TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSAL ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP MODEL: REVIEWING THE EXISTING ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP THEORIES AND MODELS

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ABSTRACT

Currently, there are several Islamic leadership models developed by various authors around the world which created perplexity rather than clarity among the academics and practitioners. Although the popular excerpt says "the differences in people bring benefits to others" is true, but in this academic endeavour, a common agreement on the definitions and the underlying dimensions of Islamic leadership styles are greatly required. Having so many theories and models of Islamic leadership make academics and researchers struggle to decide on the most appropriate model to pursue their novel investigation. Realizing the need to have a universal model of Islamic leadership, this paper discusses the existing leadership theories and models and proposes the one that can be regarded as the common model. It is expected that the proposed model might facilitate research on Islamic leadership and its nomological networks can be established.

Keywords: Islamic leadership, religiosity, spirituality

INTRODUCTION

Muslims comprise over 1.6 billion people, which is equivalent to 23% of the world's population, making it the second largest religion with the number followers worldwide. In Malaysia, Islam has the largest number of followers exceeding 18.4 million people or 61.3% of the total population. Due to this great number, it is not surprising that a lot of studies especially on Islamic leadership have been conducted by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars all over the world. Most studies have made major references to two main sources that are the Quran and Hadith when they developed the models of Islamic leadership.

Recently, there are a number of studies that have been conducted pertaining to Islamic leadership. Some used the practices of Prophet Muhammad as the dimensions of this construct and others referred to the personality of the Prophet to identify the underlying dimensions (e.g., Hakim, 2012). There are also studies that used different names but referring to the same concepts (e.g., Ather & Sobhani, 2007; Khaliq & Fontaine, 2011). These occurrences create confusion among academics and scholars to clearly conceptualize Islamic leadership and also for others to develop the nomological networks of the concept.

Realizing the urgent need to consolidate varying models of Islamic leadership so that studies on this area can be orchestrated towards developing its nomological networks, this paper will discuss the existing models of Islamic leadership and based on the content analysis, the parsimonious model of Islamic leadership will be suggested. It is expected that this effort will be able to contribute to the Islamic leadership literature and benefit the world population in general.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Islamic Teachings and Leadership

Over the past decades, there had been numerous models on Islamic leadership suggested by scholars that were based on the words of Allah (Quran) and the Prophet's traditions and practices (Sunnah and Hadith). These texts hold supremacy over other man-made laws that make them indispensable in governing personal and social issues. These two divine sources shall timelessly remain as the ultimate foundation for Muslim leaders in exerting their legitimacy and authority towards the followers (Almoharby & Neal, 2013). Such divine-based paradigm in regulating social order is clearly within the opposite view of secularism that is widely adopted in most western and developed nations. Nevertheless, since Islam is considered as 'the way of life' that engulfs both spiritualism and materialism, any deviation towards secularism might lead to "failure of Muslim societies" (Metcalfe & Murfin, 2011).

In view of terrorism, patriarchal administration and authoritarianism that are commonly associated with Muslim-populated countries, the purview of Islamic leadership has come under heavy scrutiny by critics especially by the media and politicians. The term 'Islamic leadership' itself may carry different meanings to different people. It is akin to 'jihad' which is often misunderstood as hard-lined physical acts of justice, that far deviates from its original meaning of relentless struggle. Muslims' sacred texts are often literally misinterpreted and misguided, such as the concept of caliphates and infidels. Thus, this misinterpretation gives birth to Muslim leaders that eventually nurtured extreme groups like the Taliban, al-Qaeda and the Islamic state, or autocratically ruled some parts of the Middle East and Africa. While these leaders claimed that their actions were guided based on the Quran and the Prophet's teachings, non-Muslims may easily view Islam as a threat to peace and democracy. There is hardly any evidence that Islam endorses autocratic rule despite the establishment of Rashidun Caliphate (righteous successors chosen by the Prophet) after the Prophet's death. Ibn Khaldun, a legendary Muslim philosopher, believed that the absence of 'Syura' (group solidarity) and commonly held faith are the reasons why sedentary cities were continuously invaded by others tribal warriors during

his lifetime; something which is absent during the Rashidun Caliphate rule (Anjum, 2012). Hence, Islamic leadership has been a subject of misunderstanding as their original teachings were no longer observed. As quoted by Ali (2009):

In the centuries that follow the early era of Islam, various dynasties came to power and since then the Muslim World has been the subject of relentless foreign invasions and occupations. These events have left their impact and have created a state of turmoil and uncertainty. Consequently, various leaders have attempted to promote their view of leaders and leadership irrespective of the wishes of the followers. In all probability, these leaders have deviated from the original Islamic thinking and have institutionalized a form of leadership that is inconsistent with early Islamic instructions. (Ali, 2009; p. 167)

Exploitive, oppressive and self-serving acts are denounced in Islam. The need for absolute power and authority that often became the underlying motive for autocratic rule, is recognized as 'nafs' or personal desire that may trigger ill intentions according to Islam (Abu-Raiya, 2012; Ali, 1995).Islam promotes equality and justice within the 'ummah' (society), that is created through heightened sense of belonging and social cohesiveness among individuals. By placing the needs of others in front of self, a person has performed a noble deed that is highly valued in Islam. Even in the workplace, Islamic 'syura' principles encourage acts of teamwork, consultation and participation among the employees (Tayeb, 1997).

Table 1 summarizes the different dimensions of Islamic leadership models that were produced by scholars that are based on Islam's sacred texts and also the works of philosophers. For example, Ang, Low and Al-Harran (2012) exemplified several leadership lessons drawn from the 9th century written by Ibn Khaldun, and related them with contemporary management issues. Meanwhile, Elkaleh and Samier (2013) propose Islamic leadership values that correspond to the well-adopted western leadership theories namely transformational leadership and servant leadership.

Table 1: Different Dimensions of Islamic Leadership Models by Different Authors

Authors	Dimensions	Dimensions
ElKaleh & Samier (2013)	Tolerance	Consultation
	Honesty	Empathy
	Justice	Patience
	Kindness	Compassion
	Consistency	Conviction
	Discipline	Humility
	Cooperation	
Ang, Low & Al-Harran (2012)	Faith, Integrity and Discipline	Syura (consultation)
	Dignity	Seeking for advice & continuous learning
	Giving (wealth distribution)	Foresight
	Moderation	Understanding the meaning of sins
	Sincerity	Patience
Hakim (2012)	Honesty	Smart
	Trust	Enlightenment
Khaliq & Fontaine (2011)	Faith and belief in God	Endurance
	Mutual consultation	Morality and piety
	Knowledge and wisdom	Express gratitude

	Courage and determination	Patience
Ather & Sobhani (2007)	Syura	Dependence on Allah
	Freedom of thought	Accountability
	Islamic Jurisprudence	Sincerity
	Justice	Dignity of Labour
	Esprit de Corps	
Khaliq (2007)	Patience	Enterprise
	Eloquence	Leniency
Ismail (2007)	Receiving the message	Spreading the message
Aabed (2006)	Conviction (yaqin)	Humility
	Mutual consultation (shura)	Eloquence (fasah)
	Knowledge (ma'refah)	Patience (sabr)
	Justice ('adl)	Leniency (lin)
	Self-sacrifice (tadhyah)	Enterprise (iqdam)
Lukman (1995)	Sovereignty	Equality
	Mutual consultation	Freedom
	Justice	Enjoining the right and forbidding the evil

Islamic Leadership Models

Based on the compilation of the Islamic leadership models proposed by various authors, the dimensions can be grouped into two distinct types of leadership. The first group concerns Islamic leadership traits and the second group relates to the Islamic leadership behaviours. The categorization of the dimensions is shown in the following table.

Table 2: Categorization of Islamic Leadership Models

Types of Leadership	Dimensions	Definitions
Islamic leadership traits	Honesty, sincerity, morality and piety	Being honest in every action and communication
	Kindness, giving, compassion, self-sacrifice, empathy	Being benevolent, helpful
	Smart, foresight	Being intelligent in thinking, actions and communication
	Patience, tolerance	Being acceptance
	Conviction, faith	Believe in God power
	Discipline	Having high self-control
	Humility	Being modest
	Courage and determination, enterprise, endurance	Having strong will and mental power
	Dignity	Having high self-respect, self-esteem
Islamic leadership behaviours	Consistency	Ensuring steadiness and uniformity in every action
	Consultation (syura), freedom of thought	Making decisions based on mutual members' agreement

Cooperation, esprit de corps	Putting emphasis on teamwork, providing support and assistance when needed
Continuous learning, knowledge and wisdom	Engaging in continuous learning to acquire knowledge and wisdom
Express gratitude	Appreciating the contribution that others have made
Accountability, enjoining the right and forbidding the evil	Being responsible and liable for the actions
Eloquence, enlightenment, receiving the message and spreading the message	Practicing good two way communication
Moderation, leniency	Exercising self-controlling behaviour in actions
Sovereignty	Using the power and authority bestowed to him appropriately
Justice, equality	Fairness and impartiality in his decisions and actions

Islamic Leadership Traits

In Islam, it is believed that a human is made of physical appearance (zahir) and intangible spiritual self (batin). The self is all about the soul, in which the questions about its existence are of metaphysical nature. As quoted by Ali (1995):

"The body serves as the vehicle for the soul, and the soul is home for knowledge. It is the soul then that drives a person closer to Allah or away from Him" (p. 58).

Trait or personality exists in the form of intangible and spiritual form within a human's body that is principally guided by will and knowledge. These are the two intrinsic qualities that made Islamic personality as human beings different from other types of personality approaches namely behaviourism and humanism(Ali, 1995). A holistic Islamic view of personality is also ought to benefit Muslims as the western's personality namely the Big Five is doubtful in terms of its applicability to them(Othman, Hamzah & Hashim, 2014).

The belief towards 'heaven and earth', 'deeds vs sins', and 'heaven vs hell' shape each Muslim as a leader of his own. Leaders who have deep faith in the presence of the 'hereafter' and its rewards or punishments, are inclined to embrace benevolent deeds and build empathic relationships with other people. Contradictorily, leaders who are ignorant towards the blessings and repercussions presented during the 'hereafter' will be inclined towards idealism and materialism views of the world. By succumbing to this thought, leaders became subconsciously overwhelmed with self-serving strategies driven by egoistic ambitions and greed for authoritative dominance.

For Islamic leadership traits, 10 dimensions are grouped under one category that consists of Honesty (sincerity, morality and piety), Kindness (giving, compassion, self-sacrifice, and empathy), Smart (foresight), Patience (tolerance), Conviction (faith), Discipline, Humility, Courage and determination (enterprise, endurance) and Dignity. These dimensions reflect the characteristics that should be possessed by Muslim leaders. To be successful as leaders, they need to have these elements in themselves because these elements will be translated into actions and behaviours.

Islamic Leadership Behaviours

In a retrospective western view on the evolution of leadership, behavioural theorists emphasized on the conduct and behaviour of leaders as compared to their physical and

psychological characteristics that earlier explained leadership from the traits approach. Among the popular classical themes of leadership from the behaviourists' point of view include Stogdill's concern for people vs concern for production, Tannenbaum and Schmidt's boss-centered vs employee-centered decision making, and Mouton and Blake's leadership grid. While this behaviour is relevant among Muslim leaders in the Islamic world, the underlying motivation behind the conduct is not always clearly understood. Ather and Sobhani (2007) contended that the western leadership behaviour models are highly compatible with Islamic values, such as in high productivity and high involvement of employees as portrayed in Mouton and Blake's leadership grid. In another instance, the highly authoritative boss-centred decision making is viewed as hindering the spirit of 'syura' or consultative participation, hence it is not preferred in Islam.

As a God-obeying follower, the challenge that lies ahead of every Muslim leader is to achieve the right balance of materialistic and spiritual goals. Being too materialistic-driven shall risk the leader into deviating from the divine objective and Shariah's law (that is to seek Allah's blessing), while being too spiritual-driven (by showing less responsibility towards the organization) will affect the overall quality and productivity of work output. In this case, one may ponder how Islamic leadership models differ from the western derived leadership behaviour models when the concept of spiritual leadership is not exactly new and well-conceived among the western academia. Al-Talib (1991) outlined the characteristics of Islamic leadership that are also applicable to managerial leaders in work organizations. These are (1) allegiance to Allah, (2) Islamic-objectives (seeking Allah's pleasure), (3) adherence to Shariah and Islamic manners, and (4) accepting responsibility as a divine trust given by Allah.

It is worth to note that some of the Islamic behaviours are often overlooked from the western perspectives. A particularly important leadership behaviour, 'Wasatiah' or moderation, is all about the suppression of greed and wants. In general, it is the act of prudence against excessive wastage or extravaganzas. In modern corporations, the principles of moderation are mostly seen as economic-based sustainability efforts to counter the problems related to limited organizational resources and lack of operational efficiency. However, leaders failed to realize that the principles of moderation also cover psychological well-being aspects like work-life balance, and use of authority. Another aspect is consistency, which is described as 'as-Sabirun' or steadfast. Being consistent reflects steadiness or uniformity in every action. Uniformity is frequently misunderstood as traditional form of management that is less desirable for leadership, due to its nature of 'maintaining the status quo' and 'following by the book'. However, consistency does not infer that dynamic or innovation thoughts are suppressed. What it meant is relentless struggle to act rightly whilst allowing no deviation, which is indispensable for any leaders in ensuring that the organization sets it course according to the chosen path.

According to Table 2, Islamic leadership behaviours consist of 10 dimensions comprising Consistency, Consultation (syura, freedom of thought), Cooperation (esprit de corps), Continuous learning (knowledge and wisdom), Express gratitude, Accountability (enjoining the right and forbidding the evil), Eloquence (enlightenment, receiving the message and spreading the message), Moderation (leniency), Sovereignty, and Justice (equality). These leadership behaviours concern the practices and actions taken by leaders in ensuring the success of the organization through motivating members to exert their highest effort.

These two categories of Islamic leadership principles can be used either separately or collectively. The first category concerns the characteristics that Islamic leaders must have and the second category involves the translation of those characteristics into actions and behaviours. However, great caution should be exercised when developing the items for measuring each dimension in leadership traits and behaviours so that they are not overlapping. Factor analysis will provide great assistance in determining the right items for the right constructs.

The Relationship between Islamic Leadership Traits and Employees' Motivation

It is expected that there is a strong relationship between Islamic leadership traits and employees' motivation. Employees who feel comfortable with characteristics of leaders such as honesty, kindness, intelligence, patience, having high conviction, humility, courageous, and having high dignity are normally happy working under the supervision of these leaders.

These leaders are well-accepted by employees and they are normally treated as role models for the subordinates to follow. Studies have shown that Islamic leadership traits are significant to influence employees' motivation at the workplace (Hamidifar, 2015; Islam & Zaki, 2008; Khan, Farooq & Hussain, 2010; McMurray, Pirola-Merlo, Sarros & Islam, 2010).

Islamic leadership behaviours are also expected to influence employees to have high levels of motivation. It is because leaders who exhibit or practicing desirable leadership styles such as consistent in actions and communication, making decisions based on group discussion, providing the required supports when needed, having wisdom, appreciating others, being responsible for their actions, practicing good communication with subordinates, restraining from performing inappropriate behaviours, using the power appropriately and being fair in their decisions and actions are able to instil the right culture in the organization.

These leaders are able to create harmonious working environment that is desired by employees for them to be motivated and perform at the highest level. Studies have provided empirical evidence that those leaders who practice Islamic principles in their leadership are able to motivate their subordinates (Ahmad & Ogunsola, 2011; Ofori, 2009; Yousef, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Currently, researchers who are interested to conduct studies on Islamic leadership are facing difficulties in selecting the right Islamic leadership model to be used due to varying views and conceptualizations of the constructs and dimensions of the model. This effort is made to propose a universal Islamic leadership model by integrating the existing models and theories that have been developed by previous authors. This paper managed to discover two different themes of leadership model; Islamic leadership traits and Islamic leadership behaviours. These two types of Islamic leadership principles can be used separately or collectively in assessing the levels of the Islamic leadership traits and behaviours of leaders in Islamic organizations. This paper is a conceptual paper that needs to be further verified. Future research is required to construct the items to measure Islamic leadership traits and behaviours based on the proposed dimensions, confirm the dimensionality of the variables and to establish the nomological networks of the constructs.

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