

## Integrating the Element of Al-Qalb in the Institutional Leadership Competencies Framework: A Content Validity Analysis

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### Abstract

Drawing upon the Higher Education Leadership Academy Model, *a priori* proposition was made that *Al-Qalb* is one of the relevant dimensions in the institutional leadership competencies in higher education institutions. The objective of this study is to examine the content validity of *Al-Qalb* as one of the dimensions to be incorporated in the institutional leadership competencies framework and measure an analysis of previous literatures related to leadership competencies in the higher education institutions context was carried out to identify and examine relevant attributes in explaining and understanding the construct. The results provide adequate evidence of content validity of *Al-Qalb* as one of the leadership competencies items based on content validity index (CVI) analysis. This suggests the usability and content validity of the items of *Al-Qalb*, as one of the leadership competencies elements in the Malaysian higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** Leadership competencies; Institutional leadership; Al-qalb; Content validity; Higher education institutions; Malaysia.



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### 1. Introduction

In today's competitive and dynamic business environment, the success or failure of an organization is often highly influenced by the presence of effective leaders with a strategic perspective. Leadership is an integral feature that organizations be dependent on in order to translate goals and objectives into accomplishments. According to Bass (1990), leadership is defined as an interaction between members of a group. Leaders are agents of change; persons whose acts affect other people's acts affect them. Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group. Additionally, defined leadership as a process where the leader and followers engage in reciprocal influence to achieve a shared purpose. It is all about getting people to work together to make things happen that might not otherwise occur, or to prevent things from happening that would ordinarily take place. Leaders are generally responsible for overall organizational effectiveness as measured by production, efficiency, quality, flexibility, satisfaction, competitiveness and organizational development. In similar defined leadership as a process of influence between a leader and his followers to attain group, organizational and societal goals. Given its importance, studies have been conducted to examine the fundamental attributes and characteristics of an effective leader.

Leadership competencies, on the other hand, are leadership skills, knowledge, abilities, and behaviors that contribute to superior performance. Given the importance, essential leadership competencies and global competencies have been defined by various researchers. However, external and internal forces in the dynamic business environment demand future business trends and strategy to drive the development of new leadership competencies. While some leadership competencies are homogenous in all types of businesses, an organization should also define what leadership attributes that are distinctive to a particular organization or institution in order to create competitive advantage.

According to (Alban-Metcalfe and Alimo-Metcalfe, 2013; Alban-Metcalfe *et al.*, 2009), in the late 1970s and early 1980s the emergence of leadership had been recognized as a fundamental in handling the constant change. Having great leaders is considered very crucial in ensuring successful organization. Great leadership is required to have full packages of skills, knowledge, abilities, vision and mission, goals desire, courage, and intelligence in order to drive the organization towards success. Competency is a salient aspect that should be possessed by leaders in

response to the constant demands and forces due to rapid change of technology, economic and market forces, as well as customer requirement taking place across the globe.

Scholars have defined the term competency in several ways. Competency is defined as characteristics, which are demonstrated by an individual in achieving his or her desired performance goal. This element involves behavior and necessary traits (Abraham *et al.*, 2001), skills, abilities, cognitive intelligence, social intelligence (Boyatzis, 2011), knowledge, skills, self-image, social motives, feeling and acting (Dubois *et al.*, 2004), individual with effective performance on the job (Klemp, 1980), as well as “core elements in a periodic table of human behavior” (Russ-Ef, 1995). It is crucial to note that the success of an organization depends heavily on the competencies of its leaders, specifically on how they manage daily organization activities, inspire others to perform, and strategize in achieving organizational mission and vision. (Abdul and Noor, 2016) stated that leadership has become a model that influences an ideal organizational members or society. Further, the shaping of noble personality in leaders is very important as this is the basis for bringing people to achieve desired results.

Alban-Metacalfe and Alimo-Metacalfe (2013) contended that leadership competency refers to leaders who have the ability to think on how to assess the organization in a way that is goal directed and to create specific features for developing processes and systems in the organization. They further added that leaders with these comprehensive characteristic are more inclined to help their subordinates to plan effectively and efficiently, in order to achieve the targeted goals. This is because competent leaders usually have higher cognitive skill and abilities to foresee immediate and future outcomes for their organization. Similarly, previous studies (Calhoun *et al.*, 2008) & Warden (2008); (New, 1996) defined leadership competencies as a “building block upon which best practice leadership selection, development, and performance management are constructed”. Most importantly, leadership competencies encompass the ability to understand both internal and external forces that may have impacted the functioning of organizations. Seemiller (2016) concurred that leadership is a competency that is very wide, yet there are many integral competencies that should be incorporated to fully comprehend the concept of successful and effective leadership. Among others are effective communication, critical evaluation, and strategic visioning. It is also important that leadership competencies need to be demonstrated in order to gauge the level of effectiveness and efficiency.

Seemiller (2016) noted that leadership competencies play a massive role across various industries, including the higher education sector. The role of leadership in the higher education institutions is crucial due to the fact that leaders play the integral role in developing and sustaining the competitiveness of the higher education institutions. Hence, universities leaders are posed with various unique challenges. This is attributed to the fact that the nature of leadership in higher education institutions also is ambiguous and constantly contested at different levels. According to Petrov (2006), leaders in higher education institutions are facing organizational complexity of the university whereby they need to focus on multiple goals while preserving the traditional values. Spendlove (2007), who studied on the needed competencies among effective leadership in higher education, pointed out that most of the prior studies of leadership development have moved towards identifying the leadership competencies by examining knowledge, skills, abilities and behavior of individuals. This finding was drawn upon an interview session with 10 Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) in English universities. Among the main highlights of the study are the key competencies for leadership, namely coaching and mentoring (Spendlove, 2007). Also, from the interview by Spendlove (2007), it was noted that the most common attributes for effective university leadership were honesty, openness, the need to consult others, negotiation and persuasiveness, ability to listen, ability to think strategically and broadly, and ability to get engage with others (Spendlove, 2007). Additionally, (Spendlove, 2007) also has highlighted that reputation and respect, experience, and people skills or human aspects are among the key competencies required for leaders in higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions nowadays are experiencing a rapidly changing environment with various shift in every aspects. Higher education institutions in Malaysia are not spared from facing the similar challenges, particularly in fulfilling the aspiration to achieve world standards of excellence. The function of leaders in any higher education institutions is crucial as their role is not only to meet the respective higher education institution’ objectives, but most importantly their role has extended to attaining the mission of the nation at large. In line with this, Higher Education Leadership Academy (AKEPT), which plays the major role in leadership development in higher education institutions in Malaysia, has been entrusted by the Ministry to design succession planning and to develop a pool of highly potential candidates to be appointed as higher education institutions’ topguns in the years to come. One distinct feature of leadership competencies highlighted by AKEPT is leadership based on *Qalb*, which is purported to be the critical competency of leaders in higher education institutions in Malaysia. Despite the various conceptualization of *Al-Qalb* put forward in the literature, it is worthy to note that there is lack of empirical investigations conducted to date on the *Al-Qalb* measure. Hence, there is a need to assess the *Al-Qalb* items in terms of its validity and utility, particularly in the higher education institutions context. In light of this, we aim to examine the concept of *Al-Qalb*, to develop items relevant to its definition, and to assess the content validity of the *Al-Qalb* items based on content validity index (CVI) analysis as suggested.

## 2. The Underlying Concept of *Al-Qalb* and Its relevance to the Leadership Competencies construct

The word *Al-Qalb* originated from the Arabic word, which means “heart” (Abdul Kamil & Noor Shakirah, 2016). According to Agustiar (2015), individuals who embrace *Al-Qalb* as their guideline in life would continuously live in a way to improve the quality of themselves. A study by Elmi and Zainab (2015) found that, based on the

Islamic perspective, *Al-Qalb* is one of the domains of the spiritual intelligence. *Al-Qalb* functions for human to think in order to develop knowledge, help people to carry caliphate duties properly and also assist people to feel and live in order to improve and enhance the quality of those individuals (Agustiar, 2015). Specifically, *Al-Qalb* has been divided into two senses, which are known as *Al-Qalb* spiritual and *Al-Qalb* physical (Elmi and Zainab, 2015). *Al-Qalb* spiritual focuses on the subtle elements i.e. divine and rūhaniyyah, also known as the spiritual heart, which is capable of obtaining knowledge and is responsible for all the commands and prohibitions of Allah. *Al-Qalb* physical revolves around the soul of the flesh on the left side of the chest with special meaning (be physical), in which a black hole containing blood in Elmi and Zainab (2015). This serves as a source of the spirit, which also exists in the animal and in the dead.

In similar vein, Abdul and Noor (2016) pointed out that heart can be referred into two form which are physical heart and the heart with the abstract that known as feeling. Feeling are the mental association that most time decide well over evil or vice versa (Abdul and Noor, 2016). In similar vein, a study by as cited in Abdul and Noor (2016), distinguished the meaning of *Al-qalb* into two notions, which are called the carnal heart that refers to the physical heart-shaped piece of tender meat, which has cavities where blood is flowing and people on the left chest. The second notion is called as fine heart which refer to a secret spiritual heart shaped fine and nature *rabbaniyyah* and *ruhaniyyah*.

In the context of the Malaysian higher education institutions, the concept of *Al-Qalb* has been introduced as an additional element required to enhance the competencies among the institutional leaders. According to Malaysian Higher Education Leadership Academy or AKEPT Program Book (2017), *Al-Qalb* as a leadership guided to influence leader's behavior, thought, actions, feelings, and emotion. The *Al-Qalb* is grounded in both the Rukun Negara and National Education Philosophy that inspires a concept of "balanced and harmonious human being". This refers to those who firmly believe in and devoted to God, and of service to society (AKEPT Program Book, 2017). It embeds four principal virtues of wisdom, justice, courage and temperance. As highlighted by Mohd Rushdan Mohd Jailani, a Deputy Director of AKEPT, leaders are the person who need to establish a harmonious relationship with their own self, with others and with God or a higher power (Leader, 2016). This is because it is one of the essential universal principles that always been promoted by all religions in the world (Leader, 2016). The introducing of *Qalb* is to accentuate the human's heart as the central pass of human being in the process of formulation of human thought, actions, behavior, feeling and emotions (Leader, 2016). He also added that, having *Qalb* as a guide is the source of good value for leadership where it can be the medium to help to preserve high moral conduct, integrity, humility, respecting others, and reaching a full humanness. In fact, history has proven that it is instrumental that all leaders develop their foundation, whether they establish cities or civilization, all those aspects are derived from their inner feeling, which can be gained from an inspired and peaceful *Qalb* or "heart" (Leader, 2016).

Based on the interview with former member of AKEPT, Ismi Arif Ismail mentioned that *Qalb* based leadership would bring people back to the "Ihsan" concept, where the concept of "Ihsan" brings in it "Itqan" construct like perfection, integrity, and ethical. Furthermore, *Qalb* also incorporates the element of *silaturahmi* as in "Hablumillah" (i.e. relationship with our creator) and "Hablumanas" (i.e. relationship with other human beings), such as being mindful, having mutual respect, and celebrating diversity in the spirit of collegiality across disciplines and levels, which goes back to the heart and wisdom of the leaders (I. A. Ismail, personal communication, September 17, 2017). He also stressed that the heart and the wisdom in the *Qalb* of the leaders make up the intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual competencies of leaders. This is because the wise heart or *Qalb* which undergoes continuous purification will nurture a group of wisdom leaders who decide and act wisely in their day to day operation professionally and personally, which cut across academic, research and innovation, student development as well as industry and community engagement locally and globally (I. A. Ismail, personal communication, September 17, 2017).

### 3. Methodology

To develop the items for *Al-Qalb* construct, we referred to the Higher Education Leadership Academy Model (AKEPT Program Book, 2017). The model introduced *Al-Qalb* as one of the characteristics guidelines for leadership competencies in higher education institutions. We gathered adequate sources on the operational definitions of *Al-Qalb*, which embeds four principal virtues of wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance. To gain more relevant outputs, we also studied previous literatures (Alban-Metacalfe and Alimo-Metacalfe, 2013; Simonet and Tett, 2012; Smith and Wolverson, 2010; Spendlove, 2007; Tubb and Schulz, 2006) connected to the leadership competencies and leadership competencies in higher education institutions context in order to get gain a clearer insight and ideas for the construct to be defined and developed. Further, based on both reviewed of previous literatures and the model of Higher Education Leadership Academy, we had identified several traits of *Al-Qalb* that are related to leadership competencies in higher education institutions. Following this, we developed the items of *Al-Qalb* based on the traits that have been identified earlier.

According to, in developing a new scale, it is important for researchers to provide extensive information about the scale's reliability and validity. Hence, to ensure the *Al-Qalb* has an appropriate sample of items, we gauge the construct by conducting the content validity analysis. Self-administered questionnaire consists with 32 items were distributed to three (3) institutional leaders who have served at least for a year in higher education institutions. According to items can be rated on a 3 or 5-points ordinal scale, but she also advocated the use of 4-point rating scale in order to avoid having a neutral and ambivalent midpoint. Hence, all the items of *Al-Qalb* were rated based on 4 ordinal points, namely 1= Not Relevant, 2= Somewhat Relevant, 3= Quite Relevant, 4= Highly Relevant. To calculate the relevancy of each of the items, we computed the item level content validity index or I-CVI as the

number of respondents giving their rating of either 3 or 4, and divided by the number of respondents (Polit and Owen, 2007).

#### 4. Findings

In this study, items on *Al-Qalb* were gathered through literature reviews that are related to the aforesaid concept. Based on the definition and scrutiny of the concept, a total of 32 items were extracted to measure the *Al-Qalb* construct. The construct integrates four principal virtues, namely wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance.

According to, content validity analysis is important to provide extensive information on the scale validity when new measures are developed. It is also imperative to measure the extent to which an instrument has an appropriate sample of items for the construct being measured. In parallel fashion, pointed out that the content validity analysis helps to measure whether the inclusion on the tool perfectly adequate to represent domain of content addressed by the instrument.

Table 1 shows the ratings of relevance on the 32-items scale from three experts. The scale content validity index or S-CVI, according to Polit and Owen (2007) can be measured by computing the I-CVI of each item on the scale. This is followed by the calculation of the average of I-CVI across items. Based on the analyses, the S-CVI value gathered was 0.59, whereby all the three experts agreed that 19 items of *Al-Qalb* were relevant (I-CVI=1.00), but had divergent opinions on other 13 items which had I-CVI of 0.33 and 0.67. Averaging across the 32 items of I-CVIs, the S-CVI/Ave yields a value of 0.84. Furthermore, the average proportion relevant among the three experts was 0.81.

According to Polit and Owen (2007), with an I-CVI of .78 or higher for three or more experts could be considered evidence of good content validity. Given I-CVI for the *Al-Qalb* items was 0.84, the measurement can be considered to have a good content validity.

**Table-1.**Fictitious Ratings on 32 items Scale of *Al-Qalb* Construct by Three Experts: Items Rated 3 or 4 on 4-point Relevant Scale

Items	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert in Agreement	Item CVI
1. Achievement Oriented	✓	✓	—	2	.67
2. Courage	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
3. Customer oriented	—	✓	—	1	.33
4. Emotional intelligence	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
5. Empathy	—	✓	✓	2	.67
6. Focused	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
7. Generosity	—	✓	✓	2	.67
8. Hard work	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
9. Honesty	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
10. Humility	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
11. Integrity	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
12. Interpersonal skills	—	✓	—	1	.33
13. Justice	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
14. Kindness	—	✓	✓	2	.67
15. Knowledgeable	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
16. Love	—	✓	✓	2	.67
17. Mindfulness	✓	✓	✓	3	.33
18. Patient	—	✓	✓	2	.67
19. Personal effectiveness	—	✓	✓	2	.67
20. Reflective skills	✓	✓	—	2	.67
21. Result driven	✓	✓	—	2	.67
22. Self-management	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
23. Self-awareness	—	✓	✓	2	.67
24. Self-reflection	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
25. Showing genuine concern	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
26. Stakeholders awareness	—	✓	—	1	.33
27. Temperance	—	✓	✓	2	.67
28. Tolerance	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
29. Trust	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
30. Value	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
31. Wisdom	✓	✓	✓	3	1.00
				<b>Average I-CVI =</b>	<b>.84</b>
<b>Proportion relevant</b>	<b>.66</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>.81</b>		

*I-CVI*, item-level content validity index; *scale-level content validity, universal agreement method (S-CVI/UA)* = .59; *scale-level content validity index, averaging method (I-CVI/Ave)* = .84; *average proportion of items judged relevant across the three experts* = .81.



## 5. Discussions, Implications, and Conclusion

In addition to performing well in terms of computation ease, understandability, and its provision of both item- and scale-level information, the CVI is an index that provides crucial information for researchers in developing a scale. It reflects the extent to which there is a consensus among experts about the relevance of the items to the understudied construct (Polit and Owen, 2007). The evidence of good content validity index or CVI was attributable to the rigor assessment of content validity of the *Al-Qalb* measure. Prior to using the instrument for data collection purpose, we scrutinized all of the items so that content validity was established, meaning that each item really measures the underlying latent factor that it was purported to measure. This is followed by the decentralization process, whereby items that were too vague were changed to suit the higher education institution setting. Given detailed process undertaken to ensure content validity of the instrument, the findings in this study provided substantial evidence of CVI on the measure of *Al-Qalb*.

The high value of CVI for *Al-Qalb* items suggests that the construct was well-operationalized, which validly represents of the underlying construct, i.e. *Al-Qalb*. This also means that the construct specifications or directions to the experts were adequate, in which the experts were not biased or erratic in assessing the items. In fact, all of the experts involved were sufficiently proficient in the aspect of *Al-Qalb* and leadership competencies. This implies that, in the initial stage of the content validation process, we managed to develop good items and construct specifications and most importantly we managed to select a strong panel of experts.

Another plausible reason for the results was due to demographic aspects of the respondents, in terms of organizational tenure and job tenure. All of the institutional leaders, who participated in the study have served for at least a year in their current position and respective higher education institutions. With adequate length of service, they would have developed clear understanding on the roles and responsibilities of institutional leaders. They are more cognizant of why these attributes are important and relevant for institutional leaders to be effective in higher education institution in Malaysia. Therefore, they were able to respond to all items in the *Al-Qalb* measure.

One important theoretical implication of this study would be in terms of content validation of the *Al-Qalb* items. Content validation could be of substantial value to the theoretical domain in the respective field. Further, content validation is deemed crucial to ensure more meaningful and truthful results could be elicited from a research. Given the limited empirical scrutiny on content validation for leadership competencies model in the Malaysian higher education institution context, we took a decidedly different approach by providing the evidence of content validity of the *Al-Qalb* scale, as one of the dimension in institutional leadership competencies framework. Prior to assessing the content validity of the instrument, each item has gone through decentralization process to enhance its utility in the Malaysian context, specifically higher education institutions. The rigor process and procedure of decentering were conducted based on work. This stage is crucial to ascertain the suitability of all items in the Malaysian higher education institutions context. More importantly, this particular process is useful to ensure content validity of the instrument scrutinized in this study. Following this, the content validation procedures through content validity index analysis, as suggested was carried out.

Taken together, this study discussed the importance of the *Al-Qalb* concept in the context of institutional leadership competencies in higher education institutions. Most importantly, based on the content validity index result, the current research provides full support for *Al-Qalb*, to be integrated as the new institutional leadership competencies dimension for higher education institutions context in Malaysia.

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