

**THE CONCEPT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP IN AL-QUR'AN: AN ANALYSIS OF SURAH AL-NISA' (4): VERSES 58-59.**

Ahamad Faosiy Ogunbado,  
*Faculty of Islamic Development Management,  
Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA).  
Brunei Darussalam.  
[tunbado@gmail.com](mailto:tunbado@gmail.com).  
[Faosiy.ogunbado@unissa.edu.bn](mailto:Faosiy.ogunbado@unissa.edu.bn)*

**ABSTRACT**

Leadership is indispensable in every organization, society, or community, and Islamic community or 'ummah is not excluded. Islam is a comprehensive way of life that encompasses all endeavors of its adherents. The primary sources in Islam or Islamic civilization are Al-Qur'an and Hadith, while the Qur'an claims that it envelopes clarification of everything, it has answer for every complications, it is a guidance, glad tidings and mercy for the whole universe (Al-Nahal (16):89). Based on these statements, this paper proposes to look in to the concept and characteristics of leadership which is crucial in Islam through analysis of Surah Al-Nisa' (4): verses 58-59. The paper utilizes qualitative methodology to achieve its objective(s). In doing so, it employs analytical approach which gives room to create "solutions for common issues and make educated and actionable decisions." The finding among others, indicates that leadership is a must in Islam, it also shows that leadership is a trust and must be given to the rightful owner. Likewise, justice or fairness is one of the basic operational principles of leadership or governance in Islam.

**Keywords:** Concept; Characteristics; Leadership; Islam; Al-Qur'an; Surah Al-Nisa'.

**1. INTRODUCTION.**

It has been emphasised that "man is political by nature" that is to say, human cannot exist without social organisation, co-operation or mutual relationship between one another. The inability to stand alone necessitates living in a community or society. Furthermore, living in society also needs regulation because of the nature of human. Human beings are subject of temptation, who loves to follow his humanistic nature therefore there is need for an authority to control that. It was also known that the Prophet Muhammad once said that if the three persons are on a journey, they should appoint one as their leader.

Leadership in Islam is one of the religious duties without which neither religion nor a well-order world can be achieved, and Qurán has claimed that it contains clarification of everything, it incorporates solution to every issue and it is glad tidings, manual and reference to human being. Laid

on this background, this paper is set to seek for the concepts and characteristics of Islamic leadership through verses 58-59 of the surah al-Nisai, which is chapter four of the book:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا  
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ۚ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

Allah doth command you to render back your Trusts to those to whom they are due; And when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice: Verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For Allah is He Who heareth and seeth all things.

O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination.<sup>53</sup>

## 2. ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Ultimate Leadership. (command)

The beginning of the verse says “Allah doth command”. The word command in its verb form means “give an authoritative or peremptory order from a superior height.” while in a noun form signifies “the ability to use or control something.”<sup>54</sup> thus the command or order comes from Almighty Allah, the omnipotent to his servants. That is to say, in the concept of leadership in Islam, absolute command or order is in hand of the creator of the universe this is buttressed by another verse which says “To Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth; and Allah hath power over all things.”<sup>55</sup> Another verse says “Knowest thou not that to Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth? And besides Him ye have neither patron nor helper.”<sup>56</sup>

### 2.2. Put the Right Person in the Proper Position.

The next phrase in the first verse says: “To render back your Trusts to those to whom they are due.” Islamic leadership strongly believes in pointing the right finger to the right direction. That is why Almighty Allah commands to place the trust in the hand of the proper person(s). It has been noticed that one of the great mistakes of the nations before Islam was entrusting authority or position to incompetent persons. Responsibilities or controls were given to immoral, narrow minded and dishonest people. Therefore, the whole society was disintegrated and collapsed.<sup>57</sup> To this effect, it

<sup>53</sup> Al-Qurán : Surah Al-Nisa’ (4): verses 58-59.

<sup>54</sup> Oxford language.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Qurán , surah Al-Imran (3) :189.

<sup>56</sup> Al-Qurán, surah Al-baqarah (2): 107. It has been noticed that many verses in the holy Qurán express or indicates the notion of sovereignty or absolute power of the heaven and earth belongs to Almighty Allah. Here are some of the verses: Q5:17,18,40,120; Q9:116; Q24:42; Q25:2; Q38:10; Q39:44; Q42:49; Q43:85; Q45:27; Q48:14 etc.

<sup>57</sup> Ogunbado, A. F. (2019). *Leadership in Islam: Ibn Khaldun’s Perspective*. Bandar Seri Begawan: UNISSA press p58.

was reported that prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) said “one who appointed an incompetent person to a responsible post as though has betrayed Allah and his Prophet” (Al-bukhari).

### 2.3. Trust or Responsibility (*Aamanah*).

Another characteristic of Islamic leadership which can be seen from the same phrase “To render back your Trusts to those to whom they are due.” Is *Amanah* (trust). The word emanates from Arabic three letters (a-m-n) which means safety, security or to be in the state of peace. As a noun form, *amanah* connotes security safety shelter protection and peace. Furthermore, literally, the word means trust, honest, responsibility, reliability, integrity, faithfulness, and trustworthiness and so on.<sup>58</sup> It is anything with which a person is entrusted and enjoined to take care of. It is defined as “something given to a person over which he has a power of disposition, he is expected to use it otherwise”<sup>59</sup> It is “moral responsibility or honest and all the duties which Allah has ordained”.<sup>60</sup>

It is an important characteristic in Islamic leadership. It is the responsibility upon human being after it has been rejected by the heaven earth and mountains because of its magnitude and all what it contains but human being foolishly and unjustly shouldered it. Allah says:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it;- He was indeed unjust and foolish.<sup>61</sup>

### 2.4 Justice (*Al-Adlu*)

Justice is another attribute that can be seen in the verse based on the phrase “And when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice”. *Al-‘adl* is an abstract noun emanated from the root word ‘*adala*’ which means to strengthen, to depart from one part to another, it also means to be equal, match, equalize or corresponding, to balance or counter-balance, or to be in the state of equilibrium.<sup>62</sup>

Ogunbado expresses that the concept of justice in Islam is beyond limitation, likewise its application is not limited to the law and judiciary only but it relevant to every filed of human endeavours. It is one of the basic operational principles when it came to Islamic leadership.<sup>63</sup> It is strongly attached with concept of trust which is shouldered by human being to be discharged with utmost sincerity and honesty. Another verse says:

<sup>58</sup> Lane, E. W. (1968 ). An Arabic-English Lexicon, Beirut: Librairie du Liban. P.102.

<sup>59</sup> Abdullah, Yusuf Ali (2006). *The meaning of the Holy Quran, New edition with revised translation, Commentary with newly compiled comprehensive Index*. Maryland: Amana Publication. P.1080.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Hilal Muhammad Taqi-ud-din & Khan, Muhammad Muhsin (2000). *Interpretation of the Meaning of the Noble Quran in the English Language*. Riyad: Darussalam Publisher and Distributions vol 6:300.

<sup>61</sup> Al-Quran: Surah al-Ahzab (33):72.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Mansur, Abu Al-fadli, Jamal al-din Muhammad (1970) *Lisan al-Arab*. Beirut: Dat al-lisan. Vol. 8:457-8.

<sup>63</sup> Ogunbado, A. .F. (2019). Leadership..., 83-89.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۗ اٰعْدِلُوا هُوَ اٰقْرَبُ  
لِلتَّقْوٰى ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ

O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.<sup>64</sup>

## 2.5 Belief (*Iman*)

The second verse (verse 59), starts with the phrase “O ye who believe!” belief means “to have confidence in truth” or accept that something is true. Almighty Allah calls upon those who believe in him and his apostle, before other things that follow. This indicates that believing in Allah and his apostle is one of the fundamental features in Islamic leadership. “*iman*” or belief is also the first pillar of Islam, and articles of faith, which is mandatory upon a person before he or she can be called a Muslim.

## 2.6 Obedience (*Taah*)

The next characteristic is obedience. The verse says “Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you”. Obedience is defined as “compliance with an order, request, or law or submission to another's authority”. It is also said to be the act of obeying; dutiful or submissive behavior with respect to another person”<sup>65</sup> Obedience here is in hierarchy, obedience to Almighty Allah is the first and foremost. An individual in a society owes his or her loyalty first to Almighty Allah, any other Allegiance, loyalty or obedience to anyone else can only be acceptable if it does not antagonise the obedience to the Allah the creator. Otherwise, it is rejected. The prophet says “There is no obedience to any of His creatures in what involves disobedience to the Creator.”<sup>66</sup>

Next to obedience to Allah and his noble apostle is obedience to those whom are in helm of affairs. It is said that the Arabic word “*ulil-amr*” is a comprehensive term which includes all those who in one way or the other at the steering system, be it a political leader, company managers, scholars, thinkers, judges, community chiefs and so on. Furthermore, upholding obedience to the leader is tantamount to obedience to Allah and his prophet as long as it does not contradict the commands of Allah.

## 2.7. Supremacy of Shriaah

Another characteristic or feature of Islamic leadership is supremacy of Shari'ah. Shariah is defined as religious regulation or the legal practice derived from the Qur'an and Shunnah governing the lives of Muslims. Supremacy of Shari'ah could be inferred from the phrase “If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger”. Dispute or conflict is inevitable in human society, it has been in human behaviour since then first human generation. Qabil and Habil had different opinion towards Allah's command, consequently led to killing of the later by the former. Human

<sup>64</sup> Al-Quran: Surah al-Maidah (5): 8.

<sup>65</sup> Wordweb Dictionary

<sup>66</sup> *Sahih* ibn Hibban; Al Ihsan, Hadith: 4568 and Musnad Ahmad, vol. 1 pg. 131

society is instructed in the verse that whenever there is different opinion in decision, it should be referred back to the Allah (Qurán) and Prophet (Hadith). During the Prophet's time, that is to say, when he was alive, it meant accepting the Prophets judgment or decree in all ramification, as he never follow his humanistic nature but decreed with inspiration and command from his Creator as it has been discussed earlier. Subsequently, after his departure, it means that reference must be made to two things which he said that he left behind Qurán and Sunnah. Whenever a dispute, conflict, difference of opinion or challenge arises, sharia'h should be used to judge the right. And this is what is meant the supremacy of sharia'h.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The paper discovers and explains some attributes of Islamic leadership it started from confirmation that Ultimate leadership belongs to Allah. He is omnipresence omnipotent which everything in this world and heaven belongs to. The next characteristics is "put the right person in the right place next is trust/responsibility (Amanah). Justics Al-ádlu in a major feature of Islamic leadership if it is missing the leadership is worthless. Belief (Iman) is another characteristic of Islamic leadership, obedience and last but not the least supremacy of Sharia'. It necessary to note that there are other characteristics but the aforementioned are only based on the targeted verses.

### REFERENCES

- Abdullah, Y. A. (2006). *The meaning of the Holy Quran, New edition with revised translation, Commentary with newly compiled comprehensive Index*. Maryland: Amana Publication.
- Al-Bagawi, Al-Hussain bin Masud, (1976). *Sharh al-sunnah, N.p. al-Maktabah al-Islami*.
- Al-Gazali, Abu Hamid (1964). Nazihat al-Mulk, F.R.C Bagley (trans). London: Oxford University Press.
- Ibn Kathir (2003). *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Abridged by A group of Scholars Under the supervision of Shaykh Saiur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri, Riyad: Maktaba Dar-us-salam.
- Ibn Mansur, Abu Al-fadli, jamal al-din Muhammad (1970) *Lisan al-Arab*. Beirut: Dat al-lisan.
- Khadduri, M. (1984). *The Implementation of justice in History of Islam in Islam and Justice* (ed.) Aidit bin Hj Ghazali. Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding.
- Maududi, S. A. (1970) *The meaning of the Qur'an*. Abdul 'Aziz Kamal (trans). Lahore: Islamic Publication Ltd. Vol.2:132.
- Ogunbado, A. F. (2019). *Leadership in Islam: Ibn Khaldun's Perspective*. Bandar Seri Begawan: UNISSA press.