to the people that coexisted with him in his time. Moreover, Muhammad (PBUH) was a rational man who sought more logical truths than follow traditional ideas.³

7.2. Situation 2:

“After that long and hectic day in the month of Ramadan, he understood what he had to do and prepared himself for the things he was about to face. Only a brave and strong man like him , helped by Allah, can be a true prophet because people often refuse to listen to Allah's message”.⁴

7.2.1. Analysis:

This situation described elaborates the fact that despite the uncertainty of the circumstances that he was in, he decided to face the situation head on and with full bravery and he carried Allah’s message forward with great determination and enthusiasm⁵

7.3. Situation 3:

“The Prophet secretly started speaking and inviting the ones who were close to him and whom he could trust with Allah's message”

7.3.1. Analysis:

This should that Muhammad (SAW) relied on his far sightedness in this aspect and planned his moves according to the situation and would mould it according to the context.

¹ Al-Qurān 25:63.

² Nezar Faris and Mohamad Abdalla, “Leadership in Islam Based on Primary Sources,” Leadership in Islam, November 28, 2017, 9–25, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66441-5_2.

³ Ayesha Gouverneur and Lelia Azzam, “The Life of Prophet Muhammad,” February 2017, 92–108, <https://www.islambasics.com/chapter/the-king-who-believed>.

⁴ Ibid., 24.

⁵ Ayesha Gouverneur and Lelia Azzam, “The Life of Prophet Muhammad,” February 2017, 94–108, <https://www.islambasics.com/chapter/the-king-who-believed>.

7.4. Situation 4:

"While Mecca was going through hard times, the Prophet's uncle "Abu Talib" who had taken care of him after his grandfather's death was finding it difficult to feed his large family. The Prophet assisted him by taking one of his children 'Ali'"¹

7.4.1. Analysis:

This situation clearly demonstrates the generosity and kindness and empathy that resided in his heart and with which he dealt with people around him, which again is an extremely crucial personality trait that a leadership must possess; Empathetic.

7.5. Situation 5:

"Three years later, the Archangel Gabriel asked Muhammad to start preaching openly to all people. The Prophet stood on a hillside in Mecca and he called people and told them that he was the Messenger of Allah, sent to show them the correct way".²

7.5.1. Analysis:

This situation elaborates on the fact that Muhammad (PBUH) was a man of his principles and followed the right path no matter how difficult the circumstances would get. He had a sense and an understanding that he is in fact a source of influence for many and those who follow him and he embraced this responsibility to the core.

8. Conclusion

The gist of this research paper focuses on the aspect that Management and Leadership are interconnected and interrelated. Leadership is a crucial aspect to incorporate into organizational performance in order for it to act as a catalyst in order to achieve organizational goals. Furthermore, it also sheds light on the aspect of Islam and how its main focus is to ensure that the employees are satisfied in every organization. Islamic believers follow the authoritative source of Quran and Sunnah, Islamic scholars guide the followers from time to time on the basis of these. Islam Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is the great leader in this religion and also leaders' leader in the world. And In the case there are any complications down this road, Islamic religion practices and values stand as a source of eternal guidance in this aspect. Status of the Prophet (SAW) has been confirmed in the *Qurān* as well "And verily, you (O Muhammad

(SAW) are of an exalted standard of character",³ or in another interpretation, "You have undeniably in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad a beautiful pattern for any one whose hope is God and the Final Day".⁴

Last but not the least, the research showed that in the light of Islamic Leadership that an organization follows, it instantly sees prosperity in terms of its overall growth, the organization's performance, productivity and overall executional strategies.

From the leadership Code model a crux can be extracted of the Prophet's leading abilities; he

¹ Ibid., 24.

² Ibid., 27.

³ Al-Qurān 68:14.

⁴ Al-Qurān 33:21.

envisioned the future, got things done, managed others, invested in his Companions, and demonstrated personal proficiency, which in turn lead to an effective leadership. Prophet Muhammad's effective leadership has set an example around the globe, so much so that it has developed into a leadership brand which can be termed as Islamic leadership. This has ensured a robust infrastructure that helps and develops the next generation of leaders. It is important to understand that leadership sustainability is an enduring pattern and not an isolated event. Additionally, we learn from the above analysis that whenever leadership is ethical and directed to create value and benefit for followers, it has a lasting influential impact. This study proves that Prophet Muhammad had many unique qualities that is rarely found in one person. Also, he played many roles from the beginning until the end of his life that cannot be seen in one leader. Thus, we have no doubts that he deserves to be the most effective leader in the history of the world.



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