Matching leadership qualities of male and female leaders from the Qur'ānic perspective: An exegetical analysis

Huda Hilal*

Abstract: The topic of female leadership has yet to be conclusively and impartially investigated, especially from the Islamic perspective. The current study bridges the gap between the original Qur'ānic teachings and dominant Muslim culture by highlighting the Qur'ānic conceptualisation of female leadership and investigates the myth that only men are the best leaders. It identifies female leadership qualities of Queen Āsiyah, Queen Balqīs and Maryam, the daughter of 'Imrān and mother of Prophet 'Īsā, and matches them with male leadership qualities of Prophet Muhammad, Dhū al-Qarnayn, Ṭālūt, and Prophet Sulaymān as narrated in the Qur'ān. The research documents the traits of a leader's personality, leader-follower relation, task structure, and crisis management as four principal axes to the study, relying on the dominant theories of leadership. The inference reveals conformity between both male and female patterns of leadership, except for minor differences related to physical strength, and war conducts.

Keywords: Female leadership; leader-follower relation; male leadership, Queen Balqīs; Qur'ān exegesis.

Abstrak: Topik mengenai kepimpinan wanita masih belum menjadi muktamad dan saksama, terutamanya dari perspektif Islam. Kajian ini menghubungkan jurang antara pengajaran asal Al Qur'ān dan budaya dominan Muslim dengan menitikberatkan konseptualisasi kepimpinan wanita. Kajian ini juga mengkaji metos bahawa hanya lelaki yang terbaik sebagai pemimpin.

* Huda Hilal is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Fundamental and Interdisciplinary Studies, Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Malaysia. Email: drhuda@iium.edu.my.

Kajian ini mengenalpasti ciri-ciri kepimpinan wanita berdasarkan kualiti Permaisuri Āsiyah, Permaisuri Balqīs dan Maryam, anak perempuan Imrān, di samping menyesuaikan mereka dengan kualiti-kualiti kepimpinan lelaki seperti Nabi Muhammad, Dhū al-Qarnayn, Ṭālūt, dan Nabi Sulaymān, seperti yang diceritakan dalam al-Qur'ān. Kajian ini mendokumentasikan ciri-ciri personaliti seorang ketua, perhubungan antara ketua-pengikut, struktur tugasan, dan pengurusan krisis sebagai empat paksi utama dalam kajian ini, bergantung kepada teori-teori kepimpinan yang dominan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat persamaan antara pola kepimpinan lelaki dan perempuan, tetapi perbezaannya hanya kecil sahaja, iaitu dari segi kekuatan fizikal dan kecenderongan melaksanakan peperangan.

Kata Kunci: Kepimpinan wanita; hubungan ketua-pengikut; kepimpinan lelaki; Permaisuri Balqīs; tafsiran al-Qur'ān.

There is a need to review the historic patterns of female leadership in the Qur'ān since Muslims are cautious in accepting women in leading positions. Female Muslim leadership has started to draw people's interest in recent times. While many people continue to praise male Muslim leadership, a few appreciate the equivalent examples and success of Muslim women leaders. No one doubts that the Muslim world needs wise leaders from both sexes to guide the *ummah* in the 21st Century. However, to do this, Muslims have to overcome cultural barriers and challenge the limited vision of women's role in their societies. This article focuses on the leadership of three great female leaders mentioned in the Qur'ān, namely, Queen Āsiyah, Queen Balqīs, and Maryam, the daughter of 'Imrān and mother of Prophet 'Īsā. Through an analysis of their leadership, we endeavour to draft a Qur'ānic conceptualisation of female leadership by determining its general features.

The article reviews the steps taken by these women to achieve the highest level of success, including both physical and spiritual personal characteristics, and leader-follower relations, as well as their approach to structuring tasks and managing crisis. The analysis documents a pattern of self-dedication that goes beyond the social support given to a great leader. Moreover, the analysis underlines the socio-cultural symbolism of being a female leader capable of making effective decisions for their nation.

Given the paucity of female leadership research, what does exist on this topic varies, largely due to the socio-cultural religious perspectives

of the authors. Drawing on a more consistent basis of existing research, the researcher relies on leadership styles based predominantly on male leaders as a means to understand the female leadership style. Some contemporary researchers are keen to conserve the traditional juristic opinion on forbidding assigning women to leadership positions. Abu al-Fadil in his study, *Administrative Leadership in Islam* specified the requirements of Islamic leadership, including the constituent of "masculinity" in personal factors (Abū al-Faḍl, 1996). In contrast, there are other scholars who refute such an opinion. According to Badawi, "there is no text in the Qur'ān and Sunnah that precludes women from any position of leadership" (Badawi, 1995, p. 38). Thus, the culprit for such a negative outlook on female leadership is more likely based on culture (Ruderman & Ohlott, 2002). Negative stereotypes are often applied to women and this contributes to their limited presence in high-level positions (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). It is important to remember that the Qur'ān acknowledges important female leaders, and it is our contention to bring to light the wisdom of recognising these women.

Male leadership

Leadership in Arabic is "*qiyādah*", the Arabic root of which is "*qawda*", which means, "driving an animal from the front", while "*qā'id*" is a leader and means, "who is in the front" (Ibn Manẓūr, 2003, vol. 12, p. 215). The Qur'ān does not use this term, but uses the derivative "*qudwa*" which carries the same meaning, namely, "to quote from something" (Ibn Fāris, 1999, vol. 5, p. 60). This expression is shown in just two verses. The first pertains to good leadership, "Those are the ones whom Allah has guided, so from their guidance take an example" (Qur'ān, 6:90), whereas, the second concerns bad leadership, "And similarly, We did not send before you any warner into a city except that its affluent said, "Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are, in their footsteps, following" (Qur'ān, 43:23).

There are several other terminologies that convey the same meaning such as "*mulk*" (kingship), "And their Prophet said to them, "Indeed, Allah has sent to you Saul as a king" They said, "How can he have kingship over us while we are more worthy of kingship than him and he has not been given any measure of wealth?" (Qur'ān, 2:247), and "*ḥukm*" (judgment), "And We did certainly give the Children of Israel the Scripture and judgment and Prophethood" (Qur'ān, 45:16). There

is also the use of succession, "*'istikhlāf*", "[We said], "O David, indeed We have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge between the people in truth" (Qur'ān, 38:26).

The definition of leadership is elusive depending on different kinds of contexts: political, social and religious. Leadership is "the influencing process of leaders and followers to achieve organisational objectives through change" (Achua & Lussier, 2013). Badawi and Beekun provide a definition from the Islamic perspective: "a psychological contract between a leader and his followers that he will try his best to guide them, to protect them and to treat them fairly and with justice" (Beekun & Badawi, 2009).

It is possible to define the Qur'ānic conceptualisation of leadership through a comprehensive study of the parables concerning prominent past leaders such as Prophet Muhammad, Dhū al-Qarnayn, Ṭālūt, Prophet Sulaymān and other Prophets (peace be upon them). From here, it emerges that the Qur'ānic concept of leadership has several dimensions, some of which are related to the leader's personality, while others concern the relation between leader and subordinates, and the desired goal.

Leader personality

The Qur'ān stresses the importance of a leader's personal attributes, physical, spiritual, intellectual, and moral, all of which are necessary for effective leadership. This is illustrated in the following two cases, among others. Allah Almighty described Ṭālūt, who was sent to Banī Isrā'īl, "Allah has chosen him over you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature" (Qur'ān, 2:247), and Dhū al-Qarnayn, "We established him upon the earth, and We gave him to everything a way" (Qur'ān, 18:84). The physical quality might be labelled as "fitness for purpose" by Randeree (2009, p. 201), and focuses on strength, but it might be extended to include all physical characteristics needed to shoulder a heavy mission.

Leader's belief: In the Qur'ān, good leaders have religious conviction in Allah Almighty as the only God. This is evident in the Prophet's public address, "O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, [from Him] to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him" (Qur'ān, 7:158).

Prophet Yūsuf, who was given leadership over Egypt's storehouses declared, "We established Joseph in the land" (Qur'ān, 12:56), when he tried to convince people by saying: "are separate lords better or Allah, the One, the Prevailing?" (Qur'ān, 12:39). The Oneness of Allah (S.W.T.) constitutes the bedrock for leadership and the spiritual dimension should be included in true leadership (Bolman & Deal, 1995, p. 5). Faith might manifest in times of crisis because it is a refuge that can grant followers the feeling of safety. The example of the Prophet's immigration to Medina demonstrates this notion. When he was with his companion Abū Bakr fleeing to Medina from the pagans who were tracking them, Abū Bakr was frightened, and the Prophet reminded him that Allah (S.W.T.) is with them, "Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us." (Qur'ān, 9:40). Abū Bakr said to the Prophet in the cave where they were hidden, "If any of them looked under his feet, he would have seen us, the Prophet replied: "O Abū Bakr! What do you think of two persons the third of them is Allah?" (al-Bukhārī, 1994, p. 1337).

Leader's morality: The Qur'ān describes a specific code of ethics for a leader, "You are of a great moral character" (Qur'ān 68:4). The Prophet (S.A.W.) represents this code perfectly, "Here has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern" (Qur'ān, 80:20). He is a role model as Randeree depicted, "great leaders have the quality of being a role model to those they lead. For a Muslim, their greatest leader is also their role model, the Prophet Muhammad" (Randeree, 2009, p. 205). Honesty is a characteristic of a role model and is defined as, "consistency between word and deed" (Beekun & Badawi, 2009, p. 38). The code for ethical leadership includes mercy for all, as portrayed in the verse, "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds" (Qur'ān, 21:107). Moreover, modesty is encouraged, "that [behaviour] was troubling the Prophet, and he is shy of [dismissing] you" (Qur'ān, 33:53). His companions described him as "the Prophet was shier than a veiled virgin girl" (al-Bukhārī, 1994, p. 2268). In addition, courage is included in the ethical code of leaders, as illustrated in the battle of Uḥud wherein Muslims were fleeing away because of defeat, but the Prophet was staunch, "[Remember] when you [fled and] climbed [the mountain] without looking aside at anyone while the Messenger was calling you from behind" (Qur'ān, 3:153). His companions commented on the Prophet's bravery, "When the battle grew fierce, we by God seek protection by his side" (al-Nawawī, 1996, p. 461).

In the story of Dhū al-Qarnayn, there are several characteristics for a successful leader such as probity. When the people he found between mountains offered him money to protect them from Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj by building a barrier, they said, "O may we assign for you an expenditure that you might make between us and them a barrier?" (Qur'ān, 18:94) Dhū al-Qarnayn refused by saying, "That in which my Lord has established me is better [than what you offer], but assist me with strength; I will make between you and them a dam" (Qur'ān, 18:95). This verse also illustrates the attribute of humility when he said, "My Lord has established me" as opposed to saying, "what I am doing".

Leader's influence: The leader's ability to influence people is also mentioned in different verses. Prophet Mūsā was capable of convincing the public of the truth in his claims despite opposition from Fir'awn (Pharaoh) who, "put together his plan" (Qur'ān, 20:60), and called upon the magicians to work with him against Mūsā, "So resolve upon your plan and then come [forward] in line. And he has succeeded today who overcomes." (Qur'ān, 20:64). Instead, they converted and followed Mūsā's mission, "So the magicians fell down in prostration. They said, "We have believed in the Lord of Aaron and Moses" (Qur'ān, 20:70). Similarly, prophet Yūsuf was able to convince the king of his innocence, "And the king said, "Bring him to me; I will appoint him exclusively for myself" And when he spoke to him, he said, "Indeed, you are today established [in position] and trusted" (Qur'ān, 12:54).

The theory of charismatic leadership consists of influence, strong beliefs, and self-confidence. Influence is the most important factor since leaders should induce change. Gardner (1995) introduced leaders as, "individuals who significantly influence the thoughts, behaviours and feelings of others" (p. 6). Michael Hart considered Prophet Muhammad the most influential leader in history due to the impressive victories of Muslims, the vast Islamic empire, the lasting impact of Islam, the mixture between the religious and secular in the Prophet's personality, and his powerful force that made him the greatest political leader (Hart, 1992, pp. 3-10).

As for his charisma, Laḥḥām (2001), in her *The Method of the Prophet's Biography in Social Changes,* noted that his grandfather, "was discerning on him nobility and sovereignty" (p. 21). One example was before the beginning of his mission, when the tribes disputed the right

to set the Black Stone in its place, and they said when they saw him, "we accept him as a judge, he is honest" (al-Mubārakfūrī, n. d., p. 43). The Prophet asked the people to bring a cloth and put the black stone in its centre, and for each tribal leader to hold one corner of the cloth and to carry it to its resting place. The Prophet then picked the stone up and set it in its place. The tribes were delighted with the Prophet's solution (al-Mubārakfūrī, n.d., p. 43). This led Laḥḥām to describe the Prophet as distinguished in his wisdom, which made all people respect him (Laḥḥām, 2001, p. 23).

Another incident was when Ṣafwān ibn Umayyah offered to support 'Umayr ibn Wahhāb and his family if he killed Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.). 'Umayr agreed and left for Madīnah with a poisoned sword. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb saw him and sensed evil intentions and immediately informed the Prophet (S.A.W.). The Prophet revealed to 'Umayr his secret mission. 'Umayr was completely surprised and as a result embraced Islam (Hārūn, 1986, p. 144). After the conquest of Makkah, Ṣafwān ibn 'Umayyah, fearing the loss of his life, tried fleeing to Yemen. 'Umayr said to him: "I came to you from the best of people and the most righteous" (Ibn Hishām, 1998, p. 45) The Prophet knew how to appeal to the hearts of people (Laḥḥām, 2001, p. 25).

Leader-follower relations

Leaders show their subordinates appreciation, either materialistically or spiritually, in order to boost a desired behaviour. It might be verbal, such as praising by categorising them as real believers. Allah Almighty explained the "permission request" etiquette in the relation of the leader Muhammad and his followers, "And, when they are [meeting] with him for a matter of common interest, do not depart until they have asked his permission. Indeed, those who ask your permission, [O Muhammad] - those are the ones who believe in Allah and His Messenger" (Qur'ān, 24:62). Appreciation might also be in enhancing the subordinates' self-esteem as Dhū al-Qarnayn led this unknown people to make sense about themselves even though they were very weak, and threatened by Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj, "But assist me with strength; I will make between you and them a dam" (Qur'ān, 18:95). Appreciating subordinates often takes the form of supportive behaviour, as illustrated when the Prophet adopted Salmān al-Fārisī's advice of digging a trench around Medina, wherein he was working by his hands to encourage Muslims to work for the sake

of Allah (S.W.T.) (Al-'Aqqād, 2000, p. 50). This was also to enhance the *esprit de corps* to achieve the organisational objective within a team rather than though individual endeavours (Atheer, 2006, p. 7).

Group supervision is perhaps best represented by consultation (*shūrā*) wherein all members share their different opinions in a gathering in order to solve problems. Al-Talib said, "the practice of *shūrā* enables members of the Islamic organisation to participate in the decision-making process" (2001, p. 53). Allah (S.W.T.) commanded the Prophet to establish the practice of consultation in the new Muslim society, "Consult them in the matter" (Qur'ān, 3:159), and his companions narrated: "None was more apt to seek counsel of his companions than the messenger of Allah (S.A.W.)" (al-Tirmithī, n.d, p. 186). The practice of consultation started very early in Islam. The Prophet asked his companions their opinions in going to war with Abū Sufyān, and the Prophet heard the opinions of all Muslim groups (Ibn al-Athīr, 1965, p. 84). Moreover, the Prophet listened to the advice of al-Ḥabbāb ibn al-Mundhir in changing their location to be near to the water that supplied the battle field. In doing so, the Muslim army could prevent its enemy from drinking (al-Ṭabarī, 1979, p. 440). In addition, the Prophet requested the Muslims for estimation in the battle of Uḥud concerning where to wage the battle, with the majority opting for outside of Medina (al-'Aqqād, 2000, p. 51; Shākir, 1991, p. 227). As 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād explains, the Prophet (S.A.W.) "set up what is called today "council of war" before the fighting started, and he listened to everyone on arts of war or reconnaissance' guides" (al-'Aqqād, 2000, p. 51).

Task structure

Task structure may include defining the task and choosing the best solution. The process of defining the problem can be shown in the story of Dhū al-Qarnayn, when the people who could "hardly understand [his] speech" (Qur'ān, 18:93), told him about Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj, "O Dhū al-Qarnayn, indeed Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj are [great] corrupters in the land" (Qur'ān, 18:94). The components of the problem are their weakness and Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj's corruption. The second step is choosing the best solution. Here, the people suggested constructing a dike, "O may we assign for you an expenditure that you might make between us and them a barrier?" (Qur'ān, 18:94). Dhū al-Qarnayn then chose the components of the dam after inspection (al-Ṭabarī, n.d., p. 109), and arranged the

steps of the task, "Bring me sheets of iron" - until, when he had levelled [them] between the two mountain walls, he said, "Blow [with bellows]," until when he had made it [like] fire, he said, "Bring me, that I may pour over it molten copper" (Qur'ān, 18:96).

Crisis management

In the case of crisis, leaders emerge by exhibiting their abilities to their fellows in times of hardship. There are many examples in the Qur'ān about successful crisis management such as the conflict between Prophet Mūsā and Fir'awn. One such instance is when the Fir'awn claimed that he is the god of the world, "If you take a God other than me, I will surely place you among those imprisoned" (Qur'ān, 42:29), for which Mūsā replied, "Even if I brought you proof manifest?" (Qur'ān, 42:30). Another crisis which Prophet Mūsā encountered was with Sāmiriyy who sculpted a god from people's ornaments while taking advantage of Mūsā's absence. Abdu al-Latīf Hamīm explained in his book *Crisis Management and Conflict Leadership* that the key to overcome the crisis was to eliminate the impact of Sāmiriyy's sedition on the nativity (al-Hamīm, 2004, p. 57).

The Qur'ān highlights important factors in crisis management in the argument of Bani 'Isrā'īl and the king who is going to save them (Ṭālūt) after Mūsā's death. Allah (S.W.T.) said, "And when they went forth to [face] Goliath and his soldiers, they said, "Our Lord, pour upon us patience and plant firmly our feet and give us victory over the disbelieving people" (Qur'ān, 2:250). It is evident here that the important factors are: "supplication, stability, patience and faith" (al-Hamīm, 2004, p. 59).

The crisis of Prophet 'Īsā was dealing with the betrayal of his people for which he then sought the company of honest supporters and sincere consultants (al-Hamīm, 2004, p. 60), "Who are my supporters for [the cause of] Allah?" The disciples said, "We are supporters for Allah. We have believed in Allah and testify that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]" (Qur'ān, 3:52).

The economic crisis in Egypt was managed by Prophet Yūsuf by adopting the interpretation of the king's dream (al-Hamīm, 2004, p. 60): "[He said], "Joseph, O man of truth, explain to us about seven fat cows eaten by seven [that were] lean, and seven green spikes [of grain] and

others [that were] dry - that I may return to the people; perhaps they will know [about you]" (Qur'ān,12:46).

Female leadership

The natural traits of women should be exercised in a type of leadership that reflects women's ability to collaborate, transform, and nurture and their relational, charismatic manner. This female leadership style would fill the gap, which men heretofore were unable to fill (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007, p. 98). The Qur'ānic pattern of female leadership can be defined through a set of three female leaders, namely, Queen Āsiyah, Queen Balqīs, and Maryam, the daughter of 'Imrān.

Leader's personality

Leader's personality encompasses three essential components; faith, morality and influence.

Faith in leadership: The Qur'ān emphasises on Queen Āsiyah's strong faith to the degree of abandoning her position, prestige, and kingship. She dedicated her life to upholding divine principles and sacrificed much in its path. Queen Āsiyah was Fir'awn's wife. Fir'awn thought he owned Egypt, "O my people, does not the kingdom of Egypt belong to me" (Qur'ān, 43:51). In spite of the bliss surrounding Queen Āsiyah, she perceived the light of truth, that this life is but a temporary joy, and that Fir'awn is not a God, since Allah (S.W.T.) is the only God, after which she asked for Allah's (S.W.T.) salvation, "My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Fir'awn and his deeds" (Qur'ān, 66:11). As such, Queen Āsiyah is an example for believers, "And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Fi'awn" (Qur'ān, 66:11).

Balqīs was the Queen of Saba' in Yemen who was granted everything, "I found [there] a woman ruling them, and she has been given of all things, and she has a great throne" (Qur'ān, 27:23). She used to worship the sun, "I found her and her people prostrating to the sun instead of Allah" (Qur'ān, 27:24). Al-Andalūsī said of this, "they were Magi who worship lights" (p. 68). Hence, she was a disbeliever (Al-Andalūsī, 2007, p. 1077), "and that which she was worshipping other than Allah had averted her [from submission to Him]. Indeed, she was from a disbelieving people" (Qur'ān, 27:43). In spite of her pride and glory, when she knew the truth, she left her polytheistic belief to

embrace Islam, "My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, and I submit with Sulaymān to Allah, Lord of the worlds" (Qur'ān, 27:44). The previous examples reflect asceticism in worldly desires for the sake of Allah Almighty.

Maryam's faith was very strong that she underwent unbearable circumstances imposed on her by Allah Almighty. When she felt the contraction pains of delivery, she wished that she had died rather than be exposed to false accusations of adultery, since people knew that she was not married. Allah describes her situation, "And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree. She said, "Oh, I wish I had died before this and was in oblivion, forgotten" (Qur'ān, 19:23). Even though she was in a state of grief to the degree that she welcomed death, she asserted her belief in Allah (S.W.T.) (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984). When she was told that she will give birth to a boy named 'Īsā, she commented that she is a virgin and yet she became satisfied in the verse, "Such is Allah; He creates what He wills" (Qur'ān, 3:47), and she did not ask for proof like others (al-Qurṭubī, 2006, p. 79). Allah (S.W.T.) granted her with the status of the most believing (*siddīqah*) (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, p. 85): "And his mother was a supporter of truth" (Qur'ān, 5:75).

Morality in leadership: Maryam has been chosen as an example for those who believe. Allah (S.W.T.) mentions Maryam appreciatively in the verse, "O Maryam, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds" (Qur'ān, 3:42). To have been selected among all women as an example, alludes to their high morality. Ibn Kathīr said: "O Maryam Allah has chosen you, which means that Allah has selected you, and purified you from bad ethics, and grant you good attributes" (Ibn Kathīr, 2003, p. 424). Prophet Muhammad classified Maryam and Āsiyah among the most perfect human beings, "many amongst men attained perfection, but amongst women no one attained perfection except Maryam, the daughter of 'Imrān, and Āsiyah, the wife of Fir'awn" (al-Nawawī, 1996, p. 570). He also said, "the best of its women is Maryam, the daughter of 'Imrān, and the best of its women is Khadījah, and pointed to heaven and earth" (al-Nawawī, 1996, p. 569). It is inferred by these Hadiths and others that, "Maryam is the best woman in the world" (al-Qurṭubī, 2006, p. 79). Moreover, these women had the honour of rearing Prophets. Maryam educated her son, Prophet 'Īsā and Queen Āsiyah raised Prophet Mūsā.

Leader's influence: There are many examples in the Qur'ān of the mentioned queens influencing their societies by influencing the general opinions of their citizens, or by changing the command of the king, in addition to challenging the predominant culture. The most revealing example for the first situation is Queen Balqīs' attitude when Sulaymān threatened her kingdom with invasion, "for we will surely come to them with soldiers that they will be powerless to encounter, and we will surely expel them therefrom in humiliation, and they will be debased" (Qur'ān, 27:37). Balqīs knew from her experiences that wars lead to negative consequences, "Indeed kings - when they enter a city, they ruin it and render the honoured of its people humbled. And thus do they do" (Qur'ān, 27:34). In order to influence her people's decision, she took several wise steps. The first was by gathering her people to let them feel the importance of their stand in her ruling, "O eminent ones, advise me in my affair. I would not decide a matter until you witness [for] me" (Qur'ān, 27:32). The second was when Sulaymān refused her gift, and warned her of a devastating war, Balqīs behaved by, "going to him with the masters of the folk" (Ibn al-Athīr, 1965, p. 205) to avoid the war.

The example of changing the king's command is exemplified in Queen Āsiyah's attitude towards her husband, Fir'awn, and his royal order to kill every male baby born to Banī 'Isrā'īl, "slaughtering their [new-born] sons and keeping their females alive" (Qur'ān, 28:4). Ibn al-Athīr al-Jurzī said, "when the Fir'awn was speaking with his chancellors about God's promise to make kings and Prophets from the offspring of Ibrāhīm, they agreed to send men to kill every male born from the 'Isrā'īlis" (Ibn al-Athīr, 1965, p. 151). Fir'awn's wife, Āsiyah, used all her talents in supporting the plea to keep Mūsā alive, that he might be a good son to both of them, "[He will be] a comfort of the eye for me and for you. Do not kill him; perhaps he may benefit us, or we may adopt him as a son" (Qur'ān, 28:9). There is no authentic information about how she influenced Fir'awn's decision, but the verses revealed that Fir'awn was about to kill him when she showed him some advantages of keeping him alive. Ṭāhir ibn 'Āshūr said, "Fir'awn's wife became emotional, and took away the idea of killing him after he was about to do so, because the baby is not Coptic in his skin colour and facial feature, and he knew that the baby had been put in the box in order to keep him from being slaughtered. The Fir'awn's wife was an inspirational force for good, and Allah Almighty wanted to save Mūsā because of her" (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, p. 78).

The best example of challenging the dominant culture is Maryam dedicating herself to serve the temple and worship Allah as her mother, "vowed to dedicate her baby to serve *Bayt al-Maqdis*" (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, p. 232). When she was pregnant, she said, "My Lord, indeed I have pledged to You what is in my womb, consecrated [for Your service]" (Qur'ān, 3:35). To be devoted to serve Allah was exclusive to men, and because of this, she was surprised that Allah ordained a girl not a boy, "My Lord, I have delivered a female... and the male is not like the female" (Qur'ān, 3:36). The purpose of sending a girl to handle such a task is to prove that women are also capable of religious leadership.

Leader-follower relations

Supportive behaviour is clear in the story of Queen Balqīs when she put her confidence in her people in two very crucial issues. Firstly, when she told them that she is not going to send a reply to Sulaymān unlesss they provide her with their advice, "O eminent ones, advise me in my affair. I would not decide a matter until you witness [for] me" (Qur'ān, 27:23). Her comportment revealed that their opinions were valid and perhaps more applicable than hers. Secondly, when she was about to send to Sulaymān a gift in order to avoid a violent confrontation with him, "But indeed, I will send to them a gift and see with what [reply] the messengers will return" (Qur'ān, 27:35). This encouraged them and enhanced their participation.

For leader-follower exchanging viewpoints, the Qur'ān highlights some points in Queen Balqīs's behaviour with her people when Prophet Sulaymān sent her a letter to choose either Islam or war. The first point is that she consulted in public, "O eminent ones, advise me in my affair. I would not decide a matter until you witness [for] me" (Qur'ān, 27:32). Al-Qurṭubī (2006) said, "she adopted a good manner with her people, and consulted them in her affair" (p. 181). In addition, she negated any type of tyranny in her role as she openly consulted her people despite having full control over the military, "she has been given of all things, and she has a great throne" (Qur'ān, 27: 23). This incident highlighted Queen Balqīs' practice of *shūrā*.

The second point is the confidence granted to her by her people. The answer to her inquiry underscored the people's complete trust in her decree, "We are men of strength and of great military might, but the command is yours, so see what you will command" (Qur'ān, 27:33).

Al-Qurṭubī commented, "they left the matter to her view in spite of displaying their strength and power" (p. 182). The verse shows her subjects' loyalty and her ability to control them since they were waiting for her command to comply. The point that attracts attention and occurs in the life of a nation is that they did not try to overcome her in spite of their military power. The mutual confidence generated the team spirit (Ather & Sobhani, 2007, p. 17). Al-Talib commented, "effectiveness at this level rests on clear understanding of, and commitment to, what the task is, and who has responsibility" (al-Talib, 2001, p. 135).

Task structure

This includes defining the task and choosing the best solution. Balqīs proposed to her nation when she received the letter of King Sulaymān, "O eminent ones, indeed, to me has been delivered a noble letter" (Qur'ān, 27:29). She started when introducing the nature of this letter, "Indeed, it is from Sulaymān, and indeed, it reads: "In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, Be not haughty with me but come to me in submission [as Muslims]" (Qur'ān, 27:30-31). The most important part was defining the problem that needs to be solved: "She said, "Indeed kings - when they enter a city, they ruin it and render the honoured of its people humbled," (Qur'ān, 27:34). There were many suggested solutions. Queen Balqīs began by sending a present, "I will send to them a gift and see with what [reply] the messengers will return" (Qur'ān, 27:35). The second alternative appeared after Sulaymān refused her present. She decided to go to him to avoid war, accompanied by the leaders of her people (Ibn al-Athīr, 1965, p. 206). The third alternative was when she answered Sulaymān's request, "Is your throne like this? [It is] as though it was it" (Qur'ān, 27:42). Nevertheless Sulaymān made some changes in her throne to test her, "Disguise her throne; we will see whether she will be guided [to truth] or will be of those who is not guided" (Qur'ān, 27:41). In a short period before she reached him: "I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you" (Qur'ān, 27:40). Her reply reflected her wisdom, where she knew that her throne had been left in Yemen (Ibn Kathīr, 2003, p. 336), thus, her response was uncertain, so as not to disappoint in either case.

Remarkably, the steps followed by Balqīs are approximately the same with modern steps in decision making. Al-Talib introduced the steps of decision making in his book "Training Guide for Islamic Workers":

"identifying the alternative actions, gathering relevant information, evaluating the consequences and making a decision accordingly" (al-Talib, 2001, pp. 81-82).

Crisis management

There are several examples that prove the effectiveness of crises in developing the personality of leaders and enhancing their power over subordinates. The first example is when the palace slaves were carrying a male baby found inside a box, and chaos permeated since Fir'awn and his wife knew the fate of the baby. This crisis provoked Queen Āsiyah into thinking of saving the baby. Her strategy was to make her husband aspire to fatherhood, "[He will be] a comfort of the eye for me and for you. Do not kill him; perhaps he may benefit us, or we may adopt him as a son" (Qur'ān, 28:9). She successfully managed this crisis. Mūsā's mother then relaxed knowing her son would not be killed, "So We restored him to his mother that she might be content" (Qur'ān, 28:12), and Queen Āsiyah was able to be a mother. The best depiction of Queen Āsiyah is the saying of Mary Robinson, Ireland's former president about women leadership, "this is leadership by influencing and inspiring rather than by commanding" (Powell, 1999, p. 244).

The second example is the crisis of Maryam in giving birth to a baby without a father, "And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree. She said, "Oh, I wish I had died before this and was in oblivion, forgotten" (Qur'ān, 19:23). Maryam was strong enough to hold her negative feelings, and direct her behaviour to conform to the holy commands, "So eat and drink and be contented. And if you see from among humanity anyone, say, "Indeed, I have vowed to the Most Merciful abstention, so I will not speak today to [any] man" (Qur'ān, 19:26). Later she appeared with her baby, 'Īsā, as the Qur'ān reports, "Then she brought him to her people, carrying him. They said, "O Maryam, you have certainly done a thing unprecedented" (Qur'ān: 19:27). This predicament was unbearable, but she proved her strong belief in the power of Allah Almighty, "So she pointed to him" (Qur'ān, 19:29).

The third example is the crisis of Queen Balqīs when King Sulaymān asked her to enter his palace which was made of glass on its surface, but it was stuffed with water from the inside, and she thought that his palace was made of water, thus she lifted her garment not to be wet, "She was

told, "Enter the palace." But when she saw it, she thought it was a body of water and uncovered her shins [to wade through]" (Qur'ān, 27:44). Al-Ṭabarī interpreted the verse as "Sulaymān made an order that the palace should be built, then the Jinns built it from white glass as if from water, then he sent the water underneath, then he put his bed inside it, then he sat down on it, and he was surrounded by Jinns and humans and brides, then he said: "enter the palace", to show her a kingdom that is more glorious than her kingdom, and a suzerainty that is greater than her suzerainty" (al-Ṭabarī, 1979, p. 473). Balqīs embraced Islam when she saw the grandeur of Sulaymān because she believed that he was honest, and supported by Allah Almighty. Ibn 'Āshūr (1984) said, she knew that her religion and her people's religion was void, so she acknowledged that she committed tyranny when she worshipped the sun. This was the first step in belief, which was followed by the next step of embracing the true religion. She said, "My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, and I submit with Sulaymān to Allah, Lord of the worlds" (Qur'ān, 27:44).

Conclusion

This article highlights the biography of women mentioned in the Qur'ān as models of successful global female leaders. In order to conceptualise female leadership in the Qur'ān, examples were drawn from past male leaders such as Prophet Muhammad, Dhū al-Qarnayn, Ṭālūt, Prophet Sulaymān and other prophets. The general leadership framework revealed several attributes that might be summarised as follows. The Oneness of Allah (S.W.T.) constitutes the bedrock of leadership. A special personality is required of a leader who also has charitable characteristics. Leaders should represent a specific ethical code. Finally, the Qur'ān demonstrated how managing a crisis created successful leaders who used clever steps to save their people from hardship.

The first and foremost attribute of the sampled female leaders is their strong faith in Allah (S.W.T.), which entailed much sacrifice. Āsiyah declared her belief in Allah (S.W.T.) and abandoned Fir'awn's kingship, exposing herself to severe punishment. Balqīs embraced Islam despite having everything that counts. Maryam declared her belief in Allah (S.W.T.) even though she was under unbearable difficulty of having a child without a legal father. Maryam and Āsiyah were classified in Hadith as the best in morality, and Maryam was mentioned in the Qur'ān as the best of all women. There are many examples of the significant influences that these women had on their societies, such as their influencing public

opinions, changing the king's demand, and challenging the dominant culture. In conclusion, the Qur'ānic conceptualisation of female leadership is nearly identical to the general features of male leadership. There are differences in the leader's charisma, which is emphasised in the case of men but not women, especially with regards to physical characteristics. Another difference is by using force and physical strength as one of the suggested solutions in crisis management according to male leadership patterns as opposed to those of female leadership.

References

Abū al-Faḍl, A. (1996). *Al-qiyādah al-idāriyyah fī al-Islām.* Cairo: Al-Maʿhad al-ʿĀlamī al-Islāmī.

Achua, C. F., & Lussier, R. N. (2013). *Effective leadership* (5th ed.). Australia: South-Western, Cengage Learning.

Al-ʿAqqād, A. M. (2000). *ʿAbqariyyat Muhammad*. Beirut: Al-Maktabah al-ʿAṣriyyah.

Al-Andalūsī, A. D. M.. (2007). *Al-tafsīr al-kabīr al-musamm*a *al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ*. Beirut: Dār ʿIḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī.

Al-Bukhārī, M. B. I. (1994). *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr.

Al-Hamīm, A. (2004). *Idārat al-azmah wa-qīyādat al-sirr fī al-mawrūth al-Islamī al-muʿāṣir.* Amman: Dār ʿAmmār.

Al-Mubārakfūrī, S. R. (n. d.). *Al-raḥīq al-makhtūm.* Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.

Al-Nawawī, Y. (1996). *Sharḥ al-Nawawī ʿalā Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Cairo: Dār al-Khayr.

Al-Qurṭubī, M. B. A. (2006). *Al-Jāmiʾ li-ʿaḥkām al-Qurʾān*. Cairo: Muʾassasat al-Risālah.

Al-Shawkānī, M. B. A. (2007). *Fatḥ al-qadīr al-jamʾ bayn fanniyy al-riwayah wa-al-dirāyah*. Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah

Al-Ṭabarī, M. B. J. (1979a). *Tārīkh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk*. Dār al-Fikr.

Al-Ṭabarī, M. B. J. (n.d.). *Jāmʾ al-bayān fī taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*. Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif.

Al-Talib, H. (2001). *Training guide for Islamic workers.* UDA: Herndon, Verginia: International Institute for Islamic Thought.

Al-Tirmithī, M. B. I. (N.D.). *Sanan al-Tirmithī.* Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.

Al-Zarkalī, K. D. (1999). *Al-aʿlām*. Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm lil-Malāyyīn.

Atheer, S. M. (2006). Islamic management: An introduction and its contrasts to traditional management. *IIUC Business Review, 1*, 20-23.

Ather, S. M., & Sobhani, F. A. (2007). Managerial leadership: An Islamic perspective. *IIUC Studies*, *4*, 7-24.

Badawi, J. (1995). *Gender equity in Islam*. Plainfield, Ind.: American Trust Publications.

Beekun, R. I., & Badawi, J. (2009). *Leadership: An Islamic perspective*. Beltsville, Maryland: Amana publication.

Bolman, L., & Deal, T. (1995). *Leading with soul*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gardner, H. (1995). *Leading mind: An anatomy of leadership*. New York: Basic Books.

Hart, M. H. (1992). *The 100: A ranking of the most influential persons in history*. USA: Kensington publishing Corp.

Hārūn, A. (1986). *Tahdhīb sīrat Ibn Hishām.* Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah.

Ibn al-Athīr al-Jurzī, I. D. (1965). *Al-kāmil fī al-tārīkh*. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir.

Ibn ʿĀshūr, M. T. (1984). *Al-taḥrīr wa-al tanwīr*. Tunisia: Dār Saḥnūn.

Ibn Fāris. A. (1999). *Mu'jam maqaiyys al-lughah*. Beirut: Dar al-Jīl.

Ibn Hishām, A. A. (1998). *Al-sīrah al-nabawwiyyah li-ibn Hishām*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

Ibn Kathīr, A. F. (2003/1424). *Al-bidāyah wa-al-nihāyah*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah.

Ibn Manẓūr, J. D. (2003). *Lisān al-ʿArab*. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir.

Kellerman, B., & Rhode, D, L. (2007). *Women and leadership: The state of play and strategies for change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lahhām, H. (2001). *Hady al-sīrah al-nabawiyyah fī al-taghyīr al-ijtimāʿī.* Damascus: Dār al-Fikr.

Lussier, R. N., & Achua, C. F. (2013). *Leadership: Theory, application, and skill development* (5th ed.). Mason, OH :South-Western Cengage Learning.

Merriam Webster. (1993). *Webster's new encyclopaedic dictionary*. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers.

Powell, G. N. (1999). *Handbook of gender and work*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Randeree, K. (2009). An Islamic perspective on leadership. *The Global Studies Journal, 2*(1), 167-210.

Ruderman, M., & Ohlott, P, J. (2002). *Standing at the crossroads: Next steps for high-achieving women.* San Francisco: Jossey–Bass.

Shākir, M. (1991). *Al-tārīkh al-Islamī*. Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islamī.