



Public life of the Muslim *Ummah* from the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith Teachings

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Abstract: Public life is the social activity that takes place in everyday public spaces -- on streets, in parks, in schools, in markets and plazas. We measure certain aspects of public life to better understand what's already happening in a place and what changes might provide public benefits. Therefore, this paper discusses seven issues which are fundamental in public life in our society, such as selflessness, accountability, honesty, integrity, leadership, objectivity and openness. The paper also explores some explanations of these seven principles of public life from Islamic perspective and extracted some examples from the Glorious Qur'an and Prophetic Sunnah. The paper will analyse these seven principles according to our contemporary time. The analytical method is used when conducting this research.

Keywords: Public life, Islamic perspective, accountability, integrity, selflessness, honesty, leadership, objectivity and openness.

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INTRODUCTION

Islam, the complete code of life, declares leadership as a trust (Amanah), and gives a detailed description about it. Integrity is one of the moral qualities of human that needs to be translated into everyday life particularly by Muslim individuals. It also refers to ethic, a principle that is followed daily. A person's character consists of the combination of qualities that make up his personality, and it is this attribute that motivates a person to avoid something that could cause him to be considered an individual without integrity. The characteristics of a person without integrity include deception, treachery, deviance, corruption, money politics and the likes. These characteristics could be avoided if one adorns oneself with elements of integrity such al-Sidq (truthfulness).

Honesty incorporates the concepts of truthfulness and reliability and it resides in all human thought, words, actions and relationships. It is more than just accuracy; it is more than just truthfulness, it denotes integrity or moral soundness.

Leadership is a great quality of human nature. Every organization or group of people needs a good leader in order to gain their desired success. As a social being each and every man has to lead his life through a mutual relationship with others. He is completely unable to do something alone. Thus, the necessity of co-operation brings out the idea of leadership in our society. Nowadays, the concept of leadership becomes very influential in financial, political and social arena.

There are seven fundamentals or principles of public life in Islam which can be observed in every society, the seven items will be discussed one after the other which includes, selflessness, accountability, honesty, integrity, leadership, objectivity and openness.

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE LEADERSHIP

Literally, leadership is the state or position of being a leader that goes with or in front of a

person or an animal to show the way or makes them to go in the right direction [1].

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. It is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it toward goals. Management activities such as planning, organizing, decision making are dormant cocoons until the leader triggers the power of motivation in people and guides them toward their goals [2].

The above definition of leadership stresses that a leader is more than just a manager. Leading and managing are not the same thing.

Leadership in Islam

According to the Islamic view, leadership is a sacred position that can solve the problems of humanity and guide them to the eternal betterment of here and hereafter. It is a person or a group of people who guide and lead the followers, the humanity from the brink of destruction to the way of Allah. Giving preference on human welfare Islam exposes leadership as a psychological contract between a leader and his followers that he will try his best to guide them, to protect them and to treat them fairly and with justice. Hence, the focus of leadership in Islam is on doing good [3].

According to Islam, every person is the "shepherd" of a flock, and occupies a position of leadership [4].

Abd Allah Ibn Umar (Allah be pleased with them) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: Behold! Each of you is a guardian, and each of you will be asked about his subjects. ... [5].

Today, leaders lack plenty of skills, it's how human beings are. We are never going to be perfect. But if referring to leaders more generally, I would point two elements which are the in our contemporary time.

1. **Authenticity.** In a post-truth post-modern era, truth is highly contextual. It means we don't always see the real leader, because they are too concerned about the political reality. If there is a negative element of their character, they will probably suppress it. Our leaders today are looters of the public treasury; they don't care about the problem facing their people, cheaters of their subjects in all angles and crannies. Our leaders today are unjust, they are appointing people in the office who are not competent and the competent one are rejected [6].
2. **Ethics.** Most of the leaders today are not genuine and true to what they are supposed to do. Everyone is running behind money and stepping the other person down. Leaders need to bring unity instead of creating indirect barriers between people, but unfortunately our leaders today are the causer of all disunity, chaos and even killing among their subjects in order to divert people from what they are doing. They believed in the statement which says, divide and rule [7].

SELFLESSNESS

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends [8].

Selflessness in Islam

It is the love of good for others. When we find a situation that calls for selfless behavior, we prefer others and favor them above ourselves. We feel hunger for others until their hunger is fulfilled and we feel thirst for others until their thirst is quenched. We would even die to save the life of others [9]. It is not astonishing or strange for the Muslim to quench his own spirit with doing what is right and the love for virtue and righteousness.

Any Muslim, who prefers unselfishness, really enters by this to the straight and right path of the pious predecessors in faith, and follows the footsteps of those early successful people and the

¹ *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, P. 872.

² K. Davis, *Human Relations at Work: The Dynamics of Organizational Behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967, p. 96.

³ R. Issa Beekun & J. Badawi, *Leadership; An Islamic Perspective*, London, 1998, p. 4

⁴ M. I. Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Muhsin, M. (trans.): 2009, Hadith, Op. Cit, NO. 3.733.

⁵ *Ibid*, Hadith, 3. 733.

⁶ Self-view point

⁷ Self-view point

⁸ <https://darussalamblog.com/tag/selflessness-in-islam/>

⁹ <https://darussalamblog.com/tag/selflessness-in-islam/>

companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), whom Allah praised while He said:

And give them (emigrants) preference over themselves, even though they were in need of that [10].

All good morals and incredible characteristics of Muslims are only taken from the source and wisdom of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) or from the Divine Revelation of the Mercy of Allah. Similarly, the Prophet (peace be upon him) also added beauty to this great manner by saying:

None of you will have faith till he likes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself [11].

So we must be certain that the love of good for others and selfless behavior will bring success for ourselves, our children, our family and the whole society.

Shining examples on selflessness from Prophetic Sunnah:

There are many shining and inspiring illustrations of the selflessness and love of good for others from the life of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the bright history of Islam and these are the best examples for us to follow.

Narrated Abu Hazim, Sahl bin Sa'd said that:

A woman brought a Burda (sheet) to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Sahl asked the people, "Do you know what is a Burdah?" The people replied, "It is a Shamla, a sheet with a fringe." That woman said, "O Allah's Messenger! I have brought it so that you may wear it." So the Prophet (peace be upon him) took it because he was in need of it and wore it. A man among his Companions, seeing him wearing it, said, "O Allah's Messenger! Please give it to me to wear." The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Yes" (and gave him that sheet). When the Prophet (peace be upon him) left, the man was blamed by his companions who said, "It was not nice on your part to ask the Prophet (peace be upon him) for it while you know that he took it because he was in need of it, and you also know

that he (the Prophet PBUH) never turns down anybody's request that he might be asked for." That man said, "I just wanted to have its blessings as the Prophet (peace be upon him) had put it on, so I hoped that I might be shrouded in it [12].

Narrated Abu Hurairah (RA) that:

A man came to the Prophet (PBUH as a guest), so he (peace be upon him) sent a messenger to his wives (to bring something for him to eat) but they said that they had nothing except water. Then Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said, "Who will take this (person), or entertain him as a guest?" A man from the Ansar said, "I." So he took him to his wife and said to her, "Entertain generously the guest of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him)." She said, "We have got nothing except the meals of our children." He said, "Prepare your meal, light your lamp and let your children sleep if they ask for supper." So, she prepared her meal, lighted her lamp and make her children sleep, and then stood up pretending to mend her lamp, but she put it off. Then both of them (the husband and wife) pretended to be eating, but they really went to bed hungry. In the morning the Ansari went to Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) who said, "Tonight Allah laughed, or wondered at your action. Then Allah revealed: "... And give them (emigrants) preference over themselves, even though they were in need of that. And whosoever is saved from his own covetousness, such are they who will be the successful [13].

The prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions displayed the highest example of charitable behavior and selflessness, honored others above themselves and this should be our cause in this life. These shining examples are illustrating the attitude of a real and true Muslim; his selflessness, generosity, and self-sacrifice for the sake of others.

¹⁰ Qur'an, 59:9

¹¹ M. I. Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Muhsin, M. (trans.): 2009, Hadith, NO: 13.

¹² Ibid, Hadith, NO: 6036

¹³ Ibid, Hadith, NO: 3798

Therefore, every Muslim should adopt such noble qualities of loving kindness, hospitality, and selflessness and assume praiseworthy behavior in life, because above everything he is a Muslim.

A Muslim is expected not only to be virtuous, but to also enjoin virtue. But unfortunately we Muslim we are not copying the selflessness, kindness and hospitality, given example by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in our daily activities.

INTEGRITY

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organizations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships [14].

Integrity from Islamic Perspective

One of the oldest meanings of integrity refers to its etymology. Integrity stems from the Latin word “*integritas*” or “*integer*” which means wholeness or unit. It also carries the meaning of entire, a whole or untouched intact, sound, true or reliable [15]. Integrity means the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles or the quality of being honest and upright [16].

Integrity also means something against corruption. If corruption is defined as the misuse of entrusted power for personal and political purposes, then integrity means the use of public power for a purpose which is officially confirmed and justified by the public [17].

From the Islamic perspective, integrity can be attributed directly, and in parallel, to the attributes of trust, honesty, faith, strong belief, powerful character and noble manners. For believers, integrity at a high degree in the sight of God is piety, that is doing what they are commanded and avoiding things that are prohibited [18].

Success will Come and Go, but Integrity is Forever

If I could teach only one value to live by, it would be this: Success will come and go, but integrity is forever. Integrity means doing the right thing at all times and in all circumstances, whether or not anyone is watching [19]. It takes having the courage to do the right thing, no matter what the consequences will be. Building a reputation of integrity takes years, but it takes only a second to lose, so never allow yourself to ever do anything that would damage your integrity [20].

Now in our contemporary time we live in a world where integrity isn't talked about nearly enough. We live in a world where “the end justifies the means” has become an acceptable school of thought for far too many.

- For example, Sales people overpromise and under deliver, all in the name of making their quota for the month. Applicants exaggerate in job interviews because they desperately need a job [21].
- Entrepreneurs overstate their pro formats because they want the highest valuation possible from an investor. Investors understate a company's value in order to negotiate a lower valuation in a deal. Customer service representatives cover up a mistake they made because they are afraid the client will leave them [22].
- Employees call in “sick” because they don't have any more paid time off when they actually just need to get their Sallah festival or shopping done.
- The list could go on and on, and in each case the person committing the act of dishonesty told themselves they had a perfectly valid reason why the end result justified their lack of integrity [23].
- Examination malpractice is rampant all over in the world now, in primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions.
- Election rigging became like compulsory tools for the politicians before they get the power [24].

¹⁴ S. Lisa, *The concept of moral integrity and its implications for business*. Konstanz institute for corporate governance (KICG), University of Konstanz, 2015, P. 2.

¹⁵ *ibid*, P. 3.

¹⁶ A. Mustafar, *Integrity and Islam: An effective application of building Ummah*. Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Integrity Institute, 2009, P. 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, P. 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, P. 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, P. 3

²⁰ *Ibid*, 4.

²¹ Self-view point

²² Self-view point

²³ Self-view point

²⁴ Self-view point

A word of advice to those who are striving for a reputation of integrity

Avoid those who are not trustworthy. Do not do business with them. Do not associate with them. Do not make excuses for them. Do not allow yourself to get enticed into believing that “while they may be dishonest with others, they would never be dishonest with me.” If someone is dishonest in any aspect of his life you can be guaranteed that he will be dishonest in many aspects of his life. You cannot dismiss even those little acts of dishonesty, such as the person who takes two newspapers from the stand when they paid for only one. After all, if a person cannot be trusted in the simplest matters of honesty then how can they possibly be trusted to uphold lengthy and complex business contracts? [25].

“In looking for people to hire, look for three qualities: integrity, intelligence, and energy. And if they don’t have the first one, the other two will kill you.” A person’s dishonesty will eventually catch up to them. It may not be today, and it may not be for many years, but you can rest assured that at some point there will always be a reckoning [26].

HONESTY

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Honesty incorporates the concepts of truthfulness and reliability and it resides in all human thought, words, actions and relationships. It is more than just accuracy; it is more than just truthfulness, it denotes integrity or moral soundness. Islam commands truthfulness and forbids lying. God commands that a Muslim be honest.

O you who believe! Fear God, and be with those who are true (in word and deeds) [27]. Ibn Katheer, the renowned Quran scholar, explained the meaning of this verse. He said, “Being truthful and adhering to truthfulness, means you will be among the people of the truth and be saved from calamity and that it will make a way out for you from your problems”.

A true believer, one who is truly submitted to God, has many characteristics by which he can be identified. The most obvious of these noble characteristics are honesty of character and truthfulness of speech. Prophet Mohammad was a perfect example of honesty. Even before his

Prophethood, he had earned the titles of Al Amin (the trustworthy one) and As Sadiq (the truthful).

Al Amin, the Prophet Muhammad once gathered all the people of Mecca and asked them, “O people of Mecca! If I say that an army is advancing on you from behind the mountains, will you believe me?” All said in one voice, “Yes, because we have never heard you telling a lie.” All the people, without exception, swore to his truthfulness and honesty because he had lived an unblemished and extremely pious life among them for forty years.

This honesty, an essential ingredient of the Muslim character, includes being truthful towards God by worshiping Him sincerely; being truthful to oneself, by adhering to God’s laws; and being truthful with others by speaking the truth and being honest in all dealings, such as buying, selling and marriage [28]. There should be no deceiving, cheating, falsifying or withholding of information, thus a person should be the same on the inside as he is on the outside.

Prophet Muhammad warned us of the dangers inherent in dishonesty, and the benefits of living in an honest way. He said:

Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. In addition, a man keeps on telling the truth until he becomes a truthful person. Falsehood leads to wickedness and evil-doing, and wickedness leads to the (Hell) Fire, and a man may keep on telling lies till he is written before God, as a liar [29].

Let us look at the honest and it important in our daily life activities, for example, honest citizens are big reasons for the development of any nation. Honesty helps to build trust, improve the relationship, and develop societies. That’s why honesty is really important to live freely, happy and prosperous in life [30].

What happens if all the people in this contemporary time become honest?

If all the people of our contemporary time become honest no doubt the society will be in a good atmosphere and the certain vices will be snipped and there will be:

- No corruption because of honest people and a sense of duty in our activities.

²⁸ www.islamreligion.com website

²⁹ M. I. Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Muhsin, M. (trans.): Op, Cit, 2009, Hadith NO: 6094

³⁰ Self- view point.

²⁵ Self-view point

²⁶ Self-view point

²⁷ Qur’an, 9:119.

- Honest people are less stressed so less prone to stress-induced diseases.
- Honesty in duty displays dedication and dedication increases productivity in job and business. Increased productivity leads to higher economic development and financial stability.
- Honesty in personal and business dealings helps to build strong relationships. Absence of personal & business problems leads to a happy social environment.
- Honesty in leadership roles creates more opportunities for followers and builds trust [31].

What happens if all the people in this contemporary time become dishonest?

In our contemporary time most of the people are not honest, so due to this we are facing a lot of problems in our society that is why we have:

- More corruption because of selfishness.
- More stress because of doubts in relationships and business dealings.
- Dishonest people will do the business/job only to make money and they won't think about the social responsibilities, teamwork, goals, among others. It will make the poor even poorer and the rich will become even richer.

If people are dishonest then no long lasting relationships and friendships will exist. It will create more court cases, police works, crimes, and violence. If leaders are dishonest they will only think about themselves and their personal profits. They won't care about national development or other people's welfare [32].

We know that not all people are honest and not all are dishonest. I know people don't care about honesty and truthfulness in today's selfish world. Dishonest people are not able to understand that dishonesty creates problems for them in the future. Also, they don't realize that the problems they are facing today are a result of their dishonesty in duty and dealings in the past. The reason why people are dishonest is that they are cowards, telling the truth takes courage.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

³¹ Self- view point.

³² Self- view point

In Islam, accountability relates to trust (*Amanah*) which is the indicator in measuring how sincere a person is in discharging his duties. According to al- Shinqiti 2006 *Amanah* (trust) includes everything *Allah* entrusted to you and instructed you to take care of. These include guarding physical faculties from engaging in anything that is not pleasing to *Allah*, and guarding anything that has been entrusted to you which has to do with the rights and dues of others [33]. Based on these, what is meant by *Amanah* in this sense is everything that the individual is obliged to take care of, uphold and fulfill in the right of others. There are three well known areas in which *Amanah* operates namely; financial rights which are established by contract and covenants, keeping others' secrets and position of responsibility, whether social, public or private [34]. Islam requires in the case of both public and private trust that one takes care of the trust and fulfills it in the proper manner as required by *Shari'ah* and it is *not* allowed to neglect it or betray it. In the Glorious Qur'an Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوا أَمَانَاتِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

O you who believe! Betray not Allah and his messenger, nor betray knowingly your *Amanah* (things entrusted to you and all the duties which Allah has ordained for you [35].

Allah also commands us to render back trust to whom they are due. This shows that, the understanding of Islamic principle of accountability and transparency are the keys to good governance. This is due to the fact that The Law Giver leaves nothing untouched in the Glorious Qur'an. In relation to trust, Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ

إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

Allah command you to render back your Trusts to those to whom they are due; and when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice: Verily How excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For Allah is He who heareth and seeth all things [36].

³³ A. Taufiq, Transparency and accountability in the Qur'an and its roles in building good governance. *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law*, 6(4), (2015), PP.. 73-81.

³⁴ Ibid, PP. 82.

³⁵ Qur'an, 8:27

³⁶ Qur'an, 4:58

Ibn-Kathir 1992 mentioned that in the above verse Allah commands that the trusts be returned to their rightful owners. This command refers to all things that one is expected to look after, such as Allah's rights on His servants and also the command includes the rights of the servants on each other, such as what they entrust each other with, including the cases that are not recorded or documented. Allah commands that all types of trusts be fulfilled.

The above *ayah* explains to us how accountability works in Islam. It shows that whatsoever one did, he will give account of it before Allah. So, accountability in Islam is first to *Allah*, then to the fellow beings. The Qur'an enjoined all Muslims to be steadfast in discharging their duties as trustees (public or social service) in any form of responsibility. Furthermore, accountability has to do with principle of *taqwa* because it is this that makes one to have conscious that he will be held accounted for his action before Allah either obligatory or optional (*Sunnah*) in the hereafter.

If we look into our contemporary time today, we see signs that true accountability seems to be a dying trait. In both young and older professionals alike, accountability is clearly waning. It's time to reverse this trend of lack of accountability, or the consequences will be dire, for leadership, for business, for our global relationships and for the world. We Muslim today we behave like we don't believe that all actions and deeds will be accountable in the day of resuscitation.

OBJECTIVITY

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit. Furthermore, holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias [37].

³⁷ <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-main-objective-of-Islam>

OPENNESS

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands. In another word holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing [38].

CONCLUSION

When honesty is lost, then wait for the Hour (the Day of Judgment). These are the words of Prophet Muhammad. They paint a picture of the time leading up to the Day of Judgment, when righteous people will be sorrowful due to the lack of honesty around them. In the 21st century, we live in a world where honesty is valued and yet shunned at the same time. We expect people to be honest in their dealings with us yet we watch and applaud television shows and movies that promote and encourage lying and deceitfulness.

The paper shows that if we became honest people all our daily life activities will be in a right path, we will be perfect in leadership; we will not neglect accountability, objectivity, openness and other responsibilities upon us. That is why the paper is advising people in our contemporary time that they should connect with honest people. Find honest clients. Find honest friends. We know they are there but they don't like to show they are honest publicly. Whereas dishonest people are always trying very hard to show that they are honest. When something seems too good to be true then there is something wrong. So be careful and just enjoy your life. Do good have good and remember, Allah is watching everything.

This paper, pointed out that accountability in Islam is based on the principle of dual accountability. This principle is built on the basis that human beings are Allah's *khalifah* and as such they should be accountable to Him and their fellow mankind.

³⁸ Watson, P. J., Chen, Z., & Morris, R. J. Varieties of quest and the religious openness hypothesis within religious fundamentalist and biblical foundationalism ideological surrounds. *Religions*, 2014, PP. 5, 1-20.