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The study of the Living Qur'an: Surah Al-Imran, verse 159, in the context of leadership at the Muhammadiyah Student Association of the Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta

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Abstract

This article examines the leadership values in Surah Ali Imran verse 159 and its implementation in the context of leadership in the organization of the Muhammadiyah Student Association (IMM) at the University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta. This study uses a living Qur'an study approach. Through this approach, the verse is not only understood textually, but also traces of its application in real life, particularly in organizational leadership practice. The subjects in this study are the leaders of the IMM commissariat at UMS totaling ten people. Data collection was carried out by interview technique. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. This study concludes that the leadership values in Surah Ali Imran verse 159 include: gentleness, forgiveness, deliberation, and tawakkal. These values are well understood by respondents and are relevant in leadership at IMM. These values are implemented in decision-making, conflict resolution, and communication patterns that encourage member participation. The main supporting factors are the culture of deliberation and the spirit of ukhuwah, while the obstacles include time constraints, personal egos, and differences in character. In general, the response of the members is positive and they hope that this Qur'anic value is increasingly internalized in the life of the organization.

Keywords: *Studi Living Qur'an, Leadership, Muhammadiyah Student Association.*

Introduction

Leaders are essential figures who shape and guide society by leading groups towards common goals. In the social context, a leader is not only responsible for providing direction but also for inspiring, setting an example, and ensuring stability within the group. However, contemporary society faces challenges due to the scarcity of effective leaders. Both at the communal and personal levels, there is a void of leaders who can offer clear guidance and

promote positive change. In Islam, the concept of leadership goes beyond power and authority; it is seen as a responsibility, referred to as the "*caliph*" (representative) or "*Ulil Amri*" (the highest authority). Leadership is viewed as a divine mandate that carries significant responsibility, with accountability not only in this world but also in the hereafter [1], [2], [3].

Understanding the concept of leadership in Islam, especially from the perspective of the Qur'an, is crucial to exploring the qualities, duties, and responsibilities of a leader. One of the key verses that speaks to leadership is Surah Al-Imran (159), which highlights the importance of gentleness, forgiveness, and consultation in leadership. The verse states: *"So it is by the grace of Allah that you are gentle towards them. If you were harsh and hard-hearted, they would have dispersed from around you. Therefore, forgive them, ask forgiveness for them, and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]."* This verse underscores the ideal leadership qualities that are not merely administrative but also spiritually grounded [4], [5].

Spiritual leadership, as guided by this verse, emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire and guide individuals to reach their full potential, both professionally and spiritually. A leader who practices spiritual leadership is not only skilled in administrative tasks but also instills spiritual values in every aspect of their leadership, creating an environment that promotes peace, integrity, and a strong sense of purpose among followers. This holistic approach is rooted in the principles of honesty, justice, charity, and the development of both the leader and the followers [6], [7]. In the context of the Muhammadiyah Student Association (IMM), an autonomous organization within the Muhammadiyah movement, the leadership model is deeply rooted in Islamic values. IMM's mission includes forming Islamic academics with noble character while fostering social and religious movements. The IMM at the University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta is influential in the development of students through both its leadership and its engagement in academic, social, and religious activities. The implementation of leadership based on Qur'anic values, particularly Surah Al-Imran (159), is integral to IMM's approach to developing future leaders [8], [9].

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the leadership values derived from Surah Al-Imran verse 159 within the IMM organization at the University of Muhammadiyah Surakarta. The research will explore how the principles of gentleness, consultation, and trust in Allah, as mentioned in the verse, are applied to address the dynamics and challenges within the organization. By utilizing the Living Qur'an approach, which examines the practical application of Qur'anic teachings in real-life contexts, this research intends to contribute to the understanding of leadership in student organizations

and to the broader field of leadership studies grounded in Islamic values. This research will fill a gap in existing literature by focusing on the leadership practices of student organizations and their alignment with Qur'anic teachings [10], [11].

Method

This type of research is descriptive qualitative research. This type of research is suitable for studying the phenomena of individual life or a group of individuals. These phenomena can be in the form of activities, characteristics, relationships of similarities and differences, changes and so on. For this reason, usually data from descriptive research is in the form of words or pictures that can be interpreted chronologically descriptively by the researcher [12], [13], [14]. This study examined the implementation (application) of the leadership model based on Surah Al-Imran verse 159 at the IMM Commissariat within the UMS scope. For this reason, the approach used in this study is the Living Qur'an Study. According to a study, this approach examines the interaction of Muslims with the Qur'an in real life, not just the textual understanding of its verses. He places the Qur'an as a "living text" that dialogues with the social, cultural, and behavioral contexts of Muslims [15], [16], [17].

Data collection in this study was carried out by Interview technique. This study involved ten participants from different commissariats at PK IMM UMS. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using text and context analysis. The researcher conducted a text analysis of the Qur'an, Surah Al-Imran, verse 159 to obtain important points that contain leadership values. nature conducts textual analysis, the researcher utilizes Hamka's contemporary interpretation of Al-Azhar to find the leadership values contained in the Qur'an surah Al Imran verse 159. Furthermore, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis of the data obtained from the interview [18], [19].

According to Rozali, thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method used to identify, analyze, and interpret themes or patterns of meaning that emerge from a set of data, such as the results of interviews, observations, field notes, or documents. This method helps researchers understand the meaning behind the data, not just the information that appears on the surface. Thematic analysis applied in this study was carried out to see the relevance of Qur'anic verses to the context of today's leadership, especially in the IMM organization at UMS. Thematic analysis was carried out by looking at the relevance of leadership values in the Qur'an surah Al Imran verse 159 with the results of interviews regarding the implementation of leadership in the IMM commissariat within the UMS scope [20], [21].

Results and Discussion

The Value of Leadership in the Qur'an Text Surah Al-Imran verse 159

In Tafsir Al-Azhar, Hamka explained that Surah Ali Imran verse 159 was revealed after the Battle of Uhud as a comfort for the Prophet Muhammad and as a guideline for leadership ethics. According to Hamka, the success of the Prophet in leading the ummah does not lie in power or firmness alone, but in the gentleness and love he showed. The Prophet remained gentle to the companions even though they made great mistakes. If he is hard-hearted and hard-hearted, then the ummah will turn away and leave him. Buya Hamka emphasized that hard leadership will only divide, while a soft attitude will bring the hearts of the people closer to the leader. In this verse, Allah gives three main principles that a leader must have: first, forgiving the mistakes of others (*fa'fu 'anhum*); second, praying for them to be forgiven (*wastaghfir lahum*); and third, involve them in decision-making through deliberation (*wa shaawirhum fil amr*) [22], [23].

For Buya Hamka, this is a form of democratic and participatory leadership, far from authoritarian. After deliberating and decisions are taken, a leader must put his trust in Allah (*fa idzaa 'azamta fatawakkal 'ala Allah*), which, according to Hamka, does not mean giving up without effort, but determination after undergoing the process of effort to the maximum. Buya Hamka sees this verse as a leadership guideline that is relevant for all ages, both in the fields of education, organization, and government. The ideal leader, according to him, is one who can prioritize empathy, build trust, involve others in the process, and always be oriented to spiritual values sourced from the Qur'an [24], [25].

The results of the study showed that all respondents (100%) knew and had read Surah Ali Imran verse 159, so that this verse was quite well known and used as a reference for values in leadership. IMM cadres in every activity usually start their activities by studying the verses of the Qur'an which can be used as a basis for the IMM Movement. When asked further about where to find out the meaning of Al Imran 159, most of the respondents answered that the verse is a reference in the study of Leadership and Organizational Management Training (LKMO) at IMM. Asman, explained, IMM always starts every activity, both recitation and other activities, with the reading of the holy verses of the Qur'an. This activity is carried out regularly not only to strengthen the spiritual aspect through the reading of the Qur'an, but also to hone the intellectual abilities of its members. Activities such as cult and *tadabur* of the Qur'an are the main part of IMM activities, because through this, the intelligence possessed can have a positive impact on the practice of Islamic values [26], [27].

The leadership values identified included gentleness and humility (9 respondents), forgiveness (8 respondents), and deliberation and *tawakkal*,

mentioned by all respondents (10 respondents). These findings show that the respondents' understanding is in line with the main message of the verse, namely leadership that is humanistic, forgiving, participatory, and based on submission to Allah. All respondents also emphasized the relevance of this verse to leadership practices at IMM, so that it can be concluded that Surah Ali Imran verse 159 has high significance as a guideline for Islamic leadership both in student organizations and daily life [26], [28], [29].

The results of these findings are in accordance with what Sulisniati & Hasibuan explained, that in the Qur'an there are many teachings that emphasize leadership values such as justice, responsibility, gentleness, and deliberation. One example is found in Surah Ali Imran, verse 159 which emphasizes the importance of gentleness and the involvement of deliberation in leading. From this verse, it can be understood that a leader should lead with compassion, forgive mistakes, and prioritize dialogue in every decision-making, not with a harsh or coercive attitude [30], [31].

Table 1. Implementation of the Values of Surah Ali Imran Verse 159 in the Leadership of IMM

Respondent	Question 4: In exercising leadership at IMM, do you try to apply the values contained in the verse?			
	Very Much Effort	Effort	Rarely	Never
A	V			
B	V			
C		V		
D	V			
E	V			
F	V			
G		V		
H	V			
I	V			
J	V			

Data on the implementation of the values of Surah Ali Imran verse 159 shows a high level of implementation among respondents. Most of them were in the business category (7 respondents), while the rest chose to try very hard (3 respondents), with no one answering rarely or never. These findings confirm the existence of a collective consciousness in IMM to make the Qur'anic values –

gentleness, forgiveness, deliberation, and tawakkal – as a guideline in leadership practice.

Table 2. Leadership Values in IMM Decision-Making

Respondent	Key Example	Code
A	Decisions on work programs are made through collective deliberation so all members feel heard.	Deliberation (musyawarah)
B	Unconventional ideas are discussed and developed into win-win solutions.	Deliberation (musyawarah)
C	Emotional control and task redistribution through discussion resolve program issues.	Forgiveness; Deliberation
D	Open discussion is encouraged to reach consensus without coercion.	Deliberation; Gentle leadership
E	Differences of opinion are discussed to find a middle ground.	Deliberation
F	Members' shortcomings are addressed privately and solutions are sought collectively.	Forgiveness; Deliberation
G	Decisions are postponed until consensus is reached through discussion.	Deliberation
H	All viewpoints are heard before reaching agreement.	Deliberation
I	Internal conflicts are resolved through sharing sessions and joint problem-solving.	Deliberation; Gentle leadership
J	Open communication forums are used to prevent conflict and strengthen cohesion.	Deliberation; Gentle leadership

Based on the interview findings, respondents described concrete practices reflecting leadership values derived from Surah Ali Imran (3:159) in IMM activities and decision-making. Overall, three dominant patterns emerged: deliberation (*musyawarah*) in resolving differences, forgiveness toward members' shortcomings, and gentleness in leader-member interactions. First, most respondents emphasized deliberation as the primary mechanism for addressing differing opinions. Respondents A, B, D, E, G, H, and I reported that decisions in work meetings were reached through open discussion rather than unilateral authority. This indicates consistent application of the principle of shura, a core value of Islamic leadership that promotes collective responsibility and minimizes

leader dominance. This finding supports Sa'adah et al. (2025), who highlight the relevance of participatory leadership grounded in deliberative principles within Islamic contexts [32], [33].

Second, forgiveness emerged as an important leadership attitude. Respondents C and F noted that instead of issuing harsh reprimands, leaders sought to understand members' personal circumstances when performance was suboptimal. This approach reflects the Qur'anic emphasis on forgiveness as a leadership foundation and aligns with Widodo (2025), who argues that forgiveness and humility are essential for maintaining harmony amid differences, as emphasized in QS. Ali Imran (3:159).

Third, gentleness in communication was found to encourage member openness. Respondents D, I, and J explained that a soft and empathetic approach enabled members to express opinions and personal concerns more freely. Respondent J further institutionalized this value through regular sharing forums, fostering stronger interpersonal bonds. This practice aligns with servant leadership, where leaders act as facilitators of supportive and inclusive environments, and is consistent with Ibn Kathir's interpretation of QS. Ali Imran (3:159) regarding the unifying role of gentle leadership [34], [35].

Question 6 & 7: What factors support and hinder you in implementing these values in leadership?

Table 3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Implementation

Respondent	Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors
A	Organizational culture that values deliberation	Time constraints
B	Spirit of togetherness and brotherhood (<i>ukhuwah</i>)	Personal ego
C	Spirit of togetherness and brotherhood (<i>ukhuwah</i>)	Differences in members' personalities; Time constraints
D	Organizational culture that prioritizes deliberation	Emotional instability
E	Members are open and willing to engage in discussion	Emotional instability

F	Members are open and willing to engage in discussion	Emotional instability; Time constraints
G	Organizational culture that prioritizes deliberation	Low member participation
H	Organizational culture that prioritizes deliberation	Low member participation
I	Organizational culture that prioritizes deliberation	Personal ego
J	Spirit of togetherness and brotherhood (<i>ukhuwah</i>)	Personal ego

Based on the findings in questions 6 and 7 regarding the supporting and inhibiting factors for the implementation of the values of Surah Ali Imran verse 159 in the leadership of IMM, interesting data was obtained. The majority of respondents considered that the main supporting factor came from a strong organizational culture in emphasizing the value of deliberation (respondents 1, 4, 7, 8, and 9). This shows that IMM has an organizational climate that encourages openness, participation, and joint discussion in decision-making. In addition, there are respondents who emphasize the spirit of togetherness and *ukhuwah* (respondents 2, 3, and 10) as important factors, which means that the value of solidarity and brotherhood among members is a social capital that strengthens Islamic leadership practices. There are also those who highlight that members are quite open and willing to discuss (respondents 5 and 6) as supporters, which shows the readiness of individuals in realizing a culture of deliberation. Thus, it can be concluded that the main supporting factors lie in two aspects: first, the organizational culture that emphasizes deliberation; and second, the spirit of togetherness (*ukhuwah*), which is the collective energy of members. The findings are relevant to those stated by the researcher in their research, which explains that organizational culture is a virtue value that is instilled in an organization. When Islamic values such as *Amanah* are applied in the organization, the organization tends to be able to run more effectively and efficiently [36], [37], [38].

Meanwhile, the inhibiting factors that have emerged are quite diverse. Several respondents mentioned time constraints (respondents 1, 4, and 6) as the main obstacle, which could be caused by the congestion of academic and organizational activities. Some emphasize personal ego (respondents 2, 9, and 10) as a barrier, indicating that there are challenges in controlling self-interest when deliberating. Other factors that emerged were unstable emotions (respondents 4, 5, and 6), lack of activeness of members (respondents 7 and 8), and differences in character between members (respondents 3). From these findings, it can be

understood that although the organization has a strong culture of deliberation, obstacles still arise from internal factors of the individual (ego, emotions, character), as well as external factors (time and participation of members) [39], [40], [41].

In his book entitled “Organizational culture: challenges to improve individual performance in the era of competition” A writer explained that the application of leadership patterns in an organization is inseparable from various internal challenges. While good leadership can create a harmonious work culture and improve employee motivation and performance, building a strong organizational culture is not an instant process, but rather takes years to be truly embedded in the behavior and values of the organization's members. One of the obstacles that often arises is the lack of understanding of some members of the organization's principles and goals, which causes differences in perceptions in carrying out the vision and mission of the institution. In addition, individual differences—such as educational background, experience, and personal character—also affect how each member interprets and implements the organization's values. Therefore, a comprehensive approach is needed through effective training, coaching, and communication so that organizational values can be properly internalized and form a solid work culture that is aligned with common goals [42], [43].

This condition shows that the implementation of the values of Surah Ali Imran verse 159 in the leadership of IMM has a good foundation through organizational culture and the spirit of *ukhuwah* (Brotherhood). However, to optimise the implementation, efforts are needed to overcome inhibiting factors, especially through effective time management, emotional control, character development, and member participation. Thus, Islamic leadership based on gentleness, forgiveness, deliberation, and *tawakkal* can be carried out more consistently.

Table 4. Members’ Responses to Value-Based Leadership (QS. Al-Imran 3:159)

Respondent	Member Response	Code
A	Members respond positively, feeling more appreciated and willing to contribute.	Feeling appreciated; Willingness to contribute
B	Members feel more comfortable expressing their opinions.	More open in expressing opinions
C	Members are more comfortable conveying ideas and criticism.	More open in expressing opinions

D	Members feel heard and more comfortable sharing their views.	Feeling appreciated; More open in expressing opinions
E	Members feel comfortable because the leader listens before making decisions.	More open in expressing opinions
F	Members feel more comfortable and confident in voicing opinions.	More open in expressing opinions
G	Members feel appreciated and more comfortable expressing opinions.	Feeling appreciated; More open in expressing opinions
H	Members feel involved and that their opinions are valued.	Feeling appreciated; More open in expressing opinions
I	Members feel comfortable and safe to speak up.	Feeling appreciated; More open in expressing opinions
J	Most members become more open after consistent deliberation and forgiveness, though some remain passive due to past conflict.	More open in expressing opinions

Based on the results of the interviews, members' responses to the leadership style based on the values in Surah Ali Imran verse 159 generally showed a positive tendency. Almost all respondents (A-J) stated that the leadership approach made them feel more appreciated, heard, and more comfortable in expressing their opinions. Some of the main points that emerged include:

1. Feel appreciated and involved

Some respondents (A, D, G, H, I) emphasized that they feel more valued, involved, and that their opinions are considered in the decision-making process. This shows that the application of Islamic leadership values is able to build a more participatory organizational climate.

2. Openness in expressing opinions

The majority of respondents (B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J) revealed that this leadership style makes them more open, courageous, and comfortable to express ideas and criticisms. This condition indicates an increase in two-way communication between leaders and members.

3. Consistency in deliberation and forgiveness

Respondent J added that although most of the members were positive, there were a small number who were still passive due to the trauma of previous conflicts. However, the consistency of leaders in implementing deliberation and forgiveness has succeeded in fostering trust so that they slowly begin to be more open. Overall, these findings show that the application of leadership values based on compassion, deliberation, and forgiveness as contained in Surah Ali Imran verse 159 has an impact on creating an inclusive, communicative, and harmonious organizational climate. These findings are in line with participatory leadership theory, where leaders who are able to appreciate and listen to their members tend to get greater support and encourage members to contribute more actively. The findings are also relevant to the results of another paper, which show that the application of Islamic values in leadership can improve employee motivation and performance. When leaders uphold the principles of fairness, trust, and responsibility, employees feel more valued and encouraged to work with greater passion and loyalty to the organization. In addition, Islamic leadership also encourages the formation of a harmonious work environment, where collaboration and mutual support become a common culture in achieving organizational goals [44], [45], [46].

Table 5. Importance of Qur'anic Leadership Values and Organizational Expectations in IMM

Question 9	Key Answer	
Is leadership based on Qur'anic values, as in Surah Ali Imran verse 159, important in student organizations?	Important	Not Important
	10	0
Questions 10	Key Answer	
What are your hopes for the application of Qur'anic values in IMM organizations in the future?	Hope	Quantity
	The value of the Qur'an is truly internalized and realized in the life of the organization	10

The table above presents the respondents' answers to questions 9 and 10 regarding the importance of Qur'an-based leadership values, especially Surah Ali Imran verse 159, as well as their expectations for the application of these values in IMM organizations. In question 9, all respondents (10 people) stated that the

leadership values of the Qur'an, especially those contained in Surah Ali Imran verse 159, are important to be applied in student organizations. None of the respondents answered that it was not important. This confirms that the verse is seen as having a very high relevance to the world of student leadership. The values of gentleness, forgiveness, deliberation, and *tawakkal* are believed to be moral guidelines as well as ethics in building a healthy organizational culture with Islamic character. This is in accordance with what is explained by the writer that in leadership based on Islamic values, every action and decision is taken based on Islamic teachings. Islamic leadership not only emphasizes the managerial aspect, but also includes spiritual and moral responsibility. A leader who understands and applies these principles can create a positive work culture [47], [48].

Question 10 expresses the respondents' expectations for the future of the application of Qur'anic leadership values in IMM. All respondents emphasized that these values must be truly internalized and realized in the daily life of the organization. This shows a collective awareness that the leadership values of the Qur'an are not only understood theoretically, but must also be embodied in real practice, both in interactions between members and in the decision-making process of the organization. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a strong understanding among respondents that Qur'anic leadership is the fundamental foundation for IMM, and its future application should be increasingly evident in the organizational culture. The expectations raised by the respondents support the application of Islamic values in the organization. This has a good impact as explained by the researcher the integration of Qur'an values is not only a moral foundation, but also an effective strategy to improve overall organizational performance [49], [50].

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the leadership values in Surah Ali Imran verse 159, namely gentleness, forgiveness, deliberation, and *tawakkal*, are well understood by all respondents and are considered very relevant in leadership at IMM. Its implementation is reflected in deliberation-based decision-making, a forgiving attitude in the face of members' shortcomings, and soft communication that encourages openness and participation. The supporting factors for the application of these values mainly come from the organizational culture that prioritizes deliberation and the spirit of *ukhuwah*, while the obstacles include time constraints, personal egos, character differences, and unstable emotional conditions. Members' responses to the Qur'anic value-based leadership style are generally positive because they feel valued, involved, and more comfortable expressing their opinions. All

respondents also emphasized the importance of applying the Qur'anic values in the future, with the hope that it can be truly internalized and realized in the daily life of the organization so as to create an inclusive, harmonious, and Islamic leadership climate.

Author Contributions

Author: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration.

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Conflict of Interest

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