

**ISLAMIZATION OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE (IOHK) MEDIATES THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ISLAMIC SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE (ISI) AND
LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES OF STUDENT LEADERS (LCSL)**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether mediation of Islamization of Human Knowledge (IOHK) existed between the relationships of, Islamic Spiritual Intelligence (ISI), and leadership Competencies of Student Leaders (LCSL). Three hundred and seventy-two (N=372) students of IIUM were stratified and randomly selected from the population of student leaders. A full-fledged structural equation modeling was employed to validate the proposed model. The findings revealed that there was a significant positive effect of Islamic Spiritual Intelligence (ISI) on the Leadership Competencies of Student Leaders (LCSL) through the Islamization of Human Knowledge (IOHK) as a mediator. Besides, IOHK completely mediates through ISI and LCSL. This study could be useful in developing young minds to become ethical leaders and enhance the Islamization process at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

Key Words: Islamization of Human Knowledge, Islamic Spiritual Intelligence, Leadership Competencies, Student Leaders, International Islamic University Malaysia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Competency refers to the behavioural characteristics that support competent performance. These are behavioural competencies since they cover how people behave while performing their jobs. Recent studies of leadership literature place the importance of global leadership competencies at the top (Flores, 2016; Lange, 2015; Le, 2016; Park et al., 2018; Trémel, 2016). Leaders with the necessary abilities, expertise, attitudes and other qualities are needed in the contemporary era or the 21st century to provide organisations with or contribute to constitutional solutions to global concerns (Stevens et al., 2014; Mccrory, 2016).

However, the current leaders lack the spiritual component (Ahmed et al., 2016; Smartt, 2014). As a result, contemporary leaders tend to be more emotionally unstable and less God-conscious, and they tend to prioritise immediate gains at the expense of benefits that will last forever. Because of this, these leaders engage in hubris, avarice, and other unethical actions (Hitt, Haynes, & Serpa, 2010) as there is no or less moral conduct (Hassan, 2010). Thus, there is a great need for the university to foster the growth of young brains into holistic selves with the appropriate blend of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order to steer higher education in the proper path and contribute to the country's sustainable development (Gelen, 2018; Ithnin et al., 2018; Kumar & Al-Samarraie, 2018; Lee, 2017).

A person needs to have the capacity for optimism to perform with confidence (Bensaid et al., 2014). In a condition of intrinsic faith and conviction in the one God, there will be pleasant feelings, thoughts, and behaviours. Spiritual intelligence is what we refer to as this. A person's path to success and excellence in life is paved with the spiritual wisdom (Ghodratolah Bagheri et al., 2013; Hanefar et al., 2016). Spiritual intelligence is intrinsic or fitrah-primordial (Ahmad & Ogunsola, 2011; Beekun, 2012; Hanefar et al., 2016; Hanefar et al., 2015; Jumahat et al., 2015). Because of this, people have started to look for deeper meaning in their work and to consider the meaning of life goals and career choices. Each person has a spiritual quest that manifests when they consciously seek to understand their potential function and relationship with the highest power.

This intelligence fosters personal intrinsic drive, emphasising moral and ethical ideals like trust and honesty as well as empowering and providing possibilities for opinion expression. The inner will to live, an energising inner motivation and experience that propels people into action, a wholeness with a commitment to shared goals, a will to contribute to the success and development of others, an attachment of love, hope, faith, and optimism, a spirit of a team, and seeking or calling for meaning in life are all examples of spiritual intelligence (Kaya, 2015; Silingiene & Skeriene, 2016).

When Islam is incorporated with spiritual intelligence, it creates an Islamic Spiritual Intelligence where people can look for the purpose of life, which helps them find and get closer to a true God. They will be able to understand that life is all about utter obedience to a true God (Bensaid, Machouche, & Grine, 2014; Rahman & Shah, 2015). Consequently, people become calmer (Bensaid et al., 2014). In addition, leading a life of obedience to a true God assists people in modelling good deeds and motivates them to engage in these activities for rewards in the hereafter rather than for benefits in this life.

To be free from temporary and material gains, leaders in the twenty-first century must work harder on their inner selves. Universities must therefore concentrate on instilling students with Islamic spiritual intelligence through knowledge to increase their God-consciousness (Nik Mat Kamil & Hanafi, 2017) and to students internalize the knowledge in its purest form in their daily lives, striving to become good and strengthen humankind. Hassanzadeh et al. (2015), Mendenhall et al. (2017), and Reza (2016) suggest that human characteristics can be modified by training. Therefore, university students must receive the appropriate training to instil in them strong leadership qualities, including the necessary information, skills, and talents. In line with that, the philosophy of IIUM is based on the belief that knowledge should be pursued as an *'ibādah* (continuous worship) and *amānah* (a trust) from the human creator (Allah) to mankind. As a result, the knowledge that is sought in this way will enable one to acknowledge Allah as the sole ultimate Creator, Treasurer, and Sustainer of the cosmos. This idea, which forms the basis of the Islamization of Human Knowledge, is incorporated into the University's founding documents based on the first five verses of Surat Al-'Alaq (The Clot).

For all Prophets, knowledge is a necessary condition. Islam mandates that one must carry out their duties as God's vicegerent (*Khalifa*) on earth with complete devotion to Allah (Jumahat et al., 2015). From an Islamic standpoint, this is the theology or essence of learning (Islam & Fawaz, 2017). Knowledge can be divided into two categories: revealed knowledge and learned

knowledge. For the advancement of human greatness, which acknowledges virtues and vices, neither can be isolated from the other. A person becomes mechanical if they excel without a spirit (Hassan et al., 2010). Due to this, Al Attas and Al Faruqi, two educational reformists, both persuasively contended that the issues facing the Muslim Ummah are caused by the educational system. Both hold that all knowledge comes from God and is founded on values. They, therefore, argued that Islamization of the contemporary western educational system is necessary to pave the way for the establishment of Islamization in all spheres of human life, both private and public (Nik Mat Kamil & Hanafi, 2017).

In order to develop young brains into confident, self-directed, engaged, and concerned citizens, the 21st-century educational system emphasises global, social, and cultural awareness (Bartscht, 2016; Docherty-Skippen & Woodford, 2017; Lee, 2017; Tan et al., 2017). However, educators are urged to understand the compelling moral goals of education (Crow et al., 2017) by inculcating God-consciousness to live a life goal to worship a true God and become His vicegerent on Earth. As a result, the spiritual quest to comprehend the purpose of life from the perspective of the Islamization of human knowledge will be more thorough and all-encompassing. Therefore, possessing IOHK will significantly increase one's spiritual intelligence in Islam. As a result, it will be easier to fulfil the requirements of a human being, such as worshipping Allah and becoming a *Khalifah* of Allah. Hence, this study proposed that IOHK mediates via the connection between ISI and LCSL. Additionally, the degree to which IOHK mediates the connection between the two variables was also hypothesised.

Objectives and Rationale of the Study

This study is part of a larger study that investigated the Leadership Competencies of Student Leaders of IIUM. Before this study, there has not been any empirical research conducted like this in the area of IOHK and student leadership of IIUM. However, the purpose of this study was to investigate the mediation effect and the extent to which IOHK mediates through the relationship between ISI and LCSL.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The conceptual framework of this study was intended to explain student leaders' leadership competencies through Islamic spiritual intelligence and the Islamization of human knowledge as a mediating variable. The conceptual framework is based on established frameworks and models namely Jumahat et al.'s (2015) Islamic spiritual intelligence model, the Uli al-Albāb, "people of sound reason" of Islamization by Hassan (2010), and the integrative global leadership framework of Park et al. (2018) together with student leadership competency model of Seemiller (2013). Figure 1 shows the general conceptual framework of the study and its variable connections.

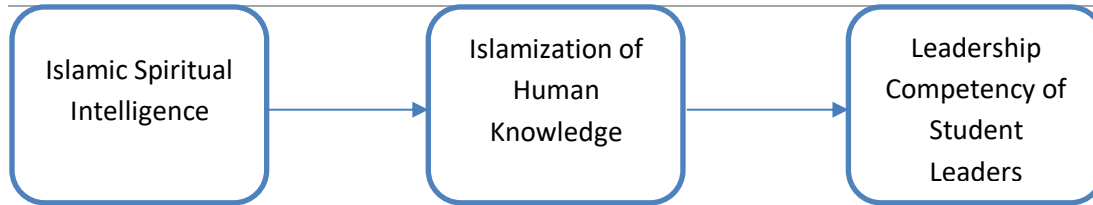


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

From the above frameworks, the present study came up with the three sub-constructs from the Islamic spiritual intelligence model: spiritual awareness, responsibility, and continuous learning. Spiritual intelligence in Quran refers to the ability to generate positive emotions, thoughts, and actions in an intrinsic state of faith and belief in the one God (Jumahat et al., 2015; Fatimah Abdullah, 2012). According to Islam, beginning with the self, humans are granted the ability to improve the condition of life in a rational, reflective way with faith embodied in it. When spiritual intelligence is practiced by Islam, it is expected not to draw or cause any kind of destruction or conflict to the human or environment.

Leadership competencies of student leaders; interpersonal interaction, group dynamics, and intercultural awareness and capability. Student leaders govern the student body of a college or a university. In student government, students participate to represent the students of the campus and voice their concerns to college administrators. Competency refers to dimensions of behavior lying behind the competent performance. These are behavioral competencies, as they describe how people carry themselves when they do their job. In the literature, competency is referred to in two ways, 1. "A proven ability to perform a job completely and 2. "The set of behavior the person must display to perform the tasks and functions of the job with competence"(Moore et al., 2002; Woodruffe, 1993).

Also, the Islamization of Human knowledge sub-constructs as the process of IOHK, morality (*Akhlaq*), an environment that was used as a mediation of the working model. To Islamise knowledge or bring it into the fold of the Islamic worldview having a profound understanding of the Quran and sunnah and having a comprehensive understanding of human nature and Islamic heritage is important (Ali,2010). Muslim reformers found that the crisis lies in the mind of the man. Therefore, there was an urgent need to reform the Muslim education system through Islamization (Maulana, 2017; Tajuddin, 2019). Education changes the mind of individuals (Islam & Fawaz, 2017). Besides, when the Islamization of human knowledge takes place in educational institutions, there will be an integral view of the concept of knowledge (epistemology) and the concept of God, theology. Thus, Islam and Fawaz (2017) emphasize that epistemology strongly associates with ontology. When the students have an ontology about the Lord who created the world and believe that He has all the power over everything. The first Surah Allah sent to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was about knowledge and learning. The first five verses of surah al-Aa'la form the basis of Islamization (Siti Salmiah, Emelia, & Mohd Muzhafar, 2016).

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The cross-sectional survey method was used to collect data for this quantitative study. The instrument has gone through three phases of validation namely, expert judgment in content validation, face validity, and pilot study. Student leaders from all the IIUM campuses were selected to provide the data to find whether IOHK mediates through the relationship between ISI and LCSL. Since all the campuses are from IIUM, the type of student associations is the same on all the campuses. However, there is a campus head on the Kuantan campus unlike the rectors and deputy rectors at the IIUM Gombak campus.

Respondents

Three hundred and seventy-two (N=372) student leaders basically from three campuses making up the population of student leaders up to 760 students. The Pagoh campus is under the administration of the Gombak Campus. Based on gender, female student leaders comprise 57.5% (214/372) and males 42.5% (158/372). There are more local student leaders with 86.6% (332/372) as compared to international student leaders with 13.4% (50/372). The student leaders who participated in this survey from the Gombak campus comprised 89.2 % (332/372) and from the Kuantan, campus comprised 10.8% (40/372). The highest number of student leaders having the highest qualifications is Bachelor's degree comprising 68.5% (255/372). Further information about the sample is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of Demographic information about the study

| Characteristics | Category | Frequency | % |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|------|
| Gender | Male | 158 | 42.5 |
| | Female | 214 | 57.5 |
| Age bracket | 18-24 | 303 | 81.5 |
| | 25-34 | 43 | 11.6 |
| | 35-44 | 19 | 5.1 |
| | 45 years and above | 7 | 1.9 |
| Nationality | Local | 322 | 86.6 |
| | International | 50 | 13.4 |
| Campuses | Gombak | 332 | 89.2 |
| | Kuantan | 40 | 10.8 |
| Years at IIUM | 0<3 years | 196 | 52.9 |
| | 3<6 years | 161 | 43.3 |
| | 6<9 years | 13 | 3.5 |
| | 9<12 years | 2 | 0.6 |
| Qualifications | PhD | 21 | 5.6 |
| | Masters | 23 | 6.2 |
| | Bachelor | 255 | 68.5 |
| | Others | 73 | 19.7 |

Survey Instrument

Many tools have been used in past studies to measure leadership effectiveness and competencies. However, there have been few studies using instruments to measure Islamic spiritual intelligence and Islamization of Knowledge. The instrument used in this study was Jumahat et al., (2015) for Islamic Spiritual Intelligence, Rosch and Seemiller (2018) for Leadership Competencies, and Rahman (2016) for Islamization of Human Knowledge. Also, intercultural awareness and capability items under the leadership competency construct have been self-developed. Therefore, all other items used in the instrument in the present study have been adapted from the models of Jumahat's (2016) Islamic Spiritual Intelligence, Hassan's (2010) "Man of Sound Reasoning" of Islamization of Human Knowledge, and the frameworks of Seemiller's (2013) Student Leadership Competencies together with Park et al.'s (2018) Integrative global leadership. Also, the instrument has gone through three phases of validation namely, expert judgment in content validation, face validity, and pilot study. Therefore, the final instrument was estimated to take an average of 6 minutes to complete with 48 questions. Thus, the instrument is divided into two sections; A and B. Section A includes demographic information. Section B relates to the constructs, assessing on a 7- point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Very strongly disagree to 7= Very strongly agree.

Data Collection and Analysis

The main purpose of the research was to examine the mediation process. Therefore, the appropriateness of the items and underlying constructs are vital. With the approval of STADD, the questionnaire is distributed to 372 student leaders. A total of 372 questionnaires were returned. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the constructs. Second, a reliability analysis was performed to test the internal consistency of the data derived from the preliminary set of items.

In the pilot data of 135 student leaders, the suitability for factor analysis was assessed. A close observation of the Correlation matrix includes coefficients above 0.3. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sample adequacy (KMO) value was .938. This is a higher value than the threshold value of 0.60. Bartlett's Test Sphericity achieved statistical significance as $\chi^2(1128) = 9984.322, p = .000$. Thus, this supports the factorability of the correlation matrix (Pallant, 2011). Then PCA was conducted on 4 fixed factors. Then the factor loadings for each component were checked. Items whose loadings were 0.5 and above were retained.

Pooled CFA was carried out with final data to ensure that all the factor loadings (>0.5) comply with convergent and discriminant validity. At the same time, this procedure allowed the researcher to determine the AVE (Average Variance Explained), Cronbach Alpha, and Composite Reliability. All the threshold for the construct, convergent, discriminant, Cronbach alpha, and composite reliability was achieved.

4.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined indirect relationship between Islamic spiritual intelligence (ISI) and leadership competencies (LCSL), through the mediating variable; Islamization of human knowledge (IOHK). To test the relationship and the hypothesis, structural model's standardized Beta (β) estimates, critical ratios, and significance values were examined. Table 3 shows that the structural paths were positive and significant for ISI and LCSL. The Hypothesis was accepted, as there is a positive and significant relationship between ISI and LCSL through IOHK. Therefore mediation has occurred (Aguinis, Edwards, & Bradley, 2017; MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007; Ramayah et al., 2016)

Table 3. Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

| | | | Estimate | S.E. | C.R. | P | Label |
|-------|------|-------|----------|------|-------|------|-------------|
| I_OHK | <--- | I_SI | .278 | .056 | 4.659 | *** | Significant |
| L_CSL | <--- | I_SI | .136 | .063 | 2.608 | .009 | |
| L_CSL | <--- | I_OHK | .298 | .109 | 3.522 | *** | Significant |

According to Aguinis et al. (2017) and Cepeda, Nitzl and Roldán (2016) if there is a positive and significant effect on the indirect path or mediated path and if the direct path or without mediator path showing a significant positive effect too, then the mediation is partial. However, if the direct bath shows an insignificant effect, then there is a full mediation. Therefore, in the present study, IOHK mediates completely between ISL and LCSL. Therefore the two postulated hypotheses were accepted.

The causal relationship between Islamic spiritual intelligence and leadership competency of student leaders

While few studies have specifically examined the relationship between Islamic Spiritual Intelligence and leadership competencies, there is a significant body of literature supporting a positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and leadership effectiveness. For example, Ali and Zaky (2018) found that spiritual values and practices have positive and interactive effects on leadership effectiveness. Similarly, Akhtar et al. (2017) and Arshad et al. (2018) described the role of spiritual intelligence in developing leadership, while Ramachandaran et al. (2017) suggested that spiritual intelligence can transform the workplace into a more meaningful and purposeful environment by promoting balanced and harmonious relationships among employees. In addition, Nejat, Whitehead, and Crowe (2016) found that spiritual intelligence fosters positive and resilient factors, such as intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal skills, religious needs, a need for inner peace, existentialistic needs, a spirit of giving, and spiritual awareness, morality, responsibility, and continuous learning (Eldisaty & Ibrahim, 2018; Jumahat et al., 2015; Marghzar & Marzban, 2018).

Hanefar et al. (2016) also highlighted how spiritual intelligence can help individuals create meaning and purpose in their lives, promote consciousness and transcendence, provide access to

spiritual resources, promote self-determination and reflection, facilitate soul purification, and support spiritual coping with obstacles, which can ultimately lead to success in achieving goals. Finally, some studies suggest that spiritual intelligence contributes more to women's life satisfaction (Alghraibeh, 2017). While Saad et al. (2018) and Siswanti, Khairuddin, and Halim (2018) found that spiritual intelligence has an insignificant direct influence on leadership competence, these studies represent a minority view.

5.CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This research has expanded our understanding of how Islamic Spiritual Intelligence and the Islamization of Human Knowledge can affect the leadership abilities of student leaders at IIUM. It also highlights how IOHK plays a role in enhancing ISI to have a more significant impact on the development of ethical future leaders who can work without constant supervision. Additionally, this study has made theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions.

Contribution to the practical importance of Islamization of Human Knowledge

Despite IIUM being a pioneering university for Islamization in Asia and globally, there has been no research that provides adequate psychometric properties to evaluate IOHK. To address this gap, this study generated three sub-dimensions related to IOHK implementation in IIUM: the process of IOHK, morality, and the environment. The term "Akhlak" refers to the self-development of student leaders in the context of this research, while "environment" refers to the impact of IIUM's environment due to the Islamization of Human Knowledge. These sub-dimensions were derived from an instrument initially developed by the center of Islamization at IIUM (Rahman, 2016) but underwent rigorous refinement throughout the validation process.

Contribution to the practical importance of Islamic Spiritual Intelligence

Jumahat (2016) conducted a study to identify the dimensions of Islamic Spiritual Intelligence. The study identified three dimensions: spiritual awareness, responsibility, and continuous learning. However, in this current research, only two dimensions were found to be relevant: spiritual awareness and continuous learning. All items related to responsibility were removed from the analysis. The dimensions were found to have good psychometric properties, including convergent, construct, and discriminant validity. The internal consistency, measured by Cronbach's alpha, was found to be adequate. Additionally, the composite reliability was above the acceptable threshold, indicating strong validity and reliability. The observed variables explained more than half of the variance (AVE is 0.65).

Contributions to the practical importance of Leadership Competencies of Student Leaders

Numerous studies have examined the leadership competencies of leaders globally (Brzakovic & Vukotic, 2018; Dziatzko, Struve, & Stehr, 2018; Neeley, Clyne, and Resnick-Ault, 2017; Park et al., 2018; Skarbaliene, 2018), but only a few have focused on student leadership competencies (Mccrory, 2016; Neeley et al., 2017). Recent trends indicate a lack of global leadership competencies in leaders. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the global leadership competencies of student leaders by examining three aspects of leadership competencies: interpersonal interaction, group dynamics, and intercultural awareness and capabilities.

The psychometric analysis of the sub-dimensions showed that observed variables from all three aspects possess adequate psychometric properties. The study produced seven items from CFA, all with factor loadings greater than 0.5, and they demonstrated convergent, construct, and divergent validity. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha level was above 0.7, indicating the internal consistency of the items. The composite reliability was also satisfactory in determining the items' reliability. Importantly, the items for intercultural awareness and capability were self-developed to emphasize the global character of the IIUM student leaders in the present research.

Theoretical Contributions

The present study contributes to the existing literature by providing theoretical insights into the development of leadership competencies among student leaders through the cultivation of Islamic Spiritual Intelligence and the Islamization of Human Knowledge. Specifically, the study emphasizes the importance of training young individuals to strengthen their beliefs and emotional control, enabling them to navigate worldly challenges without responding negatively. The findings suggest that Islamic Spiritual Intelligence can enhance leadership competencies, particularly among young minds. Furthermore, the Islamization of Human Knowledge is shown to further facilitate the development of leadership competencies among student leaders. Overall, the study contributes to a better understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of leadership development in the context of Islamic education.

Methodological Contributions

The present study has several methodological contributions. Firstly, it has developed and validated a 24-item scale for evaluating the influence of Islamic Spiritual Intelligence on the Leadership Competencies of Student Leaders. This instrument has been shown to be reliable based on Cronbach alpha and Composite Reliability, and it is valid in terms of convergent, construct, and discriminant validity. Additionally, the present study has validated and tested the reliability of items related to the Islamization of Human Knowledge for the first time. The researcher has also developed a new dimension of leadership competencies, intercultural awareness and capabilities, which possesses adequate psychometric properties and contributes to leadership competencies as a global leader characteristic.

Secondly, this study uses structural equation modeling to assess the Leadership Competencies of Student Leaders at IIUM, merging theories and models related to Islamic Spiritual Intelligence and the Islamization of Human Knowledge. This study confirms the impact of Islam in developing globally competent leaders at IIUM and is the first to empirically test the Islamization of Human Knowledge using structural equation modeling in the context of a pioneer Islamic University. Finally, this study addresses a gap in existing research by focusing on the leadership development of students and the development of good ethics and manners.

Practical Contributions

The practical contribution of this study is significant for educational institutions, including schools, colleges, universities, and parents who are involved in the development of young individuals into responsible and competent leaders. The findings confirm the importance of Emotional Intelligence and Islamic Spiritual Intelligence in shaping the Leadership Competencies of Student Leaders,

especially when mediated through IOHK. This suggests that educational institutions should prioritize the development of emotional and spiritual intelligence alongside a focus on Islamization of Human Knowledge to promote the development of globally competent leaders who possess good morals and ethics. Overall, the results of this study highlight the critical role of emotional and spiritual intelligence and IOHK in shaping the next generation of leaders in society.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study hypothesized that Islamic spiritual intelligence could positively influence the leadership competencies of student leaders, with the understanding that practicing spiritual intelligence in accordance with Islam should not cause harm or conflict to humans or the environment. In Islam, achieving the highest level of spirituality involves returning to fitrah, which includes various aspects of human beings such as the spirit, heart, self, brain, and body. Through the Islamization of human knowledge, which corrects the epistemology and belief behind knowledge acquisition, the mind of an individual can develop and change through education.

Muslim reformers have identified the crisis in the minds of Muslims, and the Islamization of human knowledge is viewed as a solution to this crisis. As a mediator between Islamic spiritual intelligence and the leadership competencies of student leaders, the Islamization of human knowledge is expected to produce ethical leaders who do not engage in scandalous or corrupt activities and instead engage in activities that remind them of their purpose as humans to worship Allah and become His vicegerent.

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