The Challenges in the Development of Islamic Leadership: A View on Western and Islamic Perspectives

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Abstract

Managing organization is associated with leadership as it also manages the social system in that organization and other compartments of division. Leadership alone does not assure that an organization may operate successfully unless there is smooth flow of communication. Communication is the biggest challenge in an organization because it involves going beyond mediated or un-mediated channels. The variation of authority level in management might affect the flow and the exposure of communication among members of the organization. The fear of being isolated for giving any opinion is another thing that still happens in our Islamic organization. The bonding of each member is far away from the value of ‘Ukhuwwah’ while there are in existence groups in the organization that try to differentiate each other by name calling or status and some organizations are still seeking unlawful revenues which contradict the Islamic ways of organizational leadership. These are the obstructions that might hinder the development of Islamic leadership in our country. Thus, this paper attempts to discuss the challenges in the development of Islamic leadership and to offer some resolutions that the organization might implement.

Keywords: challenges, organizational leadership, Islamic leadership

Introduction

Organizational management has always been associated with the term of leadership management and its performance of leading and managing. Organization and communication cannot be set apart because both complement each other when communication usually serves as a utilization element to promote organizational efficiency.
Galander (1999) defines organization as a social system that exists between its members that guides the flow of interaction, environment, and the relationship or division. Whereas the social system defines organization as that which holds together a number of people that share common organizational goals and work together to achieve those goals.

As mentioned here, organizational leadership does not specifically serve as the answer to increasing effectiveness of communication; however, it is best described as how a communication occurs between people or what facilitates or motivates them to communicate, basically to get the task done. Thus, the essence of good organizing and managing is via communication and openness guided with ethical values.

It is through good communication that members are able to communicate and cooperate with each other. This involves a leader giving an instruction, discussion, implementation and construct or maybe brainstorming. Communication has become a major activity in an organization whether mediated or unmediated. However, in an organization there will be some people who have power to control communication, direction and instruction flow who always think that they are always right, superior and powerful. While those who have low self-esteem will have no chance to voice their opinions, feeling threatened and scared of being isolated and just follow the orders given.

Thus, we must consider Islamic practice to define our own perspective in the organization which definitely contributes to, and determines, the meaning of success as Islamic values are based on Amanah, ‘Adil and Ukhwah.

**Organizational Leadership And Communication**

First and foremost, there are numerous reasons why organizations exist. According to Gareth R. Jones (2000), an organization can be defined as a tool which is used by people to coordinate their actions to obtain something they desire or value. To achieve organizational goals, it is necessary to define the main values that organizations are targeting, which fall into diverse categories, such as security, entertainment, religious, spiritual and emotional support and many more.

The organization is set up to satisfy people’s needs and to fulfill the task of responsibility. This refers to the organization’s agenda. Western organization has its main agenda of Capitalism and to satisfy people’s needs. However, needs are no longer needs when the intention is to satisfy what people ‘want’. People with lots of money may become superior as they invest jointly although they have no specific qualification to be part of the organization at a higher level of management. Westernized organizations will focus on three important phases:
i) Inputs
Inputs can be determined as money and capital as an organization’s main values include human resources, knowledge and raw material. It covers the way an organization chooses from its environment on the selected input it needs to produce the final product, which possibly ranges from developing websites, packaging for products, gadgets and many more.

ii) Conversion
This phase explains when one organization transforms selected inputs into outputs; it shows how much value has been created. For example, inputs in terms of money have been invested to hire a graphic designer to create, develop and monitor intended company web page. Thus it pays for the skills, energy and that person’s ability and qualification to produce the final product.

c) Outputs
Explain a level of phase where people can use and purchase either to satisfy needs or wants in term of products, goods and services and it also defines the process of value exchange.

Organizational theory outlines the study of how organizations function, and how they manage to affect and be affected by the environment in which they operate. As living in an organization it means that members live and survive in its culture, which will occur naturally or vice versa. It is actually shaped by the people inside (internal) the organization, supposedly with good ethical values.

Defining values in another way is where society or members and organizations establish a very strong affective regard for it. Values can vary in form of common goals, beliefs, ideals and purposes of the society and organizations. Values play an important role when credibility induces in inner spirit among workers and members of an organization. Islamic views of the perspective of values should be based on Ad-Deen (religion) where there are differences in what is good and what is bad in terms of ‘As-Shar and Al-Khair’ or ‘Al-Maa’rqf/Wa Al-Munkar’.

Islam does not prevent people seek for triumph, wealth and victory in organization to sustain the leadership. Seeking and implementing capitalism as the first element, without separating the good and bad elements, is however contradictory to the Islamic guidelines. A phrase states that:

“Final goals do not justify the means”
The belief and value system is actually the mirror of an organization, which then helps to develop the company perspective as members should work collectively aligning the values of Amanah, Akh and Ulboh. A Quranic verse defines:

"Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded." Surah An-Nahl, verse 90.

Nik Mustapha (2003) stated that values may influence peoples' attitude, behaviour and character. Through adopting the right values, an individual in an organization will possess dynamic attitudes which include optimism, confidence and the willingness to seek for excellence in whatever the person is doing.

Meanwhile, Organizational Structure defines the formality system of task and authority relationship that controls how members within the organization coordinate their action and use the resources to achieve their organizational goals. Therefore, organizational structure is purposely developed with its aim to control. The term control defines controlling and coordinating people or members so that they manage to achieve the organization goal.

Organizational structure somehow can be affected by the organizational environment, which is defined as a situation when an organization, and specifically its members, is facing the principal source of uncertainty. Jones (2000), defines the term 'organizational environment' as the set of forces that surround the organization and it has a potential to affect positively or negatively the way members operate the organization and it allows the accessibility to scarce resources.

Jones also defines that scarce resources can be described as the raw materials and skilled workers which the intended organization needs to produce its final product, other knowledge and information it needs to improve its knowledge on technology and even in terms of the decision making process for organizational strategy.

There are numerous factors or forces that could affect organization environment, such as political factors, technological forces, demographic and cultural forces, external forces such as suppliers and distributors and many more.

Organizational Leadership:

Analysing a Theory Of 'The Spiral Of Silence'

The emerging theory of Spiral of Silence was formulated by Elizabeth Noelle Neumann and discusses the spread and growth of public opinion as the root for this theory. Public opinion has been recognized as one of the most powerful tools and it is known as a tangible force.
that manages to keep people in line (togetherness), and it is important in organizational leadership. Noelle-Neumann, from her point of view, describes public opinion as the attitudes that one person may express without running the danger of isolating oneself. Therefore, through public opinion it might naturally set up a situation where people become abid.

In another way, Spiral of Silence can be determined as the pressure that increases and that makes people feel the need to conceal or hide their intentions to point out their views when they think or feel that they are the minority group. Also, Spiral of Silence covers the understanding of peoples’ extraordinary emotions and sensitivity to the situation that they are facing.

If we refer to Noelle-Neumann (2009), she aligned the emotion and sensitivity that a minority group might feel or experience, which correlates to the Quasi-Statistical Organ Sensing to produce the climate of opinion. The word ‘organ’ is actually referring to our body receptors, eyes for eyesight, ears for hearing, tongue to taste, the nose to smell and skin to touch.

Thus, from her point of view, she pointed out that humans are given a ‘Sixth Sense’ that could help them to align feelings and information regarding thinking, perception and emotion. In other words, people can imagine and expect the sense of what is and what will be or what is going to happen if they do this and that; the inspiration. Although some senses remain unclear to the final act they need to decide.

This topic of the theory embarks on a question of what actually drives people into the Spiral of Silence? People who fear isolation will remain silent as they try hard to control their feelings and avoid falling into a minority group and feeling pressure when they are tending towards the opposite side.

Generally, people can feel when they are set synchronized with other audiences, the public or organization members as they will not project their points of view, because they fear being isolated, which are not favoured by the opposite side. Noelle-Neumann (2009) stated that:

"Individuals who notice their own personal opinion is spreading and is taken over by others will voice this opinion self-confidence in public. On the other hand, individuals who notice that their own opinions are losing ground, will be inclined to adopt a more reserved attitude."

There are some other conditions to be considered in this theory for further research, which are not included in Noelle-Neumann’s discussion and explanation on this theory of Spiral
of Silence, apart from the main core point of people being scared of being isolated. People might also remain in that Spiral of Silence because:

a) They do not attach togetherness or dislike each other, which then leads to ignorance or not being interested.

b) People in a Spiral of Silence might not understand the point or the topic of discussion, and the opposite party might also feel the same.

c) People tend to fall into the minority group not because they are not good on the topic they discuss but because maybe they have low self-esteem or they are shy.

d) People who fall under the minority are actually dominated and manipulated by people with authority or people with influence, and they make the minority group remain silent, unspoken.

Pamela J. Shoemaker (2000), in her article, outlines the topic of ‘Fear of Isolation’, as she refers to Noelle-Neumann describing two motives why people imitate others. First, changes in public opinion are actually dependent on individual opinion changes over time. Second, individuals changing their opinion might be because that person has learned more about the subject or either she or he feels a need to express opinions consistent with other people.

Voicing opinion and uncertainty, people may use different styles of language, but Islam suggests and advises Muslims to use good words since words can physically describe individual personal character whether it is prudent and courteous or unpleasant that could affect and hurt the feelings of other people. Abu HurairahRadiyallahuAnhu Narrates, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in Hadith:

“Those who believe in Allah Hereafter, let him say good words or keep and remain in silence. Those who believe in Allah and Hereafter, Should pay respect to the neighbors and those who believe in Allah and Hereafter, should honor his guests.”
(Bukhari and Muslim).

Referring to the above Prophet (pbuh) Hadith, voicing opinion is not prohibited, but an individual should follow guidelines on (i) voicing opinion with good words and (ii) remaining silent if an individual might use harmful words, has nothing to say or as a way to show some respect to others. As Islam is a religion that stresses justice (Al-Adl) it suggests and advises its followers to do as in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh):

“QulilHaqWalaa Kana Murrun”
Meaning: “Speak the truth even though it is bitter”
Thus, the need for the right values in the organization and for its members is actually very clearly and lucidly referred to by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It is an organization's responsibility to make members adopt the right values and at the same time practise them in managing works. Inferior workers usually feel meek and small compared to those who are in high-level management. If an organization practises the term "Ushshuhasanah" (there will be small or zero difference and one should respect another without considering the title given).

"O nūfūlūn, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." Surah Al-Hujurat, verse 13.

(Figure 1: The Downward Spiral of Silence. Nuille-Neumann, 2009)

In the spiral defining the journey of individual perception either he or she tends upward, which leads that person to reveal opinions or downward to remain concealed and silent. Whereas the bullet circle ball represents people who experience and feel slight discrepancy or the differences between their position and the prevailing public opinion.
The main idea in ‘Fear of Isolation’ is that a person must need to agree with other people; to not experience being isolated from others. Noelle-Neumann (2009) defines this situation as a ‘Social Nature’, which might tend to happen naturally. Human beings experience a learning condition, which leads to imitation when that social nature causes them fear or to fear separation and isolation from their own members and the intention is to be respected and liked by them.

In the Western perspective on the Spiral of Silence, people who are not experiencing a condition of isolation fall in the majority group. Most of their opinions are well received and members can recognize that this group of people tend to speak out fearlessly and with high self-esteem, so they know they have people to support them and agree with their point of view whether it is right or wrong.

Fear of isolation can be classified as a ‘variable’ element in this field of study. The component differs as (i) the effect on opinion, and (ii) its effect on willingness to express opinion. Thus, to define the relation of those two components, it must be tested on how and whether the fear of isolation affect each other.

Pamela J. Snoeckxter (2000), in her study, found a relation between the theory of ‘Fear of Isolation’ and the Psychological aspect; Social Anxiety. Snoeckxter referred to Mindset and Kafer (1994), Fear of Isolation tends to have a connection with self-consciousness, in which people fear of being negatively evaluated by others. In this situation, Social Anxiety defines that people who have fear of isolation will try to conceal, hide and hold their negative images. It is a condition where people hold their perfection for themselves and to look good among other people.

As organizational communication usually operates in two ways, either in traditional or unmediated communication, fear of isolation is also taking place in the form of virtual technology or mediated communication in an organization. The virtual and cyber era has promoted new communication tools and settings for organizations.

Information and communication are relying heavily on technologies that have been widely used to complement and double the effectiveness of an organization in order to reach out to members, divisions, departments and organizations within, or across, the world.

When mediated communication takes place, expressing online opinions, as we can see through the organization ‘Online-Web-Evaluation’, it provides another alternative way of speaking out about individual opinion. We begin questioning whether the effect on personal opinion greatly differs between the online environment and the traditional environment. Another question arises on how an online medium such as email and instant messaging
can play its role in affecting aperson’s perception, opinion and feedback, and how it affects other groups and how it affects the theory of Spiral of Silence.

Organizational communication is relying very much on interpersonal communication to receive and deliver information between its members. However, previous studies found that computer-mediated communication provides an alternative way for interpersonal communication to take place apart from facilitating public discussion through online means.

Another point outlined by Liu and Shahira (2010), involves a theoretical approach to online opinion expression giving the example of the forum. This situation can be interpreted as a quite similar condition to the Spiral of Silence Model. A participant writes his or her point of view regarding a topic given on the forum, but that person conceals and hides his or her real identity when he or she chooses to be viewed as ‘anonymous’.

In contrast, Noelle-Neumann, from her point of view, assumes that there is some group of people that are willing to express their opposite or minority opinion and they have to pay the price of isolation. This group is known as the ‘Hard-Core’ group.

Islam does not forbid people to take public opinion into account, moreover, Islam suggests the concept of ‘Musyawarah’. Public opinion in Islam can be understood by the term of ‘Tasawwur’ or ‘Syura’ which has been explained in the Quran:

“...And those who have responded to their Lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend.” (Surah Al-Shura, Verse 38).

It is a method of taking public opinion as vital condition. Members of Musyawarah, before taking any public opinion, should consider both the majority and minority opinion without bias. It is not about the majority and minority group, but it is about the falseness and truth of information given by the group. Abu Hurairah Radyallahu Anhu narrates:

“...I have never seen someone who is consistently performed Musyawarah than Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and His Companions.”

Implementing the concept of Musyawarah in organizing as a communication tools might enhance the effectiveness of reaching company goals. Prophet Muhammad considers three important elements in the concept of Musyawarah:

a) Any public opinion should primarily refer to Quran and Hadith before human information.
b) Consideration of public opinion should refer to the truest without any bias to the majority or minority group.

c) When the decisions are accepted by most majority groups aligning with Quran and Sunnah.

(Above Figure: Proposed Reconstruct Model Spiral of Silence Adopted by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann to be used in Islamic Organizational Communication.)

To view this Western theory, The Spiral of Silence, Noelle-Neumann claimed that people fear that they will be isolated. Isolation is the condition or the bad spirit that makes people think to say or not say a certain word that he or she thinks people might hate, and separate one person. Thus, people who fear this isolation will remain silent.

Whereas in Islam, we should not make one thing to be afraid of, except fear of Allah the Almighty God. If one person fears Allah, he or she will be in a situation to think and re-think does she or he need to speak out and voice their opinion or remain in silence. Since Westerners avoid separating religion into each aspect, it is crucial for Islamic scholars to reconstruct the theory and model.
Allah says in the Quran:

"O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not do except what Allah has commanded, for it is a duty to you." - Surah Al-Imran, verse 102.

Above, Ayat, from Surah Al - Imran stresses the word of "Ihtiqallah" - Fear of Allah. It is Allah's command to Him that we should fear, not to others but Him. Effective leaders and leadership can only be seen and proved if there is a sign or effects that show the Risa of Ma'ruf (the good thing) and the decrease of Mun'kar (the bad thing).

In terms of Islamic leadership, a leader should possess the good quality referred to as Khushul Khatimah and practise the good leadership character. Leadership should also be practised based on faith (Iman) and good deeds (Amal) at the same time shaping the country in the form of righteous political and economic knowledge and others. Selflessness of one intention of interest, such as is of benefit to one political party should not be categorized as good Islamic leadership. Everyone should play their role, as the leader and the followers and to acknowledge and mend the leadership.

Conclusion

Setting goals is actually an impetus aspect of the organization and for members to be united. The organization should set the short term and long term goals based on good values and for Muslims it should be guided by Islamic ways of organizing and managing. To achieve goals and to create mutual relations with other members of the organization may take some time. As the formulation goals are the starting point and brainstorming session, which is held by the organization, it is another way to develop relationships, maintaining Ukhuwah and to generate good ideas and opinions. There is no shortcut to reaching the peak of success and members should unite together and should not hate each other and should implement openness guided by Islamic values in the development of Islamic leadership in organizations.

References

Quran