

Building Leader Power and Team Loyalty Leadership and the Art of Followership in an Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT: *Islam emphasizes how a leader should act and how a good follower can support effective leadership. This article reviews how leadership and followership are intertwined and how Islamic values guide the carrying out of both roles. This article uses a qualitative method with a descriptive and literature study approach. The Prophet Muhammad SAW exemplified how leadership should prioritize trustworthiness, responsibility, justice, wisdom, perseverance, and empathy. An ideal leader in Islam does not only focus on power but also integrity and balance between worldly and hereafter interests. In addition, a good follower of Islam must have obedience with understanding, healthy loyalty, and the ability to provide constructive input. One example of effective interaction between leaders and followers is seen in Islamic history, such as in the Battle of Khandaq, when Salman Al-Farisi proposed a trench-digging strategy accepted wholeheartedly by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Leadership success in Islam depends on a harmonious relationship between leaders and followers, where both parties support each other and build a shared vision.*

INTRODUCTION

A leader is someone whose strength, actions, conscience, and character can create a situation that allows the people he leads to work together to achieve the desired goals (Sukatin et al., 2022). A leader's leadership significantly influences the performance of the people he leads (Imansyah et al., 2020) and the goals to be achieved (Ningsih et al., 2021). The success of a leader in an organization or institution itself is highly dependent on the behavior of the leader that is seen when carrying out his leadership duties, such as how to command, assign tasks, communicate, motivate people being led, guide and direct, decision making, and how the leader enforces discipline, controls and supervises the performance of his employees, reprimands and gives sanctions or punishments to his employees (Sobian, 2023). The behavior of a successful leader is related to the leader's traits or character, such as intelligence, wisdom, enthusiasm, responsibility, and reliability (Muchtarom et al., 2023).

However, in the world of leadership, the focus is often only on the role of a leader. A leader's success also depends on his ability to build and develop loyal, intelligent followers with the same vision. This is because followers have an important role in supporting the success of leadership and can also play an active role in achieving the same vision as the leader (Kelley, 1992).

The Prophet and his companions have very well exemplified the concept of leadership and followership in Islam. The Prophet was always open, accepting criticism, input, and suggestions from his companions. When leading, the Prophet prioritized exemplary attitudes and deliberation and led using a persuasive or inviting approach and not with violence or repression so that people who converted to Islam during the time of the Prophet purely because they felt called by seeing his very noble morals, not by intimidating or forcing them to convert to Islam (Kartika et al., 2024). Islam emphasizes how a leader should act and how a good follower can support effective leadership. This article examines how leadership and followership are intertwined and how Islamic values guide the successful execution of these roles.

METODE

This article uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach and a literature study (Tenda et al., 2024). Qualitative research aims to deeply understand the phenomenon by analyzing non-numerical data from various sources. The descriptive approach systematically and factually describes the theme of leadership and followership from an Islamic perspective. Meanwhile, a literature study was conducted by collecting reference data from various journal articles and books accessed online as a basis for theory and analysis. The study results include a discussion of the concept of Leadership in Islam and the steps to build followers as a leader. Finally, this article also describes the art of following Islamic teachings as part of ethics and morals in leadership.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Leadership in Islam

Leadership in Islam is not only about power or control over others but more about the mandate and responsibility of directing and inspiring others toward goodness. Leaders in Islam are expected to be authoritarian figures and role models who guide their people toward goodness and prosperity (Hilaliah et al., 2023). In addition, leadership in Islam is oriented towards administration or power alone and on spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. Hence, a leader is not only tasked with giving orders, criticizing, or controlling his subordinates but must also be able to influence and inspire through emotional communication and instilling important values in his followers (Wati et al., 2025). The Prophet Muhammad SAW said: "Each of you is a leader, and each of you will be asked to account for your leadership." (Hadith Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim)

From this hadith, it is clear that leadership in Islam is not just a position but more of a responsibility. A good leader must have relevant qualities. First, Justice (fairness in decisions and actions) - Leaders must be able to act impartially and prioritize the truth. Leaders who prioritize Justice in assigning tasks and responsibilities create an environment where every team member feels valued and recognized (Hilaliah et al., 2023). Second, Wisdom (Wisdom in dealing with problems) - Leaders must have intelligence in making the right decisions. An intelligent and wise leader can make the right and insightful decisions, overcome problems and challenges effectively, and bring the people he leads to progress and prosperity (Rusmita et al., 2024).

The third is perseverance (Consistency in carrying out his duties) - Leaders must be steadfast in carrying out their mandate without being easily influenced by personal interests. A consistent leader respects time, discipline, and responsibility, does not delay work, and is patient in achieving leadership goals (Sukatin et al., 2022). Finally, fourth, Empathy (Caring about the conditions of his followers) - Leaders must understand and pay attention to the needs and aspirations of their followers. An empathetic attitude to assist is an important trait for a leader because a good leader is a leader who not only thinks about personal interests but also the public interest and welfare of society (Rusmita et al., 2024).

The leadership of the Prophet Muhammad SAW greatly reflects these four traits. For example, in the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, he showed wisdom in negotiating, even though it initially seemed detrimental to the Muslims. However, in the long run, this agreement benefited the Muslims. The Treaty of Hudaibiyah is a diplomatic strategy of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which shows the wisdom of Islam in prioritizing peace and the welfare of the people (Fitri et al., 2024).

In his book *The ICLIF Leadership Competency Model (LCM): An Islamic Alternative*,

Syed Muhammad Naquib Alatas emphasizes that leadership in Islam must be oriented towards spiritual and moral values. He explains that a true leader focuses on worldly results and must know his responsibilities before Allah (Al-Attas, 2007). In his book, he states: "True leadership is not merely about power and authority, but about servitude, accountability, and the pursuit of justice. A leader must cultivate Taqwa (God-consciousness) and Ihsan (excellence) in every decision and action (Al-Attas, 2007)."

This statement clearly states that a leader must prioritize integrity and justice and make Islamic values a guideline in every leadership step. Al-Attas also emphasized that an ideal leader must develop strong ethical and moral leadership and prioritize the balance between worldly and afterlife interests (Al-Attas, 2007).

Steps to Building Followers for a Leader

Followership positively correlates with work engagement and leadership, so critical employees will likely be engaged. Likewise, active employees will likely be engaged (Rosani & Tarigan, 2019). A good leader must be able to build loyal and quality followers. Here are some steps that can be taken. The first step is to Instill a Clear Vision - A leader must have a strong vision and be able to inspire followers to move towards the same goal. This is because an effective leader is a leader who can move the people under him toward the desired goal (Subni, 2024).

Next, the second step is to Set an Example – Leaders must be examples in action, discipline, and ethics to be their followers' role models. This is because a leader must create an organizational culture that will guide all its members to influence the people's perceptions, views, and ways of working (Subni, 2024). Then the third step is to Build Effective Communication – A leader must be open to input and ensure clear communication between himself and his followers. Effective communication occurs when the recipient of the message can fully grasp the meaning of the message conveyed by the sender so that the purpose of the communication can be achieved (Ayep et al., 2022). Therefore, a leader must have communication skills, in the sense of not only the ability to convey missions, goals, strategies, information, and ideas to other people/subordinates but also the ability to understand what is conveyed because no matter how great the idea is, if others do not understand the idea, then it will be meaningless (Subni, 2024).

The fourth step is Appreciating Follower Contributions – Appreciating followers who actively contribute will increase their loyalty. Loyalty in an organization is important to increase commitment in the organization, so a leader can use his/her power of influence to motivate followers to complete tasks and provide rewards (can be in the form of praise or tangible benefits) for those who meet expectations (Aulia et al., 2025). The fifth step is Providing Space to Grow – A leader must encourage his/her followers to learn, develop, and take on a more significant role in the organization or community. A leader must be able to develop the skills and potential of his/her followers/subordinates by ensuring that each follower/subordinate gets the opportunity to learn and develop in their work (Nurhayuni et al., 2023).

Finally, the sixth step is Supporting and Motivating – A leader must provide moral support and motivation so that followers remain enthusiastic in carrying out their duties. So, a leader must create a positive and enthusiastic environment among his/her followers/subordinates so that they can feel comfortable and motivated to contribute optimally (Nurhayuni et al., 2023). Finally, the sixth step is Support and Motivation – A leader must provide moral support and motivation so

that followers remain enthusiastic in carrying out their duties. So, a leader must create a positive and enthusiastic environment among his followers/subordinates so that they can feel comfortable and motivated to contribute optimally (Nurhayuni et al., 2023).

The Art of Followership in Islam

A leader will not be successful without quality followers. In Islam, a good follower is submissive and obedient and must have the following values. First, obedience with understanding – A good follower does not just obey unthinkingly but understands the reasons behind his leader's orders. In the Qur'an Surah an-Nisa verse 59, there is an order to obey *ulil amri*. However, Islam does not teach blind obedience to leaders because it requires obedience based on the benchmark of truth from God, so when a leader adheres to the demands of Allah and His Messenger, he must be obeyed. When the leader goes against the will of Allah and His Messenger, he may be criticized or advised to return to the right path using persuasive methods, and if the leadership also ignores these methods. It is permissible not to comply (Rozali, 2020). This is because, in Islam, a leader must be obeyed when he leads by referring to the book of Allah or Islamic law, so when he does not refer to Islamic law, he does not have to be listened to and obeyed (Majid et al., 2019).

Second, Healthy Loyalty: Good followers must be loyal to their leaders as long as they are on the right path. The sincerity of the leader will have an impact on the sincerity of the followers to work together in order to achieve the vision of the organization, and this sincerity will create loyalty. The study's results show that leadership has a positive influence on follower loyalty, which means that strong leadership will increase follower loyalty (Infrianto & Wahyoedi, 2011). Third, Actively Providing Input – Islam teaches that followers must dare to express their opinions if they see their leaders making mistakes. When a leader makes a mistake, followers must warn them of their mistakes gently and politely, remind them if they are negligent, and unite human hearts to obey him and pray for their goodness (Majid et al., 2019). Fourth, Strengthening Each Other – Good followers must be part of the solution, not just following without contributing. Islam gives rights to everything, as is the case with leaders; there are rights that we as followers must fulfill because, in fact, the benefit of the people will not be achieved and organized except by mutual assistance between the leader and his followers (Majid et al., 2019).

In his book *The Art of Followership*, Ronald E. Riggio emphasizes that effective followership is not just about following but also having critical thinking and initiative. He states: "Good followers are not passive; they actively engage with their leaders, provide constructive feedback, and contribute to the overall success of the organization (Riggio, 2008)."

This statement is relevant to the Islamic concept that emphasizes that followers must dare to voice ideas if they are felt to be beneficial, as the companions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW often provided input to him in various situations. One example of a legendary interaction between leaders and followers in Islam was in the Battle of Khandaq when Salman Al-Farisi proposed digging a trench to defend against the Quraysh attack. The Prophet Muhammad SAW accepted this suggestion with an open heart even though, in Arab tradition, a strategy like this was never known. However, the Prophet immediately ordered his companions to implement it. This strategy proved to be very effective in defending Medina from enemy attacks. This shows that a good leader must be willing to listen to and respect the opinions of his followers. In Islam, a fundamental characteristic of leadership is the implementation of deliberation as a means to solve problems in

leadership. It will give rise to a fair attitude and provide freedom of thought to all parties within the scope of his leadership (Mulkanasir, 2021).

Effective leadership throughout Islamic history occurred when there was a harmonious relationship between the leader and his followers. The Prophet Muhammad SAW was a great leader and made his companions extraordinary followers. He allowed them to express their opinions, learn, and become leaders after him. In addition, we know one of the most legendary examples of followership in Islam, namely the attitude of Abu Bakr Ash-Shiddiq towards the Prophet Muhammad SAW. When the Isra' Mi'raj incident occurred, and many people doubted the truth of the story, Abu Bakr believed it without hesitation. His high trust and loyalty to the Prophet Muhammad SAW made him one of his closest friends and a leader who replaced him after his death.

CONCLUSION

Leadership in Islam is not just about power but is a significant mandate that must be carried out responsibly. The Prophet Muhammad SAW emphasized that every leader will be accountable for his leadership. Leadership and followership in Islam are not separate concepts but two sides of the same coin. A leader is tasked with giving orders and being a role model who can inspire, motivate, and guide his followers towards goodness and prosperity. A successful leader can build and empower his followers, while a good follower can support, provide input, and participate in building a shared vision. Then, followership or good followers is essential in Islam. Quality followers are obedient, think critically, provide input, and contribute actively. Islam teaches that obedience to a leader must be accompanied by understanding, healthy loyalty, courage to provide advice, and a spirit to strengthen each other. The leadership of the Prophet Muhammad SAW is the best example in Islam, where he built harmonious relationships with his followers through deliberation, role models, and respect for the opinions of others. Ideal leadership must be oriented towards moral and spiritual values and balance the interests of the world and the hereafter.

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