



## **Promoting Leadership from the Islamic Education Perspective**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to investigate the nature of the mental and spiritual components of the individual that build one's leadership from the Islamic education perspective. The researcher applied the Information Retrieval Method, tracing the collection of information and evidence from its original sources, analyzing it, and explaining the rationale for its reasoning and presentation. Research findings show that the individual's mental and spiritual characteristics consist of three components: one's instinct, one's knowledge and what s/he inherited effortlessly. In conclusion, an integrated leader in Islamic education is one who combines his/her innate nature, inherited leadership skills from his/her environment along with the knowledge acquired through experience, effort and hard work.

**Keywords:** leadership, Islamic education, innate nature, inheritance, knowledge.

### **INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH BACKGROUND**

Human beings inherit their physical characteristics such as appearance, color, shape, etc. from their inherited ancestry. However, there is a debate when it comes to inheriting one's morals and manners such as courage, generosity, leadership, etc. So as organ transplantation and plastic surgery are able to change one's physiology and appearance, some pedagogues and psychologists believe that it is possible to influence a person and transform his/her inherited character, characteristics and morals if s/he wants and attempts.

There are pros and cons when it comes to human beings' ability to change their inherited manners, whether nature is stronger than nurture or vice versa. No matter how one attempts to change his/her character, s/he may return to his/her nature if there is a situation or mood change; anger, sadness, happiness, etc. On the other hand, some believe that one can pursue such change. Anderson reports that "Most people who seem to have little instinct leadership qualities can become good leaders, and even outstanding. So, the most effective way to grow as a leader is to become self-aware". (Anderson, 2012)

Humans are born with weak biological genetic system for adaptation and existence especially at birth barely capable of existing, surviving and continuing without others' help. Thus, babies can hardly breastfeed for the first time; neither can walk, talk, nor distinguish between things. Indeed, this is the state of the ultimate weakness with which the human being is defined during his childhood. Therefore, infants need training and education in order to grow, sharpen their skills, acquire knowledge, abilities and experiences that help them adapt to their surroundings (Arab Open University, 2013)

When man settled on earth, he was ready to face any challenge, such as the desire to survive and adapt to his surroundings. Therefore, he began to look for the necessities for his survival, such as physiological, security and social needs. When those were satisfied, he began to think about feeding his soul and mind. Man's mental and spiritual characteristics consist of multiple components: instinct, acquired and inherited. Therefore, this research is set to answer to the following question:

### **Research Question**

What is the nature of humans and what are the mental and spiritual components that influence them in this life? And what is the nature of the components that make them leaders from an Islamic education perspective?

### **Objectives**

This research aims to investigate the nature of humans and the mental and spiritual components that make them leaders from an Islamic education perspective.

### **Terminology**

#### **Advancement**

Human progression in life and the extent of one's leadership qualities, in terms of mental and spiritual components.

## Leadership

Humanself abilities that make a leader based on what characteristics were acquired, and inherited such as courage, generosity, nobility, ability to influence others, and power to prepare oneself for success and the tasks needed to undertake the challenges of life.

## Islamic Education Perspective

Citations and evidence from Islamic sources; the Qur'an and Sunnah (tradition of prophet Muhammad regarding the mental and spiritual nature of humans and their advancement to reach leadership.

## Research Methods

This is a qualitative research that applies the Information Retrieval Method; collecting information on the areas of focus, then classifying, organizing and analyzing it, to come up with opinions, research findings, recommendations and proposals.

## Research Tackles the Following Topics

### First: Nature of the Human Being

If we openly think about the human nature from a philosophical point of view, we will find that philosophers had various ideas regarding the nature of humans who changed the face of the earth, utilizing its elements to progress in life: soil, plants, animals and water. Plato spoke about man as a rational and eternal soul that was accidentally attached to the human body. While Aristotle described him as a sane speaking animal, which is an essential characteristic that distinguishes him from the rest of the animals. On the other hand, Descartes said that man's mental reflections are not derived from his senses or from reality, but rather, from himself, which means it's his nature, i.e., truth flows from oneself, according to Descartes' principle "I think, therefore, I am" (Uribe, 2019). Thus, these philosophers diversely discussed the human being and each described him according to their thought, philosophy, and perhaps their psychological, ethnic, or religious background, etc.

Therefore, we have learned about man throughout the ages since the post-writing era (3500 BC) and its inscriptions and writings can be beneficial. As we know that civilizations are sequential. Thus, every civilization benefits from the civilization that preceded it and establishes its own upon it. Usually, the latter is more distinguishable than the one preceding it and adds to it new inputs until we reached our present time. We can realize that within fifty years our materialistic civilization has exceeded what all these civilizations have produced altogether since the beginning of time in knowledge and science. Yet, we as Muslims lack information about some of the extinct civilizations, which were transmitted to us through verses in the Holy Qur'an. In fact, in some situations there were miracles that exceed what we in the modern civilization can achieve, such as in the verses that describe the transfer of the throne of Balqees from Yemen to Palestine where Prophet Solomon lived, peace be upon him: "Solomon asked, "O chiefs! Which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in 'full' submission? One mighty jinn responded, "I can bring it to you before you rise from this council of yours. And I am quite strong and trustworthy for this 'task' "Then" Solomon said, "Disguise her throne for her so we may see whether she will recognize 'it' or she will not be able to. So when she arrived, it was said 'to her', "Is your throne like this?" She replied, "It looks to be the same. We have 'already' received knowledge 'of Solomon's prophethood'<sup>1</sup> before this 'miracle',<sup>2</sup> and have submitted 'to Allah'." (Holy Quran Chapter 27 Verses 38-42)

Regarding the Islamic civilization, it is characterized by an inevitable intellectualism, which means the undebatable matters that every Muslim inevitably believes in. In case s/he abandons it, s/he will feel completely stripped from this civilization. This belief comforted some Muslim philosophers and reduced their to the red lines they believe that they should not cross. This view opened other doors for them to think about the nature of the human being according to what is narrated by the Qur'an and Sunnah; prophet Muhammad's Tradition. The Qur'an urges its readers to earn knowledge through contemplation. The Quran, mentions "human being" in about 53 spots, 38 speak about themes of human weaknesses, stubbornness, disbelief, hardship and enmity as in {Man does not weary of asking for good (things), but if ill touches him, he gives up all hope (and) is lost in despair}[Chapter 41:49]. In addition, the human being in 15 times indicating the nature of his creation and his characteristics, as He said {Verily We created man of potter's altered clay of mud} [Chapter 15: 26]. Three times of which are about compliment, as He said {Surely, We, created man of the best stature...} [Chapter 95: 4]. In fact, Allah has created the human being unlike any other creature in terms of spirituality and mental capacity. This phenomenon bewildered doctors in treating the human's body, and they mystified how can man become extinct die, with many attempts to find ways to extend the human life, but in vain. On the other hand, those, who were fascinated with the human's mind, were no more successful. They were puzzled by the human being's selfishness, stinginess, greed, ignorance, tyranny and cowardice in an attempt to transform people to share their lives on earth with each other without pain, poverty, ignorance, foolishness and in peace.

Identifying the nature of the human being and his creation leads to clarifying his mental and spiritual components that make him a successful leader from the perspective of Islamic education. Due to the importance of

leadership, researchers and management intellectuals have tackled it in more than (53121) books that were offered for sale until 2009 on Amazon.com.uk (Altallawy, 2013), reaching 60,000 books in 2020 according to the search engine on Amazon.com.uk.

Let us think about the ability of man to lead his fellow man, where the latter submissively follows the leader and entirely convinced of his supernatural leadership qualities, and how it is carried out. This led to the typical question asked by many of those interested in leadership, debating this question for years: Are prominent leaders born or made? There are many examples of historical figures, who automatically came to leading positions and became leaders, while others developed their leadership qualities through practice, persistence and experience. Therefore, to understand leadership, both aspects of leadership must be considered, namely the innate nature (the genetic factor), and social feed (environmental influences). (Boerma et al, 2017)

Therefore, in the following idea, I'll embark on looking into the mental and spiritual components of the human being according to the Islamic education and whether man can be developed, or one was molded in a way that can never be changed.

## Second: Mental and Spiritual Components of the Human Being from the Islamic Education Perspective

Just as the human body is made of flesh, blood and bone, its mental and spiritual components are more complex than his body components, as in the following graphic:

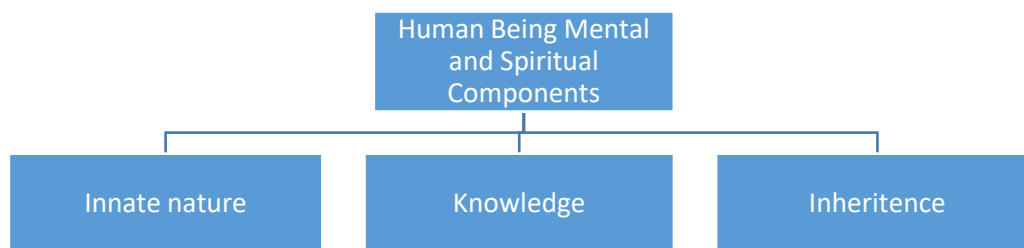


Figure 1

### Component 1: Innate Nature

Innate nature is the willingness and tendency towards good.

This means that the human being is born and created, while instilling in the innate nature of willingness and tendency towards good. In addition, he is born good and was created neither evil nor predatory by nature, whereas lions were born as predators by nature, and the cattle were domesticated by nature.

There is a story in the Arabic literature that tells us about a woman who found a wolf pup whose mother died after giving birth, so she took it in and fed it from her sheep and nurtured it until it grew up and gained its strength. The cub then attacked the sheep that nurtured it, so she articulated the following stanza:

You disemboweled my young sheep and broke my heart,

While you to our young sheep were a foster kid.

You have been fed by its milk and raised by us,

So who told you that your father was a wolf?

If the nature of character is essentially bad,

Then propriety and good manners are both of no avail.

Furthermore, a well-known Arabic proverb says, "Whoever does good to unworthy people, s/he would receive what the guard of Umm Amer got", Umm Amer is the hyena. The story goes that a man protected a hyena from hunters chasing it and took it to his tent in the desert. At night, when it was reassured that the man slept, it attacked him as in its character and nature. Thus, his cousin said this famous proverb.

This indicates that every creature has varied characteristics by nature that is not related to religion and belief, that differentiates him from other creatures.

In the Noble Quran, regarding humans' innate nature {So be steadfast in faith in all uprightness 'O Prophet'—the natural Way of Allah which He has instilled in 'all' people. Let there be no change in this creation of Allah. That is the Straight Way, but most people do not know} [Chapter 30: Verse 30]. There were plenty of interpretations of "innate nature" some interpreted it as the religion, which Creator has instilled in 'all' people. Others, like Altabari said: the withing creation upon which people were created (Alkhamash, 2009). Altabari's interpretation means the craft, upon which the Creator has created human beings. In Sunnah, there are many indications regarding humans' innate nature such as "Every child is born on Fitra and it is his parents, who ordain him Jewish, Christian, or Magus (Persian Zoroastrians/Fire Worshipers)...Etc.), narrated by Muslim. Another saying narrated by Iyad b. Himar, "I have created My servants of one natural inclination to be virtuous, but it is Satan and his decedents deviate them from the right path" (Muslim). The innate nature here means that the Creator created man with the willingness and inclination towards goodness. To a Muslim, undoubtedly, the greatest good is Monotheism represented by the testimony of faith "there is no god but Allah". Some

interpreters said that what is meant by the innate nature is monotheism, stating the following Hadith as evidence “The Messenger of Allah, Peace be upon him, asked an enslaved woman: Where is Allah (The Creator)? She replied: in the heavens. He said: Who am I? She replied: you are the Messenger of Allah. He said: free her, for she is a believer) narrated by Muslim. However, in the previous hadiths, there is no explicit citation indicating that the innate nature is monotheism.

Describing the innate nature as Monotheism is inconsistent with the reality and stories narrated, including those related to a number of children who lived with animals, such as the Ukrainian girl (Oksana), where she lived in the woods with dogs for five years since she was three years old, until a group of hunters found her in 1991 when she was eight and handed her to police who handed over to the orphanage. She did not emulate human nature, but rather that of the dogs eating raw meat and walking on four legs, without uttering a single word. Thus, she began her journey of learning since she was found (Grice, 2006). Furthermore, two children were found in India in the same way. They did not know anything and did not utter a single word (Arab Open University, 2013). Moreover, a Colombian girl (Marina Chapman) was found with a group of monkeys, who began her life with humans without realizing any of her human concepts previously attained (Hattenstone, 2013). All of the previous examples were not guided to the Creator and did not know the path of monotheism themselves because they did not learn such so from people. Hence, where are those from the innate nature that some view as knowing the Creator without a tutor?

A human being may deviate from his good instinct and nature that was instilled in him. However, the state of deviation is not like what he was originally, yet it may be due to an unexpected reason, either due to external influences such as drugs, psychological diseases, etc. Or it may be due to internal influences such as envy and jealousy, or to the impact of injustice occurring to man. Consequently, he opposes his nature, yet he shortly returns to his good instinct and regrets what he did. The incident of the two sons of Adam is a clear illustration of this. They both offered an offering that was accepted from one but not the other. Therefore, driven by envy, the one whose offering was not accepted killed the other. Eventually, he felt very remorseful. Allah says {Then Allah sent a raven digging the ground, to show him how to cover his brother's corpse. He said, “Woe to me! I was unable to be like this raven and bury my brother's corpse.” So, he became full of regrets} [Chapter 5: Verse 31]

### **Component 2: Knowledge**

The second man's mental and spiritual component is knowledge. That is, man is a blank slate at birth as he knows nothing. The Quran states: {And Allah brought you out of the wombs of your mothers while you knew nothing, and gave you hearing, sight, and intellect so perhaps you would be thankful} [Chapter 16: Verse 78]. In the Arabic Language, the negative indefinite sentence denotes generalization. As the human being is born without knowledge, however, Allah has created sources of knowledge for him, including hearing, sight, and heart, and perhaps he began to be able to hear since hearing sense is the most critical source of knowledge. In fact, the deaf lack behind the blind in knowledge as insightful people do. Nevertheless, everything that man acquires through his hearing and sight would be filtered by the heart, which will in turn separate good from bad and useful from harmful. Therefore, we realize people are different in understanding skill, and those with mental issues as being off track in terms of understanding facts and information.

The human being's learning capability is unlimited. His mind and heart can be extended as far as he provides it with knowledge. In addition, some people surpass others in terms of memorizing and comprehension. As the mind is like a soft bag, the more you add to it, the more it expands.

Since knowledge requires effort, patience, and perseverance, accordingly in Islam, scholars of knowledge are preferred even over those who are fasting and praying worshipers, Allah asks rhetorically {Are those who know equal to those who do not?} [Chapter 39: 9] Allah elevates the knowledgeable to a superior rank than the devout worshiper, assimilating them to the full moon to the rest of the stars as in the Hadith reported by Abud-Darda and narrated by At-Tirmidhi. Thus, Islamic guides man to seek knowledge as much as possible, because the more he increases in knowledge; the more he becomes virtues, leading to leadership.

### **Component 3: Inheritance**

Inheritance in the Arabic refers to all morals and manners the human being gets from his ancestors, for instance, nobility, courage, generosity, leadership and their opposites. The Islamic education, some view that as one inherits his appearance from his parents and forefathers, one inherits his morals from them as well, such as nobility, courage, generosity, and leadership. It was narrated by Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) that the Messenger of Allah said: “Choose the best compatible women for marriage for you and your offspring”. Some view as a fact that the aforementioned qualities cannot be learned. Whereas information, skills and experiences are acquired by learning. Nevertheless, this view in Islamic education does not deny the possibility of one's ability to develop his morals and to try to follow others' good manners, as said “clemency can be taught”. However, it is complicated enough for someone to change an innate quality such as stinginess into generosity and cowardice into courage.



In Islamic education, leadership is one of the best ways of expressing one's as it is the key quality. The Noble Qur'an narrates a story of one of the Jewish Prophets and kings, characterizing a number of good qualities he inherited from his predecessors, importantly, leadership and courage. Besides, he sought knowledge after his birth, where he became one of the world scholars at his time: {Their prophet told them, "Allah has appointed Saul to be your king." They protested, "How can he be our king when some of us are more deserving of kingship than he, and he has not been blessed with vast riches?" He replied, "Allah has chosen him over you and blessed him with knowledge and stature. And Allah grants kingship to whoever He wills. And Allah is All-Bountiful, All-Knowing} [Chapter 2: verse 247]. This emphasizes knowledge and stature, knowledge means everything that is learned after birth, while stature means all good manners that the one inherits since his birth. Regarding Saul, he inherited several good qualities, such as courage, leadership, and intelligence, and in the verse, only stature is mentioned as the context is about courage, and in Saul's era physical power was crucial in war.

Many interpreters said that the stature is the physical power and courage, as some Messenger's companions said, such as Ibn Abbas. However, Alhawi's interpretation (Alkhamash, 2009) stated a different view from some interpreters. He said that plenty of stature was because of many aspects of good and courage and not because of the physical power, as a poet said:

When you see a weak man, you despise him,  
While inside him is a roaring lion with a strong mind.  
You enjoy the soft man, so you can go after him,  
However, such a man will disappoint you.  
The camel is great without a fierce core,  
Yet it feels not its greatness with its great bones.

The fact of the matter is that Saul, peace be upon him, inherited a number of traits of perfection, such as leadership, courage and intelligence. His leadership was well-manifested in his ability to persuade people to follow him despite what his people's claim that he lacked leadership skills. Moreover, his bravery was well-manifested in his defeat of the greatest army on earth at that time and the killing of its commander Goliath. Moreover, when he felt that his army had agents and hypocrites was obvious evidence of his intelligence, he thought of a plan to expose them, as mentioned in the Quran: {When Saul marched forth with his army, he cautioned: "Allah will test you with a river. So, whoever drinks 'his fill' from it, he is not with me, and whoever does not taste it—except a sip from the hollow of his hands—is definitely with me." The majority drank 'their fill' except for a few!} [Chapter 2: verse 249]. All of the above provides evidence that man inherits his characteristics and morals from his forefathers. As Saul inherited good manners from his ancestors, and he improved himself by increasing his knowledge from what he learned in his life. Consequently, he deserved the kingship and the leadership. This confirms what the medical studies have indicated, that, from the medical and scientific point of view, the genetic traits of man assemble in the DNA, as it contains chemical units that come together and form individual characteristics, and even a person's vulnerability to disease. A single human cell contains two pairs of chromosomes, where man inherits one pair of chromosome from the mother, which is about 50%, and the other pair from the father, which is also about 50%. Likewise, the mother and father inherit from their mother and father a similar pair. Therefore, man inherits (25%) of the chromosome from his four grandparents. While he inherits (12.5%) from his eight grandparents and so on (Understanding genetic: New York –Mid- Atlantic, 2009). Moreover, other medical studies have stated that man may inherit from his ancestors up to the seventh generation (Estes, 2020)

The human being may be born with various qualities, as he may be generous but not brave, or noble, polite and respectful, yet greedy. In addition, one may be an outstanding leader who has the ability to lead people, direct them and make use of their abilities in order to achieve his goals, so he may be stingy, cunning or arrogant like some of the famous leaders. Furthermore, siblings may vary dramatically in terms of their inherited traits as each one of them inherits different traits from the other.

As our research's topic is about the leadership from some Islamic education perspectives, what is the ratio of leaders who are born with leadership traits that can be utilized to lead people brilliantly? We can best determine this ratio by looking at the Hadith narrated by Abdullah b. Umar that the Messenger of Allah said, "people are just like camels, out of one hundred, one can hardly find a single camel suitable to ride" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim). This Hadith may give an indication of the percentage of leaders among people, that they constitute 1% of the population.

The question here is: can inherited good qualities such as leadership, generosity, nobility, courage, etc. be acquired?

It is the key question in this research. Some have said that if man is given certain qualities, such qualities cannot be changed and will stick with him forever. Others believe that such qualities may be acquired through training. Given citations and narrated stories support man's capability to change one's nature to the optimal, as said "clemency can be taught". Nevertheless, this change is characterized by the following features:

1. Perseverance, diligence, and effort to change undesired characteristics.

2. Humans' bad qualities may diminish by learning; because knowledge refines and purifies the soul; uneducated people behave differently than educated ones.
3. This change may disappear in situations of anger, grief, etc., however, one suddenly returns back to his nature and original personality.

### **Third: Components of Leadership in Human Beings from some Islamic Education Perspectives**

To conclude, what are the main components of leadership in human beings from some Islamic education perspectives?

In all cultures, leadership elements can be a combination of inheritance upon which the human being was created, and did not exert any effort on, but inherited unconsciously, while knowledge needs exerted efforts from man to be acquired. If one male/female is able to combine these two qualities, one would be qualified for leading people successfully whenever given the opportunity. Regarding defining leadership elements in Islamic Education, we have to look at the leadership model in Islamic education—i.e., Saul, peace be upon him was characterized by the Creator that he inherited leadership qualities from his predecessors, yet he enhanced it through knowledge until he became one of the most prominent scholars of his time. Therefore, he made an effort to learn, as learning is available to every human being. As a matter of fact, all civilizations and cultures agree on these two elements in terms of a leader's characteristics. However, leadership from the perspective of Islamic education requires a third condition, which is the innate nature that means guiding to the greatest good, which is according to some "monotheism - there is no god but Allah". It is an element with which man is born with unconsciously, but what he acquires from his surroundings, such as his parents, his tutor, etc. can influence it and cause it to continue or change direction otherwise.

Accordingly, in Islamic education, the leader male/female needs to combine and integrate the following components:

1. Innate nature orientation—i.e., monotheism (there is no god but Allah), which is built in the nature of all humans and reinforced and acquired by one's parents, educators and social surroundings, can either reinforce it or redirect it otherwise. Thus, if man maintains and nurtures it, s/he would be guided to the greatest good of "There is no god but Allah" practicing good deeds and righteousness: {By the 'passage of' time! (1) Surely humanity is in great loss, (2) except for those who have faith, do good, and urge each other to the truth, and urge each other to perseverance (3)} [Chater 103: verses 1-3]
2. Inherited leadership features and characteristics.
3. Knowledge, which is acquired from cradle to grave, exerting every effort to enhance all three variables of leadership.

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