

Tawhidic Paradigm and Ethical Leadership: The Views of Students

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the influence of Tawhidic paradigm on ethical leadership. The essence of Tawhidic paradigm is in the spiritual built-in conscience and behavior that comply with the law of Allah in discharging duties as servant and vicegerent of Allah religiously. Since Tawhidic paradigm requires a person to discharge duties both for individual and others, it is naturally influences individual to behave ethically and also to be influence others to be equally ethical to seek the Pleasure of Allah. The study obtains the opinions of students through a survey. The preliminary findings suggest that the influence of Tawhidic paradigm is very significant and essential to educate and nurture ethical leadership among students. The informants propose that the academic authority to include Tawhidic paradigm in academic and co-curricular activities as a mean to educate and nurture students to be professional and ethical.

Key words: *Tawhidic Paradigm, Ethical Leadership, Student Leaders*

INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of America's gigantic corporation, Enron Inc. in 2001, ethical leadership has become the major concern of the corporate world. The industrial revolution led the world to be highly industrious, materialistic and ambitious in maximizing profit. However, such ambition is not sustainable. The vocabulary of today's world is not being competitive, but also being sustained. Corporate leaders are expected to lead the world with high ethical standards. A responsible leader must always maintain ethical standards with morality (Aburdene, 2007). In fact, Abudene (2007) argued that "leading from the Middle" as one of seven new megatrends shaping the way that corporation is responding to the challenges. In the middle is where a host of ethical leaders, "ordinary" managers operating from the strengths of "values, influence and moral authority." The debate is continued whether a highly profitable business can maintain high ethical leadership and morality? The proponents of this argument convinced that highly ethical business can generate high profitability. The truth is that when every individual believes in high ethical and moral standard in completing the tasks, it can reduce the cost of the operations. Nevertheless, the opponents always argued that it is impossible to be highly profitable and highly ethical leadership in a business based on evidences, events and situations of the present and the past. They predicted that the future is going nowhere as they believe being ethical is oxymoron to profit maximization business objectives.

To create more ethical leadership in this world is to find the way to motivate and train the students with ethical values and religious views. The role that religious views play in affecting ethical attitudes is well documented. Both in areas specific to studies, including student cheating (Allmon, Page and Roberts, 2000; Siu, Dickinson and Lee, 2000), insider trading (Terpstra, Rozell & Robinson, 1993), environmentalism (Wolkomir, Futral, Woodrum and Hoban, 1997), and in broader studies (Siu *et al.*,

2000; Kaptein, Huberts, Avelino & Lasthuizen, 2005; Paine, 1994). The degree of religiosity is generally associated with higher ethical attitudes.

Aburdene (2007) also quoted that, Alan Greenspan (Former Federal Reserve Chairman) has said that, "Fraud and falsification are highly destructive to market capitalism and, more broadly, to the underpinnings of our society...Our market system depends critically on trust. Trust in the word of our colleagues and trust in the word of those with whom we do business." The main purpose of this paper is to investigate how the adherents of Tawhidic paradigm can be applied in the dealings of ethical leadership around the world especially in the Muslim world.

Aburdene (2007) argued that ethical leadership is important to address the imbalances, damages and bad reputations caused by the unethical behaviour of corporate managers and leaders. Although capitalism remains in the business paradigm, the stakeholders insist on integrating the profit motives with morality values. In other words, the approach to capitalism is to be imbued with ethical values or religious concern while doing businesses. However, Allmon *et al.* (2000) contended that the root cause to unethical practices is caused by the profit maximization profit. Aburdene (2007) realized the importance of ethical capitalism after discovering the unethical practices are not good for profit maximization motives. Allmon *et al.* (2000) pointed out three factors, namely ethical orientation (education and exposure), individual personality and the patterns of demographics contributed to the unethical practices. Berghofer and Schwartz (2010) argued that ethical leadership is related to the emotional and spiritual components of behaviour. While the industry is very much concern of quality products, productive human resource, and high value of organizational resources, the stakeholders insist on the quality of life. Thus, the argument by Aburdene (2007) is valid toward certain extent, but not entirely due to implicit factors that contributed to unethical behavior.

Ethical leadership is essential. Kaptein, Huberts, Avelino and Lasthuizen (2005) argued that ethical leadership can be measured by ethical leadership components, which comprised cognitive, affective and behavioral. The measurement to the ethical leadership should include quantitative and qualitative approaches so that the results can be robust and comprehensive. The notion 'ethical leadership' has been argued as leadership with integrity. Paine (1994) argued that being ethical is not only 'in-out' approach but also 'out-in' approach to ensure integrity or trustworthiness. Paine (1994) took a dynamic stance in proposing organizational leadership to adopt integrity in managing the organizations. With regards to the dynamic ethical leadership by Kaptein *et al.* (2005) and integrity stance by Paine (1994), the approach to ethical leadership should also include ethical review. Siu, Dickinson and Lee (2000) argued that ethical leadership is contingent to the situations, which requires comprehensive audit and review activities. Siu *et al.* (2000) contended that the ethical evaluation on business activities can be merely external (explicit) in nature, but philosophically, it can serve as proxy measure for individual religiosity approach. In other seminal, Wolkomir, Futreal, Woodrum and Hoban (1997) argued that strong religious belief is essential to influence individual behavior to be concerned with the environment. Thus, being ethical is not only to the approaches, but also the paradigm and philosophy of individuals.

Terpstra, Rozell and Robinson (1993) argued that individual personality traits and their social background can have a significant impact on their ethical decisions, particularly the issue of insider trading. Terpstra *et al.* (1993) took a serious approach psychologically to examine the factors influencing unethical practices. Nevertheless, Terpstra *et al.* (1993) remains with the comprehensive measurement to ethical leadership, which has been extended in the studies by Paine (1994), Siu *et al.* (2000), and Kaptein *et al.* (2005).

TAWHIDIC PARADIGM

Islam is a monotheistic religion articulated by the Qur'an, a text considered by its adherents to be the verbatim word of God (Allah), and by the teachings and normative example (called the *Sunnah* and composed of Hadith) of Muhammad (SAW), considered by them to be the last prophet of God. An

adherent of Islam is called a Muslim. Islam means peace and works at all aspects of life which is based on human rights and justice. Islam encourages and recognizes profit motive and private ownership motive and the market. But pursuit of wealth is subject to ethical and moral principles under guardianship of *halal* and *haram* concepts according to Shariah law (Quran and Sunnah).

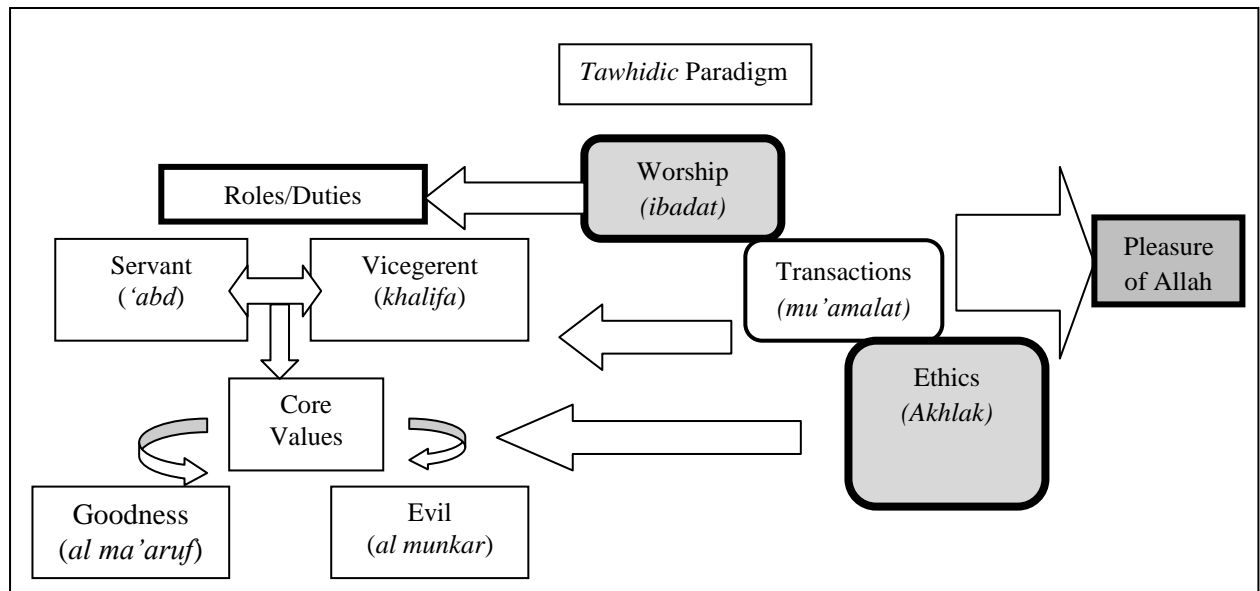
Sarif and Ismail (2011a) argued that the manifestation of *Tawhidic* paradigm signifies individual's multiple relationships revolve around the unity of God thinking. In other word, the unity of God thinking requires individual to remember God and all the commandments of God (Sarif & Ismail, 2011b). In Islamic worldview, *Tawhid* is explained by the roles of the believers of the paradigm in the forms of worship (*ibadat*), i.e. submission of mankind to Allah for the sake of securing His Pleasure vis-à-vis the roles of mankind as servant (*'abd*) and vicegerent (*khalifa*) of Allah (Sarif & Ismail, 2011c). The worship has to be performed with manner and strict disciplines and with trust and justice. This has to be done in order to be consistent with the job requirement of vicegerent (*khalifa*) as stated in *Sura al Baqarah* 2: 30. This assignment is in line with the purpose that Allah has created mankind to be His servant and also His vicegerent.

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ
نَحْنُ وَنُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Note the occasion, when our Rabb [Lord] said to the angels: I am going to place a vicegerent on earth. They said: “Will You place there one who will make mischief and shed blood while we sing Your praises and glorify Your name? Allah said: “I know what you know not.” (*Sura al Baqarah* 2:30)

Figure 1 depicts the manifestation of *Tawhidic* paradigm in terms of ‘service’ or worship towards Allah. The service to Allah is a Divine commandment, which is the main purpose of the creation of human being. Two simultaneous roles for human beings: servant and vicegerent of Allah. However, the service can be accepted by Allah when the task is implemented under the ethical leadership based on the commandment of Allah.

Figure 1: Manifestation of *Tawhidic* Paradigm for Ethical Leadership



Ethical leader or *Khalifa* acts as a trustee of Allah in carrying out his duties in organizations. His worldview, his *ukhrawi* view, and his worldly-Hereafter view should be *Tawhidic*. He has to ensure this his formulation, execution, and evaluation of plans is in line with *Tawhid* and the specific principles of Islam. He will have to accept, revise or reject his plan if he suspects any inconsistencies

with the spirit of *Tawhid* at planning or implementation stages of strategy. Non-compliance with the *Sharia* could weaken a person's faith, and this compromise might infest his decisions about all matters and times. An individual with such a predisposition (having a weak faith) might abuse his authority and misuse the resources. The consequence of his decision will affect not only colleagues and subordinates but also other creatures like the environment with resource depletion, landslides, civil wars, and the like. In the end, there will be injustice, inequity, exploitation, manipulations, oppression, and wrong doings that will negatively affect life, property, reputation and dignity.

Tawhidic paradigm is basically Unity of God which refers to do activities to please Allah SWT. Everything has to be done as a vicegerent of Allah SWT to act as a representative of Allah SWT. The Tawhidic concept is on three central principles. The unity of God includes things like the hereafter, its implications, core values such as justice and trust. The second aspect is man which centers on how human beings conduct themselves in relation to the environment and amongst themselves. The third one is the environment which includes the resources etc.

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

According to Berghofer and Schwartz (2010), the significance of ethical leadership for managerial achievement has important implications for leadership development. The key to business success is getting things done and we now recognize more clearly than ever before that this depends on those who manage in the middle.

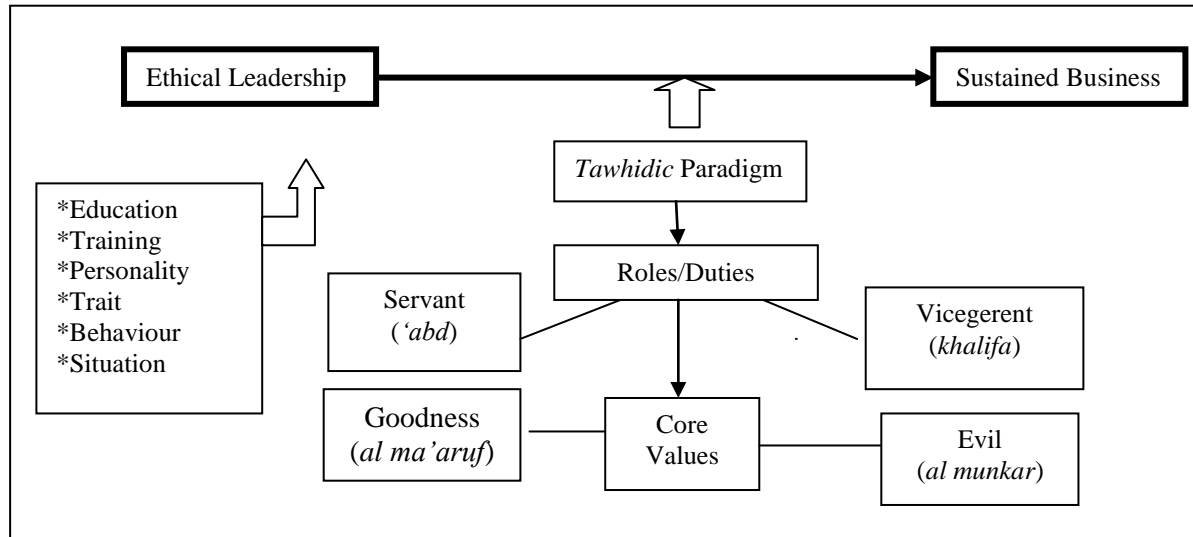
Leadership and ethical conduct are strongly highlighted in modern military doctrines (U.S. Department of the Army, 1999, 2006). Ethics and leadership failures in dynamic and volatile situations may have extensive strategic and political consequences in contemporary military operations. On the other hand, Berghofer and Schwartz (2010) contended that ethical leadership must be commended effort, politically be transparent, and it has to be wise to deal with all activities. Lacking of the clear ethical leadership, we are on a ship ploughing through hazardous waters without plan. The stakes are now too lofty for such irresponsible adventurism. In addition to that, Lewis (2006) in his book "Excellence without soul" highlighted the significance of teaching and highlighting on ethical principles to students as against the then exercise of responding only to the demand of students and the business world.

There have been efforts to develop ethical leadership. More importantly, managers must play proactive role to nurture, develop and maintain ethical leadership with the organizational authority. Kaptein *et al* (2005) argued, managers can only direct organizational ethics if all staff has a clear picture of the effectiveness and efficiency of current efforts (e.g., compliance programs, codes of conduct, rules and regulation) aimed at avoiding unethical behavior and motivating ethical behavior. Because management is not a dictator but organizational hierarchies may stop employees from freely communicating violations, it is prudent to carry out ethics audits to find out whether the view of management in the organization is a true reflection of the state of affairs or not.

The above discussion emphasised that ethical leadership is essential force for a sustained business. Ethical leadership is an outcome of education, training, personal growth, personality development, trait, behavior and situational change. *Tawhidic* paradigm can moderate the development ethical leadership by integrating the worldly objectives with the hereafter consequences. Nevertheless, it is a choice for human whether to subscribe to Islam as the way of life or other faith of choice. For believers (Muslims), *Tawhidic* paradigm implies that they have to listen and obey to the commandment of Allah at all times and to adhere to that religiously and thoroughly. The commandment of Allah has been documented in the Qur'an and the teachings and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). When Muslims hold on to these references, they will be guided by Allah. The guided leadership enables the believers to strengthen ethical leadership via the execution of the tasks prescribed to them, namely the duties as servant and vicegerent of Allah.

The study argues that ethical leadership can influence businesses to be sustained i.e. survived, profitable, and experience tremendous growth. The conventional antecedents to ethical leadership include education, training, personality, behaviour and situation. As for Tawhidic paradigm, ethical leadership can be reinforced consistently via the roles and values of servant and vicegerent of Allah. Figure 2 illustrates the framework of the study.

Figure 2: Framework of the study



METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study is to obtain the opinion of students about the influence of Tawhidic paradigm on ethical leadership so that businesses can be sustained. The study used opinion survey. The students were asked questions about the ways ethical leadership is developed through conventional, Islamic and other practical ways. Respondents profile given below:

Table 1: Respondents profile:

Respondent	Gender	Age	Program	Country
R1	Male	23	MBA	Malaysia
R2	Male	25	MMgt	India
R3	Male	24	MBA	Bangladesh
R 4	Female	23	MBA	Iran
R 5	Male	23	MBA	Malaysia
R 6	Male	27	MBA	Malaysia
R 7	Male	24	MBA	India
R 8	Male	30	MBA	Sri Lanka
R 9	Male	26	MMgt	Malaysia
R 10	Male	26	MMgt	Maldives
R 11	Male	25	MMgt	Guinea
R 12	Female	34	MBA	Malaysia
R 13	Female	22	MBA	Malaysia
R 14	Male	27	MBA	Malaysia
R 15	Male	26	MBA	Malaysia
R 16	Male	26	MBA	Malaysia
R 17	Male	28	MMgt	Kenya
R 18	Male	23	MMgt	Malaysia
R 19	Male	23	MBA	Malaysia
R 20	Male	24	MBA	Malaysia

R 21	Male	25	MMgt	Malaysia
R 22	Male	25	MMgt	Somalia
R 23	Male	23	MBA	Indonesia
R 24	Female	26	MBA	Nigeria
R 25	Male	26	MMgt	Malaysia

We have asked 25 students from graduate school of Management at International Islamic University Malaysia. We have asked 8 questions to respondents which are as follows:

- 1) Do you think. Tawhidic paradigm influences ethical leadership?
- 2) Does Tawhidic paradigm create ethical values?
- 3) Is it essential to practise according to tawhidic paradigm to create ethical leadership?
- 4) Ethical leadership still be achieved without Tawhidic paradigm, do you agree on that?
- 5) Do you think, ethical leadership is absent in this contemporary era?
- 6) Should Tawhidic paradigm be included in the co-curricular activities to enhance ethical leadership?
- 7) Do you think that, students leaders have to be taught about tawhidic concept to create ethical leadership?
- 8) Will this study benefit the society to build up ethical leadership in the current muslim world

Based on the question, respondents' answered (Yes/No) but if they are not familiar with the particular question, they said that, they are "not sure". Based on the respondents' answers, discussion has been made as follows.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Before going deep into the findings of the survey it will be of utmost importance to state that the survey tries to measure the respondent's knowledge about ethical leadership before asking follow-up questions about their personal opinions and ethical views. We have done a survey among the MBA and MOM students and found that, All respondent has agreed that, Tawhidic paradigm influences the ethical leadership. Because Tawhidic paradigm says that everybody is accountable towards Allah SWT which makes them very conscious about what they are doing. So as a leader, he has to be very careful about his activities and he has to make sure that all activities are done to please Allah SWT. Moreover, every respondent also said that, Tawhidic paradigm creates ethical values which make the person to be ethical all the time. Tawhidic paradigm emphasises the role of a vicegerent in the world and do the activities to please Allah SWT. Therefore, all respondents are believed that, it is essential to practice our daily activities based on Tawhidic paradigm to create ethical leadership. So we should practice Tawhidic Paradigm from our study life so that it will gradually create ethical leadership. In that case we can introduce Tawhidic Paradigm in coo curricular activities. Even though some of the respondents are not sure how the Tawhidic paradigm can be introduced in the co curricular activities but most of them agreed that, we should introduce and practice Tawhidic Paradigm in the co curricular activities. Also we can give some training activities to create ethical leadership from the students as Cording to Paine (2003) said that, coaching and training are also significant in creating consciousness and improving the ethical skills of human resources to deal with moral issues. Kaptein,M, et al (2005) mentioned in their article, If just 33 percent of the employees receives ethics training or participate in the workshops, there is surely room for improving the accomplishment of ethical programs. Supervising participation in ethics curriculum and employee satisfaction with them is a first footstep to boost awareness about the effectiveness and efficiency of organizational efforts.

Furthermore, University authority can introduce the activities which will increase the morality and sincerity towards Allah SWT. Such as: Halaqa (study circle), Islamic Cultural performance and so on. Moreover, 90% of the respondents have agreed that, ethical leadership is somehow absent in the contemporary era. As Trevino &Weaver (2003) mentioned that, the absence or presence of strong leadership and role models also have an effect on the organizational atmosphere and the way

employees perform. So in that case, students' leaders have to be taught about the ethical leadership through Tawhidic paradigm. If the students' leaders are becoming great ethical leaders, then it will affect the current leaders of the country to be more ethical. Consequently it will help the country to produce more ethical leadership in the near future. All respondents mentioned that, this kind of study will be beneficial for the Muslim Ummah to create more ethical leadership in this contemporary world. This is the high time to give efforts to create ethical leadership among Muslim countries to protect them and protect the country from the dirty conspiracy by the western countries.

CONCLUSION

Thus far, it is worthy of mentioning that despite the fact that the struggle to earn a living has taken hold of our lives, religion is playing an important role in how we conduct our day to day activities. It is important to note that Tawhidic Paradigm provide a set of consistent and reasonable contribution to create ethical leadership in this world. Ethics is becoming part and parcel of everything because in our world we have to deal with people from different countries, ethnicity, religious and cultural backgrounds, which if misinterpreted could cause serious havoc to our dealings. As such, a deeper knowledge of ethical values might bring about an understanding which will be based on mutual respect between people of different religions and cultures to lead the country. So we may affirm that, If an academic authority can include Tawhidic paradigm in academic and co-curricular activities as a mean to educate and nurture students to be professional and ethical then in the near future we will be having enough ethical leaders to lead this *Muslim Ummah* towards a prosperous future.

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