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# Qualitative Study on the Leadership of Umar ibn al-Khattab: Lessons for Contemporary Leaders

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### ABSTRACT

Umar bin Khattab, in addition to being the head of government, also played a role as a faqih. His role in legal views made him very influential in his time until now. During the time of the Khulafaur Rasyidin, Islamic law could also not be applied in its entirety, because at that time the companions were faced with various realities of life and social conditions that were different from what happened during the time of the apostle, so they were required to carry out ijihad and deliberation. The aim of this research is to find out qualitatively what Umar ibn al-Khattab's leadership system and patterns are. The method used is descriptive qualitative. Umar's leadership was able to bring Islam into a golden age. Many efforts have been achieved under his leadership which should serve as an example and guide for the lives of Muslims. Simplicity, prioritizing the interests of the people, full attention to what people who live in poverty face and experience. His example has become an inspiration that has become an example to be emulated by future leaders. Umar's government has inherited the development of Islam to this day, in the fields of law, politics, government, and sociology.

**Keywords:** contemporary, leadership, moslem.

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### 1. Introduction

Umar bin Khattab is a revered figure in Islamic history, known for his exceptional character and dedication to justice. His allegiance to Abu Bakr, the first caliph, helped quell divisions among Muslims after the Prophet Muhammad's death. Despite this, conflicts over leadership persisted, particularly between the Ansar and Muhajirin groups, each claiming entitlement to the caliphate.

As Abu Bakr's health declined, he convened a council that unanimously appointed Umar as his successor, aiming to prevent further discord. Abu Bakr advised Umar to serve with devotion to Allah and emphasized the importance of good deeds. While some initially worried about Umar's stern demeanor, they recognized his capability as a leader.

Umar's tenure was marked by military strategy and significant achievements that contributed to Islam's golden age. He prioritized the welfare of the people, especially the poor, and actively sought to understand their struggles. His governance laid the foundation for Islamic law, politics, and sociology, promoting a democracy that valued public input. Umar's legacy continues to influence leadership principles today.

## **2. Literature Review**

Leadership is an activity that influences others so that they are willing to work together to achieve the goals that have been set. Leadership is also often known as the ability to gain consensus among members of an organization to carry out management tasks so that organizational goals are achieved. According to George Terry, Leadership is an activity to influence others to work willingly to achieve group goals. According to Cyril O'Donnell, leadership is influencing others to participate in achieving common goals. So, if seen in the context of leadership, the interrelated things are the existence of elements of driving cadres, the existence of participants who are moved, the existence of communication, the existence of organizational goals and the existence of benefits that are not only enjoyed by some members.

A person who occupies a leadership position, as explained above, is not always a leader at the same time. In this regard, it is necessary to know what the characteristics of good leadership are, so that someone who occupies a leadership position can be said to be a leader or not. If a person formally occupies a leadership position but his abilities and attitudes do not meet the characteristics of a leader, then he cannot be said to be a leader. As the definition, the formulation of these characteristics also differs among writers or scholars, although if studied in principle there is not much difference. Leadership tends to be said as a characteristic of a person's personality. Personality qualifications in leadership are a very vital factor, as stated by Millet, among others. Chester I Barnard argues that leadership has two aspects. The first is individual superiority in the field of leadership techniques. A person who has good physical condition, has high skills, masters technology, has fast perception, has high skills, masters technology, has broad knowledge, has a good memory and a convincing imagination will be able to lead subordinates. The second aspect is personal superiority in terms of assertiveness, tenacity, awareness and success.

Regarding the emergence of a leader, leadership theorists have put forward several different theories. However, if the various theories are analyzed, there will be three prominent theories, namely:

- **Genetic Theory (Hereditary Theory)**  
The essence of this teaching is summarized in the statement that "Leaders are born not made". This means that the adherents of this theory put forward the opinion that a leader will become a leader because he was born with leadership talents, in whatever circumstances a person is placed, because he has been destined to be a leader, one day he will emerge as a leader. Speaking of destiny, philosophically this view is classified as a fatalistic or deterministic view.
- **Social Theory**  
If the first theory above is an extreme one; then this theory is also an extreme one at the other end of this section. The core teaching of this social theory is that "Leaders are made and not born". So it is the opposite of the core of genetic theory. The adherents of this theory put forward the opinion that everyone can become a leader if given sufficient education and experience.
- **Ecological Theory**  
Because the two extreme theories above do not contain all the truth, then as a reaction to these two theories a third theory emerged, called the ecological theory, which in essence

means that a person will only succeed in becoming a good leader if at birth he has leadership talents, which talents are then developed through education.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### *3.1 Research Object*

The researcher conducted a literature study by examining the leadership of Umar Ibn Khattab.

#### *3.2 Data and Data Collection Techniques*

According to the sources and data needed in this study, the data is divided into two, namely:

- **Primary Data**  
According to Sugiyono (2016:225) Primary data is a data source that directly provides data to data collectors. Primary data sources are obtained through library study activities.
- **Secondary data**  
Secondary data is data that is not produced and collected by researchers but is obtained in a processed form. Secondary data sources are data to complete the data needed for primary data. Secondary data in this study are in the form of articles from websites, the internet, relevant news and some relevant literature.

#### *3.3 Data Analysis Techniques*

Analysis means separation or careful examination. Simply put, it can be understood that analysis is an effort to analyze or carefully examine something. In research, data analysis can be interpreted as the activity of discussing and understanding data to find meaning, interpretation and certain conclusions from all data in the study. Data analysis can also be interpreted as the process of responding to data, compiling, sorting and processing it into a systematic and meaningful arrangement (Sirajuddin Saleh, 2017:74). Therefore, the things that must be considered in data analysis are:

- Data search is a field process with pre-field preparation.
- After obtaining the findings in the field, the data is arranged systematically.
- Presenting the findings obtained from the field.
- Repeatedly searching for meaning until there is no more doubt. Here it is necessary to increase the researcher's understanding of what is happening in the field.

### **4. Result**

Umar bin Khattab was the second caliph after Abu Bakr. He was appointed by Muslims based on Abu Bakr's recommendation when he felt that his age would not last long. The decision to appoint Umar was expected to be able to minimize the polemics that occurred among Muslims (Ahmad Al-Usairy, 2003: 155). Because during the time of Caliph Abu Bakr there were many problems, including people who did not pay zakat, apostates, and false Nabis.

Umar bin Khattab, in addition to being the head of government, also played a role as a faqih. His role in legal views made him very influential in his time until now. During the time of the Khulafaur Rasyidin, Islamic law also could not be applied in its entirety, because at that time the companions were faced with various realities of life and social conditions that were different from what happened during the time of the apostle, so they were required to carry out ijthihad and deliberation. At one time the companions could agree on one thing but at another time it was possible that they would have different opinions. This also happened during the caliphate of

Umar bin Khattab (Quhtb Ibrahim Muhammad, 2002: 8). When Umar wanted to decide something related to the law, he always adhered to the Qur'an as the main and first legislation (dustur) in Islam. Every legal view issued by him was always based on these provisions. However, most of the policies formed to establish a law, by Umar, were inseparable from aspects of the welfare of the people, such as upholding the values of social justice, mutual assistance, and enforcing the rights that exist in society, including in economic policies. Umar was also known to be very brave in carrying out ijtihad, this was done because Umar looked further and deeper into the teachings of Islam, namely the principle of the welfare of the people (Abbas Mahmud Aqqad, 1992: 46). This article is an attempt to present the history of Umar bin Khattab in his role in building Islamic civilization. Without intending to belittle other aspects, the author only focuses on the educational aspect. This is important to sharpen the discussion of the social history and education of Islam during the time of Caliph Umar bin Khattab.

#### *4.1 Social History of Education during the Umar Era*

During the caliphate of Umar bin Khattab, the political conditions were stable, and the expansion efforts also yielded brilliant results. The Islamic region during Umar's era included the Arabian Peninsula, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Persia and Egypt (Hanun Asrahah, 2001: 37). With the vastness of the region, the needs of life in all fields also increased. To support these needs, humans need skills and expertise, so education is needed. In this case, Umar's attention can be seen through his policy by ordering every warlord if he succeeded in conquering an area, he must build a mosque as an Islamic Center or center of worship and education (Samsul Nizar, 2007: 47). He also forbade senior friends to leave the area except with his permission and within a limited period of time. So, if there are Muslims who want to study religious knowledge, they must go to the city of Medina. This indicates that the spread of the knowledge of the friends and places of education is centered in the city of Medina.

Likewise with Umar himself, he was an educator who provided counseling in the city of Medina. Umar also appointed and appointed teachers for each conquered region, their task was to teach the contents of the Qur'an and other Islamic teachings to residents who had just converted to Islam. Among the friends appointed by Umar to the regions were Abdurrahman bin Ma'qal and Imran bin Hasim. Both were placed in Basrah (Samsul Nizar, 2007: 47). The method they used was to create a halaqah, namely the teacher sitting in the mosque room while the students circled him. The teacher delivered the lesson word by word and its meaning then explained its content, while the students listened, took notes, and repeated what was explained by their teacher, and discussed (Abudin Nata, 2011: 123). Usually each halaqah consisted of twenty students.

For educators, Umar provided honorariums/salaries sourced from the income of conquered regions or from the Baitul Mal (Gifari, Noor Muhammad, 1989: 35). Umar bin Khattab is also seen as an initiator of the formation of Islamic government science. He organized it by dividing it into several small areas to make it easier to coordinate, and he also formed educational centers in various cities, so that educational progress was very rapid, especially driven by the stable and safe state of the country.

Educational institutions during Umar's reign were still the same as during Abu Bakr's reign, namely mosques and kuttabs. Kuttab is the oldest center of learning in the historical context

among Muslims. Islamic historians say that the Arab world had known it before the arrival of Islam. Kuttab in the first century of Hijriah was one of the main priorities whose affairs were very much considered, because it was the gateway to higher education. This kuttab resembles the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) today (Raghib As Sirjani, 2011: 203).

By definition, kuttab comes from the word taktib which means teaching writing. While katib or kuttab means writer. Initially, kuttab functioned as a place to provide writing and reading lessons for children. This type of kuttab education was initially held in the teachers' houses. However, after the Nabi Muhammad SAW. and his companions built a mosque, there were kuttabs that were built next to the mosque, and some were separate from the mosque. The study period at the kuttab was not determined. This depends on the physical condition and intelligence of the child. The teaching system at the kuttab during Umar's time was not made into classes (generations/leting).

#### *4.2 Current Reflection*

In today's millennial era, characterized by rapid progress and change, new challenges have emerged that can be transformed into opportunities, particularly in education. This era, a continuation of the global age, shares similarities with the previous era but differs notably in the advanced use of digital technology. This evolution has prompted experts to share their insights and propose various solutions. Umar effectively managed education during his time and made significant advancements, including: First, he established Medina as the center of Islamic education. In Indonesia, the educational focus remains primarily on Java or provincial capitals, with no specific city designated as a center for Islamic education, aside from certain specialized institutions. The Ministry of Religion has targeted specific educational institutions for particular fields, such as the Mora Scholarship program, which directs students to UIN Ar-Raniry for modern fiqh and other institutions for specialized studies. Second, educators during Umar's time were paid by the government, much like today, where teachers receive salaries, allowances, and certification benefits. The difference lies in the sources of government funding: Umar's income came from the expansion of Islamic territories and taxes, whereas contemporary state revenue is derived from various taxes, customs duties, corporate taxes, and state-owned enterprises. Third, Umar's era employed halaqah as a learning method, similar to modern practices. However, today's teaching is enhanced by advanced media, such as PowerPoint, allowing educators to present material more effectively. Students can easily access additional resources online if they need further assistance beyond classroom instruction. Initiatives like the literacy program led by Najwa Shihab, Indonesia's reading ambassador from 2016 to 2020, also support this learning environment. Fourth, while the curriculum during Umar's time may not differ significantly from contemporary educational frameworks in Indonesia, today's curriculum is more structured and requires teachers to develop effective learning methods and modules.

#### *4.2 Current Reflection*

The concept of theocracy is often associated with entities like the Pope's leadership during the Middle Ages and the Vatican City today, which functions as an "institution of spiritual power." HM Rasjidi notes that this spiritual power creates a hierarchy where religious scholars dominate the common people, a structure not found in Islam. In contrast, Islam emphasizes equality among

its followers and does not recognize a clergy hierarchy like that in Catholicism. Consequently, it is inconceivable for a group of religious scholars in Islam to claim the title of "representatives of God" with political authority. Louis Gardet's perspective, as cited by Rasjidi, supports the idea that an Islamic state is governed by ordinary people rather than a spiritual authority, characterized by "equalization," which ensures equal rights for all residents, regardless of their status or faith, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. This foundation underscores the principles of Islamic Nomocracy as a state of law.

1. Principle, power as a mandate

Caliph Umar carried out the mandates of the Qur'an and Hadith, following the testament of Caliph Abu Bakr, who appointed him as his successor. In his message, Abu Bakr emphasized obedience to Umar, expressing confidence in his fairness while noting that the consequences of Umar's actions would reflect on the people. This appointment, unlike Abu Bakr's own rise at Saqifah, involved various figures, including initial dissent from Abdurahman bin Auf, who ultimately accepted the choice. However, Abu Bakr's testament did not embody a true shura (consultative) system; instead, it reinforced the caliph's authority to select his successor. Abu Bakr's message served as a directive, indicating that Umar's appointment was a mandate to be followed rather than just a suggestion.

2. The principle of deliberation (musyawarat)

Each Hajj season, Umar uses the occasion to evaluate and discuss state issues comprehensively. State officials and governors gather to report on regional developments and community complaints. This annual meeting serves as a forum to shape future governance, similar to a National Working Meeting or National Conference today. Umar provides strategic instructions and listens to feedback to address challenges and achieve progress. He encourages open deliberation, though not everyone is adept at it; some struggle to consider differing opinions or reject others' views. Deliberation is a complex skill, requiring the ability to resolve differences for effective decision-making. Umar excelled in this art, valuing input from both experts and dissenters alike.

3. Principle of justice

Umar had visited a poor person's house, where he heard a child crying because he was hungry. Meanwhile, the child's mother is entertaining her by boiling a stone. As soon as Umar found out, he brought him food and cooked it for the child who was crying and hungry. In another example, Cases of Legal Determination: one night Umar was patrolling the city of Medina to get to know more closely the suffering of its people in that dark night. In one place he heard a woman complaining alone because her husband had been on the front line for too long. The woman uttered several stanzas of poetry that expressed her sadness at being abandoned by her husband for so long. Umar heard the complaint addressed to him. In the morning Umar called his daughter Hafshah. He said: "Hafshah, how long can a wife survive being left by her husband?" "He can last a month, two months, or three months, after the fourth month he can't survive anymore." Hafshah answered. Since, then Umar made a regulation, each soldier only served on the front for no more than four months. And the woman's husband, who was at the front, was immediately called home.

4. Principle of equality

Justice and equality of treatment, have been played by Umar in practical political practice. Theoretically it appears in Munir Fuady's study as follows:

- It is interesting to observe how the relationship between "justice"(justice) with "equality" (equality) The connection is that equality is the most important element of justice. Equality deals with the relationship between two or more human beings, where unequal treatment between them would result in injustice.
- Equality here does not always have to mean "equal", but depends on the conditions and qualifications of each individual, which is also called "proportional equality". (proportional equality). Proportional equality is that everyone who is classified into the same category for a particular purpose must be treated equally. For example, if those who can be given the right to vote are people who are of legal age and Indonesian citizens, then each Indonesian citizen who is of legal age must be given one vote each. Justice will not be disturbed if the law does not give equal voting rights to children or foreign citizens.
- That equality, which is the most important part of justice, is a truth that has been accepted throughout the ages, regardless of how different conceptions of justice have developed over time.
- In the legal world, many terms of "equality" are expressed according to the emphasis of each of their uses. For that, the following terms are found:
  - (1) Equality under law (equality before the law).
  - (2) Humans are created equal (all men are created equal).
  - (3) Equality between fellow human beings (equality of men).
  - (4) Equal protection by law (equal protection of law).
- With this principle of equality, in principle the law must be applied equally to anyone, both the rich and the poor, to men and women, to the majority and the minority, to whites and to coloreds. However, it does not mean that justice is only about equal treatment. Applying the same law to people with different qualifications can actually cause injustice. So, the qualifications of people in society are still needed to measure justice. Whoever can meet the same qualifications, must be given the same rights. That is where justice lies. So, for the law to be fair, differences in skin color or differences in religion, or differences in gender do not make the laws applied differently.
- Therefore, distributive justice as stated by Aristotle, similar to the principle of justice of the Roman Emperor Justinian, namely to give everyone their due.(to give each man his due). Indeed, it means that justice gives the same rights to the same person or group of people, but gives different rights to different people or groups of people, with the note that not all differences between humans can be used as a basis for differentiation. Racial differences, skin color, regional origin, gender, religion, and beliefs, should not be used as a basis for differentiating the law or their rights. Because such things are "discrimination." So, legal differentiation does not mean discrimination.
- Justice and equality are intricately connected, such that unequal treatment is considered a serious injustice. Legal scholar HLA Hart stated that justice involves placing each entitled individual in relation to others, ensuring they receive equal treatment or at least treatment that reflects their differences. The core principle is that equals should be treated equally. However, justice is broader than just equal treatment; it also includes the recognition of basic human rights. For example, if a government imprisons opponents under a law that has been legally established,

this still constitutes injustice, even if the treatment is uniform. In such cases, fundamental rights such as the right to speak, organize, live freely, and choose political beliefs are often violated.

5. The principle of an independent judiciary

During the Battle of Badr, Umar argued that all prisoners of war should be executed because they were very hostile to Islam. However, the Nabi Muhammad SAW agreed with Abu Bakr's opinion. It turned out that later the Nabi confirmed Umar's opinion. Umar's suggestions and opinions conveyed with the Nabi SAW, have become the reason and basis for the revelation of the verses of the Qur'an, namely: Al-Anfal 67-69; 70-71; Then the Nabi, peace be upon him, said: We almost suffered a great punishment, because we disobeyed Ibn Khattab's opinion, and if the punishment descends, it will certainly not escape that punishment but Umar himself.

6. Principle of peace

Umar was very submissive to the truth, particularly regarding peace with enemies of Islam. However, he fought firmly if betrayed. Justice and peace are seen as irrational ideals; while important, justice is not a knowledge object. From a rational perspective, only interests and conflicts of interest exist. These conflicts can be resolved by sacrificing one interest for another or by reaching a compromise. Only positive legal order can be the object of legal science, representing reality without evaluating positive law. This legal order aims to ensure relatively permanent social peace, even though justice and peace have different characteristics. There is a tendency to equate the two concepts in this context.

7. Principle of welfare

Umar was deeply concerned about the welfare of the people of Medina. During food shortages, he sourced supplies from regions like Egypt and Jordan. Philosophers, including Plato, discuss the concept of justice in relation to a prosperous society. Modern states prioritize the interests of their citizens, likening themselves to ships that guide passengers toward prosperity. The term "government" derives from the Greek word "kubernan," meaning to steer a ship. Thus, the state, as a social institution, exists to meet the needs of all its citizens, not just specific groups. Political theorists like Plato and Aristotle argue that states are formed to fulfill collective human needs, as individuals cannot meet all their own requirements. Aristotle emphasizes that states aim to organize a good life for all citizens.

8. The principle of people's obedience

The people obeyed Umar due to his exemplary character and special qualities. His authority and firm stance were rooted in truth and sincerity in fulfilling his governmental mandate. He exemplified high morals by living simply in his actions, words, and attitudes. Ahmad Ali outlines moral principles as follows: first, legal rules aligned with moral norms tend to be more effective than those that conflict with the community's values. Effective legal rules are those that prohibit actions similarly condemned by moral, religious, or customary norms; conversely, legal rules lacking support from other norms are less effective. Second, the effectiveness of a legal rule also relies on the professionalism of law enforcement officers throughout its creation, socialization, enforcement, legal reasoning, interpretation, and application to specific cases. Third, a minimum socio-economic standard is necessary for the effectiveness of legal rules.



Public order must be maintained to some extent; otherwise, laws cannot function optimally in chaotic or war-torn situations.

## **5. Discussion**

Umar's thinking surpasses Comte's three stages of development: the theological, metaphysical, and positive stages. Comte's first stage is characterized by an animistic and anthropomorphic view of the world, attributing natural phenomena to human-like spirits and purposes. The second, polytheistic stage simplifies this by recognizing supernatural powers controlling various phenomena, culminating in the third, monotheistic stage, where a single supreme god is believed to govern the universe.

In contrast, Umar navigated these stages in practice. In the theological stage, he offered religiously based suggestions, such as advocating for the death penalty for Badr war prisoners, which, although initially rejected by the Prophet Muhammad, was later affirmed. During the metaphysical stage, Umar prevented the Prophet from praying for the hypocrite Abdullah Bin Ubay, a decision that influenced Quranic revelation. In the positivist stage, Umar governed guided by the Quran and Hadith, along with his own reasoning. Thus, Umar's approach reflects a more advanced integration of these philosophical stages than Comte's original framework.

## **6. Conclusion**

Based on the description and contextual above, it can be understood that with the still simple conditions, education in Umar's time already referred to various necessary components, namely the components of vision, financing, and others. The education carried out by Umar was quite successful with the efforts to restore/awaken the community that rebelled against Islam.

In this millennial era, the zone and brand of education are increasing, but many students fail in terms of character formation so that this is a weak side of today's education as well as a difference with the success of education in Umar's time. However, this does not mean that we have to follow the learning model like in Umar's time because considering that social life is very different. Therefore, in Indonesia the 2013 curriculum was formed, besides they (read: students) must be able to answer the challenges of the times, they must also have noble morals so that they become democratic and responsible citizens.

Not to mention that there are still many children of the nation who are not touched in the field of education, even though various methods have been thought of by related institutions/agencies, one of the causes is the economic factor. Moreover, in Indonesia, education is under two roofs (Kemendikbud and Kemenag/Dikti and Diktis) so that it refers to the problem of the sharp bluntness of the budget. To neutralize this, it is very necessary to optimize the role/function of Baitul Mal for the education sector so that education can be stable for the millennial generation and they dare to get out of the old habits (out of the box).

Umar's leadership was able to bring Islam into a golden age. Many efforts have been achieved under his leadership which should serve as an example and guide for the lives of Muslims. Simplicity, prioritizing the interests of the people, full attention to what people who live in poverty face and experience. His example has become an inspiration that has become an example to be emulated by future leaders. Umar's government has inherited the development of Islam to

this day, in the fields of law, politics, government, and sociology. Democracy taught by Umar, in the form of people's democracy by listening directly to the complaints of the people. He visited villages in disguise, in order to get real information about the suffering of his people. One of the initiators of the legal state of Medina, was Umar with insight and knowledge based on Islamic principles.

Umar's thinking had gone far beyond Comte's three stages. Comte, with the theological stage, metaphysical stage and positive stage, was carried out by Umar over a period of time. Umar, with theological considerations, gave suggestions based on religion. When the Nabi Muhammad saw asked for Umar's opinion in resolving the Badr war prisoners. Omar argue with theological thinking. Because the prisoners clearly fought against Muslims, the punishment was the death penalty. Although Umar's suggestion was not accepted by the Nabi, it was later approved by the Nabi. Likewise, the metaphysical and positivism stages were carried out with consideration of his own conscience.

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