



RESEARCH PAPER

Knowing the Need to Develop Islamic Leadership among University Students: Teachers' Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the need to develop Islamic leadership among university students, focusing on the perceptions of university teachers through the lens of key variables derived from the perceptions of teachers: moral and spiritual necessity, current education system, and qualities of Islamic leadership. The rapid involvement of modern culture in universities, such as the curriculum, culture, leadership gaps, the vast exposure of social media, and the current society scenario demands leaders who are clearer about Islamic leadership. The study employs a qualitative interpretivist paradigm to examine the perception of teachers, analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings of the study showed that there is a dire need to develop Islamic leadership among students, as moral and spiritual necessity is the need of this era. The recommendations included that policies and plans should include Islamic leadership as a top priority, and the integration of the curriculum is very necessary.

KEYWORDS Islamic Leadership, Islamic Morals, Moral Character

Introduction

Education is not just an intellectual attitude; it is a means of transferring values, moral principles, and social norms from one generation to another within the society (Karim & Aman, 2024). Particularly in Pakistan, where Islam occupies a prominent position in the public sphere, there is always a pressing need to inspire and inculcate Islamic principles and the educational context in order to produce morally upright citizens equipped with the contemporary skills and knowledge (Ashraf, 2019). The university courses included leadership in the curriculum, but the Islamic leadership based on Islamic morals and norms is limited. The influence of such policies on the quality of education, moral development of students, and the balance between religious and secular knowledge has been a matter of debate among educators, policymakers, and religious scholars (Amjad et al., 2025, a, b; Shakil & Akhtar, 2012). According to Northouse (2007), leadership is a multidimensional and complex process, making effective leadership a rare quality.

As DuBrin (2005) notes, inspiring and motivating others towards common goals is a hallmark of successful leaders, who derive their influence from integrity and a strong moral foundation. Leadership transforms organizations by fostering self-motivation, confidence, and empowerment, enabling individuals to develop their leadership skills. As Smith and Piele (2006) suggest, this collective leadership capacity becomes an organizational asset, extending beyond individual leaders.

Literature Review

In contemporary foreign literature regarding Islamic philosophy, it is asserted that Islam offers a comprehensive moral framework for its followers, based on the Quran and Sunnah as the foundation for establishing ethical guidelines. On the other hand, the postmodern perspective adopts relativism and subjectivism, perceiving morality as dependent on context and varying across different times and places (Shaukat & Basharat, 2022). The study aims to provide the necessity for developing Islamic leadership among university students.

Islamic Leadership

Research on the basis of Islamic leadership, Islamic leadership theories, features of Islamic leaders, and the functions that Muslim leaders perform is rare in Western literature. Aabed (2006) has contended that leadership is “so dependent on the spirit that the essence of it will never be capsuled or codified” (p.17). Aabed also explains that Islamic leadership principles were chosen primarily from the Holy Quran and the biography of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and his companions in governmental matters. Aabed stated that a well-defined leadership style directs Islamic leaders in the effective management of Islamic organizations. For instance, the use of shura (mutual consultation) in decision-making is a fundamental principle of Islamic leadership. This implies that stakeholders and teachers should be motivated to contribute to leadership in and out of institutions. Moeheriono (2012) describes in detail Islamic leadership. For followers, leaders are like the heads of their limbs, and they have a strategic function of establishing a pattern (Minhaj) and movement (harakah).

Miftah (2006) explained that leadership is the task of influencing people to be led in order to reach organizational objectives. In the Islamic perspective, leadership is described as a trust or mandate that involves the psychological contract between leaders and followers to do good deeds. Thus, a leader must have a strong moral character (Ahmad, 2009).

Islamic Leadership Development

The moral training of students is intrinsically related with the education system as it has a significant role in shaping their best manners and qualities; it has long been noting that the moral quality of the adolescents' general moral experience has deteriorated and there are more moral problems with their living habits and recreational activities, and for the reason of moral education should be strengthened, emphasizes moral behavior in Islam (Akmalovna, 2024; Amin et al., 2024). This suggests that creating targeted programs to enhance leadership skills in future professionals is a viable and promising approach (Barnes, 2020). As the study context shows, Professionals require more autonomy, self-awareness, and leadership skills to excel in their roles (Ewing et al., 2008; Habib et al., 2024). Leadership is an activity that influences people to attain goals (Anierobi et al., 2025; Miftah, 2006). Islamic leadership is described in detail and at length by Moeheriono (2012). In the life of the congregation, leaders like the head of the limbs play a strategic role in setting the pattern (Minhaj) and movement (harakah). Shah's leadership model identifies three components: parents (who demonstrate commitment to care and responsibility), educators (teachers who teach with knowledge and understanding), and prophetic values (Prophet)/leaders (who lead with virtues and values). (Shah, 2006). Caring, teaching, and guiding are activities that carry a broader scope of responsibility, as stated by S.J.A. Shah (2006). This type of responsibility is a

direct motivation for leaders to give their best possible commitment to people, and all of this is based on faith in Allah SWT (S.J.A. Shah, 2006). In reinforcing the high moral standard as well as ethical conduct in Islam, deeper perception with practical guidance is provided by various hadiths (sayings and actions of the Prophet Mohammad SAWW). The Quran's teachings find a complement in these hadiths. Muslims are able to implement all these principles into their daily lives as the hadiths do offer a practical framework for them.

Materials and Methods

The research design involves the qualitative interpretative paradigm, which enables the researchers to examine social phenomena in the natural settings where they take place, according to the emphasis of the subjective elements of human behaviors (Mihas, 2019). It was deemed as the most suitable strategy because it adequately meets the coverage and understanding of the phenomenon under study (Alase, 2017). According to Arellano et al. (2018), "it enables us to come close to our everyday life and to grasp, describe and occasionally explain the everyday phenomena from within, incorporating this strategy in the research enables us to know, describe and interpret, from the perspective of the participants (teachers), the effectiveness of the program"

Methodology

In an effort to analyze teachers' perceptions on the need to develop Islamic leadership, qualitative analysis of teachers' perceptions was employed (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). A qualitative research design is used to understand the research problem in depth (Cohen et al., 2017). By listening to the voices of university teachers, the study provides valuable insights for policymakers to make policy decisions for educational policy improvement.

In this context, 18 teachers from 9 public-sector universities were interviewed to learn their perceptions about the need to develop Islamic leadership qualities among university students.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data obtained from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to organize data and identify themes. The analysis process involved transcribing the interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Urdu. The interviews were conducted in Urdu and translated into English. Transcription of the interviews was carried out. The analysis process involved iteratively reviewing the entire dataset to identify patterns and meaningful issues (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process allowed for the extraction and coding of data from the interviews to analyse the need for the development of Islamic leadership qualities.

Participants

The interviews were conducted with public sector university teachers in Punjab province. As per the Higher Education Department, Punjab, there are 34 public sector universities in 9 divisions of Punjab. Two teachers from each university were interviewed, and a total of 18 interviews were conducted, considering the nine divisions of Punjab. The semi-structured interview was applied as a research technique; this methodological design makes it possible to analyze teachers' perceptions for the development of Islamic leadership qualities among university students. Therefore, it

allowed for the discovery of the research, the concrete case in question, and the phenomena under study (Yin, 2012).

The interview was designed to analyse teachers' perceptions of the need to develop Islamic leadership qualities among university students. Thus, to learn the perceptions of teachers, the interview was helpful in obtaining deeper insight into the information. So, the interview technique was a path to deeper access to teachers' own words and how they see their phenomena. Additionally, using this technique, the interviewee had the possibility of clearing his doubts and being directed toward the subject with the idea of going more in-depth into the phenomenon. Afterward, a rigorous, exhaustive, and systematic process was carried out to reduce the obtained data and in order to arrive at a reasonable number of units of analysis, the judgment of the actors takes place, that would allow them to be studied with precision and clarity (Male, 2016; Mihas, 2019). Specifically, three categories were outlined to develop data analysis, and themes were set out in the study by focusing on the principles of moral and spiritual necessity, the current education system, and Islamic leadership qualities (Table 1). Each category is further subcategorized, which allows a coherent relation between the contributions from interviews of university teachers, literature review, and the research objectives.

Results and Discussion

Data analysis revealed key aspects of the intervention under study, shedding light on teachers' perceptions of the need for the development of Islamic leadership qualities among university students. The findings are categorized under three categories: moral and spiritual necessity, the current education system, and Islamic leadership qualities. These categories align with the research question and are in coherence with the study's objective, which is to understand the teachers' perceptions of the need for the development of Islamic leadership qualities among university students.

Moral and Spiritual Necessity

Teachers highlight the importance of moral and ethical values, as these values are crucial for one to follow for the betterment of society. Many respondents agree that the values not only help individuals but also help students serve society and humanity, regardless of the boundaries of ethnicity. The concept of leadership in Islam is derived from the Holy book, the Quran, which was revealed to the Prophet Mohammad SAWW. The teaching tells us to follow the laws made by ALLAH SWT, as revealed in the Holy book Quran, and fulfill the rights of ALLAH SWT and His Makhlooq (people). Isla teaches to have faith in ALLAH SWT. Islamic leadership stresses serving humanity, as one of the respondents stated:

“True leadership in Islam is rooted in following Allah's laws and upholding both Haqooq Allah (rights of ALLAH) and Haqooq ul Ibad (rights of people), with greater emphasis on serving humanity.”

Islam is not just a religion of obligations of prayers, but also provides a way to spend life. In the Quran, many of the lessons are revealed to guide us. One of the interviewees responded that:

“Islam provides a complete code of life.”

Almost all of the teachers, as respondents, agreed that the development of Islamic leadership qualities is crucial and necessary. This is because it is necessary to develop the ethical and moral sense among today's generation and bring them into line with the ethical and moral basis provided by Islam. As one of the interviewees said:

“Well, I think the necessity of development of leadership qualities in the Islamic perspective is the need in every era, and at present, it is an era of dispersion, and the need to develop those leadership qualities is at its ultimate need on topmost priority. I think that the current era has made our lives very tough, and people are so confused about what to do and what the purpose of their career is.”

By highlighting the necessity of Islamic leadership and Islamic leaders, most of the interviewees stressed the need to include Islamic leadership as a course in educational programs.

“Islamic leadership as a course should be taught.”

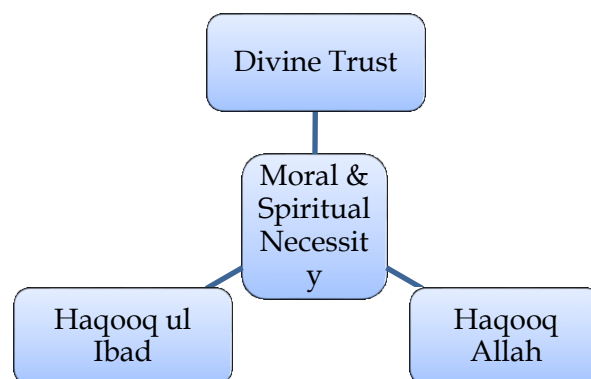


Figure 1 Mapping the Moral and Spiritual Necessity

Current Education System

Most of the teachers agree that the curriculum support should be given to Islamic leadership, and it should be modified to develop Islamic leadership qualities among the students. They also highlight the need to revise the syllabus and the content on Islamic leadership to be included in the curricula based on theories and true stories to inspire students and to give them motivation. The views of the respondents:

“We are generating the rote learners and the crammers from our curricula. To develop leadership qualities in students, especially from an Islamic perspective, there is no such thing in our syllabus.”

“Revision of old curricula and old teaching methods is in need. There is no course to teach about leadership qualities from an Islamic perspective. Leadership Theories taught to students are entirely secular.”

Teaching Islamic values is necessary to inspire students. This can also be possible if they are exposed to true examples.

“We can inspire students by giving examples of Islam about traditional qualities like fear of God, taqwah, fairness, and also by teaching the Quran and Quranic verses about leadership qualities among the students.”

Many respondents viewed leadership as Islamic. Therefore, it may be possible to instill leadership qualities based on the Islamic viewpoint in degree programs. This would not only help them as leaders but also allow them to be consistent with their religion.

The degree program comprises eight semesters. Accordingly, there should be a course from the point of view of Islam. So that those qualities can be developed in the students and they persist and are motivated by their religion.”

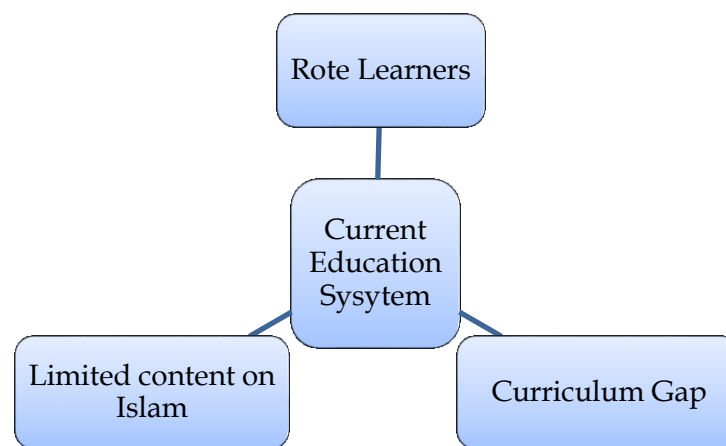


Figure 2 Mapping the Current Education System

Islamic Leadership Qualities

We can get the qualities of an Islamic leader from the teachings of Islam (Most authentic from the Holy Quran) and from the life of the Prophet Mohammad SAWW; as his life gives the complete code to follow to live a better life. The interviewee highlights many qualities of Islamic leadership, such as:

“Fear of God, integrity, taqwa, consistency, patience; if we bind and join them together, all these qualities we can see in a true Islamic leadership. If we glimpse into the past, the life of the Holy Prophet (SAWW), there is no better leader than our Holy Prophet (SAWW). It is the truth, it is reality from dawn to dusk, and this reality cannot be changed.”

Most of the respondents were at the point of teaching students various moral and spiritual principles, such as honesty, integrity, humility, and patience, as these characteristics are considered in Islamic spiritual needs, and are also considered as universal moral principles. These characteristics are unchangeable and undeniable. Most of the teachers responded that teacher can teach their students about mindfulness of God as it is a very crucial trait to be developed in this generation, so that they may stand firm in their religion.

“We teach students about honesty, being kind to others, and patience. These are significant Islamic values. We also teach about being mindful of God in everything we do.”

Another respondent described four significant fundamentals as trust, honesty, justice, consultation, and accountability. He further illustrated;

In the Islamic perspective of leadership, trust, justice, consultation, and accountability are four significant fundamentals. A good leader depends on Allah, patience, and taqwa, and has wisdom and knowledge. They also possess a spirit of honor, pledge, sacrifice, and excellence. Developing leadership qualities is essential for students, regardless of their faith. “

“It becomes even more significant from an Islamic perspective. Islam highlights service to others, compassion, humility, and justice. Students become effective leaders when they embody these values, which can absolutely influence their communities.”

“For several reasons, like moral and ethical guidance, community engagement, and Ummah building, it is crucial to develop leadership among students as per Islam.”

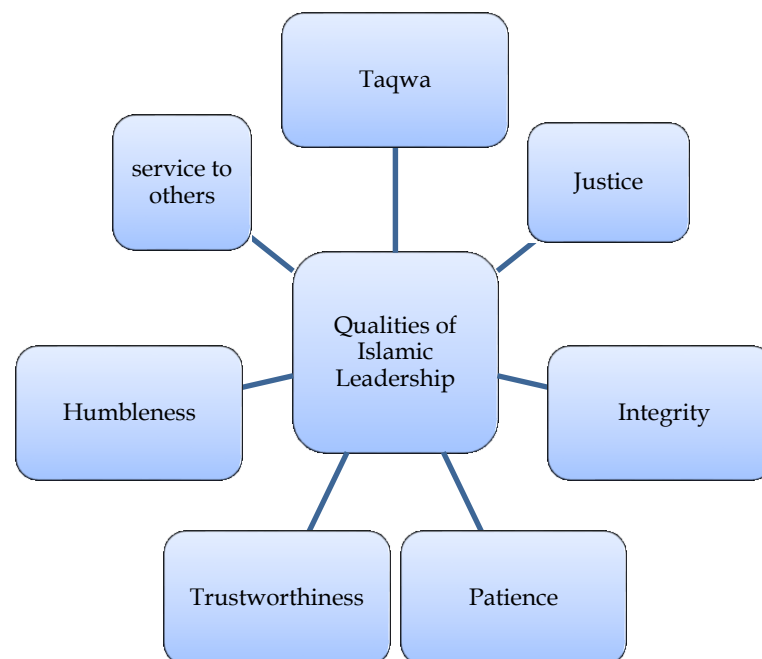


Figure 3 Mapping Islamic Leadership Qualities

Table 1
Thematic Analysis (coding, categories, and sub-categories)

Coding	Categories	Sub-categories
001MSN	Moral and Spiritual Necessity	ALLAH (SWT) Laws, Haqooq ALLAH, Haqooq ul Ibad, Divine trust
002CES	Current Education System	Rote learners, Gap in Curriculum, curricula dominated by Western culture, limited Islamic content, including in the curriculum

003QIL	Qualities of Islamic Leadership	Justice, Self-Accountability, Trust, Humbleness, Kindness, Integrity, Taqwa, Practice of Prophet Mohammad SAWW, Quranic studies
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Discussion

In modern foreign literature on Islamic philosophy, Muslims are considered to have a comprehensive moral system based on the ethics of the Quran and Sunnah (Shaukat & Basharat, 2022). On the other hand, the acceptance of relativism and subjectivism dominates in the postmodern world, where morality is considered relative and changes over time and context (Shaukat & Basharat, 2022). Another study suggests that the secularization of ethics, which eliminates religion as the basis of moral reasoning, has led to the dismantling of absolute moral standards and universal values (Harris, 2021). In the Islamic perspective, leadership is described as a trust or mandate that involves the psychological contract between leaders and followers to do good deeds. Thus, a leader must have a strong moral character (Ahmad, 2009). Islamic ethics, which is theistic in origin, offers more advanced foundations for moral inquiry than theistic ethics and provides clear universal and absolute moral obligations (Fraedrich, Althawadi, & Bagherzadeh, 2018) as the present study concluded the necessity of developing moral and social values among them in an Islamic perspective as these are important for self, the need of the present era, and crucial for the betterment of humanity and society. Islamic ethics is not just about moral character, but is also a practical science of what kinds of actions toward Allah, family, and society are obligatory (Hovanniasian, 1983; Mohammad, 1983; Sheila, 1984). Islamic morality, or *ikhlaq*, is a mainstay of the Islamic way of life, bedrocked upon the principles of character and the condition of the soul. This is how a person deals with other creations. It is closely related to the relationship between the Creator (*khaliq*) and the creature (*makhlooq*), and creature to creature (Mohd, 2003). It is the condition of the soul that determines human action. It is a skill that can be nurtured through training and practice (Bin-Omar, 2003). As the study found that true leadership in Islam is rooted in following Allah's laws and upholding both Haqooq Allah (rights of ALLAH) and Haqooq ul Ibad (rights of people), with greater emphasis on serving humanity.

This suggests that creating targeted programs to enhance leadership skills in future professionals is a viable and promising approach (Barnes, 2020). As the study context shows, Professionals require more autonomy, self-awareness, and leadership skills to excel in their roles (Ewing et al., 2008). Findings of the study showed that the current education system is producing rote learners and crammers, and the curriculum focuses more on content learning. Furthermore, the leadership theories in the curriculum are based only on Western leadership. It is important to include Islamic qualities within the education system along with the curriculum program so that those qualities can be instilled among students. To develop the young generation's character, it is important to prepare them with Islamic qualities from primary to advanced education, so that teachers, careers, and communities together can promote learners' Islamic identity (Saleem et al, 2024). Thus, the rationale of the study exists in the hot debate over the need to include Islamic leadership in the education system. It is necessary in the case of Pakistan, as the country has a Muslim majority population (Rehman, 2018). The following are a few verses of the Quran about morals

Be patient, "O you have believed! Be patient and strengthen your **patience**" (Al Imran:200). **Trust** "Indeed, ALLAH told you to deliver the message to those entitled to receive it" (An-Nisa':58).

Tawadhu' "And **humble** yourselves towards those who believe who follow you" (Ash-Shu'ara: 215).

Honesty "O you who have believed! Fear Allah and speak the true words" (Al-Ahzab:70)

"O you who have believed! Fear Allah and be with those who are righteous" (At-Taubah: 119)5. Istiqomah "Then you (Muhammad) (in the right path), as instructed to you and (also) those who repent with you" (Huud: 112).

The hadith narrated by Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim highlights the importance of ethical conduct in Islam and puts it at the top of the Muslims' virtues. "

Researchers often use a specific questionnaire to assess certain leadership components or development levels, typically tailored to a particular training or for particular participants (Geyer et al., 2017; Henley et al., 2017). The study identified the need for moral and spiritual necessity in the context of education for the leadership development of university students based on the Islamic principles and values. Recent studies define leadership as setting goals and collaborating with others to achieve shared objectives or values (Gialamas & Grigoropoulos, 2020; Kratzer et al., 2008). Leadership is valued across fields, particularly in education, where it is seen as a key outcome of students' development and a focus on striving to achieve teaching methods (Hishamuddin & Shukor, 2021; Villera Herrera & Pinto Lucas, 2020). Today, leadership skills are essential for future professionals, enabling them to excel in various social and professional contexts (FarajAllah et al., 2018)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study was conducted to examine the need to develop Islamic leadership among university students based on the perception of university teachers. The study revealed that the Islamic leadership gives morals and tells the code of life; it is very necessary to include Islamic leadership in the curriculum and educational context.

Recommendations

- On the basis of the research findings and conclusion, it is recommended that effective teaching and curriculum revisions should prioritize the inclusion of Islamic leadership into educational policies and plans. This integration is quite vigorous.
- It is also recommended that teachers' training programs highlighting the need for Islamic leadership should be introduced in universities so that teachers can be motivated to consider Islamic leadership by teaching and practicing. As the teachers are the role models for their students, students tend to follow them. This approach can help inculcate Islamic leadership among university students.
- The importance of Islamic leadership is paramount, especially in an era marked by moral and ethical decline. To address this situation, integrating leadership based on Islamic principles derived from the Quran and Sunnah within the academic framework is an important step, particularly for university students, as they are the future leaders of society. These values can be imparted through teaching and curriculum integration.

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