

# ***Al-Qasas* Islamic Leadership of Academic Leaders at Public Universities in Johor**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This paper is an empirical study related to Islamic Leadership. Based on Surah *Al-Qasas* verse 26, the concept of Islamic leadership has been expanded and producing a research gap that focuses on *Al-Qasas* Islamic Leadership. The two main pillars of *Al-Qasas* Islamic leadership are *Al-Quwwah*, which is strength, and *Al-Amanah*, which is trustworthy. This paper Objective of this paper is to identify the level of core elements of *Al-Qasas* Islamic leadership among academic leaders.

**Methodology:** A quantitative study in the form of a survey was conducted, where questionnaires were distributed to 339 academic leaders at two public universities in Johor. The data obtained was analyzed using the software Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. The findings of the study were obtained based on the research instruments, namely Islamic Leadership and Institutional Commitment of Academic Leaders (KISKIP).

**Findings:** The findings of the study show that the core level of Islamic leadership of *Al-Quwwah* and *Al-Amanah* of academic leaders is at a high level. The dominant element is the strength of the soul and maintaining the relationship with Allah SWT.

**Practical implications:** By applying the main core of *Al-Qasas* Islamic leadership, it helps to assist the higher education institutions and government agencies in making the selection and appointment of the best academic leaders who are capable and authoritative.

**Keywords:** *Al-Qasas* Islamic Leadership, *Al-Quwwah*, *Al-Amanah*, Academic Leaders

## **Introduction**

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play an important role in the formation of the nation. Their main function is to foster unity and provide a skilled workforce for both the public and private sectors. One of the key objectives of higher education development is to fuel research and development (R&D) efforts, cultivate student personalities, promote a culture of quality, and facilitate teaching, learning, and lifelong education (Hamzah, Hamzah, Othman, & Devi, 2016). In addition, HEIs have been entrusted to produce human capital with expertise, quality, and quantity, enabling the country to compete in the era of the global economy (Norazizah, 2018). To achieve this goal, it is essential to make changes and reforms to HEIs, which play a vital role in developing human capital. This can be achieved by fostering credible academic leaders, particularly in the aspect of leadership (Alimin, 2023).

Managing an organization can be complex, but leading a HEI is even more challenging. Academicians have always viewed themselves as independent entrepreneurs with significant autonomy. However, they are also accountable for meeting the goals, agendas, and expectations of institutions that are influenced and regulated by the government and the institution's board of directors (Mohd Azraai, 2016). This situation places academic leaders in a difficult position, trapped between advocating for staff interests and meeting the needs of the institution, which can often be conflicting (Masitah, Mohamed Khaidir, & Rosninah, 2018). According to Rafiki (2020b), most academic leaders today explore various leadership styles and methods suitable for different fields. Determining the appropriate leadership style is challenging and requires significant situational experience.

However, this study focuses on various aspects of leadership from an Islamic perspective. According to Muhd Akmal, Razaleigh, Rosli, Zanariah, & A'dawiyah (2015), the interpretation of the Quran and the debates of Islamic scholars have revealed that Western leadership theory has its origins in Islamic leadership theory. Islam, brought by the Prophet Muhammad over 1400 years ago, established a strong leadership foundation to be passed on to future leaders. Islamic leadership is concerned with balancing the spirit and the body. Islam is a religion of peace and prosperity, both in this world and the hereafter. To achieve this integrated leadership goal, leaders should be selected from the most competent and qualified individuals (Nor Hazrul, 2021). Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah interpreted that there are two main cores of Islamic leadership which are Al-Quwwah and Al-Amanah. Al-Quwwah refers to the power, ability, and capability to carry out tasks. This strength encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and all necessary skills for the entrusted task. Another term that can be used synonymously with Al-Quwwah is competence. Al-Amanah is based on two main principles which are the relationship with Allah (SWT) and the relationship with other people (Jurate, 2017). Thus, the objective of this study is to identify the core level of Islamic leadership among academic leaders from the Al-Qasas Islamic leadership perspective.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Islamic Leadership***

The concept of Islamic leadership is mainly based on two sources. The first is Naqli, derived from the Quran and Sunnah, and the second is Aqli, based on reasoning and research. The Naqli process is closely related to the three obligatory commitments that Muslim leaders must follow, which are belief in Allah SWT, worship such as prayer and fasting, and adherence to Shariah, which is Islamic law (AlSarhi, Salleh, Mohamed, & Amini, 2014). There are many principles of leadership from Islamic perspectives derived from the Quran and Sunnah. Some of these principles include practicing consultation (Shura), freedom of speech, displaying wisdom, fairness, trust, equality, assertiveness, freedom of thought, reliance on Allah, utilizing Islamic

legal resources, accountability, sincerity, and respecting the dignity of employees (Ather & Sobhani, 2007; Sulaeman, 2020).

In Islam, it is believed that a good leader must have the right leadership skills and attributes. Followers are encouraged to express their opinions and share their views with the leader. The Western perspective also focuses on the importance of openness and honesty in the relationship between leaders and followers (Jamil, 2015). These are the main principles that Muslim leaders should uphold and practice in their lives, especially within organizations. The paradigm of leadership today has shifted towards emphasizing ethics, sincerity, and integrity (AlSarhi et al., 2014). Muslims who adopt and implement the characteristics of Muslim leaders are more effective. This is because they can use a comprehensive perspective in various situations, similar to the ability of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W., who energized generations of Muslims to work together and build a great empire, while also addressing important issues of life and organization (Rahman, Roslan, Yahaya, & Hassan, 2010).

### ***Islamic Leadership Theory***

The theory of Islamic leadership that will be discussed includes the perspectives of Islamic scholars on Islamic leadership, which can be associated with commitment to work, duties, and responsibilities. This study applied theory by Al-Mawardi's Theory of Leadership

### ***Ibn Khaldun's Theory of Leadership***

Ibn Khaldun believed that a caliph must preserve and implement the Shari'a in dignifying Religious Affairs and managing the world. He emphasized that Muslim leaders need to have strong faith and devotion to implement the Shari'a effectively in all aspects of life. To fulfill their tasks and duties, Ibn Khaldun suggested that humanity needs to adopt a creative and critical thinking style (Ridho, 2019).

This humanity must be sensitive and adept at criticism. Criticism should not be used to find flaws or mistakes, but rather to help correct them. Leaders must have the courage to reprimand their subordinates correctly and prudently. It is also important for leaders to recognize their weaknesses and address them. Leadership is a result of thoughtful consideration, proving that individuals have the power and ability to think. In this case, both the leader and their leadership need to have the ability to think to guide the ummah towards excellence. Ibn Khaldun argued that the ability to think is a special power placed in the human mind. It is better to know the truth than to be ignorant of it (Machouche & Bensaid, 2015).

### ***Al-Ghazali's Theory of Leadership***

Imam Al-Ghazali argued that Muslims are obligated to appoint an imam or Caliph. He believed this obligation was based on Shariah and not solely on rational reasoning. According to him, appointing a leader has a positive impact. Having leaders in place can benefit both society and the state. Imam Al-Ghazali's principle is that appointed and obedient leaders will implement worldly laws in the best way possible, facilitating adherence to religious regulations. This is intended to prevent any conflict between worldly matters and religion. He believed that religion has the power to influence the world positively (Suzana, 2019). Imam Al Ghazali has outlined the policies of justice for leaders from the leadership perspective on leadership's duties and responsibilities, namely recognizing the value of power, which is a blessing that can bring happiness in this world and the hereafter. In addition, a responsible leader will always seek advice and views from the ulama' where he will always try to solve every issue and problem faced well (Arifin, 2020).

***Al-Mawardi's Theory of Leadership***

Al-Mawardi conducted a study on leadership, known as Al-Imamah. He emphasized that a leader must fulfill his duties to uphold national policy and religious interests. Key responsibilities highlighted for leaders are the obligation to appoint qualified and trustworthy individuals to positions of authority (Shoaib, Sani, & Amanullah, 2020). Al-Mawardi emphasizes two main criteria crucial for ensuring an individual's commitment to their duties and the trust placed in them. Al-Mawardi outlines several essential qualities required in a leader, including fairness, knowledge of legal matters and current events, physical prowess, sensory acuity, administrative and welfare expertise, and the courage and determination needed to defend the country and engage in warfare against adversaries (Suzana, 2019).

The emphasized criteria indicate that al-Mawardi is very concerned about the selection and appointment of leaders in a leadership role. This is because leaders who meet the specified criteria are better able to carry out their duties with dedication, trust, responsibility, and sincerity. This is important to ensure that the true goals of Islamic leadership are achieved. Therefore, the theory of Islamic leadership used in this study refers to Al-Mawardi's theory, as emphasized in Surah al-Qasas verse 26. This theory highlights the two main cores of Islamic leadership, which are strength and ability (Al-Quwwah) and reliability (Al-Amanah), essential qualities that should be present in every leader.

***The Core of Al-Qasas Islamic Leadership***

According to Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, Al-Qasas Islamic leadership has two main cores, which are Al-Quwwah, which refers to the strength, ability, and skill to carry out tasks, and Al-Amanah, which emphasizes being trustworthy, responsible, and accountable. These two qualities are crucial prerequisites and key preparations for a true Muslim leader (Nor Hazrul, 2021).

***Al-Quwwah (Strength & Competency)***

According to the principles of Shariah, "Quwwah" means strength and competence. Al-Quwwah is evaluated in terms of the specific context or standpoint in leadership. For instance, if a leader is appointed to a position relevant to the economy, then the approach of Al-Quwwah in their leadership will be based on their expertise, knowledge, skill, and experience in the field of economics. Specifically, a leader should have authority in the field they are managing or overseeing (Alimin, Awang, Ahmad, Safar, & Mohd Nain, 2018). For example, a judge must possess expertise, knowledge, skill, and experience in laws and regulations. A person should have the authority, encompassing expertise, knowledge, skill, and experience, allowing them to be capable of leading and fulfilling all responsibilities as Allah's servants. Al-Quwwah can also be defined as having the ability and capability to manage and execute all given tasks. It consists of important elements that can be categorized into four: mind (aqliyyah), soul (nafsiyyah), knowledge, and physical strength (Alimin et.al, 2018). These elements are illustrated in Figure 1.

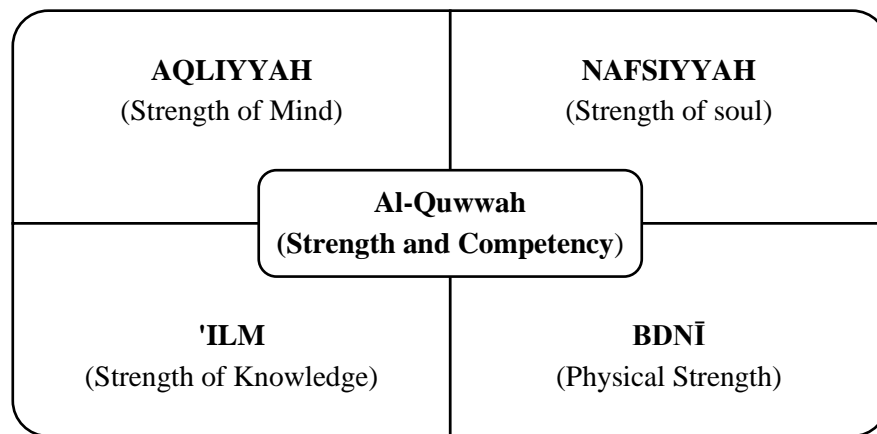


Figure 1: Elements of Al-Quwwah  
Source: Hasri (2013) & (Mohsen, 2007)

### *Al-Amanah (Trustworthiness)*

Based on Islamic leadership, trustworthiness is defined as three things which are having fear of Allah, not using Allah's ayahs for his or her good, and not being afraid of mankind. Leadership in Islam pivots on trustworthiness which represents a psychological contract between leaders and their followers that they will try their best to guide, protect, and treat their followers justly. Besides, a trustworthy leader is mindful of his or her relationship with Allah and is aware of the state of being the servant of Allah and being the caliph in this world. Besides, his or her main responsibility is to manage the world according to Allah's demand and to establish good relationships among mankind (Alimin et al., 2018). Trustworthiness can be classified into two which are the relationship with Allah SWT and the relationship with mankind. For mankind, there are four elements of trustworthiness. They are justice, responsibility, integrity, and accountability. These elements are illustrated in Figure 2.

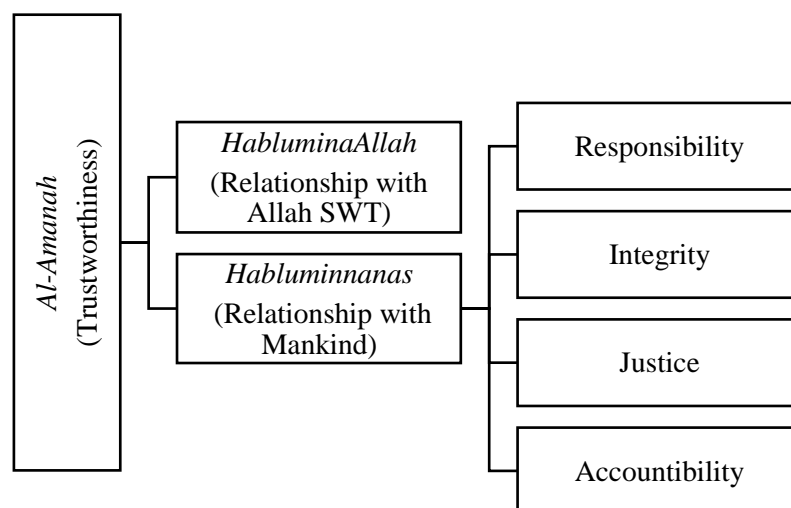


Figure 2: Elements of Al-Amanah  
Source: Zainal Abidin (2014) & Mohsen (2007)



**Methodology**

A quantitative study in the form of a survey was conducted where questionnaires were distributed to academic leaders at two public universities in Johor. The instrument used in this study is called *Kepimpinan Islam dan Komitmen Institusi Pemimpin Akademik, KISKIP*®2022 Universiti Teknologi Malaysia – All Rights Reserved (Alimin, 2023). The stratified random sampling technique has been used in this study for data collection. The data obtained was analyzed using the software Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. At the beginning of the data collection process, 400 copies of questionnaires were printed and meant to be distributed randomly to lecturers at two public universities in Johor. However, due to the constraints imposed by the Movement Control Order (MCO) and the COVID-19 pandemic, the researchers encountered difficulty in obtaining a sampling frame for the study. As a result, the researchers distributed the instrument to random lecturers online. Based on the feedback received, the researcher will identify suitable respondents for the study by determining whether they have previously held any administrative positions. This can be a challenge as it is difficult to track the history of lecturers' involvement in administrative roles within institutions. As a solution, a question regarding their history of holding positions in the institution has been included in the questionnaire to help identify academic administrators among the lecturers throughout their tenure at the institution.

**Findings**

In total, 400 sets of questionnaires were sent out via email to survey respondents. Out of these, 348 sets (87%) received feedback, while 52 sets (13%) did not. The response rate of 87% can be accepted as mentioned by Fincham (2008), for survey research intended to represent an organization or institution, a response rate of 80% is expected. However, the lack of feedback could be attributed to various factors, such as incomplete emails, inactive email addresses, or respondents being unwilling to answer the questionnaire. Some respondents mentioned that the questionnaire was too lengthy and time-consuming, which may have contributed to the low response rate. Of the 348 data obtained, 339 were analyzed. The remaining nine (9) data obtained cannot be used because they do not meet the criteria set for respondents for the study. Table 1 shows the profile of respondents based on gender, marital status, highest academic graduation and teaching experience. The survey respondents were 57.5% male and 42.5% female, with the majority of them having set up a household (89.4%). In addition, the majority also have the highest level of education, namely a doctoral degree (90.3%) and only a small group has an education level up to a bachelor's degree (1.8%). Finally, most of these academic leaders have served 9-20 years in institutions (44.8%), while others have served 21-32 years (26.0%) and 8 years (23.6%) respectively. Only a small minority have served more than 32 years (5.6%) in institutions.

There are four main elements in the main core of Al-Quwwah Islamic leadership, namely the strength of mind, strength of soul, strength of knowledge, and physical strength while there are five main elements in the main core of Al-Amanah Islamic leadership, namely relationship with Allah SWT, responsibility, integrity, justice and accountability. In Table 1, the academic leaders' levels of Al-Quwwah are described. Mental strength is the most dominant attribute among academic leaders for Al-Quwwah, with the highest mean score of 4.37. On the other hand, physical strength has the lowest mean score for Al-Quwwah, with a mean score of 3.87. For Al-Amanah, in Table 4.47, it is shown that the most dominant attribute among academic leaders is their relationship with Allah SWT, with a mean score of 4.75. Justice has the lowest mean score for Al-Amanah, with a mean score of 4.44.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

<b>Respondents Profile</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	195	57.5
Female	144	42.5
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	32	9.4
Married	303	89.4
Other status	4	1.2
<b>Highest Academic Qualification</b>		
Bachelor Degree	6	1.8
Master Degree	27	8.0
Doctoral Degree	306	90.3
<b>Length of Services</b>		
<8 years	80	23.6
9-20 years	152	44.8
21-32 years	88	26.0
>32 years	19	5.6

Overall, academic leaders scored high in both Al-Quwwah and Al-Amanah, with mean and standard deviation scores of 4.15, 0.69 and 4.57, 0.54, respectively. The findings are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Level and Dominant Elements of *Al-Quwwah* based on the mean score

<b>Element</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>High</b>
Strength of Soul	4.37	0.63	High
Strength of knowledge	4.22	0.64	High
Strength of Mind	4.14	0.68	High
Physical Strength	3.87	0.79	Moderately High
<b><i>Al-Quwwah</i> (Strength)</b>	<b>4.15</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 3: Level and Dominant Elements of *Al-Amanah* based on the mean score

<b>Element</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>High</b>
Relationship with Allah SWT	4.75	0.49	High
Accountability	4.59	0.52	High
Integrity	4.58	0.47	High
Responsibility	4.50	0.58	High
Justice	4.44	0.65	High
<b><i>Al-Amanah</i> (Trustworthiness)</b>	<b>4.57</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>High</b>

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The findings showed that the level of the main core of Islamic leadership is at a high level with a high mean score value. This explains that academic leaders at public universities in Johor have the strength and ability to lead and maintain relationships with Allah SWT and mankind. The findings are in line with studies by Noor Hidayah (2014) and Mohd Dzakhiruddin (2019), which examined the level of Islamic leadership practices of lecturers in private higher education institutions (IPTs). Their findings found that the level of Islamic leadership characteristics and principles of lecturers was at a high level, with a high mean score value. The primary focus of Al-Quwwah Islamic leadership is that strength is crucial for a leader. This is based on a verse from the Quran, Surah Al-Muddathir Verse 2, which states, "Get up and warn!" The word "Qum" (risen) in this verse signifies strength and highlights the importance of strength in taking action. This verse emphasizes the need for strength in carrying out tasks. It is believed that a capable leader possesses three important qualities: physical ability, spiritual growth, and exceptional mental capacity. When these three qualities are combined, they give rise to a good leader (Jamsari et al., 2012).

Strength and ability are necessary qualities for a leader, as mentioned by Asaari & Mat Desa (2017). A leader must be efficient in carrying out tasks. Competence in this context refers to possessing the skills or knowledge required to excel in a given task. A leader must master the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively lead an organization. Similarly, academic leaders in universities require relevant competencies and skills. This is because they often take on responsibilities or are given positions without specific training or prior administrative experience. As a result, academic leaders may end up with a heavier workload, causing their work and research-related interests to be increasingly neglected while struggling to meet various job demands. Consequently, their professional and personal lives become intertwined, and they may have to sacrifice their time to cope with the increased pressures. As said by Mohd Azraai Kassim (2016), a career as an academician requires the skills of someone who can play the role and responsibility as a field expert, educator, researcher, manager and leader at the same time.

The level of trustworthiness (Al-Amanah) of academic leaders is also found to be high. Trust is important for a leader because it is a key value in Islamic management (Sapie Sabilan et al., 2010). It is one of the attributes of the Prophet Muhammad, so much so that he is called al-amin (the man of faith), and is also the basis for every human behavior (Mohd Shauki, 2009). The result of this trust will be the birth of other admirable qualities. Moreover, trustworthiness is important to be developed by leaders in organizations because, according to Ali (2009), when employees have high trust, their confidence level that the leader will succeed in advancing the organization is high. So, it encourages the leader to perform the task well. Moreover, employees are also more committed to the organization when they trust their leaders. The findings also support the results of studies done by Masribanun and Ab. Halim (2011) and Ahmad Zabidi (2005) found that the effectiveness of education is dependent on the personality and leadership style of the educator. Both studies suggest that educators should equip themselves with Islamic leadership by modeling the leadership of Rasullulah SAW in delivering educational knowledge.

Islamic leadership was found to have a significant influence on the performance of the organization, productivity, decision-making processes, planning implementation, and employee satisfaction (Gazi, 2020). According to Noor Hidayah (2014), the leadership qualities of a lecturer can contribute to excellence in educational institutions through Islamic leadership, using the example of Prophet Muhammad as a model for effective educational leadership (Masribanun and Ab Halim, 2011). Additionally, Jamsari et al. (2012) assert that competent and qualified leaders, as prescribed in Islam, are necessary for the well-being and



progress of a society. Comprehensively, qualified leaders who follow Islamic principles are significant for the success of an institution or a country.

The main core of Islamic leadership, namely strength (Al-Quwwah) and trustworthiness (Al-Amanah), was found in strengthening the leadership of academic leaders. With proper guidance, training, and encouragement, academic leaders can acquire a better understanding of their competence and ability to perform their tasks effectively. When they have a clear understanding of their Al-Quwwah, they will be more committed to the institution and capable of achieving outstanding performance. Therefore, it is essential to possess the elements of Al-Quwwah when designing programs that aim to enhance the core level of Al-Quwwah and increase the Islamic leadership of academic leaders. Furthermore, the institution is also required to gain trust among the management of academic staff in the institution as well as to produce academic staff who are more committed and to improve the performance and productivity of academic staff by applying the elements of Al-Amanah. The institution should also ensure the selection and appointment of capable leaders by implementing policies based on their high level of Islamic leadership. The limitation of this study is that the study only involved participants from two public universities in Johor. Therefore, for future studies, it is recommended to conduct a review with a larger and more diverse sample, including respondents from all public universities (IPTA) and private universities (IPTS) in Malaysia. This will allow for research findings from different organizations to be considered.

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