

Spirituality and Leader's Effectiveness: An Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This research is an attempt to reveal leadership concepts from the Qur'an. Despite decades of ongoing inquiry and increasing interest, research on leadership has ignored religious elements, especially from the Qur'an as a source of knowledge. Based on the characteristics of the Motaqeen according to the Qur'an, the concept of Taqwa has been operationalized as having two distinct components, that is, Spirituality and Responsibility. This study tries to examine the relationship between the first component i.e. spirituality and leader's effectiveness. A cross-sectional field study was carried out in which spirituality was a self-constructed measurement while leadership effectiveness was constructed from existing scales in the literature. Multiple regression and hierarchical regression techniques using SPSS were used to test the hypotheses utilizing sample of 206 companies. The results show that leaders' level of spirituality influences the leaders' effectiveness, where one dimension of Spirituality, that is Belief, was found to predicate business leadership effectiveness. In the light of findings of present research several recommendations are made to improve the Spirituality of leaders within the organizational culture.

Keywords: Belief, Leadership effectiveness, Motaqeen, Spirituality, Taqwa.

1. Introduction

Recently, religion has become more prominent in sharing attitudes, values and behaviors, as individuals experience a religious reawakening. Al-Qaradawi (2001) mentioned that Islamic reawakening is a real phenomenon that could be recognized through three signs. Firstly the increasing number of people who pray in the Mosque specially the young people, secondly the spread of hijab among women and thirdly is the increase of sales for religious books. Additionally, he indicated that the reason behind this phenomenon is people's desire to return to Allah by complying with the Islamic teachings. Thus, they want to learn more about the religion. People have shown their willingness to be governed by Islamic rules through voting for Islamic parties such as in Turkey and Morocco. Also this phenomenon is apparent in business environments as concepts and issues of spirituality and religiosity in the workplace are being highlighted more frequently.

Leaders as well organizations are looking for meaning and higher purpose that brought spirituality, religion and faith to the world of business (Kouzes and Posner, 2002). Kazmi (2004) observed that the management discipline is experiencing an increasing interest in spirituality and religion. Islam is a comprehensive way of life as it covers and regulates all aspects of life through a complete socio-economic system (Khraim *et al.*, 2011). This system is founded on the two main sources of its teachings, the Qur'an and the hadith (the everyday deeds and sayings of the Prophet).

According to Ushama (1998) "The Qur'an is the miraculous, inimitable, indestructible, preserved and infallible word of Allah (S.W.T), revealed to Muhammad (S.A.W), the last of the prophets and the messengers (Ushama, p.18). He mentioned that "Ulama and theologians of course, have unanimously agreed to this definition of Qur'an (p.18)". In natural science the fact that Qur'an is a source of knowledge has been established. Facts and explanations provided by the Qur'an some fourteen centuries ago have only been discovered in the modern times. Since Islam encompasses a whole way of life, the same

principle is true for the other areas such as economics and commerce. Furthermore, the Qur'an contains several verses that provide guidance and rules in business such as commercial transactions, relationship toward debtors, writing of contracts, mortgaging and trading (such as An-Nisa, 4:29 and Al-Baqarah, 2:282). Despite all valuable knowledge which exists in the Qur'an, the literature on leadership is lacking research from Islamic perspective. [Ali and Weir \(2005\)](#) noting this dearth in research from an Islamic perspective emphasized that much of the current research on the issue from an Islamic perspective is at state of immaturity. On the other hand, [Shirazi et al. \(1996\)](#) stressed that the principles of the management as espoused by the Prophet Muhammad and the methods of his leadership should not be disregarded in the course of adoption of Western principles of management and leadership. [Kazmi \(2004\)](#) echoed the same view by acknowledging the lack of research into Islamic perspectives in management study and calling for an Islamic approach to investigating management issues which could offer new perspectives.

Therefore this research attempts to dig into this problem and unearth the concepts of leadership in Qur'an and also examine the relationship between components of Taqwa and leadership from an Islamic point of view.

2. Literature Review

Islam recognizes the importance of spiritual factors such as relationship with Allah in shaping human behavior ([Ragab, 1983](#)). The isolation of spiritual values from daily affairs is not acceptable from a holistic religious approach ([Hassan, 2001](#)). From the Islamic perspective management is considered as a human activity for which Islamic principles can provide guidance, and even managing organizations is considered an act of worship ([Atari, 2000](#)). From the Islamic point of view religion is a powerful driving force behind a balanced personality and culture ([Hassan, 2001](#)). [Ibeahim \(1997\)](#) indicated that in Islamic thinking, leadership prerequisites are of two types: the materialistic, related to body and the non-materialistic, related to the spirit. The spiritual type consists of three dimensions namely Iman (Belief), Ibadat (Rituals) and Tawbah (Repentance). [Ibn Alqaem \(1999\)](#) mentioned that Taqwa of Allah brings Allah's blessing and good character brings subordinates' loyalty. There is a relationship between good character and Taqwa of Allah, in which, the higher the level of Taqwa the stronger the character ([Ibeahim, 1997](#)).

A person who has Taqwa is considered a religious person. [Khraim et al. \(2011\)](#) studied Islamic religiosity in Malaysia and found a relationship between religiosity and consumer behavior. [Dawood \(2000\)](#) found a relationship between Islamic religious behavior and stress among Muslim service-sector workers in Malaysia. Even though these two studies used concepts other than Taqwa, they are somehow covering some concepts related to Taqwa. As part of their human development efforts Syariah Mandiri Bank in Indonesia emphasize the linkage between business success and spiritual strength ([Bank Syariah Mandiri \(BSM\), 2004](#)).

[Neal and Biberman \(2004\)](#) emphasized the importance of conducting research on spirituality in organizations. [Neal and Biberman \(2004\)](#) stated that in organizational research, aspects of spirituality, such as practices and values have been noticeably absent as variables, although they may be among the most powerful variables related to effectiveness of a person, team, and organization. The integration of spirituality into the working life produces positive changes in leadership effectiveness by increasing joy, peace of mind, serenity and job satisfaction ([Fry, 2003](#)). [Fry \(2003\)](#) stated that there is an overlap between spirituality and motivation. [Tischler et al. \(2002\)](#) indicated that people with higher levels of spirituality have healthier, happier, and more productive lives at work. It has been suggested that spirituality enhances organizational performance as well ([Neck and Milliman, 1994](#)).

[Strack \(2001\)](#) empirically investigated the relationship between health care managers' spirituality and their self-perceived effective leadership practices and found a positive correlation between the two. After conducting intensive interviews with many senior executives in Silicon Valley, California, [Delbecq \(1999\)](#) stressed that spirituality does provide courage, meaning, wisdom, discipline and compassion during challenging periods. [Delbecq \(1999\)](#) and [McCormick \(1994\)](#) asserted that despite different religious and spiritual paths, managers who are committed to spirituality share similar concerns.

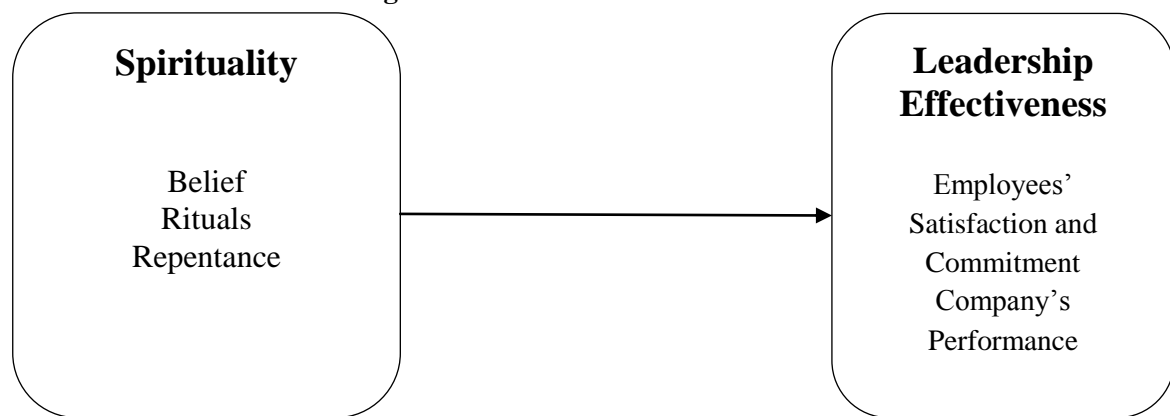
[McCormick \(1994\)](#) suggested that religion and spirituality do influence many managers' behavior at work place. [Mitroff et al. \(1999\)](#) indicated that spirituality is essential to the human experience. Because of that it should be included in the organizational culture. [Chapman \(2002\)](#) stated that personal development determines organizational development, and that complete engagement of heart, mind and soul is needed by organizations from people at all levels. [Garcia-Zamor \(2003\)](#) argued that spiritual values influence productivity.

Strack and Fottler (2002) indicated that many outstanding scholars and practitioners are convinced that the essence of effective leadership is in the spiritual dimension of the individual leader and that researchers have been studying the wrong variables. Throughout history, permanent values and beliefs of religious and spiritual traditions have been practiced. These include qualities such as honesty, truthfulness, humility, forgiveness, compassion, thankfulness, and service to others. Even though these values are attached with religious and spiritual traditions around the world, they could be acquired from sources other than spirituality. Consistency between beliefs and behavior should be established so that leadership can be effective. Butts (1999) stated that spirituality can improve personal well-being and creativity that leads to business success. Organizational theories and models would be incomplete if spirituality is not considered as one of their dimensions (Oliveira, 2002). Kouzes and Posner (2002) reported that when they asked John Robbins to give his advice on developing leaders he emphasized the important need of daily spiritual practices that are performed regularly. These practices according to him may take the form of prayer. Even though he valued giving financial support for good causes, he also stressed the importance of giving time to spiritual development. In this research, under the concept of Taqwa the traits of Motaqeen shall be investigated and their relationship with leadership effectiveness will be examined.

3. Theoretical Framework and Development of Hypotheses

In reference to the literature review, a theoretical framework has been developed to illustrate the relationships between various factors of spirituality and leadership (Figure 1). Even though several factors may influence leadership effectiveness, Taqwa and particularly spirituality has been chosen due to three reasons. The first reason is that the other factors affecting leader's effectiveness have been much studied before and similar results are expected to be achieved. The second reason is that Taqwa is what distinguishes the Qur'anic leadership from the other leadership concepts. The third reason is the lack of empirical studies about the relationship between leadership and spirituality particularly from an Islamic perspective.

Figure-1. Research Theoretical Framework



Based on this theoretical rationale the following hypotheses are developed:

- H1*: The higher the level of spirituality the greater is the leader's effectiveness
- H2*: The stronger the belief in Allah (Iman), the greater is the leader's effectiveness
- H3*: The more Rituals (Ibadat) performed by the leader the greater is the leader's effectiveness
- H4*: The more Repentance by the leader the greater is the leader's effectiveness

4. Research Methodology

The research method employed in the present study is the survey method which focuses on surveys that are conducted to advance scientific knowledge. This method is in line with the objective of the research, which is aimed at explaining, hypothesizing and testing the relationship among the research constructs. This research tries to establish and verify hypothesized relationships between a leader's level of spirituality and business leadership effectiveness in a managerial context. Therefore, the business unit leader is the unit of analysis for this research. This study first determined the dimensions of spirituality

based on the Qur'an and then developed the measurements of Taqwa manifestations. Then, cross-sectional method was used which required data to be collected from a population sample.

4.1. Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population of this study is all companies listed in the Chamber of Commerce in the capital of Yemen, Sana'a, and Taiz. This list is considered as the most appropriate source, since the Chamber of Commerce is the only official body that represents business in the country. According to Hair et al. guidelines the sample size of this study is 135 companies (Hair et al., 2006).

Due to unavailability of complete addresses of the companies, non-probability sampling method was used in order for the data collection. Therefore, considering the address clarity, easiness and the availability of contact persons, companies with clear and known addresses and valid telephone numbers were contacted either through phone or personal visit to request for participation. The total number of companies which agreed to participate was 380, thus questionnaires were distributed among them. Out of these 380 companies, only 278 of them participated in the survey which implies 73 percent rate of response.

4.2. Questionnaire Design

Due to the fact that most of the available instruments to measure spirituality are tailored for Christian surveys and Islamic instruments are very limited. The questionnaire used in this study is partly adopted from a measurement called Islamic Religious Behavior Questionnaire (IRBQ) developed by Dawood (2000). To better fit into the context of this study, some parts of this questionnaire were adjusted. The modified questionnaire consists of 28 questions to measure spirituality. A five point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always) was employed. This questionnaire was distributed among the leaders of the targeted companies.

4.3. Measurement of Leadership Effectiveness

As discussed in the previous chapter leadership effectiveness is conceptualized to relate to employees' satisfaction and commitment and company's Performance. Since Beh (2003) used the same concept, the Business Leadership Effectiveness measurement was adopted and adapted from Beh (2003). The questionnaire was constructed based on key indicators of leadership effectiveness as discussed in Yukl et al. (2002). The parameters considered are achieving the organizational goals, organizational commitment, cooperation, members' growth and job satisfaction. These parameters were grouped into two dimensions, namely Employees' Satisfaction and Commitment and Company Performance. The questionnaire, composed of thirteen items with a five point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaires were distributed among the leader's direct subordinates, to evaluate their effectiveness. The Cronbach's alpha values for Beh's study were 0.82 and .84 respectively. There are two reasons for choosing this instrument. The first reason is that it measures the end-results of the leader's efforts rather than their attitude or behavior. The second reason is the instrument's simple design, which makes it easy to be administered to individuals.

4.4. Cronbach's Alpha

The most widely used index of reliability and internal consistency is the Cronbach's alpha (Salkind, 2010). Internal consistency is the extent to which individual items correlate with one another or with the test total (Brown et al., 2011). The alpha coefficients for each subscale are shown in Table 1.

Table-1. Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	Number of Items	Alpha Cronbach's
Belief	11	.62
Rituals	12	.60
Repentance	5	.77
Total	28	.65

As shown in the above table all Alpha values are above .60 which is the acceptable lower limit, therefore all of the items are retained.

5. Data Analysis and Results

The selection of appropriate method of analysis is determined by the hypotheses and characteristics of the data. The present study intends to examine the relationship between spirituality and leadership effectiveness from a Qur'anic perspective. This type of analysis requires appropriate statistical tools. With the advent of versatile and powerful computer software programs performing such analyses has been reasonably convenient for many researchers. To test the research hypotheses of this study, a multivariate analysis will be utilized.

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

Adopting the views of treating the Likert scale as interval scale (Salkind, 2010), this study uses the mean to assess the central tendency, while the dispersion is assessed by the standard deviation. Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics of respondents' ratings on spirituality and leadership effectiveness.

Table-2. Descriptive statistics for research variables

Variable	Mean	STD
Belief	4.66	.46
Rituals	3.38	.86
Repentance	3.76	.86
Leadership effectiveness	3.80	.54

All variables were measured on a five point scale; the mean scores of all variables were between 4.66 and 3.38. The range of standard deviation is moderately low .46 - .86. Belief has the highest mean score 4.66 with the lowest standard deviation .46 which indicates that Yemeni business leaders consider themselves as strong believers. The other two variables of Spirituality have moderately high means 3.38 and 3.76 which points out that Yemeni business leaders view themselves as spiritual Muslim managers.

5.2. Correlation Analysis

To complement the shortcomings of the coefficient alpha, correlation analysis is used to further examine the internal consistency of the research instrument. Table 3 shows the correlation results for research variables.

Table-3. Variables' bivariate correlation

Variable	BE	RI	RE	EF
Belief	1.00			
Rituals	0.37**	1.00		
Repentance	0.28**	0.38**	1.00	
Leadership effectiveness	0.24**	0.25**	0.13	1.00

**significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

From table 3 all Spirituality dimensions were found to be positively correlated with Business Leadership Effectiveness, two of which are significantly correlated with EF namely Belief and Rituals with correlation coefficients of, $r = 0.24$ and 0.25 ($p < .01$) respectively.

5.3. Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was conducted to summarize correlation patterns among the variables hence; a smaller number of items could represent the variables (Hair *et al.*, 2006). A principal components analysis with varimax rotation was used to examine the factor structure of all variables. Since the sample size is 206 and in accordance with Hair *et al.* (2006) each item should load .50 or greater on one factor and .39 or less on the other factors. The results of factor analysis are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 shows the factor analysis results after omitting the items that have cross loading or low loading (less than .5). After the deletion, KMO value is 0.82 and three factors emerged with eigenvalue greater than 1.0, explaining 57.75% of the variance with all items loaded in the range of 0.77 to 0.64. All items included in the extracted factors were derived from the same theorized dimensions, thus they would be awarded the same names i.e. Rituals, Belief and Repentance respectively.

Table-4. Factor analysis results for spirituality

Items	Factors		
	1	2	3
I stop my work or meeting when I hear the call for prayer	.78		
I encourage my subordinates to pray together at work	.73		
I encourage my subordinates to fast and break fasting together	.71		
I practice voluntary fasting	.69		
I do my best to perform all five prayer regardless how much busy I am	.66		
I depend on Allah's help to carry out my duties at work		.76	
I direct my dedication to Allah alone		.76	
I do my duties in the best way I could and I leave the outcomes to be determined by Allah		.74	
I supplicate to Allah whenever I face difficulty in my work		.67	
I observe Allah's orders in dealing with my subordinate		.64	
I do apologize for my mistakes when I realize them at work			.79
I ask forgiveness from subordinates if I have wronged			.78
I seek feedback to evaluate my behavior from my subordinate			.72
Eigenvalue	2.75	2.70	2.05
% of Variance	21.2	20.8	15.8
KMO MSA	.82		

5.4. Hypotheses Testing and Results

The first hypothesis stated that leader's level of Spirituality relates positively and significantly to the leader's effectiveness. Therefore, multiple regressions were conducted to examine the relationships between the Spirituality dimensions; Belief, Rituals and Repentance and Business Leadership Effectiveness. Table 5 summarizes the results.

Table-5. Result of multiple regression

Variable	Standardized β	t-value	p-value
Belief	.11	2.069	.04
Rituals	.04	0.749	.46
Repentance	-.04	-0.810	.42
F-value	20.71		
R^2	0.56		
Adjusted R^2	0.54		

The overall model estimation which represent the leader's level of spirituality accounted for 54% of the variance in Business Leadership Effectiveness ($R^2 = .54$, $p < .05$) therefore $H1$ is accepted implying that overall spirituality is significantly related to leadership effectiveness. The use of Adj. R^2 is based on the fact that it accounts for the number of independent variables and sample size (Hair *et al.*, 2006). Therefore, it provides a more realistic description of the relationships as it corrects possible overestimation.

Only the leader's Belief was found to be positively and significantly related to Business Leadership Effectiveness. Therefore, hypothesis $H2$ is accepted ($\beta = .11$, $p < .05$). This indicates that the higher the Iman of the leader, the greater the Business leadership Effectiveness.

Rituals were found to be positively but not significantly predicting Business Leadership Effectiveness ($\beta = .04$, $p > .05$), therefore hypothesis $H3$ is rejected. The third dimension is Repentance. Repentance was found to be negatively and non-significantly related to Business Leadership Effectiveness ($\beta = -.04$, $p > .05$). Therefore, hypothesis $H4$ is rejected.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This study was carried out to reveal the concepts of leadership as ordained in the Qur'an. It aimed at empirically exploring the relationship between Spirituality and Business Leadership Effectiveness. The findings of this study revealed that Spirituality is a construct with three distinct dimensions, namely, Belief, Rituals and Repentance. The hypotheses were developed in this study to examine relationships

between leadership effectiveness and spirituality and its dimensions. Firstly factor analysis were conducted to measure the construct validity, then in order to test the hypotheses multiple regression analysis were carried out.

The regression analysis results indicate that spirituality was significantly related to Business Leadership Effectiveness. This positive relationship between Spirituality and Business Leadership Effectiveness has been highlighted by Ibeahim (1997), Delbecq (1999), McCormick (1994), Strack (2001), Fry (2003), Garcia-Zamor (2003) and Strack and Fottler (2002).

The leader's Belief was found to be positively and significantly related to Business Leadership Effectiveness. This is consistent with the findings of several researchers such as Ibeahim (1997), Swaidan and Basharhabil (2003), Abu-Alainain (1984) and Ali and Weir (2005).

It has been argued that Belief provides leaders with an advantage to lead effectively as it provides superior values (Ibeahim, 1997) and serves to function as harness for wrongdoings (Al-Ghazali, 2004). In other words, Belief directs the believer towards right behavior and decisions. In the case of business, it guides him to treat subordinates in an appropriate manner, which would help to enhance their satisfaction and commitment.

The relationship between Rituals (prayers, fasting, Zakat and haj) with Business Leadership Effectiveness was positive but non-significant. The insignificant effects of Rituals on Leadership Effectiveness may be explained as indicated by Al-Qurtob in his interpretation of Qur'an (Al-Ankabut: 45). He explained that some people may perform all Rituals but do not enjoy the benefits of these Rituals as their hearts are not present during these Rituals. That means unless business leaders are able to engage their minds and hearts in their prayers, these Rituals will have no effects on their performance.

Repentance was found to have a negative and non-significant relationship with Leadership Effectiveness rejecting the hypothesis. One of the acknowledged conditions of acceptable Repentance is sincerity in not repeating misbehavior as Allah only rewards those who are sincere with His blessings and Barakah. So, lacking sincerity from the leader when he repents could be a reason for the insignificant effects of Repentance Business leadership Effectiveness.

7. Contribution and Recommendations

The results of this study indicate that the leader's level of Iman affects his leadership effectiveness. Iman implies full obedience of Allah's orders at the mosque and work. This study presents a framework that integrates Iman and business leadership in a single model. It proposes that leaders could be elective (achieving growth and making profit) while following Allah's orders. In other words, a match between the leaders' practices and internal values, such that no conflict exist between the day-to-day practices and decisions in the work place and behavior commended by the leaders' belief creates internal harmony. Having this harmony is an advantage for reaching stability, clarity and satisfaction in the leaders emotions and thinking. These imply that business organizations should respect employees' beliefs and spiritual practices and provide them the time and space to nurture their beliefs. Business organizations could also give periodic incentives in the form of paid umrah and haj trips for Muslim employees. Business organizations should utilize the chances of spiritual events and occasions such as lectures and seminars in the month of Ramadan to strengthen leaders' and employees beliefs.

8. Limitations of the Study

The first limitation is related to the language in the study the questionnaires were developed in English and applied in Arabic. Although translation was done by official translator, it does not guarantee the accuracy of transferring the original meaning. The second limitation is related to the geographical limitation. The survey was only applied into two cities in Yemen. Conducting similar studies in different Islamic countries might yield better understanding of the variables studied and more generalization might be cached especially if the results were compared across these countries.

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