

## Islamic Leadership Model an Accountability Perspective

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**Abstract:** In almost every aspect of life leadership crisis is quite evident from last one decade. There is wave of high profile scandals across the board including politics, governance, management, services, finance, banking, stock exchanges, manufacturing, marketing and selling. This article provides Islamic leadership model with novel accountability perspective introducing the role of faith in keeping the leaders with in the prescribed norms of values and ethics. This article specifies three layered leadership model to ensure right use of authority and resources entrusted to leadership; thus giving new paradigm to this vital subject. Primary and secondary attributes of leadership have also been incorporated in the first and the last layer of the model to provide quality leadership in every field of life. Conclusion and recommendations are given for leadership development programs and other scholars in the same field to extend the concept in new directions.

**Key words:** Leadership · Accountability · Religious · Worldly · Attributes · Righteous

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### INTRODUCTION

In March 2008 news surfaced in the electronic media that American insurance giant sued ex-CEO and six other former executives for misappropriating \$20 billion in company shares. Next month we came to know that the Chairman of the leading electronic group of Korea was indicted on charges of evading taxes on billions of dollars he had hidden in stock accounts under the names of his aids. Then the senior managers at German engineering firm have admitted that they know that paying bribes to win contracts was common practice in the company. Senior officials in a bank in Pakistan were spotted to rob at least Rs. 20 billion along with some leading names. The former top attorney at renowned computer technology firm in US agreed to pay \$2.2 million to settle the charges that she altered company records to conceal improper backdating of stock options for senior executives. In 2009 we witnessed a wave of financial scams around the globe; bonus controversies at AIG, Rs. 190 million scandal in WAPDA, compensation to politicians in Pakistan to make a block against emerging political party and bills of British MPs. After Enron's scandal there had been significant emphasis on developing regulations, but probably all in vain. It is a call to review our leadership development programs and to revisit our approach towards leadership. As

leadership is one of the vital enablers to manage reputation and continuous improvement in an organization [1]. This article provides three layered leadership model (Figure 2) covering the leader with primary attributes at first stage, then the accountability encircling the leader and at third step ensuring secondary attributes for effective leadership. This paper also draws a line between contemporary models of leadership and proposed model of leadership being worldly the former and the religious the later. Thus provides the solution to curb the prevailing ethical crisis in leadership around the globe.

### PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Several weaknesses are exposed in contemporary leadership models, when they are juxtaposed with extensive literature reviews and in-depth analyses of leadership failures from around the globe. These weaknesses are caused by the lack of two main factors:

- Values and ethics
- Accountability

Standard values and ethics inculcate primary attributes in leaders which qualify them to take the responsibility of leadership, while secondary attributes

help leaders sustain and perform according to the expectations of their fellow beings.

Islamic leadership model provides two fold mechanism of accountability: firstly, leader is accountable for every action to ALLAH (SWT) the Creator of all mankind; secondly, he is accountable to his fellow beings for all policies, strategies and their outcomes. The said model ensures right use of authority for the welfare and protection of all stakeholders [2].

### RATIONALE OF STUDY

Human society has always been in need of leadership to pursue collective and personal objectives. Immense research has been carried out to elucidate numerous notions shrouding this crucial subject. Though the services rendered by the past and contemporary researchers are invaluable in many respects, the researcher contends that there is a perpetually growing need to probe the role of standard values/ethics and accountability in developing leaders who possess sound character and give an outstanding performance.

Facts and figures provided in the introduction of this article give a fair understanding of problems and issues surrounding leadership in every sphere of life. Values and ethics are the keys to eliminate ethical dilemmas from the corridors of leadership. Twofold accountability perspective of Islamic leadership model is an important contribution of this study for optimum outcome through effective leadership.

### WORLDLY MODEL OF LEADERSHIP

We live in the era of worldly model of leadership. It places high value on independence and self-sufficiency in wisdom & intelligence, which is away from very nature of human being [3]. Man is by nature religious even if he believes he is secular [4]. Contemporary model of leadership separates individual's personal and professional life. Here leader depends on learned expertise, experience and decision making skills; which are regarded as key attributes of leadership [3]. The emphasis is given on doing – accomplishing tasks, achieving goals, ensuring self interest [5]; little attention is given to values & ethics for the character building of the leadership, coordination of moral & professional responsibilities and accountability.

### SOURCES

This study explains Islamic leadership model using following two sources. However this model is flexible

enough that scholars from other religious faiths can step forward and incorporate their teachings to formulate accountability model for leadership utilizing religious dimensions of human makeup. This may help eliminate ethical dilemma from leadership across the world.

**Al-Qur'ān:** al-Qur'ān is the central religious text of Islam. In Islamic teachings al-Qur'ān is the book of Divine guidance and direction for mankind. According to Islamic faith al-Qur'ān is the last revelation to Muhammad, peace be upon him, by Allah (God) through the angel Gabriel.

**Sunnah:** Sunnah is an Arabic word that means habit or usual practice. The Muslim usage of this term refers to the sayings and living habits of Muhammad, peace be upon him, the prophet of Islam. The Sunnah of Muhammad, peace be upon him, includes his specific words, actions and practices. It is significant to the spirituality of Islam because it addresses ways of life dealing friends, colleagues, family, government, environment and society at large.

### VALUES AND ETHICS

Values and ethics may be defined as a set of principles that distinguish the right from the wrong. Leaders in the organization must respect values and ethics. In fact it is leadership [6] which is responsible for transforming organizational values and ethics. Corporate leadership has got a moral cancer or governance cancer and it's going to metastasize, if we don't cut out this thing in a hurry or as soon as we can, into an economic cancer [7]. Executive greed is one of the important factors of reputation crisis and ethical dilemma in corporate management around the globe [8]. Our system has a lot of greed, greed on investment side, greed on accounting side and greed on corporate side [9].

Leadership crisis which we observe from decades is only because of the fact that contemporary leadership paradigm is going away from its religious origin. It will further deteriorate as long as it is not connected to religious roots. Because all religions are supposed to preach love, care, sympathy, honesty, justice and truth; founding stones of strong character. Character is the state of the soul which produces consistent and spontaneous physical actions. When the state of the soul is such that it produces virtuous actions, the character is said to be good. On the contrary, when the state of the soul is such that it consistently and spontaneously produces evil actions, the character is termed evil or bad [4]. Only regulations and trainings can not ensure right use of authority and resources, it is individual's inner character

which can drive him consistently towards honest and just utilization of entrusted provisions.

According to the report of Ethics Resource Centre [10], internalization of values and ethics will not occur without the active support in word and deed of company's leadership, ranging from the CEO to immediate supervisor. It is this point where contemporary model of leadership fail to deliver. Because it focuses on the use of authority, power and position to achieve set objectives. Control mechanism in existing models of leadership is flexible and offenders find possibilities to break rules thus prove the fact that only regulations can not serve as an effective tool to curb unethical practice. Contrary to that religious model draws some unavoidable lines which compel the leaders to abide by the basic requirements of faithful leadership.

This study evolves leadership model from Islamic point of view and invites scholars from other religious faiths to give the leadership new paradigm through religious influence for eliminating ethical dilemma from the corridors of leadership. Islamic values are set of beliefs and morals, a social doctrine and a call to righteousness among all members of organization [11]; it is a complete, self-contained ideology which regards all aspects of our existence – moral and physical, spiritual and intellectual, personal and communal – as parts of the indivisible whole which we call "Human life." The point is, when all eyes are on the leader - and all eyes will always be on the leader - his example will be the measure of his leadership [12]. Leaders have to represent this commitment to diversity through their behavior ... and it has to be genuine [13]. Anas (raa), a companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him, said that he worked for the Prophet, peace be upon him, for twenty years and that the Prophet, peace be upon him, never asked him why he did what he did nor did he ask him to do things that he did not do [14].

#### **PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES OF LEADERSHIP**

**Righteous:** Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full Knowledge and is well-acquainted (with all things). (al - Qur' ān 49:13).

The only basis of superiority and excellence that there is, or can be, between man and man is that of moral excellence [15]. As regards birth, all men are equal, for their Creator is One, their substance of creation is one and their way of creation is one and they are descended from the same parents. Moreover, a person being born in particular country, nation, or clan is just accidental. Therefore, there is no rational ground on account of

which one person may be regarded as superior to the other. The real thing that makes one person superior to others is that one should be more God-conscious. Righteousness is the inner strength of a leader to have resolve against temptations while being reproach [16].

**Trustworthy:** Global development demands trustworthiness. It is not possible for corporations to continue with maximizing shareholders' value without ensuring trustworthiness in organizational procedures and practices. Organizations must demonstrate trustworthiness [17] in order to fully share in the benefit of international business development.

Every one who is holding a post of leadership is holding a public trust. Therefore he is accountable for his duty. Trustworthiness is a value which should be realized in Leadership. To implement this value in leadership means to make every staff a trustworthy person [4].

Allah doth 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. (al - Qur'ān 4:58).

**Knowledgeable:** Their Prophet said to them: "Allah hath appointed Talut as king over you." They said: "How can he exercise authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority and he is not even gifted, with wealth in abundance?" He said: "Allah hath chosen him above you and hath gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess: Allah granteth His authority to whom He pleaseth. Allah is All-Embracing and He knoweth all things." (al - Qur'ān 2:247).

According to Islamic teachings beside other characteristics leader should possess two main qualities; knowledge and strength. There is no substitution for the ability to perform. Knowledge brings competence and competent leaders have the ability to see the full view of any situation to deliver just the right outcome at just the right time [16]. Learning organizations are valued because knowledge is the power to create difference and to provide competitive edge. Physical strength is also universally accepted quality for effective leadership.

**Consistent:** The tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him, has taught Muslims to be consistent in their work. Allah loves one who is diligent in his work. A good leader is hence one who is diligent and consistent in his work [4]. Consistency demonstrates leadership confidence and control, it means to stay firm on track during rough times and to maintain a solid vision forward [16].

O ye who believe! When ye meet a force, be firm and call Allah in remembrance much (and often); that ye may prosper ( al - Qur'ān 8:45).

**Cooperation:** Workplace is an assortment of people which come together for common purpose and cooperate with each other to create conducive and efficient environment [18]. Islamic perspective for cooperation is based on following verse of al - Qur'ān.

“Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, But help ye not one another in sin and rancour. Fear Allah, for Allah is strict in punishment.” (al - Qur'ān 5:2).

It is a golden principle; let's not behave like so called civilized nations who give priority to their own interests, no matter right or wrong [19]. The same applies to personal affairs among the group. Islamic teachings bound every one to cooperate only in righteous deeds while dealing with others (locally or internationally) and to avoid cooperation in sins and hostility.

**Moderation:** Islam is against extravagance. All actions and decisions should be taken within the confines of moderation. To go beyond the bounds of moderation is to outrage humanity [20]. Teachings of al - Qur'ān are explicit about moderation, which is evident from following two verses.

Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes); (al - Qur'ān 25:67).

Thus have We made of you an Ummat justly balanced, ... (al - Qur'ān 2:143).

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Leader should be held accountable for his decisions and actions because he accepts the prerogative to lead [21]. Leader has to deliver all the elements of his responsibility [22]. Only those emerged as best leaders in the history who knew that they are accountable in service to their followers [23]. There are several methods of accountability in contemporary models of leadership. But all of these procedures are based on man made regulations and man made regulations are not difficult for other human beings to violate. Islamic value system provides effective mechanism for the accountability of leadership, based on Divine instructions, which bounds leaders from three directions (Figure 1). First, accountability to Allah (God) in this world, second accountability to Allah (God) in the life hereafter and third accountability to fellow beings through different modes of accountability which may include professional,

managerial, administrative, political or public accountability.

**Accountability to Allah (God):** Accountability conveys an image of trustworthiness. Accountability is both an instrument and a goal. What started as an instrument to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency has gradually become a goal in itself. Accountability has become an icon for good leadership performance both in the public and in the private sector [24]. Islamic value system categorically explains accountability in front of Allah (SWT) in this world and the world hereafter. Subsequent verses from al - Qur'ān explain this concept in clarity.

Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it. (al - Qur'ān 99:7-8)

Nor can a bearer of burdens bear another's burden. If one heavily laden should call another to (bear) his load, not the least portion of it can be carried (by the other), even though he be nearly related. (al - Qur'ān 35:18).

**Accountability to Fellow-Beings:** Accountability does not refer to individuals holding their subjects to account, but to the reverse, it is the authorities themselves who are being held accountable by their fellow-beings [24]. Following saying of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, explains Islamic concept of accountability of the leadership to fellow-beings to perform their duties effectively and efficiently.

It has been narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Umar that the Holy Prophet (May peace be upon him) said: Beware every one of you is a shepherd and every one is answerable with regard to his flock. The Caliph is a shepherd over the people and shall be questioned about his subjects (as to how he conducted their affairs). A man is a guardian over the members of his family and shall be questioned about them (as to how he looked after their physical and moral well-being). A woman is a guardian over the household of her husband and his children and shall be questioned about them (as to how she managed the household and brought up the children). A slave is a guardian over the property of his master and shall be questioned about it (as to how he safeguarded his trust). Beware; every one of you is a guardian and every one of you shall be questioned with regard to his trust [25].

Accountability in this very broad sense is basically used to positively influence a state of affairs or the performance of a leader. It comes close to 'responsiveness' and 'a sense of responsibility', a willingness to act in a righteous and trustworthy manner [24].

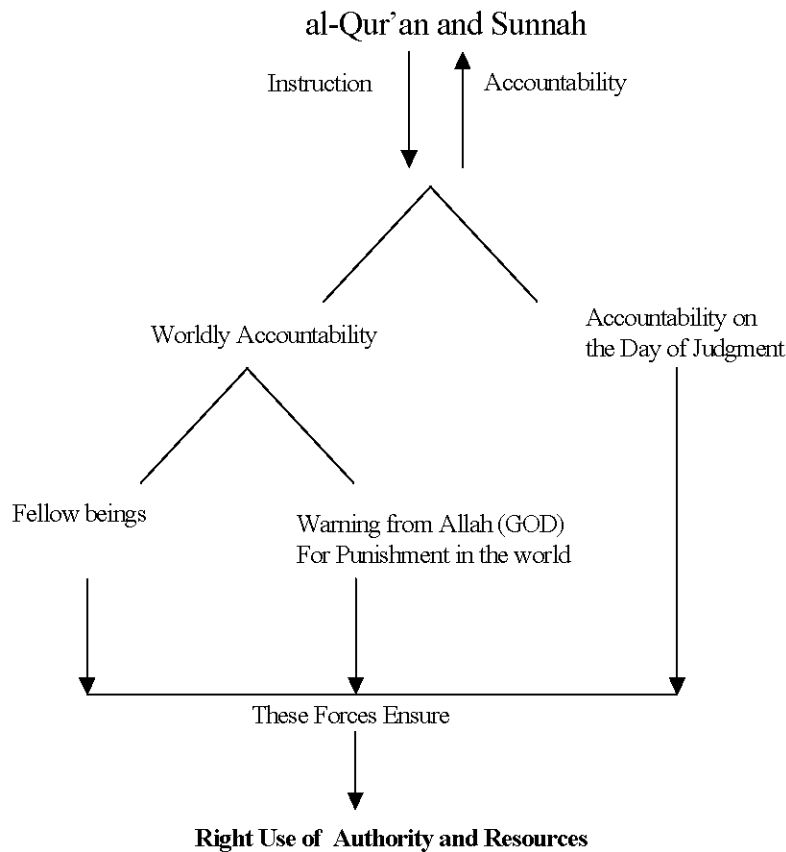


Fig. 1: Accountability Model

### SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES

**Servant:** Islamic leadership is viewed more as a service to the organization and its members [14]. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that the leader of the people is their servant. Servant leaders lead with logical feelings related to the follower, which cultivates understanding, gratitude, kindness, forgiveness and compassion [26]. Servant leaders serve; they are what they do [27]. Servant leaders believe in first to serve, then to lead [28]. Servant leadership is based on trust and sacrifice thus leads to 'Agapao'. Agapao is sacrificial love; it is the kind of action that keeps giving itself away without regard for a return [29].

**Eloquence:** Important quality of leadership is the ability to articulate and communicate ideas and views with clarity and eloquence [30], because communication is one of the important dimensions of effective leadership [31]. Eloquence is important not only for persuading followers to adopt the proposed course of action and committing themselves to a specific set of values and purposes,

but also for negotiating and communicating with opponents and competitors. Again, the al-Qur'an stresses the importance of eloquence through the example of Moses (AS) whose initial reaction, when he received the divine commission to call the Pharaoh to the way of God, was to plead for the inclusion of his brother Aaroon (AS) in this mission based on the fact that Aaroon (AS) was more eloquent in speech:

"And my brother Aaron, he is more eloquent in speech than I: so send him with me as a helper, to confirm (and strengthen) me: for I fear that they may accuse me of falsehood." (al - Qur'an 28:34).

**Forbearance:** When it comes to leadership keep in mind that forbearance is virtue [32]. Forbearance refers to one's ability to endure annoyance and irritation even when one has the upper hand over those responsible for producing them [30]; in al - Qur'an it is mentioned that,

For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate and given to look of Allah. (al - Qur'an 11:75).

**Enterprise:** Enterprise of leadership is the will to achieve specific objectives [33]. Enterprise reveals itself through the initiatives taken by leader in his drive to carry out his mission [30]. The leader's enterprise is usually manifested by self confidence, boldness and willingness to take risk whenever necessary, as well as by personal energy, diligence and hard work [34]. Enterprise leads to firmness and determination.

And We ordained laws for him in the Tablets in all matters, both commanding and explaining all things, (and said): "Take and hold these with firmness and enjoy thy people to hold fast by the best in the precepts: (al - Qur'an 7:145).

It is this attitude of "taking with might" that one sees in the boldness of the young Abraham (AS) when he stood firmly before the elders of his community.

**Humility:** In response to Allah's command, Moses (AS) first asked for Allah's help to enhance his capabilities and enable him to succeed in completing the assigned task. His plea for help represents the hallmark of leader, full of humility and dependent on His Lord for every thing [35].

"(Moses) said: 'O my Lord! Expand me my breast; Ease my task for me;'" (al - Qur'an 20:25-26).

Charismatic leaders always have great self confidence, yet they are very humble. They are willing to admit that they don't know and can't possibly be the best at every thing. That's why they continuously seek learning.

**Resolve:** Resolute person continues to pursue his objectives despite the strong opposition of those who have the power to inflict pain and suffering [30].

Therefore patiently persevere, as did (all) Messengers of inflexible purpose; and be in no haste about the (Unbelievers) (al - Qur'an 46:35).

Resolve strengthens one's own inner belief and provides laser-like focus combined with unwavering determination [36].

**Conviction:** Importance of leader's conviction in times of volatility and change is seen in the fact that when the existing order begins to break down, along with its rules and regulations, actions can be guided only by the principles and values to which one is committed [30]. Thus a deep conviction in and a strong commitment to a set of principles or values are essential for a leader who wants to reform the accepted pattern of behavior.

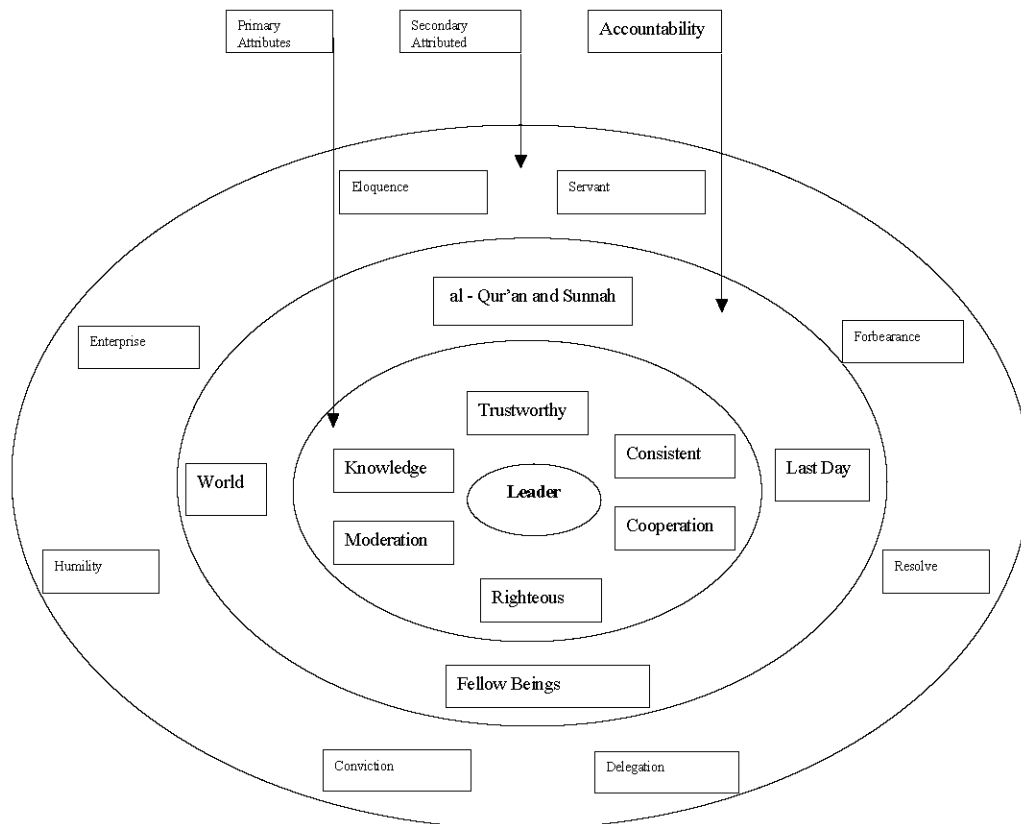


Fig. 2: Islamic Leadership Model

Leader requires strong conviction and should make extraordinary sacrifices in the interest of his vision and mission. Conviction is needed if the leader is to challenge the status quo, for without a deep faith in a higher and better order, the task of changing the prevalent circumstances is impossible.

**Delegation:** Effective delegation is important tool provided it is clearly defined and communicated [37]. When Allah (SWT) asked Prophet Moses (AS) to leave his people for forty days, he put them under the supervision of Aaron (AS). In other words, he delegated the leadership of the community and the management of its affairs to his teammate. In doing so, Moses (AS) defined the delegated task in broad terms as follows:

“..... And Moses had charged his brother Aaron (before he went up): ‘Act for me amongst my people: do right and follow not the way of those who do mischief.’” (al - Qur’ān 7:142).

When Moses (AS) returned to his people and found that Aaron (AS) had been unable to prevent his people from being misled by Samri, he was upset. He held Aaron (AS) accountable but assumed responsibility himself, illustrating one of the most basic rule of delegation that one cannot delegate responsibility; one can delegate only the authority [35].

Moses prayed: "O my Lord! forgive me and my brother! admit us to Thy mercy! for thou art the Most Merciful of those who show mercy!" (al - Qur’ān 7:151).

## CONCLUSION

Over a period of time, recurrent unethical scandals and financial scams have proved that all prevailing leadership programs have failed to produce the leadership that can deliver beyond its personal interests and gains. For example, regulations such as Sarbanes-Oxley and many others failed to keep leadership from moral and financial scandals; instead, loopholes in regulations have been manipulated to find room for malpractices. This dilemma has occurred because our system developed the leaders who think that if they can hide their wrong doings from the eyes of laws, there is no danger to them. Second, all scams and controversies prove that self-interest, rather than collective betterment, remains their priority. We live in a global village, thus now our interests are well connected with one another. This article concludes that the first problem, where leaders try to

hide from rules and regulations, can be better addressed by incorporating religious doctrine in leadership development programs, thus providing a model of Divine accountability, an accountability that no one can avoid. This concept will raise an accountability barometer within the personality of the leader, acting as internal policeman to stop from doing wrong under any temptation. This model may also facilitate leadership development schools and academies in inculcating a will to scarify the self-interest and encouraging contribution for the benefit of others in difficult times. This model will help develop an organizational environment which will move around planet, people and profit; not just the profit.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that contemporary leadership development gurus must now recognize that approaches away from natural human instinct have failed time and again; therefore, leadership schools and academies should incorporate religious dimensions in their development programs.

Leadership programs should base their motivational theories on everlasting pleasures of contributing for the benefit of human race, thus avoiding repentance at the end of careers.

Leadership academies and business schools should include subjects explaining values and ethics and their significance for long-term individual and organizational reputation.

Leaders should learn that it is not only the personal or organizational interest which matters; in fact, it is the triumph of entire society that signifies the success of the leadership.

Training and development programs have to focus on counseling those who are at higher risk to be deviated, besides strengthening those who have the potential to perform better for the success of organization.

Recruitment procedures need to be reviewed to ensure that upcoming leaders adhere to standard values and ethics.

Code of ethics has been proven nothing more than a piece of papers in many organizations around the globe. It is important to integrate code of ethics with rewards, as significantly as financial or other specific achievements.

Researchers and scholars from other religious faiths should also step forward and develop leadership models providing religious foundation to leadership development and accountability program.

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