



Leader-Member Exchange and Transformational Leadership through an Islamic Lens: Insights, Implications, and Theoretical Exploration

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ARTICLE INFO			ABSTRACT
Article History:			<i>The purpose of this study is to look at the insights of leader-member exchange (LMX), transformational leadership and to understand the Leadership style in Islamic perspective in context of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Primarily, it is considered that leadership is constitutively linked with followership and vice versa. Further, the magnitude of mutually intermingled leadership/followership can be understood and discussed as an emerging event embedded with interrelated nexus, which is based on an integral orientation. It is an attempt to find out the prominent features of Leader-follower relationship in Islamic perspective. This inquisition throws light on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a model leader and on his believers as followers. This study is hermeneutics based. The basic sources of Islamic knowledge alongwith other available literature is explored to uncover the Islamic perspectives of the theories and concepts of leadership style.</i>
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Introduction

It is mandatory for organizations to learn and adapt the changes of the environment for their survival and growth. Such adaptation of the change is necessary for existence and development of any organizations in the cutting edge and dynamic competition. It is, therefore, observed that being open system, organizations are faced multiple external factors. If organizations keep ignoring these critical factors, it may cause irrecoverable, irreversible, and adverse impact on the growth and success. This alarming stage demands a pivotal role within the organization that may lead it through the turbulent waters of market rivalry. Such role is known as leader of the organization. It

is the basic reason that theorists and scholars have paid a great emphasis on leadership irrespective of secular or religious literature.

The scholars, authors, strategists, and researchers have always been deliberated and debated on leadership for a long time. It is an observable fact that various scholars have extensively discussed this topic in different eras as per requirements and interests in manifold frame of references but it is still in its formative years. In order to save today's world from wreckage and destruction, a cyclopedic model of leadership is necessitated which may device modes to tackle today's problems. The world population has been contributed by the Muslims population 2.2 billion (TIME-NEWSFEED, 2011) which is growing swiftly (NEW-YORK-TIMES, 1989). It is imperative to research the Islamic perspective of leadership in order to discover that how Islamic culture, knowledge, and civilization led the world for about one thousand years and its input into the existing body of knowledge. Wallace-Murphy (2006) evidently states, "Even the brief study of history recovers that European culture owes an immense and immeasurable debt to the world of Islam." We find that most of the modern knowledge and science of the west has been transmitted from Islamic civilization via Muslim Spain (Aadil, 1997). In this way, it is asserted that the study of Islamic leadership style, especially the Prophet of Islam PBUH will definitely help the modern day leadership scholars in viewing the leadership in a new dimension (Lings, 1983).

Review of Related Literature

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory focuses on the exchange process between the leader and each follower, where high-quality exchanges increase trust, mutual respect, and commitment (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Those leaders who maintain strong LMX relationships with their subordinates are more likely to improve organizational productivity and employee involvement (Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). On the other hand, transformational leadership is described as a type of leadership that motivates and inspires followers to perform beyond their expectations through fostering a shared vision, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). Some researchers found that transformational leaders are more likely to establish high LMX relationships, thereby enhancing cohesion and creativity levels within the organization (Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005).

Islamic View of Requisites of Leadership: Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions

The integration of Islamic leadership principles takes a dominant position over ethics and motivational elements of transformational leadership (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). In Islamic faith, leadership as a concept refers to a trust (amanah) which possesses its own justice ('adl), consultation (shura), and activity of bearing responsibility to followers (Ali, 2009). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is cited as an exemplary servant leader and transformational leader as he showed great moral commitment, empathy, and community service (Khan, Farooq, & Hussain, 2010). Tawhid (the oneness of God), Ihsan (goodness), and Taqwa (consciousness of God) are Islam's primary principles which guide the ethical practice of leadership (Kriger & Seng, 2005).

Both LMX and transformational leadership theories are received well under Islam because they encourage positive working relationships between superiors and subordinates. Studies indicate that Islamic work ethics increase the quality of LMX because of justice, sincerity, and respect (Yousef, 2001). Some traits of transformational leadership, like idealized influence and individualized consideration, correspond with mentoring and ethical stewardship in Islam (Abbasi, Rehman, & Bibi, 2010). It has been argued that in Islamically integrated organizations, there is more emphasis on ihsan (excellence in character and in work) by the leaders, which improves LMX relationships and makes transformational leaders more influential (Ali, 2015).

There is a growing body of research evidence that support the principles of Islamic leadership for further workplace commitment, satisfaction, and ethical behavior A. Rehman and Jamal, 2018. Islamic styles of leadership are believed to provide moral guidance while promoting high performance. Research conducted in the Muslim countries suggest a more positive use of transformational leadership for motivation and ethical behavior among employees (Shahzad, Bhatti & Khalid, 2020). The implementation of Islamic ethos in context of LMX is vital for the positive development of leadership skills in organizations and institutions with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Features of Transformational Leadership

It is the fundamental nature of leadership to achieve the love and trust of its followers. A Leader deals with political, economic and social affairs of the society as a whole, solving its practical or public problems, related to individual and private life (Bass, 1985). He solves these problems by observing rules and laws opting for sanctions or punishment in a way that his decisions would not be refused to comply with. He transforms the society into harmonious community of peace, contentment, awareness, and good morals. The Republic (Plato) and Utopia (Thomas More) has introduced the conception of an ideal society as a product of transformational leadership. The capabilities of performance can be improved to the high level of maturity by transfiguring follower's values, attitudes, and motives (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership positively correlates to the efforts which followers are eagerly ready to put forth, ranking of job performance, and perceived efficacy of leader (Bass, 1998). Gerstner and Day (1997) argue that transformational leadership appears to be conceptually similar to the process of developing an exceptional exchange of relationship, which is pivotal to Leader-Member Exchange. LMX is, indeed, associated with transformational leadership (Deluga, 1992). Burns (1978) enumerates transformational leadership to be a relationship wherein leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation.

According to Burns (1978: p. 4), "the result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" leaving a transforming effect on leaders and followers. Transformational Leadership has uplifted the level of behavior of leader and follower. According to Bass (1985), a transformational leader always motivates his followers to do more than that is expected to them. Transformational leaders extend and modify the interests of their followers and disseminate awareness regarding acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group. They preach the lesson of selflessness to their followers. Palmer, Walls, Burgess, and Stough (2001) are of the view that transformational leadership owns the ability to control and keep an eye on the emotions in one self and others. There are four factors are involved in the formation of Transformational leadership that are (i)charismatic leadership (ii) inspirational leadership (iii) intellectual stimulation (iv) individualized consideration. Usually, followers feel proud to be allied with their charismatic leaders and blindly trust on their competence to overcome any hindrance. Inspirational leadership and Intellectual stimulation involve the encouragement and heightening of motivation among followers and make them conscious of their problems to solve them in a better and productive way. It not only revolutionizes their imagination but also generates novel thoughts and insights. It aims at giving individualized and personal attention to followers, which seem neglected in most of the cases, dealing with the provision of their peculiar interests as they wish (Bass, 1998). Boehnke *et al.* (2003) supports the notion that the main dimensions of leadership for extraordinary performance are universal.

Bass (1985) considers that a transformational leader owns an ability to convince his followers to perform more than they are expected to do. However, Transformational leaders widen the scope and

change the interests of their followers in order to make them realize the purpose and acceptance of their goal. It is a process of influencing individual and group activities towards goal achievement. He has to ensure balance between the goals of organization, himself, and group. A successful leader is one who succeeds in getting others to follow. It consists on the act to discover those individuals who possess this priceless gift of being able to inspire and lead others for the attainment of their objectives and mission. Leader's vision and holding on certain essential values/ principles implementation through task cues affects performance and attitudes of subordinates (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996). Shamir *et al.* (1998) found that subordinate's level of identification is subjected to a leader's collective identity. Cremer and Knippenberg (2002) emphasized on the interactive effect of leader charisma and procedural equality in teamwork was followed by its interactive effect on the sense of belongingness in a group. Transformational leadership could be potentially effective across the board in every situation, though certain relative factors like structure of the organization could possibly smoothen and facilitate the emergence and impact of transformational leadership (Shamir and Howell, 1999).

Leader-Member Exchange's Features

LMX conceptually appears as social exchange process, assuming a transactional leadership model, but it is not usually measured in this way. It is oriented toward transformational leadership. This theory is worth mentioning, because it directs our attention to the importance of communication in leadership. LMX measures mutual respect trust, and the overall quality of the working relationship. It is an emerging view that LMX may be transformational, at times and under certain conditions (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Schriesheim *et al.* 1999).

The LMX theory describes that how leaders in groups maintain their position through a series of tacit exchange agreements with their members. It conceptualizes leadership as a process of interaction between leader and follower that centers on the dyadic exchange relationships between both. It contends that outcome of a leadership is dependent upon how much of interaction exists between the leader and the members. LMX theory is originally referred to as Vertical Dyad Linkage (VDL) theory (Dansereau *et al.* 1975). According to VDL approach, leaders and followers develop dyadic relationships and leaders treat individual followers differently. It is assumed that different relationships between the leader and every single follower develop. It resulted in two groups of followers—an in-group and an out-group. The members who go beyond their expected roles and have a constructive approach to the tasks receive special attention from the leaders. Leaders identify them as subordinates that are proactively seeking help the leadership roles. The in-group is identified as high quality of LMX with positive outcomes. Members negotiate and initiate their role expansion beyond their job description. The out-group includes the members who only try to work enough to fulfill their contractual obligations. The interaction of the leader remains more formal more like scripted gestures and task oriented with them. These varying social exchange relationships are reasonably lasting; they flourish due to the leader's limited time and energy and there is little reciprocity (Gerstner & Day, 1997). The quality of leader-member exchange is based on the degree of emotional support and exchange of valued resources. It has been found to be positively related to follower's satisfaction, organizational commitment, role clarity, performance ratings given by leaders, and objective performance, which is negatively related to role conflict and turnover intentions (Bauer & Green, 1996; Deluga, 1998; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Schriesheim *et al.* 1999). LMX focused on leaders and members perceptions of negotiations autonomy. Overall, High-quality exchanges bring positive organizational outcomes such as innovation, empowerment, positive job climate, and organizational citizenship behavior. Therefore, a leader should look for ways to build trust and respect with all of their subordinates. When the relationships between leaders and subordinates are all high quality, "the goals of the leader, the followers, and the

organization are all advanced in a positive manner, including performance and affective outcomes” (Gerstner & Day, 1997). The leader-follower dyad relationship may be termed as a life-cycle model with three possible stages (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991). The relationship begins with an initial testing phase and remains at the out-group level if it does not proceed to the next stage. If the relationship proceeds to the second stage and mutual trust, loyalty, and respect are developed. Some relationships proceed to a third stage wherein self-interest gives way to mutual commitment to the mission. As per Graen and Uhl-Bien (1991), this final stage corresponds to transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers through a variety of mechanisms. These include connecting the follower's sense of identity and self to the mission and the collective identity of the organization. Therefore, the leader can align followers with tasks that optimize their performance. Krishnan (2004) is of the view that LMX and transformational leadership were positively related to each other. Dasborough and Ashkanas (2002) debated that if peculiar interactions within the leader-member relationship have resulted in the liking of member for the leader, then members are more likely to consider the leader as truly transformational.

Prominent Characteristics of Followers and Impact of Leader Vision and his Character on Followers

From close examination of various researches, it is evident that the vision held by the leader and his leadership styles both concepts have been studied independently. As the followers are unique individuals, the leader must adapt according to them in order to be an effective leader. Leaders must have the capacity to improvise, to adapt to unfamiliar situations and changing circumstances. Followers have a strong identification with leaders who are transformational, which enforce them to put an extra effort for the sake of such leaders. Several studies have shown that the Impact of transformational leadership on follower's effort and performance would be improved if followers own personal values, compatible with their leaders' (Klein & House, 1995). Leader's vision is especially influential when it is harmonizing with follower's personal values (Shamir, 1995). Jung and Avolio (2000) observed that transformational leadership had an indirect effect on performance through value equivalence between leader and follower. Posner (1992) found that perceived value congruence was directly linked to positive work attitudes. Value congruence indicates a harmonious relationship between leader and subordinate which not only satisfactory but also lasted longer the relationship between the both. Jung and Avolio (2000) found that value congruence between leader and follower was positively related to follower satisfaction. The distinguishing feature of transformational leaders is that they are credible and respected by their followers. Dvir *et al.* (2002) bring into light that transformational leadership enhanced direct followers' development and indirect followers' performance. The visionary leadership appears as the ability to express the visions not just verbally but through behavior extend or apply the vision to different leadership contexts. The transformational leaders idealized vision and its potential for satisfying followers' needs make the leader likable. The personalized relationship between transformational leader and followers creates an environment in which the followers feel happy to work with the leader who seeks suggestions and advices weighing the pros and cons. The transformational leader is an ideal or a role model for the follower, and hence the follower is likely to be influenced by such a leader.

Islamic Literature With Reference to Prophet (PBUH) and His Companions Reflecting Leader-Follower Relationship

The Islamic history guides us to look deep into factual picture of true leadership and sincere

followership in the form of Prophet (PBUH) and his companions. There are numerous examples of Muhammad's (PBUH) transformational leadership and true followership of his devoted companions in a way of illustrations and for the support of constructing and forming the ground arguments. Few examples are given below:

1. It would be a best example of transformational leadership that after the victory of Badr against the Makkan polytheists, the Muslims met them again, this time, at the foot of Mount Uhud. A reverse due to some neglect on the part of the archers unfortunately followed the easy victory won by the Muslims at the beginning of the battle. Seventy Muslims were martyred and the Messenger himself was wounded. The Muslim army took shelter on the mountain and was prepared to counter any further attack by the enemy. However, lacking enough courage for further attack, the enemy forces left the battlefield for Makkah. Nevertheless, they changed their mind half-away and again decided to march upon Madina. Right after this decision, God's Messenger (PBUH) gave the order to reassemble and mobilize. His (PBUH) single order sufficed the Companions to collect them, even though they were ill or wounded. His (PBUH) every call was a breath of life for their souls, a breath that could revive old, rotten bones. (*Bukhari, "Maghazi," 25; I. Sa'd, 2.42-9; I. Hisham, 3.99-111, 128*)

One can very easily infer from the above exemplary example of transformational leadership of Prophet (PBUH) and unique way of following the instruction of transformational leader under all pressure of circumstances by the devoted and sincere followers.

Counsel or consultation is very important in Islam that God's Messenger (PBUH) did not take a decision, especially regarding public affairs, without consultation. He (PBUH) sometimes held counsel even for his personal affairs.

2. During the campaign against the Banu Mustaliq, 'A'isha (may God be pleased with her), the Prophet's wife, was accompanying the Prophet (PBUH), riding in a litter. At one halt, she lost her necklace and set off alone to find it only to return and discover that the army had left without her, the camel drivers thinking that she was in her oblivion. Ultimately, Safwan has found her, who was assigned the duty to collect whatever was lost or left behind caravans. The hypocrites brought into the air her scandal and 'A'isha's fidelity was questioned.

God's Messenger (PBUH) was sure of the fidelity of his wife. However, since hypocrites made this into a pretext to defame God's Messenger (PBUH), so he consulted with some of his Companions like 'Umar and 'Ali (R.A). 'Umar said that 'A'isha was undoubtedly chaste and pure, and that she had been slandered. When asked how he knew, Umar (RA) answered that:

"O God's Messenger! You were once praying. You stopped and explained that the Archangel Gabriel had come and informed you that there was some dirt in your slippers. If there were some impurity in 'A'isha, your wife, God would certainly have informed you of it." (*Halabi, Insan al-Uyun, 2.613*)

God's Messenger (PBUH) used to quote that whoever takes advocacy in resolving his issues, shall never be regretted in the life (Maythami, *Majma'al-Zawa'id*, 2.280). So never, overlook to take counsel from those who could better advice on a particular matter.

3. The Battle of Badr was the first major encounter between the Muslims and the Makkan polytheists after the Emigration. He (PBUH) consulted his companions whether Muslims should

wage a war against the Makkan army or not which was approaching. The Muslim army numbered 305 or 313, while the Makkans numbered around one thousand.

Miqdad ibn ‘Amr stood up on behalf of the Emigrants and said: “Spur your horse forward even to Bark al- Ghimad; we will follow you, with no one left behind.” When the Messenger (PBUH) turned to the Helpers in order to learn their views, Sa’d ibn Mu’adh stood up and said:

“O God’s Messenger! I think you are waiting for our opinion. This is our opinion: Here we are, at your command, with our souls and possessions. Take from our goods whatever amount you wish; as many people as you desire are ready to sacrifice themselves in your way!” (*I. Sa’d, Tabaqat, 3.162; Muslim, “Jihad,” 83 ; I. Hisham, 2.266-7*)

All of his (PBUH) Companions, whether Emigrants or Helpers, promised to follow him at every step, he took, and to carry out all of his orders. Despite this, God’s Messenger (PBUH) consulted with them almost on every matter concerning the community as a whole, so that, it should be adopted or appropriated by everyone as a Sunna.

4. Again, in the Battle of Badr, the Muslim army was positioned somewhere on the battlefield. Hubab ibn Mundhir, who was not a leading personality among the Companions, stood up and gave this opinion:

“O God’s Messenger! If you were not ordered by God to be positioned here, let us be positioned around the wells and close up all but one of them in order to prevent the supply of water to the enemy. You set up your camp at the side of that one well (from which we will take water), and we will encircle you”. The Messenger (PBUH) adopted this view. (*I. Hisham, 2.272*)

5. In the fifth year of Hijra, the Quraysh made an alliance with certain desert tribes and Jews of the Banu Nadir, who had emigrated from Madina to Khyber. However, the Prophet (PBUH), forewarned of their plans, consulted with his Companions about what to do in order to defeat the enemy. Salman al-Farisi gave him the idea that they should dig a defensive trench around Madina, a stratagem hitherto completely unknown among the Arabs.

God’s Messenger (PBUH) adopted the idea and ordered the digging of the trench. This war was therefore called, after the trench, the Battle of the Trench or Ditch. (*I. Hisham, 3.235; I. Sa’d, 2.66*)

6. The Muslims found the terms of the Treaty of Hudaibiya unpalatable, and showed some reluctance to perform the Prophet’s order to sacrifice the animals they had brought to sacrifice in Makkah during the rites, which the Treaty prevented them from observing. God’s Messenger (PBUH) consulted with his wife Umm Salama about how to respond. She gave this opinion:

“O God’s Messenger! Do not repeat your order lest they should disobey you and perish. Sacrifice your own animals and take off your pilgrim dress (ihram). When they understand the order is decisive, they will perform it unhesitatingly”. God’s Messenger (PBUH) acted according to the counsel of his wife. (*Bukhari, “Shurut,” 15.*)

Prophet (PBUH) was a man of action and never hung back in putting his plans or decisions into action. Any hesitation in the leader causes his followers to falter. Muhammad (PBUH) always acted with deliberation, never neglected to consult, but once he (PBUH) had come to a decision or planned something, he did not show any hesitation in carrying it out.

Prophet (PBUH) repented neither of what he had, or had not done, nor regretted on any lost of opportunity for doing something. Before starting something, he used to take all the necessary precautions, consider all the probabilities, and take counsel with those who could give expert advice on the matter, and once he made up his mind, he never faltered in carrying out his decision. This is one of the important and logical reasons why he carried all his attempts to victory and why his Companions followed him at every step, he took.

The greatness of a man does not consist in the working of miracles or the doing of wonders; does it lie neither in the preaching of sermons or the formulating of theories. These are but passing phenomena. The greatness of a man lies in the possession of a mighty personality. "Personality is one of the indescribable wonders of the world, and ... personalities can and do the marvels of the world." It is of ceaseless value for those who are immediately around it, and for those who come after. It conciliates opposition and inspires respect and imitation, which results in the long run, in implicit obedience. It inspires others with its own spirit and dyes them in its own color. It changes ideas and revolutionizes the thoughts, the habits, and the customs of contemporaries. It creates a new basis of the beliefs and actions of generation after generation of the races of humanity. In a word, it creates a new heaven and a new earth. Muhammad (PBUH) is the ideal personality, who in his own lifetime moulds the character of his fellow men, reforms them, changes their thoughts, puts new ideals before them, and elevates them to a higher plane. Muhammad (PBUH) was such a unique and charismatic personality. There have been other personalities in the world. We may clothe them with attributes they never possessed; we may attribute to them virtues and ethics that they never owned or taught.

Conclusion

To the magnum opus, the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) possessed not only transformational leadership values but also possessed extraordinary values that made him a unique and novel leader in the history of humankind. The transformational leadership values Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) exemplified liberty, justice, equality, and collective well-being. His public communication and dealing also demonstrated the values he approved. He (PBUH) preached of family values that include affection and kindness for children, children honoring their parents, the importance of educating the children, financial security for wives after the husband's death, husbands treating their wives with kindness and gentleness, respecting even foster parents, brothers, and sisters, and the importance of loving and honoring relatives. The focus of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) speeches was also on character values, which include gentleness, humility, kindness, moderation, modesty, politeness, and truthfulness. His public communication included the admonition of community values that included charity, forgiveness, hospitality, and mercy. His life from cradle to grave was recorded, documented stored and practically put into practice for all those who come after him as example for the whole humanity making him the Universal Prophet (PBUH) for mankind. His way of life was fully documented for our guidance.

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