

**PROPHETIC ETHICS AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP****Mira Fauziah**

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Email: [mira.fauziah@ar-raniry.ac.id](mailto:mira.fauziah@ar-raniry.ac.id)**ABSTRACT**

This study explores the ethical and theological foundations of leadership as reflected in the prophetic traditions (ḥadīth) of Islam. In light of contemporary challenges—such as moral erosion, authoritarian tendencies, and the neglect of justice in Muslim leadership—this research revisits key ḥadīth to recover the prophetic vision of governance rooted in responsibility, consultation, and public service. Employing a mawḍūʿī (thematic) approach, the study analyzes three core aspects of leadership: the obligation to establish leadership in a community, the method and ethical considerations for selecting a leader, and the moral accountability of those in power. Drawing from authentic ḥadīth collections and classical commentaries, the findings reveal that leadership in Islam is both a religious and rational imperative (*farḍ kifāyah*) aimed at safeguarding unity, promoting justice, and ensuring communal welfare. The prophetic model redefines leadership as a trust (*amānah*), where every individual—from political leaders to heads of households—is accountable for those under their care. These insights remain profoundly relevant, offering an ethical framework for leadership that transcends hierarchy and invites a return to compassionate, principled governance.

**Keywords:** *Prophetic Tradition, Islamic Leadership, Ḥadīth, Ethics, Responsibility***ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini mengkaji fondasi etis dan teologis kepemimpinan sebagaimana tercermin dalam tradisi kenabian (ḥadīth) dalam Islam. Dengan latar belakang krisis kepemimpinan yang ditandai oleh degradasi moral, kecenderungan otoritarian, dan pengabaian terhadap keadilan, studi ini meninjau kembali hadis-hadis utama guna merekonstruksi visi profetik tentang kepemimpinan yang berakar pada tanggung jawab, musyawarah, dan pelayanan publik. Melalui pendekatan tematik (mawḍūʿī), penelitian ini menganalisis tiga aspek inti: kewajiban menegakkan kepemimpinan dalam komunitas, metode serta etika dalam memilih pemimpin, dan akuntabilitas moral pemangku kekuasaan. Berdasarkan sumber primer hadis sahih dan syarah klasik, temuan menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan dalam Islam merupakan kewajiban agama dan rasional (*farḍ kifāyah*) untuk menjaga kesatuan, menegakkan keadilan, dan mewujudkan kesejahteraan umat. Model kepemimpinan Nabi mereposisi kekuasaan sebagai amanah, di mana setiap individu—from pemimpin negara hingga kepala keluarga—bertanggung jawab atas pihak yang dipimpinnya. Nilai-nilai ini tetap relevan dan menawarkan



kerangka etika kepemimpinan yang melampaui hirarki serta mendorong kembalinya pemerintahan yang berlandaskan kasih sayang dan integritas.

**Kata Kunci:** *Hadis, Kepemimpinan Islam, Etika Kenabian, Tanggung Jawab*

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is one of the most vital yet often overlooked dimensions in contemporary Muslim societies. Amidst rapid political, economic, and cultural transformations, many communities face a troubling deficit in leadership—both in terms of competence and moral integrity. This phenomenon is particularly concerning within the Muslim world, where the foundational sources of guidance—the Qur'an and the Sunnah—offer not only spiritual teachings but also clear principles on governance and social responsibility. The apparent disconnect between these normative teachings and the realities of modern leadership raises a fundamental question: how can prophetic guidance be meaningfully re-engaged to address the ethical and practical demands of leadership today?

Islamic teachings, as encapsulated in the Qur'an and exemplified by the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), provide a comprehensive framework for leadership that encompasses personal integrity, communal justice, and divine accountability. The Prophet is described in the Qur'an as the best exemplar (*uswah hasanah*), and his life illustrates a model of leadership that balances spiritual commitment with administrative wisdom, emotional intelligence with political discernment. His leadership extended beyond religious instruction—it shaped family life, community dynamics, economic structures, and state governance.

In addition to the Qur'an's general directives, the ḥadīth literature offers detailed insights into the Prophet's leadership ethos. The ḥadīth serve not only as legal references but as ethical narratives that reflect how values are embodied in action. They preserve prophetic responses to real-life dilemmas, offering timeless principles on how authority should be exercised, how leaders should be chosen, and how justice should be upheld. This makes the ḥadīth an essential resource for exploring Islamic perspectives on leadership in both historical and modern contexts.

In light of the current erosion in leadership quality—marked by corruption, authoritarianism, and the marginalization of moral discourse—this study seeks to re-engage with the prophetic model of leadership through a thematic (*mawḍū'ī*) analysis of relevant ḥadīth. By revisiting the prophetic tradition, this research aims to rediscover the ethical foundations and functional structures of leadership as taught and practiced by the Prophet Muhammad. Specifically, the study focuses on three core themes: (1) the obligation to establish leadership within a community, (2) the criteria and method for selecting a leader, and (3) the ethical responsibilities that come with leadership.



This study employs a *maudū'ī* (thematic) approach to the study of ḥadīth, concentrating on three interrelated aspects of leadership as reflected in prophetic traditions: the obligation to establish leadership, the procedure for selecting leaders, and the ethical responsibilities of leadership. The research adopts a descriptive-analytical method using classical library sources, with primary references drawn from authentic ḥadīth compilations—such as those of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal—and supported by commentaries from major scholars like al-Shawkānī, al-'Asqalānī, and al-Suyūṭī. The selected ḥadīth are examined not only linguistically and narratively but also in terms of their practical implications in both classical and modern contexts. This methodology allows for an interpretive reading that links prophetic wisdom with contemporary discourses on leadership, public ethics, and civic responsibility in Muslim societies.

## B. DISCUSSION

### 1. Prophetic Traditions on Establishing Leadership

#### 1) The Obligation to Establish Leadership

The first theme explored in this study concerns the obligation to establish leadership, even within the smallest of communities. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized this in several ḥadīth, highlighting the necessity of appointing a leader to ensure order and accountability. One such narration is recorded in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*:

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ بَحْرٍ بْنُ بَرِّي حَدَّثَنَا حَاتِمُ بْنُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَجَلَانَ عَنْ نَافِعٍ عَنْ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: "إِذَا خَرَجَ ثَلَاثَةٌ فِي سَفَرٍ فَلْيُؤَمِّرُوا أَحَدَهُمْ

"If three people set out on a journey, they should appoint one of them as their leader" *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, no. 2858)

A variant of this narration is also found with different chains and wordings, such as the following:

إِذَا كَانَ ثَلَاثَةٌ فِي سَفَرٍ فَلْيُؤَمِّرُوا أَحَدَهُمْ - قَالَ نَافِعٌ: فَقُلْنَا لِأَبِي سَلَمَةَ: فَأَنْتَ أَمِيرُنَا

Another version recorded by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal from 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar reads:

لَا يَحِلُّ لثَلَاثَةٍ يَكُونُونَ بِخَلَاءٍ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا أَمَرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ أَحَدَهُمْ

Further, in *al-Jāmi'* *al-Ṣaḡhīr*, the following wording is attributed to Imams Aḥmad, Muslim, and al-Nasā'ī, also through Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī:

إِذَا كَانُوا ثَلَاثَةً فَلْيُؤَمِّرُوا أَحَدَهُمْ وَأَحَقُّهُمْ بِالْإِمَامَةِ أَقْرَبُهُمْ

Another related narration is attributed to the Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (ra), recorded in *Sunan al-Dārimī*, through Tamīm al-Dārī:

أَخْبَرَنَا يَزِيدُ بْنُ هَارُونَ أَخْبَرَنَا بِقِيَّةُ حَدَّثَنِي صَفْوَانُ بْنُ رُسْتَمٍ عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ مَيْسَرَةَ عَنْ تَمِيمِ الدَّارِيِّ قَالَ: تَطَاوَلَ النَّاسُ فِي الْبِنَاءِ فِي زَمَنِ عُمَرَ فَقَالَ عُمَرُ: يَا مَعْشَرَ الْعَرَبِ الْأَرْضُ الْأَرْضُ



إِنَّهُ لَا إِسْلَامَ إِلَّا بِجَمَاعَةٍ وَلَا جَمَاعَةَ إِلَّا بِإِمَارَةٍ وَلَا إِمَارَةَ إِلَّا بِطَاعَةٍ. فَمَنْ سَوَّدَهُ قَوْمُهُ عَلَى الْفَقْهِ كَانَ حَيَاةً لَهُمْ وَمَنْ سَوَّدَهُ قَوْمُهُ عَلَى غَيْرِ فَقْهِ كَانَ هَلَاكًا لَهُمْ

*"Tamīm al-Dārī reported that during the caliphate of 'Umar, people began boasting about their buildings. 'Umar said: 'O people of the desert! There is no Islam without community (jamā'ah), no community without leadership (imārah), and no leadership without obedience. Whoever is made a leader over his people due to his knowledge brings them life; and whoever is made a leader without such knowledge brings them ruin.'"*

Although this last narration is not widely reported outside *Sunan al-Dārimī*, its content is consistent with the Qur'anic spirit and broader prophetic teachings on leadership and communal unity. It draws a direct relationship between leadership, collective well-being, and divine accountability. These prophetic statements have long served as foundational texts for the view that establishing leadership is a religious obligation—classified by many scholars as *farḍ kifāyah*, or communal duty. Beyond the religious imperative, the rational necessity (*ḥukm 'aqlī*) of leadership is evident: in the absence of clear authority, communities fall into discord, instability, and moral chaos. Thus, leadership is not merely a practical requirement, but an essential mechanism for upholding justice, security, and the ability of the Muslim community to fulfill its ethical obligations.

## 2) Prophetic Traditions on the Selection of Leaders

The second theme concerns the method and ethics of selecting a leader, particularly as exemplified in the practices of the Prophet's Companions. While the Prophet ﷺ himself did not explicitly designate a successor, the precedent established by the early caliphs provides valuable insight into how leadership transitions were managed in the formative period of Islamic history. One foundational narration is recorded by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, through 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يُوسُفَ أَخْبَرَنَا سُفْيَانُ عَنْ هِشَامِ بْنِ عُرْوَةَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ: قِيلَ لِعُمَرَ أَلَا تَسْتَخْلِفُ قَالَ: إِنْ أَسْتَخْلِفْتُ فَقَدْ اسْتَخْلَفْتُ مَنْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِنِّي أَبُو بَكْرٍ وَإِنْ أَتْرَكْتُ فَقَدْ تَرَكْتُ مَنْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ

*"'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar reported that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was asked, 'Will you not appoint a successor?' He replied, 'If I do appoint someone, indeed someone better than me—Abū Bakr—also appointed a successor. But if I leave the matter open, then the Prophet ﷺ, who is greater than me, also left it open.' (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 3700)*

This ḥadīth is supported by alternative versions in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* and *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, offering richer narrative contexts. In Muslim's version, Ibn 'Umar recounts his father's final illness:

قَالَ: حَضَرْتُ أَبِي حِينَ أَصِيبَ فَأَتَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَقَالُوا: جَزَاكَ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا فَقَالَ: رَاغِبٌ وَرَاهِبٌ. قَالُوا: أَتَسْتَخْلِفُ فَقَالَ: لَا أَتَحْمَلُ أَمْرَكُمْ حَيًّا وَمَيِّتًا. لَوَدِدْتُ أَنَّ حِطِّي مِنْهَا كَفَافٌ لَا لِي وَلَا عَلَيَّ. فَإِنْ



أَسْتَخْلِفُ فَقَدْ اسْتَخْلَفَ مَنْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِنِّي - يَعْنِي أَبَا بَكْرٍ - وَإِنْ أَتْرَكَ فَقَدْ تَرَكَ مَنْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِنِّي - يَعْنِي رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ. قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ: فَعَرَفْتُ أَنَّهُ حِينَ ذَكَرَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ غَيْرُ مُسْتَخْلِفٍ

*‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar said: “I was present when my father was struck (by the assassin). People praised him and prayed for him. He responded, ‘I am torn between hope and fear.’ They asked, ‘Will you appoint a successor?’ He replied, ‘I do not want to bear this responsibility in life or after death. I wish to leave it neutral—neither in my favor nor against me. If I do appoint someone, Abū Bakr, who was better than me, appointed someone. And if I do not, the Messenger of Allah, who was better than me, also did not appoint a successor.’ I then understood that he would not appoint anyone.”*

Another version found in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* reads:

قَالَ عُمَرُ: إِنِّي أَنْ لَا أَسْتَخْلِفُ فَإِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ لَمْ يَسْتَخْلِفْ وَأَنْ أَسْتَخْلِفُ فَقَدْ اسْتَخْلَفَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ. قَالَ: فَوَاللَّهِ مَا هُوَ إِلَّا أَنْ ذَكَرَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَأَبَا بَكْرٍ فَعَلِمْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا يُعَدُّلُ بِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا وَأَنَّهُ غَيْرُ مُسْتَخْلِفٍ

*‘Umar said, “If I do not appoint a successor, it is because the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not. But if I do, then Abū Bakr did so before me.” Then he added, “By Allah, once he mentioned the Prophet and Abū Bakr, I realized that he would not appoint a successor, and that no one is equal to the Messenger of Allah.”*

These narrations highlight a critical aspect of Islamic political thought: the succession of leadership is not rigidly determined by prophetic instruction, but entrusted to the discretion of the community’s most responsible figures. While Abū Bakr appointed ‘Umar directly, ‘Umar chose a consultative method by designating six candidates and delegating the final decision to mutual agreement among them—reflecting both prudence and democratic sensibility.

This episode reflects ‘Umar’s profound awareness of leadership as a moral burden rather than a privilege. He recognized the tension between ambition (*rāghib*) and reluctance (*rāhib*) in seeking power, and sought to avoid both extremes by deferring the matter to collective wisdom. His choice illustrates the legitimacy of different mechanisms in Islamic political ethics—whether by appointment (*istikhlāf*), public consultation (*shūrā*), or collective consensus (*ijmā*), as long as the objective remains the welfare of the ummah.

### 3) Prophetic Ethics of Leadership

The third theme concerns the ethical foundations of leadership, as conveyed in one of the most widely transmitted ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ. This tradition outlines the moral responsibility inherent in every form of leadership, from public governance to domestic and economic stewardship. The narration, recorded by al-Bukhārī, is transmitted from ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar:

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: "أَلَا كَلِّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكَلِّكُمْ مَسْنُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ فَالْأَمِيرُ الَّذِي عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ أَلَا كَلِّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكَلِّكُمْ مَسْنُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ فَالْأَمِيرُ





الَّذِي عَلَى النَّاسِ رَاعٍ عَلَيْهِمْ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُمْ وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُمْ وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى بَيْتِ بَعْلِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ وَهِيَ مَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْهُمْ وَالْعَبْدُ رَاعٍ عَلَى مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُ فَكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

*“Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock. The ruler over the people is a shepherd and is accountable for them. A man is a shepherd over the members of his household and is accountable for them. A woman is a shepherd over the household of her husband and his children and is accountable for them. A servant is a shepherd over his master’s wealth and is accountable for it. Surely, every one of you is a shepherd, and every one of you is accountable for his flock.”*

This ḥadīth is remarkable for its universality. It democratizes the notion of leadership by linking it to responsibility rather than authority. The metaphor of the *rā’ī* (shepherd) invokes an image of care, protection, and sustained attentiveness—qualities essential for any leader, regardless of scale or setting.

The idea of accountability (*mas’ūliyyah*) lies at the heart of this tradition. The Prophet ﷺ does not define leadership in terms of status or entitlement, but as a moral trust (*amānah*) that demands vigilance, empathy, and answerability before God and community. This ethical framework challenges any notion of leadership as dominance or privilege; instead, it insists that every leader must serve, protect, and elevate those under their care.

The repetition of the phrase "كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ، وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ" reinforces the comprehensive scope of this teaching. Leadership, in this view, is not confined to formal positions of power. It includes familial roles, workplace dynamics, and even personal management of resources. Each sphere requires moral consciousness, sincere intention, and active effort to uphold the welfare of others.

In the modern context, this prophetic ethic serves as a powerful critique of authoritarianism, neglect, and self-serving governance. It demands that presidents, governors, CEOs, teachers, and parents alike recognize the sacred weight of leadership and commit themselves to justice, compassion, and transparency. This ethical vision offers a deeply humanistic foundation for leadership—one grounded not in legalistic authority, but in relational responsibility. It envisions society as a network of interdependent trust, where every individual contributes to the moral architecture of the community through their role, however public or private.

## **2. Commentary and Analysis of the Prophetic Traditions**

Leadership is a fundamental necessity in any human society. Without it, collective life risks disarray, conflict, and moral collapse. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, through his words and actions, laid down the ethical and practical foundations of leadership not as a form of domination, but as a trust and responsibility. The prophetic traditions discussed in this study reflect the



urgency of organizing human life through just and accountable leadership, beginning with even the most basic social units.

In the first ḥadīth, the Prophet ﷺ commands, “*If three people set out on a journey, let them appoint one among them as a leader*” (فليؤمروا أحدهم). This instruction may appear simple, but it carries profound implications. It shows that Islam prioritizes order, unity, and the delegation of responsibility, even in temporary or informal settings. According to al-Shawkānī in *Nayl al-Awṭār*, this ḥadīth serves as evidence that leadership is a divinely legislated necessity. Without a leader, people may follow their personal desires, resulting in disorder and disintegration. Thus, appointing a leader—even among a small group—acts as a safeguard against chaos and reflects a general principle: leadership is essential wherever people interact as a community.

This obligation is classified by scholars as *farḍ kifāyah*, a communal duty. If neglected entirely, the entire community bears the burden of sin. Rationally, too, leadership is indispensable for social organization. A society cannot fulfill its obligations in education, welfare, justice, or public safety without a functioning structure of authority. The Qur’an supports this view, as in Q.S. al-Furqān [25]:74 where the believers pray, “*And make us leaders of the righteous*” (واجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا), and Q.S. al-Nisā’ [4]:59, where obedience is enjoined upon Allah, His Messenger, and *those in authority among you* (أولي الأمر منكم). These verses confirm that leadership in Islam is not merely a sociopolitical arrangement but a moral and religious imperative.

The second set of traditions addresses the process of selecting a leader. One of the most well-known examples is the response of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb when he was asked during his final illness whether he would appoint a successor. He answered, “*If I appoint someone, then Abū Bakr, who was better than me, appointed someone. But if I do not appoint anyone, then the Prophet ﷺ, who was better than me, did not appoint anyone either.*” This moment, recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, illustrates the flexibility within Islamic political tradition. Both appointment (*istikhlāf*) and non-appointment (*tark*) are valid, depending on the context and needs of the community. According to Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī in *Fatḥh al-Bārī*, this exchange occurred when ‘Umar was critically wounded by a Persian slave named Abū Lu’lu’ah, prompting concerns about political vacuum.

In another version of the report, ‘Umar says, “*راغب وراهب*” (eager yet hesitant), indicating his internal struggle. On one hand, he feared leaving the community without guidance; on the other, he was cautious of imposing his will on others, a responsibility that weighed heavily on his conscience. Ultimately, ‘Umar chose a middle path. He appointed a consultative council of six Companions to select the next caliph—a decision grounded in *shūrā* (consultation) and collective deliberation. This move balanced the need for order with the ethical value of consent and participation. It also set a precedent that political legitimacy in Islam must rest on trust, competence, and community approval—not merely on succession or inheritance.

The third and final tradition emphasizes the ethical essence of leadership: accountability. The Prophet ﷺ declared, “*Each of you is a shepherd,*



*and each of you is responsible for his flock*” (أَلَا كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ). This ḥadīth, reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, redefines leadership from a position of power into a position of trust and care. The metaphor of the shepherd is profound. A shepherd does not exploit or abandon his flock; rather, he nurtures, protects, and ensures their welfare. In the same way, every leader—whether a head of state, a parent, a teacher, or a servant—is entrusted with the well-being of others and will be held accountable before God.

The repetition in this tradition—*“each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is accountable”*—demonstrates that leadership is not the exclusive domain of politicians or rulers. Everyone, in some capacity, exercises leadership. A husband is responsible for his household. A wife for the care of her children and home. A worker for the property of his employer. Leadership in Islam, therefore, is universal and rooted in moral obligation rather than rank or status. This vision collapses the distinction between public and private ethics, requiring all individuals to embody responsibility, fairness, and compassion in their respective domains.

In the contemporary world, where political leadership is often marked by authoritarianism, injustice, or self-interest, the prophetic model offers a radical alternative. It centers the ethical responsibilities of leadership—service, justice, and care—above the desire for control or recognition. A ruler who fails to address poverty or injustice, or who prioritizes personal interests over the common good, is failing to fulfill the basic requirements of leadership as defined in the Sunnah. The true measure of a leader, according to these traditions, is not how much power they wield, but how effectively they serve their people and uphold justice. Through these three prophetic teachings, we see a coherent ethical vision that begins with obligation, proceeds through process, and culminates in accountability. Leadership in Islam is not a privilege to be seized, but a trust to be honored—a trust that demands humility, wisdom, and above all, responsibility.

### C. CONCLUSION

This study has sought to explore the ethical foundations and normative imperatives of leadership as articulated in the Prophetic tradition. By examining selected ḥadīth on the obligation to establish leadership, the method of leader selection, and the moral responsibilities of those in power, it becomes evident that Islam offers a holistic vision of leadership—one that is both practical and deeply rooted in moral accountability. Leadership is not merely an administrative necessity; it is a religious and rational obligation that safeguards the unity, welfare, and spiritual direction of the community. The Prophet’s command to appoint a leader, even among three travelers, illustrates that no group should function without responsible oversight. Such guidance affirms that governance in Islam is grounded in the principles of order, justice, and the prevention of discord.

The practice of the Companions, particularly in the matter of succession, further demonstrates the flexibility and wisdom embedded in Islamic political ethics. Whether through direct appointment, public





consultation, or collective deliberation, the legitimacy of leadership lies not in the mechanism alone but in its alignment with ethical intent and communal trust. The examples of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar reveal that leadership must not be approached with personal ambition, but with deep awareness of the burdens it entails and the public good it must serve.

Most importantly, the Prophet’s reminder that “*each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock*” reframes leadership as a universal moral calling. Every individual, regardless of title or position, bears responsibility within their sphere of influence. This ethos transforms leadership from a hierarchical privilege into a form of ethical guardianship, where power is exercised with compassion, care, and a constant awareness of accountability—both to society and to God. In an era where political leadership is often reduced to technical management or self-interest, the prophetic model urges a return to leadership as trust (*amānah*), shaped by sincerity, humility, and service. As such, these ḥadīth remain not only relevant but urgently needed as a source of ethical guidance for leaders at every level of society today.

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