The Concept of Servant and Islamic Leadership: 
A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore and examine the similarities and differences between the concepts of Servant Leadership (S-L) and Islamic Leadership (I-L) through identifying the characteristics of both concepts as represented in the literature. Data for analysis were collected from three major secondary sources: the literature of Islamic Leadership (I-L), Servant Leadership (S-L), and General Leadership (G-L). The result of an approach based on hermeneutics and content analysis revealed that the concept of Servant Leadership (S-L) accords with Islamic Leadership (I-L) particularly in the aspect of how both of the concepts focus on the aspect ethical leadership. Moreover, based on the nineteen clusters of Islamic Leadership (I-L) designed to examine the ten characteristics of Servant Leadership (S-L) in the open and axial coding process, this research found that the ten characteristics of S-L accord with the nineteen clusters, except in five clusters: justice and equity; profit-orientation; moderation and balance; spiritual, religious, faith in God and piety; and coerciveness under certain circumstances with limitations. The differences have suggested that in general the literature of Servant Leadership (S-L) should be enriched with more ideas pertaining to other aspects of leadership, for example Islamic Leadership (I-L) besides those to do with organisational leadership, while the literature of Islamic Leadership (I-L) should be enriched with more information pertaining to contemporary leadership processes and contexts.

Keywords: Islamic leadership, servant leadership, hermeneutics, content analysis

Introduction

This article discusses three themes that arose based on the content analysis procedures conducted on the characteristics of Servant leadership or S-L (Dittmar, 2006; DeGraaf,
Tilley & Neal, 2004; Spears & Lawrence, 2004) and Islamic Leadership or I-L (Noor, 2002; Badawi & Beckum, 1999). The idea for the analysis to be conducted arose from three arguments raised by scholars pertaining to the concept of S-L. First, Badawi and Beckum (1999) argue that the ideas that underpin the concept of S-L have already been there in the teachings of Islam. This is the major focus that provides this analysis with a justification to study the concept of S-L from the perspective of I-L. Second, Humphreys (2005) states that the concept of S-L is only practical when used in static environments. Third, Whetstone (2002) argues that the concept of S-L is not sufficient to be used on employees or followers who are less naive and are capable of exerting excessive and self-interested influence on leaders. This second and third argument act to further justify this analysis to investigate the concept of S-L. In sum, from these three arguments, it is justified that the concept of S-L needs to be analysed further, particularly from different points of view. In this article, we analyse the concept based on the principles of leadership in Islam that constitutes Islamic Leadership (I-L). In the next subsections, before we discuss further with the analysis, this article will discuss briefly the concept of Servant Leadership (S-L) and Islamic Leadership (I-L).

The Concept of Servant Leadership

Robert K. Greenleaf (d. 1990) is recognised as the founding father of S-L. The Servant as Leader (1970) and Servant Leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness (1977, 1991, 2002) have been a significant influence in recent journals and articles according to Frick and Spears (1996). In addition to the two books above, there are more than ninety unpublished essays that Greenleaf left after he died. Some of the books based on these unpublished essays have subsequently been published as edited collections, for example, On Becoming a Servant Leader (1996) and Seeker and Servant: Reflections on Religious Leadership (1996). These books that were published posthumously could be considered as bringing “to the public for the first time essays that reveal Greenleaf’s evolution in thinking over a period of fifty years of his works” (Frick & Spears, 1996, p.xiii). In addition to Greenleaf’s essays and articles that have been republished, there are also journals and articles from different authors that analyse the concept of S-L by Greenleaf. Therefore, his work is considered to be so influential that it has forced many people to re-think the bona fide purpose of leadership.

Among all of the journals that discuss the concept of S-L by Greenleaf, this article examines explanations of the concept of S-L found in the literature. Cunningham (2004, p.1) says that the concept of S-L is a concept that tries “to instigate a cultural revolution—not just in terms of executive behaviours, but in terms of the mind set that associate material situations from psychological or spiritual health”. Cunningham continues by saying that the “concept of S-L intends to communicate that serving, leading, receiving and giving are intermingled and not so discrete and dissociated as some economists or social theorists
might think” (Cunningham, 2004, p.2). Stone, Russel, and Patterson (2004) argue that the main understanding which underpins the concept of S-L is that theorists or researchers should disengage from the materialistic and leader-focused elements in leadership activities and move to ones that are more spiritual in nature and focus more on followers or members of organisations. The concept of S-L requires leaders to be compassionate, caring, and also trustworthy to the members of organisations, more than other leadership concepts require leaders to be. It is argued that this is a very useful concept to enhance the quality of leadership performance and further argued that S-L is a very convincing concept which should replace other traditional and modern concepts of leadership because it is influenced by morals and ethics (Ciulla, 2005; Dittrich, 2006; Lloyd, 1996; Riverstone, 2004).

Islamic Leadership: An Introduction

In order to comprehend Islamic Leadership or the paradigm of leadership in Islam, is not to illustrate its beginning point from the Makkan period of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, but to far back before the creation of the mankind as stated in the Al-Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah 2: verses 30 – 34. From grasping the main ideas instilled in these verses, one will not only be illuminated with the exoteric features of Islamic leadership, but along with the esoteric features of it as well. Exoteric refers to the outer dimension of leadership such as the behavior, process, skill etc, whilst esoteric refers to the inner dimension of Islamic leadership such as the values, its relation to the Sacred, the sovereignty of God etc. (see Faivre, 2005 in Jones et al., year, p. 2842). Exoteric features are perceivable from the conventional definitions of leadership, where here leadership is treated as a process, as an ability, as a skill or as a behavior (Yakl, 2006). Whilst exoteric is the root of Islamic leadership, from which the exoteric features bloom and manifest. The esoteric features of Islamic leadership are the philosophy, concept and core values of Islam; whereby the exoteric examples are the observable and sensible factors which derive out of it. For instance, a Muslim leader leads his people through deliberation (shura) and empowerment (taufiqa) with the principles and values manifest from the philosophy, concept and core values of Islam.

Mankind as the viceroy of God, the Most High (Allah), represents Him in the task of comprehending, conveying and executing the stipulated role of Allah SWT as leaders in its varieties of level: upon self, family, neighborhood or state; and areas: religious, education, politics, economics and armed forces. (Al-Zahayli, 1418H, pp. 122-135) In the Quran and the Sunnah, the issues of leadership have been mentioned in many ways either stressing on its principles or its examples. The word Imam, which means leader in its many forms such Imam, Imamah, Imamah and A’immah as has been mentioned 11 times in the Quran and countless in the Sunnah (Muhammad Fu’ad, 2001). In addition to the word Imam or leader, Al-Quran Al-Karim also discussed bad leadership. For example, Surah Al-Naml 27: verse 34 Allah SWT prescribed a sample of bad leadership in the story of Queen
Balqis: “She said: “Kings, when they enter a country, despoil it, and make the noblest of its people its meanest thus do they behave.” Thus, it should be understood that in Islam, leadership should not only be perceived from the standpoint of effective leadership process but also from the perspectives of how a leader could be perceived as bad and sinful.

In addition to the above, Islam also sees leadership as important because the leaders are trusted with power and sovereignty particularly in the context of state leadership. Sovereignty here refers to the autonomous state or the supreme control that a leadership holds. In some theories of leadership, such as democracy, sovereignty refers to the people majority where government is created by the will of the people (Henn, 2006). In utilitarianism, sovereignty refers to the pain and pleasures of the people (Smart, 2006). Whilst in communism, sovereignty is decided by the common good to the extent of the elimination of private property (Lawler, 2006). Sovereignty in Islamic leadership refers to the will and commands of God, the Most Wise (Al-Hakim). In other words, leaders in any level or stratum must hold firmly to the will and command of God, the Most Sovereign (Al-Mustazhir), in his leadership. Unfortunately, some researchers misunderstood Islamic leadership as theocracy as any theocracies witnessed in human history. Theocracy is the rule of the priesthood or the priestly class, of whom the ruler is the head or leader. Nevertheless in Islam, God is the Most Sovereign and even the ruler, be it religious or professional, needs to abide by God’s law and not only the ruled (Nase, 2002). Evidently, Allah SWT says,

To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the Scripture that came before it. and guarding it in safety; so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the Truth that hath come to thee. To each among you have We prescribed a Law and Open Way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single People, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you; so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute (Al-Maidah, verse 48).

The same stressing was also made by one of the great Caliphs in the Islamic history i.e. Saydina Umar RA, as he says,

Indeed, there is no Islam except with Jama’ah, there is no Jama’ah except with imarah (leadership), and there is no imarah except with obedience. So whoever is appointed as a leader by his people because of his faith (knowledge) and religion, then it becomes a life for himself and his people. And whoever is appointed to be a leader by his people not because of faith (knowledge) and religion, then it becomes destruction for him and his nation. (Al-Darimi, 1407H, Hadith no. 251, Vol. 1, p. 91.)
As a result, the source of power in the Islamic leadership is neither totally returned to the leader, nor to the people as practiced in the most continents of this world, but to the sovereignty of God SWT as observed by both: the leader and the people (Al-Zuhayli, 1985). Furthermore, with the power of leadership, Islam sees that a leader has some responsibilities and rights. Prophet Muhammad SAW said,

“O Mu‘addil! Do you know what is Allah’s right over His servants and what their right is over Him?” I said: “Allah and His Messenger know best.” He said: “Allah’s right over His servants is that they worship Him without associating any partner with Him in worship, and their right over Him is that He does not punish anyone who worships Him without associating any partner with Him in worship (Muslim, n.d. Hadith no. 153, Vol. 1, p. 143)”.

Generally, leadership comes with a purpose or purposes to be fulfilled. A leadership without any single purpose is never a leadership. In Islamic leadership, regardless of its any level and area covered, purports towards the fulfillment of the rights of God SWT. According to Khalifah Ahmad (2010, p.3),

Leadership in Islam centers on trust (Amanah). It represents a psychological contract between leaders and their followers that they will try their best to guide, protect, and treat their followers justly. It revolves on doing good deeds for the sake of Allah, the Muslim community and humankind.

In a popular saying, Al-InamahTaklif Wa La Tasrif, which means leadership is a responsibility not an honor. This responsibility in Islamic leadership, in whatever tasks and functions a leader should undertake or endure, is bound with the basic principle of fulfilling the trust (amanah) bestowed upon mankind as vicegerent. Allah SWT says,

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. (Al-Quran Al-Karim. Surah Al-Ahzab 33: Verse 72.)

With such responsibility, it comes with a complement of a right that a leader must be obeyed and be followed, as long as one is not against the main principles or the asul al-din of Islam. Realizing this importance in Islam, Rasulullah SAW had many times warned about disobedience and its grave punishment. One of these hadiths, as narrated by Imam Muslim r.a.,

He who refused obedience on a leader, disavowed the Jama‘ah (the mainstream Muslims), and then died, died on Jahiliyyah. And he who fought blindly under a banner, getting angry for a prejudicial group, inviting to blind solidarity, or
helped a prejudicial group and was killed then, his death was a `ollision death (n.d. Hadith no. 4892, Vol. 6, p. 20).

Research Methodology

This section is divided into three subsections, or the research approach, data collection procedure, and data analysis procedure.

Research Approach

The overall methodological approach used in this study is interpretative, falling within what Neuman (1997) describes as Interpretative Social Science (ISS). He further describes the method of content analysis, the hermeneutical study of texts, which has been used in this research.

Hermeneutics is largely found in the humanities (philosophy, art, history, religious studies, linguistics, and literary criticism). It emphasises a detailed reading or examination of text, which could refer to a conversation, written words, or pictures. A researcher conducts ‘a reading’ to discover meaning embedded within text. Each reader brings his or her subjective experience to a text. When studying the text, the researcher/reader tries to absorb or get inside the viewpoint it presents: as a whole, and then develop a deep understanding of how its parts relate to the whole. In other words, true meaning is rarely simple or obvious on the surface; one reaches it only through a detailed study of the text, contemplating its many messages and seeking the connections among its parts (Neuman, 1997, p.68).

The objectives of this study have required this research to use a hermeneutical approach as its methodology. This is because the hermeneutical approach enabled this research to discuss the idea of leadership in both breadth and depth to answer the research question and the sub-questions. Specifically, this research has focused on analysing the characteristics of leadership that underpin the concept of S-L by drawing on the principles of I-L that are regarded by Islamists as universal. The characteristics of I-L have been identified by Noor (2002) and Badawi and Beek (1999). These characteristics of I-L were further compared with the characteristics of S-L that could be found in the works of Dittmar (2006), DeGraaf, Tiley, and Neal (2004), and Spears and Lawrence (2004) in order to identify the similarities and differences between I-L and S-L. Based on the reason that the focus is to examine the characteristics of S-L with I-L, a series of comparative content analyses have been employed with an Interpretative Social Science (ISS) perspective. Comparative content analysis and Interpretative Social Science (ISS) have a very close connection with hermeneutical approach used by this research (Neuman, 1997).
Data Collection Procedure

Concerning the data collection procedure, this research is based on data derived from academic and non-academic literature, or in other words, it is based on secondary data. This means that this research draws on a large amount of data that were collected through literature. Articulates from the literature were considered as the units of analysis (Neuman, 1997) for this research. However, the categories of literature used in this research are varied and not only limited to textual academic literature. The data were also collected from other relevant sources. This means that data were also collected from general sources, such as from web pages, digital and tape recordings of documentaries, and recorded speeches of academics and leaders found on the internet that could provide information pertinent to this research.

Data Analysis Procedure

Based on the nature of data above, it is very important for this research to organise the data properly (Lichtman, 2006). The best way for this research to organise the data is by using two cataloguing or coding systems which are the open coding system and the axial coding system (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The data were first catalogued by using an open coding system. Open coding is a process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This is to ensure that every detail of the literature that could provide this research with data would be identified in order to be analysed further by using an axial coding process. Strauss and Corbin (1998) stress that the best step to open code every data in the literature is by conceptualising, categorising or naming, and subcategorising them. The coding system as used in this study accords with the purpose of answering the research questions and the research objectives.

In this open coding process, the data were categorised into two major categories. First is the background of the literature and secondly is the contents framework of the literature. Each of the major categories have their own subcategories. These subcategories were located and named in different boxes or clusters in order to organise the data more clearly. Furthermore, data that were first coded in open coding process to identify the contents of the literature were re-grouped according to the categories of the literature in an axial coding process. This was to identify whether the data represent the concept of L-L, S-L, or other possible leadership theories or general leadership (G-L). Most importantly, this was also to enable this research to identify the basis of arguments of the literature used by this thesis and to identify the similarities and the differences between each of the data according to its contents and the leadership characteristics in order to answer the research objectives.
In the data analysis procedure, the works of Noor (2002) and Badawi and Bee kun (1999) were selected to provide this research with fundamental understandings of I-L. This is because the two books discuss the fundamental ideas of Islam in leadership as well as management clearly in order to provide readers with understandings pertaining to the topic. Through the books, Muslims particularly can understand that moral actions of leaders which are one of the most important aspects to achieve leadership effectiveness. In addition to Noor (2002) and Badawi and Bee kun (1999), this research also relied on some other literature that discusses leadership in Islam for example Åberg (1997), Ahmad (2004), Bee kun (1998), and Quasem (1975). Nonetheless, the works of Noor (2002) and Badawi and Bee kun (1999) could be argued as influential to this research because they have compared the principles of I-L with the needs of the contemporary world of leadership. This has made these two books essential not just to this research but also to the discussion of leadership in general. Furthermore, the discussions of I-L in these two books are also universal and not only confined to Muslims as readers.

Based on the works of Noor (2002) and Badawi and Bee kun (1999), nineteen characteristics and values of leadership were identified in order to analyse the major characteristics and values of leadership that were found in the literature of S-L. These characteristics were used to develop the preliminary framework for the content analysis, with the literature clustered accordingly. The nineteen clusters are: (1) Mutual Consultation and High in Diplomacy, (2) Justice and Equity, (3) Freedom of Expression, (4) Empowering Intelligent, Wisdom and Encourage Synergy, (5) Protection of Employees Integrity, (6) Accountability and Trustworthiness, (7) Shared Values and Beliefs, (8) Security, (9) High Morality, Ethics, Humility with Self Esteem and Good Personality, (10) Profit-Oriented, (11) Orientation to Altruism and Employees, (12) Moderation and Balance, (13) High Self Esteem and Emotional Maturity, (14) Mutual Respect and Maintenance of Relationship, (15) Spirituality, Religiousness and Piety, (16) Willingness to Learn, (17) Being Influential and Supportive, (18) Social Responsibility, and (19) Coerciveness under Certain Circumstances with Limitations.

All leadership characteristics and values that were found in the literature were coded using these nineteen characteristics. In these steps of categorising the data found in the literature, the focus was more on comparing the concept of S-L with I-L. This action most importantly helped this research to identify the similarities and differences between S-L and I-L. Any additional data were also noted for later categorisation in the process of analysis.

Results

In this section, findings will be presented about the comparisons of I-L with S-L. In addition to the nineteen clusters of I-L that were developed based on Noor (2002) and Badawi and Bee kun (1999), in examining the S-L literature, the focus was placed on the ten
characteristics of S-L commonly identified by scholars. The ten characteristics of S-L are: listening (L), empathy (E), healing (H), awareness (A), perception (P), conceptualisation (C), foresight (F), stewardship (S), commitment to the growth of people (C-G), and building community (B-C) (DeGraaf et al., 2004; Dittrar, 2006; Spears & Lawrence, 2004).

After conducting an analysis of data by using the nineteen clusters of I-L and ten clusters of S-L above, three emergent themes were formed based on the works of Zaccaro et al. (2004). The three emergent themes are leadership ethics, leadership contexts, and leadership spirituality or religiosity. These three emergent themes are very important to enable this research to present its arguments effectively. In addition, these three emergent themes are also important in order to allow more space of discussion, rather than just to use a cluster by cluster style of discussion.

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is one of the emerging themes found in this research. Ethics play a very important role for leadership effectiveness and stability (Abeng, 1997; Ahmad, 2004; Ciulla, 1998; Qasem, 1975). One of the sources of the understandings of ethics is the teachings of religion. Religion is also one of the major factors that influences the way humans think and act (Kingsley, n.d.). Islam for example, provides distinctive values of ethics in every aspect of human life (Abeng, 1997; Badawi & Beekun, 1999; Qasem, 1975). If we refer to Islamic books pertaining to leadership, the elements of ethics are very clearly described and emphasised (Altalib, 1993; Badawi & Beekun, 1999; Nour, 2002). As an introduction to this section, this research argues that it is very important for leadership research to try to absorb the understandings of religion in the discussion of leadership. This is in order for us to gain the benefits of religion's teachings in the field of leadership and its processes. This is in contradiction with the approach taken by S-L. The difference is based on the factor that S-L does not consider religion as its basic principles (Dittrar, 2006). The discussion pertaining to the religious values that exist in the concepts of I-L and S-L can be read further later.

As an example of the importance of the ethical personality to leadership, in the first cluster, mutual consultation and high in diplomacy, this research found that almost all of the literature of I-L mentions the necessity of leaders to have the skills of consultation and diplomacy. Mutual consultation, or in the Arabic terminology shura, plays a critical role in leadership and management (Altalib, 1993; Badawi & Beekun, 1999; Nour, 2002). In order to practise mutual consultation, a leader must have high diplomacy skills as one of his or her leadership characteristics. Islam teaches humans to practise shura in every situation in order to achieve the best result or solution (Yousef, 1999). Mutual consultation or shura means "the prime mode of decision making, and in doing so the Quran calls upon all Muslim leaders to consult those who are affected or more knowledgeable and well-
informed about the issue at hand” (Noor, 2002, p. 9). The reason why most of the literature of L-I stresses this quality is because of the importance of mutual consultation and the direct teachings of Islam regarding the topic that could be found in the Quran (42:38) and in the Sunnah of its Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Some of the L-I literature that stresses the element of mutual consultation or shura are Sa’ad (2007), Thaib (1995), and Youssef (1999).

The necessity of these values could also be seen clearly through the characteristics of S-L. The characteristic of listening, for example, explains clearly the importance of high diplomacy and consultancy in leadership (Dittmar, 2006). Dittmar (2006) points out that, according to Spears, one of the characteristics that acts as the foundational background of S-L is listening. This could be seen in how Greenleaf stresses clearly in almost every part of his works that leaders must be able to be good listeners (Dittmar, 2006). In addition, according to the coding process on the ten characteristics of S-L, this research found that other characteristics of S-L such as the quality of consultancy and/or being high in diplomacy in leadership are: empathy, healing, conceptualisation, foresight, awareness, persuasion, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. This argument was developed based on the points of view of most of the S-L literature that stresses the importance of mutual consultation as the most basic practice of S-L. For example, Frick and Spears (1996) explain that S-L is about applying the power of persuasion in groups or organisations and not the power of authority. Reineke (2004) says in his works on S-L that leadership in general is a method of using relationship and not power. Whetstone (2002) believes that leaders and employees must work collaboratively, which means that the relationship between leaders and employees is not a linear relationship. Moreover, DeGraaf et al. (2004) who discuss the ten characteristics of S-L in detail stress that the understanding of mutual consultation in S-L is not just exist in every single characteristic of S-L, especially in stewardship which encourages leaders to share his or her power with employees, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. It could also exist when leaders practise the idea of S-L by combining more than one of the characteristics of S-L. Two examples of this proposition will be presented to explain the argument more. First, the combination of listening and empathy could assist leaders to practise healing. Second, whenever leaders practise forecasting by carrying out the vision of others in combination with awareness, it could help leaders to have a sense of persuasion.

Therefore, based on this information from the field of S-L and the focus of the literature of L-I, including those of Badawi and Beekeun (1999) and Noor (2002), this research found that it is indubitable that good and ethical leaders need to possess the quality of high consultation and diplomacy. However, this finding through the secondary literature and through personal experiences of a leader, such as Greenleaf, is not sufficient to be generalised to every leadership situation. Further research on the necessity of the quality
of consultancy and being high in diplomacy in leadership as well as its processes needs to be carried out in various contexts of organisations and leadership environments.

Another characteristic of I-L that has a close relationship with ethical leadership values is justice and equity. Justice and equity or in the Arabic terminology adl means fairness and equilibrium. Adl plays a critical role in leadership and management as well as in I-L like shura or mutual consultation (Altaifh, 1993; Badawi & Beekun, 1999; Noor, 2002). Justice in Islam means adl and adl also means balance and modesty which indicate a relationship with fairness, equity, or equilibrium. Establishing adl is very important in Islam and the word adl could be found clearly in the Quran (5:8; 4: 58; 4: 135; 25: 67-68 & 72-73). Justice means to establish just and right decisions. In the aspect of distribution of wealth, justice means fair wealth distributions as well as the distribution of opportunities. Flexibility is allowed in Islamic Teachings. He stresses that there are Muslims, who when in power become arrogant and do not abide by the teachings of Islam which has resulted in the world perceiving Islam as a cruel and unjust religion. This is also supported with the description of justice by Noor (2002).

Justice signifies putting a thing in a place of its own, or putting something in the right place, or positioning it properly in its right perspectives. It also means doing something without transgressing the proper limit however much or little. In the Islamic context, it implies at the pinnacle that Allah saw does everything right. Whatever He does is based on justice, even when He has to punish His servants He does what is good for them. On the part of men, justice implies doing something with righteousness, without malice or high-handedness. The opposition of justice or adl is zalim (al-zalim) (Noor, 2002, p. 13)

Most of the literature of I-L stresses the concept of establishing justice in every situation. Askari (2006), for example bemoans the unjust practices of wealth distribution, particularly the wealth that comes from the earth, for example oil, gas, and others, in most of the Muslim countries. All of the literature of I-L agrees that whenever justice does not prevail, imbalance will happen and this might cause negative impacts (Askari, 2006). In addition to the points above, the first mission of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), beside calling humans to Islam, was to bring justice and equality to the people. This could be seen in his actions to fight against slavery (Al-Mubarakfuri, 2001; Haykal, 2002; Taib, 1995). In sum, justice could be said to be one of the most important principles of I-L, no matter whether it is leadership of a country, community, business organisation or non-profit organisation.

However, in the concept of S-L, the element of justice and equality is there, but it is not as clear as the element of mutual consultation which could be seen in every characteristic of the concept. This is supported by DeGraaf et al. (2004) who discuss in detail the ten
characteristics of S-L. The concept places greater emphasis on the notion of love as the basis of S-L, and not justice and equality. Frick and Spears (1996, p. 338) when discussing the concept of S-L say that “the virtue of justice is good but not good enough as compared to love and friendship”. This has indicated that the concept of S-L does not consider justice and equality as the most important factor of leadership. The concept of S-L is based on love, friendship, and relationships between people. This research found that one of the differences between I-L and S-L lies in the degree of concentration of these two concepts on the significance of justice and equity in leadership.

The requirement that leaders be high in consultancy, diplomacy, and justice that support the qualities of leadership signify that both I-L and S-L consider ethical values as the basic focus of good leadership. Ethical values and morality are also identified as very important in growing an exemplary leadership personality. This will help an organisation to foster a healthy and positive environment. Both literatures argue that, as a result of this focus, an organisation can ensure the growth of its people in all possible means, for example, physical and spiritual means.

Leadership Context

Humphreys (2005) is one of the scholars who supports the significance of contextual factors in determining the level of leadership effectiveness and suitability. He suggests that his research supports “the speculation that contextual influences could determine the appropriateness of transformational and servant leadership” (Humphreys, 2005, p.1426). He also stresses that the primary contribution of his research is “to help advance the discussion concerning the relationship between diverse leader behaviors and context” (Humphreys, 2005, p.1427). Based on this suggestion, we could now understand that leadership research needs to include analyses and discussions pertaining to contextual factors of leaders or leadership theories. However, this research highlights that the definition of contextual factors should be broader and cover every aspect of human life. This means that this research does not consider organisational environment, culture, or others as the only contextual factors but looks more broadly at the reality of the modern world and its human activities as the principal contextual factors.

Based on the explanation above, this section includes facts and information gathered through the literature of general leadership or G-L that mostly show us the reality of leadership and world activities today and is not only restricted to the literature of S-L and I-L. There are many literatures in the category of G-L that discuss the issue of world leadership in general, for example Askari (2006), Achbar et al. (2004), Kullerman (2004), and Iacocca and Whitney (2007). Achbar et al. (2004) in their documentary “The Corporations”, discuss clearly the nature of the leadership situation in the world’s major corporate organisations. They present some information that was collected from some corporate leaders in America.
that can be publicly viewed through this documentary. They argue that the world of
corporations and its leadership have the personalities of psychopaths and have no concern
for other people (Achbar et al., 2004). Through the documentary, some of the corporate
leaders confess that the modern reality of the world has forced them to work selfishly for
the sake of their corporations’ material and physical development and ignore the needs of
others outside the corporations or the stakeholders.

Based on the arguments of this documentary, this research argues that if we consider the
nature of the modern corporate world as the context of the concept of S-L, the concept
of S-L only focuses on serving the needs of organisational interests and stockholders or
the followers. This means that, even though undoubtedly the concept of S-L encourages
the usage of good leadership qualities as portrayed in the definition of servant as leaders
in any context inside and outside organisations, this research has found that the nature of
discussion of S-L is somewhat narrow, since it only covers the needs of organisations in
relation to the ways leaders serve the benefits of the followers. This does not mean that
this research sees the concept of S-L as invalid or wrong, but rather that the concept of
S-L is incomplete when seen in a broader context, such as the reality of the world and in
particular the corporate world as discussed by Achbar et al. (2004).

In contrast, much of the literature of I-L discusses the issue of leadership in broader ways
free from any consideration of contextual factors. This might be because most of the
literature of I-L argues the need for good and ethical leadership in a broader sense, not
one that is simply restricted to a particular context or organisational environment. This on
the one hand has meant that the literature successfully discusses the issue of leadership
in relation to the world and global matters. However, the focus on broad and context-free
discussion also means that the literature lacks the detailed elements required to discuss
the implementation processes of leadership according to Islamic teachings. Most of the
literature of I-L has some foundational background which is to disseminate the positive
values of Islamic teachings pertaining to leadership. This might be the reason why in the
modern literature of I-L, there are texts that focus on the fundamental understandings of
Islam pertaining to leadership in order to be read and practised by everybody. Examples of
such literature are the works of Noor (2002), Badawi and Beeckun (1999) and Altabl (1993).
However, modern research pertaining to the teachings of I-L, yet also concentrating on the
issue of leadership processes and implementations, are still considerably fewer compared
to what appear in other theories of leadership.

Leadership Religiosity and Spirituality

It is argued here that the quality of religiosity and spirituality is an emergent theme that
has separated I-L and S-L. Badawi and Beeckun (1999) discuss how, in Islam, the best and
most prominent Muslims or Muslim leaders could be produced through the understanding
of faith (Iman), the practices of Islam (Islam), piety to the faith and religion (Taqwa), and lastly the ability to be benevolent (Hasan). In Islam, a person can develop the best moral values through the practices of total religiosity based on the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). However, when it touches upon leadership, it is not only this characteristic that is important but also the persons' ability, and knowledge as well as skills to hold the responsibility and trust of becoming a leader. If the leader is not highly knowledgeable in the aspect of religious matters, the leaders must be assisted by Muslim religious experts (Thail, 1995). This is to avoid the leaders mistakenly guiding people into sinful and wrongful acts. Therefore, in this aspect, it could be understood that Islam encourages collaborative work by many people in order to achieve the best results from the perspectives of worldly and religious values.

As with I-L, the concept of S-L is also concerned with the importance of spirituality in leadership. However, there is no direct and clear indication in the literature of S-L that links the concept explicitly with the understandings of a particular religion in the way that I-L does. This argument is supported by the agreement of Spears, the President and CEO for the Greenleaf Centre for Servant Leadership. He says that the concept of S-L is not based on certain theological understandings or religion. It is based on a philosophy that upholds the importance of moral and ethical leadership (Dittmer, 2006). Therefore, there are several researchers that discuss the concept of S-L from the perspectives of religion. For example, Brown (2007) and Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) argue that the concept emerged through the understandings of love in Christianity. Some writers comment that the literature of Greenleaf is actually based on the activities of Christian religious leaders such as Jesus and Paul.

If we refer back to I-L, the understandings of religiosity and spirituality work as the basis of I-L and its processes. This means that the other two emergent themes identified in this research, which are ethical leadership and leadership context, are also included under the understandings of Islamic spirituality and religiosity. All of the I-L literature agrees that the understanding of Islam pertaining to leadership is broad and comprehensive. The elements of Islam according to Askari (2006) must cover every aspect of leadership. He gives the fair distribution of the earth’s wealth as an analogy. This might be the reason why most of the modern literature of Islam, including the literature of I-L, tends to discuss the issue broadly to cover every aspect of human life, for example in political aspects (Tzamandas, 1989; Thail, 1995), in the economy (Abbasi et al., 1989; Askari, 2006), in relation to ethics, leadership and ethics in the workplace (Abeng, 1997; Ahmad, 2004; Alalib, 1993; Badawi & Beekun, 1999; Beekun, 1996; Kasule, 1998; Noor, 2002; Quasem, 1975; Yusief, 1999), management (Abuazm, 2006), in social aspects (Abdalla, 2000; Fadil, 2007; Gorges, 2003; Quath, 2006), in education (Quasem, 1975; Shah, 2005), and many others. However, in the field of leadership research, like what has been mentioned above, it is very important for the I-L literature to try to discuss the elements of leadership processes more, rather
than to exclusively discuss the issue of leadership broadly. This is because the modern leadership literature has started to concentrate on the issue of leadership implementation which is more critical in order to guide people toward effective and flexible leadership. Islamic literature that has already engaged in this arena, for examples the writings of Badawi and Beekun (1999), Noor (2002), and Ahtahib (1993), needs to be enriched and supported by encouraging more research and analyses pertaining to Islam in the leadership and management fields.

Suggestion And Conclusion

This research studies the similarities and the differences between the concepts of Servant Leadership and Islamic Leadership based on the characteristics and values of both concepts. The analysis, which was carried out by using the nineteen clusters of I-L designed based on the works of Noor (2002) and Badawi and Beekun (1999), revealed that the ten characteristics of S-L and its values accord with the nineteen clusters of I-L except in five clusters, namely, justice and equity; profit-orientation; moderation and balance; spiritual, religious, faith in God and piety; and coerciveness under certain circumstances with limitations. The analysis also revealed that the concept of S-L is congruent with the concept of I-L in the aspect of how both of the concepts value the importance of ethical leadership. Moreover, based on the findings of this research, it is affirmed that further research needs to be carried out on both I-L and S-L. In the aspect of future research pertaining to I-L, the concept of I-L need to be supported with enough contemporary empirical data that focuses on the processes of leadership. This means that the concept of I-L, as has been discussed by Badawi and Beekun (1999) and Noor (2002), could be seen as merely a theoretical concept that needs to be explored and practised in modern organisations. This does not mean that this research questions the practicality of Islam as the background of I-L. Islam is one of the major religions of the world and holds numerous positive values that should be used by organisations and research. Further analysis based on empirical data from various organisations could reveal the theoretical discussion of I-L and it needs enough evidence to support the arguments pertaining to the positive impacts of the principles of I-L on leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, this could also enable the idea of I-L to be actively discussed in the field of contemporary leadership theory and practice, and not only in circles focusing on academic leadership theory.

The case is also the same for S-L. This research suggests that the concept of S-L needs to be brought forward as a very important concept of leadership. Further research on S-L with more empirical data should be conducted to discover whether the concept is applicable to every situation and context, for examples in different cultural and religious contexts. The importance of further research on S-L which considers more empirical data is also voiced by Washington et al. (2006). In addition, any element of S-L that can be considered as questionable, for example the definition of coercive power of S-L, should be
discussed analytically (and perhaps in light of empirical data) in further research. However, further research pertaining to the idea of S-L should not be restricted to discovering the weaknesses of the concept. The concept needs to be nourished and enriched with other positive elements, for example the positive elements that are rooted in religious practices, in order to increase its motivational strength and to grow its applicability to people of different backgrounds. The best method is to discover the weaknesses and strengths of the concept of S-L in respect of its focus and its practicality for different organisational situations. Lastly, further research on S-L could also be done to discover how the element of listening in Servant Leadership is important to leadership processes. The characteristic of a good listener as an indication of a good leader permeates the understanding of S-L. This is because the characteristic of listening is considered as the most important trait of S-L as compared to other characteristics of S-L (Dittmar, 2006; Washington et al., 2006). Therefore, this research also suggests that research that focuses on discovering the importance of listening in leadership will be very important to grow the concept of S-L further. Finally, based on the discussions and findings of this research, it is affirmed that this research has revealed the importance of leadership study to human society. This is because this study has provided a deeper understanding of the ways different concepts i.e. I-L, S-L, and G-L, can provide universal understandings that are fundamental to the ethical practice of leadership.
References

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