

THE IMPORTANCE OF ADOPTING ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP IN THE ROYAL MALAYSIAN CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT (RMC) AND ITS IMPACT ON STAFF AND WORK PRODUCTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of Islamic leadership on staff productivity and work performance in the Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMC), through a case study at the RMC Lawas Branch involving 8 informants. Findings indicate that Islamic leadership, characterized by responsibility, trustworthiness, commitment, consultation, and transparency, significantly enhances organizational management quality. These principles improve motivation, teamwork, integrity, and workplace relationships, thereby increasing productivity. The study concludes that Islamic leadership creates a conducive work environment and boosts organizational performance. These findings have important implications for promoting the integration of Islamic values in leadership practices across Malaysian government departments, potentially enhancing public service delivery.

Keywords: Islamic leadership, Royal Malaysian Customs Department, employee productivity, organizational performance

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, it's important to understand leadership from an Islamic point of view. Every Muslim should have their own thoughts about how Islam views leadership. To be a good and strong leader, it's crucial to know where to find guidance.

In Islam, leadership is about being responsible and honest when dealing with followers. Being a leader and doing a leader's job is a way of worshipping Allah. Islamic guidance helps people in their daily lives and in the afterlife. It shapes organizations, social customs, and the whole community.

The Quran mentions leadership. In one verse, Allah says He made some people leaders to guide others by His command. These leaders do good deeds, pray, give to charity, and worship Allah alone.

Islamic teaching emphasizes leadership. Muslims need to learn about leadership from Islamic sources and history. These can help form Islamic leadership theories. This study will look at leadership from an Islamic view. It aims to:

1. Define leadership in Islam
2. Explain why using Islamic leadership in organizations is important
3. Show how Islamic leadership affects staff productivity

By exploring these points, we can better understand how Islamic leadership can be useful in today's organizations.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing semi-structured interviews with a purposively selected sample of 8 participants from the Lawas Branch of the Royal Malaysian Customs Department. The sample comprises 3 individuals in leadership positions and 5 in subordinate roles, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives. The interviews were designed to elicit insights into the understanding, implementation, and perceived impacts of Islamic leadership practices within the organizational context. Data collection focused on participants' experiences and perceptions of Islamic leadership principles in their workplace.

Thematic analysis was applied to the interview data, employing open coding techniques to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data. This approach allowed for the systematic interpretation of participants' responses regarding the conceptualization, enactment, and perceived effects of Islamic leadership in their specific organizational setting. Rigorous ethical considerations were implemented throughout the research process to ensure participant confidentiality and voluntary participation. Additionally, measures were taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the data interpretation, including member checking and peer debriefing.

This in-depth case study of a single government department provides valuable exploratory insights into the real-world dynamics of incorporating Islamic leadership values within a public sector workplace. While the findings are context-specific, they offer a foundation for further research into the application of Islamic leadership principles in similar organizational environments.

3. BACKGROUND OF THE CENTER

Background of Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMC)

Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMC) was formed in 1931, RMC is the governing body of the Government of Malaysia. abbreviated RMC or JKDM is the Malaysian Government agency responsible for administrating the nation's indirect tax policy, border enforcement, and narcotic offenses.

The early beginning of its establishment began with Maritime and harbor regulations that prevailed in the period of the Malacca Sultanate, along with matters relating to the tax system concerning international and local merchants. The Head of the Exchequer was in charge of all tax-related matters.

During that period the tax collector and all tax-related matters were the responsibility of the Chief of the Exchequer (Penghulu Bendahari): " ... the Chief of the Exchequer. (He) controlled all the revenue and Customs Officers and looked after the palace building and equipment". (R.J.W. Wilkinson, 1935)

Negeri Sembilan, the British High Commissioner, Sir Cecil Clementi, suggested an extension of the union in 1931 during the Federated Malay States Rulers Conference or Durbar in Sri Menanti. The plan was based on an annual increase in the tax on imports. However, it was only in 1946 that the Customs Union for the Malay Peninsula could be formed with the establishment of the Malay Union. After several years of going through the research and planning process, in 1989 the college was expanded. Now it is known as the Royal Malaysian Customs Academy (Akademi Kastam Diraja Malaysia or AKMAL, meaning 'perfect'). Then, the Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMC) until now.

Malaysian Royal Customs Department

VISION

A World Class Customs Administration

MISSION

Collect revenue and provide trade facilitation through enforcement of and compliance with applicable law to spur economic growth, maintain national security and public welfare

SERVICE ETHICS

Trustworthy Services, Sincere and Dedicated (A.B.I.D.)

SLOGAN

Serving for the People's Well-Being

Background of Royal Malaysian Customs Department (Lawas Customs Station)

This study focuses on the Royal Malaysian Customs Department's Lawas Customs Station, selected for its strategic location and accessibility during the COVID-19 pandemic. The information presented is based on data obtained from Zainurin (2020).

Lawas Customs Station, a significant branch in Sarawak, operates under the Pusat Tanggungjawab (PTJ) Limbang, Sarawak division. The PTJ manages fund allocation from headquarters for various purposes, including development projects, employee tuition payments, and general management expenses.

The station comprises three primary departments: Management and Human Resource Service Department (KPSM), Customs Department (Import/Export Unit), and Enforcement Department. Currently, it is led by an Assistant Director of Customs (grade 44) and supported by senior officers, with a total staff complement of 37 members.

While the customs department's primary function is tax collection, it also provides various facilities, such as licensed warehouses for companies. Notably, the organization's focus extends beyond revenue collection to service orientation.

Lawas's unique geographical position enhances its service-oriented approach. Situated at the nexus of international and interstate borders, it connects to Long Bawan, Kalimantan (Indonesia) in the north, borders Sabah state, lies in proximity to Brunei Darussalam, and is near the federal territory of Labuan, a tax-free island. This strategic location positions Lawas as a crucial entry and exit point for Sarawak.

The jurisdiction of Lawas Customs Station extends to several smaller outposts:

1. Mengkalap Border: Bordering Brunei's Temburong district
2. Ba'kelalan station
3. Sindumin (Sabah)–Merapok (Lawas) station

These outposts are staffed periodically rather than permanently, as they are not designated as main customs areas (Kawasan Utama Kastam, KUK).

It's worth noting that customs stations previously established in Sundar, Punang, and Kuala Lawas were closed in 2019 due to inactivity, with their functions now centralized at the main Lawas station.

This comprehensive overview of the Lawas Customs Station provides context for the study's exploration of Islamic leadership practices within this specific organizational setting.

4. FINDINGS

The data presented in this study were obtained through a series of interviews conducted within the organization. The interview protocol comprised 8 questions, carefully designed to align with the study's stated objectives. This section presents a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the collected data, offering clear insights into the findings derived from the interviews. The qualitative data gathered from the respondents provide rich, in-depth perspectives on the research topics. Each question was formulated to elicit specific information related to the research objectives, ensuring that the data collected directly addresses the core aims of this study.

In the following subsections, we will systematically present and analyze the responses to each interview question. This analysis will include direct quotations from participants where relevant, thematic interpretations of the data, and discussions on how these findings relate to the broader context of Islamic leadership within the Royal Malaysian Customs Department. By presenting the data in this structured manner, we aim to provide a clear and comprehensive understanding of the participants' views and experiences, thereby addressing the research objectives and contributing to the broader discourse on Islamic leadership in governmental organizations.

Definition of Leadership in Islamic Perspective

According to Zainurin (2020), the definition of leadership in Islamic perspective is Islamic leadership is not necessarily the leader from an Islamic department background such as Jabatan Agama Islam Sarawak (JAIS) but as a Muslim, it as a need to beliefs and practice religious teachings. In Islamic leadership, as a leader need in applying Islamic teachings into the workplace.

For example, practices the pillars in Islam such as established prayer. Prayer is compulsory for Muslims to do and look at there are a lot of benefits from established prayer five times daily such as our body feel healthy. Then, it is related to the character as leader must have which is having a good health condition. Allah states in the Al-Quran:

Meaning: "And perform As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), and give Zakat, and whatever of good (deeds that Allah loves) you send forth for yourselves before you, you shall find it with Allah. Certainly, Allah is All-Seer of what you do."

(Al-Quran. Surah Al-Baqarah 2:110)

Second, Islamic leadership can be defined from intention of the leader in beginning of his work. The intention is most important thing before a person start their job daily, such as employee under government. The good intention effect in your daily routine because as Muslims, in believing whatever things to do begin with the intention of "تعالى هلال" as worship to Allah SWT even though earn money to get sustenance (rizq) in reaching the demands on responsibilities as a human (Zainurin, 2020). According to S. F. Muhammad Nor (2022), Islamic leadership is defined by the responsibilities of guiding the community in accordance with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Related to the Prophet Muhammad says:

It is narrated on the authority of Amirul Mu'minin, Abu Hafs 'Umar bin al-Khattab (ra) who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah SWT says: "Actions are (judged) by motives (niyyah), so each man will have what he intended. Thus, he whose migration (hijrah) was to Allah and His Messenger, his migration is to Allah and His Messenger; but he whose migration was for some worldly thing he might gain, or for a wife he might marry, his migration is to that for which he migrated."

(Sahih Bukhari & Muslim)

Based on the Al-hadith above, intention is important to distinguish between worship and just routine as Muslims. The main concept of Islamic leadership is to lead to achieve and compete to be ahead of others to seek the measure of Allah and success hereafter. In addition, to confirm the practices that are directed to Allah SWT or it will be detrimental to the individual.

Finally, Zainurin (2020) stated that Islamic leadership is leader as role model and reference to the subordinates. The subordinates will look up to the leader as a person that can influence the others and that called leadership by example (kepimpinan melalui tauladan). The bringing from the way approaches as leader to his subordinates such an obtained it through the leader's appearance as dressing, talking and social relations with others during in the position. This statement agreed by Yusuf (2011) "An individual's circumstantial position shaped by time, values, information, and socially and professionally accepted and recognized skills and qualities, which seek to influence others through creative and convincing methods to achieve a precise set of objectives, or that

contribute to establishing an idea that is determined and oriented towards ensuring adequate growth and overcoming challenges, in addition to obtaining the contentment and satisfaction of the followers.” Besides that, leadership is a mechanism by which a person controls a group of people to accomplish a common objective (Peter, 2007).

In Islam, the best example of leader is Prophet Muhammad. He was messenger of Allah SWT but at the same time as a good leader. The Prophet Muhammad indicated a good attitude and behavior to his followers. Allah SWT has considered Prophet Muhammad in the Al-Quran in verses as follow:

Meaning: “Indeed! in the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much.”

(Al-Quran. Surah Al-Ahzab 33:21)

Based on the verses Al-Quran above, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had all the qualities which if implemented in life whether it’s personal, practical or corporate, it can be made successful. There are some universal attributes and traits that Prophet Muhammad which can be helpful in order to become a successful leader.

Abdul Razak, Arbaiah, Mhd. Sarif, Suhaimi, and Ismail, Yusof (2022) undertook a systematic review of literature on Islamic leadership for sustainability, utilizing PRISMA. The paper scrutinizes the extent of initiatives in Islamic leadership for sustainable development across diverse settings. The research used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) technique as a systematic data collection guide. Data was gathered from scholarly articles spanning two decades, specifically, between 2000 and 2021. The evaluation incorporated a total of 63 articles from the EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) database. Outcomes reveal that the publication frequency on Islamic leadership for sustainable development has been on the rise over the last decade, spearheaded by Muslim nations. This study also demonstrates that Islamic leadership and traditional leadership styles possess many common values. The tawhidic paradigm surfaces as a unique characteristic of Islamic leadership. Results suggest that Islamic leadership is oriented towards holistic endeavors for social sustainability, at personal, organizational, and national scales.

Significance to adapt Islamic leadership in the organization.

The significance to adapt Islamic leadership in the organization is to achieve pleasure of Allah (mardatillah). As a Muslim leader must apply Islamic taught to us and it is necessarily behavior and ethical in our daily life. The core principle of Islamic leadership is to lead and fight to be ahead of others in finding the gratification of Allah and success in hereafter (al- akhirat). Zainurin (2020) states in achieving Allah’s pleasure with being a good Muslim as leader with the criteria as follows:

a) Consideration and equality

Zainurin (2020) stated a good leader must have these criteria which is consideration and equality. Allah SWT also mentioned in the Al-Quran:

Meaning: “Help you one another in Al-Birr and At-Taqwa (virtue, righteousness and piety); but do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Severe in punishment.”

(Al-Quran. Surah Al-Ma'idah 5:2)

Consideration and equality in emphasizing in Islam. Took seriously on every knowledge, information or opinion that reached to the leader. One of the ways is celebrates every difference of opinion from his subordinates. In Royal Malaysian Customs Department, the staff are from different race and religion. Even though, the staff come from different background in aspect of beliefs, race and nations but as leaders must show their support and attention (lend ears) to content delivered by the subordinates (Zainurin, 2020). Then, be equal to everybody to avoid isolated things happened in department. According to this be equal, Allah states in the Al-Quran:

Meaning: "Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion; He admonishes you that you may be mindful."

(Al-Quran. Surah Al-Nahl 16:90)

b) Sociability

Sociability means building a good relationship with others. As leaders, this kind of social relation formed from friendship between a leader and his subordinates. The leader shows warmth and care to his workers because it leads to build effective and good teamwork as a result. This is the leader's propensity to develop supportive social relationships with polite, compassionate, versatile and diplomatic people who are sympathetic to others' needs and show concerned to the situation (Zainurin, 2020). Prophet Muhammad says:

Meaning: It was narrated that 'Arfajah bin Shuraih Al-Ashja'I said: "I saw the Prophet [SAW] on the Minbar addressing the people. He said: 'After me there will be many calamities and much evil behavior. Whoever you see splitting away from the Jama'ah or trying to create division among the Ummah of Muhammad [SAW], then kill him, for the Hand of Allah is with the Jama'ah, and the Shaitan is with the one who splits away from the Ummah, running with him."

It also created feeling of love to each other as a team. Most of the time, as government agency will work together and need to connect each other department to achieve the goals set by top management. Sociability also create transparency between two persons, there is no gap or barriers between them but at the same time showing respect each other. Therefore, good relationship between leaders and his subordinate make them work together and finally produce a good and quality work.

c) Consultation

According Zainurin (2020), consultation means have a good conversation with the subordinates. In addition, consultation is a process in which as leader encourage in organization to open formal and informal communication channels between subordinates and leaders. Leadership in Islam contribute in a religious ritual (worship) and a communication mechanism between equals which leader and the subordinates aimed at achieving an objective (Abdulrashid, 2011). Allah SWT mentioned in the

Al-Quran:

Meaning: "And speak to him mildly, perhaps he may accept admonition or fear Allah."

(Al-Quran. Surah Ta-Ha 20:44)

The verse above means to convey the message in order to have respond of workers. Islam teach to talk politely and kind to everyone.

d) Responsibility

Leaders must have a higher and greater sense of responsibility for themselves. Being accountable person as a leader that truly leads according to Islam teach. Allah state in the Al-Quran about accountability:

Meaning: "So whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom (or small ant), shall see it. (7) And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant), shall see it."

(Al-Quran. Surah AL-Zalzalah 99:7-8)

Become a leader not just give instruction to the subordinates but a leader also must go down to the field to fulfill his responsibility such as Prophet Muhammad says:

Meaning: Allah's Messenger said, "Everyone of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges. The ruler who has authority over people, is a guardian and is responsible for them, a man is a guardian of his family and is responsible for them; a woman is a guardian of her husband's house and children and is responsible for them; a slave ('Abu) is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it; so all of you are guardians and are responsible for your charges."

(Sahih Bukhari)

In the same time, leader required go down to the field, build good relationship with the society, gain information and knowledge to get their own perspective about the organization. Next, the responsibility is not just in carrying out duty at the department but responsible in ensuring that subordinates carry out the orders of Allah SWT such establish prayer, fast in Ramadhan and so on (Zainurin, 2020).

Impacts on working productivity among the staff while adapting Islamic leadership in the organization

a) Changes of Employees Attitude

The first impact is when the attitude or behavior of employees change to the positive aspect. These proves by the less of ethical issues occur in the organization and lack in handling with problematic employees. It also refers to the increasing of performance appraisal workers every year, such as in aspect of employee's attendance, showed less absent report in a week, month or year (Zainurin, 2020) in accordance with Ahmad and Ogunsola, 2011; Ahmad et al., 2019, except for religious, moral, and human underpinnings, Islam is the same as the conventional leadership method, which likewise serves as a bridge for leaders to influence the attitudes and behaviors of their followers in order to achieve corporate goals. It also mentioned by Quranic verses that Allah says:

Meaning: "For each (person), there are angels in succession, before and behind him. They guard him by the Command of Allah. Verily! Allah will not change the good condition of a people as long as they do not change their state of goodness themselves (by committing sins and by being ungrateful

and disobedient to Allah). But when Allah wills a people's punishment, there can be no turning back of it, and they will find besides Him no protector.”

(Al-Quran. Surah Al-Rad 13:11)

b) Trustworthiness

The second impact state by Zainurin (2020) is reducing of untrustworthy and bribing cases among officers. The result is zero cases in work issues in the organization. Islam emphasized trust in the life to get gratification of

Allah SWT. This related to the verses in the Al-Quran:

Meaning: “Verily! Allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those, to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice. Verily, how excellent is the teaching which He (Allah) gives you! Truly, Allah is Ever All-Hearer, All-Seer.”

(Al-Quran. Surah Al-Nisa’ 4:58)

Allah also prohibit untrustworthy action in life while state in the Al- Quran:

Meaning: “O you who believe! Betray not Allah and His Messenger, nor betray knowingly your Amanat (things entrusted to you, and all the duties which Allah has ordained for you).”

(Al-Quran. Surah Al-Anfal 8:27)

Thus, the effort by the leader is very important, the strong enforcement in the organization by the leader seriously effective for the workers when related to the effective leaders from an Islamic perspective possess as trustworthiness towards the organization which (*Amanah*) to uphold a psychological contract with followers, guiding and treating them fairly. Indeed, the implementation of leaders or this organization is effective.

c) Contribution

Thirdly, the impacts when the increase of activity organize in a year in the organization and full cooperation given from the employees can be proven after the successful of the program. This related to Islam encourages the implementation of excellent work culture and quality work in performing duties and responsibilities. Human beings need to do better in their job as well as possible in any situation. Allah says:

Meaning: “Verily, We created man of the best stature (mould), (5) Then We reduced him to the lowest of the low, (6) Save those who believe (in Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous deeds, then they shall have a reward without end (Paradise).”

(Al-Quran. Surah Al-Tin 95:4-6)

Then, contribution of workers is self-involvement in department activities and others. The employee’s involvement in departmental NGOs and participated in CSR program organized by department (Zainurin, 2020).

d) Increasing of employee motivation

The last impact from Zainurin (2020), he mentioned about increasing of motivation among his subordinates which as leader to maintain the employee's motivation create discipline among members and it is a key of the success of organization. It is believed that a strong leader will establish organizational management that encourages worker performance and motivation, which in effect will increase productivity in the company and help the organization fulfill its goals. (Gultom & Situmorang, 2020; Samsu et al., 2021). Zainurin (2020) also mentioned the maintaining is one of the effective in making the subordinates obedient to the leadership in the organization. It related to Allah says:

Meaning: "O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad), and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger (), if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination".

(Al-Quran. Surah Al-Nisa' 4:59)

The verse above is about the command of Allah SWT to respect and follow the leader that had been chosen.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlighted the definition, significance, and positive impacts of Islamic leadership in the Royal Malaysian Customs Department. Findings show such values-based leadership can improve organizational outcomes. Therefore, leaders should nurture Islamic practices like consultative decision-making, accountability, and employee welfare within agencies. The government should provide training programs, guidelines, and incentives to adopt such ethical, productive leadership styles.

Furthermore, Muslim scholars should intensify research on conceptualizing and integrating Islamic leadership, such as developing theoretical frameworks, instruments to assess leader competencies, and comparative case studies in public and private sector contexts. This will enable a robust, context-sensitive understanding while expanding the knowledge base for evidence-driven policies and initiatives. Researchers should also examine interventions like customized workshops, leadership coaching, and post-training sustenance mechanisms.

Additionally, scholars should explore adaptations required in organizational processes and systems to embed Islamic leadership tenets into formal role expectations, performance metrics, and HR practices. This includes studying structural and cultural enablers from top-down commitment to ground-up participation. Consultative councils can formulate recommendations to systematically foster Islamic leadership across managerial levels. Periodic audits help to continually improve the alignment between religious principles and organizational environments.

Realizing the promise of Islamic leadership needs concerted efforts to theorize concepts, study evidentiary trends, formulate organizational frameworks, create leadership development pipelines,

and promote regular self-assessment. This multi-pronged approach will help ingrain Islamic values in management philosophy while elevating individual and operating performance. The ultimate goal is the sustained embodiment of Islamic leadership for organizational excellence.

6. CONCLUSION

This study set out to understand the concept of leadership from an Islamic perspective and examine its implementation in Malaysia's public sector. The case of the Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMCD) Lawas Branch provided insights into the significance and impacts of Islamic leadership on the productivity of employees. A key finding is that Islamic leadership embodies values-centered qualities emphasized in Quran, such as accountability, consultative discourse, equality, and role modeling after the Prophet Muhammad PBUH.

The analysis of interview data reveals several benefits of adapting such leadership within organizations, including improved attitudes, higher trust, increased engagement in activities, and greater motivation among staff. This suggests Islamic leadership can leverage religious principles to generate both moral and performance outcomes in the governmental context. Employees respond positively when leaders show care for their wellbeing, furnish a unifying vision based on Islamic teachings, and foster a collaborative climate aligned with religious values.

While this exploratory study was limited to a single case with a small sample, it sets the groundwork for expansion. Future research should investigate the constructs and mechanisms of Islamic leadership through comparative cases and quantitative surveys across organizational types and hierarchies. Scholarly efforts must also translate ethical leadership ideals into formal policies, training programs, assessment tools and other actionable frameworks suited for public sector agencies. In closing, the promise of Islamic leadership principles in boosting customs department functioning as well as countering corruption warrants ongoing research and implementation initiatives. Integrating Islamic teachings can guide managers to nurture productive and fulfilling workplaces.

In conclusion, Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMC) has practiced Islamic leadership based on this research that has been conducted. This organization also understand that Islamic leadership is important to be appreciated by every member in the organization. It is important to apply the concept Islamic leadership in the organization and understand that all action according to the work becomes an act of worship and gain the pleasure of Allah. At the end, clearly, Islamic leadership greatly affects the level of productivity of employees in the organization.

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