Moral Commitment in Rabbani Leadership of National Islamic Secondary School Principals in Malaysia

Rahimah Haji Ahmad & Hailan Salamun

Department of Educational Managemnet, Planning & Policy , Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, MALAYSIA.

Corresponding Author: Department of Educational Management Planning & Policy, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya.
rahimaha@um.edu.my

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Rabbani leadership among National Islamic Secondary School principals in Malaysia. Rabbani leadership rests upon Islamic values and the assumption that leadership practices are influenced by the leader's moral commitment, the basis of which are concerns for godliness, concern for human development, and concern for professional development of their members, and their practices were focused on all aspects of the principalship functions. The results show that leadership practices of Malaysian National Islamic School principals were generally guided by moral commitment, but leadership practices varied in terms of their focus, depending on whether they were more focused on godliness, human development or professional development of staff, or a combination of the three concerns. When identified into four types, based on strength of leadership influence, it was found that leadership focus of Type I Rabbani principals was godliness, while their practices showed they were concerned with all aspects of principalship functions; Type II was more focused on concern for human development of individuals with practices concentrating on developing teacher leadership capacity. Type III was more inclined to focus on professional development, while their practices were apparently not much guided by moral judgment. Type IV, did not show an apparent focus on any of the three concerns of moral commitment, changing from time to time; and likewise their practices were not consistently apparent on any aspect of leadership practice identified as principalship functions, while their leadership was in general much weaker as compared to the other types.

Keywords: **Principals, Rabbani leadership, Leadership Focus, Leadership Practices, Moral Commitment.**

INTRODUCTION

Leadership studies have always been relating the intellect to leadership capability. It has been shown that intelligence correlates with ability to lead. For instance, Zaccaro et al. (2004) verified that intelligence or intellectual ability is positively related to leadership based on their analysis of a series of recent studies on intelligence and various indices of leadership. Studies have also shown that leaders who were more intelligent than their followers were more effective (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987). Leaders tend to have higher intelligence than non-leaders (Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Northhouse, 2010). Goleman (1995) postulated that good leaders have IQ and EQ. However, individuals differ in their abilities to lead, and they use different approaches in coping with leadership issues and problems. Part of the reason may be attributed to their personality and traits (Adair, 2009, 2010). A good leader is able to know the specific needs of the situation whenever faced with a difficult situation (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Recently, much has been written on values-based leadership (O'Toole, 1995; Sergiovani,1992) and spiritual leadership, the latter mostly in the western tradition (Fry, 2003; Sanders, 1986) incorporating ethics and values-based approaches to leadership, going beyond worldly pursuits, which is in line with the Islamic concept of leadership.

Islamic leadership emphasizes that leadership practices should be based on internal moral judgments, guided by specific rules of the religion or akidah. Akidah itself must be in accordance with the true path of the religion, and adherence to the divine right of God (Rabb). Akidah guides every act of communication, behavior and the intention behind the practices (Sidek Baba, 2006). From the Islamic perspective, leadership is a vocation; the leader is committed to having a responsibility to stay on the true and divine path of the Creator, to lead mankind or the ummah for peace on earth, and in line with divine right (Ali Moh'd Jubran, 2004; Haron Din, 1988; Ibn Taymiya, 1992; Al-Mawardi, 1973; Ibn Khaldun, 2006).

In the context of the school, the principal is committed to be responsible to ensure that education fulfills worldly needs and demand as well as those of the hereafter. Hence leadership practice with the guidance of internal commitment, that is derived from making decisions (judging) of what is right according to the rules of the religion, or moral judgment. A person who acts according to his internal moral judgment can be said to have moral commitment. The principals who have moral commitment follow the guidelines of the religion in performing their role functions as leaders of their schools, and at the same time, ensuring positive human relations among the members of the organization, as well as focusing on staff professional development and the needs of the modern school.

In a sense Islamic leadership, while acknowledging that there are two dimensions of leadership behavior, consistent with early western literature on leadership behavior, labeled by Owens, (2001, p. 238) as the two factor leadership theory, but emphasizes that a leader's actions in performing his duties, are determined by moral commitment, the inner drive which reflects the spiritual side of leadership. At the same time, human relations and development of the group professionally are also important. Islamic scholars agree that a leader has a role to safeguard religious needs, while managing worldly demands, as practiced by Ibn Taymiya; (661-728), Al-Mawardi (957-1058), and Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), and reflected in their works, published after their lifetime (Ibn Taymiya, 1992; Al-Mawardi et al., 1973; Ibn Khaldun, 2006).

The main principle in Islam is that all practices are related to the paradigm and oneness of Allah, that is tawhid. This implies that in all individual actions are governed by the will to do good in the eyes of the Creator. Each action taken, each activity carried out, should be based on values aligned to rules of nature and moral values. In this respect, Al-Faruqi (1991), states that Allah s.w.t created things to be done in accordance to judgments made on its suitability (by the individual), and in accordance with the will of Allah, the Creator. All actions taken are considered as a good deed, ibadah,for as long as it does not contradict the tenets of religion (Islamic way of life) and one should ensure daily practices are demonstrations of a good moral behavior, presumably formed by a person's moral commitment.

Most Arabic sources (for example Tafsir al-Baidhowi, 1968; As-Alusi), describe a person who has the rabbani characteristic as one who is knowledgeable and wise in administering human affairs, hence a leader. A rabbani person is someone whose mission and vision in life is solely for the divine path, to be acceptable in the eyes of the Creator, and his actions are fully guided by Al-Quran and Assunah (Ramli Awang, 1997).

The basis for moral commitment is spiritual intelligence (SQ). Spiritual intelligence goes beyond wisdom or possessing the knowledge and ability to solve problems, but his actions are guided by his conscience that guides him to the path subservient to the Creator.

Spiritual intelligence (SQ) rests at the soul of the human self. Having spiritual intelligence means the person is being able to use the mind (having IQ), balance the emotions (having EQ), as well as acting in accordance to the divine truth, the spiritual dimension. Taufik Pasiak (2006) proposed that the ability to balance these aspects illustrates a person having spiritual intelligence, bringing an individual closer to God. It is the spiritual intelligence that guides a person's moral commitment.

This study aimed at exploring the characteristics of National Islamic Secondary School principals in Malaysia as rabbani leaders, their moral commitments, which influence the focus of their leadership practices.

RABBANI LEADERSHIP

Rabbani leadership is leadership in the Islamic context. A Rabbani leader is a person who is not only able to lead, but is also knowledgeable and wise; his actions and decisions are always based on dual concerns for worldly needs and spirituality, and he strives to align his work on the true path to God. Rabbani leadership also emphasizes shared responsibility and accountability that are driven by moral commitment and desire to seek the divine path, akin to spiritual leadership. In doing so, Rabbani leaders practice Goodwill (Ihsan) that becomes the underpinning principle during promotions of teacher capacity building, group cohesion, cross cultural knowledge, and improvements of teaching programs in schools.

A rabbani person (hence a rabbani leader), is one whose behavior is shaped by their intellect (IQ), emotions (EQ), as well as spiritual considerations (SQ).In line with this, rabbani leaders are constantly aware of his duty in his relationship among men, (Hablum min al-nas), and his relationship with his Creator (Hablum min Allah). An individual must utilize his different intelligences in fulfilling his duties.

This paper posits that an individual who strongly adheres to the pursuit on divine path in all his actions will develop spiritual intelligence (SQ), which is defined as a strong inner drive to contribute to the concerns of humanity and human development, as well as concerns for professional development. Spiritual intelligence is attained when the individual's conscience is shaped by the balance between his mind, his heart and his wants, which then ultimately becomes the basis of the moral commitment of the individual.

All these concerns will manifest themselves in the individual's actions and moral commitment.

Moral Commitment

Moral commitment is derived from a person's consciousness of being held responsible and accountable for one's actions in the here-after, and is driven by the desire to pursue the divine path (ketuhanan), compassion for humanity (keinsanan), and the need to excel in one's service to mankind. Moral commitment then refers to the basic inner drive that moves an individual to act in certain ways, the basis of which are inner thoughts that have taken into consideration the good and bad (positive and negative) impact of a particular action before a person takes the action. It is the inner considerations that an individual makes that results in feelings of being responsible for the good and bad of any action taken.

Moral commitment should be nurtured so as to ensure that the considerations are based on the purpose and destiny of one's creation (fitrah), which has a bearing on one's beliefs, values and attitudes to life, worldview and interactions with the surrounding environment. Fitrah cannot be viewed in isolation: one's mind, conduct and physical presence in various institutions in the phenomenal world (Yasein Mohamed, 1994) are all inter connected. The Fitrah causes mankind to constantly seek to align their work and commitments to gain acceptance in the eyes of the Creator, or in godliness, (ketuhanan), to instill humancompassion in all their relationships (keinsanan) and to seek to improve their quality of service to fellow mankind through continuous holistic professional development. Moral commitment in the Islamic perspective transcends to the spiritual belief of one's purpose of creation, and the innate ability endowed to all individuals by the Creator to understand what is right and wrong according to the tennets of the religion, while at the same time being able to exert intellectual rationality over one's actions and worldview, as long as it is not in contradiction with Al-Quran and As-Sunnah. Moral commitment requires both the mind and rationality (intellect), which influences feelings and causes the individual to be receptive and adhere to the divine truth that is already accepted by one's innate reality (fitrah). The mind drives the intellect (IQ), emotional intelligence (EQ) as well as spiritual intelligence (SQ).

Moral commitment triggers inclinations or tendencies that drive the individual in his actions. Hence in this paper, moral commitment is seen as being triggered by the three inner drives, namely, concern for divine righteousness (ketuhanan), concern for development of the individual as members of the groups well as in his relationships with the group (keinsanan), and thirdly concern for the enhancement of the individual professionally, that is professional development.

The basis of moral commitment cannot stand alone, but judgments are made based on concerns that are able to influence him. Covey (2004) used the word conscience to be the basis of a person's moral judgement. Conscience is defined as the role of a part of the human mind which explains what is good or bad about an action. (English-Malay Dictionary, 2003)

A person's conscience becomes active when the spiritual quotient (SQ) influences each activity done by the individual. The intellect is one of the 'attributes' which determines a person's 'ibadah' (acts of faith). Without the intellect, a person is not responsible for his actions.

The principal as the school leader should possess all intelligences, the IQ, EQ and SQ in the application to his/her leadership practices. The principal who is seen to have and makes decisions based on SQ, EQ and IQ is the important factor in Rabbani leadership. These, as the basis for consideration (for decision making) should not be in contradiction with the tennets of Islam (syara'), ie the Al-Quran and Sunnah .

Concern for Godliness or Adherence To The Divine Path

Concerns for godliness or divine affinity reflects directly the relationship between God and man when man willingly submits himelf to Islamic teachings as noted in the Al-Quran and Sunnah. A leader who is guided by godliness uses spiritual intelligence (SQ) to guide both the emotional intelligence (EQ) as well as the intellectual intelligence (IQ).

Subjugation to God opens the way for a person to discover his 'instincts' which incorporates the meaning of life. An individual will only discover the meaning of life when he is free from prejudice, principles of life, past experiences, certain vested interests, differential perspectives, comparisons, and literature. When his feelings are not influenced by those mentioned above, he will be touched by universal values that is the ninety nine names of Allah (Ary Ginanjar, 2005). This feeling will invoke strength to draw others into doing what is good/welfare of mankind. Without realizing it, the individual will be an example for others as he 'enjoys' loving goodness, doing good, and spreads goodness to others.

An individual influenced by SQ will always be guided by EQ and IQ in all his actions, solely to get blessings of God (Allah s.w.t). Simply put, a person who is guided by SQ tends to be good, practices what is good, and influences others to do the same.

Concern for Human Development

To safeguard relationships among human beings is of great concern in Islam. The basis of human relationships should begin with the relationship between a leader and his followers according to the guidelines of tawhid. Human relationships will be sustained and controlled when a leader is able to play his role in leading his people, and his followers are able to play their roles, as followers. At the same time, the basis for good human relations should also be mutual understanding among themselves, as well as love and affection. These are the foundation

for tolerance, an essential element in group relations. Good relationships between men is the manifestation of EQ. Ginsberg and Davis (2007) state that the EQ is a form of intelligence that can relate a person's ability to control one's emotions and others' to avoid favoritism, and to use information which helps thinking and actions. A person with EQ will always be more successful in life and his career.

Concern for human development or development of the human self, (keinsanan) influences the basis of moral consideration in Rabbani leadership, which is again based on responsibility and accountability that influence others in developing themselves (leadership capacity building). While the basis for moral consideration is based upon understanding, that is influencing groups of people to do things that are able to make them relate closer to each other (collegiality). An individual who puts importance to his own self and does not understand his responsibilities or the feeling of others can give rise to conflicts. This is related to the EQ, that is how an individual manages his own feelings and understand others.

EQ enables a person to know himself and his feelings and understand the feeling of others, based on tawhid. Instincts which are subtly influenced by EQ usually results in the person realizing his responsibilities as a leader. Leaders with EQ will influence others to be responsible, by understanding others' capabilities.   Leaders will act on the basis of his EQ to motivate and inspire his group. The EQ will help a person to enhance his interpersonal and interaction skills. This ability will enable a leader to influence others.

A leader's SQ influences his EQ, and will make him aware of his responsibilities to improve and enhance relationships with others, in a moral manner. A leader will feel responsible to guide and support others that he leads, to enhance understanding. A principal should feel it is his responsibility to encourage and develop the leadership capacity of his teachers. A leader with EQ will be able to control his emotions, understands feelings of others, as well as the responsibility to build relationship among members – a responsibility to lead and nurture the feelings of mutual understanding among members, as well as building collegiality among members, to work harmoniously as a team, according to the Islamic way of life.

Concern for Professional Development

Staff development based on Islamic beliefs aims to get the blessings of Allah SWT in a person's life span. Development means interaction of the human with resources bestowed by Allah with the objective of fulfilling human needs in the world. Man's role is to manage natural resources and develop them to fulfill human needs. (Muhammad Syukri Salleh, 2002). To manage and develop the world's natural resources requires knowledge and skills. The Al-Quran and Hadith touch on the importance of knowledge. Zulkifli Mohamad (2007) analyses the hadith related to knowledge, puts forth that Muslims must have several skills incorporating skills in managing the self, managing the system besides thinking skills, organizational skills, strategic skills and communication skills.

A leader's concern for professional development influences the moral commitment in Rabbani leadership practices. The basis for moral concern is responsibility for increasing competency of the group, which is enhancing competency and knowledge as well as skills. Concern for professional development is the consideration for efforts to develop the human being as a resource. A leader who uses consideration using IQ always works towards

Improvement. The leader's competency is enhanced when the knowledge he has is used to develop the capacity of staff and enhance the organizational resources. This ability influences his leadership practices, in managing human resource well. It helps an individual to plan and implement changes.

The IQ does not guarantee leadership practices are in sync with good values. The inclination towards fulfilling everyday needs sometimes deviate a person from the right path. Not all actions are good and moral. There are times when a leader manages well, but are involved with scandals and less than moral or ethical activities. It is one's SQ which will guide one to the right path, influencing the IQ to fulfill basic human needs parallel with good moral values. A person's soul that is influenced by a clean heart will always be influenced by needs to take actions according to Islamic beliefs and tend to love goodness. His actions will always be influenced by his wants to fulfill Allah's ways and leave things forbidden. Each activity is based upon one's values.

The spiritual intelligence (SQ) of a leader influences his intellect. (IQ), realizing his responsibility to develop human resources available for the benefit of mankind. A leader feels responsible to enhance his competency and will bring others together enhance their knowledge and skills. A principal will try his best to build the learning culture in school. A principal will also work towards enhancing the teaching and learning continuously, towards enhancing the effectiveness of the school.

THE STUDY

The focus of Rabbani leadership refers to leadership practices which clearly demonstrate the individual's inclinations that is a result of his considerations for his behavior and actions based on (i) affinity to the Creator, and the intention to pursue the divine path or godliness (ketuhanan), (ii) compassion for human kind and their development, particularly the staff, human development, and (iii) concerns for staff professional development.

This study assumes that Islamic secondary school principals in Malaysia practice Islamic leadership, specifically rabbani leadership, which is driven by moral commitment. However, the study recognizes that the level of rabbani-ness as manifested in their practices, as well as the focus of their practices, differ between individuals. The leadership focus as mentioned above refers to whether their practices are predominantly aligned to their inner considerations, which is mainly affinity to Allah, concern for human development, or concerns for professional development. The objectives of this study were to examine the leadership focus of Malaysian Islamic Secondary school principals, the relationship between leadership focus and moral commitment and the internal drives or concerns that form the basis for moral commitment.

This study aims to answer the following questions:

a)   What is the level of moral commitment of National Secondary Islamic School principals in Malaysia?

b)   Is there a relationship between rabbani leadership practices of Malaysian National Islamic Secondary

         School principals and their moral commitment?

c)   What is the focus of rabbani leadership practices of Malaysian National Islamic Secondary School

Principals?

METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed methods approach, or explanatory mixed methods design (Cresswell, 2008). Data collection was done in two phases, priority being given to quantitative data, followed by qualitative data collection to further analyze results obtained from the quantitative data.

The Research Instrument

The questionnaire was constructed based on readings and references, as well as interviews with educational experts in the field of Islamic leadership. Items of the questionnaire were selected and adapted from Ali Moh'd Jubran Salleh (2006), who earlier had developed his instrument with adaptations from Kouzes and Posner (2007) and his own personally constructed items. The items for this study were specifically designed to reflect the concepts related to the research questions. Validity and refinements of the instrument were done by aligning the items with the operational definitions of the concepts. Validity in quantitative studies means that the measurement instrument at the operational level correctly measures the conceptual definitions (Slavin, 1992).

Content validation was ensured by enlisting the assistance of three scholars each from University of Malaya, International Islamic University of Malaysia, and National University of Malaysia.

The distribution of questionnaire items and target groups are illustrated bin Table 1.

Table 1
The Questionnaire

Section	Contents	Target Group
A	Background	Principals and teachers
B	Moral commitment based on inner considerations	Principals
C	Leadership practices	Principals and teachers.

Section aims to obtain background information of the respondents. Section B contains 15 items describing the three major concerns that drive a leader's moral judgment that is Concern for godliness (ketuhanan), Concern for development of the individual as a human being (keinsanan), and Concern for professional development. Items that measure Concern for Godliness touched on beliefs and practice based on values acceptable to Islamic faith or aqidah, and belief in the role of leadership for the reinforcement of good behavior in self and others. Items that measured Concern for human development included the concern for developing the human side in individuals, developing teacher capacity, enhancing teacher commitment, and developing mutual understanding.

Concern for professional development was measured through items that denote, among others, building knowledge culture, nurturing shared values, enhancing group cohesion and group professional development, enhancing competent management of programs, establishing a systematic work schedule for teachers, and nurturing teacher self-management of teaching and learning, as well as continuous instructional supervision. Section C measure show far were Rabbani leadership practices practiced, as perceived by the principals and their teachers in those areas of concerns specified in Section B.

To ensure reliability, the questionnaire was pilot tested twice. The first phase involved 31 teacher respondents from one National Islamic Secondary School and one National Secondary School. From the feedback obtained, the items were revised and refined to ensure clarity and appropriateness of concept. The revised questionnaire was again pilot tested, with 70 teachers as respondents.

The Cronbach Alpha reliability test score was .982, which denotes high reliability (Sekaran, 2000; Zaidatun & Mohd Salleh, 2003).A few items were dropped when they were found to have a correlation matrix not strong enough to define certain concepts in the instrument. The resulting reliability test showed an alpha value of .989. The questionnaire was then used to collect the quantitative data for the study.

Primary data collection in this study was done in two phases, first the quantitative data collection, (questionnaire), with a sample of 763 teachers and 45 principals. Phase two, the qualitative phase, involved direct interviews with 12 principals, further selected from the original 45 principals in phase 1, as pictured in Figure 1.

Phase 1 : Quantitative: Questionnaire
(763 teachers and 45 principals)

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Phase 2: Qualitative: Direct interviews
(12 principals)
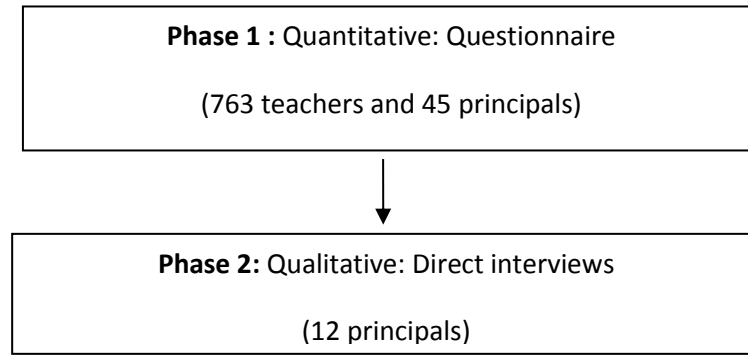
Figure 1. Primary Data Collection Phases

The population for the study consists of all the principals and teachers who were holding administrative positions, in 52 National Islamic Secondary schools under the purview of the Ministry of Education Malaysia, in 2000. Specifically the population numbered 51 principals. However, due to unavoidable circumstances, only 45 principals were involved, as there were recent transfers or retirement of principals, and a few others were unable or unwilling to participate. Stratified random sampling procedure was then used to select fifteen (15) teacher-administrators from each school.

Teacher-administrators included Assistant Principals Heads of Departments, as well as heads of Subjects. In descriptive studies, it is agreed that a sample of 10 – 20 percent of the population is sufficient (Van Dalen, 1993). The final sample then comprised 45 principals and 763 teacher-administrators. All were given the questionnaires for the phase 1 quantitative data. For the second phase, 12 principals were selected for the interviews, three each from each of the types of Rabbani leaders identified by the analysis of Phase I data.

RESULTS

Moral Commitment of National Islamic Secondary School Principals in Malaysia

Basis of moral commitment consists of concern for godliness, or concern for divine right, (ketuhanan), concern for developing the human being (keinsanan) and concern for professional development. The level of the principals' moral commitment was measured using mean scores. Data were analyzed using simple frequency counts and means. This was measured through principals' responses to the items which measure leadership practices, which were then grouped as concerns.

Table 2

Moral Commitment by Concerns

No	Items	N 45	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %	Mean
A	Godlines							
1	Beliefs and values is good in all things to be considered	45	-	-	-	17.8		4.82
2	School staff have led to hone their behavior	45	82.2					4.64
3	Mental strength to be increased to take responsibility	45	-	-		-	35.6	4.71
4	I need to set a clear mission to educate students, among school staff	45	64.4					4.80
			-		-	4.4	20	4.74
	Godlines Mean		75.6					
			-	-	-	20	80	
B	Human Development							
1	Teachers should be motivated to improve their leadership efforts	45	-	-	6.7	51.1	42.2	4.36
2	I need to emphasise teacher expertise in their respective fields.	45	-	-	2.2	42.2		4.53
3	I need to strengthen the commitment to work among teachers.	45	55.6					4.67
4	Understanding among the teachers should be emphasized	45	-	-	-	33.3		4.73
	Human Development Mean		66.7					4.57
			-	-	-	26.7		
			73.3					
C	Professional Development							
1	I need to develop a learning culture among school staff	45	-	-	-	28.9		4.71
2	I need to inculcate common values among the school population.	45	71.1					4.69
3	I need to emphasise knowledge-sharing increase professionalism among all parties	45	-	-	2.2	26.7		4.69
			71.1					
4	Management skills in the teaching programs in schools should be emphasised.	45	-	-	2.2	26.7	71.1	4.67
5	The system works regularly in the teachers must be nurtured	45	-	-	-	33.3		4.76
6	Management of teaching and learning among teachers must be improved	45	66.7					4.64
7		45						4.62
	Continuous supervision of teaching practice is important.		-	-	-	24.4	75.6	4.68
	Professional development means		-	-	-	35.6	64.4	4.66
	Moral judgment means		-	-	-	37.8		
			62.2					

Note. *1 (never), 2 (seldom), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often), 5 (Very often)

Table 2 is a summary of a bigger table which detailed the frequencies and means of the items used to measure practices and concerns. It shows the level of moral commitment of rabbani principals, by concerns. It can be seen that principals 'moral commitment was generally very high, with a mean score of 4.66. Analyzing further in terms of individual concerns, it can be seen that there were very small differences, with Concern for godliness being highest (mean = 4.74), followed by concern for professional development (mean = 4.68), and concern for wholesome human development (mean = 4.57). More than 50 percent of the principals agreed that their practices were guided by their own moral judgment that is godliness, human development and concern for professional development. It can also be seen that about 75 percent of the principals rated concern for godliness as very high denoting that godliness was the main concern which shaped their moral judgment. This is to be expected being Islamic secondary school principals, and the values that permeate the organizations were Islamic values.

Analysis of the qualitative data affirmed findings from the quantitative data. The principals interviewed agreed that their practices were influenced by what they felt as the best they could do, in accordance with Islamic values, and driven by what they felt as the best choice of action to take, based on their own judgments. They claimed that they tried to emulate the practices of the holy Prophet, Muhammad (blessings and peace be upon him, pbuh). In fact, Principal 1 cited the case of the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) actions in the latter's final journey to Madinah, in the historical Hijrah from Makkah when fleeing the non-believers.

"... (Translated) I take the example of the prophet. When he arrived in Madinah he did three things, first build a masjid, secondly befriend the people and thirdly implement Islamic law ... So, my actions are based on these three steps ..."

They further claimed that their own judgments guided them to act and dispense their duties, according to their beliefs that it was their responsibility to develop their staff as individuals, develop teacher leadership capacity, and to enhance the teachers' professional competency, develop group cohesiveness and collegiality, as well as develop the knowledge or learning culture among the staff. At the same time, they needed to manage and develop the teaching and learning programs, which is the core business of the school. From the conversations, it was most apparent that the principals wanted to discharge their duties and fulfill their obligations, according to Islamic values, that is Islamic practices, within the scope of the functions of school principals.

Relationship between Moral Commitment and Leadership Practices

Leadership practices were used to examine firstly the relationship between moral commitment and leadership practices categorized into acts that represented the functions of school principals. The categories were human development, that is practices deemed to be for the development of the staff as individual human beings; teacher leadership capacity building which are practices deemed to develop teachers as leaders; building group cohesion, that is practices deemed to be promoting team building and staff collegiality; building knowledge culture, practices deemed to promote a culture of learning in the school; and management of teaching and learning programs.

Secondly, the same practices were looked at from the perspective of them being a manifestation of the principals' moral commitment and concerns (inner drives) or the leadership focus. Leadership focus refers to practices deemed to be driven by any or all of the concerns or inner drives that shape moral commitment. In other words the practices are deemed to be driven by, or manifestations of the three drive that form the basis of a person's moral commitment. These can also be seen as being aligned to three different intelligences, specifically concern for godliness as the spiritual aspect aligned to SQ; concern for human development as the human aspect, aligned to EQ; and concern for professional development, the intellectual aspect, aligned to IQ.

Moral Commitment and Leadership Practices

The relationship between moral commitment and rabbani leadership practices representing the functions of the principal is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Relationship between Rabbani Leadership and Moral Commitment/Judgment

Respondent	Developing Individual Person	Building Teacher Leadership Capacity	Building Group Cohesiveness	Building Knowledge Culture	Management of Teaching & Learning
	Sig / r	Sig / r	Sig / r	Sig / r	Sig / r
Principals' moral judgement	.000/.687**	.000/.644**	.002/.456**	.003/.431**	.000/.539**

*Significant level s$p < .05$
**Significant level s$p < .01$

From Table 3 it can be seen that the relationship between moral commitment and rabbani leadership practices was very significant, both in general as well as for individual categories of practice, all being above the .05 level of significance - specifically with practices aligned to human development, or developing the individual person ($r = .687$, $p = <.05$), building teacher leadership capacity ($r = .644$, $p < .05$), building group cohesiveness and collegiality ($r = .456$, $p < .05$), building knowledge culture ($r = .431$, $p < .05$), and management of teaching and learning programs ($r = .539$, $p < .05$).

The highest value was the relationship between moral judgment and human development, or developing the individual (r = .687, p < .05), followed by building teacher leadership capacity (r = .66, p < .05). The lowest was developing knowledge culture (r = 0.431, p < .0.5). This clearly illustrates that the most prominent relationship between moral commitment and rabbani leadership practices of National Islamic secondary school principals in Malaysia was building the teachers as individuals, while the practices focusing on knowledge culture was rated lowest. It is noted however, that it was also significant at the .05 level.

Table 4

Moral Commitment and Leadership Focus

	Leadership practices		
Leadership Focus	Godliness	Development of the self	Professional development
	Sig / *r*	Sig / *r*	Sig / *r*
Principals' moral commitment	.000/.693**	.000/.601**	.000/.498**

*Significant level sp < .05
**Significant level sp < .01

Table 4 shows the relationship between concerns of moral commitment and leadership practices of the principal as a reflection of their inner drives. It can be seen that the relationship was significant (p < .05) for all concerns, be it godliness (r = .693, p < .05),   human development (r = .601, p < .05), or professional development (r = .498, p < .05). However, it is to be noted that the relationship was most significant with the concerns for godliness (r = .693, p < 0.5), which means that generally Islamic secondary school principals in Malaysia are more inclined toward the spiritual aspect in their practices, or their leadership focus is on godliness. This is to be expected as they were religious school principals.

Leadership Types, Focus and Strength

This paper posits that leadership strength of the principal, besides being determined by scores that determine the level of rabbani leadership, or rabbani-ness of the leadership, were also influenced by their teachers' acceptability of their leadership, as signified by the difference between teachers' and principals' scores. Simply put, when teachers and principals themselves agree on the principals' leadership level, the principals were well accepted, and leadership is strong. When teachers' perception differed greatly from principals' self-perception, the principals were less accepted; hence their leadership was less strong. It was apparent that for both principals who were rated highly (mean score above 4.0), as well as those who were rated less highly (mean scores below 4.0), there were

differences in teacher acceptability. Analysis was then done to see these differences. This resulted in four different types of rabbani leadership, as pictured in Table 5.

Table 5
Rabbani Leadership Types

Rabbani Type	Mean		
	Principal	Teachers	Difference
Rabbani I	4.58	4.27	0.31
Rabbani II	4.82	4.02	0.80
Rabbani III	4.25	3.83	0.42
Rabbani IV	4.54	3.72	0.82

Rabbani I principals were those whose scores were high (mean score > 4.0), and the difference between principal and teacher means was small (difference of 0.3). Rabbani II were also with high scores, (mean = 4.02), but difference between principals' and teachers' scores was much greater (0.80). Rabbani III and IV were those whose mean scores were less than 4.0. Rabbani III leaders were well accepted, that is difference between principals' self-assessment and teachers' perception was small (0.42), while Rabbani IV leaders had greater difference between principals' self-assessment and teachers' perception scores (0.82) denoting the leaders were less accepted.

Each of the four groups was analyzed to see inner drives or concerns that form the basis for moral judgment of the principals. Their inclinations would be reflected in their actions which could be seen as a tendency to be aligned to specific concerns, whether it is godliness, human development, or professional development, in other words whether there was a leadership focus.

The results are discussed using inferential statistics and Spearman rho correlation. The details of the leadership practices and leadership focus will be discussed according to four types of Rabbani leadership. These can be seen in Tables 4 – 11.

Rabbani I

Rabbani I principals are those whose scores were high (principal mean = 4.58; teacher's mean = 4.27), and the difference in means was small, that is less than 0.5 (0.31) signifying that the teachers "accepted" their leadership, hence inferred as strong.

Table 6

Relationship between Leadership focus and Moral Judgment/Commitment of Rabbani I Principals

	Leadership Practices Based DivinePath	Leadership Practices Based Humanity	Leadership Practices Based Professional Development	
	Sig / r	Sig / r	Sig / r	
Principals' Moral Judgement	.007 / .625**	.182 / .340	.412 / .213	

*Significant level s$p < .05$
**Significant level s$p < .01$

Table 6 shows the relationship between leadership focus and moral commitment of Rabbani I a principal was significant at the .01 level. It can be seen that the correlation with practices exhibiting concern for godliness was very significant ($r = 0.625$, $p < .05$). However, correlation with the other two concerns were not highly significant, specifically with practices for the human development, or development of the individual as a human being, ($r = .340$, $p > .05$), and practices for professional development ($r = .213$, $p > .05$).

This shows that concern for godliness was the driving force for leadership practices of Rabbani I principals. It can be concluded that leadership practices as well as leadership focus of Rabbani I principals were driven by concerns for godliness, which makes it apparent that Rabbani I principals were spiritual in nature, focussed more on developing the teachers as individuals in the pursuit of godliness, or in line with the tennets of Islam, and practices leadership beyond the mission to perform a job, but practicing and acting for what is good, for the sake of doing good.

Rabbani Leadership II

Rabbani leadership II were those with high scores (principal score = 4.82, teachers' perception = 4.02), but the difference between principals' score and that of their teachers was more than 0.5 (that is 0.80) signifying that they (the principals) were less accepted by the teachers, and hence their leadership strength was weaker. This can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7

Relationship between Moral Commitment and Leadership Focus of Rabbani II Principals

_____

	Leadership Practices Based Divine	Leadership Practices Based Humanity	Leadership Practices Based Professional Development
	Sig / r	Sig / r	Sig / r
Principals' Moral Judgement	.085 / .644	.013 / .818*	.101 / -.620

_____

*Significant level sp < .05

**Significant level sp < .01

Table 7 shows the relationship between moral judgment and leadership focus based on inner drives or concerns which form the basis of moral judgment, of Rabbani II principals was significant at the .05 level. Further observation shows that the relationship between leadership focus and concern for the development of the human being was significant at the .05 level, (r = .818, p < .05). Correlation with practices driven by godliness was much lower than those driven by concerns for developing the human being, while correlation with practices exhibiting concern for professional development was negative and not significant. (r = - 0.620, p > .05).

This shows that the main concern which influences Rabbani II principals' actions was concern for human development, specifically building the human self of the teachers. This means their concern for the development of the human side of individuals was most dominant, or the leadership focuses of Rabbani level II principals were for the softer aspect of leadership. The negative correlation with concern for professional development affirmed this conclusion, as it shows that Rabbani II principals tend to neglect the concern for teachers' professional development.

It was also apparent (Table 7) that their practices, which are deemed to mean a manifestation of their inner beliefs, was obviously concentrated on actions related to developing the teachers as individuals. This led us to conclude that the leadership focus, as aligned to their inner drives, was concern for the individual as a human being, and their practices as practical acts in performing their duties, were acts for developing the teachers as individuals, the softer aspect of leadership (keinsanan), an indication they used more EQ than SQ or IQ. The latter is obvious as relationship with concern for professional development was negative.

Rabbani III

Rabbani III principals were those whose mean scores were lower than 4.0 (i.e., 3.83) and there was little difference between the principals' self-perception score and the teachers' score (principal score = 4.25, teachers' score = 3.83), a difference of 0.42 , signifying that the teachers accepted the principals' leadership.

The concerns which influence moral commitment that guide practices can be seen from the analysis as shown in Table 8.

It can be seen that the relationship between leadership practices based on moral commitment and leadership focus of Rabbani III principals, for all sub-aspects of moral judgment or commitment were not positively significant. The correlation between Rabbani level III leadership focus and godliness was not significant (r = .316 p = > .05), as was correlation with practicing demonstrating concern for developing the professional self (r = .105, p > .05). Concern for human development (r = - .738, p > .05) was negative. This shows that their practices were not driven by moral judgment, whether concern for godliness (ketuhanan), concern for developing the human being (keinsanan) or concern for development of the professional self. It can be taken to mean that Rabbani level III principals had no leadership focus, and were not much guided by any moral commitment or judgment.

Table 8

Relationship Between Moral Commitment and Leadership Practices of Rabbani III Principals

_____

	Leadership Practices Based Divine	Leadership Practices Based Humanity	Leadership Practices Based Professional Development
	Sig / r	Sig / r	Sig / r
Principals' Moral	.684 / .316	.262 / -.738	.895 / .105

_____

*Significant level sp < .05
**Significant level sp < .01

The results of the study also show that this lack of adherence to moral commitment was manifested in their practices aligned to functions of the principals, as discussed earlier. Apparently Rabbani III principals were not concerned with any of the aspects of leadership focus that portray principalship functions. They had no leadership focus in terms of concerns that drive their actions, nor paid particular attention to their actions in terms of the functions of the principal.

Rabbani IV

Rabbani IV were those whose mean scores were much lower, with teachers' mean score of 3.72 and principals' self-perception score of 4.54, and the difference between the scores was more than .5, specifically .82, signifying that the principals were less accepted by their teachers. Table 10 shows results of the analysis of the relationship between moral judgment and leadership focus, as measured by their concerns.

Table 10

Relationship between Moral Commitment and Leadership Practices of Rabbani IV Principals

	Leadership Practices Based Divine	Leadership Practices Based Humanity	Leadership Practices Based Professional Development
	Sig / r	Sig / r	Sig / r
Principals' Moral Judgement	.005 / .722**	.001 / .819**	.003 / .748**

*Significant level sp < .05
**Significant level sp < .01

Table 10 shows that the relationship between leadership practices based on concerns and the principal's moral judgment were very significant for all, at the .01 level of significance. Concern for human development was highest (r = .819, p < .05), followed with concern for staff professional development (r = .748, p < .05), and then concerns for "godliness" (r = .722, p < .05). However, the differences were very small. This then shows that Rabbani IV does not appear to have any leadership focus, and their practices rather inconsistent. At times they were driven by concern for godliness, at other times driven by concern for human development and still others by concern for professional development. Their leadership focus was inconsistent, the impact of which was that they were less accepted by their teachers, and generally their rabbani-ness was considered to be low, as compared to other types.

DISCUSSION

In summary it can be said that National Islamic secondary school principals in Malaysia were driven by moral judgment, the bases of which were inner drives or concerns. That is godliness, human development of individuals, and professional development. The most dominant concern was godliness, which is to be expected as they are religious school principals.

With regard to leadership practices, categorized according to principalship functions, it was clear that their practice, being guided by their moral judgment, manifested in actions aimed at developing teachers as individuals and the human self. These were practices relating to developing the person of the teacher, developing teacher capacity, managing teaching and learning programs, building group cohesion and knowledge culture, in that order. This appears to be in line with normal practice, where school leadership is associated with developing teachers to enhance themselves and their performance, as well as improving the school. Less emphasis was given to building the school as a learning community, since group collegiality and knowledge culture were given lower priority.

This study categorized principals into four types of rabbani leaders, Rabbani Leader Type I – Type IV, according to the strength of their moral judgement, in order to examine differences in their leadership focus, both in terms of moral judgment, as well as emphasis in terms of practices relating to principals' functions as school leaders.

It was clear that Rabbani I principals, those identified as strongest in terms of moral judgment, were clearly focused on godliness, for the true or divine path. This manifested in their practices being most emphasized in the category of human development, that is developing the individual in the teacher, the person. Practices towards building teacher leadership capacity, and professional development seem to be far less important, while practices for group collegiality building and knowledge culture were least important. It was very clear that for Rabbani I principals, moral judgment was focused on godliness, and their practices toward developing the person of the teacher. It can be said that Rabbani I principals were more inclined to be SQ leaders.

Rabbani II principals, in terms of strength of moral judgment were a little less distinct that Rabbani. In terms of focus, it was very clear that they were dominated by concern for human development, (keinsanan), the human more than godliness. In terms of practice, this manifested in Rabbani II principals exhibiting practices for capacity building of teachers. They can be said to be EQ leaders.

Rabbani III principals who were found to be less distinct in their moral judgment than Rabbani I and II did not appear to use much nor show any focus. They appear not to be concerned with any one of the three concerns. Likewise their practices did not show any concentration on any aspect or group of practices identified as the functions of the principal. In fact, practices that promote group collegiality appear to be neglected as the relationship with moral judgment was negative.

Rabbani IV on the other hand, were also not distinctly clear whether they use much moral judgment, and they had no clear focus which of the concerns they used. However, the analysis showed the relationship between moral judgment and the practices were positive, and significant. It can be concluded that they were guided by moral judgment, but their moral judgment was not dominated by any one concern, as they were in fact not strong in it. Likewise, this was reflected in their practices, which were equally distributed among all the functions of the principal. It can be said that Rabbani IV principals were leaders who did not use moral judgment much, but their actions were distributed equally among the principalship functions. In fact, Rabbani IV was the only group which showed a positive and significant relationship between moral judgment building knowledge culture. This lack of focus in leadership practices could be because they did not use much moral judgment in their actions, and perform their duties as what they perceive were required of them as principals.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, National Islamic Secondary School principals in Malaysia were guided in their actions by moral judgment. However, they differ in focus, both in terms of moral judgment, as well as in terms of actual practices that relate to functions of the school principal. They could be categorized into four types of rabbani leaders. Leadership Type I was focused on godliness and their practices were strongly geared toward developing teachers as good persons. Rabbani Leadership Type II was focused on concern for human development, on the humane aspect, and their practices were geared toward developing teacher leadership capacity. Both Rabbani Type I and Type II were focused on developing individuals, be it aligned to godliness, which can be said showing an inclination of having higher SQ (Rabbani I), or concerned more with wholesome human development, the human self, an inclination toward emphasizing EQ. Rabbani Leadership Type III, on the other hand does not have any focus both in terms of their moral judgment concerns, as well as their practices, which were not apparently emphasizing any of the principalship functions. Rabbani leadership Type IV also did not have any dominant focus, but they appear to be weakly guided by all concerns that form the bases of moral judgment. Likewise, their practices reflect equal emphasis on all aspects of the principalship functions, developing the teachers as persons, and developing their capacity to be leaders, and developing them as professionals, as well as developing them as members of the school community.

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