

# Islamic Leadership and Its Practices among Malaysian Armed Forces Officers: An Appraisal

Zainal Abidin Mohammed Salleh

Faculty of Leadership and Management Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i6/14039>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i6/14039

*Published Date:* 04 June 2022

## Abstract

Islamic leadership contains kinds of leadership qualities like trust, justice and certainty. These deep-seated unique qualities change and develop only slowly over time. The current study stands to investigate the level of these types of rates among Malaysian Armed Forces Officers; the problem addressed by this study was whether the MAF officers understand the principles of Islamic leadership and lead the other ranks according to these principles or not. The researcher adopted analytical and descriptive approaches in this study. The study was conducted via the Quantitative method, and the study draws from analysis of data taken from the questionnaire. The result of the study showed that the influence of Islamic principles on leadership approaches used among the Malaysian Armed Forces to be high. The development of the study further showed that power influences leadership approach, moral leadership approach, situational approach, bureaucratic approach are highly influenced by Islamic principle. However, Islamic leadership principles have barely influenced the trait leadership approach. Therefore, the study recommends that Military officers should be equipped with requisite Islamic Knowledge that will enhance their leadership qualities to enhance more decentralization of power and delegation of responsibilities.

**Keywords:** Malaysian Army, Islamic Leadership, Practices

## Introduction

Leadership is one of the foundations in managing societal affairs; one of social science's most examined phenomena, and it is one of the trusted and vital aspects of human life. From human existence on earth, leadership has been a responsibility humans must undertake. The majesty of the ancient civilization was due to the integrity of the leaders, the quality which is paramount in a Muslim leader. Unfortunately, the collapse of civilization has resulted from the undue process of going by the secular rules as the primary source of strength among the leaders and the people (Yildirim, 2016).

The study of leadership is a subject of great importance to all communities. It gives an individual a powerful dynamic in ruling a country, military forces or the corporate sector. Due to the significance of leadership for human life, Islam has provided specific guidelines for selecting the leader and guiding leaders to carry out the mandate in line with the will of God. The researchers believe authentic leadership affects a person without being pushy (Nikolic et al., 2020). Leaders have followers who voluntarily carry out their duties with skill and intellect as a power source, the power used to maintain flexibility and introduce changes. Wahjosumidjo (1991) states that leadership is an ability to influence others to think and act for producing high performances in the formulation and achievement of organizational goals. From the above discussion, power and leadership skills are essential to influence. Such leadership exists in various activities, and it is either directly or indirectly in any organization. The researcher would like to prove in this study, among others, that military leaders are the best among ATM officers when their awareness of the principles of Islamic leadership is ensured and practised.

### **Leadership in Islam**

Leadership is one of the terms that are familiar and close to Muslims. From the creation of Adam until the present generation, leadership is an essential element that constitutes the core of Islam. This argument is based on the belief that human beings were created to govern the world and devote themselves to Almighty God. Allah SWT says:

*“And when your lord said to the angles “I am placing on the earth one that shall be My deputy,” they replied: “Will You put there one that will do evil and shed blood when we have for so long sung Your praises and sanctified Your name?” He said: “I know what you do not know.” (Al-Baqarah, 2:30).*

The word khalifah in verse has been translated as a deputy by (Zayid, 1980). It aligns with the views of some past Muslim scholars such as Abu Ja'far, al-Hasan and Qatadah (Al-Tabary, 2000). As the deputy of God on earth, man acts on it based on His instruction. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, it could be inferred from the view that the word khalifah/deputy could be interchangeably used to indicate the same meaning as the comment 'leader'.

Allah SWT created a human being that is made up of two elements. The Outer elements (physical) consist of blood, flesh, bones and nerves and the Inner parts (spirituality) refer to the spirit, breath, heart and mind. (Hassan 1996). Allah says:

*“We created man. We know the promptings of his soul, and are closer to him than (his) jugular vein” (Qaf 50:16).*

Therefore, to fulfil the task as caliph on the earth, Allah SWT equipped them with intellect and made this universe subservient. This meant that Allah SWT provided humans with skills and resources to govern the world (Naceur, 2012). The spirit of leadership in the Islamic point of view follows the Islamic principle that man is responsible for whatever he does on earth as per the Word of Allah: Moreover, there are two scribes, one each sitting on the right and the left, recording everything. He utters not a word, but there is a vigilant watcher at hand (Quran, 50:17-18)

This point has given immense chances to the Muslim leaders to excel their non-Muslim counterparts in good leadership, either in politics, religion or armed forces. A summary of what is known and understood about Islamic leadership makes it very important to conduct further research on Islamic leadership concerning many fields of life, especially military affairs.

### Islamic Leadership

Islamic leadership is a process of moving a group of people towards a direction that has been determined by impulsive objectives (Afsaruddin & Asma, 2019). Islamic leadership runs openly and full of the spirit of brotherhood between leaders and followers (Tan & Charlene, 2019). Islam, in general, places great emphasis on leadership questions because, in the absence of leadership elements, religious administration matters, and the nation could not be run perfectly (Beekun et al., 1999; Ibn Taimiyah, 1971).

This leadership was also proven when Rasulullah SAW recommended appointed leaders when travelling, even in small groups. Rasulullah SAW also described that all Muslim individuals are considered as caliph or leader and is accountable to those who are in under his leadership, whether they are heads of State, wives, children or slaves: *"Each of you is a leader and will be held accountable over which he led. A priest (head of State) is a leader and will be held accountable for his people. A husband in his family is the leader and will be asked to be responsible for the people he leads. A wife in the household her husband is the leader she will be asked for responsibility for who he leads. An assistant in matters of property his master is the leader, and he will be asked responsibility for it"* (Al Bukhari, 1987:2371).

Hence, leadership is related to adhering to a strong belief in monotheism that will affect the formation and the development of a Muslim individual because it will be the basis of the journey of their lives. Al-Hasan al Aidaros et al (2013) states that true faith is an aqidah (spirit) for each individual determines their behaviour and actions in the same life there is good or bad. Meanwhile, Al-Maududi (1976) explains that the failure of the ummah Islam fully understands and appreciates the question of faith will open the door to the devil ruining their lives. Therefore, Rasulullah SAW started da'wah in Makkah, emphasizing the formation of strong faith and akhlaq among the first generation of Muslims (Al-Buti, 2000).

Therefore, Islamic leadership should be emphasized in the military profession. Military duties are a career that is considered noble by Islam and even high respect for people directly involved with military duties (Jalal et al., 2020). People who fall on the battlefield or duties that have been entrusted to the interests of religion, race and country deserve to be called 'martyrs' far more valuable than the rewards given in this world. In this case, the Prophet Muhammad SAW has said, which means, *"Whoever dies for defending his property is called a martyr. Anyone who dies for defending his family and the soul of his friend it is called a martyr, and whoever dies because defending his religion will then be called a martyr "*. (At Tirmizi, 2007).

Hence, leadership is related to adhering to a strong belief in monotheism that will affect the formation and the development of a Muslim individual because it will be the basis of the journey of their lives. Al-Hasan al Aidaros et al (2013) states that true faith is an aqidah (spirit) for each individual determines their behaviour and actions in the same life there is good or

bad. Meanwhile, Al-Maududi (1976) explains that the failure of the ummah Islam fully understands and appreciates the question of faith will open the door to the devil ruining their lives. Therefore, Rasulullah SAW started da'wah in Makkah, emphasizing the formation of solid faith and akhlaq among the first generation of Muslims (al-Buti, 2000).

Allah SWT has commanded Muslims to make preparations and form strength for defending religion, nation and country. This is as has been said by Allah SWT *"And prepare to oppose them (invading enemies) all kinds of strength that can you prepare and from the well-equipped cavalry ready, to awe with that preparation the enemies of Allah and your enemies and the enemies of those whom you do not know; medium God knows. And whatever you spend in the way of Allah will be recompensed to you, and you will not be persecuted"*. (Al-Quran, Al-Anfal, 8:60).

Thus, being one of the senior officers in the Malaysian Army, upholding Islamic leadership is highly demanded in my services. Leadership among Malaysian Army Officers is based on a concept of duty, service, and self-sacrifice, as has been pledged in the knight's pledge. Their responsibilities to followers as moral accountability, defining leadership as placing followers needs before the leaders. Nonetheless, since most military personnel are Muslims, this study attempts to delve deeper into the extent to which Islamic principles in terms of aqidah (belief) and akhlaq (moral) of military officers in the Malaysian Army impact the behaviour of Islamic leadership and practice.

### **Concept of Leadership in Islam**

Yulk (2006) defined leadership as "a process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs and to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective effort to accomplish a shared objective."

Hollander (1978) defines leadership as an influence process that affects leaders and followers. Although the leaders have the power but the power of influence depends more on persuasion than coercion. An effective leader can lead his followers unconsciously to sacrifice for the organization (Bass, 1985; Locke et al., 1991).

Aabed (2006), in his dissertation of more than two hundred pages and titled "A study of Islamic Leadership Theory and Practice in K- 12 Islamic School in Michigan", had interaction with twelve (12) Islamic school principals in the state of Michigan who participated in the study. Individual, face-to-face interviews obtained data to get rich descriptive information about their leadership approaches, traits, styles and principles. It contained the essence of literacy to human development, education as the most critical key to development and poverty alleviation, and the importance of parental values and religious beliefs, among others. He admitted that effective leadership in Islamic schools involves incorporating Islamic principles in leadership behaviours and practices. Therein, he confirmed the need for Islamic leadership in Islamic institutions in the United States. He also addressed whether school principals in Islamic schools exhibited and led these schools according to Islamic leadership principles. The dissertation is relevant because it deals with the importance of Islamic leadership theory, which contains the significance of Islamic leadership principles. Although the dissertation was written on some selected school principals, the topic deals with the MAF officers.

Khan (2012) accrued the credit of successful organisation to the leader factors that lead it towards glory, and the need for such leaders is always there. It is one of the unifying forces and the driving force for success.

In this paper, the writer gleaned through the annals of history and studied the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his wise Caliphs and inferred from it the fundamental success principles responsible for outstanding achievement in their lives. In the writer's belief, these principles are equally useful both for Muslims and non-Muslims.

The concept of leadership in Islam, according to him, is based on Qur'an 6:165, where Allah addresses human beings as His representatives or vicegerents on the earth. He endowed them with the necessary skills, principles and tools to lead their lives and others' towards glory. The key sources of these leadership principles are primarily derived from the Glorious Quran, the holy prophet, the wise Caliph and pious followers.

The paper of which scope is discussing critical Islamic leadership principles and their importance for a Muslim and any other leader. It had its primary methodological approach from adopting the study of Islamic leadership as illustrated in the existing literature.

Salleh and Alwani (2012), in their article titled "Islamic Principles of Administration: Implications on Practices in Organization", developed a discussion expounding the principles of Islamic administration and its implication to practices in any organization. They enumerated the basic tenets of Islamic administration extracted from the primary and secondary sources of Shari'ah, its definition and scope, application and implementation, and its impact on the practice in any organization. The paper highlighted the relationship of Islamic principles of administration vis-à-vis the mainstream corporate values and good governance as adopted by world-leading firms and organizations. This centred around the three main areas of any organization: employment practices, managerial practices, and training and development. It was an attempt to convince their readers that Islamic principles of administration don't merely serve as a concept or theoretical aspect in the Islamic administration but rather as a very practical tool in serving the needs of any organization is facing the challenges of the new globalization era.

### **Malaysian Armed Forces Officers and Understanding the Principles of Islamic Leadership**

Members of the Malaysian Armed Forces occupations are those military servicemen who currently serve in the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) and are not free to accept any civilian employment. They are bound to do the Armed Forces to protect Malaysia's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity against hostile forces. The Malaysian Armed Forces occupation includes regular members of the Malaysian Army, Royal Malaysian Navy and the Royal Malaysian Air Force. Still, it does not include civilian persons employed by the government under The Ministry of Defence and military reserves not currently on active service. Reference to a skill level has not been used to define this major group's scope.

The Malaysian Armed Forces Officers are military personnel who were commissioned by the *Seri Paduka Baginda Yang Di-Pertuan Agong* to serve in the services of The Malaysian Armed Forces. They are officers from the rank of Second Lieutenant or equivalent right up to General. This category of military personnel is trained to lead their men and subordinates in times of war and peace (Shuhud, 1996).

The influence of Islam in the Malaysian Army began to grow after the resurgence of Islam. However, efforts to spread Islam in the Malaysian Army started since the establishment of the Army itself. This effort was further strengthened by the establishment of a Religious Corp called 'Kor Agama Angkatan Tentera Malaysia' (KAGAT) in 1986. The establishment of KAGAT was the vision of the Fourth Prime Minister of Malaysia, YAB Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohammad, aimed at inculcating Islamic values and changing western culture contrary to local norms religious teachings. Before the establishment of KAGAT, the task of spreading Islam and implementing the needs of Islam was carried out by public religious staff.

KAGAT is similar in function to Chaplain Corp. in the U.S. military and other countries, but its role is broader, and there is little difference with Chaplain Corp. in other countries (Whitt, J.E, 2008). The existence of KAGAT has increased the influence of Islam and hindered extremist ideologies and Islamic streams that are contrary to national policy among members of the military. KAGAT plays an essential role in eliminating traditions and norms that are contrary to Islamic values while ensuring that only moderate Islamic teachings are considered for adoption by the Malaysian military.

To further strengthen the role of KAGAT and enhance the understanding of Islam among members of the Malaysian Army, the Government has formulated a policy known as the Malaysian Armed Forces Islamic Mental and Spiritual Development Policy or (Dasar Pembinaan Mental dan Kerohanian Islam ATM) through the Armed Forces Council Order 9 / 91 (PMAT 9/91). This policy aims to provide a balance of physical and spiritual construction for Malaysian Armed Forces Personnel. This policy emphasizes ten educational focuses that need to be given to members of the Malaysian Army, namely:

1. Basic education of Fardhu Ain.
2. Basic education of Fardhu Kifayah.
3. Jihad education.
4. Family education.
5. Moral education.
6. Leadership education.
7. Al-Quran and Sunnah education.
8. Worship teaching.
9. Education of Islamic civilization.
10. Tasawwur Islam

Sources: (Jalal et al., 2021)

### **Finding of Study**

This study investigates the relationship between the Islamic leadership Principle among Malaysian Armed Forces Officers in the Malaysian Army Headquarters, Kuala Lumpur. This study will focus on Army Headquarters officers. The study location is the Malaysian Army Headquarters, Kuala Lumpur. The scope of the study involved 250 members working in

various branches, divisions and departments at the Army Headquarters. Permission to select respondents focuses on Muslim officers in management, administration, and training in all Malaysian Army operations centres. They all face challenging national defence problems and deal with various local and foreign enforcement agencies. However, this study's focus should not be generalized to other organizations in the Armed Forces or other Enforcement Agencies in Malaysia.

The participants in this study will explain their experiences of what it is like being a Military Officer in Malaysian Army Headquarters. This study is only quantitative-based, and the goal of quantitative research using a questionnaire is to explore a topic more openly and allow respondents to express their opinions and ideas (Esterberg, 2002). Therefore, the data for this study will be collected through a questionnaire.

### **Selection of Participant**

The majority of the respondents are male (158), while (55) are female. Also, most of the respondents are married (125), and (88) of the total respondents are single.

**Participant Rank:** The total respondents are lieutenant, 17 and 40 lieutenant colonel, and then captain 68. Meanwhile, colonel 63. Major 17 and lastly, major general 8.

**Items:** A total of 250 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the military officers and those who work with the Malaysian Military. In comparison, 213 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and found usable by the researcher.

**Gender Rate** Majority of the respondents are male (158), while (55) of the total respondents are female.

**Years of Service** The result shows that (43) of the total respondents have served in the Malaysian Military between 0 – 5years, (109) of the total respondents have served in the Malaysian Military between 6 – 10 years, (50) of the total respondents have served in the Malaysian Military between 10 – 15years and (11) of the total respondents have served in the Malaysian Military for 15years and above.

### Analysis of Study

Briefly, the results of the study are shown in the table below:

STATEMENT	VH	H	L	VL	MEAN	STD
Leadership centers on serving Allah	42	101	64	06	2.87	.741
Leaders have to provide direction to their followers	58	100	42	00	3.08	.717
Leaders communicate their vision to the others in ways designed to generate strong commitment needed to serve as support to achieve desire goals	23	117	58	02	2.83	.637
Leaders have a role of sustaining the organization over longtime	23	108	57	12	2.75	.737
Leaders have a role of maintaining the culture of the organization	17	117	64	02	2.75	.608
Leaders maintain unity and cooperation among followers in their organization and the momentum of their progress	33	100	64	03	2.83	.702
Leaders should initiate, guide and control change in the order to achieve the stated objectives	01	142	50	07	2.67	.565
Effective Islamic leaders should have some Leadership qualities	10	100	75	15	2.50	.722
Grand mean					2.79	.167

In contrast (127), the respondents opted that the understanding of Malaysian Armed Forces on the principle of Islamic leadership, that Leaders communicate their vision to others in ways designed to generate strong commitment needed to serve as support to achieve desired goals is high. The Table also revealed that (58) and (05) of the respondents opted that the understanding of Malaysian Armed Forces on the principle of Islamic leadership that Leaders communicate their vision to others in ways designed to generate the strong commitment needed to serve as support to achieve desire goals is low and very low respectively. The mean and standard deviation of this item are (2.83) and (.637), respectively.

Furthermore, the Table also showed that the Islamic principle of leadership deals with Leaders having a role in sustaining the organisation over a long time. The Table further showed that (23) and (118) of the respondents opted that the understanding of Malaysian Armed Forces on the principle that Leaders have a role of sustaining the organisation over a long time to be very high and high respectively, while (57) and (15) of the respondents opted that the understanding of the Malaysian Armed Forces on the principle that Leaders have a role of sustaining the organisation over longtime to be low and very low respectively. The mean and standard of this item are (2.75) and (.737), respectively.

It can be seen in the Table also that the principle of Islamic leadership deals with leaders having a role in maintaining the culture of the organisation. The Table further revealed that (17) and (127) of the respondents opted that the understanding Malaysian Armed Forces on the principle of leaders having a role of maintaining the organisation's culture is very high and high, respectively. In contrast, (64) and (05) of the respondents opted that the understanding of Malaysian Armed Forces on the principle that leaders have a role of maintaining the organisation's culture is low and very low, respectively. The mean and standard deviation are (2.75) and (.608), respectively.

Finally, the Table also revealed that the principle of Islamic leadership deals with leaders initiating, guiding and controlling change to achieve the stated objectives. The Table further showed that (01) and (152) of the respondent opted that the understanding of the Malaysian Armed Forces on the principle of Islamic leadership on leaders initiating, guiding and controlling change to achieve the stated objectives to be very high and high, respectively. In contrast (50) and (10) of the respondents opted for understanding the Malaysian Armed Forces on the principles of Leaders initiating, guiding and controlling change to achieve the stated objectives to be low and very low, respectively. This item's mean and standard deviation are (2.67) and (.565), respectively.

### **Conclusion**

The Malaysian Armed Forces Officers' understanding of Islamic leadership principles is commendable. The results show that the officers of the Malaysian Armed Forces laid the foundation of their leadership to be centred on serving God. They also believe that their leadership principles must be centred on Islamic leadership, such as; giving instructions to subordinate followers; communicating vision and mission to others effectively. They also believe that the role of the leader is to sustain the organization in the long run and have a role in maintaining the organizational culture, unity and cooperation among followers in their organization. They also believe that leaders should initiate, guide and control change to achieve stated objectives. They also think that influential Islamic Leaders should have some high leadership qualities. This study recommends that Malaysian Armed Forces Officers be equipped with the Islamic knowledge necessary to improve their leadership qualities to segregate powers and delegate responsibilities.

### **References**

- Abed, A. A. (2006). *Study of Islamic Leadership Theory and Practice in K12 Islamic School in Michigan*. A published doctoral dissertation AAT 3206991, Brigham Young University.
- Rashid, A. R., & Mamat, A. (2013). *Educational View of the Islamic Leadership: Are the Islamic Leaders Performing Their Responsibilities?*. <http://irep.iium.edu.my/29124/>
- Bernard, M. B. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. The Free Press, New York.
- Bekum, R., and Badawi, J. (1999). The leadership process in Islam. <http://myroinc.yolasite.com/resources/Leadership%20Process%20in%20Islam.pdf>
- Lee, B., & Terrence, D. (1995) *Leading With Soul*. Jossey-Bass Publishers; San Francisco, Ca.
- Bryman, A. (2001), *Social Research Method 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Oxford university Press
- Delbert, C. M., & Neil, J. S. (202), *Handbook Of Research Design & Social Measurement, 6th Edition*, Sake Publication, Thousand Oaks London
- Esterberg, K. G. (2002). *Qualitative Methods in Social Research*. Boston: McGrawHill.
- Faridi, F. R. R. (1991). *Islamic Research Methodology*. Some reflection Journal Of Objective studies, 149-157.
- Jabnoun, N. (2012). *Islam And Management*. International Islamic Publishing House Riyadh.
- Khan, A. (2012). *Islamic Leadership: A Success Model for Everyone and all time*. [http://www.irfi.org/articles/articles\\_1401\\_1450/islamic\\_leadership\\_principles.htm](http://www.irfi.org/articles/articles_1401_1450/islamic_leadership_principles.htm)
- Al-Tabari, M. J. (2000), *Jami' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wil Ayi al Qur'ān*. Bayrut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi

- Hassan, M. K. (1996), *Toward Actualizing Islamic Ethical And Educational Principles In Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: ABIM.
- Saaid, M. S. (1996). *The Malaysian army a brief profile*. Ministry Of Defence. Kuala Lumpur.
- Nikolić, G., Kvasic, G. S., & Grbic, L. (2020). The Development of Authentic Leadership Theory. *Conference proceedings PILC 2020: High Impact Leadership*. 176-189.
- Punch, K. F. (2000), *Developing Effective Research Proposals*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Sanders, W. B., and Pinhey, T. K. (1983). *The Conduct of Social Research*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (1992) *Moral Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Base.
- Stogdill, R. (1974). *Handbook of leadership*. New York: The Free Press.
- Turam, B. (2004) *The Politics Of Engagement Between Islam And The Secular State: Ambivalences Of 'Civil Society'*. *The British Journal Of Sociology*. 55(2) 259–281
- Turam, B. (2007) *Between Islam and the State The Politics of Engagement*. Stanford University Press Stanford, California
- Wilson, A., Lenssen, G., & Hind, P. (2006) *Leadership Qualities and Management Competencies for Corporate Responsibility*, Ashridge and EABI.
- Yildirim, E. (2016). *Concept of Leadership in the Ancient History and Its Effects on the Middle East*. *Sociology and Anthropology*. 4(8). 710-718.
- Yukl, G. (2006) *Leadership in organizations*. Six Edition. State University of New York, University at Albany. Printed in the United States of America.