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THE PRINCIPLE OF EFFECTIVE DELEGATION FROM PROPHET MUHAMMAD LIFE

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ABSTRACT

Delegation is an essential tool that leaders need to achieve more, as well as an approach to develop others. However, delegation is not always done effectively. This paper reviews some techniques that can lead to the desired outcomes of delegating. Since Prophet Muhammad is considered one of the most influential people in history and the profound impacts of his leadership are well known, an investigation of the Prophet's approaches when delegating tasks to others may offer an in-depth understanding of productive delegation that provides reciprocal benefits to both the leader and the subordinates who are to perform the tasks delegated. The content analysis carried out in this study shows that appreciating others, listening to them, motivating them and raising their sense of self-actualization are some of techniques that the Prophet used in delegation.

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INTRODUCTION

No one could doubt the significance of delegation for leaders (Pollock, 2005). It is an act of pushing more to be done as well as a smart approach of developing others. However, the distortion of using it or even neglecting using it can affect the leaders, the followers and the organization negatively. Accordingly, identifying and understanding the principles and the techniques of effective delegation nurtures leaders to use delegation with effectiveness. Prophet Muhammad was one of the leaders who has a profound impact on the people worldwide. He was ranked first on the list of the most influential people in history (Hart, 1978). Hart indicated that after thirteen centuries since the Prophet's death, his influence is still pervasive and effective.

In 1932, author, Besant, wrote: "It is impossible for those who study the life and characteristics of Prophet Muhammad to feel anything else but reverence for the mighty teacher" (p.11). Additionally, Mahatma Gandhi emphatically stated this in the book, *Young India*:

I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today an undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind.... I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his

friends and followers...When I closed the second volume (of the Prophet's biography), I was sorry there was not more for me to read of that great life. (1924, p. 189)

It is strongly believed that the Prophet had a great responsibility towards the world; this responsibility includes spreading mercy and kindness in the world. The Qur'an states that "We [the god] have not sent you (O Muhammad), except as a mercy to the world" (Qur'an, Ch. 21: Verse 107). According to the Qur'an, the Prophet's mission was primarily to correct belief and promote habitual change in order to establish mercy and compassion to humankind. Such a responsibility would create a sense of anxiety for any leader especially in trying to adopt an appropriate leadership style to produce the required change. It is believed that Prophet Muhammad embraced the leadership approach that focused on people and their needs as a priority. He is reported to have said: Each one of you is a guardian, and each of you will be asked about your guardianship; the leader is a guardian, and the man is a guardian over the people of his house, and the woman is a guardian over her husband's house and children. So each of you is a guardian, and each of you will be asked about your guardianship. (Bukhari, 2009; Muslim, 2009)

Many writers have recognized the sense of guardianship and caring displayed by Prophet Muhammad throughout his life. The Prophet's concern was not only to spread the word of God.

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He was also concerned about believers and nonbelievers, animals and inanimate being. His primary motivation was to help others and provide assistance for those who merited assistance (As-Siba'ie, 2005). His sense of serving and caring was one of the fundamental reasons behind his influence throughout history (Khan, 2008).

Since, prophet Muhammad is considered the most influential person in history, as Hart posited, "He was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both religious and secular levels" (1978, p. 3), I believe that an investigation of his leadership techniques would provide a glimpse at effective approaches of dealing with people. More specifically, the Prophet approaches and behavior of delegating tasks to others may offer an in-depth understanding of productive delegation that provides reciprocal benefits to both the leader and their subordinates who are going to perform the delegated tasks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Administrative delegation is not a way of escaping responsibilities or avoiding complicated tasks; rather it is a way of building trust and collegiality in a working place (Gonaim, 2017). In their study on leadership in extreme action in medical team Klein, Ziegert, Knight and Xiao (2006) confirmed that delegation enhances the team ability to perform reliably and reinforce their skills. They also urged organization to pave the way for more flexible enhancing process such as delegation and reducing bureaucratic structures. However, not all delegations produce positive effects or used in away that enhance the development of the people who performed the delegated tasks.

The uniqueness of the Prophet's life in how he acted, in his way of treating old and young, slaves and free, rich and poor, enemy and beloved and above that his approaches of delegating tasks make his biography a valuable source for today's leaders (As-Siba'ie, 2005). Leaders could grasp the Prophet's approaches in treating an advancing his people. Researchers such as Adair attempted to explore the Prophet's leadership in his book entitled *The Leadership of Muhammad* (2010). Adair linked the Prophet's cultural life with his leadership characteristic. Additionally, other authors including As-Siba'ie (2005), Ramadan (2007), and Khan (2008) have explored the Prophet's leading behaviors and characteristics. Despite these many researches and discourses on the Prophet's leadership, there isn't any research that actually examined the techniques that the Prophet used in delegating tasks. Therefore, the focus of this work was to investigate the Prophet's techniques and approaches of delegating tasks.

METHODS

Research methods are tools that guide researchers to illuminate their inquiries. For this investigation, a content analysis approach was selected to identify and interpret the Prophet's techniques of delegation. According to Stemler (2001), the content analysis approach enables researchers to sort through large amount of data in a systematic way to identify patterns. It is known as a method of analyzing documents (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Krippendorff (2004) described it as a powerful and unobtrusive technique. Therefore, this method is relevant to my inquiry in examining the literature about the Prophet's behaviors to identify a pattern of the techniques of delegation.

Content analysis is one of the qualitative research method which has been widely used to systematically describe written, spoken or even visual content. Content analysis approach can be conducted deductively or inductively depending on the purpose of the study. For this study, the deductive content analysis was used for its suitability to find answers for this investigation. The deductive content is recommended when the researchers want to retest existing data in a new context (Elo & Kyngas, 2008).

Data Source. Three sources were used to establish this study. The first one is the Qur'an because in Islamic faith, Qur'an is the sacred scripture and the most accurate divine book for all Muslims. The second source is Sunnah which incorporates the Prophet's authentic saying, practice and living habits (As-Siba'ie, 2005). Sunnah also is regarded as the second reliable and authentic source of Islamic regulation (As-Siba'ie). The third source that nurtured this work is what is written about the Prophet biography. Volumes have been written on Prophet's biography in both languages, Arabic and English; however, the researcher only has used what is suggested to be the most trustworthy books that compiled his biography, namely; Al-Mubarakpuri, (1979) and Ibn- Hisham, (2000).

Principles of the Prophet's Delegation

From a study of the Prophet's manners of communicating and delegating tasks to his companions, the following principles have emerged:

Selecting an appropriate person for the task

An investigation of the common elements among the tasks that the Prophet delegated to his companions illustrates that delegation was done with vigilant selection. In addition, understanding the characters of other individuals before assigning a task assisted the Prophet in selecting a suitable person who could perform the task appropriately. The Prophet would appoint the best person to carry out each particular task. This is shown in the following authentic hadith narrated by Bukhari. One day a person asked the Prophet about the time of the Day of Judgment. The Prophet answered: "When trust is lost, then you shall await the Day of Judgment." Then the same inquirer asked how the trust would be lost. The Prophet answered, "When tasks are given into the hand of unqualified people." (Bukhari, 2009).

The Prophet did not delegate tasks until he was certain that the person was capable of doing it. For example, the Prophet used to ask his companion Abu Bakr to lead Muslims' prayers because the Prophet realized that Abu Bakr was the best person to lead the Muslim community after the Prophet's death. In this act, the Prophet implied the selection of Abu Bakr to lead after him. While he selected Abu Bakr to lead the prayers, he appointed Osamah Ibn Zaied who was 16 years old to lead the Muslim army in one of the Prophet's battles (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1979). Although there were plenty of older soldiers with more knowledge, the Prophet knew that Osamah was the most appropriate person to lead the army because of his advanced skills and military abilities.

Motivating and Stimulating a Sense of Competition to Accept Delegation

People might be reluctant to accept tasks when they are asked. However, using motivational words and behaviors can encourage them to agree to the task. Prophet Muhammad used various approaches to motivate others to compete to be appointed for responsibilities. When the Prophet was with his companions in the battle of Hunain, he asked, "Is there among us a knight who can guard us tonight?" As the Prophet finished speaking, Onais Alganawi, raced up on his horse, saying "The knight is me." (Abuonanah: 5913).

Furthermore, using complimentary, motivational titles for people can stimulate them to exert their best efforts. The Prophet used to call Abu Bakr, his closest companion, *Alsedeeq*, which means the honest one, and he called Omar *Alfaruq*, which means the fair person. In addition, when the Prophet sent deputations to other countries, he would make the leader of the mission a prince. For instance, Sa'ad bin Waqas was given the title of prince for leading at the battle of Alqadesia (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1979).

Explaining the Task and the Possible Emerging Difficulties

The Prophet's technique in appointing tasks which might involve some complications was to point out to these difficulties and suggest possible actions. For instance, when the Prophet sent his companion, Muaz to Yemen to present the message of Islam, he clarified the reactions that's could be expected.

You are going to a tribe from the People of the Book (meaning Jews and Christians). Invite them to testify that there is no god but Allah and that I am His Messenger. If they accept this, inform them that Allah has commanded them to pray to Him five times a day every day. If they accept this, inform them that Allah has commanded a zakat (charitable alms) to be paid by the wealthy to the poor. If they accept this, do not take the most valuable goods (for this). Be wary of the curses of the oppressed, because there is no veil between the curses of the oppressed and Allah. (Muslim, 2009)

In addition, choosing simple, concise words to communicate when appointing tasks makes performing the responsibility easier. The Prophet spoke with clarity and avoided sophisticated terminology (Zohery, 2009). In his words, "I have been given superiority over the other prophets in six respects: I have been given words which are concise but comprehensive in meaning" (Muslim, 2009).

Different Discourse Style Suits the Receivers

The nature of the Prophet's communications indicates that he took personal differences into consideration and did not treat his companions alike. Understanding individual differences enabled him to use appropriate approaches in communication and delegation. For instance, he would talk about serious community issues with his closest companion Abu Bakr, consult with him and delegate to him, while engaging in cheerful talk with his wife Aishah. Also he adjusted his communication style to the age of his audience. For example, he used to play with the children and place his hand on their heads out of compassion.

The Prophet chose descriptive words which are suitable for the people's perceptions, abilities and thoughts. From the examples he used mentioning camels and dates, it is apparent that he used language that suited the listeners and the nature of their life at that time. For instance, a Bedouin asked him about emigration (Hijrah). He said "Woe to you, emigration is difficult. Do you have any camels?" The man replied "Yes." The Prophet asked "Do you pay *Sadaqah*, charity, on them?" The man said that he did. The Prophet told him "Do righteous deeds no matter how far away you are from the Muslims, for Allah, the Mighty and Sublime, will never cause any of your deeds to be lost." (Sunan an-Nasa'i: 4164). As well as words, he used other techniques to enhance the meaning of the words. Many incidents have indicated the Prophet's use of non-verbal communication. Abu Hurayrah reported that "One day the Prophet asked 'Who among you will receive from me these words and act upon it?' I said 'I will.' He then picked my hand, counted five and said to me 'Five matters; keep away from forbidden things and you will become the most worshipping man!...' (Muslim, 2009).

Mistakes are not Confronted with Humiliation

Investigating the Prophet's treatment of others confirms that he was compassionate, kind and never insulting. He set these rules for all humanity. Most of his sayings confirms building peaceful relationships based in mercy and compassion, both with his companions and with people with whom there was disagreement. For instance, he explained that "*The [true] Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand other Muslims are safe.*" (Bukhari and Muslim, 2009).

If a man made a mistake in performing a task, the Prophet did not focus on the mistake and humiliate the person for that mistake; instead, he used to praise the virtue and the good characteristics of the person and only imply the mistake, without confronting him directly. For instance, he would say, "*What is wrong with the people who do such and such?*" and not criticize. Also, Anas bin Malik, the Prophet's servant, reported that he served the Prophet for ten years, and the Prophet never even said to him, "Uff," a word that expresses irritation, also he never said harshly "Why did you do that?" or "Why did you not do that?"

In another incident, a man came to the Prophet asking him for advice. The Prophet answered "Do not get angry," and repeated this phrase three times (Bukhari, 2009). In addition, the Prophet cautioned people when he said: "Do not express joy at your brother's misfortune or else Allah will pardon him for it and test you with it" (Al-Maymûn and Bar-Asher 2012).

Tabarani narrated that the Prophet asked his companions "Do you know what will cause you to have high walled palaces in Paradise and will cause you to be raised by God?" When they replied in the negative, he said "To be forgiving and to control yourself in the face of provocation..." (Tabarani, 923).

Listening Attentively to Complaints

Listening is essential for successful leadership. It denotes consideration for the speakers. Prophet Muhammad showed interest in the speakers' words and questions. Due to this, some of the disbelievers mocked him, calling him 'Udon' which means a person who listens to everything. This issue is discussed in the Quran, "...and among them are men who hurt the Prophet and say, 'He is (lending his) ear (to every news).'"

Say "He listens to what is best for you; he believes in Allah; has faith in the believers; and is a mercy to those of you who believe." (Quran: 10).

Associates may confront difficulties or problems in trying to carry out a task; accordingly, they appreciate leaders who listen attentively to their concerns and provide direction. The Prophet's biography demonstrates that he was a most attentive listener who never interrupted or stopped a speaker, no matter who it was. He listened actively, not only to the Muslims, but also the disbelievers. The dialogue with Abul-Walid demonstrated the Prophet's attentive listening. When Abul-Walid was delegated by Quraish, the disbelievers, to advise the Prophet to stop spreading his message of Islam, Abul-Walid told the Prophet "... you are distinguished by your qualities; yet you have sown discord among our people and cast dissension in our families; you denounced our gods and goddesses and you charge our ancestors with impiety. Now we have come to make a proposition to you, and I ask you to think well before you reject it." The Prophet replied "I am listening to you, Abul-Walid," Then Abul-Walid kept urging the Prophet to stop spreading the message of Islam, while the Prophet was listening carefully, saying frequently "I'm listening, Abul-Walid."

Sequential Delegation

Some incidents from the Prophet's life indicated that in some cases he appointed more than one person to be in charge of tasks in case the first person failed to accomplish them, particularly when the tasks were urgent or sensitive and error was unaffordable. In the Battle of Mu'tah, he delegated three companions to be responsible for the battle and hold the white flag, a sign of victory in battle. He said that Zaid bin Harithah is the leader, then if he were martyred, then Ja'far bin Abi Talib, lastly if he were martyred then Abdullah bin Rawahah was to be in charge. This strategy gave a road map to those in charge of tasks to resolve sudden difficulties that might emerge without hesitation or wasting time.

Using Influential Power

The Prophet's influential power allowed him to transform the ancient Arabs' miserable lifestyle to a purposeful life. He instilled in his companions the conviction that both delegating responsibilities and accepting tasks delegated by a leader are honorable acts, unlike running away from one's responsibilities. An investigation of the Prophet's approaches to delegation reveals that throughout his life, he never abused power in giving responsibilities to others. Rather he created a sense of initiative in others, so they were keen to be appointed for tasks. For instance, his companions Abu Bakr and Omar used to compete to be appointed by the Prophet to do tasks. Omar once said to Abu Bakr, "All the *Caliphas*, the following companions, are tired after you" (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1979). Omar's saying indicated that because of Abu Bakr's initiative to be appointed by the Prophet to perform tasks, all the other companions were tired of trying to compete with him to be appointed.

Trusting, not Micromanaging

The Prophet gave others the benefit of the doubt. Many verses in the Quran and many of the Prophet's saying emphasize trust in communicating with one another. "O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some

assumption is sin. And do not spy on or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful" (Quran: 12). This verse demonstrates that spying and investigating others are not permitted. Accordingly, trusting people is confirmed and not trusting others is forbidden in Islam.

The Prophet demonstrated confidence and trust in others that they will fulfill the delegated task. The sense of appreciation inspires others to reach their potential. Expressing appreciation and showing trust take different forms in the Prophet's interaction with his people. He gave them credit, listened to their concerns and appreciated their work. In addition, the Prophet did not follow up frequently on the delegated tasks in away that decreased trust. After delegating the Prophet reinforced the sense of trust by giving full authority to the person to perform the task on his own, without irritating them by frequent follow-up.

Giving Authority Along with Responsibility

Giving responsibilities without adequate authority is not conducive to effective delegation. Assigning responsibilities necessitates granting sufficient authority to allow the task to be performed appropriately. For instance, the Prophet taught his companions that whenever he appointed a task to anyone, those around should follow this person as they would follow the Prophet. He clarified this, saying "Whoever obeys me, obeys Allah, and whoever disobeys me, disobeys Allah. Whoever obeys my governor (the person who is delegated to perform a task), he has obeyed me, and whoever disobeys my governor, he has disobeyed me" (Sunan an-Nasa'i, 45). In this saying the Prophet confirmed that when a person is appointed for a task, they are granted the right to be obeyed and listened to by others as they follow the main leader. Giving this authority allows subordinates to accomplish the responsibilities assigned to them without being confronted with disobedience.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that the Prophet's pattern of leadership is influential, focusing on people's growth. His leadership style implied working to fulfill others' interests rather than pursuing dominance over them. His leadership suggests that leadership in itself is not about attaining position or a title of authority. His approach to leadership is by leading for the common good of all. He prioritized and served the needs of everyone. He listened, empathized, healed, settled, rehabilitated and persuaded. He provided care and appreciation to every human being. He shared his people's hardships and labor. Having done that, he exemplified a universal principle of good leadership (Adair, 2010). Not only human beings had the privilege of his care, but also inanimate beings received his consideration, as the Prophet valued the environment and its protection for future generations. The uniqueness of the Prophet is in what he said, how he acted, what he liked and disliked, in the way he treated children, old and young, slaves and free, rich and poor, enemy and beloved (As-Siba'ie, 2005). Accounts of Prophets Muhammad's life make his biography a valuable source for today's leaders who want to grasp the Prophet's spirit of changing and advancing his people. Before the emergence of the Prophet, the ancient Arabs did not delegate tasks or share responsibilities. The tribe's chief was the one with absolute

authority. However, the message of Prophet Muhammad spread a decent way of living and communicating. Prophet Muhammad's biography, sayings and teachings provides practical methods and descriptions which can be a source of inspiration for leaders who aspire to lead effectively. Focusing on the act of delegation, the Prophet's biography demonstrated that he used different approaches for delegation, such as using words, body language or indirect speech. There was diversity not only in the words he used, but also in the art of understanding others and selecting the appropriate approach to communicate with them. Furthermore, the Prophet delegated tasks as a way of developing and supporting others, not as opportunities to get rid of responsibilities.

People might be reluctant to achieve a targeted task, or they might lose motivation in a workplace. A leader has a significant role in reinforcing the reasons for working. Accordingly, before delegating tasks, the purpose of achieving it has to be fully realized by the performers. A leader should not merely explain the reason for doing the task, but also how to approach it, using non-verbal skills if needed to enhance the meaning of words. Having said that, the Prophet has provided clear pictures of how he motivates, explains tasks and uses various approaches to express how to perform various tasks. In addition, clarifying the reasons for doing a task and developing trustful relationships are more powerful motivations, unlike the use of force. Cultivating a culture of openness and trust creates a climate of mutual respect, unlike an atmosphere of power, force and coercion. When workers are fearful they are less effective. This point was apparent in the Prophet's method of delegation. He did not delegate tasks before having a precise understanding of others and matching the task to the person's qualifications and strengths. This is clear when he gave responsibilities to his companion with whom he had a long relationship. In addition, when the tasks are suitable and interest the person, they retain their attention and perform them enthusiastically, for example when the Prophet appointed his companion Abu Bakr to lead the Muslim prayers. Not only assigning appropriate tasks, but also using complimentary titles and stimulating a sense of competition increases people's keenness to perform tasks, such as when the Prophet asked "Is there among us a knight who can guard us tonight?" In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, satisfying the needs of self-esteem can influence behaviors.

Delegating tasks requires envisioning the possible outcomes and considering what might emerge. The Prophet had foresight of what the person in charge of a task might encounter; thus, he gave further details to combat them. The incident when the Prophet explained to Muaz the possible difficulties when he was going to Yemen to present the message of Islam, confirms the importance of foreseeing the possible results. In addition, foresight assists the leader to appoint more than one person in sequence if the tasks were significant and there was a danger that one of the people in charge of the task might be unable to complete it. This was clear in the case of the battle of Mu'tah when the Prophet assigned three leaders in sequence. Disobedience and insubordination from others may present challenges to those responsible for tasks. The Prophet recognized these difficulties and confirmed that people should obey the delegated person as they would obey the main leader.

In this way, he demonstrated that responsibility must be associated with commensurate authority.

People are not fault-free; they may fail to perform the delegated tasks accurately or indeed at all. Using an appropriate approach for confronting any mistakes can have a positive effect without hurting the relationship. If a person senses feelings of condemnation, they become defensive and this damages the relationship. Hence, when a leader gives advice or direction; it is important to ensure a positive outcome while providing constructive criticism. In Quran, *Allah* confirmed, "The believers, men and women, are *Auliya* (supporters) of one another" (Quran, 9:71). Genuine caring for one another creates pleasant relationships and a good working environment.

CONCLUSION

Building strong shoulders to rely on does not emerge without practicing. Also establishing effective leadership does not exist without an appropriate delegation. Since leaders cannot singlehandedly manage all the responsibilities they have, and besides they are expected to develop and reinforce their subordinates, delegation is an essential tool for developing others and meeting the leaders' responsibilities. However, delegation may not provide the hoped-for benefits if it is not used effectively. Therefore, this qualitative inquiry was conducted to analyze Prophet Muhammad's life to identify the techniques he used to assign responsibilities.

One benefit of delegation is that it is an element of increasing the sense of trust and responsibilities. The Prophet realized the importance of this element; thus, he assigned tasks that suit and develop different personalities. Appreciating others, listening to them, motivating them and raising the sense of self-actualization are other aspects of the Prophet's delegation.

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