

Analyzing the Ideal Leadership of Prophet Yusuf in the Quran: Relevance to Transformational Leadership Theory

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Abstract: This study delves into the Quranic concept of ideal leadership by examining the narrative of Prophet Yusuf and its alignment with transformational leadership theory. Utilizing a qualitative library research approach, this analysis synthesizes insights from an array of primary and secondary sources including classical Islamic texts and contemporary scholarly articles. It identifies key leadership qualities exemplified by Prophet Yusuf such as intellectual prowess, professionalism, fairness, consistency, and the capacity to nurture a productive and inclusive environment. These attributes are juxtaposed with Bernard M. Bass's transformational leadership framework, which comprises intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. The research articulates how the leadership exemplified by Prophet Yusuf resonates with modern theoretical constructs and offers practical implications for contemporary leadership in organizational and national contexts. The findings underscore the enduring relevance of Quranic narratives in informing and enhancing modern leadership paradigms.

Keywords: *Quranic Leadership, Prophet Yusuf, Transformational Leadership*

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengeksplorasi konsep kepemimpinan ideal menurut Al-Qur'an dengan memfokuskan pada narasi Nabi Yusuf dan kesesuaiannya dengan teori kepemimpinan transformasional. Melalui pendekatan penelitian perpustakaan kualitatif, analisis ini mengintegrasikan wawasan dari sumber-sumber primer dan sekunder termasuk teks-teks Islam klasik dan artikel ilmiah kontemporer. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi kualitas-kualitas kepemimpinan yang ditunjukkan oleh Nabi Yusuf, seperti kecakapan intelektual, profesionalisme, keadilan, konsistensi, dan kemampuan untuk membina lingkungan kerja yang produktif dan inklusif. Atribut-atribut ini dianalisis melalui kerangka kerja kepemimpinan transformasional Bernard M. Bass, yang mencakup stimulasi intelektual, motivasi inspirasional, pertimbangan individual, dan pengaruh ideal. Penelitian ini mengartikulasikan bagaimana kepemimpinan yang ditunjukkan oleh Nabi Yusuf beresonansi dengan konstruksi teoritis modern dan menawarkan implikasi praktis untuk kepemimpinan kontemporer dalam konteks organisasi dan nasional. Temuan menekankan relevansi abadi narasi Al-Qur'an dalam menginformasikan dan meningkatkan paradigma kepemimpinan modern.

Kata Kunci: *Kepemimpinan Al-Qur'an, Nabi Yusuf, Kepemimpinan Transformasional*

Introduction

Nation-building and state governance are unavoidable realities for humanity. Essentially, people live within specific territorial boundaries that require adherence to established regulations in that region. In the context of nation-building and state governance, there are at least three interconnected aspects: leaders and government systems, citizens, and governance areas. These elements can provide mutual relationships and engage in dialogue to create comprehensive welfare. Leadership is a fascinating topic because it represents a crucial aspect of society or any organization, playing a pivotal role in shaping the direction and success of an entity.

In human life, leadership is not only a profound topic but also remains relevant throughout the history of human civilization. However, in today's era of globalization, leaders face massive changes across various aspects, including politics, economics, social issues, culture, technology, and more, posing unique challenges and even threats to the nations or organizations they lead. From an economic perspective, globalization represents an era of market openness (business), where business actors have equal opportunities and chances without being hindered by geographical or national boundaries. Politically, globalization is seen as shifting national values and statehood, replacing them with pluralistic values and non-national, non-state diversity.

In the socio-cultural aspect, globalization is viewed as a process where individuals and communities from different backgrounds interact within a global scope, potentially giving rise to new civilizations or global cultures.¹ Therefore, in facing the era of globalization marked by various changes, nations or organizations need ideal leaders who have the capability to adopt leadership styles and behaviors that are suitable and can meet the challenges of the globalization era. Kurniawan's research indicates that an ideal leader is one who follows the demands and developments of the times; they must possess skills in influencing, motivating, guiding, and mobilizing others.² In Islam, leadership has unique and comprehensive characteristics, providing a philosophical foundation and

¹ Idi Jahidi and Mochammad Hafid, "Transformasional Leadership Dan Servant Leadership: Tantangan Kepemimpinan Dalam Menghadapi Era Global," *CosmoGov* 3, no. 2 (2017): 220, <https://doi.org/10.24198/cosmogov.v3i2.14730>.

² Syukron Kurniawan Indra et al., "Tantangan Era Digital Dan Kepemimpinan Masa Depan Serta Implementasinya Di SMPN 1 Ciwaringin," *Jurnal Syntax Admiration* 4, no. 1 (2023): 100, <https://doi.org/10.46799/jsa.v4i1.506>.

practical guidelines for leaders in their duties.³ The Quran, the ultimate guide for the Muslim community, not only discusses eschatology, worship, and ethics but also narrates stories of prophets before Prophet Muhammad, such as Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), and Yusuf (Joseph), which will be the focus of discussion in this study. Thus, in this research, the author proposes the potential of an ideal leader in the Quran, specifically by exploring the story of Prophet Yusuf in Surah Yusuf as a response to the leadership challenges in the globalization era.

In the Quran, Prophet Yusuf's story is narrated in a chapter named after him, which broadly discusses several matters, including Yusuf's dreams, his interactions with his brothers, his trials, and his eventual reunion with his siblings. Specifically, this study will focus on the narrative of Prophet Yusuf when he served as a leader in Egypt. Undoubtedly, the Quran presents Prophet Yusuf's leadership authority as ideal and charismatic, known for his wisdom, decisiveness, responsibility, and providing a positive example to his followers. As explained in Surah Yusuf verse 54 regarding the selection of Yusuf as a king to be appointed due to his high esteem in Egypt, the king told Yusuf that he possessed high esteem (*makinun*) and trustworthiness (*aminun*) in Egypt. Classical Islamic scholar Ibn Kathir states in his exegesis that the king of Egypt said so because he recognized and understood that Prophet Yusuf possessed virtues, skills, excellent judgment, and integrity. Hence, he was deemed both *makin* (reliable) and *amin* (trustworthy).⁴

Furthermore, the author will also relate this to the theory of transformational leadership as proposed by Bernard M. Bass. In his book, Bernard M. Bass defines transformational leadership as "an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of the members." A leader is an agent of change, someone who can influence others more than they can influence themselves. Leadership is realized when a group has a member who can change the motivation or competency of others within the group.⁵

³ Muhamad Arifin, "Konsep Kepemimpinan Dalam Islam: Karakteristik Pemimpin Ideal Menurut Al-Quran," *AKADEMIK: Jurnal Mahasiswa Humanis* 3, no. 3 (2023): 151, <https://doi.org/10.37481/jmh.v3i3.616>.

⁴ Ibnu Katsir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Adhim*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1994), 586.

⁵ Roni Harsoyo, "Teori Kepemimpinan Transformasional Bernard M. Bass Dan Aplikasinya Dalam Peningkatan Mutu Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education Management* 3, no. 2 (2022): 253, <https://doi.org/10.21154/sajiem.v3i2.112>.

Unlike other leadership models like charismatic leadership and transactional leadership, the transformational leadership model is the most effective because the focus of transformational theory itself is on developing higher motivation and encouraging members' motivation with a future vision that inspires by emphasizing several factors, including attention, communication, trust, respect, and risk.⁶

Relevant prior literature to this study includes research by Muhammad Zainul Arifin titled "Educational Leadership of Prophet Yusuf," which is a qualitative study focusing on the analysis of verses about Prophet Yusuf's story and then identifying the leadership traits of Prophet Yusuf relevant to education.⁷ Another study titled "Analysis of the Leadership of Yusuf according to Al-Qurtubi and Hamka" uses thematic and comparative analysis. This study concludes that in the story of Prophet Yusuf, there are ethical stages that a leader must go through, generally consisting of three periods: preparation, demand, and tenure.⁸ Then, the study titled "Relevance of Yusuf as a Democratic Leader: A Philological Study of Yusuf" uses philological and library methodologies whose primary source is the Story of Yusuf. It was concluded that Prophet Yusuf possesses characteristics in harmony with those of a democratic leader. Thus, although there are similarities with previous studies on the leadership of Prophet Yusuf, this research has not yet focused on discussing the ideal leadership of Prophet Yusuf in the Quran and including the analysis of the relevance of Prophet Yusuf's leadership with transformational theory that is relevant and effective with the development of the times.

Therefore, this research aims to examine ideal leadership as depicted in the Quran, using Prophet Yusuf as a role model for contemporary leaders, focusing on his character and leadership style, and integrating transformational leadership theory. This study seeks to enhance the understanding of leadership that is pertinent to modern contexts, potentially guiding nation-building and organizational development. Employing a qualitative library research method, it utilizes a comprehensive literature review of books, scriptures, and journals that discuss Prophet Yusuf's leadership and transformational

⁶ H Suriagiri, *Kepemimpinan Transformasional* (Lhokseumawe: CV. Radja Publika, 2020), 29.

⁷ Muhammad Zainul Arifin, "Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Nabi Yusuf," *Ta'allum: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 4, no. 2 (2016): 235, <https://doi.org/10.21274/taalum.2016.4.2.235-254>.

⁸ Sigit Budiyanto, Abdul Malik Ghozali, and Yusuf Baihaqi, "Analisis Kepemimpinan Yusuf AS Menurut Al-Qurtubi Dan Hamka," *TAFAHUS: JURNAL PENGKAJIAN ISLAM* 1, no. 2 (2021): 139, <https://doi.org/10.58573/tafahus.v1i2.11>.

theory. The analytical approach is descriptive, involving the collection, synthesis, classification, analysis, and interpretation of data within a conceptual framework.

Result and Discussion

Leadership Concept: Tracing the Criteria of Ideal Leaders in the Quran

Leadership and ideal leaders are inherently interconnected concepts, as leaders are fundamental in creating and shaping leadership dynamics. Leadership itself represents the relationship between a leader and those led, serving as a nexus of influence and direction.⁹ From an etymological perspective, the term "leadership" derives from the word "lead," meaning the one who guides or heads a group. This interpretation extends to include functions such as guiding, initiating, and commanding.

In terminological terms, a leader is characterized by the ability to mobilize, motivate, and influence individuals or groups to achieve defined visions, missions, and objectives through proactive decision-making concerning undertaken activities.¹⁰ Scholars like Miftah Thoha describe leadership as the activity of influencing others, encapsulating the essence of human behavior modification, whether individually or in groups. Harold Koontz, on the other hand, views leadership as a dynamic process of influencing people and encouraging them to pursue group objectives willingly and enthusiastically.¹¹

In the Quran, the term that reflects the concept of leadership is "khalifah." Derived from the word "khalaf," appearing 127 times in the Quran, Ibn Mandzur in *Lisan al-Arab* notes that "al-khalaf" is the antonym of "al-quddam" (forward), suggesting that "khalifah" refers to one who succeeds or follows another.¹² This is exemplified in the Quranic verse from Surah Al-Baqarah (2:30), which states:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّيْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةًۙ

“And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.""

The term "khalifah" (خَلِيْفَةً) in the aforementioned verse is singular and appears in this form only twice in the Quran, specifically in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:30) and Surah Sad

⁹ Fridayana Yudiaatmaja, “Kepemimpinan: Konsep, Teori Dan Karakternya,” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* IV, no. 2 (2013): 30.

¹⁰ Djunawir Syafar, “Teori Kepemimpinan Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam,” *Tadbir: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 1 (2017): 148.

¹¹ Ahmad Sulhan, *Teori Kepemimpinan Organisasi Dalam Pendidikan Islam* (Mataram: Sanabil Publishing, 2020), 1.

¹² Ibnu Mandzur, *Lisan Al-Arab*, Vol. 9 (Beirut: Dar Sadir, n.d.), 82.

(38:26). In its plural form, the term varies in usage as "khalaiifa" and "khulafa'." "Khalaiifa" appears four times across various chapters, interpreted as "rulers" or "successors." Then "Khulafa'" in the Quran appears three times, mainly interpreted as "successors" in contexts of governance.¹³

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi comments that "khalifah" signifies someone who replaces another. The interpretation of who this "khalifah" refers to in the verse varies among scholars. Some suggest it specifically denotes Prophet Adam as the first human successor on Earth, indicating a foundational leadership role intended to uphold divine commandments. Others extend this to all of humanity, reflecting on the broader mandate for humans to lead justly and wisely. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi comments that "khalifah" refers to someone who replaces another, and scholarly opinions vary on whom this term specifically denotes in the verse. Some scholars argue that the term "khalifah" refers to Prophet Adam as the first human successor on Earth, while others extend this designation to humanity at large, reflecting the differing interpretations based on various exegetical sources. Ibn Abbas, for instance, suggests that Adam was designated as a "khalifah" because he was to uphold divine commandments on Earth, whereas other interpretations, like those from Imam Hasan, suggest that it reflects the broader human responsibility to lead justly among others.¹⁴ Thus, it is understood that humans were created by Allah as leaders on Earth, meant to act as deputies or successors in upholding divine commandments and continuing the prophetic mission of governance. As such, an ideal leader must embody a high level of responsibility and be prepared not only to lead but also to be led.

In terms of terminology, several Muslim intellectuals have provided their interpretations of leadership. Abul al-A'la al-Mawdudi emphasizes that true governance, according to the Quran, involves recognizing the authority of Allah and His Messenger in legislation and granting them all legislative and judicial powers. A caliph, as the successor to the Prophet Muhammad, represents a leader capable of effecting positive change and improving the welfare of those led.¹⁵ Muhammad Najib al-Mut'hi highlights

¹³ Syahrulloh Mu'in and Jufriyadi Moh Sholeh, "Pemimpin Ideal Dalam Al-Qur'an (Studi Komparatif Penafsiran Quraish Shihab Dan Hamka Kajian QS. Al-Baqarah Ayat 30 Dan QS. Shad Ayat 26)," *Jurnal Usluhuddin Dan Filsafat* 7, no. 2 (2023): 290.

¹⁴ Fakhruddin Al-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghayb*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiah, 2000), 152.

¹⁵ Amir Hamzah, "Kriteria Pemimpin Menurut Al-Qur'an," *Al-Qalam: Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Pendidikan* 10, no. 2 (2018): 17, <https://doi.org/10.47435/al-qalam.v10i1.259>.

that comprehensive leadership encompasses both secular and religious realms. According to Ibn Khaldun, leadership involves guiding the community based on Sharia to realize welfare in both worldly and religious aspects.¹⁶

Quraish Shihab, a contemporary Indonesian exegete, notes that ideal leadership is not a privilege but a responsibility. Leadership involves sacrifice, hard work, serving others, and acting as a role model and exemplar of courage.¹⁷ Overall, the specific criteria for an ideal leader in the Quran include trustworthiness (*amanah*), consultation (*shura*), justice, and responsibility. These attributes are emphasized across various verses, illustrating the profound and multidimensional role a leader plays in both the spiritual and temporal realms, aiming to guide, influence, and uplift the community according to divine principles.¹⁸

Portrait of Prophet Yusuf as an Ideal Leader: A Perspective from Quranic Exegesis

The description of Prophet Yusuf's leadership can be found in verses 46–49, when Yusuf was trusted to interpret the Pharaoh's dream about seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean ones, seven green ears of grain, and others that were dry. In these verses, Yusuf gained the Pharaoh's trust for his skill and expertise in interpreting dreams, earning him the title of "al-Siddiq," which denotes someone who is profoundly honest in both word and deed.¹⁹

The narrative continues in verse 50, where Prophet Yusuf is summoned by the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh said, "Bring him to me." When the message was delivered to Yusuf, he responded, "Return to your lord and ask him about the condition of the women who cut their hands. Indeed, my Lord is well aware of their scheming." This summons from the Pharaoh came after recognizing Yusuf's insight and following his assistance in interpreting the Pharaoh's dream, thus sending a messenger to call him. However, Yusuf refused the request before ascertaining the truth about the allegations against him made by the women who tried to seduce him. He told the messenger, "Go back to your lord and

¹⁶ Nadzmi Akbar, *Kepemimpinan Islam Kepemimpinan Yang Membimbing* (Kalimantan Selatan: Antasari Press, 2018), 16, http://idr.uin-antasari.ac.id/18997/1/kepemimpinan_islam_merged.pdf.

¹⁷ Quraish Shihab, *Membumikan Al-Qur'an Jilid 2 (Memfungsikan Wahyu Dalam Kehidupan)* (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2011), 685.

¹⁸ Musthafa Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi* (Mesir: Maktabah al-Babiy al-Halabiy, 1946), 4; Budi Suhartawan, "Konsep Kepemimpinan Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Tafakkur* 2, no. 1 (2021): 1–23.

¹⁹ Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*.

ask him about the women who cut their hands; I and they know the truth."²⁰ In the subsequent verses, specifically Yusuf 12:51, the Pharaoh asked the women, "What was your condition when you sought to seduce Yusuf?" The women said, "God forbid! We know there is no evil on his part." The wife of al-Aziz then stated, "Now the truth has become evident. I sought to seduce him, and he is surely of the truth." This revelation vindicates Prophet Yusuf, showing that he was neither at fault nor had he committed the misdeeds attributed to him by the wife of al-Aziz.²¹

Following this, in verses 52–53 of Surah Yusuf, Prophet Yusuf stated, "That was so that he (al-Aziz) may know that I did not betray him in [his] absence and that God does not guide the plan of betrayers. And I do not absolve myself [of blame]. Indeed, the human soul is inclined to evil, except for those upon which my Lord has mercy. Indeed, my Lord is forgiving and merciful." The phrase "dzalika liya'lama..." varies among exegetes; some suggest these are Yusuf's words, while others believe they are al-Aziz's (Zuleikha's), implying her acknowledgment of Yusuf's integrity and her own misjudgment previously.²² Subsequent verses, Yusuf 12:54–55, recount the Pharaoh saying, "Bring him to me; I will appoint him personally." Once the Pharaoh spoke with Yusuf, he declared, "Indeed, from this day on, you are with us, high in status and trusted." Yusuf responded, "Appoint me over the storehouses of the land; indeed, I will be a knowledgeable and guarded [steward]." Ali al-Sabuni mentions in his tafsir that the Pharaoh made Yusuf a close and trusted person because he had proven Yusuf's innocence, capabilities, and wisdom firsthand.²³

In the wording of verse 54, the terms "makin" and "amin" are used, as mentioned above, suggesting that Prophet Yusuf was recognized and trusted as someone deserving of a high status and trustworthy. Interestingly, in the subsequent verse, Prophet Yusuf proposed himself to the king to be appointed as the treasurer of Egypt, as stated in the verse 55:

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ

[Yusuf/Joseph] said, "Appoint me over the storehouses of the land. Indeed, I will be a knowing guardian."

²⁰ Abu Ja'far Muhamaad Ibn Jarir Al-Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an*, vol. 16 (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risalah, 2000), 133.

²¹ Katsir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Adhim*.

²² Muhammad Al-Shawi, *Hasyiyah Al-Shawi*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiah, 2021), 178.

²³ Ali Al-Shabuni, *Safwah Al-Tafasir* (Kairo: Dar al-Shabuni, 1997), 52.

Regarding the context of Prophet Yusuf's request to the king of Egypt to be made treasurer, Ali al-Shabuni opines that Prophet Yusuf made this statement because he had a strong desire to uphold justice, truth, and goodness. This does not fall under "tazkiyah al-nafs" (self-purification), but rather signifies the knowledge and experience of Prophet Yusuf, thus he requested to be appointed as the minister of the treasury.²⁴ After Yusuf was appointed to a high position in Egypt, verses 58–59 explain that Yusuf's brothers came to Egypt. Yusuf recognized them, but they did not recognize him. According to Ali al-Sabuni, their failure to recognize Yusuf was due to the long interval since their last meeting and the changes in Yusuf's appearance. The brothers came to Egypt due to a famine, seeking food stored by Yusuf, who had predicted the famine.²⁵ When Yusuf prepared provisions for them, he asked them to bring their half-brother, Bunyamin, to Egypt to receive food. In verse 59, Yusuf states that he provides full measure without reduction.²⁶

In verse 69 of Surah Yusuf, it is explained that when Yusuf's brothers, including Bunyamin, returned to Egypt, Yusuf placed Bunyamin with him and revealed his identity to him. Yusuf then secretly informed Bunyamin of his true identity. Later, when they were to depart with their provisions, Yusuf ordered that a drinking cup be secretly placed in Bunyamin's bag. This led to an announcement accusing the brothers of theft. The brothers denied the accusation. Yusuf's intention in placing the cup was to hold them accountable for their past actions. The story concludes in verses 76–79, where the cup is found in Bunyamin's bag. One of Yusuf's brothers offered to take Bunyamin's place, but Yusuf refused, stating he would only punish the guilty party, as taking another would be unjust.²⁷ From these accounts, several leadership qualities of Prophet Yusuf can be identified, which are relevant to modern times:

1) A Leader with High Capability and Intelligence

As previously mentioned, Prophet Yusuf was endowed with wisdom and knowledge by Allah. Zainul Arifin's research highlights that an exceptional leader with high intelligence, communication skills, and sensitivity to the psychological state of his

²⁴ Al-Shabuni, *Safwah Al-Tafasir*.

²⁵ Al-Shabuni.

²⁶ Al-Shabuni.

²⁷ Al-Shabuni.

followers can easily achieve desired goals.²⁸ An example of Yusuf's intelligence is his ability to interpret dreams, as depicted in verse 46:

يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ أَفْتِنَا فِي سَبْعِ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعُ عِجَافٍ وَسَبْعِ سُنبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ
يَبْسُتِ الْعَالِيَّ أَرْجِعْ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

[He said], "Joseph, O man of truth, explain to us about seven fat cows eaten by seven [that were] lean, and seven green spikes [of grain] and others [that were] dry - that I may return to the people; perhaps they will know [about you]."

According to al-Maraghi, the king's request to Yusuf indicates Yusuf's proficiency in uncovering the meanings of dreams. The term al-Shiddiq refers to someone who is truthful in both speech and deeds. By interpreting the king's dream, Yusuf was freed from prison. Al-Maraghi explains that the king's officials hoped Yusuf, being a truthful man, would be freed and benefit the king with his superior knowledge.²⁹

2) *A Professional, Honorable, and Trusted Leader*

A professional leader possesses extensive knowledge, understands his employees well, excels in verbal and non-verbal communication, and is familiar with his work environment. Although not explicitly stated, the Qur'an alludes to Yusuf as a professional leader through the terms al-Makin and al-Amin in verses 54 and 55. Ibn Jazairi notes that al-Makin means someone with high status capable of doing as he wishes, while al-Amin signifies a trustworthy person.³⁰ Yusuf's reputation and high status are rooted in his proven excellence and the king's recognition of his capabilities

3) *A Just Leader*

Prophet Yusuf's justice is evident in verse 59, when he distributes grain fairly and without favoritism. Wahbah Zuhaili states that Yusuf always provided full measure, without reduction. Despite his brothers' past wrongdoings, Yusuf treated them fairly³¹

4) *A Consistent Leader Who Sets a Good Example:*

Prophet Yusuf's consistency and firm principles are shown in verse 79, where he refuses to punish an innocent person:

قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَنْ نَأْخُذَ إِلَّا مَنْ وَجَدْنَا مَتَاعَنَا عِنْدَهُ إِنَّا إِذًا لَظَالِمُونَ

²⁸ Arifin, "Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Nabi Yusuf."

²⁹ Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*.

³⁰ Abu Bakar Al-Jazairi, *Aysir Al-Tafasir*, vol. 2 (Madinah: Maktabah al-Ulum wa al-Hikam, 2003), 622.

³¹ Wahbah Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir Fi Al-Aqidah Wa Al-Syariah Wa Al-Minhaj* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), 2.

He said, "[I seek] the refuge of Allah [to prevent] that we take except him with whom we found our possession. Indeed, we would then be unjust."

This verse highlights Yusuf's refusal to act unjustly, teaching his followers the importance of justice.³²

5) *A Leader Who Creates a Hardworking and Tolerant Work Environment*

By fostering a hardworking and tolerant environment, Prophet Yusuf transformed Egypt into a prosperous nation. His effective management skills are evident in his ability to create a thriving work culture.³³

Analysis of the Ideal Leadership of Prophet Yusuf in the Qur'an and Its Relevance to Transformational Theory

Bernard M. Bass states that transformational leadership is a process of mutual elevation between leaders and followers to a higher level of morality and motivation. More precisely, Bass describes transformational leadership as a leader who provides stimulation and inspiration to followers to achieve extraordinary visions, missions, or results. A leader can be said to possess the qualities of a transformational leader when they exhibit four characteristics, as outlined below:

First, Intellectual Stimulation. In this aspect, a transformational leader makes efforts to stimulate their followers to become creative and innovative, reframing problems and approaching them in new ways. A leader encourages team members to explore new methods and seize new opportunities. This is reflected in Surah Yusuf, verse 47, when Prophet Yusuf was asked to interpret the king's dream. In his commentary, Quraish Shihab explains that Yusuf said, "The interpretation of this dream is that you will farm wheat for seven years. After that, when you have harvested it, store the grain with its stalks, taking only what you need to eat while maintaining frugality." Quraish Shihab³⁴ further comments that this is in line with modern agricultural knowledge that harvesting crops with their stalks can prolong their preservation and prevent spoilage due to atmospheric factors. The grains will still contain nutrients in a holistic manner. Prophet Yusuf's statement here implicitly conveys a message to the country's farmers to start increasing production. The intention of planting is to obtain the maximum yield so that it can be stored for future needs. Therefore, in this context, it can be said that Prophet Yusuf

³² Al-Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an*.

³³ Arifin, "Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Nabi Yusuf."

³⁴ Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, vol. 6 (Tangerang: Lentera Hati, 2005), 473.

provided stimulus and broader perspectives in solving a problem, encouraging people to be more creative, such as his suggestion to store grain with its stalks. Indirectly, this also stimulated people to think innovatively to face any problems that may arise.³⁵

Second, Inspirational Motivation. In this aspect, a leader acts in a way that motivates and inspires those around them to have team spirit, enthusiasm, and optimism. Ahmad Sulhan states that in this part, a leader must be able to articulate their vision clearly and understandably to team members to avoid misunderstandings in achieving common goals. This aligns with the story of Prophet Yusuf mentioned in Surah Yusuf, verse 55, where Prophet Yusuf explicitly told the king of Egypt to appoint him as the treasurer of Egypt. His proposal to become the treasurer was not due to a desire for power but to uphold justice, prosperity, and welfare. This undoubtedly stemmed from Prophet Yusuf's knowledge and wisdom in leadership. As the author has explained above, Prophet Yusuf's aim here was for propagation and to bring benefits to the land of Egypt. Consequently, after Prophet Yusuf became treasurer, Egypt's economy ran smoothly without significant obstacles. Thus, it can be understood that this is what is meant by a clear vision that can be articulated to team members

Third, Individualized Consideration. In this aspect, a transformational leader positions themselves as a coach or mentor for the achievement and growth of their followers' potential. A leader can provide new learning opportunities in a supportive climate. Meanwhile, a leader's behavior demonstrates acceptance of individuals by increasing interaction with their followers and viewing individuals as complete persons rather than just employees. This means that a leader must also involve, offer support, and encourage each individual in the team to be fair and prioritize collective decisions. Although the Qur'an does not explicitly mention Prophet Yusuf having individualized consideration, with the help of commentators like al-Sa'di in "Taysir al-Karim," when interpreting verse 55 of Surah Yusuf, it is stated that Prophet Yusuf was "Hafidz," meaning he was capable of guarding what was entrusted to him, and he did not waste anything inappropriately. In his leadership as treasurer, Prophet Yusuf created a well-ordered administrative system both externally and internally. This indicates that Prophet Yusuf was able to create a hardworking work environment by encouraging his followers

³⁵ Nasyiatul Aisyah, "Perencanaan Dan Kebijakan Ekonomi Nabi Yusuf As," *Istinarah: Riset Keagamaan, Sosial Dan Budaya* 3, no. 2 (2021): 24, <https://doi.org/10.31958/istinarah.v3i2.4835>.

to carry out their duties professionally and proportionately. Prophet Yusuf did not distinguish himself from his subordinates, seeing them as complete individuals with the potential to advance. Therefore, al-Sa'di states that this was driven by Yusuf's desire to spread benefits comprehensively in Egypt.³⁶

Fourth, Idealized Influence. In this aspect, a transformational leader becomes a role model for their followers. They do not only lead but also provide real examples. As mentioned above, Prophet Yusuf was a leader who set a positive example for his followers. This can be found in Surah Yusuf, verse 79, where Prophet Yusuf declares that he will not act unjustly or place anything in the wrong position. Thus, Prophet Yusuf did not punish those who were not guilty. This was a characteristic of Prophet Yusuf's leadership that, at that time, was communicated with his brothers and witnessed by his followers. This proves that Prophet Yusuf provided a positive and consistent role model in upholding laws that aligned with Sharia and rejecting laws that contradicted Sharia.

Furthermore, ideal leadership practices can also be found in Islamic history, notably during the era of Prophet Muhammad in promoting Islam. Before Islam, the Arabs were known as the Jahiliyyah people, worshipping idols and prioritizing tribalism ('asabiyah). Some Arabs even named themselves after idols, such as 'Abdul al-'Uzza, which they considered beautiful. The Ka'ba was a place for idol worship, with Hubal being the largest idol. However, when Prophet Muhammad received revelations, he invited those who were warmongers, arrogant, and idol worshippers to worship Allah alone. In his mission, Prophet Muhammad faced many obstacles but remained patient and steadfast, ultimately succeeding in building civilization and culture. The most significant transformation was social change. Prophet Muhammad succeeded in transforming the moral decay of the Arabs into civilized morality. This can be proven through several of his achievements, including the construction of the Prophet's Mosque, fostering brotherhood between the Muhajirin and the Ansar, establishing mutual assistance agreements between Muslims and non-Muslims, and laying the foundations of politics, economy, and society.³⁷

In relation to transformational theory, Prophet Muhammad is also an exemplary leader who could influence and direct his subordinates effectively to achieve

³⁶ Abdurrahman Al-Sa'di, *Taysir Al-Karim Al-Rahman* (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risalah, 2000).

³⁷ Dedi Supriyadi, *Sejarah Peradaban Islam* (Bandung: CV Pustaka Setia, 2016), 64.

organizational goals. Muhammad Nur'ani, in his research, mentions that Prophet Muhammad's leadership attitudes, categorized within transformational leadership theory, include setting an example, starting with oneself, and being able to influence others, and this attitude falls under the category of idealized influence. Furthermore, being able to motivate others falls under the component of inspirational motivation. Prophet Muhammad's penchant for consultation is also part of intellectual stimulation. Prophet Muhammad was also close to the people and communicated effectively, an attitude included in the component of individualized consideration. The closeness here refers to leadership behavior that brings the leader emotionally closer to their members, including delegation of authority, guidance, and effective communication, fostering two-way communication.³⁸

A practical example of Prophet Yusuf's leadership values in the modern era, particularly in Indonesia, can be found in Election Law No. 7 of 2017, Article 169 on the requirements for presidential candidates. This article outlines 20 requirements for presidential candidates, one of which is to be pious to God Almighty. The application of leadership values by a pious leader involves serving the community with sincerity and integrity, thereby gaining the community's trust and compliance. A serving leader can encourage the community to actively participate in activities that aim to achieve common goals, aligning with the transformational theory components of inspirational motivation and idealized influence. Another requirement for presidential candidates is having a clear vision, mission, and program for implementing the government of the Republic of Indonesia.³⁹ This aligns with the characteristics of Prophet Yusuf's ideal leadership in Surah Yusuf, verse 46, which implicitly explains that a leader must have a clear vision and mission for the future, understand the challenges and obstacles that will come, and prepare strategies to face those challenges.

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of ideal leadership as depicted in the Quran through the story of Prophet Yusuf. Through an in-depth analysis of Prophet Yusuf's

³⁸ Muhammad Nur'ain et al., "Kepemimpinan Rasulullah Saw," *Edu-Leadership: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2023): 128.

³⁹ Tofa Fidyansyah and Siti Ngainnur Rohmah, "Kriteria Calon Pemimpin Negara Dan Mekanisme Pencalonannya Di Negara Republik Indonesia Dalam Pandangan Fiqih Siyasah," *SALAM: Jurnal Sosial Dan Budaya Syar-I* 8, no. 2 (2021): 555–72, <https://doi.org/10.15408/sjsbs.v8i2.20254>.

leadership characteristics, this research demonstrates the relevance between ideal leadership in the Quran and transformational leadership theory. The leadership traits of Prophet Yusuf emphasized in this study include high intellectual capability, professionalism, justice, consistency, and the ability to create a productive and tolerant work environment. Prophet Yusuf's wise, decisive, responsible, and exemplary leadership provides a model for contemporary leaders facing the challenges of globalization.

Bernard M. Bass's transformational leadership theory aligns with the leadership practices of Prophet Yusuf, encompassing intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence. Transformational leaders are expected to inspire, motivate, and guide their followers to achieve extraordinary visions and missions while elevating their morality and motivation. This research not only enriches the understanding of leadership within the Islamic context but also provides a comprehensive view of how the leadership principles exemplified by Prophet Yusuf can be applied in modern contexts to enhance nation-building and organizational development. Using a descriptive approach and qualitative analysis, this study suggests that integrating the leadership values exemplified by Prophet Yusuf with transformational leadership theory can provide a strong foundation for contemporary leaders to perform their duties with justice, wisdom, and responsibility.

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