Examining the Concept of Educational Leadership from the Classical Islamic Worldview

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the concept of leadership from the perspective of the Islamic worldview. It begins by emphasizing the fundamental belief in Allah's Oneness and Supreme nature and the purpose of human beings as servants to serve Allah. The relationship between God and humans is based on followership, with every individual considered a unique creation with an exclusive bond to Allah (sbt) as the only true leader. The article highlights the idea of equality in Islamic thought, where individuals are seen as equals but undergo trials to test their characters and facilitate personal growth. It further discusses how individuals striving for virtuous Knowledge can attain positions of respect and recognition, emphasizing that leadership is determined by the extent to which individuals realize their latent potentialities. The article also explores the dialectical approach, which harmonizes seemingly contradictory notions and prevents the fragmentation of self, thought, values, and norms. It emphasizes the Importance of learning from divergent opinions and acknowledges the constant need for assessing and reformulating theory and practice. The concept of education is deeply rooted in the Islamic worldview, encompassing the holistic developmental progression of individuals based on their Knowledge and understanding of creation. The article concludes by asserting that leadership in the Islamic worldview involves actively witnessing faith in action and integrating secular and divine Knowledge. It highlights the dialogical-dialectical process through which educational leaders guide their followers towards continual self-development. Overall, this article provides insights into the understanding of leadership derived from the Islamic worldview.

Keywords: Leadership, Islamic worldview, Followership, Education, Dialogical-dialectical process

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini mengeksplorasi konsep kepemimpinan dari perspektif pandangan dunia Islam. Itu dimulai dengan menekankan keyakinan mendasar pada Keesaan dan Sifat Agung Allah dan tujuan manusia sebagai hamba untuk mengabdi kepada Allah. Hubungan antara Tuhan dan manusia didasarkan pada keikutsertaan, dengan setiap individu dianggap sebagai ciptaan unik dengan ikatan eksklusif kepada Allah (sbt) sebagai satu-satunya pemimpin sejati. Artikel tersebut menyoroti gagasan kesetaraan dalam pemikiran Islam, di mana individu dipandang setara tetapi menjalani ujian untuk menguji karakter mereka dan memfasilitasi pertumbuhan pribadi. Ini lebih lanjut membahas bagaimana individu yang berjuang untuk Pengetahuan yang bajik dapat mencapai posisi hormat dan pengakuan, menekankan bahwa kepemimpinan ditentukan oleh sejauh mana individu menyadari potensi laten mereka. Artikel ini juga mengeksplorasi pendekatan dialektika, yang mengharmonisasikan gagasan-gagasan yang tampaknya kontradiktif dan mencegah fragmentasi diri, pemikiran, nilai, dan norma. Ini menekankan Pentingnya belajar dari pendapat yang berbeda dan mengakui kebutuhan konstan untuk menilai dan merumuskan teori dan praktek. Konsep pendidikan berakar kuat dalam pandangan dunia Islam, yang mencakup perkembangan holistik individu berdasarkan pengetahuan dan pemahaman mereka tentang penciptaan. Artikel tersebut diakhiri dengan menegaskan bahwa kepemimpinan dalam pandangan dunia Islam melibatkan secara aktif menyaksikan keimanan dalam tindakan dan mengintegrasikan Pengetahuan sekuler dan Ilahi. Ini menyoroti proses dialogis-dialektis di mana para pemimpin pendidikan membimbing pengikut mereka menuju pengembangan diri yang berkelanjutan. Secara keseluruhan, artikel ini memberikan wawasan tentang pengertian kepemimpinan yang bersumber dari pandangan dunia Islam.

Kata kunci: Kepemimpinan, pandangan dunia Islam, Keikutsertaan, Pendidikan, Proses dialogis-dialektis

BACKGROUND

This paper explores the theoretical ideal of Islamic educational leadership by examining core Islamic texts, such as the Quran, alongside insights from classical and contemporary Muslim scholars. To begin, the concept of worldview is introduced, emphasizing its relevance to the Islamic perspective, specifically through the notion of the "din of Islam." This worldview is considered a comprehensive civilizational endeavour wherein leadership is intimately connected to self-development. The paper argues that the self is conceived as an internal agent engaged in a transformative dialogue, capable of change and growth.

Furthermore, the acquisition of Knowledge is identified as a crucial aspect of Islamic educational leadership. A hierarchical structure of Knowledge is presented, starting with sensory perception and rational Knowledge, which formulates the basic understanding of the physical dimension and reality. However, the paper contends that a higher form of Knowledge exists—the Knowledge of the unseen or hidden, associated with the metaphysical realm. This Knowledge is attained through revelation, inspiration, and intuition, guiding the practice of rational Knowledge. The integration of theory and practice is seen as essential for the harmonization of Knowledge, and it is emphasized that the core concept of tawhid, the unity and Oneness of Allah, plays a central role in this process.

Drawing inspiration from the Daoist Yin-Yang philosophy, the paper argues that tawhid represents the ultimate state of perfection, achieved through the continuous processes of change and transformation. By adopting a dialogical-dialectical approach, Islamic educational leadership is conceptualized as the guiding and teaching of followers, fostering their continual self-development. The paper suggests that this process involves engaging in meaningful dialogue, facilitating growth, and supporting individuals in their personal and spiritual advancement journey. By synthesizing insights from Islamic texts and scholars, the paper contributes to understanding educational leadership within an Islamic worldview.

This paper employs a theoretical analysis approach to understand leadership from the Islamic worldview. The study draws on primary sources such as the Quran and works of classical Islamic scholars, including Sina, Rushd, Ghazali, and the Ikhwan al Safa. Secondary sources are also consulted, including scholarly articles and books by contemporary researchers such as Beekun, Badawi, Sahin, and Rahman. By critically analyzing these sources, the paper aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of the principles and concepts of leadership in the Islamic worldview.

The Islamic Worldview

The term *worldview,* a calque of the German term '*Weltanschauung',* [world ('*welt')* view '*anschauung'*] implies the *"study of the world; a view of life"* (Oxford Dictionary) that Hughes (2020) recognises to be a perception framework that identifies the convictions of an individual regarding his world and how he interacts with it. Studies conducted by Rothman & Coyle (2018) and Naugle (2002) demonstrate that the universal adoption of this term has been directly responsible for pioneering research in the natural and social sciences, humanities, philosophy and theology. Furthermore, Islamic scholars operating within the spirit of the *Islamisation of Knowledge* movement suggest that the notion of worldview is not a novel development within the Islamic scholarly tradition (Ahmad, 2012; Awang, 2002; Imran H Khan Suddahazai & Manjoo, 2022; Imran Hussain Khan Suddahazai, 2023). They contend that the entire corpus of the Islamic tradition has been established within the conceptual boundaries of the Islamic worldview, denoted by the Arabic term *tasawur* (Ahmad, 2012).

Awang (2002) cites the work of classical Islamic lexicographers Ibn Manzur (d.1312) and Al Jurjani (d.1078) to demonstrate that the term *tasawur*, derived from the root word *sawwara* encapsulates the ideals that now define the English worldview:

> "First, to give a perception to the form that is viewed; second, to try and give an actual view on something; third, to give an actual outlook on something; And fourth, to produce the outline of the thing in the mind (Awang, 2002)"

It is suggested that this study understands the Arabic and Anglo-Germanic epithets of worldview and *tasawur* to infer that individuals ultimately construe their idea of reality and its value systems through religious, philosophical, historical or personal experience. Therefore, in deciphering the individual or societal perspective, it becomes imperative that the social system from which they hail is thoroughly examined. Thus, the study is aligned with Naugle's spirited statement, "*After all, what could be more important or influential than the way an individual, a family, a community, a nation, or an entire culture conceptualises reality...!*" (Naugle, 2002).

However, as Abdullah and Nadvi (2011) argue, although "*individuals in a society can have their own principles or variations... their standard behaviour would be inclined to the norms that have been socially agreed.*" Toshihiko Izutsu (2008) perceives these norms to be contained in the semantic structure of the language. He argues for a semantic analysis of the linguistic terminology to deduce the Weltanschauung of those people. Izutsu (2008) recognises this as the 'sprachliche weltanschuuangslehre' of the nation; their worldly perspective is encapsulated in its prominent terms. In support of this contention, this study of linguistic relativity suggests that "*a given language not only contains the ideas and concepts of its users, but it also excludes other ideas from being expressed*" (Clark, 2009). Therefore, by these hypotheses, particular thoughts and perceptions are With regards to this study, a profound and relevant example of this entails understanding the designatory terms utilised to describe the faith, the *din of Islam*.

Din of Islam

The concept of *din* as it is promulgated within the Quranic context is vastly more sophisticated and prodigious in comparison to its pagan Arabic connotation. The pre-Islamic understanding denoted a conceptual similarity to the Western rendition of the term *religion*, whereby it was a personalised system of ritualised practices that became part of the custom and culture of society. Therefore, both Izutsu (2008) and Al-Fārūqī (1992) reject the notion propagated by such writers as Carter (2017) and Smith (1991) that *din* is an alien term incorporated from Persian heritage into the Arabic language. Instead, they argue that din is a more comprehensive term than religion because it encompasses a way of life rather than a set of beliefs. This is evident from the scholarly realisations of *din* as an overt manifestation of high civilisation, such as Al Farabi's (d.950) delineation of the *'Virtuous City'* (Walzer, 1985). An ideal that conceives the zenith of civic society to be based on ethical and moral virtues, those endowed with Knowledge are systematically developed as a class apart and placed at the helm as leaders and teachers of humanity. In contemporary parlance, Al-Attas replicates Farabi's exposition by relating the semantic analysis of the conjugational notions of the term *din* to establishing a civilised society through the development of universal ideals (Wan Daud, 1998). Culturing moral and ethical virtues sutures the very fabric of society into a coherent community leading to a subsequent manifestation of *tamaddun*, a civilisation. This implies that society operating under universal laws and principles organises itself into a cohesive functional unit. The contribution of individuals to society determines the attainment of its common objectives. When this process is undertaken within a precisely demarcated political and social boundary, it is known as *al Madinah*, the city (Walzer, 1985). The authorities that are charged to preside over the affairs of the city's

population, its leaders, ruler, governors or judges are known as the *dayyan* (Walzer, 1985). According to Ahmad (2012) and Tolchah & Mu'ammar (2019), it is clear that there is a distinct correlation between the cited verbs (*tamaddun, al Madinah, dayyan*). They are all derived from the all-encompassing verb *dana*, which signifies the development of civilisation based upon intellectual endeavour. The noun that provides the descriptive nature of this process is *Islam*, the appellation of the *din,* explicated to man by Allah, via the medium of the Quran (3:19; 3:83-85; 4:125; 5:3). Hence, the contention being presented can be abridged to suggest that the *Islamic tasawur* is encapsulated in the term *din*, which connotes a civilisational endeavour attained through the subjugation of the self, *Islam* (Arif, 2007).

A cursory examination of literature on the Quranic linguistics reveals that the Arabic term *Islam,* composed of the trilateral verb *'slm'* encompasses the terms *salima,* 'to be in a sound condition', 'well without blemish', 'safe and sound' and *aslama,* the 'submission' or 'resignation of oneself' (Omar, 2003). Hence, another popular paraphrasing of *Islam* is in its deference or *Submission*. Examining the root verbs that compose the term Islam presents a literal translation that purports to a state of a sound condition attained through the Peaceful Submission of the self. This literal definition of the *din of Islam* infers the notion of a humble state of existence, whereby the intellectual development of the individual and society is nurtured in line with the interminable ethical and moral values. This, however, does not curtail nor stifle human creativity but inculcates and nurtures inherent human potential through eternal universalistic principles (Al Zeera, 2020; Rahman, 2009).

The profound transformation in the meaning of established terms and concepts such as *din* had such an impact upon society that Muhammad (s) was alleged to be a *sahir* (sorcerer), a *kahin* (soothsayer), a *sha'ir* (poet) and a *majnun* (possessed) (Sahin, 2013; Imran Hussain Khan Suddahazai, 2023). Therefore, Izutsu (2008) argues that the semantic structure revealed in the Quran revolutionised and refined the traditional comprehension of the Arabic language. Whilst Al-Attas in Daiber (2020) observes that the reformulation of the old pagan worldview through a renovation of the language was the original Islamisation process, which entailed the deciphering of the notion of 'leadership' as a process of self-development.

Leadership as Self-Development

The early Hellenised Islamic philosophers of the classical age perceived the Quranic illustration of the *nafs* (Self) of man *(insan)* to be an objectified entelechy within the individual. In order to prove the existence of an extant self, Ibn Sina postulated the hypothetical notion of a suspended *'flying man'* (Rahman, 2009). Rahman imagination of a person created in entirety, suspended in mid-air, devoid of external stimuli, oblivious to his extremities, limbs and body, would still be *'aware'* of his existence. Hence Ibn Sina states, *"…you know that what can be asserted as existing is not the same as what cannot be asserted and that what is stipulated is not the same as what is not stipulated"* (Rahman, 2009). Thus, the core contention presented here proposes that the self can be conceived as a separate entity from the physical body, thus, justifying its existence. However, the contrary postulate of the existence of the body without a self is non-verifiable and thus, not stipulated.

Furthermore, Ibn Sina propounds that although the Self can be conceived as embodying form, it is not the material form of the physical body. Therefore, Ibn Sina renders the Arabic term *'ana,* which directly translates as self, to *'I-ness'* to identify the specific aspect of the *nafs* (self), which is aware of its existence without the encasement of a materialised body-vessel. Islamic scholars such as Iqbal (2013) and Western commentators such as De Boer in (Klein-Franhe (2013) also equate *'ana* with I-ness based upon Al Jilli's text *'Al Insan Al Kamil'* (The Perfect Man) (Rassool, 2021). Iqbal (2013) utilises the analogy of a toothache

to exemplify and equate the *'I'* with self-consciousnesses. He states that the *"dentist may sympathise with my toothache but cannot experience the feeling of my toothache"* (Islam & Aziza, 2022). Thus, for Iqbal, the experiences of sensations formulate a state or event of consciousness that is expressed by the *'I'*. Rassool (2021), in summarising the assertions of prominent Islamic scholars from the classical to the contemporary era, argues that *'I-ness'* of man is *"the source of his highest qualities...distinguishes between the I and the world...and is the distinctive characteristic of man alone* (Rassool, 2021)." (Therefore, the concept of the self as introduced by Ibn Sina's perspective is, as Tolstoy analogised in his great saga, akin to the captain of a ship (Roji & El Husarri, 2021). Although the captain does not embody the form of the ship, he is nevertheless the perfection of that vessel. Thus, the conduct of physical acts performed with a certain degree of will that do not belong to the nature of bodies... must belong to a principle they have other than bodies. This principle is what is called 'Self'. Thus *"Allah warns you of Himself (Nafs)"* (3:28/30), whilst *"man is a witness against himself"* (75:14) and the testimony of Prophet Isa (s) declares, *"...You know all that is within me (nafs) whereas I do not know what is within yourself (nafs)..."* (5:116)

The orthodox Sunni and Sufi (sapiential) traditions embodied in the work of Ghazali (d.1111) envision the *qalb* (heart) to be the seat of the self. Ghazali eulogised that this was the light of Allah, the *sirru'l-qalb* (secret of heart) and reflected in all of Allah's truths (Griffel, 2009). According to Buehler (2016) this allusion to the heart in Islamic tradition implies the tangible metaphoric gateway to the self. The heart is also synonymous with the concept of *"the 'intellect' not in the sense in which this word is misused today, but in the full sense of Latin 'intellectual', that is, the faculty which perceives the transcendent"* (Buehler, 2016). Said Nursi (2004) contends that the *Amanah* (divine trust) bestowed upon *'Insan'* correlates to self-realisation and consciousness. However, in accepting the divine trust, which all of creation had shirked from, man is, according to the Quran, *"...unjust and ignorant."* (32:72). Iqbal (2013) argue that when self-realisation has fermented and actualised into a concrete awareness of the 'I', it may engulf the individual, thus, sowing the seeds for injustice and ignorance. Therefore, the Quranic, Prophetic, traditional and scholarly literature is replete with warnings against self-importance and superciliousness. The Prophets of Allah explicitly stipulated, *"We are men like you"* (14:11), *"Say 'I am only a man like you..."* (18:110; 41:6). An aphorism attributed to Prophet Muhammad (s) cautions against *"...the following of desire and the approval of man to himself".* (2:120) Furthermore, Quranic exhortations equate a haughty attitude with the enemy of man, Shaitan, who challenged and denounced man by declaring *"...I am better than him..."* (7:12), then through the personage of Pharaoh who proclaimed to his nation, *"I am alone the supreme lord of you all"* (79:24). This self-obsessed and self-centred attitude can be compared to the secular Freudian notions of the id and the ego.

Therefore, it can be stipulated that the Quranic concept of the Self embodies both the physically moulded earthly *"clay"* (23:12) as the form of man and the divine breath (15:29), as his consciousness. Hence, the self exists between two extremes: the earth's lowliness and the immensity of the Holy Spirit. Thus, man is, as Turner & Nasir (2016) observes, *"compelled to be always in motion. His own 'self' is the stage for a battle between two forces that results in a continuous evolution towards perfection"* (Turner & Nasir, 2016). Hence the philosophers of Islam's golden age, such as al Kindi (d.866), al-Farabi (d.950), Ibn Sina (d.1037) and Ibn Rushd (d.1198), conceived of perfection as being a primary and secondary nature (Sardar, 2014). The primary nature of perfection is the essence that makes a thing what it is, whilst the secondary nature is the conduct or performance of the act established by its essence.

The *nafs,* therefore, are the primary perfection of the physical body, which is then subsequently endowed with the potential to perform secondary functions. The *nafs* were, thus, conceived to be of two elements, the 'rational' and 'non-rational'. The 'non-rational' *nafs* was the primary agent that managed the

physical body. It was deemed to have two distinct natures, 'plant' and 'animal'. It manifested at the most elementary level as the *plant soul*, which represents the most basic functions associated with the body, such as sustenance and reproduction. The *animal soul,* however, operated at a higher level and was composed of sensational and locomotive powers.

Ibn Sina in Rahman (2009) then argued that higher rational nafs also existed. His hypothetical experiment of the suspended man inferred that the awareness of being, existing without any material form or substance, implied Knowledge and awareness of one's own existence. This conception of *rational nafs* was then divided into the practical and theoretical intellects ('*aql*). The practical intellect was responsible for knowing and acquiring temporal, social and worldly Knowledge. It sought to understand the principles of creation and their utilisation according to the reality it encountered. The theoretical intellect epitomised the zenith of human development as it sought to grasp and live according to universal laws and truths. The theoretical intellect represented the nafs' perfection and was perceived as connected to the first intellect or God.

Therefore, the concept of the nafs formulated a pivotal and pertinent point of reference for the early Islamic philosophers. This is exemplified by Al Farabi, who concurred that the *nafs,* in its absolute essence, was a unified whole whose ultimate objective was to attain happiness. This, however, could only be accomplished by acquiring the 'light' from the 'agent intellect' (Walzer, 1985). The Islamic philosophers adopted this quintessential Aristotelian thought because it confirmed the *idée reçue* of unity in Islamic thought (*tawhid*). The notion of raising the *nafs* to a stage whereby it experiences the realisation of unity with the eternal and universal concepts as expounded in the Quran. Therefore, realising this stage is identified to delineate happiness as the *nafs* become 'aware of' and 'connected to' the Eternal.

This objective and formulaic perspective of the *nafs* was further developed by a rather furtive clique of scholars *Ikhwan al Safa* (Brethren of Purity) and later expounded upon by Ibn Khaldun (d.1406) in his classic introductory text *'al Muqadimah'* (1967 (Imanbayeva, 2020)). However, due to the notorious rejection and uprising against the dominant rationalistic academic schools of thought (*mutazilah*) by Ash'rite theologians (*mutakallimum*), the rationalist perspective was subsequently harangued and deemed antithetical to the Islamic ideals of revelation.

Despite this hostility towards rationalising the human self and existence, some intellectual writers of the era banded together under the pseudonym of *Ikhwan al Safa* and utilised non-philosophical terminology to discuss the *nafs*. Instead of discussing the rational and non-rational aspects of the *nafs,* as Ibn Sina et al had attempted beforehand, they delineated a natural parabolic perspective of the *nafs* that was identifiable with a stage the earlier Islamic philosophers had proposed (ElKaleh, 2023).

The *Ikhwan* assert that every individual would begin life in a *Plant* like a stage, whereby the desire for sustenance and nourishment would override any other factor. Hence in acquiring the core sources for survival, the individual would attain pleasure as it satisfied its needs and reached the limits of its objective.

This stage would then evolve to the *Animal* stage, which encompassed the demands of the *Plant* stage but was supplemented with the desire for belonging, revenge and authority as the individual recognised their interests and acted to satisfy them. This was attained via the need to dominate through cunningness, chicanery, manipulation, and suspicion of others' intents and actions. Thus, individuals at this stage sought to establish those practices and policies that sustained their domination and served their interests.

These first two stages represent in parity the rationalists' concept of the *non-rational nafs,* whereas the third stage represents the *rational nafs,* particularly the practical intellect. The third, *Human*, phase incorporates the previous two stages of the *Plant* and *Animal* but now imbues a desire for Knowledge,

learning and discovery. Thus, individuals at this stage participate in scientific inquiry and strive to acquire the arts, crafts and skills necessary to conduct such practice. In this phase, the individual also became aware of the self and its prestige and esteem. Pursuing such activity brings pleasure, contentment and a sense of fulfilment. An inability, or lack of opportunity, to participate in the acquisition and implementation of Knowledge and science is a cause for sorrow, sadness, frustration, and confusion.

The fourth stage, identified as the *Molakia* could be argued to represent the material and habitual intellects of the theoretical intellect. Therefore, the individual's foremost concern is acquiring Knowledge and the sciences required to further comprehend the laws of creation. Individuals possess a keen sense of perception, understanding, intelligence, purity and firmness of heart in Allah's revelations. Ibn Sina's identification of the internal senses is pertinent towards achieving this station. Using common sense, imagination, and memory creates the necessary insight for investigation and reflection. Thus, individuals at this stage act as the teachers for the rest of humanity.

The fifth and final stage represents the pinnacle of human self-development and the purpose of existence. The Prophets and their heirs, the scholars and great sages, best represent the *Khudsia* phase. Here, the overwhelming desire is to be close to Allah; the individual is defined by his/her unconditional faith and belief in the Reality, Truth and Power of Allah; furthermore, the individuals now perceive themselves to be a vessel or conduit through which the Divine operates.

From a contemporary Muslim perspective, these classically broad descriptive stages of the *nafs* are accepted to be the mental, psychological constructs of an individual and her personality. As per the classical thinkers, Rahman (2009) conceives of the self to be aware of its existence but argues that phrases such as *"nafs al mutma'inna (satisfied soul) and nafs al lawwama (blaming soul) are best understood as states, aspects, dispositions or tendencies of the human personality."* (Rahman, 2009)

Sahin (2013) further develops the concept of the *nafs* from a mental phenomenon to a psychosocial construct, a narrative or dialogue. The self is a temporal realisation of the continuous dialogue, the *"communicative space in our subjective lives that takes place between us and what we are not..the future-directed, projected character of our existence..."* (Sahin, 2013). Thus, Sahin argues that the 'self' is 'transcendental' and 'self-surpassing' and should not be understood to be an 'abstract metaphysical entity', but the significant component of the human physical body that has *"potential for change, growth and transformation."* (Ibid) This perspective of the self has gained support and Habib, Nadeem Chohan, & Bhatti, 2021 (2021), working within Kazmi's (2015) *'Self as a narrative'* promulgation, perceives the self to be a *'story that is constantly being written...'* (Habib et al., 2021).

Kazmi & Naaranoja (2015) argues that Kazmi's narrative conceptualisation of self is comparable to Fay (1987) notion of the individual as a 'historical being'. Fay was adamant that human beings, on account of their ability to reflect and transform, were capable of self-interpretation. This implies that individuals can innately evaluate their practices, beliefs and relations and alter their identities and societies based on their reflections. Furthermore, there is recognition that the human being is "*social",* as they possess the latent potential to change society through their conduct and relationships; "*rational"* due to their propensity for reflection upon their practices and relations; and "*active"* as they can reformulate their practices and relations based upon their ability to "*reflect"* (Fay, 1987).

Fay (1987) prognosis suggests that societal and individual transformations are inherently synonymous, as society constitutes the stage upon which the Human being acts. Thus, as human being continually reformulates their understanding of the natural discourse, they will innately alter their perceptions and meanings of the natural order to survive and thrive.

Sahin (2013) concurs that the self-narrative formulates the basis for developing individual identity. He argues that this encompasses the notions of *religiosity*, entailing the development of personal attitudes towards the *'belief in'* and *'practice of'* a specific faith system and the degree to which this has been formed through critical or reflective practices, *subjectivity*. Sahin perceives this construction as a constant dialogical process that construes the self through a personal narrative, which *"opens up possibilities for reinterpreting ourselves in the light of changing life conditions"* (Sahin, 2013). The literature suggests that the notion of leadership from an Islamic perspective entails realising the individual's potential abilities and character through the development of their personality, the self. However, this positive development depends upon two core factors: the acquisition of Knowledge and *tawhid*.

Knowledge as the Foundation of the Islamic Worldview

Knowledge is considered sacred as a conceptual ideal as it formulates the foundation for the divine narration, which comprises the essence and literal 'word of Allah' (*Kalimat Allah*). A'la Mawdudi (2013) argues that the Quran personifies the method by which Knowledge of the Creator and creation is acquired and propagated as conceptual ideals that lead towards certainty, the truth of reality and the purpose of man.

The Arabic term *Quran*, literally translated, implies recitation. Thus, there is no onus on a physical text but a medium which is *"listened to"* and *"reflected upon"* with *"reverence"*(A'la Mawdudi, 2013). Therefore, Sahin (2013) compares the concept of the Quran to the sacred texts of the Hindus, the Bhagavad-Gita (Lord's Song) as *"the spoken word' of God, a dialogue* (Sahin, 2013)."Whereas the Gita is a dialogue between Krishna and Arjun on military conflict, the Quran utilises *"a mixture of narrative prose, poetic imagery and oratory"* to address *"...individual, social, religious and ethical dilemmas that humans face in their lives* (Sahin, 2013)." Hence, Rahman (2009) perceives the Quran to be a "*document...squarely aimed at man..."* a *"guidance for mankind"* (*hudan li'l-nas*) (Rahman, 2009).

Wan Daud concurs that a holistic rendering of the Quran is required to fully realise and comprehend this guidance to humanity (Wan Daud, 2013). This implies that reiterating themes and passages of the Quran are contextualised by the *asbab al nuzul* (occasions of revelations) with an explicit recognition of the scientific nature of the Arabic language and its allegorical application (Daiber, 2020). Therefore, the Quran presents us with a metaphorical framework for human development, the educational process (Leezenberg, 2021). Indeed, in the first five revealed verses (*ayahs* 96:1-5) the *"concepts of reading, learning/knowing and the pen occur six times* (Jalil & Amir, 2019)." The appellation *Quran*, and the first word revealed by Allah to Muhammad, *Iqra* are both derivatives of the root *qara'a* (read) ('Abdullāh 'Abdul-Raḥmān, 1982; Imran Hussain Khan Suddahazai, 2023). The Quran refers to itself as the *kitab* from *kataba* (wrote), which implies not just a physical book encasing a body of Knowledge but a source from which all Knowledge stems. Allah declares that *"Nothing have We omitted From the Book"* (6:38) *"...We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things..."* (16:89). This reiterating message justifies the Quran's self-description of being glorious (*majìd*) and clear (*mubìn*).

The pertinence of knowledge acquisition is initiated right from the nascent acceptance stage into the Islamic mindset. The recitation and offering of obligatory *salât* (Contact Prayer) require the adherent to memorise and recite many *ayahs*. Thus, Abdullah (1982) alludes to the notion that embracing Islam requires acquiring some knowledge. Pregill (2020) argues that, unlike the previous Judeo/Christian scriptures, which begin chronologically or genealogically, the Quran directly refers to reading, teaching, knowing, and writing. Hence exhortations such as *"By the pen and that which they write (therewith)"* (88:1)

lead Haleem to contend that the *"…significance of uttering and writing the revealed scripture is…locked in the very nouns that designate the Quran"* (Pregill, 2020).

Hence, there is an overt justification for the Quran to be considered the embodiment of the divine framework by which Knowledge is acquired and synthesised. Therefore, the Quranic perspective formulates an innate synonymous relationship between the purposes of man, *"to worship"* (51:56) and *"Those truly fear Allah among His servants, who know"* (35:28).

Bondarev (2022) argues that from an educational perspective, the Quran is a unique sacred scripture as it promulgates the acquisition of the fundamental tenets of education, reading and writing as precursory tools for comprehending its message. Therefore, he argues that the propagation of the Quran provided the first breakthrough in mass education (Bondarev, 2022). Furthermore, even during times of conflict and war, the Quran stipulates that a contingent of individuals must be left behind to continue their teaching and scholarly works so that they can act as guides to society through moral regulation against ignorance (Bondarev, 2022).

Bukhari (d. 870) attempts to demonstrate the relevance of this Quranic injunction from an episode of the Prophet's (s) life. During the battle of Badr (13/03/624), the Muslims managed to capture seventy prisoners of war. These men were all literate, and the Prophet (s) declared that if one prisoner taught ten Muslims the art of reading and writing, this would act as their ransom, and thus, they would be free. It can be argued that this represents the first school system in Islamic history established by the Prophet (s) with a teaching staff that was neither Muslim nor preaching the *din of Islam*. This remarkable episode demonstrates the place of Knowledge in the Islamic worldview and that Quranic counsel is supported by many prophetic narrations (*hadith*), which urge the believers to acquire Knowledge from the entirety of creation and the world.

Thus, Muhammad (s), in line with the Quranic exhortation to explicitly pray for an *"increase in knowledge"* (20:114), equated the pursuit of Knowledge as an inherent component and prerequisite for living the *din of Islam*.

Hence, the conceptual notion of Knowledge becomes an obligation for the Muslim as expressed by these populist Prophetic sentiments (Biplob & Abdullah, 2019):

1. "The best form of worship is the pursuit of knowledge",
2. "Contemplating deeply for one hour (with sincerity) is better than seventy years of perfunctory worship",
3. "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave",
4. "Whoever walks in the pursuit of knowledge, Allah will facilitate for him the way to heaven",
5. "Acquiring knowledge enables its possessor to distinguish right from the wrong, it lights the way to heaven; it is our friend in the desert, our society in solitude, our companion when friendless - it guides us to happiness; it sustains us in misery; it is an ornament among friends and an armour against enemies".
6. "Seek knowledge and wisdom, or whatever the vessel from which it flows, you will never be the loser".

In addition, the Islamic tradition is replete with advice from the companions (*Sahaba*) and their direct associates (*tabi'un*) that urge believers that *'The wise statement is the lost property of the believer, so wherever he finds it, then he is more worthy of it"* (Abu Huraira in Tirmidhi) whilst Abu Darda relayed that *"if anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, Allah will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise"* (Cetto et al., 2016). Fath Al Musilee analogised: *"Would the sick person who is not fed or given*

anything to drink or given any medicine, not die?" The people replied: *'Surely!'* He said: *"It is the same with the heart, it would die if knowledge and wisdom is withheld from it"* (Islamic Revival, 2014).

It is suggested that these aphorisms only serve to reinforce the Quranic portrayal of the symbiotic relationship between Knowledge and the *din of Islam*. Therefore, in explicit purpose of this study it can be argued that, due to the quintessential nature of Knowledge in Islamic thought, those individuals in possession of it, are deemed to be superior.

The Quran rhetorically postulates *"...Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition"* (39:9). Thus, the Quran admonishes and exhorts humanity to seek Knowledge as those who strive towards this path are raised in ranks (58:11). The most obvious example is encapsulated in the personhood of the Prophets (s) and for Muslims, Muhammad (s) in particular. Thus, the Quran identifies Muhammad (s) to be a Messenger raised up from within the local community sent to guide and teach the people about the *"book"* with wisdom (3:164).

Therefore, a celebrated proclamation declares the *"scholars to be the heirs of the prophets"* (Adrahtas & Milani, 2021). Al Bukhari (d.870) observes that the Prophets (s), in passing away, did not bequeath any material or capital wealth. However, they left Knowledge. The second Caliph of the Islamic movement, Umar bin al-Khattab, stated that the *"ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr... as the scholar and the seeker of Knowledge are the partners in the sharing of good. Other men are hungry, and there is no good in them* (Sunnah.com, 2014a)."* As a result, Abdullah bin Masud narrates a prophetic counsel that advises the Muslims to embody only two types of persons: *(1) A person whom Allah has given wealth, and he spends it righteously; (2) The one whom Allah has given wisdom and he acts according to it and teaches it to others* (Sunnah.com, 2014b).

This is further supported by As-Samit's prophetic narration that admonishes the believers for not acknowledging the honour due to elders, the absence of affection and mercy to the children and not recognising the right of the scholar (Hamisan, 2020). Therefore, the perspective of the classical Islamic sources and texts is forthright in identifying the centrality of Knowledge to those responsible for its acquisition and dissemination.

The supreme status of *'ilm* about man can be deduced from the Quranic narration on the first human creation. Adam was taught the *"names of all things";* thus, by inference, a man was given Knowledge that surpassed even that of the infallible divine attendants, the angels (2:31-2:33). Wan Daud (1989) demonstrates that this unique characteristic of Knowledge in the Quranic Arabic directly distinguishes the status of individuals and society. He cites the Arabic root for Knowledge, *'ilm, as* a derivative of the term *'alima*, which indicates a *"mark, sign, or token, by which a person or thing is known"* (Wan Daud, 1989). This leads Rosenthal to concur that *"the frequency with which the root 'alima occurs in the Quran is not a matter of chance. It is mentioned with such persistence that nobody could fail to notice it."* (Wan Daud, 1989).

Boyle (2022) attempts to quantify this claim by noting that the term *'ilm* is mentioned 750 times in the Quran, implying that it is the third most referenced notion behind only the name of *'Allah'* (2,800) and His attribute *'Rabb'* (950) (Ayyad, 2022). Thus, the Arabic term *'ilm* formulates the basis for several of the divine attributes of Allah (*Sifat Allah*). Although its derivatives *Allam* (Omniscience) applies only to Allah, the term *'alim* (Knower) is used as an attribute for Allah and the human being (Wan Daud, 1989).

In addition, another term often translated to imply Knowledge, *ma'rifa,* as derived from the root *arafa* is often utilised in Gnostic and mystical, spiritual literature to signify man's comprehension of Allah. Abdullah (1982) notes that *ma'rifa* is that Knowledge is attained through contact with the traces of the object, whereas *'ilm* refers to Knowledge acquired through direct contact with the object. Thus, man's Knowledge of Allah is *ma'rifa* and not *'ilm*, whilst Allah can be described as *'alim* and not *'arif'* since His

Knowledge does not stem from recognising the traces of things. The difference between *'ilm* and *ma'rifa* is distinguished by its transmission and acquisition.

Transmission of Knowledge

By the classical perspective, Allah created the Human being with the faculties for the acquisition of Knowledge, such as *"intellect", "hearing", "sight",* and *"wisdom"* (16:78). Maturidi (d.944) in Akyol had contended that Knowledge could be obtained via the intellect (*'aql*), which encompassed the physical senses, true wisdom and verbal transmission of information or traditional information received from those who are trustworthy (Akyol, 2021). Al-Ghazali in Griffel (2009) described this intellectual acquisition and transmission of Knowledge as *rabbaniyyah,* whilst he cited a special and unique method by which Allah directly imparts and bestows Knowledge upon individuals as *ladunniyyah*. According to Abdullah (1982) and Ahmad (2012), *ladunniyyah* is a transmission of Knowledge through 'revelation', 'inspiration' and 'intuition', which are considered higher modes of transmission than the sole utilisation of the intellect and the senses to derive Knowledge.

Classical orthodox Islamic thought, represented by Al Ghazali in Griffel (2009), considered revelation to be the most fundamental and pertinent source of Knowledge in the Islamic worldview. He argued that Knowledge from a Quranic perspective was a means for attaining certainty and truth. It was the direct parlaying of divine information to the human being and, thus, embodied the divine truth. The heart, representing the internalisation of Knowledge, could then perceive the revealed Knowledge through inspiration and intuition.

Furthermore, in his *'Book of Knowledge'*, Al Ghazali in Griffel (2009) divides Knowledge into a religious (*'ulum shar'iyyah*) and rational (*'ulum 'aqliyyah*) form. Although he was heavily criticised for creating a division in Knowledge when none had existed before, it was a reaction against the political and intellectual milieu of the time. Whilst the *'ulum 'aqliyyah* pertains to knowledge derived by the senses and the human intellect, the *'ulum shar'iyyah,* as the 'revealed' Knowledge, encompasses the Quran and *Sunnah* (way) of Allah and His messengers. Al-Ghazali in Griffel (2009) propounds that this revealed Knowledge is absolute and praiseworthy. It is guidance for human beings towards their ultimate goal, the hereafter (*eschatology*).

Furthermore, in his magnus opus, *Ihya' Ulum al Din* (Revival of Religious Sciences) (Al Ghazali, 2016), Ghazali postulates that although both aspects of Knowledge, the religious and the rational, are required for developing the mind and soul, the ultimate aim of Knowledge is the purification of the soul. Therefore, Al Zeera (2020) observes that Al-Ghazali and almost all the great luminaries in Islamic scholarship have advocated the necessity and synonymy of ethics and virtue with Knowledge. Thus, she proposes that to attain a true Quranic perspective of Knowledge, the notions of Knowledge must become inherently associated and perceived with ethics and virtues so that Knowledge becomes whole and holy as *"ethics proved the link between knowledge and action, between the philosophical and the practical"* (Al Zeera, 2020).

However, Ahmad (2012) argues that the theory and understanding of Knowledge from an Islamic perspective are not encapsulated within the Western understanding and definition of epistemology. As a branch and discipline within Western philosophy, epistemology studies the theory of Knowledge. Its heritage is derived from the Greek '*episteme',* implying 'knowledge' and '*ology',* which indicates a theory, science or branch of Knowledge (Wordnik, 2014)

Epistemology is concerned with research, analysis and identification of the causes and sources of the elements that generate Knowledge, the correlation between Knowledge and truth, the acquisition and

degrees of Knowledge, the relationship between lived experience and Knowledge, its taxonomy and limitations. Hetherington (2020) notes that the conventional understanding of Knowledge signifies the actual presumption or belief on a matter after it has been justified. The predominance of the rationalist schools of thought in Western philosophy implies that Knowledge must be arrived at through rational thought and reasoning alone, the *"justified true belief"* of Plato.

From the Islamic perspective, this represents a one-dimensional approach that is antithetical to the notion of *tawhid*. As demonstrated below, the Islamic perspective recognises the attainment of perfection (*kamal*) and unity to be garnered by a multi-dimensional approach, whereby interactive dialectical forces comprising rationalistic and spiritual elements work in harmony and balance to arrive at new Knowledge.

Therefore, in discussing the notion of Islamic epistemology, both the spiritual and material aspects must be acknowledged. Thus, Zeera argues that such an epistemology must take into *"consideration the fact that there is a real world, in which we live, and an ideal world, for which we strive"* (Al Zeera, 2020). The real world is comprised of the realities perceived by the senses and is characterised by the properties of: *"limitation, change, dependency, need and relativity"* (Mutahhari, 1985, P.61), whilst the ideal or unseen world comprises all the Knowledge that our external senses cannot comprehend.

This is gloriously evident in the very article defining Islamic faith, the belief in a Single God that is beyond our perceptions and direct Knowledge; also, possessing firm faith in the existence of angels, a day of judgment, the hereafter (heaven, hell), Jinns, devils and other aspects of creation that we are not able to control. However, from a Quranic perspective, the belief in the unseen does not entail blind faith or mindless imitation but urges man to *"move from the concrete to the abstract"*(Al Zeera, 2020). Hence, by starting at the known concrete physical realities of the universe, the search for truth eventually leads towards the unknown, encapsulated as universal truisms and certainties based upon the principle of *tawhid*.

Tawhid

Al-Faruqi (1992) posits that the ultimate understanding an individual could attain is imbued in the concept of *tawhid,* which captures the affirmation of the absolute unity of truth and God.

The classical Islamic philosopher Ibn Sina (d.1037) had opined that the *"...chain (of being) as a whole must terminate in a being that is holy, simple and one, whose essence is its very existence, and therefore, is self-sufficient and not in need of something else to give it existence"* (Al Zeera, 2020).

From the spiritualist tradition, Nasr (2013) observes that *tawhid* is the principle of Unity that percolates through *"the heart of the Islamic message and... the degrees of spiritual attainment achieved by any human being is none other than the degree of his or her realisation of Tawhid".*

Furthermore, the centrality and purpose of *tawhid* is illustrated in the opening statement of the aptly termed first pillar of Islam, the *shahadat* (witnessing), the *'kalamat al- tawhid'* (word of unity), *"la ilaha illa'llah"*(I bear witness that there is no god but Allah).

Chittick (2013) observes that this statement declares the universal truth that *"stands outside history and outside transmission". Tawhid* is an ahistorical eternal ideal (3:83) imbued into the very fabric of human nature (*fitra*).

The Quranic stipulation that *insan* (human being) has been *"created only to serve Allah (sbt)"* (1:5; 3:79; 51:56) demonstrates an overt awareness of the concept of followership before leadership.

Thus, human beings' first and foremost objective is to seek guidance from their Master (*Ubudiyyah*) (Al-Attas & Daud, 2007; Murata & Chittick, 1994). Thus *Allah,* the Creator and Source of all Knowledge, steers humanity through the passage of life via revelation. This ideal is encapsulated in the Quranic

discourse to man as signs (*ayah*), which reflect and demonstrate the evidence of a Creator in creation. Therefore, Islamic cosmology recognises the total of the entire cosmos and creation to reflect the divine nature or the *sifat Allah* (attributes of Allah). "*He is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward; He knows everything*" (57:3)

Chittick (2013), Schimmel & Heiler (1994), Nasr (2013), and Murata (2001) argue that the entire corpus of the Islamic tradition is an attempt at reflecting aspects of this perspective. Furthermore, the classification of the traditional Islamic schools of thought has been developed in their understanding and focus on the nature and purpose of the divine names (*'ism*) or attributes of Allah (*asma al husna*).

Therefore, Murata (2001) attempts to demonstrate that the theological and spiritual heritage of Islamic thought is based on God's transcendent or immanent nature.

Transcendent Nature

God is *tanzih*, incomparable with creation and everything in existence. This can be described as the overwhelming classical understanding of the *Kalam* (Islamic theology), whereby God is a remote incomprehensible Being inaccessible to His creation.

Several Quranic verses are utilised to propagate the view that alleges "*nothing can be compared to Him*" (42:11; 112:4). Murata (2001) terms this perspective as "*negative theology*" and suggests that in this respect, "*God is an impersonal reality far beyond human concerns*".

Immanent Nature

Ibn Arabi (d.1240) identified the "God of the Quran and the Prophet (s)..." as the alternative to the "impersonal God of the theologians whom no one could love, since He was too remote and incomprehensible" (Murata, 2001, P.8). A God who loves His creatures and creation (5:54) is 'Rahman ir Rahim' (Compassionate and Beneficent) and what Chittick (2013) describes as tashbih (similar) to His creation.

According to the Islamic tawassuf tradition, this anthropomorphic approach is the only possible method of understanding God, citing verses that speak of "the face of God" (2:115) and His "nearness to man than the jugular vein" (50:16) justify this positive theological line of thought (Murata, 2001). However, literalist orthodox theological schools perceive the tradition of tawassuf (Sufism) as pantheistic or monistic, thus contradicting the notion of tawhid as a unitary principle.

A Dialectical Approach

The reconciliation of these two perspectives formulates the heart of the *tawhidic* debate. Al Zeera (2020) attempts this resolution through a dialectical approach. Although she confesses that this may appear contradictory as *tawhid* implies oneness and unity, the commonly accepted dialectics of Hegel (d.1831) and Marx (d.1883) stipulate an inevitable conflict between seeming opposites. Therefore, she notes that from the Islamic perspective, the overpowering necessity to attribute ambiguity and attrition to opposites is antithetical to the concept of *tawhid*. Al Zeera (2020) The tension in the duality of two opposites in the Western perspective is rejected by the Islamic approach to dialectical reasoning.

Hence the '*Ikhwan al Safa's* declaration that below the One (God) is two of every kind is confirmed by the Quranic verse stating that He "*has created pairs in all things...*" (43:12) (See Quran: 22:5; 31:10; 35:11; 36:36; 39:6; 49:13; 53:45; 78:8). This can be observed in the bipolar examples contained in the Quran that encompass but are not limited to the: '*seen*' and '*unseen*', '*heavens*' and the '*earth*', '*male*' and '*female*', '*believers*' and '*disbelievers*'; *companions of the* '*right*' and '*left*', '*day*' and '*night*', '*paradise*' and '*hell*'

and so forth. Islamic thought aims to reconcile these seemingly opposite ideals and apparent divergent forces into a *"unified, holistic worldview"* (Sahin, 2013).

Therefore, it is suggested that to enhance the appreciation and comprehension of the dialectical approach, the concept of *tawhid* can be contrasted with the Taoist concept of the *Yin* and *Yang* in attaining the *Tao.*

Murata (2001) argues that Allah's ultimate attribute of *kamal* (perfection) is realised by harmonising his transcendent and immanent nature. Thus, the diametric attributes of Allah, The transcendent *Jalal* (Powerful, Majestic) and The Immanent *Jamal* (Beautiful, Near), are comparable to the Taoist formulations of the Yin and the Yang concept.

The Jalal- (Yang)

Schimmel & Heiler (1994) and Murata (2001) assert that the *Jalal* represents the *Yang*. Thus, the term embellishes God's masculine powerful and majestic nature, the *'mysterium tremendum'.*

Murata (2001) identifies the transcendent names of God such as '*Mighty*', '*Inaccessible*', '*Great*', '*Majestic*', '*Compeller*', '*Creator*', '*Proud*', '*All-High*', '*King*', '*Wrathful*', '*Avenger*', '*Slayer*', '*Depriver*' and '*Harmer*' as '*Names of Majesty*' or the '*Names of Severity*'; the *Yang* names (P.9).

As representatives of the yang aspect, the *mutakallimum* (theologians) of the Kalam focus exclusively on God's transcendence; thus, the *mutakallimum* preach about a wrathful, vengeful God of destruction, punishment and hell. (Murata, 2001)

The Jamal- (Yin)

In contradistinction, Schimmel & Heiler (1994) and Murata (2001) recognise the *Jamal* to be symbolised by the *Yin,* hence implying the feminine, loving and beautiful aspect of God, the *"mysterium fascinans"* (Murata, 2001).

Thus, the attributes utilised to describe God include *'Beautiful', 'Near', 'Merciful', 'Compassionate', 'Loving', 'Forgiving', 'Pardoner', 'Life-giver', 'Enricher'* and *'Bestower'*. These are considered to represent the inherent and similar nature of God. These names are usually termed the '*Names of Beauty*' or '*Gentleness*', the *Yin* names (Murata, 2001, P.9).

The aspects of God mostly associated with the practice of *tawasuf* (Sufism) meditate upon the immanence of God. This leads to a belief that Allah's mercy precedes His wrath, His love overcomes His anger, and heaven is an eventual abode.

Tawhid as Change / Transformation

Although Islam's theological and sapiential traditions represent a distinct half of the dualistic paradigm, in theory, this division is fallacious.

The Islamic, as well as the Daoist argument, stipulates that the attainment of mutual harmony and balance between the *Jamal* (Yin) and the *Jalal* (Yang) derives a state of perfection, the *Kamal* (Tao). The Muslim recognition of this state is referred to as *tawhid* and by the Daoists as the 'Great Ultimate'.

Thus, the *asma al husna* as *"two categories of names working in harmony'* create the change (*haraka*) and transformation (*estehala*) that brings the cosmos into existence (W. Chittick, 1983). Therefore, the *Jalal* and *Jamal* akin to *yin* and *yang* possess the potential to act as their opposite, whereby *Jalal* has the potential to be *Jamal,* and *Jamal* has the potential to act as the *Jalal.*

When the *Jamal* and the *Jalal* attain or reach a balance, a harmonious state is attained, recognised as the *haraka* (change) that initiates the *estehala* (transformation), the implication is that everything from

heaven to earth is created and recreated. This is supported by the Ash'rite theology, which proclaims that nothing stands still in creation and no phenomenon remains constant in its place for two successive moments.

Many Quranic exhortations demonstrate this principle: "...*in the alternation of the night and the day, and all that Allah has created, in the heavens and the earth, are signs...*" (10:6).

Classical scholars and authorities such as Al Ghazali (d. 1111), Ibn Arabi (d. 1240) and Jandi (d. 1300) promulgated that everything in creation requires 'divine inauguration' as they cannot come into existence without Allah giving them that existence. This constant 'change' and 'transformation' is reflected by the *asma al husna* (Most Excellent Names). Thus, at each instant, Allah asserts His Immanence and His Mercy, He creates and brings into existence the cosmos (creation). However, in that moment, as He is *tanzih* and Transcendent, His wrath and severity also destroy. Hence, each instant symbolises a new moment, a new cosmos, a new universe that is *tashbih* (similar) to what has come before it but also *tanzih* (incomparable). Murata (2001) observes that each moment epitomises a new self-disclosure of Allah, as each disclosure is unique as Allah is infinite. Rumi (d.1273) argued that if Allah ceased His divine manifestation, even for an instance, the universe would cease to exist (Craig, 2023).

Therefore, as per the Daoist perspective, the unity of existence represented by change and transformation wholly relies on two mutually opposing forces that must be in constant harmony and balance. Rudolph Otto encapsulates this mutual interaction as the *hieros gamos*, (the sacred marriage), whereby *"Severity and gentleness were married, and a world of good and evil was born from the two"* (W. Chittick, 1983). The essence of this argument is beautifully embalmed in the Confucian aphorism: *"Like a running river, the whole universe is flowing ceaselessly day and night."* (Murata, 2001).

Deriving an Understanding of Leadership from the Islamic Worldview

The theoretical standpoint demands an assiduous acceptance of Allah's Oneness and Absolute Supreme nature (sbt). Therefore, man has been created as a servant with a purpose to serve Allah (sbt), whereby Allah (sbt) as the One God is the Lord and Master over His creation.

Therefore, Beekun and Badawi (1999) argue that man, as the *khalifah* (successor), is a servant, so the relationship between God and man is based upon followership (Imran Hussain Khan Suddahazai, 2021). This implies that every individual in the Islamic worldview is considered a unique creation with an exclusive bond or relationship with the only One True Leader, Allah (sbt). Human beings, as subjects of Allah, are fundamentally considered to be equals; but are subjected to "*trials and tribulations*" (29:2) so as to test the strength of their characters and to teach them through direct experience.

The response (act) of the individual to these challenges determines an individual's status and station. Classical Scholars such as Sina (d.1037), Rushd (d.1198), Ghazali (d.1111) and the *Ikhwan al Safa*, amongst many, put forth the understanding that individuals striving to attain and act with virtuous Knowledge are elevated by Allah to stations of respect and recognition in formal or informal positions. This gives credence to the notion of equality in Islamic thought, as every individual is imbued with the divine capacity for growth and personal development of themselves in identical measure. The individual is considered a microscopic representation of the macrocosmic as man possesses a finite limit of the attributes of Allah *(sifat Allah)* as latent potentialities to be realised (Daiber, 2020). The distinguishing feature of the leaders is the depth and degree to which they have realised these latent potentialities.

For the realisation to transpire, a process of exploration, investigation and discovery must occur as encapsulated by the dialectical approach. According to Al Zeera (2020), this syncretic dualistic perspective is the harmonisation of theory and practice.

Thus, contradictory notions of absolute or relative reality, spiritual or material existence, and the eternal or temporality of creation are reconciled as paradigms of a single reality. This approach, therefore, prevents the fragmentation of the self, thought, values, norms and the concept of isolation or asceticism from the world. The notion of the other is. Thus, not one of conflict but of another dimension that must be comprehended before a holistic perspective is formulated. The Quran stipulates, "*Allah could have made everyone the same, but He created diversity in society so that man could learn from the divergent opinions*" (5:48).

Sahin (2013), Rahman (2002), Al Zeera (2020) and Abdullah (1982) observe that this establishes the absolute elemental foundations for education in the Islamic worldview. The concept of education entails a mutually dependent dual process that encompasses the holistic developmental progression of individuals based on their Knowledge and understanding of creation. However, Lafrarchi (2020) and Abdullah (1982) note that although human growth and understanding are reflected in the divine attributes, they are temporal and partial, as Allah (sbt) alone is Eternal and Infinite. Thus, once an understanding of a matter has attained perfection, it is subject to change and transformation.

This constant change and transformation in human affairs can be considered the process by which theory and practice are continually assessed and reformulated to address the present context and derive a new understanding. Therefore, in acknowledging and accepting the unity principle of *tawhid*, individuals recognise that Allah (sbt) creates, recreates and presents the new in every situation.

Thus, the appellations of the faith, the *din of Islam,* is a direct result to the evolution of society into a civilisation, which is proportionally reflected by the intellectual and spiritual development of the individual human beings comprising it. Therefore, the *din of Islam* can be considered a broad civilisational endeavour that relies upon cultivating and nurturing human potential to realise its creativity (Salvatore, 2009).

This is embodied by the notion of "*imam (faith) becoming intimately linked to human action (amal)*" (Sahin, 2013). Thus, the individual declaration of *shahadat* (Witnessing) to become a *Mu'min/ Muslim* (Believers and Submitters) cannot be understood as an utterance of a canonical statement but one that entails the active witnessing of the faith in action by the individual.

However, the notion of faith in Islamic thought is innately intertwined with its canonical heritage as a concept of Knowledge and, subsequently, its methods of acquisition in formulating and developing the individual human being. Therefore, conventional secular perspectives propounding a single dimension, *daruri* Knowledge, is not rejected nor deemed irrelevant but considered the most elemental form of Knowledge that is attained without much effort. The Knowledge acquired by the faculties of the intellect formulates a preliminary stage that entails the development of rational thought to decipher the most elemental phenomenon.

In contrast, whilst developing secular Knowledge, Islamic thought seeks to further explore and penetrate the truth of creation through *divine* Knowledge. This is the Knowledge that is based upon the *naqli* methods. Therefore, it encompasses methods of transmission rejected by the secular approach, such as revelation, inspiration and intuition. Furthermore, the influence of the *ghayb* (unseen/hidden) forces is completely rejected by secular thought. Thus, a significant element of the dialectical debate is ignored, and the problems, predicaments and dilemmas encountered within contemporary education and leadership are attributed mindlessly to economic, environmental and cultural issues.

Although the Islamic perspective advocates a rightful place for externally derived Knowledge by the sense, it also recognises the internal process of acquiring unseen/hidden Knowledge. The acquisition of this Knowledge is dependent solely upon Allah and is understood to be the reward for continuous service to the Divine. This formulates an essential aspect in appreciating that the notion of educational leadership

as derived from the classical Islamic worldview, which stipulates that leaders operating within the ethical and moral ethos of the Quran are defined apart from their followers as a result of their superior virtues, knowledge base and realisation of latent potentialities. This is demonstrated in their ability to teach and guide their followers towards continual self-development through a dialogical-dialectical process.

CONCLUSION

In summary, it can be stated that the purpose of this paper was to derive a perspective of educational leadership from the Islamic worldview. The paper began by exploring the notion of worldview and its pertinence in defining the Islamic perspective; it was demonstrated that the Islamic worldview was broadly defined by the appellations of the faith, din of Islam as a civilisational endeavour. From the classical Islamic perspective, this process was augmented by the premise of individual self-development; it was then stipulated that this process was reliant upon the acquisition of Knowledge. The eventual reification of Knowledge as action and praxis constituted the tawhidic process, the realisation of individual latent potentialities in reconciling theory and practice via a dialogical-dialectical approach. This effectively becomes an educational leader's demonstratable characteristic from the Islamic worldview perspective.

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