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## ISLAMIC MODEL OF LEADERSHIP: AN OPERATIONAL ASPECT

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The primary objective of the study is to explore the leadership concept in Islam and propose the operational aspect of Islamic leadership. This study aims to explore the operational activities and concepts of managerial leadership in Islam and how these can be used in day-to-day matters of organizational management. The findings of the study shed light on the importance of use of proposed model of operational Islamic leadership and provide the path for achieving organizational success through following Islamic teaching for leadership.

**Keywords:** Islamic Model, Leadership, Operational Aspect.

### Introduction

This new dynamic era of globalization has new challenges and crises, which requires innovative solutions and such solutions lie in the paradigm shift of leadership. A shift from traditional leadership to Islamic leadership paradigm. This shift can address the management issues more effectively as Islam brings perfection whenever it is implemented in true spirit. Islam offer a unique leadership paradigm that nurture the civility, prosperity, diversity and contentment among people of different creeds and ethnic origins around the globe.<sup>1</sup> The Islamic leadership deals with management of organizations from the perspective of the guidelines derived from revealed and other Islamic sources which results in applications compatible with Islamic beliefs and practices.<sup>2</sup> Leadership in Islam is to some extent similar to conventional leadership and accepts the rights ways of doing things. However, it would be different in the consideration of religious, moral, and human roots.<sup>3</sup> The Islamic roots of leadership generally exist in the primary sources of Shari'ah (Holy Qur'an and Sunnah). These roots are further penetrated in the practices of the early Muslims. Due to the current crisis in management and leadership and increased globalization, the need of the hour flashing signals for progressing towards Islamic leadership model. These problems and issues can be better resolved through Islamic leadership model. The Islamic teachings and guidance repeatedly focus on the leadership perspective as these teachings suggest Muslims to appoint a leader in most of the situations even when

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they are traveling.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Islamic perspective on management studies is an important area of research for modern management scholars. This study aims to explore the Islamic leadership operational aspects and highlights the importance of implementing the principles of Islamic concepts of leadership in the organizational context.

### **Operational Principles of Islamic Leadership**

Islam leadership style incorporates many principles of different leadership theories. Operational aspect of Islamic leadership is supreme blend of transactional, transformational and servant leadership theories. Justice and compassions are the central point of the operational dimension of Islamic leadership. According to Islamic teachings, there are three basic pillars of the leadership; Mercy, Kindness and Justices.<sup>5</sup> The whole concept of Islamic model of leadership is constructed on these bases. The primary operational duties of a leader are to lead the people in offering prayers, to look after their interest with justice and run their activities in a disciplined and systematic way (Ahmad, 2003).<sup>6</sup> However, in the organizational context managerial leadership of Islam is guided by Islamic teachings.

In the light of the Islamic teachings, current study explains the operational aspect of Islamic leadership model. Following discussion will explain the components of the operational model of the Islamic leadership. Furthermore, this discussion will lead towards the initial development of the operational model.

#### **1- Surrender and Dependence to Allah**

The surrender is the key aspect of Muslims' beliefs, which is also incorporated in the Islamic leadership model. The worldly meanings of Islam are "The Surrender"; a complete submission to Allah's will and purpose.<sup>1</sup> Islam involves obedience and surrender to Allah, the Lord of the universe.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the concept of surrender in leadership is of vital importance. In Islamic management model, leaders have to surrender their authority to the instructions of Allah almighty. This surrender creates the sense of fear in management which refrain them doing injustice even in minor day to day activities.

In addition to the surrender another thing that is required from the Muslims in their affairs is dependence to Allah, SWT (Tawakkal). Many Quranic verses signal and highlight the importance of this Twakkal on Allah (SWT).

Allah (SWT) says, “when you have made a decision, put your trust in Allah, certainly, Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)”<sup>8</sup>.

This verse from Holy Quran suggests the decision making process in Islamic model of leadership. It emphasizes that once the decision is made management, should be strict to the implementation and put their best in achieving the desired outcome. In addition to this leader should put his trust in Allah. However, Islam does not support a common misconception about the dependence, without putting any efforts and sitting idle waiting.

### **2- Consultation**

It is a very important aspect of Islamic teachings. Consultation is discussed under many heads throughout Islamic teachings and it can be a valued component of Islamic concept of leadership.

Allah (SWT) says “And those who have answered the call of their lord and establish prayer and who conduct their affairs by consultation and spend out what we bestow on them for sustenance.”<sup>9</sup>

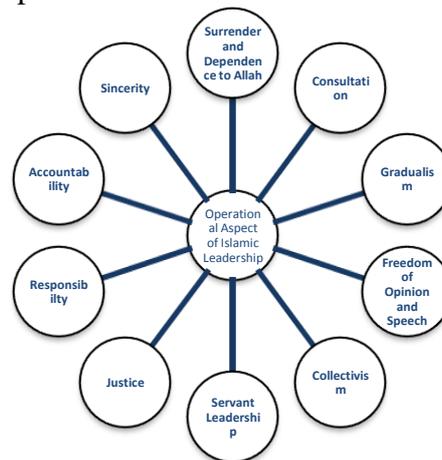
In another verse, Allah (SWT) says “And consult them in affairs, then, when you have taken decision, put your trust in Allah, for Allah loves those who put their trust in Him”<sup>10</sup>.

Many verses of Holy Quran put emphasis on the participation of the people in decision-making, which suggests that Islam promotes the culture of consultation in all the aspects of life. Consultation is the basic pillar of Islamic way of life.<sup>11</sup> Same are the instructions for management affairs. Participation of followers in decision making is declared best quality of believers. Leaders should consult with the employees. This involvement in decision making will boost the ownership of decision and expand the effort on the part of employees to achieve the desired outcomes. The Islamic view of managerial leadership promotes the shared influence process for achieving the organizational objectives. Participative decisions making is the core intervention while achieving organizational success.

### **3- Gradualism**

Gradualism is the concept of implementing the policies in steps. Gradualism is a very important Islamic concept. Islam prefers the policies to be implemented gradually. Most of the Islamic directives were not implemented over night. The most illustrative example of gradualism in Islam is the prohibition of

alcohol drinking. This prohibition of alcohol is implemented in three steps.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Islamic leadership model would guide the managers to implement the policies, organizational change and organizational development gradually. Indeed, the Holy Quran was not revealed at once, rather it was revealed incrementally over a period of 23 years, according to circumstances and requirements.<sup>12</sup> Figure 1 depicts the proposed components and elements of the Islamic leadership.



**Figure:1** Islamic Leadership Operational Model (Developed by Authors)

#### **4- Freedom of Opinion and Speech**

Islam opens the door of critiques for betterment. Umar (R.A), the second Caliph said: “May God have mercy upon anyone who points out my faults to me”. Islam encourages the respect for difference in opinions. Islamic model of management and leadership would suggest such environment that could facilitate an open culture in the organization. This open culture encourages employees to point out the flaws and guide the organizational policies towards success. Leaders should create such an environment in the organization so that the staff members can easily opine on any issue.<sup>4</sup> The four Caliphs of Islam considered openness as an integral element of leadership.<sup>13</sup>

#### **5- Collectivism**

Collectivism is the term used for team culture. It is the pillar of Islamic leadership approach. The concept of leadership is central in the teaching of Islam as Islam focus on team building (Jamat) and unity. The concept of team is very clear and explains in the following sayings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH);

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, “The believers are like one man; if his head is in pain, his whole body suffers and if his eye is in pain, his whole body suffers”.<sup>14</sup>

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said, “The Hand of Allah is with the Jama’ah(team)”.<sup>15</sup>

Implementation of collectivism in organization will foster the team culture as Islam discourages the individual approach and promote the unity and team building. Team culture should be incorporated in Organizational and departmental level. Just like consultation, collectivism creates a sense of ownership. If all the members of the department work as a team, organizational goals will be achieved in more efficient way as the teams create the synergy effect. This synergy will lead to the higher departmental and organizational efficiency.

#### **6- Servant Leadership**

This is a moral leadership approach that inclines toward values, ethics, principles, virtues, morality and authenticity. It advocates that leaders should serve those under them, helping them to reach maximum effectiveness.<sup>16</sup> The leaders of this approach lead the employees with the feeling of serving the others. The roots of theory of servant leadership found in the Islamic model of leadership. The servant leaders lead with logical feelings related to the follower, which nurtures understanding, gratitude and kindness which are the bases of Islamic leadership model.<sup>17</sup> Once Umar (RA) said, “I have appointed over you, governors and agents not to beat your bodies or to take your monies, but rather to teach you and serve you.”

This servant leaders approach is more relevant when it comes to operational activities. The leaders in organization, if adopt the servant leader approach, the ownership of employees will be escalated which will be very helpful in achieving organizational success.

#### **7- Justice**

According to teachings of Islam justice is most closely linked to the successful leadership as Allah (SWT) says;

“O you, who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witness to Allah, even as against yourselves or your parents or your kin and whether it be against rich or poor, for Allah protects both”.<sup>18</sup>

From the above stance of Islamic leadership, justice can easily be comprehended as the Muslims are directed to be fair in the

verdict even if it is against them. Islamic model of society and leadership is based on justice. The Islamic teachings repeatedly insist about doing and maintaining justice in the society. In the similar vein, it is applicable to the organizational settings. The management leaders must deal with team members justly and fairly without any discrimination regardless of their race, color or religion. The key to organizational success lies in the true implementation of principle of justice in operational and all other aspects of leadership.

### **8- Responsibility**

The concept of responsibility has vital importance in the teachings of Islam as Islam encourages the culture of assigning and feeling responsibilities. Islam assigns responsibility to every Muslim according to his capacity. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

**“Every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The leader of people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects. A man is the guardian of his family and he is responsible for them. A woman is the guardian of her husband’s home and his children and she is responsible for them. The servant of a man is a guardian of the property of his master and he is responsible for it. No doubt, every one of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock.”<sup>19</sup>**

Concept of responsibility is most obvious in the Islamic leadership model. This concept of responsibility not only limited to the upper level managers but it covers the lower level managers and even the operational staff in their capacities. This would enrich culture of joint responsibility and would provide a competitive advantage to the organization, if implemented properly.

### **9- Accountability**

Accountability is another important aspect of Islamic teachings. Islam implements the consequences based management model. These consequences can be good or bad depends upon the deeds. Allah (SWT) says “...whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant) shall see it. And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant) shall see it.”<sup>20</sup>

The above verses categorically explain the accountability aspect of the leadership. If this system of accountability for all is implemented in the organizations, the functioning of the organizations will be smooth. The fear of accountability avoids the

injustice and abuse of the powers. Islam discussed this concept of accountability of leadership in two folds; rewards and punishments. If a leader does good, he will be rewarded accordingly and if he does bad, he will be punished accordingly.

### **10- Sincerity**

Sincerity is another focal element of the operational model of the Islamic leadership.

Sincerity defines the psychological contract between leaders and their followers that they will try their best to guide, protect, and treat their followers justly.<sup>21</sup> Leadership in Islam stands on concept of sincerity towards followers and organization. If the sincerity is lacking no organization can be successful in achieving organizational goals.

These ten components of the operational model of Islamic leadership provide the framework of operational level activities of Islamic leadership. All the components are of equal importance numbering them here does not represent their order of importance. The need is to implement this model as a whole. Implementing a few or missing a few will not provide the desired outcomes to their full.

### **Conclusion**

Leadership is considered as most significant instrument of a Muslim society. Organizations are growing global which pose many leadership and management threats. The success lies in the principles of Islamic leadership. The present study focuses on the operational aspects of Islamic leadership model. This focus on operational aspect will be helpful in gaining competitive edge. The Muslim leaders should follow these principles to compete in highly dynamic environment. Managers who adopt these qualities of Islamic leadership model can cope the organizational challenges and complexities in better way. Therefore, it is imperative to consider the Islamic principles of management and leadership for the revival of society and the organizations. The missing link of organizational success can only be found in the Islamic model of leadership. The need is to implement these principles in true spirit.

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