# Embracing Basics: A Grounded Theory of Organisational Leadership in Islamic Organisation within a Western Society

Author

Faris, Nezar

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**Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance (KEL)**
**National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies (NCEIS)**
**Griffith Graduate Research School**
**Griffith Business School**

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# Doctor of Philosophy

by

**Nezar Faris**

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# Embracing basics: A grounded theory of organisational leadership in Islamic organisation within a Western Society

**Nezar Faris**
B.S (Eng)
Master of (Eng Management)

Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance (KEL)
National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies Australia (NCEIS)
Griffith Graduate Research School
Griffith Business School
Griffith University
Brisbane, Australia

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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# Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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**Nezar Faris**

September 2013

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# Abstract

This research was undertaken to fill a gap in the literature by addressing the issue of leadership process within an Islamic organisation operating in a Western context. With a few notable exceptions, leadership scholars have largely avoided the distinctive leadership dynamics within Islamic groups and organisations.

This research has three primary aims: First, to generate a theory of leadership process within an Australian Islamic organisational context. Second, to generate better understanding of the interactions between the dynamics of Islamic leadership principles and Western leadership perspectives. Third, to generate a conceptual model that fits the specific features of the leadership process in this substantive setting.

To fulfil the aim, the research applies grounded theory methodology. This thesis triangulates multiple data sources to inform about the essence of the leadership process. The data sources include interviews, observations and document analysis. The analysis of this multi-sourced data generates a processual theory of leadership. It derives a contextualised theory of leadership that explains the manifestation of leadership process within a substantive setting. The grounded theory and the basic social process is 'Embracing Basics'.

Embracing Basics is the process by which leaders infuse leading and following at a personal level, leading level, and organising level to reconcile, influence and bring about change in the problematic processes of leadership and in a problematic context. Embracing Basics illustrates the grounded theory which explains the phenomenon under investigation. The grounded theory of Embracing Basics explains the relationship of the three near-core categories of reconciling problems, sensemaking and accommodating complexity.

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# Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| ABS | Australian Bureau of Statistics |
| AFIC | Australian Federation of Islamic Councils |
| AMARAH | Australian Muslim Advocates for the Rights of all Humanity |
| AMF | Australian Multicultural Foundation |
| ANIC | Australian National Imams Council |
| AYG | Al-Nisa Youth Group |
| CIC | Canberra Islamic Centre |
| DEWR | Department of Employment and Workplace Relations |
| DIAC | Department of Immigration and Citizenship |
| FAIR | Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations |
| ICN | Islamic Council of New South Wales |
| ICQ | Islamic Council of Queensland |
| ICS | Islamic Council of South Australia |
| ICV | Islamic Council of Victoria |
| ICW | Islamic Council of Western Australia |
| IISCA | Islamic Information & Support Centre of Australia |
| IWAQ | Islamic Women's Association of Queensland |
| IWWCV | Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria |
| MBN | Muslim Business Network |
| MCF | Muslim Charitable foundation |
| MCRG | Muslim Community Reference Group |
| MWNNA | Muslim Women's National Network of Australia |

# Chapter 1 Introduction

*"Effective leadership is one in which the leader's behaviour and the exercise of the leadership influence process are consistent with ethical and moral values"* (Kanungo and Mendonca, 1998: 133).

## 1.1 Introduction

This research is concerned with examining the process of leadership and is aimed at generating a grounded theory to explain the influence of the social process of leadership. The theory developed is a substantive theory of the leadership process and is situated in an Islamic setting within a predominantly "Western" context in Australia. The substantive theory in this study will inform a core leadership process as a basic social process and other related major categories. This theory fits Tyson's (1998) and Bacharach (1989: 496) assessment as "a statement of relations among concepts within a set of boundary assumptions and constraints".

This chapter deals with the background of the problem, a statement of the research problem, its purpose, research question, objectives and the justification for the study. It continues with an overview of the methodology, delimitation, assumptions, research bias and operational definitions of key terms. The chapter concludes by expanding upon the chapters' structure for the rest of the thesis.

## 1.2 Background of the problem

The literature on leadership is interesting inasmuch as it is intriguing. Leadership has been high on the list of topics of debate for thousands of years, but it is only in the twentieth century that researchers have analysed it thoroughly (Yukl, 2006). For more than 75 years, scholars and practitioners have focused on developing a comprehensive leadership theory and model that is relevant to the business environment in a Western context (Yukl, 2006).

Until now, leadership has been framed from a predominantly American-Western ethnocentric leadership theoretical perspective (Meng et al., 2003; Northouse, 2012). Despite much talk about leadership globally, the reality is that little is known of how leadership is enacted in the Australasian context. At the same time, most of the theory and case studies in leadership is drawn from US-centric models (Dalglish and Miller, 2010). Yukl (2006) contends that the vast majority of leadership research has been conducted in the context of "Western" culture. The USA is the source of most theorising about leadership and management (Brewster and Larsen, 2003). Bryman (2004), in his review of qualitative research on leadership, emphasised that the vast majority of leadership studies do indeed originate from North America.

Holt and Muczyk (2008) believe that the time has come to start debating the leadership theory in a more global context. Walumbwa et al. (2007) argue that leadership process should be aligned with cultural demands. The Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) study (Dorfman et al., 2004), which is considered to be the most comprehensive cross-cultural research, finds that while certain leadership practices are universally accepted, others are universally rejected, and yet others are culturally contingent. Dalglish and Miller (2010) argue for a much more representative description and understanding of leadership, and a move beyond the American narratives.

## 1.3 Statement of the research problem

The research problem is three-fold. First, research associated with the leadership process in Australian Islamic organisations has not yet been tested empirically. The present research attempts to resolve that problem by testing it qualitatively within the substantive context of Muslim organisations in Australia, commencing from the early twenty-first century. The second aspect of the research problem is that leadership theory from an Islamic perspective in Western societies has not been researched in any depth. This research attempts to resolve this apparent shortfall. The third aspect of the research problem is that the dynamics of Western leadership theory in explaining the situation in the Islamic organisations has not yet been

researched. This research also attempts to commence the process of resolving this particular shortfall.

## 1.4 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to generate a theory of leadership process within an Australian Islamic organisational context. A related purpose is to improve our understanding of leadership in the Islamic organisations that exist within predominantly Western societies.

## 1.5 Research question

The research question addresses the purpose of the present investigation:

RQ1 How does the process of leadership function within an Australian Islamic organisational context?

## 1.6 Research objectives related to research questions

The following research objectives relate to the research question:

1 To generate a theory of leadership process relevant to the particular setting of Islamic organisations operating in a Western context (Australia).

2 To address the interaction between the dynamics of Islamic leadership principles and the Western leadership perspective and explore how the Islamic perspective may help us to understand the dynamics of leadership within this context.

3 To generate a conceptual model that fits the specific features of the leadership process in this substantive setting.

## 1.7 Justification of the study

The present research is justified for the following reasons. First, the theoretical aspects of the Islamic principles of leadership, and personalities of traditional Muslim leaders, have been researched and some scholarly attention has been

devoted to leadership in Islamic countries (Abbasi, 2011; Adair, 2010; āmidī, 1998; Bangash, 2001; Haykal, 1994; Mottahedeh, 2001) but not within Western contexts. Research into organisational leadership from an Islamic perspective is still scarce, and most of the current research on Islamic organisations is in its infancy (Ali, 2005). What is obvious is that little research has been conducted that seeks to understand the manifestation of leadership in Islamic organisations around the world, and very little research is centred on leadership in Islamic organisations within Western societies. Consequently, an understanding of leadership of, and within, Muslim organisations existing within majority non-Muslim societies (as well as in Muslim societies) is much needed.

With a few notable exceptions, studies into leadership have largely eschewed the distinctive leadership dynamics within Islamic groups and organisations. Apart from a handful of general works, little has been written about this issue. Beekun and Badawi (1999a; 1999b) argue the case for an understanding of the leadership process *in* Islam and leadership *from* an Islamic perspective. Two other dissertations concerning leadership in American Islamic schools from an educational perspective have been written recently (Aabed, 2006; Elsegeiny, 2005), and a few scattered fragmentary references exist in studies which present a general form of discussion (Ali, 2005, 2009; Ather and Sobhani, 2009; Izzatī, 1979; Khaliq and Ogunsola, 2011; Weir, 2004). Accordingly, current research on leadership in Islamic organisations operating in Western societies is in its infancy. This study will undertake to fill a gap in the literature by addressing the issue of leadership within an Islamic organisation from an Islamic perspective. Another real contribution that this study makes is a better understanding of organisations whose culture is most strongly aligned, not with a dominant culture, but with a 'minority' culture within Australia. This study intends to fill this gap in the intellectual discourse.

Secondly**,** we know a great deal about leadership in Western societies through much empirical research, and we know a great deal about leadership from a theoretical Islamic perspective. Unfortunately, we know very little empirically about leadership of Islamic organisations in general, and Australian Islamic organisations in

particular. This project will undertake the empirical studies necessary to research leadership within Australian Islamic organisations.

Thirdly**,** as noted above, the personalities of Muslim leaders have been researched without any notion of the social process of leadership. Leadership is a social influence process (Bass, 1998; Conger, 1998; Hunter et al., 2007; Parry, 1997, 1998, 1999; Rost, 1993; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Yukl, 2006). Accordingly, this research which is timely and significant investigates leadership as a social influence process.

Fourthly, this research targets a new context that not been studied thus far. Hence, the need for an exploratory study that is able to generate a theory rather than test hypotheses. The appropriate method for the applicability of this research is grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory emphasises new discoveries to generate theory in areas where little is already known, or to provide a fresh standpoint on existing knowledge about a particular social phenomenon (Goulding, 1999).

Finally, until recently, research in the field of leadership has been largely dominated by positivist approaches, with no emphasis on the context and process of leadership (Kempster and Parry, 2011). This research investigates the contextualised and the processual nature of leadership within a particular substantive setting through the lens of grounded theory. Grounded theory is a post-positivist approach that gives high emphasis to the context and the process of leadership.

## 1.8 Overview of the methodology

The overall research design is that of qualitative investigation. Creswell (2007) categorised the various qualitative methods into five approaches: narrative research, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory. The choice of method for this research is grounded theory. Grounded theory is the best method to answer the research question posed. Answering the “how” question is a fundamental part of theory generation (Parry, 1997). The four above-mentioned approaches of narrative research, phenomenology, ethnography and case study are concerned

largely with description of individuals or groups experience, perceptions, beliefs and culture (Bogdan and Taylor, 1984; Bryman, 1998; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2007; Embree, 1997; Platt, 1992; Yin, 2009), while grounded theory is concerned with theory generation (Glaser, 1992, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Parry (1997) contends that many qualitative studies of leadership are largely descriptive of people without theorising about the process of leadership. Parry (1998) also suggested that applying rigor to the grounded theory method will help to overcome the deficiencies in mainstream leadership research.

The fundamental techniques that constitute integral elements of the grounded theory method used in the current research are: concurrent data collection and analysis, constant comparison, theoretical sampling, theoretical saturation, development of properties, and theory generation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Before embarking on the investigation of the above mentioned techniques, a researcher cannot begin with a list of preconceived concepts, or a guiding theoretical framework, because emergence is the foundation of theory building (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 34).

Data analysis is comprised of three interrelated stages, open coding, axial coding and selective coding, as well as with theoretical sampling, constant comparison method, and theoretical sensitivity. Open coding helps to identify the early set of themes and categories based on all response data (Glaser, 1998; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) is instrumental in identifying the categories of importance and in exploring the relationship between categories. Selective coding is conducive to identifying the core-category or a central phenomenon and relating the core-category to other categories, filling in categories that need further clarification (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967) helps to engage in several repetitions of data gathering and analysis such that the emerging explanation is potentially valid and reliable. It also helps to gather data that is as rich and explanatory as possible, rather than simply accessing a potentially representative sample of a population. The constant comparison method is useful in maintaining close connection between codes, categories and the data, which in turn helps the emergence of theoretical

elaboration and categories (Glaser, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Theoretical sensitivity allows the development of a theory that is grounded, conceptually substantial, and well integrated (Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and "helps curb the potential bias from the researcher's background experiences and diminishes the risk of compromising the study through premature closure in favour of the researcher's pet theory" (Schreiber, 2001: 60).

This research triangulates data collection in generating reliable leadership research findings (Herman and Egri, 2002; Jick, 1979). Triangulation is the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon viewed from different investigative lenses (Denzin, 1978). Denzin (1978) has identified several types of triangulation methods that mix theories, methods and multiple data sources to strengthen the credibility and applicability of findings. He suggested the use of a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative data sources such as interviews, surveys, observations and organisational records in the triangulation process.

In this research, the use of triangulation will involve the convergence of multiple qualitative sources of data collection to examine the same essence of the research problem. The multiple sources include interviews, observations, organisational records and news articles. The research phenomenon in this study is the leadership process within the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils. This phenomenon will be under scrutiny by the use of several sources. First, interviews with leaders and followers will tease out details behind the leadership process. Second, participant and non-participant observations will detail what is going on behind the scenes. Third, organisational records and news articles will be sourced to corroborate and deepen information and understanding on leadership issues. The strength of this qualitative data triangulation lies in generating a core category that explains the phenomenon under investigation. By collecting the data from different sources, the richness of the data will be enhanced.

## 1.9 Delimitations

In the spirit of Perry's (1998) definition of delimitation as boundaries and elements within the researcher's control, I acknowledge the following delimitation:

1) Accessibility to organisations could be delimitated simply because the research is restricted to suitable organisations requiring an access permit.

2) The generalisation of the research findings is delimited because they were generated in an exploratory qualitative inquiry. Albeit the sample has been chosen from different organisations across Australia, however the results may not be generalised to different contexts due to the nature of the selected substantive context, and therefore the findings could be confined to that context. The basic social process generated in the current context could contribute to the understanding of the organisational leadership process among other settings, and can work adversely for different people in different contexts. The researcher is easily able to recognise the plausibility or otherwise of these findings among other contexts by insightful thoughts.

3) The difficulty of generalisation also stems from the boundary of this study which is the substantive setting of a minority organisational setting within a broader Western society. Therefore, the substantive theory generated by this empirical research is difficult to generalise across settings.

## 1.10 Assumptions and researcher bias

While acknowledging that this study is about theory generation, as opposed to theory testing of leadership, it is legitimate to state some fundamental issues about leadership which are widely accepted throughout the leadership literature. Stating the following assumptions does not pre-empt the findings of this research, rather it describes the factors to be integrated into the research.

- Leadership is not one action or an event, it is a process. Leadership is a journey of continuous actions, interactions, attitudes and behaviours over a long period of time (Hunter et al., 2007). Leadership is a dynamic and continuous process which involves a group of people with a leader or/and leaders. So it is the actions and reactions which take place between leaders and followers to achieve certain goals and objectives. Whether or not followers and leaders achieve something, leadership remains a process despite the positive or the negative outcomes. Defining leadership as a process shows that this process can happen between two parties and cannot be a one-way process. A leader cannot lead without interacting with the followers around him or her and followers may affect decisions taken by the leader.

- Leadership is not a position and holding a position does not make a person a leader. Although a great deal of the authority which leaders have in organisations comes from the positions they hold (Greenberg, 2011), considering leadership as a formal position without giving any attention to the discourse about, and meaning of leadership makes the word leadership meaningless. The above consideration gives rise to the one way relation of leadership, where the leader gives orders to the people who are lower in the organisational hierarchy.

- Leadership is about a life-long commitment to the betterment of followers and the organisation. With this clear sense of social responsibility, leaders

may find it easy to negotiate with followers to cooperate in achieving goals rather, than using autocratic means to do the job. When decisions result from wide consultation then that decision will be the followers decision as well as the leaders. A two way interaction allows for an agreement on following rather than doing something that followers feel what they are doing just to fulfil their duties.

- Leadership is about creating a positive influence that changes people's situation from one state to a better state. Leadership means changing the perceptions and behaviours of followers to meet certain goals and aims. The change factor is vital in order for leadership to proceed in achieving its goals.

- Leadership, from an Islamic perspective is attached to religious, moral and human ethics and codes of conduct (Khaliq and Ogunsola, 2011). The main heading within leading in Islam is to enjoin good and abstain from bad.

- Leadership in Islam is a huge responsibility and an immense task. It is not an honour or privilege; rather, it is a burden. The Prophet Muhammad said 'you people will be keen to have the authority of ruling, which will be a thing of regret for you on the Day of Resurrection. What an excellent wet nurse it is, yet what a bad weaning one it is!' (Khan, 1996: 1024).

Following the notion of Denzin (1989) that interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher, the researcher acknowledges the importance of this notion in the current research. Being a Muslim researcher whose study focuses on an Islamic organisation in a predominantly Western culture, is a sensitive issue and makes it very hard not to declare personal beliefs and values and to guard against the effect of potential bias. As Scheurich (1994) explains, one's historical position, one's class, one's race, one's gender, one's religion and so on interact and influence, limit and constrain production of knowledge. Brooks (1988) notes that the identification and recording of researcher bias serves two purposes; first, the explicit acknowledgement of bias improves the potential effect of that bias.

Second, declaring biases at the beginning of the research allows those examining the research to evaluate its objectivity.

I migrated to Australia in the mid-1990s. Being an Australian Muslim gives me a different perspective on the ethnic mix of Muslims in Australia under the banner of the chief overarching body, responsible among other things for guiding Muslims in Australia, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC). Watching incidents as they unfold for or against Muslims in the West in general, and in Australia in particular, gives me a very clear picture of the Muslim community. The question of the AFIC responses to these incidents always opens an important controversial and ongoing debate in the Muslim community and its organisations. During my first few years in Australia, the atmosphere among the Muslim leadership and surrounding Muslims was subdued. Even during the 1990's, the debate concerning effective Australian Muslim leadership was on the agenda at most communal meetings. I was very interested in the topic of leadership in Australian Islamic organisations, and hence my interest in undertaking this research. I believe that my knowledge of the Australian Muslim context has increased my theoretical sensitivity.

## 1.11 Operational definitions of key terms

*Authority* is a power over others for serving a purpose by virtue of one's position in the hierarchy (Heifetz, 1994; Parry, 1997).

*Axial coding* is "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 96).

*Basic social process* (BSP) is the core category, relating meaningfully and easily to as many other categories and their properties as possible; it reoccurs frequently in the data and comes to be seen as a stable pattern that is more and more related to other variables (Glaser and Holton, 2004:14-15). "BSPs are just one type of core category thus all BSPs are core variables (categories) but not all core categories are BSPs. The primary distinction between the two is that BSPs are processual. They have two or more clear emergent stages. Other core categories may not have stages, but can use other theoretical codes" (Glaser and Holton, 2005:1). BSP is a popular theoretical code used in grounded theory (Glaser and Holton, 2005).

*Category* stands by itself as a conceptual element of a theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 36).

*Constant comparison method* is the data-analytic process whereby each interpretation and finding is compared with existing findings as it emerges from the data analysis. Each comparison is usually called iteration and is normally associated with inductive reasoning rather than deductive reasoning (Parry, 2004: 180).

*Data Triangulation* is the process of collecting data from different *sources* in order to increase the validity of the research.

*Formal interview* consists of a series of well-chosen questions which are designed to extract understanding about a scientific concept or set of related concepts (Southerland et al., 2005).

*Grounded theory* is the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 2).

*Influence* is the process of changing others opinions, actions and behaviours.

*Informal interview* is a type of unofficial short meeting which targets persons whom the research cannot meet formally to ask questions about certain concepts.

*Leadership* is a social process, a series of activities and exchanges engaged in overtime and under varied circumstances to influence the social setting (Bass, 1998; Conger, 1998; Hunter et al., 2007; Parry, 1997, 1998, 1999; Rost, 1993; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Yukl, 2006).

*NVivo* is qualitative analysis software which helps in organising transcribed data and contains easy searching tools that fast track important data.

*Observation* is a data gathering technique where the researcher watches people from the outside with little, if any, interaction (Myers, 2013: 254).

*Open coding* is the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 61).

*Participant observation* is one source of qualitative data in which the researcher participates and observes people in their natural setting, similar to fieldwork (Myers, 2013: 254; Parry, 1997:50).

*Power* is the capacity to influence and motivate others (Cangemi, 1992: 499).

*Property* is a conceptual aspect or element of a category (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 36).

*Selective coding* is the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 116).

*Substantive area of inquiry* is the area of interest on which the researcher focuses his or her study.

*Substantive theory* is a set of propositions which furnish an explanation for an applied area of inquiry (Grover and Glazier, 1986: 233). The substantive theory emerges from the conceptual categories but is grounded in the data that developed for a substantive, or empirical, area of inquiry (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 32).

*Theoretical sampling* is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop the theory as it emerges (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 45).

*Theoretical saturation* is the point in analysis where all categories are well developed in terms of properties, dimensions and variations. Further data collection and analysis add little that is new to the conceptualisation, though variations can always be discovered (Corbin and Strauss, 2008a: 263).

*Theoretical sensitivity* is the ability of the researcher to think inductively and move from the particular data to the general or abstract, that is, to build theory from observations of specifics (Schreiber, 2001).

## 1.12 Chapter structure

**The rest of the thesis is divided into eight chapters.**

**Chapter 2** provides an overview of the historical background of Muslims in Australia and their contemporary contribution to Australian society at large. It also highlights within an organisational context, the main players who represent the interests of Australian Muslims at local and regional levels.

**Chapter 3** captures the overall research design. Firstly, it discusses the philosophical underpinnings. Then it addresses the justification for, and examination of, leadership through the lens of qualitative investigations. Third, it highlights grounded theory, the choice of grounded theory, quality issues in grounded theory. It then covers ethical issues. The next section deals with the sample and subsections of participants' characteristics, sample size, key informants and gaining access and outliers. It then focuses on the sampling strategy, the data collection strategy, and covers the data analysis journey. Finally, a summary of the chapter is presented.

**Chapter 4** presents the lower order category of problematic leadership. It elaborates on the first phase of data gathering which consists of three different stages of interviews and a group discussion. Stage one starts with unstructured interviews which show the broad perspectives of participants that had been captured with the initial open coding. Stage two is guided by semi-structured interview protocols focussing on themes. Stage three covers interviews and a group discussion and brings up the first level of abstraction. The first level of abstraction informed the lower order category which is problematic leadership followed by a discussion of categories properties.

**Chapter 5** examines the nature of problematic leadership processes. It carries on the second part of data gathering by the means of focus groups. The importance of focus groups at this stage of data collection is discussed. Theoretical memos, constant comparison method, and axial coding help to probe the high level category of the problematic context. The sub-categories of the high-level category are highlighted.

**Chapter 6** draws on the near-core category of reconciling problems. It begins with a brain storming question: What is the researcher up to? In answering the question the researcher elaborated on continuous brain storming and thinking about what is next. This elaboration succeeded with help from the third phase of data gathering to point out the near-core category of reconciling problems. The chapter continues with a clarification of problem reconciliation and two subcategories: enacting leading and enacting following. The dimensions of the two sub categories are discussed in detail.

**Chapter 7** introduces the substantive leadership theory of embracing basics. It is the core category and the basic social process. The core category works with two near-core categories and social processes; accommodating complexity and sense making. The social process of accommodating complexity is comprised of two properties of managing culture complexity and systemising power. The second social process, sense making, is comprised of enacting narratives and awareness. The grounded theory of embracing basics consists of two sub-categories: embracing internally embedded basics, and embracing externally embedded basics.

**Chapter 8** captures the place of the grounded theory of embracing basics within the extant literature. It begins with a discussion and explanation of the grounded theory model. The following section presents the comparison with extant literature; the place of the grounded theory embracing basics within Islamic discourse, comparison with the grounded theory studies, and comparison with the extant literature of non-grounded theories.

**Chapter 9** presents the overall summary. It finalises the research journey with a summary of the main findings, recommendations, Implications, limitations, future research and final remarks.

# Chapter 2 Overview of the context

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the historical background of Muslims in Australia and their contemporary contribution to Australian society at large. It also highlights, within an organisational context, the main players who represent the interests of Australian Muslims at local and regional levels.

Section 2.2 provides a brief historical outline of Australian Muslims. Section 2.3 highlights Muslims in contemporary Australia. Section 2.4 discusses Muslims' contribution to Australia. Section 2.5 deals with the organisational context for Muslims in Australia. And section 2.6 concludes with the summary.

## 2.2 Historical background of Muslims in Australia

Muslim contact with Australia has a history that pre-dates white settlement. At the very earliest, parts of the northern coast of Australia can be seen in the maps of ninth and tenth century Muslim cartographers (Akbarzadeh et al., 2009). Muslim migration to Australia has been traced as far back as the 16th and 17th centuries (DIAC, 2009). The Macassans, an ethnic group of fishing folk from eastern Indonesia, began visiting the northern shores of Australia in the sixteenth century (Kabir, 2005). The remains of settlements and cemeteries of the sixteenth century Macassans Muslim fishermen have been discovered on the southern coast of the continent, and in Aboriginal settlements in northern Australia (Saeed, 2004).

Early Australian settlers, under the dominion of the British Empire, used many Muslim people from the islands, territories, and overseas as slaves and navigators (Cleland, 2002). Joseph Bruce brought eighteen of the first Afghans to South Australia in 1838 (Moretti, 2002). In 1866 Samuel Stuckey travelled from Australia to Karachi, Pakistan to import camels into Australia. He succeeded in importing more than a hundred camels and brought with them 31 Afghan cameleers. In the 1860s, some 3000 camel drivers – with their camels - came to Australia from

Afghanistan and the Indian sub-continent (Jones, 2007; Moretti, 2002). Although these, and later, cameleers came from different ethnic groups and from vastly different places such as Baluchistan, Kashmir, Sind, Persia, Turkey and Punjab, they were known collectively as Afghans, Later they came to be known as Ghans - a shorter form of the word 'Afghan' (Saeed, 2004). Downes and Daum (1996: 7) eloquently described the journey of Muslim cameleers as follows:

> Camels were brought to Australia and bred in big numbers in South Australia and the Northern Territory. For decades, camels were the carriers in country too tough for horse or bullock teams. To handle these recalcitrant animals, cameleers were imported too from an area that is now Pakistan. But in the local lore of the outback, these strange men in robes and turbans, with strange gods, strange ways, strange foods, were believed to come from the mysterious Afghanistan.
>
> They were, therefore, Afghans, 'Ghans, and when one of them was the sole passenger leaving a train at Oodnadatta, a local wit dubbed the train The Afghan's Express. Shortened to The Ghan, the name became as much an outback tradition as the train itself. When Australian National Railways built a new track to Alice Springs and planned a prestigious passenger train service from Adelaide to Central Australia there was really no other choice for a name, for even if it had been called something else officially the new name would certainly have been ignored. The Ghan had made its own history, its own legends. It was part of life outback.

## 2.3 Muslims in contemporary Australia

The Australian government's implementation of the White Australia Policy in the early twentieth century made it difficult for Muslims to come to Australia (Saeed, 2004). The end of World War II was the beginning of a real shift in Australian policy, and after 1945 there was an increasing stream of migrants from a large number of Muslim countries (Cleland, 2002). From the 1970s onwards, the Australian government adopted a policy of 'multiculturalism' and Muslims from more than sixty different countries began to settle in Australia (Saeed, 2003). The new arrivals came mostly from Turkey, Lebanon, Indonesia, Iran, Fiji, and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Akbarzadeh and Saeed, 2003). Quite a few came from other countries such as Yugoslavia, Malaysia, Albania, Sudan, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt, Syria, Pakistan and Singapore (Saeed, 2004). The immigrants from south-east Asia

included a high proportion of professional people and skilled technicians, and there were also those who came for higher education and training (Saeed, 2004).

The Muslim population of Australia has been rising steadily over the years. Muslims have grown to 2.25% per cent of the total Australian population, with approximately 476,300 Muslims (ABS, 2012). During the 21st century, Muslims have migrated to Australia from more than 120 different countries (Saeed, 2004). The Muslim population in Australia is a relatively young group with 58.6 per cent aged 29 years and under (compared to 39.9 per cent of the total Australian population aged 29 years and under). This is largely due to the Australian-born Muslims, mostly second generation Australians, where 81.8 per cent are under 25 years of age. Overseas-born Muslims tend to be in the 25–44 year age group (45.6 per cent) which is consistent with the time of their arrival in Australia (ABS, 2006). Australian Muslims represent a mix of ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and the majority resides in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. (Akbarzadeh and Smith, 2005).

## 2.4 Muslims' contribution to Australia

Australia's early Afghan cameleers, with their expertise, were credited with saving the lives of numerous early European explorers (Saeed, 2003). The camels, which received more publicity than their owners, were vital for exploration, and together with their Afghan Muslim cameleers, assisted in all major expeditions into Australia's interior during the 19th century (Saeed, 2004). They contributed to the exploration of the Australian outback, working on the railway line between Port Augusta and Alice Springs, which was extended to Darwin in 2004 (Seidu, 2010). They contributed to international communication, connecting Australia to the world through the Overland Telegraph Line from Adelaide to Darwin, which connected Australia to London via India (Saeed, 2004). Afghan cameleers were employed on survey expeditions into the interior where they undertook charting and mapping, as well as geological explorations (Moretti, 2002).

Muslims from Dutch and British colonies in South East Asia were recruited to work in the Australian pearling industry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Martínez, 2009). Muslim migrants from Bosnia and Kosovo who arrived in Australia in the 1960s made important contributions to modern-day Australia through their role in the construction of one of the biggest projects in Australian history, the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme in New South Wales (DIAC, 2009).

In contemporary Australia, Muslims from all over the world enrich the country with multicultural diversity (Saeed, 2004). This diversity has enriched cultural and religious identity for Muslim immigrants within diverse groups settled throughout the continent's population. Many high-profile Muslim Australians make notable contributions to Australian society today, and they are strongly involved in all facets of Australian life, including sport, arts, fashion and politics (MIA, 2012).

Two remarkable initiatives come to fruition in recent times. The first initiative "organised by the Australian Muslim community is the television show *Salam Cafe* which has screened nationwide on SBS. This program and its team of young Australian Muslims attempts to promote harmony and understanding through humour" (Abdalla, 2010: 45). The second initiative is "a Muslim Community Radio 2MFM which is based in Sydney. It offers a wide variety of services to the Muslim community. As well as broadcasting news, information and advertising, the radio station promotes interfaith and harmony. The radio website receives millions of hits, indicating that it is definitely forging a place for itself in the community" (Abdalla, 2010: 45).

Muslims have developed trade links between Australia and their countries of origin, particularly through the export of meat that has been slaughtered in a special way (Saeed, 2004). The higher education system has also flourished recently, thanks to tens of thousands of Muslim students from different Islamic countries throughout the world who are currently studying in Australia. The students add significantly to the advancement of the higher education system in this country.

## 2.5 The organisational context for Muslims in Australia

There are many organisations representing the interests of Australian Muslims at local and regional levels. These organisations represent special interest groups such as women's groups, business leaders and educational institutions. Funding for community-based organisations comes largely from the broader community. In this research, the main Muslim organisation under investigation is the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), and for the rest of this thesis the organisation will be referred to by its acronym.

The objectives of AFIC include: articulating Australian Muslims interests – especially in the areas of political advocacy; highlighting social and cultural needs; providing grass roots support through its state councils and local Islamic societies; establishing Islamic schools across Australia; providing advisory services (Patel, 2009).

In their latest submission to the Australian Parliament Joint Standing Committee titled *Migration, Multiculturalism and the Australian Muslim Community*, AFIC provides a brief history about itself as follows:

> In 1963 the Australian Muslim community adopted an organisational structure for the cause of Islam in Australia. At the grass roots level local Muslims formed Islamic Societies to serve their basic needs in terms of education and prayer facilities. The building of Mosques and providing religious education became the primary objective.
>
> The Islamic Councils of each State and Territory united to form State Islamic Councils representing their respective Muslim communities at the peak State level. At the national level the State and Territory Islamic Councils formed the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc (AFIC), as the national umbrella organisation for Australian Muslims representing Islam and Muslims at a national and international level.
>
> As a democratic organisation, AFIC holds Federal Council Meetings with all State and Territory affiliates quarterly and an Annual Congress with all State, Territory Councils and Societies participating. The AFIC Committee of Management is elected every three years by the Annual Congress.
>
> AFIC represents about 100 members across Australia. AFIC also represents the member societies of its 9 member State and Territory Councils which are

also peak representative bodies for their States and Territories (AFIC, 2011:1).

The nine Islamic councils are:

1) The Islamic Council of Queensland (ICQ) is the state peak body for Muslims in Queensland. The Islamic Council of Queensland (ICQ) was formed in 1969 as the umbrella body to represent the interests of Muslims in Queensland. At present it represents 10 cities stretching from Cairns in the far north to Brisbane and the Gold Coast in the South East (ICQ, 2012).
2) The Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV) is the state peak body for Muslim organisations in Victoria. The ICV represents Victoria's more than 90,000 Muslims, through its 37 member organisations located throughout metropolitan Melbourne and rural Victoria. ICV's vision is to build a better community for all Australians through the empowerment of Muslims in Victoria (ICV, 2012).
3) The Islamic Council of Western Australia (ICWA) is a regional body functioning under AFIC and represents the needs of Muslims in Western Australia. The council endeavours to promote the spiritual, social and cultural welfare of West Australian Muslims (ICWA, 2012).
4) The Islamic Council of South Australia (ICSA) is the state peak body for Muslims in South Australia.
5) The Islamic Council of Tasmania (ICT) is the Islamic state peak body for Muslims in Tasmania.
6) The Islamic Council of Northern Territory (ICNT) is the Islamic Territory peak body for Muslims in Northern Territory.
7) The Islamic Council of Christmas Island (ICCI) is the Islamic peak body for Muslims on Christmas Island.
8) The Muslim Council of New South Wales (MCNSW) is the Islamic state peak body for Muslims in New South Wales.
9) The Islamic Council of ACT (ICACT) is the Islamic peak body for Muslims in Canberra, the nation capital.

Some Islamic organisations in Australia are affiliated with AFIC, while other organisations may exist under AFIC's umbrella although they are not officially affiliated. Other institutions are not affiliated to AFIC at all. It is worth mentioning here that other organisations (not affiliated with AFIC) have been established to serve the interests of Australian Muslims and the wider Australian community, including:

1) The Islamic Women's Association of Queensland (IWAQ), an organisation providing a wide range of social services to assist people from mainstream and culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse backgrounds. Services include settlement, aged care, disability and respite care (IWAQ, 2012).
2) Griffith University's Islamic Research Unit (GIRU) was formed in 2005 through the generous contributions of the local Brisbane Muslim community. It aims to examine issues facing Muslims in an Australian context using a rigorous, academic empirical approach. Among GIRU's aims was the training and graduation of scholars who understand and identify with the social, economic and political context of Australian and Muslim communities. In 2012 GIRU became part of the National Centre of Excellence for Islamic Studies (NCEIS), a consortium with the University of Melbourne and The University of Western Sydney.
3) AMARAH – is the acronym of Australian Muslim Advocate for the Rights of All Humanity. AMARAH is a non-profit organisation based in Brisbane that advocates for a better world. It supports and encourages positive engagement of Muslims on issues of concern to the whole humanity. The focus of AMARAH is devoted to five areas: human rights; civil rights; social reform; environmental responsibility; and Islamic awareness (AMARAH, 2012).
4) The Muslim Business Network (MBN) was established in 2006 and aims to bring all Muslim businesses and business people together to advance the business and commercial interests of Muslims. It engages in activities that will be of benefit to the Muslim community and provides its members with

networking opportunities, assistance in identifying and exploiting business opportunities, outreach programs and philanthropic initiatives (MBN, 2012).

5) Australian National Imams Council (ANIC) is a newly-formed organisation representing imams (religious scholars) (ANIC, 2007) and various imams' councils across Australia.
6) The Muslim Women's National Network Australia (MWNNA) is a peak body representing a network of Muslim women organisations and individuals throughout Australia. The organisation is concerned with the education of Muslim women and girls, lobbying the government and non-government institutions on behalf of Muslim women and children, and assisting refugees and others in need (MWNNA, 2012).
7) The Muslim Legal Network (MLN) is the gateway for all Australian Muslim lawyers and law students to engage with a wider community of lawyers and fellow Muslim students. It strives to ethically protect the civil liberties and human rights of Muslims living in Australia (MLN, 2012).
8) The Islamic Sciences and Research Academy of Australia (ISRA) was established in 2009. It is a platform for cooperation between Australian Muslims and educational institutions in Australia in order to actively contribute to social harmony, cultural diversity and religious values (ISRA, 2012).
9) The Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR). This is an independent, not-for-profit public relations community organisation made up of young Australians working to enhance the position of Muslims and to promote a positive image of the grassroots Islamic community in Australia through advocacy, public relations and by engaging the media (FAIR, 2012).

There are other organisations which represent the interests of the Australian Muslim community, but those mentioned suffice as a sample. In 2006 the Australian government's quest for building social cohesion, harmony and security led to the formation of the Muslim Community Reference Group (MCRG) to advise the federal government on issues relating to youth, education and training of imams and other religious teachers and leaders, women, schooling, employment, crisis

management and family and community (MCRG, 2006). The MCRG worked for twelve months with the Australian Government to provide valuable insight and identify ways to make Australia a more inclusive society. This cooperative work culminated in a report for an action plan to build on 'Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security'. This work formed the basis for continued positive communication between the government and the community.

MCRG's (2006: 14) report identified serious problems confronting Muslims that makes it very hard for them to be an embedded part of Australian society. Among the many problems identified include:

- Social isolation facing many Australian Muslims, particularly the young at school and in the community.
- Marginalisation, discrimination and vilification.
- A lack of harmony and rigid thinking in the Muslim community.
- Lack of community support for Muslims in regional and remote areas.
- Very low levels of Muslim representation in public and community service.
- A distorted view of Islam in the language used by some politicians.

## 2.6 Chapter Summary

Islamic organisational settings in Australia are multiethnic and multicultural. Muslims' migration to Australia was prompted by the search for better opportunities, justice, a fair go and freedom. Australian Muslims are not monolithic and this led to the formation of various organisations to represent them ethnically, religiously and otherwise. At the helm of Islamic organisations is AFIC, whose aim is to represent the diverse Australian Muslim community. Other organisations emerged to address pertinent issues affecting the Muslim community socially, economically, religiously and academically. This diversity led to various contextual challenges which play an important role in the organisational and leadership structures of Islamic organisations in urban Australian society. These challenges are important in determining how these institutions formulate leadership manifestations in this substantive setting.

# Chapter 3 Research Design and Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to generate a theory that explains the leadership process in the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils. Through several methods of data collection, a qualitative, grounded theory approach with reflexive interpretation will be used in order to give consideration to the research question mentioned previously. This chapter establishes the reasoning which links ontology, epistemology, methodology and accordingly the method within the current research investigation. This chapter provides justification for using grounded theory and elaborates on how it will be implemented through data collection and analysis.

Section 3.2 discusses the philosophical underpinnings of this research. Section 3.3 presents the qualitative approach. Section 3.4 examines leadership through the lens of qualitative investigation. Section 3.5 discusses theory through highlights of grounded theory, the choice of grounded theory and quality issues in grounded theory. Section 3.6 covers ethical issues. Section 3.7 deals with the sample and subsections of participants' characteristics, sample size, key informants and gaining access and outliers. Section 3.8 focuses on sampling strategy. Section 3.9 provided the data collection strategy. Section 3.10 covers the data analysis journey. Finally, chapter summary is presented in section 3.11.

## 3.2 Philosophical underpinning

Following the notion of McLeod (2001) that good qualitative research requires an informed knowledge of philosophical underpinnings, I acknowledge that the current research entails important aspects of ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Ontology, epistemology and methodology are appropriately related. While ontology informs the nature of 'reality' or 'truth', epistemology is concerned with the relationship between the knower (researcher) and reality or knowledge and how to gain that knowledge. Methodology refers to the research strategy used to investigate

the reality. Accordingly, the researcher needs to know the nature of reality, his relation with reality and the strategy to investigate that 'reality'.

The importance of ontology and epistemology stems from being the basis on which the methodology is chosen. If two scholars are interested in examining the same phenomenon, but they hold different ontologies and subsequently epistemologies then their beliefs will lead them to set up their studies differently because of their differing views of evidence, methods of collecting data and analysis, and the purpose of the research (Potter, 1996: 35-36).

Some of the key general ontological questions include: is there a single objective reality or is there a real world that is independent and detached from our knowledge and how does the world work? (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The general key epistemological question includes: what is the relationship between the knower and reality or how knowledge can be obtained? (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, key ontological questions for social researchers include: where should we position social reality? Is it objective, is it a reality different from people's views and biases, or is it a social construction which constitutes actions, behaviours and perceptions of people? The key epistemological question for social scientists is: what is the relationship between the researcher and social reality? Is social reality a social construction of the researcher's interpretation and understanding of the concept and the context, or is it something independent and outside the researcher's knowledge which needs to be discovered?

First, if the answers to the aforementioned ontological and epistemological questions are that reality is one, fixed and objective, and the researcher and the social reality are independent then the approach to inquiry is a quantitative research approach with realist and objective beliefs. Second, if the answers to the aforementioned ontological and epistemological questions are that reality is socially constructed and the researcher and the social reality are interdependent, then the approach to the inquiry is a qualitative research approach with relativist and subjective beliefs.

Accordingly, qualitative research entails relativist and constructionist ontology. Further, qualitative research entails interpretivist and subjective epistemology where the researcher 'understands, explains, and demystifies social reality through the eyes of different participants' and observes participants in their actual settings (Cohen et al., 2003: 19). Hence, the quantitative perspective that considers leadership as static, precise, and universal (Conger, 1998) is not applicable to this research, which considers leadership as a social influence process (Bass, 1998; Conger, 1998; Hunter et al., 2007; Parry, 1997, 1998, 1999; Rost, 1993; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Yukl, 2006), and a series of activities and exchanges engaged in overtime and under varied circumstances (Hunter et al., 2007: 440). Therefore, this research fits appropriately within the qualitative research approach.

## 3.3 The qualitative approach

The overall research design is that of qualitative investigation which entails qualitative methods of data collection and analysis that allow the researcher to reach an in-depth understanding of the complex factors that influence leadership. Bryman and Bell (2007: 402) define qualitative research as a research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than statistical measurement in the collection and analysis of data. The latter notices further features for this type of research. The first one is that theory is inductively generated from research. The second is interpretive epistemology, which argues that the social world is constructed by understanding and explaining participants' views, action and interaction and that is what needs to be researched, with reflections upon the researcher's own values.

Sandelowski (2004: 893), among others, explains qualitative research as a strategy for conducting inquiry that is aimed at discerning how human beings understand, experience, interpret and produce the social world. Corbin and Strauss (2008b) explain that qualitative research is undertaken in order to produce findings not arrived at by means of quantification.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 3) see interpretive qualitative research as multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive and naturalistic approach to investigate, and make sense of, people's experiences in their natural settings. Merriam (2002) elaborates further that qualitative research is an exploratory and inductive process to understands situations in their uniqueness without manipulating the variables.

## 3.4 Leadership through qualitative investigation

Many researchers have identified the benefits of researching leadership qualitatively. Parry (1997) observed that the use of qualitative data is necessary to integrate the variety of variables that are associated with the leadership processes in organisations. Conger (1998) and Alvesson (1996) have identified a number of advantages for researching leadership qualitatively including flexibility to follow unexpected ideas during research, and an ability to study symbolic dimensions and social meaning.

Among others, Bryman (2004: 751-755) sheds light on ways in which qualitative research into leadership is distinctive, and identified eight distinctions. First, researchers are able to view the impacts that leaders make on their organisations over a long period of time. Second, qualitative research gives greater attention to the ways in which leaders respond to particular circumstances. Third, qualitative research focuses on senior leaders and their teams. Fourth, the conductive behaviour and styles attached to leadership identified by qualitative researchers is more mundane than recent quantitative research on leadership which concerns visionary, charismatic and transformational leadership. Fifth, qualitative research on leadership is less cumulative and often starts afresh with little reference to other research, while quantitative research builds on previous quantitative studies. Sixth, some qualitative research on leadership takes the existing research as a springboard, while other research treats it as a counterpoint. Seventh, qualitative research puts more emphasis on the language of leadership, so language can be viewed as being a biased and highly charged medium for influencing others. Eighth, qualitative research on leadership is more likely to underline its problematic nature. The above mentioned

distinctions are central to realising the significance of studying leadership from the lens of qualitative investigation.

Ospina (2004) favours the qualitative method to investigate leadership because it adds rich detail and nuance, and it advances a leadership phenomenon that is not well understood quantitatively because of the narrow perspectives used previously. Also, it understands any phenomenon in its complexity, and understands any social phenomenon from the perspective of the actors involved, rather than explaining it from an outsider's viewpoint.

## 3.5 Methodology

### 3.5.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a branch of social research that was initiated by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. Glaser and Strauss never did explicitly declare their ontological or epistemological philosophies in their seminal work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* or in other books (Hallberg, 2006). However, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) as cited in Hallberg (2006) argue that Glaser and Strauss, in their original grounded theory approach, tried to shift from a positivist science approach to fit their own post-positivist phenomenological approach. Goulding (1999) believes that the development of grounded theory was a part of a significant development which took place during qualitative analysis in the 1960's and 1970's.

Grounded theory is a qualitative method for the collection and analysis of qualitative data. It is a research method in which theory emerges from, and is grounded in the data which have been systematically obtained through social research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The method investigates the actualities in the real world and analyses the data with no preconceived hypothesis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It refers to theory developed inductively from a corpus of data acquired through fieldwork interviews, observations and documents (Dey, 1999).

Strauss and Corbin (1994: 274) maintain that grounded theory consists of:

> Plausible relationships proposed among concepts and sets of concepts, researchers are interested in patterns of action and interaction between and among various types of social units. They are also much concerned with discovering process not necessarily in the sense of stages or phases, but in reciprocal changes in patterns of action and interaction and in relationship with changes of conditions either internal or external to the process itself.

The resulting theory can be reported in a set of relationships and propositions that proposes a reasonable explanation of the phenomenon under study or as a narrative framework (Dey, 1999; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Kan and Parry (2004) posit that the theory should also be reported as a visual cause-effect model, a hierarchy of abstraction model, and as a basic process at the highest level of abstraction.

Strauss and Corbin (1998: 9-10) suggested that grounded theory can be predicted by the following assumptions: first, there is a need to go into the field to discover what is really going on. Second, development of a discipline is relevant to theory. Third, that human action is complex and variable. Fourth, the interviewees are actors responding to problematic situations. Fifth, the interviewees act on the basis of meaning. Sixth, the interaction sets the mode of meaning to be defined and redefined. Seventh, interrelationships among conditions, action and consequences should be observed.

Strauss and Corbin (1998: 13) clarified the following goals of grounded theory. First, build rather than test theory. Second, provide researchers with analytic tools for handling masses of raw data. Third, help the analysts to consider alternative meanings of phenomena. Fourth, be simultaneously systematic and creative. Fifth, identify, develop and relate the concepts that are the building blocks of theory.

### 3.5.2 This research and grounded theory

Grounded theory is considered the appropriate method to achieve the goals of this study for the following reasons:

*First*, the purpose of the research is not to provide a comprehensive description, but rather to generate a theory of the leadership process within a particular substantive setting by investigating and recognising how complicated phenomena occur. Grounded theory is the best methodology to achieve the purpose of this research because it differs from other qualitative approaches by its feature of enabling the generation of theory (Parry, 1998).

*Second*, grounded theory has the power to predict the outcome of any problem in the particular context under study once the theory is complete, after all core categories are saturated and generalised to the point of producing highly abstract concepts and are able to fit all areas of inquiry (Miller and Fredericks, 1999).

*Third*, grounded theory has the power to be accommodative, in that it will accommodate literature within the same context and integrate that literature with the interpretation of newly generated categories and concepts (Miller and Fredericks, 1999).

*Fourth*, grounded theory focuses on how individuals interact in relation to the phenomenon under study (Dey, 1999). This interaction will add richness to the data and the findings.

*Fifth*, grounded theory is the best methodology to meet the emergent need for building a leadership theory that can make a distinctive contribution to the explanation of the substantive context under investigation (Parry and Bryman, 2006).

*Sixth*, rigorous application of the grounded theory method will help to overcome the deficiencies in mainstream leadership research methodology that are overlooked by a primarily positivist approach (Parry, 1998).

*Seventh*, grounded theory as a research method reflects the richness of leadership as a relationship paradigm rather than leadership as a cognitive paradigm (Parry and Meindl, 2002).

*Eight*, grounded theory is a dynamic method which consists of dynamic data collection and analysis techniques such as theoretical sampling and constant comparison method. This dynamic method is the appropriate method to study leadership as a dynamic social influence process, not as a position (Hunt, 1991; Parry, 1999; Rost, 1993). The leadership process cannot be studied at one discrete point of time without understanding how people (followers and members of the organisation under investigation) make sense of their lives, and how people come to understand and manage day-to-day situations (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

*Ninth*, leadership research needs to embrace the necessity of incorporating context and process into an understanding of the manifestation of the leadership phenomenon (Kempster and Parry, 2011). That necessity is reflected most strongly in the methodology of grounded theory that may allow researchers to suggest causal explanations of the leadership manifestation, in particular contexts and across contexts, through levels of abstraction related to levels of analysis (Kempster and Parry, 2011). This research is following the latter recommendation by investigating leadership as a process within a substantive context, namely the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils.

*Tenth*, the colourful and dynamic nature of choosing research participants and the research sample through theoretical sampling will give a comprehensive voice to all levels of organisation members instead of a one level sample. Whether the next sample in one point of time consists of leaders or followers or both, theoretical sampling will guide the researcher to the next sample, forcing his bias aside. Depending on the data generated, the sample could be drawn from members or followers who receive leadership, rather than those who claim to practice it. By then, the recipients of leadership may create an opportunity to voice their opinions, emotions and feelings that may help the researcher understand how they make sense

of leadership within the context of their particular setting. Theoretical sampling may guide the researcher at another stage to include some personalities in leadership positions, in order to gain insight into the challenges which affect the work of leaders, and how these challenges affect the organisation in general and followers in particular.

### 3.5.3 Critique and quality concerns in grounded theory

There are potential concerns regarding the quality of research generated by the grounded theory method because of the subjective nature of this type of research. The first concern focuses on the ability of grounded theory research to analyse change over time, particularly the impact of critical incidents that can take place either before, during or after data collection (Chenitz and Swanson, 1986; Dey, 1999; Parry, 1998). The impact of critical incidents can affect the quality of data collection and analysis if they are not accounted for. On the other hand those incidents are very much a catalyst to examine the leadership process and enhance data quality (Parry, 1998). The second issue is the impact of the researcher's presence on the phenomenon under investigation (Parry, 1998).

To overcome such aforementioned problems this research used a variety of data gathering techniques. Data gathering spans multiple sources such as interviews, observations and organisational documents which are a widely accepted method of enhancing the strength of the research (Kirk and Miller, 1986). This variety gives the researcher tools to concentrate on the scientific practice of qualitative social science research rather than reacting to isolated ideas or incidents. This research gives interviews preference over observation, and documents analysis to minimise the interference that may occur due to a certain physical setting in an observed situation. The multi data collecting techniques include both types of observation; participant observation which allow the researcher to participate and observe people in their natural setting, and non-participant observation which allows the researcher to observe people from the outside without interaction. Using these dual observation techniques allowed the researcher to witness many critical incidents first hand and

integrate them with other emergent concepts and categories. Some of the observed incidents allowed strong interpretation and analysis.

The second concern refers to generalising to universals (Maxwell, 1992). While quantitative research is based on verification or rejection of a hypothesis, qualitative research is interested in coherent and consistent analysis and interpretation. McKinnon (1988) doubted that there was a link between quantitative evaluation and understanding phenomenon through grounded theory. Grounded theory is concerned with generating a theory for a particular substantive setting, as opposed to generalising to universals.

The third concern is coherence. Jones and Noble (2007: 93-100) analysed 32 empirical grounded theory studies in management literature dating from 2002. They observed serious problems associated with many of these studies. For example, many studies ignored fundamental aspects of grounded theory. Six of these studies made no reference to theoretical sampling; four used axial and selective coding; and there was unclear use of constant comparison, memos and theoretical saturation. To overcome this problem, they offered a solution suggesting an adherence to principles of grounded theory through its objectives and procedures. This research takes the latter suggestion very seriously. The research aim is to generate a basic social process of organisational leadership by following the main procedures of grounded theory. The main procedures implemented in the current research are concurrent data collection and analysis, along with memoing, coding and categorising through constant comparison method, theoretical sampling and theoretical sensitivity.

The fourth major concern is reliability. Reliability is a quantitative evaluation related to the accuracy of results over repeated trials (Chenitz and Swanson, 1986). Joppe (2000) explains the issue of reliability as being whether or not the results of a study can be replicated under similar methodology. Stenbacka (2001) believes that reliability as a measurement approach has no relevance in qualitative research, while Patton (2002) advocates the opposite. In response to Patton (2002), Parry (1998) claims that it is very difficult, although not impossible, to replicate a grounded

theory study because no two situations are alike. The latter goes on to say that it is more appropriate to ask whether or not the grounded theory, if applied to a similar situation, will allow the researcher to interpret, understand and predict phenomena. He states that full and detailed grounded theory will do so and therefore can claim reliability. In this research I cannot claim full reliability, rather that claim is for others to judge but the analysis principles and the relation between the emergent theoretical model and other leadership research are very closely intertwined. This research articulates important links between leadership and ethical issues and dilemmas, which represent a major quest in researching leadership at this moment in time. Ethical issues will not differ between contexts; rather, asking the same rigorous questions in a different context may lead to the same conclusions as this study.

The fifth concern is that the researcher could misinterpret the data, therefore the accuracy of the emergent theory is in doubt (Lazenbatt and Elliott, 2005). Misinterpretation of the data may happen if the researcher does not follow the objectives and procedures of grounded theory, or if the researcher imposes his views and bias during the analysis process. The research could be misinterpreted if the researcher does not apply progressive theoretical sampling and theoretical sensitivity to the full extent. To avoid this concern, I have stated my own bias and assumptions very clearly in chapter one. Second, I applied grounded theory measures, including progressive theoretical sampling that allows the emergent data to inform the researcher about which sample to choose without any manipulation of the sample. Third, I questioned research participants and other organisational members who did not participate in this research, to check whether the data and categories were sound and made sense to them.

The sixth major concern addresses the ability of the researcher to see the bigger picture through grounded theory because this is a detailed method which tends to produce lower level theories only (Myers, 2013). To subjugate this concern, the researcher always focused on the big picture. The first phase of data collection and analysis brought the lower-order category of problematic leadership to light.

Through extensive investigation, I managed to discover a higher-order category of problematic context. While the negative tone was dominant through the first two phases of data collection and analysis, that did not prevent me from looking at differences, or the participants' concern about getting their organisation back on its feet. Interviewees' ideas and data highlighted much of the leadership process was negative. The easy option for the researcher would have been to go with the tide of detailed negativity. Instead I often asked myself the big picture question; what is going on here? The answer to this question guided me to theories about higher levels of abstraction, and generated a grounded theory that accounted for all variations within the data, integrating all concepts and categories into a big picture approach.

(Charmaz, 2006), Glaser (1992) and Strauss and Corbin's (1990, 1998) suggest that good grounded theory should aim to satisfy several key criteria, namely fit, understanding, credibility, workability, modifiability and usefulness. Each one of these criteria is now addressed.

***Fit***

Strauss and Corbin (1990:23) consider grounded theory to be fit "If it is faithful to the everyday reality of the substantive area and carefully induced from diverse data, then it should fit that substantive area". This research demonstrated that subsequent stages of data collection and analysis which emerged from several diverse interviews and observations met the need of everyday reality, without the researcher's interference or preconceived notions. The inductive and analytical approach generated open codes, axial codes and selective codes from a rigorous systematic process of data collection and analysis. The density of conceptualisation resulted in categories and the central category which include all variations on the data, and which form the basis of grounded theory.

***Understanding***

This criterion refers to whether grounded theory "makes sense to the persons who were studied and to those practicing in that area" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 23). At the end of every phase of coding, categorising, and linking categories, I conducted

practical session with people previously interviewed and with members of the organisational setting who had not been interviewed previously, and who were of a different calibre and who had different experiences to see whether or not the findings make sense to them, and to confirm what they knew. In the later stages, when the grounded theory had been generated, I explained this theory to a group of participants in order to allow them to gain an understanding of the theory. The latter point is consistent with a critical realist approach to grounded theory (Kempster and Parry, 2011).

***Credibility***

This research claims credibility for the following reasons. First, the constant comparison of data ensures that credibility is achieved through concept building and consistency of interpretation. Second, the sampling strategy insured the divergent participants from all facets of the organisation contribute towards real and authentic empirical data. Third, the empirical data has a strong connection with the conceptualisation through the development of categories and the core category. Fourth, this research offers new insights into the leadership process in Islamic organisations. Fifth, this research claims credibility because leadership has been triangulated from a Western theory of leadership and with an Islamic perspective of the participants in the current context. Sixth, the core-category and all conceptualisation are grounded in empirical data that has been carefully extracted from the participants' views and observations.

***Workability***

Workability refers to how well a theory explains and interprets behaviour in a substantive area, and whether the theory accounts for the way in which participants solve their main concerns (Glaser, 1998). The theory in this research accounted for the viewpoints of the participants, whether negative or positive throughout the study. The viewpoints, along with observations of actions, interactions and responses to incidents and events, thoroughly help the comprehensive interpretation and analysis in the context under investigation. The theory also captures the essence of participants' main concerns about how leadership could be less problematic.

***Modifiability***

Grounded theory could evolve and be upgraded overtime with new ideas and as new data emerges, hence the potential for further development (Glaser, 1978). The way this research investigates the leadership process in the Islamic context operating in a Western society is fairly new; hence the ability of new ideas to emerge overtime has great potential. This research is modifiable through each of the four phases of data collection and analysis. As an iteration of data collection and analysis progresses, the researcher absorbs new convergent and divergent data and attempts to fit it within the borders of the study framework. Any new idea that could emerge in the future may fit well under the generated grounded theory in this research.

***Usefulness***

Charmaz (2006: 182) explains usefulness in term of the ability of grounded theory to spark further research in other substantive areas, and whether the theory could offer interpretations that people can use in their everyday lives. The core category and the related subcategories generated in this research are sufficiently comprehensive, and will be expressed with dense interpretation (Price, 1999), therefore could be applicable in a variety of contexts (Parker and Roffey, 1997). The current research could spark further research on areas of ethical leadership, minority organisations in Western countries, migrant communities and some other religious organisations. The need for adhering to shared leadership values and principles in a global context is more important than ever before. On the other hand, people could make use of the interpretation of this research, such as the process of sense-making, in an easy, practical and obvious manner.

## 3.6 Ethical Considerations

This research is in full conformity with the requirement of Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee. As this research involves human participants, ethical considerations should follow accordingly. Ethical clearance was granted to this research under the protocol (GU Ref No: GSM/04/07/HREC). The approval letter can be found in Appendix A.

Informed consent is vital to ethical consideration. Participants were contacted via telephone and email to inform them about the subject of the interview. Interviewees involved in this research agreed voluntarily to participate, at their own consent. Prior to the start of the interview, the researcher presents the information sheet and consent form for the interviewee to read and sign. A copy of the information sheet and the informed consent can be found in Appendix B.

Confidentiality is an important issue which is stated clearly on the informed consent form. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without the participants' consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. Participants' anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. Interviewees will be given numbers and a general description code to accommodate their anonymity.

All digital recordings and transcribed documents are secured in a locked safe. Once the study is complete and data are no longer of value, all digital recording and document will be destroyed according to Griffith University regulations.

## 3.7 Sample

Gobo (2007: 405) criticises the attitude of qualitative researchers toward sampling as having "been long neglected as a mere positivistic worry". Gobo is in favour of clearly defining sampling units to avoid a lack of depth in research, and he considers sampling "as an unavoidable consideration because it is, first of all, an everyday life activity deeply rooted in thought, language and practice".

The source of data collection for this research is the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC). AFIC represents the member societies of its 9 member states and territory councils, which are also peak representative bodies for their states and territories. Each state represents local Islamic societies within the state borders. Although local societies are represented within state councils, AFIC does not control individual local or state organisations. In total, AFIC represents about 100 local member societies across Australia.

The sample selection criterion is carefully considered to ensure breadth of the data and to address the research question. The majority of the Muslim population resides in the States of New South Wales (NSW), Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland (ABS, 2006). Interviews and observations were mainly conducted in NSW, Victoria and Queensland to give wider representation for the organisation under investigation. Interviews with personalities from other states were conducted through conferences and meetings held within the borders of the aforementioned three states. Three levels of organisation, namely federal, state and local, and three hierarchical organisational levels, namely high-level management, middle-level management and members, were considered carefully in the sample in order to gain a deep and wider understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

### 3.7.1 Participants' characteristics

Diverse characteristics were used in the sample population to reflect and address the research question. Some of these participants migrated to Australia whilst others are seventh generation Australian Muslims. Participants' occupations range from professionals with university qualifications to trades people and entrepreneurs. A few of the participants have had religious education, a few are secular, and the majority have fundamental knowledge of Islam. Most leaders in formal positions are men. One quarter of the participants is women.

### 3.7.2 Sample size

In an emergent qualitative research study, the researcher cannot a *priori* clearly determine the number of people or settings to be included in order to understand the area of interest. In this type of research, the researcher concurrently collects and analyses data to uncover important concepts and categories. The latter process continues until no new data emerges or when the saturation stage is reached. From the beginning of the journey of jointly collecting and analysing data, the researcher's main concern is to capture data of a quality which is capable of answering the research question. Therefore, the depth of emerging data informs the researcher of the characteristics of future participants, and the best way to approach them without the normal positivist concern regarding the number of people or settings. In

accordance with this argument Marshall (1996: 523) argues that "An appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question".

### 3.7.3 Key informants and gaining access

Key informants are those individuals who have knowledge about the designated organisation and have connections with key influential persons who could facilitate entrance, access and interviews for the researcher. It was difficult to gain access in the current context without the help of key informants. From the start of this research, it was obvious to the researcher that it would be very difficult to start interviewing without the help of key people who knew key people inside the organisation.

People who conduct research find it very difficult to undertake research in Australian Islamic organisations due to suspicion about the motives and aims of researchers. AFIC as the umbrella group and related state and local organisation are no exception. Suspicion towards the government and the Australian media has detached Muslims from being forthcoming in any sort of research. It took a few weeks before I was able to carry out my first interview. The other access problem arises because of the loose hierarchical relations between AFIC as an umbrella body, and state and local organisations. Therefore should the researcher be able to gain access to AFIC as a federal body, that did not lead automatically to access to other state and local organisations. Each state and local organisation required individual, special access. Each time I attempted to have a conversation within a local or state level organisation, meant the need for a new key informant who was associated with that particular organisation. One high level key informant helped to establish access to some local and states organisations, and three others helped to gain access to a few other organisations. The selection of four key informants, three of whom were not previously known to the researcher, alleviated the notion of bias, which can be problematic to research findings.

### 3.7.4 Outliers

Although Olshansky (2008) claims that there are no 'outliers' in qualitative research, she affirms the importance of embracing variability and learning from the negative cases to explain why this case, or this person, is different from another. In the current research, the prediction of the outliers or the different cases point to four main categories. The first is gender based, namely women at various levels of the organisation. The second is aged based, namely young Muslim men and women. The third outlier is ethnicity, namely Australian born Muslims. The final outlier category is Muslims both leaders and followers not affiliated with any Australian Islamic organisations.

In the current research the outliers are considered closely to give strength to the emerging theoretical propositions, because these outliers are the cases that offer the most valuable information for in-depth qualitative analysis (Acock et al., 2005).

## 3.8 Sampling strategy

Qualitative research uses non-probability (purposive) sampling as it does not aim to produce a representative sample. Purposive sampling and theoretical sampling are the appropriate sampling methods used in this study.

Purposive sampling is usually used at the beginning of qualitative research and occurs in cases where the researcher decides to select a suitable sample of experienced and knowledgeable participants to answer the research question (Patton, 1990). Purposive sampling is driven by sound judgement rather than convenience or bias. In this research, the purposive sampling takes place with the cooperation of key informants, who help in selecting the sample through careful consideration of participants, to ensure that rich data were obtained.

In this research, purposive sampling starts with the purpose of investigating the leadership process in AFIC and the sample is thus selected to include people of interest and exclude those who do not suit the purpose. The preliminary criteria set in this research to select people of interest depend on their agreement to be

forthcoming, to be experienced and knowledgeable, and the importance of their perspectives in relation to the investigation. Those who are initially selected occupy positions at local and state branches and they belong to the top, middle and bottom levels of the hierarchy. Initially, the number of people interviewed was less important than the criteria used to select them. The characteristics of individuals are used as the basis of selection, most often chosen to reflect the diversity and breadth of the sample population.

Theoretical sampling differs from purposive sampling and comes after the latter, depending on the initial findings which give the researcher an indication of which data is required next (Glaser, 1978; Jeon, 2004). In this way, data collection is managed and controlled by the emerging theory developed from the grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1978; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The sample is emergent as the theory and the method in general (Dick, 2005). Theoretical sampling helps to gather data that are as rich and as explanatory as possible. A strong sampling strategy (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) makes the researcher's task easier and the journey of research shorter because the data will be richer and more informative.

Theoretical sampling starts broadly and is narrowed by the researcher to better define the topic of inquiry (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Merriam (2002) highlights the fact that needs of qualitative research are best met by theoretical sampling and purposive sampling. This is based on the assumption that to discover, understand and gain insight, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most.

Theoretical sampling is used in this research immediately after finishing the first stage of phase one of data collection. Stage one of the first phase used purposive sampling to select people of interest. In the beginning my aim was to generate a large number of codes related to the phenomenon being studied to keep things as 'open' as possible, and for this reason it was necessary to interview people who could give an account of a wide range of relevant issues. The second stage of data collection and analysis was informed by the need for participants who could shed more light on the initial themes of the first stage, and who could strengthen the

initial open coding and had the ability to explore more codes and concepts, while at the same time clarify any differences that may arise. The third and fourth stages of phase one were informed by the need for participants who could increase depth of focus.

Finishing the first phase of data collection and analysis, I looked back at my sample which, until then had been formed from a majority of male interviewees. This was not done intentionally. It was due to the norm of the Islamic organisations where most of the people who lead and follow are men. I decided that the best theoretical sampling for this phase could come from women who may enrich the data with their ideas and their wisdom. The search began for those women who could give the research very rich data about the current situation.

Phase three of data collection and analysis targeted participants who were successful at an organisational level, who were working with AFIC or had worked with it, and who were continuously involved in meetings and conferences with the aim of getting their organisations back on track. Those personalities were important for this phase due to their insights about the problematic issues, and ways of improving their situation. I was unable to conduct formal interviews with those people due to their busy schedules. I attended three conferences to observe the situations in these various Islamic organisations, and to catch up internally with my targeted interviewees.

Phase four of data collection and analysis was informed by the researcher's intention to elaborate and examine the previous categories. Part of this process of theoretical sampling is to confirm the findings so far and to work upon similarities and differences. I intend to confirm findings or discard it using different criteria: the positions they hold; their status as role models; the charisma with which some of them inspire young men and women in the Islamic community and the broader Australian community, and the way they articulate things differently from others.

## 3.9 Data collection strategy

The emphasis on data collection in this section gives rise and context to the sources of data without ignoring the fact that in the grounded theory method, data collection and analysis occur concurrently. As this research is predominantly qualitative the data comes from different sources including formal interviews, informal interviews, observations and documents. Data triangulation of these different sources will help to improve the validity of the findings. Merriam (2002) suggested that the best strategy to shore up internal validity is by triangulation. The source of data for this study comes from different sources detailed below.

### 3.9.1 Formal interviews

A qualitative investigation aims for depth as well as breadth in the type of information gathered from participants in order to form a rich interpretation within the context under study. The largest portion of information usually comes from formal interviews. Formal interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Bryman, 1995). Unstructured interviews are most suitable for grounded theory in that it elicits the respondents' ways of thinking about the issues with which the researcher is concerned (Bryman, 1995). Chenitz and Swanson (1986) suggest that the interviewer may use a guide which contains brief, general questions, a topical outline or a major theme.

Twenty four formal interviews took place in order for the researcher to understand and explore the views, experiences and incidents about the process of leadership in AFIC. The formal interview procedure in this study proceeds through the first and the last phases of the four phases of data collection and analysis, to accommodate the essence of a grounded theory interview that evolves and develops responsively throughout the data collection.

*Phase one* consists of *four stages* of data collection and analysis. *Stages one*, *two and three* are informed by formal interviews and *stage four* is informed by a focus group meeting. *Stage one* begins with six *unstructured interviews*. This stage focuses on the early interviews which are minimally controlled by the interviewer,

so that the widest possible interpretation can be placed on the subject by the interviewee, to enable all possible views, thoughts and experiences to flow without any restrictions. Unstructured interviews give interviewees the freedom to tell their stories in their own way. There are no predetermined questions or answers, and reliance is placed upon social interaction between the researcher and informant to elicit information (Minichiello et al., 1990). Punch (1998) observes it as a way to understand the complex behaviour of people without imposing any a *priori* categorisation which might limit the field of inquiry. Patton (2002) describes it as the natural flow of an interaction. The objective is to achieve some kind of deep disclosure (Johnson, 2002), and the emphasis is on acquiring deep knowledge and authenticity about peoples' life experiences (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002).

In this research the focus of the interviews is on the process of leadership. *Stage one* uses open-ended questions to probe the interviewees about their first impressions. Some questions are suggested by the researcher ("Who has power to make things happen?") and some arise naturally during the interview ("You just said that the process … can you tell me more about it?"). This research follows Bryman's advise to build a more conversational type of interview with the respondent (Bryman, 1995).

*Stages two and three* of data collection is gathered from eight in-depth *semi structured interviews*. This stage commenced once the analysis of the early unstructured interviews was completed. By that time, the formal interviews become narrower in focus, as theoretical sampling commenced (Chenitz and Swanson, 1986). Semi structured in-depth interviews are the most common method of generating data for qualitative research (Briggs, 1986). It is not structured by closed-ended questions, nor is it unstructured allowing the interviewee to talk freely about whatever comes up (Bryman, 1995). The researcher has a list of prepared supplementary questions or an *interview guide* on specific topics to be covered relying on answers to the introductory question during the unstructured interviews (Bryman, 1995; Wengraf, 2001). It may entail unplanned subsequent questions if there is an inter-relation with important themes, allowing the interviewer to focus on

clarification and elaboration, leading to both model-building and model testing (Wengraf, 2001). Semi-structured interviews are focused on specific questions to be asked, allowing for the exploration of new emergent themes and ideas that inform the next stage of data collection (Hockey, 2004).

*Phase four* is the final phase of the data collection and analysis. Here, it might be necessary simply to have a flexible conversation to check out a few points. Nine formal interviews, along with informal interviews and participant and non-participant observations, allow saturation and theoretical completeness to occur.

### 3.9.2 Informal interviews

Informal interviews entail well prepared questions to find out about issues which are central to the research question, and to gain insight from people who cannot be interviewed formally. This type of interviewing can, on occasion, take place without prior notice. It depends on the investigator's knowledge about future events, and knowledge about attendees whose contributions are of great importance to the research investigation. These events could open the door for more informal interviews with people of interest who are not on the researcher's list. The venues are conferences, community meetings, festivals or weekly religious meetings. A total of 18 people were interviewed in an informal setting. These people were drawn from a range of levels. All informal interviews were written in memos immediately after each interview. Memos are visited and revisited so that the data may be integrated with generated concepts and categories.

### 3.9.3 Focus groups

Focus groups are particularly well suited for conducting research among minorities and other vulnerable populations (Calderon et al., 2000). Glesne (2006) and Glesne and Peshkin (1992) suggest that group interviewing at times proves very useful for people who are reluctant to talk individually, but when they are in the company of others, they are emboldened to speak out. One of the distinct features of focus-group interviews is group dynamics; accordingly the type and range of data generated through the social interaction of the group are often deeper and richer than those

obtained from one-to-one interviews (Thomas et al., 1995). A focus group is applicable in a situation in which the interviewer asks group members very specific questions about a topic after considerable research has already been completed (Merton et al., 1990). Five focus groups contributed towards the data collection and analysis in the current research.

### 3.9.4 Observations

Observation is grounded in direct experience that enables the researcher to collect data from an actual interaction. In this research, both indirect observation and participant observation were conducted, in conjunction with formal and informal interviews. Indirect observations were conducted within five conferences, seven training and consultation workshops, three fundraising dinners and eight festival events. One week of participant observation was conducted through my involvement with one local organisational setting. During this week, I participated in activities ranging from a youth program, consultation meetings, a brainstorming workshop, lectures, a focus group meeting, and a general discussion forum. The latter observations occurred in the final phase of data collection and analysis. I observed incidents related to leadership and then wrote memos immediately after. The observation is not confined to those incidents initiated by leaders alone; rather it includes the actions of leaders and interactions between followers, and vice versa. The views and behaviours of both parties were noted. The participant observation journey was in line with most previous interviews, and consolidates the existing concepts and categories.

### 3.9.5 Documents analysis

Documents were analysed along with interviews and observation data. These documents included newsletters, news articles, mission statements, policy papers and external independent reviews. The independent reviews are a valuable source of data due to the process review, which is totally independent from the organisation under study; hence the data is objective and unbiased. Figure 3.1 summarises sources of data collection.

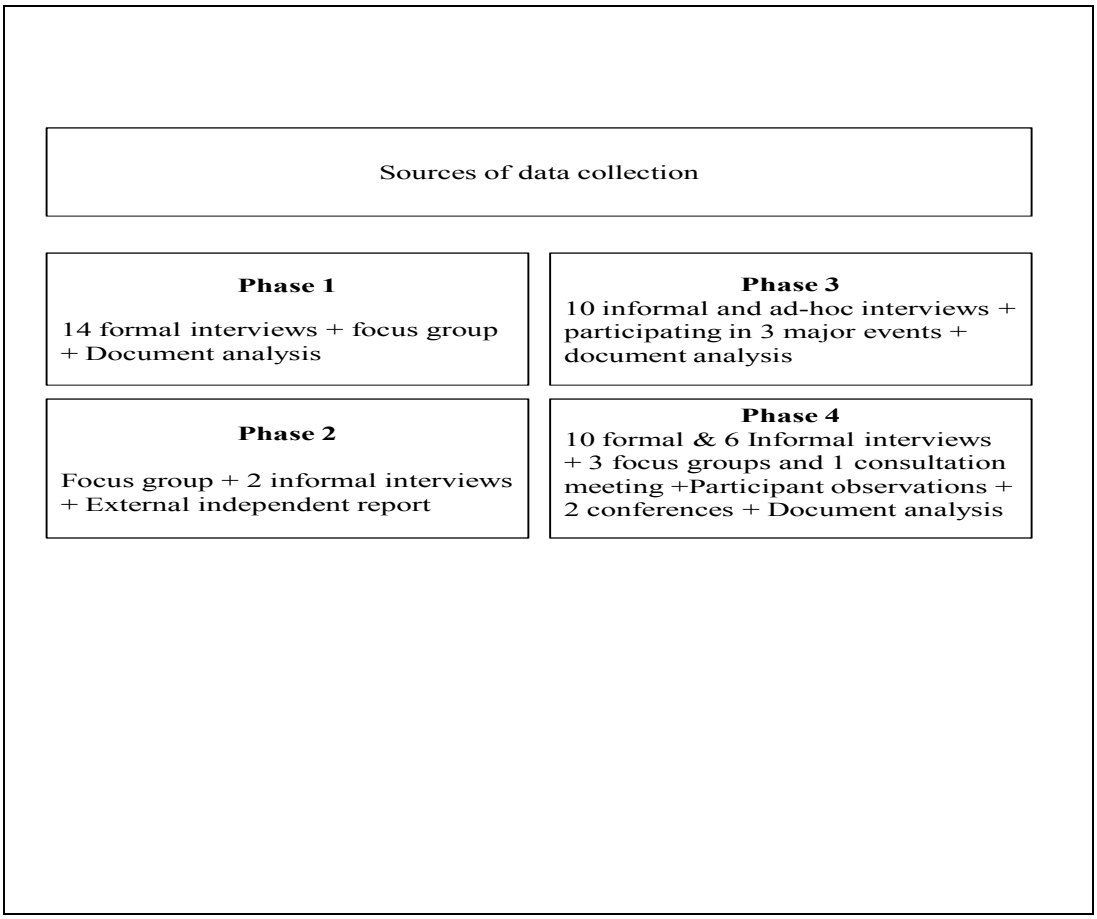


**Figure 3. 1 Sources of data collection**

## 3.10 Data analysis as it happened

> Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organising and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorisation, hypothesising, comparison, and pattern finding (Hatch, 2002: 148).

In the present research, concurrent data collection and analysis went through four subsequent phases. The four phases represent the long journey of collecting and interrogating data. In this section I will outline the actual experiences which occurred during the data analysis process. Figure 3.2 clarifies the ongoing data collection and analysis process.

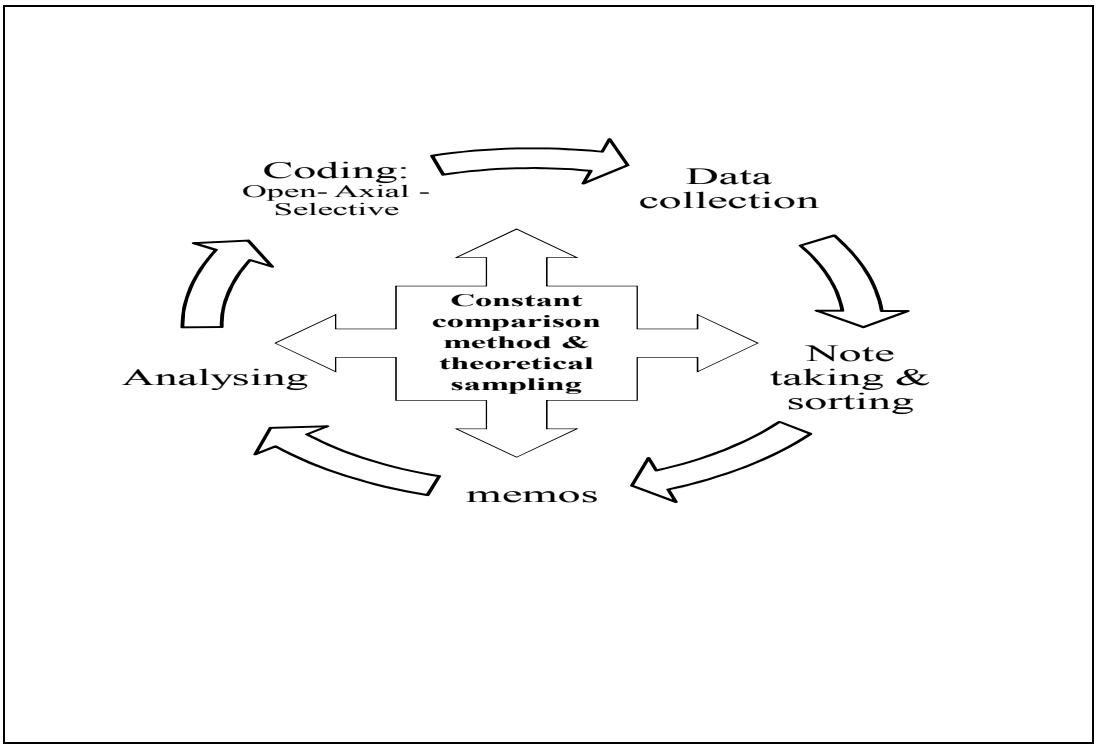


**Figure 3. 2 Ongoing data collection and analysis**

### 3.10.1 Phase 1

Analyses were initiated simultaneously with data collection by taking notes and writing memos. From the first interview, I was always prepared with a notepad to take notes of any important words, ideas and views generated by the interviewees. I was then able to make elaborations, in the form of memos, about these ideas. *Memos* are important as they provide researchers with ideas that could be forgotten after the interviews. The ideas written during and immediately after interviews could be a cornerstone to enable the identification of categories and their properties and to derive a theory.

Memos are the written notes of analysis related to development of the theory (Chenitz and Swanson, 1986). Goulding (2002: 65) elaborates that memos are used as "part of the process of abstraction, and therefore, when writing memos, ideas should be expressed in conceptual terms, not necessarily in people terms". Glaser (1978) doubts that the generation of grounded theory is possible without writing up

ideas in a theoretical memo format. Memos may enable the researcher to move from mere description to theorisation and category building.

In the present research, memos were written during the process of data gathering and analysis to describe the phenomenon under investigation (Martin and Turner, 1986). Furthermore, they were written in different formats as key points (Glaser, 1992) and in a free-flowing format (Martin and Turner, 1986). Glaser (1992) identified the use of key points rather than individual words, allowing concepts to emerge. The selection of points key to addressing research questions is in line with qualitative coding analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The key point format summarises the passages of data into key points of coding. On the other hand, the free-flowing format is used to try to understand the respondent's elaboration on issues relating to the phenomena under investigation, and then to write a theoretical memo passage in a free-flowing manner (Martin and Turner, 1986). The early memos written in stage one of the first phase of data collection and analysis depict the first format mentioned above. The second and third stages of the first phase represent the second format of memos. Memos help to guide the investigation into areas of more depth and focus.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the interrogation of interview transcripts began immediately, keeping in mind three approaches to qualitative data analysis: the literal, interpretive and reflexive approaches (Mason, 2002: 149). Meanwhile, I decided to use the qualitative software package *NVivo version 9* to help me organise and store the data in a very efficient way. At the outset, portions of the data were manually analysed, but I then decided that *NVivo* would better meet my needs for the following reasons:

- Helps organise and manage a large volume of related information.
- Helps to identify themes.
- Works as a one central storage for all research materials.
- Helps with, and speeds up, the process in the analysis of qualitative data.
- The software can enable a researcher to swiftly and precisely analyse all sorts of data, whether it is interviews, audio or video recordings.

- It is simple to use.
- Plays a very important role in easing the process of tracking data, interrogating information and making queries about frequencies of certain words or concepts through its powerful search query tools.
- Helps to find relations between themes.
- With *NVivo* it is easy to do coding and visualise codes through coloured strips.
- Makes it easier to write notes, memos and annotations and link these to relevant parts of text in different transcribed documents.

Early manual notes and memos accompanied with *NVivo* Data tracking feature and the spontaneous coding or *in vivo* coding helped me write the first open codes. The analysis process of *open coding* is of high importance in preliminary studies like this one, as it opens the researcher's mind to new ideas and concepts. Goulding (1999) explains open coding as a process of breaking data down into separate units of meaning. Open coding involves breaking down, analysing, comparing, labelling and categorising data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). At first, I kept myself as open as possible to what interviewees were saying, as the subject may identify something of interest and it must be noted. Through *NVivo* I noted repeated words of importance and similar words that were often used. Related passages of each interview were grouped and every passage in each interview relating to the leadership process was highlighted. The key points regarded as important to the investigation were identified in the transcripts, labelled with an appropriate code and written in italics, starting at the first interview and continuing through subsequent interviews (Dey, 2005). This first stage from the first phase generated nine open codes.

At this stage I considered different ways to approach the data so that I remained open-minded about what could be coded. At this early stage of the research the *constant-comparison method* begins. Glaser and Strauss (1967: 105-115) describe the method of continually comparing concepts with each other during open coding as the 'constant comparative method'. Goulding (1999), among others, believes that the constant comparison of subsequent concepts, grouping the concepts into

meaningful categories, will eventually lead to higher-order categories. The comparison happens from dataset to dataset, dataset to codes, codes to similar codes or different codes and codes to theory, until higher abstraction units emerged as categories. Spiggle (1994) mentions that comparison does not compare only similarities, but tracks differences as well across incidents within the data currently collected, and provides guidelines for collecting additional data. Goulding (1999) amongst others, believes that constant comparison of subsequent concepts, grouping the concepts into meaningful categories, will lead to the emergence of a *theory*.

I began the constant comparison within data sets of each interview and between the first six interviews from the first stage of phase one, reminding myself to remain open-minded about participant's views. I started to notice significant patterns in the data, similarities and differences. Portions of each interview were interpreted, and the pieces of one case were linked together (Sivesind, 1999). The comparisons between the first six interviews were processed through grouping the same ideas and isolating different ideas to see links and relations with the phenomenon under investigation. Separating the same ideas from different interviews translated to five open codes.

Upon starting stage two of data collection and analysis, I began increasing the depth of the focus, parallel with the theoretical sampling process. In the beginning, my aim was to generate a large number of codes to keep things as 'open' as possible and, for this reason, it was necessary to gather data on a wide range of relevant themes. Subsequently the second stage of more structured questions took place. This second stage involved a more targeted selection of interviewees and a more structured interview protocol (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

I began to analyse each interview immediately through memos, and to label them with the most appropriate codes. The core messages of each interview were analysed, and incidents and participants views were highlighted and approached with reflexive interpretation. *Open codes extracted from these core messages were*

*written in italics*. Quotes from interviews were inserted within inverted commas. As a result of analysis, twenty open codes were generated.

Stage three of data collection and analysis aimed to consolidate the findings of the last eleven interviews, build upon them and embark on category building. I reminded myself of the strong sampling strategy (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). The three interviewees informing this stage are of a different calibre with a broader foresight. Memos were written in the free-flowing format mentioned above. I interpreted and elaborated on the core messages of each interview and labelled them with the relevant code. Twenty two open codes were generated.

One focus group meeting took place immediately after the third stage to see whether or not the incoming data from the focus group diverged from, or converged with, the already generated fifty open codes. The main question for the focus group was whether the nature of leadership in AFIC is problematic or otherwise and the process behind both. The outcome from the focus group meeting converges with the previous open codes. The complete set of open codes provided enough data to suggest a problematic nature of leadership which, in turn, affects a lot of organisational work. I reviewed my memos and remarks during and after all past interviews to check whether data obtained were exaggerated in a certain direction, and I again asked myself whether my analysis imposed any preconceived notions on these findings. From my point of view, I cannot judge my analysis, but to the best of my knowledge, I conveyed the participants' message on writing the unfolding codes and concepts of this stage, taking into consideration my understanding of this complex phenomenon of leadership. That is why the sample was a colourful sample that represents leaders and followers alike. This sample could inform leadership, not just through the eyes of followers who can be biased in their views about leadership, but from leaders as well.

After having finished phase one of the data collection and analysis, and the consequent emergence of open codes, I started turning the open codes into category building, climbing to the next level of abstraction. I started the category building

using a three way approach: *intensive pattern searching, extra code interrogation and integrating patterns.* Intensive pattern search performed through the *NVivo 9* search query tool looks for reoccurring codes, exact word matches, stemmed words, synonymous words and concepts, nearby words, codes and conditions. Extra code interrogation was achieved through revisiting the data to check whether or not the coding was exaggerated or biased. Finally, the integration of patterns was carried out by merging nearby patterns, exploring the conflicting and outlier patterns and connecting them to a suitable concept, referring descriptor codes to the appropriate pattern, categorising the major patterns in one category, and finally attaching the recurrent and important patterns to the major category.

Although the complete set of open codes provided enough data to suggest a problematic process of leadership, it was important to go into category building to confirm this and to check the important themes relating to it. The intensive analysis points to *problematic leadership* as the lower-order category. The process of searching, interrogation and integration organised open codes in the following order:

1- The synonymous codes, represent two sides of the same code (Woods, 2006) which resemble the lower-order category highlighted in red as in figure 3.3.

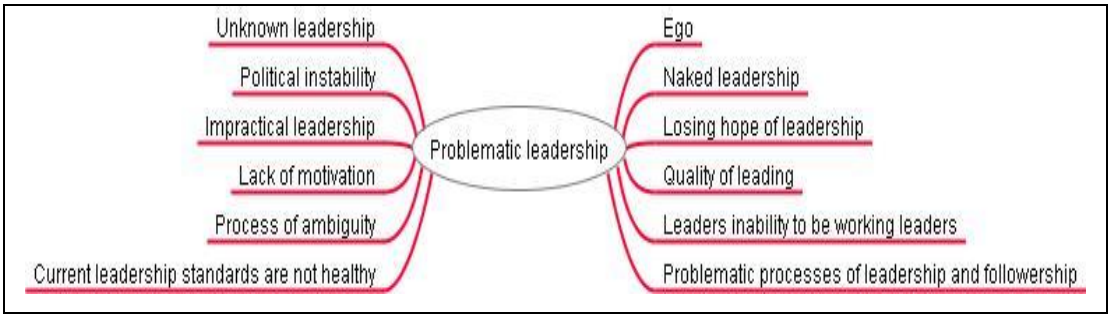


**Figure 3. 3 Descriptors (codes) of the lower order category**

2- Nearby codes, common codes and the most reoccurring and integrated codes that make the process of leadership problematic under one or various codes.

Figure 3.4 also shows similar codes appearing under more than one code, (Woods, 2006) highlighted in blue.

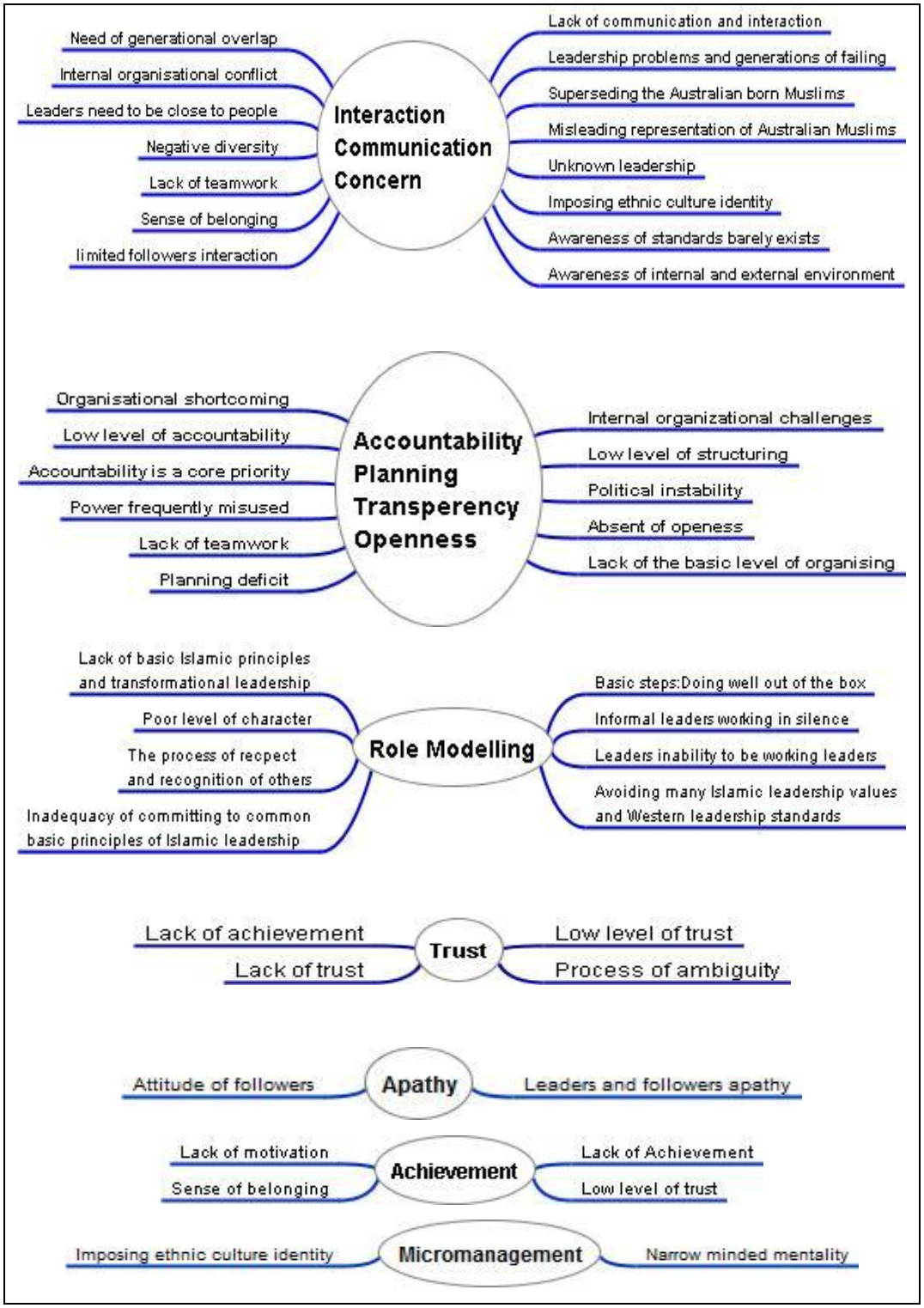


**Figure 3. 4 Subcategories that makes the process of leadership problematic**

3- The subcategories (properties) of the lower order category grouped under problematic leadership are highlighted in green in figure 3.5 and elaborated on in chapter 4.

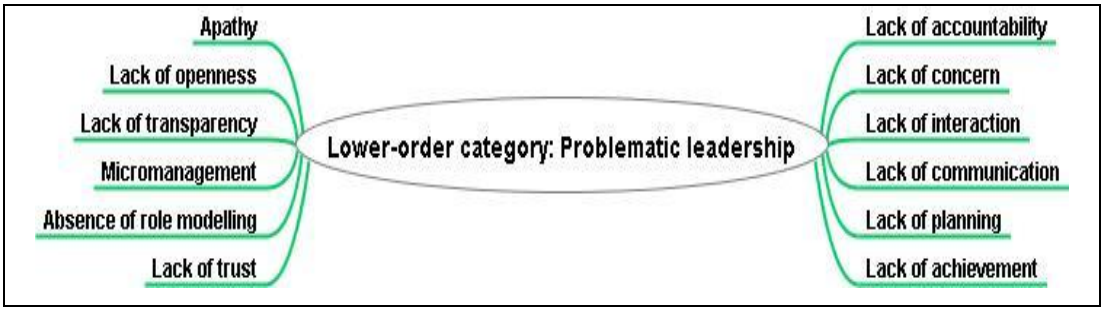


**Figure 3. 5 The lower-order category and properties**

### 3.10.2 Phase 2

So far the research has identified problems. It is now time to understand why the problems are occurring. The questions posed are: how and why have these problems originated, and where do they come from? To answer the question I decided to *revisit* the previous findings and to conduct structured discussion through a focus group meeting. Focus group meetings may allow the researcher to gain more in-depth data from participants who feel more comfortable in a small group environment, and this may produce a greater depth of information (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). The next sample consists of five women who agreed to participate in this study. Two other women declined the invitation and agreed afterward to answer the questions in an informal meeting. The women were knowledgeable and forthcoming in ideas and new concepts.

The researcher started to link concepts and categories from phase one of the data collection with the current phase. By linking the categories and investigating the connections between concepts, the abstraction of a higher level of axial coding begins (Goulding, 1999; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain axial coding as an analytic activity for making connections between a category and its sub-categories developed during open coding. Strauss and Corbin (1998) point out that the purpose of axial coding is to reassemble data that are

fractured during open coding by organising the data into a framework which draws causal relationships between categories and sub-categories, and which involves the process of abstraction onto a theoretical level, eventually guiding to the core category. The word 'axial' is used by Strauss and Corbin (1990) to explain the idea of putting an axis through the data, where an axis connects the categories identified in open coding.

Two concepts from the previous phase of data collection were identified as very important links to 'problematic leadership'. Phase one was not focused on the process of problem creation *per se*, but the data that emerged was part of the elaboration by the participants. Additionally, through a focus group meeting the researcher was able to identify another two concepts of problematic nature that answered the overarching questions, how and why. Also, some of data that emerged from this focus group meeting is similar to the data that has been collected so far from phase one of data collection and analysis.

The focus group meeting generated less open and narrower data. My main focus was on units of meaning that are relevant to this phase of data collection and analysis. The units of meaning linked directly to the answer of the how and why questions. Units of meaning separated into four major concepts. The latter concepts grouped under one major high-order category of problematic context as shown in figure 3.6. The four major concepts were elaborated upon through participants' views and memos written during and after the focus group meeting.

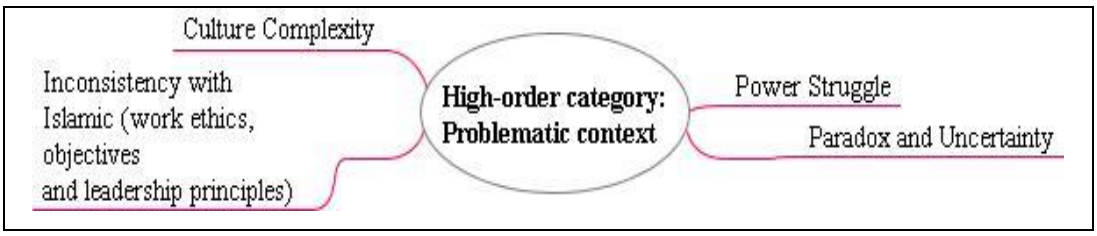


**Figure 3. 6 High-order category and properties**

### 3.10.3 Phase 3

The incidents revealed during the first and the second phases of data collection and analysis concentrated on the problematic process of leading and the problematic nature of context. The negativity surrounding leading, following and context does not completely negate the possibility of a positive story-line emerging. On finishing these two phases of interviewing, I revisited the data to ponder how a positive story-line might emerge. It was obvious from the data that another reiterated concern is that of how leaders are able to positively work through problems.

In what I can describe as a long period of analysis after the second phase, I theorised about the positive notion of getting leadership back on track. Two subsequent categories, namely inclusive workability and reanimating leadership workability, emerged. I returned to Strauss and Corbin's (1998) axial model to shed light on the latter categories. Further analysis showed that the core category of reanimating leadership workability points to leadership development, not to a leadership theory or process.

Not long after the previous elaboration I decided to embark on new interviews to gather more data about the other side of the story. The next set of interviews chosen according to theoretical sampling targeted participants who are successful, both at a personal and at organisational levels. Those participants are members of the few successful Muslim organisations under the banner of AFIC, or who had worked with these organisations, and they had working links with some of the more successful wider community organisations. I was unable to conduct formal interviews with them due to their busy schedules. Ten informal and ad-hoc interviews were conducted with main aim of discovering how to work through leadership and context problems. I participated in three main events. The first was held at a university campus to learn about the experiences of young Australian Muslim leaders. The second was a consultation meeting with personalities of various Islamic organisations regarding a current state-wide event, and the third was a fundraising dinner which attracted Muslim business leaders. Some of the informal interviews took place after these gatherings.

As part of constant comparison, I re-read field notes and memos to improve the plausibility and explanatory power of the emerging ideas. Theoretical memos were taken alongside the field notes that included questions about repeated patterns, links to other theories, and conceptual ideas that developed during research. I also included some personal notes that augmented the successful experiences of the participants. This reflexive data was important because I was also a member of the society within which the phenomenon was being researched.

Meanwhile I tried to put pieces of concepts together again. Extensive analysis brought to light the near-core category of 'Reconciling Problems'. Reconciling problems is one step of many for leaders and followers as they start acting on a variety of measures to generate workability. This phase of data collection and analysis consolidated the very first notions of articulating views of participants at the two previous phases of interviews and group discussions. These ideas were about lifting the leadership and the followership from the current status of negativity to a more practical and inspiring status. At its core, reconciling problems represents the normal operational mode of work and action to overcome these problems. The two main subcategories are enacting leading and enacting following. Figure 3.7 shows reconciling problems and the two subcategories with dimensions of the two subcategories.

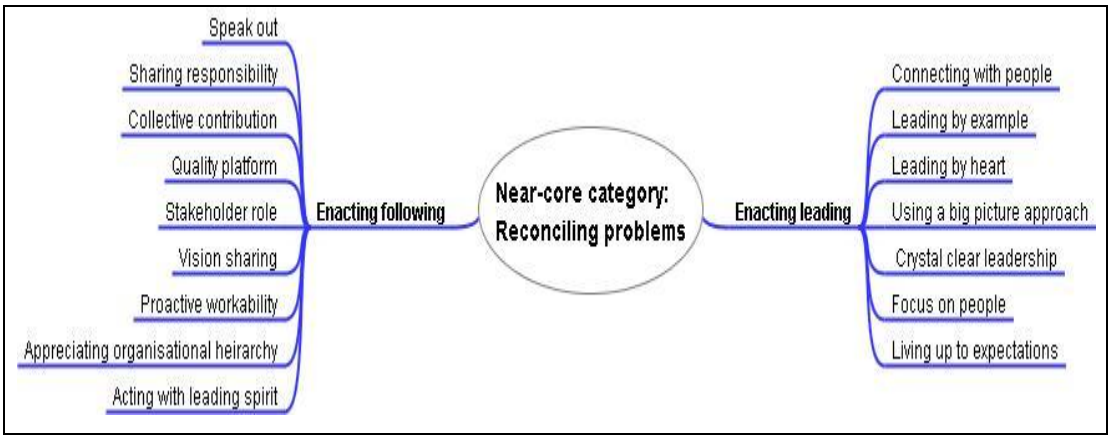


**Figure 3. 7 Near core-category**

### 3.10.4 Phase 4

The next issue to emerge after the emergence of the near core-category of reconciling problems was whether there were more steps to follow or whether this was the complete story. This question guides the next set of theoretical sampling. The next sample needs slightly different personalities. The participants are mainly young charismatic people. They articulate things differently from others. They are very successful leaders and personalities at the local and state organisations they represent.

The first stage of the fourth and last phase of the journey of data collection and analysis included two formal interviews, two informal interviews, one focus group meeting, an official consultation meeting and two conferences. The extensive interviews and meetings were eye-opening as I saw the divisions, conflicts, power struggles, narrow-minded mentalities and aspirations in action.

The above picture confirms the organisational complexity. I reminded myself that theorising now is one level above the near core-category, hence the need to start *selective coding* along with the constant comparison method and axial coding. Selective coding as Strauss and Corbin (1990) mentioned, is a bridge used to reach a central phenomenon. Sarker et al. (2001) observe that selective coding involves the identification of the core category, which explains the phenomenon under investigation. Strauss and Corbin (1998:116) define selective coding as "the process of selecting the central or core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development". Babchuk (1997) describes selective coding as the process which relates categories to the core category, which then becomes the basis for the grounded theory.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) have drawn attention to important points in selecting the core category. First, it must be central so all other categories relate to it. Second, it must appear frequently in the data. Third, the explanation of the relationship between core category and sub-categories should be consistent and logical. Fourth,

the phrase used to describe the central category should be a general term so that it can lead to more general theory. The final outputs of the data analysis will be a contribution to theory, a model, a basic social process, a story-line, and a hierarchy of abstraction model.

I revisited the data to consider the incidents. Meanwhile, I thought in terms of axial coding and putting the pieces together. I drew the axial map for the categorical relations between problematic context and reconciling problems. Figure 3.8 shows the constructed model.

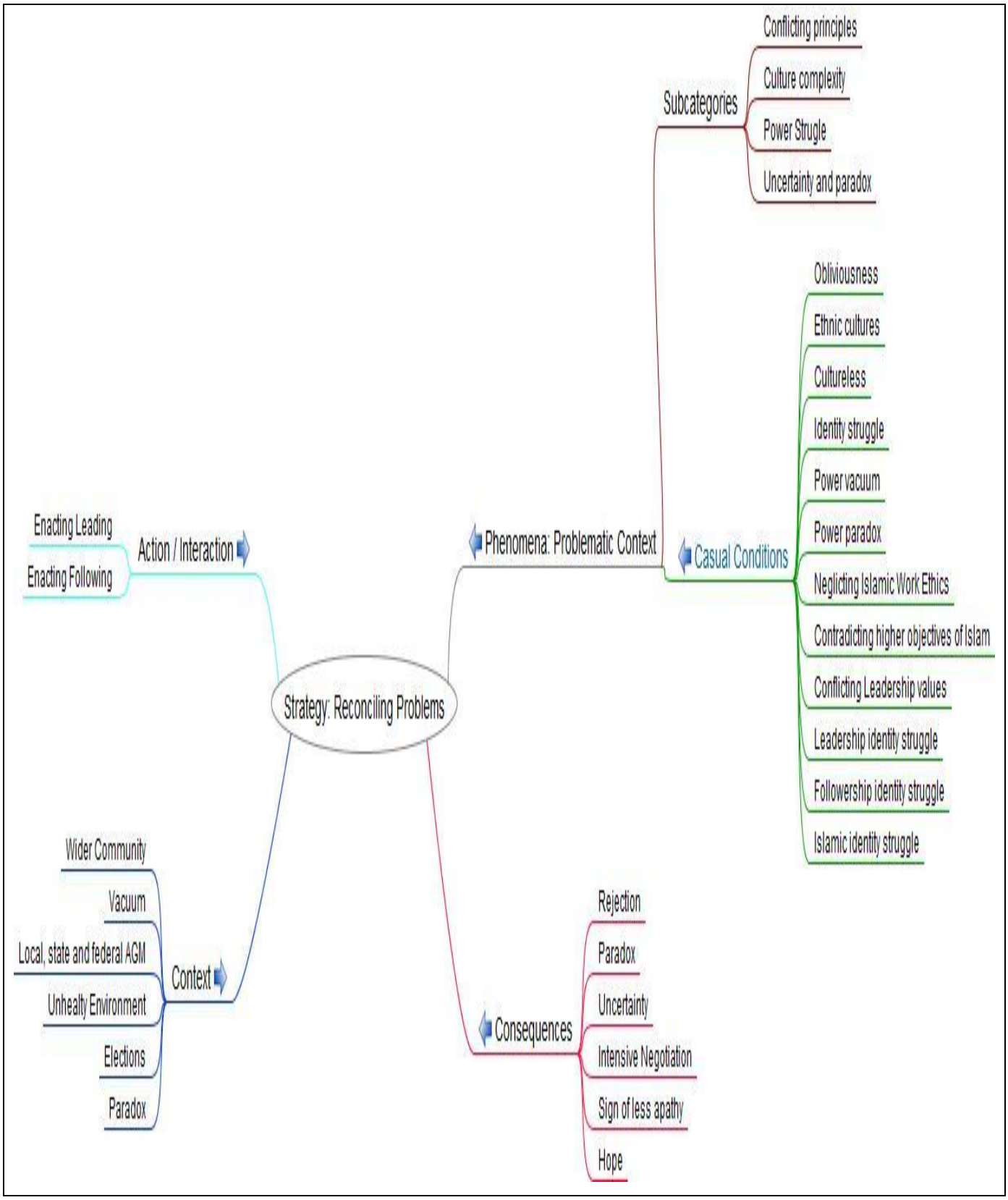


**Figure 3. 8 Axial model relating problematic context with reconciling problems**

It became clearer from the aforementioned incidents and the consequences of rejection, intensive negotiation, uncertainty and hope that the near-core category of reconciling problems can play an important role within problem solving in a less severe environment with stable conditions. But at the start of organisational upheaval and amid complex situations, a different process is needed to overcome the hurdles facing manifestations of leading and following. This process is Accommodating Complexity. Accommodating complexity will enhance leading and following processes by leaders and followers who work hard at managing complexity, after which the flow of good processes of leading and following will follow.

In contrast with the aforementioned negative events, another official consultation meeting was held, and all individuals from various disciplines came together to do their best to put the organisation needs before their personal interests. Many of the participants are role models for the young Muslim generation who did not have formal positions. The participants at this formal consultation meeting discussed ways of bringing change by doing something different, to establish a new direction for Muslim organisations in Australia. New directions need different mentalities, different personalities, different strategies and different processes.

Further data collection and analysis showed that leaders cannot start accommodating complexity without identifying and clarifying the problematic situations, using both foresight and knowledge. They must challenge the preconceived notions of others and respect other peoples' views as well. They must harness the talent of others in trying to make sense of recent successes in organisations outside and inside the umbrella of AFIC. Appealing to a big picture approach with foresight, knowledge and achievement represents the near-core category of sense-making at a higher level of the leadership process. The social process of sense-making certainly subsumed the social process of accommodating complexity.

I began the second stage of the fourth phase of data collection and analysis by keeping in mind the important question what is going on here and how will the

upcoming interviews and observations unfold? I spent a week observing and participating in one local organisational setting, along with two formal and four informal interviews and one focus group meeting. The participant observation journey was in line with most previous interviews in terms of consolidating the existing concepts and categories.

Further memoing allowed me to go through the previous interviews and observations to consider upon many views. Through participants' elaboration on the practices of leadership in the current context, they touched on their forecast for future change. From their point of view, they were certain that change would be coming. They argued for leaders of change and they argue that leaders should begin the painful steps of change by implementing and adhering to the basics of Islamic leadership and the basics of leadership in general. Furthermore, they encouraged federal and state leaders to begin acting on these basics, and to follow the footsteps of the few existing successful organisations.

Continuous examination of the data points out that sensemaking incorporates the social process of accommodating complexity, and positively affects change from a problematic situation to a more acceptable and more settled situation. At the same time, sense-making as a process falls short of answering three major concerns. First, is the formal leaders' failure to enact sensemaking while informal leaders' succeed. Second, a few local and state organisations deliver on sensemaking while the majority do not. Third, sense-making fails to explain a leader's behaviour on responding and reacting to sudden incidents without normal, consistent and sustainable action. These three concerns impose limitations on the ability of sensemaking to explain and integrate aspects of leading actions and interactions.

Through further analysis, revisiting the theoretical memos and the continuous examination of the data, it became clear that sensemaking was part of the higher social process which involved comprehension of the basics of leading. Data examination allowed for the emergence of the core category and the basic social

process of 'Embracing Basics'. Figure 3.9 shows the basic social process and the two near-core categories.

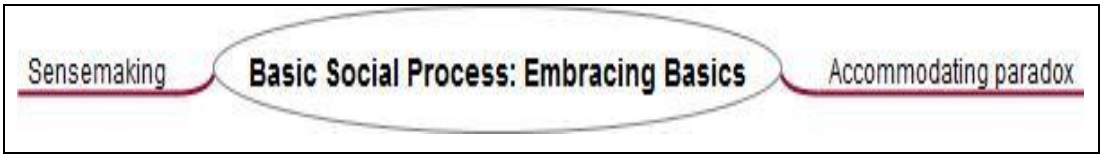


**Figure 3. 9 Basic Social Process**

The final stage of data collection and analysis of the fourth phase was informed by seven formal interviews and one focus group meeting. Theoretical sampling needed to further advance the conceptualisation of categories and to group similarities. Most of the data were in line with, and supported, the previous findings. These latest findings provided excellent, rich and focused data. I reflected on some of the new practical and theoretical explanations for the near-core categories and the basic social process. The latest findings helped me to shape the final framework model of the basic social process and related categories. It was obvious that *saturation* was achieved, and it was time to start illustrating and articulating the model of grounded theory.

## 3.11 Summary

The current qualitative investigation applied qualitative research using the grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is a suitable methodology to achieve the goals of this explanatory research in a substantive context where little is already known. The specific research design of the grounded theory method enabled the researcher to understand the phenomenon under investigation as a primary interest of the research.

Concurrent data collection and analysis is the major element in the grounded theory method. The most intelligent tools that help in the process of collecting and analysing data are theoretical sampling and constant comparison method. Theoretical sampling helps to identify what data is required next and what is the best sample to use to obtain that data. Constant comparison method enables the

researcher to compare similarities and differences of data to confirm or otherwise discount pieces of data.

Coding in grounded theory consists of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding helps to discover categories of interest, axial coding connects the emergent categories together and selective coding helps to discover the core category which links all categories under one theoretical framework. Field notes and memos help to analyse code data and flesh out the theory. *NVivo* software helps to manage and code the data.

Four phases of concurrent data collection and analysis helped with generating the lower-order category, high-order category, near core-categories and the core category. The core-category explains the variations within the three near core-categories and integrates the lower-order category along with the higher-order category. Embracing Basics is the core category and the highest level of abstraction.

# Chapter 4 Low-level category: Problematic leadership

## 4.1 Introduction

Phase one of data gathering and analysis guides the elaboration of this chapter. Phase one entails four stages. Stage one entails six formal unstructured interviews, stages two and three entail eight in-depth semi-structured interviews. Stage four entails one focus group discussion with sixteen participants. The thirty participants represent a range of leaders and followers within the state of Queensland. Subsequent sections present the fifty selected open codes generated through the constant comparison method and theoretical sampling. These fifty open codes represent the lower order-category of Problematic leadership. Finally, this chapter presents the lower order category and twelve sub-categories.

## 4.2 Data gathering: emergence of open coding

Initial interviews always help in probing the initial concepts for the area of interest and in generating initial thoughts regarding the topic. It is the first step of interviewing that captured general ideas, thoughts, views and moods. This initial stage helps to extract the themes that may set the tone for future interviews. Within the current research, it helped in an investigation of the initial perceptions of the themes encompassed within the leadership process.

Six participants were interviewed formally, five men and one woman. Some were interviewed twice. Most were in long-term leadership positions. One interviewee was born and bred in Australia, who therefore had a deep appreciation of Australian society. Interviewees forming our sample were those who agreed to participate in this study. In addition, a key informant assisted with access to these participants. The key informant helped to ensure that rich data were obtained. Half of the participants are from local and state organisations' affiliated with AFIC, the remainder from other Australian Islamic organisations not affiliated formally with AFIC, but who work with AFIC on many fronts. Half of the interviewees are still

the heads of their Islamic councils or organisations. The other half occupied formal leadership roles in the recent past.

One third of the leaders who participated in the formal interviews were founders and co-founders of their organisations. Most were interviewed more than once as iterations of data gathering unfolded. Interviews lasted for between one and two hours. Because all were willing and enthusiastic participants in the research, they were able to provide very rich data. The interviews were conducted with all levels of the hierarchy and included leaders in top management, middle management and lower management. The interviews took place in the offices, and the homes of the interviewees, infusing a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere, and allowing as much insight as possible to be gained.

The initial interview guide represented by table 4.1 was followed by the first set of interviews and the initial coding process. For more details about this process, the researcher presents some extracts of the transcribed content from interviews in order to explain how concepts and initial codes were developed, and are therefore considered as a foundation for the next stage. The following examples are key points from initial six interviews and indicate the themes that were identified and given a code. The interviewees have been given numbers to keep them anonymous. Memos were written during and after the interviews to reflect the points of focus of each interview.

**Table 4. 1 Initial interview guide**

| |
|---|
| The interviews begin with broad questions: |
| Who has the power to make things happen? |
| Who has the power to stop things? |
| Who do you look up to and who do you follow? |
| Who has had most influence on you? |
| Why do they have that influence? |

The following significant codes were extracted and were written during and after each individual interview.

*Interviewee 1 said:*

> Islamic organisations like things undocumented, because they do not want to be bound by it, they are not following policies and regulations. They decide things at hock from meeting to meeting, if this is the flavour of the month they will go along with it, next month when they come back, they forget what decisions they took last month.

***Open code: planning deficit.*** This represents lack of leadership competencies which address the lack of a basic plan to do business, a plan which provides a clear status of the current organisational work. A code of practice on issues of planning, obligations, responsibility and accountability which is fundamental to the organisation's effectiveness is inadequate.

*Interviewee 1 commented:*

> I have been telling people to go and register themselves as members of their local organisations, but many of them declined till the time of elections. By that time they come and want to be members and be elected for positions at once. Can you see the negative attitude there?
>
> Another thing that keeps us apart, there are people in our community who have experience, but they are silently sitting, it [is] taken over by people who have no experience or knowledge.

***Open code: Apathy.*** The last comment by the interviewee is indicative of the frustration among both leaders and followers about the apathy of the new members regarding the regulation of election procedures. Widespread apathy exists among leaders who want to keep the situation as it is, regardless of functionality. Apathy can be detected easily among followers who refrain from participating in organisational work.

*Interviewee 1 commented:*

> My honest opinion, there is a lack of sincerity. The older people want to hold on to their positions, because they think they struggle very hard and they make sacrifices, and they feel now that they have a God given right to run the affairs of these organisations, self proclaimed, self assumed, they are definitely not planning for the future. I think it is based a lot on false self-pride.

***Open code: ego.*** Personalities in formal leadership positions take their positions for granted. The struggle for power is paramount and prevents the organisation from heading in a planned direction. Internal politics fuelled by ego and self-pride consumes much time, which is very precious in terms of carrying out other beneficial work. Honesty and sincerity are two great pillars of Islamic principles of leadership. If leaders lose those principles, or followers assume that they have lost them, then cooperation among the two parties will be compromised.

*Interviewee 2 commented:*

> Our community is very vastly diversified; we came from different cultures, countries, and ethnic backgrounds. The leaders have to understand that they have to keep in touch with personalities of different diversity. Lack of cooperation is a symptom that exists to tell us things are not right. One of the main reasons for this lack of cooperation is prejudice and not recognising the efforts of others. Leadership has to understand and appreciate the work of others.

***Open code: lack of communication and interaction with followers.*** The comments above pose a serious problem in the current setting under investigation. With the acknowledgement of the differences among followers, terms like 'communicate', 'organise', 'align', 'understand', and 'appreciate' should play an important role in the mixed atmosphere within the organisation. The current situation is not healthy when faced with difficulties such as lack of communication and not recognising the efforts of others.

*Interviewee 3 said:*

> All the Islamic organisations that making existence (sic) are very clinched, very closed and they are not prepared to listen to new ideas and thoughts, I was frustrated.
>
> …… leaders let the Muslims down. Track record has not been good. AFIC has not tackle [d] issues affecting the Muslims; they have not shown direction for strong leadership. Leadership must have authority, and none of them have it.

***Open code: leadership problems and generations of failing.*** The followers indicate their frustration at the previous and current leadership practices. The reoccurring iteration of the failure of leadership in many aspects places the whole organisation in

a freeze mode. While leaders are not showing change regarding the basic positive skills that leaders should possess, members point out that the situation drags the whole organisation into a low functioning mode.

*Interviewee 4 said:*

> Another challenge is lack of organisation personnel who [are] willing to organise things for the community, like publish a regular updated community newspaper. I think lack of interest is one thing 'let somebody else do the job'. Internal politics is the worst enemy. The right people are not there.
>
> Look at our state office now; beside the president we do not have any professional people on the executive committee. When you don't have substance how you can be a good leader, how you can contribute. The good people, because of the politics involved in it, they are standing outside and watching. So the lack of interest from the people adds to the problem. Also one big hurdle is that the state office has no money.

***Open code: organisational shortcoming.*** While there is much talk about the transformational side of leadership, what appears from the members' views is that without the basic level of organisational structure being put in place, even from a point of zero action, the whole organisation cannot function. It is important for any organisation to establish the infrastructure of its existence.

*Interviewee 6 said:*

> Muslim leaders should have an open, honest, respectful relationship with political representative and civil servants; however, I think we should keep our Islamic principles.

***Open code: inadequacy of committing to common themes and basic principles of Islamic leadership.*** The leader's interaction with the external context is not more important than the affairs of the internal context. While the relation with the wider community and the government of the time is crucial to the organisational outward relationship, the internal legitimacy is the key to pushing the external aspect and much more. There is no substantial basis for leadership, if leaders do not take their followers into consideration at a grassroots level. Holding Islamic principles of leadership is the recipe for leaders' success.

*Interviewee 5 stated:*

> We have people who [are] holding leadership roles try to overshadow a lot of us who [are] born in Australia. I think the people who lived in Australia for a number of generations are really in the best positions to be the leaders. Unfortunately a lot of Muslims who [are] born in Australia take a back seat for those newcomers and the newcomers make problems because I think they do not have the interests of their community at hearts.

***Open code: superseding the Australian born leadership.*** The statements above indicate a disagreement took place silently among members of the organisation until now. The question of leadership representation for Muslims in Australia is a one that deserves an answer. A generation of Australians born Muslim find themselves with people in top positions who represent different type of issues, and these people relate poorly to their concerns.

### 4.2.1 Summary of first stage of initial coding

Overall, these initial data showed negative reactions which evolve around the common themes of the lack of leadership, organisational strategy, followers' behaviour and the behaviour of those in leadership positions. The data obtained from the interviewees ranged from broad concepts to specific ones. Leadership, both good and bad, received prompt attention from the participants within a few moments of the interviews beginning. Regarding their leaders, the interviewees elaborated on their behaviour, attitudes, tasks, thinking, work, duty, responsibilities and their power struggles. The negative mode was dominant in all six interviews. Interestingly, some of the interviewees mentioned above are current leaders in middle management positions, and some of them are in top positions in their respective organisations. The criticism is directed at them because they are the ones who currently make decisions and influence others. The researcher reviewed the open coding and made the decision to revisit these codes with a second round of interviews.

### 4.2.2 Open coding from first stage through constant comparison method

The next set of memos, thoughts and comments were written by the researcher after having concluded the first set of interviews. Those memos elaborated on the

similarities which the separate interviews brought to light. It was in the interest of research at this stage to consider the ways of approaching the data, so that I remain open-minded about what could be coded and begin to notice significant patterns in the data, the similarities or the differences. At this early stage of the research, the constant-comparison method begins, by comparing similarities and differences in the data and grouping the concepts from different interviews into meaningful codes (Goulding, 1999).

*Interviewee 1 stated:*

> We all occupied voluntary positions in the Islamic council. In reality yes it is a challenge. I think it is a critical issue; it is time for the members to decide that the personnel serving in any organisation should be paid. We have first of all to establish an official office, and this will lay the foundation for big changes. I am happy that you raise this question. The state council in the present time has got no organisational structure.

*Interviewee 3 stated:*

> We need to have structures in place, and those structures must [be] headed by people who [are] quite strong, who know what they are doing.

***Open code: Internal organisational challenges.*** The above comment by the interviewees indicates the difficulties facing the organisation in coming to terms with the basic organisation structure of carrying out the day to day work. The lack of a basic organisation system and structure is confusing for the followers and for middle management in regards to how to do their job.

*Interviewee 2 stated:*

> Some Islamic organisations are not functioning well. Look at our peak body, until today there is no achievement made. Can we write few lines about what they did? You find the answer is zero. Where is the social welfare, where are women's' activities, that will tell you that AFIC and all its hierarchy did nothing. Internal politics in our organisation is a disease and cancer; it's got to be addressed.
>
> The problem of leadership in our organisation is multi faceted and overlaps, it is complex. Another problem is those educated people who do not know anything about their Islam, how they can interact with their followers and the other wider community on behalf of the Muslims.

*Interviewee 4 stated:*

> The relation between the head office and the community was on the fringe, and since I left office, I am afraid that it has drifted away.

***Open code: naked leadership.*** The quotations above do pose a serious leadership issue. As leadership plays a constructive role in advancing the organisation, the situation of "no" leadership play a destructive role in bringing the organisation down. 'Not functioning well', 'no achievement', 'did nothing', 'no role model' are the expressions used to describe leadership. The concerns of followers seem genuine and demands genuine action, with extensive work to revive the ailing leadership.

*Interviewee 2 stated:*

> The person [who] makes things happen is the one who has leadership qualities who is servant of the community, who is to be there seen when the support is needed, who is there when guidance [needs] to be given.
>
> The people will follow the upright, sincere, straight person, a person who can articulate and understand the wisdom of knowledge.
>
> I think the Imams have the power to stop things if they get the experience and time opportunity. Imams have to interact with the community at large. They should get the expertise from different types of knowledge sources. They have to articulate well and understand the culture.

*Interviewee 5 said:*

> There is a lack of leadership among the religious leaders due to a very closed circle of traditional Islamic schools. The students become the teachers in the same schools which makes thing closed in this circle, and that gives little exposure to the complexity of the wider world.

***Open code: narrow leadership engagement.*** The statements above indicate how leaders can influence their followers. Members of the organisation want to see and experience their leaders' engagement. Leading in the current setting is an organisational task and a spiritual task. While the organisational leaders have a task, the imams have to do their part as well in completing the task of the organisation's leadership by influencing the followers towards achieving goals. Leaders in formal positions comprehend that, while working as a leader in the organisation, he or she must come to terms with doing not just talking. Imams should enhance their

influence by opening the door to outside influence and not just depend on their limited sources.

*Interviewee 6 stated:*

> In this organisation there is a lack of representation and a lack of equality. There are all men working in there, and there is no representation for women. We have a lot of professional women in our community, and they have a lot to contribute.

*Interviewee 1 stated:*

> The Islamic leaders around Australia are first generation migrants, they occupy all the leadership positions, there is no second generation occupying leading positions as far as I know anywhere in Australia.
>
> The vast majority of young Muslims are taking up education, they [are] following their professions. Their perception is that the first generation is taking care and so they leave it to them.

***Open code: lack of representation and followers struggle to lead.*** The statements above indicate a lack of representation by young men and women. It is a challenge for leadership to bring new blood into the system. Young men and women can bring a different view and a healthy intellect that the organisation should aspire to. The generational power-struggle is causing the organisation to become dysfunctional, which reflects badly on the perceptions of followers, and on the long term outcome.

*Interviewee 3 stated:*

> We need an organisation to speak on behalf of all Muslims, a body that gives direction, purpose and has authority, honest, truthful; they do it because of the cause.

*Interviewee 2 commented:*

> The formation of ANIC - Australian National Imams Council – is a fantastic change, it is a change that has given the impression of unity, understand [ing], respect, identity, friendship, and I think it is also manifests the common goals of the Islamic organisations. This will make it easy for us to lobby the government in the interests of Muslims and to defend Muslim rights in this country.

*Interviewee 3 stated:*

> Imams have a lot of influence on people and I guess the respected leaders, there are not many of them around.

*Interviewee 5 stated:*

> Our leaders have more interest in their profiles and they are proud to hold these positions. This is unhelpful for the organisations. I think we are on the road to correcting all these problems.

***Open code: basic steps; doing well out of the box.*** Followers begin to know how to find their way out of the current situation. They are fed up with in-substantial leadership that has left them in the dark. They began new organisations to advance the cause of individuals and of Muslims in general. They want to see something positive happening for at the grassroots level. They feel like they are just beginning to see some success now.

Table 4.2 summarises the initial open codes extracted from the first stage of interviews. I noted that many issues seems to be important as reflected in the open codes mentioned above, but I discuss these twelve open codes to show their importance and connectivity with interviewees as they express their feelings and experience.

**Table 4. 2 Open codes from the first stage of interviews**

| |
|---|
| 1. Planning deficit |
| 2. Apathy |
| 3. Ego |
| 4. Lack of communication and interaction with followers |
| 5. Leadership problems and generations of failing |
| 6. Organisational shortcoming and the need to develop transactional aspects |
| 7. Inadequacy of committing to common themes and basic principles of Islamic leadership |
| 8. Superseding Australian-born Muslims |
| 9. Internal organisational challenges |
| 10. In-substantial leadership |
| 11. Narrow leadership engagement |
| 12. Lack of representation and followers struggle to lead |
| 13. Basic steps: doing well out of the box |

## 4.3 Open codes through second stage of interviews (From unstructured to semi-structured interviews)

Upon finishing the first stage of the interviews, more focused interviews were undertaken to strengthen the initial open coding and to probe more codes and concepts, at the same time clarify any differences. On commencing the next set of interviews, I increased the depth of focus. Initially, my aim was to generate a large number of codes to keep things as 'open' as possible early on, and for this reason it was necessary to gather data on a wide range of relevant themes. Thus, it can be said that the use of open-ended questions during the interviews were aimed at discovering what was relevant. Once these interviews had been completed, the second stage of more structured questions took place. At this stage the interviews built on the initial field work results. The issues which emerged during the interviews guided me to reflect and develop follow-up questions that enhanced the richness of the data acquired during the formal interview process.

Follow-up questions evolved during the interviews allowing the researcher to pursue the implications of answers to questions posed during the formal interview. The purpose of the follow-up questions was to achieve depth and enable the researcher to elaborate on the context of answers, and explore the implications of informants' comments (Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

**Table 4. 3 Second and third stages interview guide**

| **The second set of interview questions** |
|---|
| **Semi structured interview** |
| What does leadership in AFIC mean to you? |
| Have you seen evidence of such leadership? |
| What are the leadership deficiencies? |
| And if there any deficiencies, why? |
| What is the organisation's strength? |
| What are the organisation's weaknesses? |
| How will you define successful leadership at work? |
| Are Islamic principles of leadership having an effect? |
| Are the Western perspectives of leadership having an effect? |
| Do you see any sign of team work? |
| Do the Islamic values and beliefs of a leader really matter? |
| Who has had most effect on you in this organisation? |
| Why does he/she have that effect? Tell me about incidents. |

This second stage was directed by emerging concepts, involving a more targeted selection of interviewees and a more structured interview protocol (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The researcher then followed the theoretical sampling process and began to analyse each interview immediately through methodological memos and early theoretical memos. Thus, the researcher could determine the next theoretical sampling for the following interviews, which would facilitate the collection of more in-depth data from the relevant participants. The questions became semi structured, as shown in table 4.3.

### 4.3.1 Reflections and continual open codes; second stage of interviews

Five interviews were conducted in the second stage of the interviewing process. This time the participants were chosen very carefully with the help of the key informant as well. ***Memos*** *were taken during and after interviews and important codes extracted from these memos were* ***italicised***. **Quotes** from interviews were inserted within **inverted commas**.

**The first interviewee** is a member of a local organisation which is banned from joining AFIC due to a constitutional problem relating to the board of directors for this organisation. AFIC's constitution allows the local organisations to join AFIC if their executive committee is elected through general local elections. The local organisation to which the first interviewee belongs experienced a very turbulent time spanning two election terms. The organisation decided to create a board of trustees to govern in order to avoid more problems, and that has worked well during the last few years. In response to this move, AFIC decided, in accordance with its constitution, not to accept the membership of that local organisation into the state level.

The interview covered a range of issues that reflect upon the open-coded concepts of the first stage of interviews. I have written most of the memos during the interviews, and elaborated on some after the interviews. The comments and answers against AFIC's leadership were very harsh, not just because of the issues mentioned above, but because as the interviewee stated, AFIC did not respond to his letters. He and others wrote to AFIC enquiring about one subject with no response from AFIC. The interviewee said "We wrote three letters to AFIC regarding an issue in the Islamic school in our state with no reply. It was obvious that we were getting zero feedback".

This was the first interview in my research which brings different feelings and emotions. It is the type of interview that required huge theoretical sensitivity on my part. When the interviewee began talking about the negative side of the story, and the gloomy picture of organisational work for Muslims in Australia, many thoughts came to mind but I listened showing no emotion due to the sensitivity of this topic. At the same time, I did not want to become involved in an emotional situation that could affect my research in any way.

Many views about AFIC's representation of Muslims in Australia were recorded during this interview. AFIC's claim to represent the whole diversity of Muslims was under fire from respondents, who in turn classified it as *Misleading representation*

*of Muslims in Australia* and having an "inner circle of leaders who represent themselves only", who look at their own interests without properly addressing Muslim needs, and is dominated by "overseas migrants who want to impose their cultural package upon the community". At the grassroots level, people are dissatisfied with AFIC representation; therefore the organisation will be negatively affected.

The critical point is that "followers have no confidence in their leaders". The leadership has failed to address follower's needs; subsequently they are *losing hope in leadership.* A lack in role model leaders and leaders' engagement in political battles put pressure on followers to look elsewhere to fulfil their desire for change. The failure of leadership to address the problem of cultural differences; and the failure to address a collective set of activities such as training workshops, makes daily processing activities rather difficult. Losing the talents of the Australian born Muslims is a clear signal of a loss of confidence in leadership.

**The second interviewee** is a member of several local organisations and he is still serving as president of a local organisation affiliated with the state organisation, which in turn is affiliated with AFIC. He is a second generation Australian Muslim, who was ousted from the presidency few years ago, and then returned to the position two years ago. He describes himself as a "fighter for the cause". He believes in practicality, not in talking. He raised different issues and the researcher reflected on these issues in the following memo.

The frustration of the current situation of leadership and followership became very obvious. Frustration is felt because of the *leaders' inability to be "working leaders*", as their followers expected them to be. The interviewee does not see "any working leader yet", however he does sense a certain qualities of leaders who want to be working leaders. The issue for those who aspire to be leaders is that they must acquire some grounding in "Islamic values, practical work, get down to people level, making sense of their decisions, and be encouraging". The measures above represent

a *lack of both basic Islamic leadership principles and transformational norms of leadership.*

Followers' and leaders' attitudes of grabbing leadership positions are harmful to the organisation. These people manipulate the endorsement process to take leadership positions and do nothing, just show off, which brings "a very low level of trust". *Poor level of character* of leaders is a contributor to *the low level of trust* by members and leads to a growing level of frustration. An important step in overcoming the position of having no trust and no leadership is to work hard on building moral character. All members of the organisation both leaders and followers need "to show wisdom, sincerity, humbleness and kindness" to succeed in their attempt to foster good organising skills and to overcome the manipulation of power by certain people, and to bring a high level of trust.

Leaders show their *inability to make a breakthrough at the basic level of organising*, and what is obvious is that there is no organisational system which can allow for basic steps to a revival of the organisation. A leader's responsibility is to use knowledge and education to change the attitudes and behaviour of members to begin the process of organisational change.

There is a "need for generational overlap" to add value to Australian society. The *overlap between different generations* will create a mix of experience and talent that can speak for and contribute to Muslims in Australia and to the country in general. This would contribute to an easing in the *internal organisational conflicts* and also ease the sense of frustration of not being able to cope with challenges and ideas in the current setting.

**The third interviewee** is an imam of a local organisation affiliated with the state organisation, which in turn is affiliated with AFIC. He is a serving member of a second organisation that represents the imams at a federal level. He is newly migrated to Australia, but has integrated well with his local community and the wider one. Although the interview lasted for one hour; only the most relevant and

important points were extracted. Due to the limited time of the interview, I asked him to reflect on his local experience. He mentioned different issues that are worth elaborating on.

The interview took place in a relaxed mode. Close observation shows that this imam seemed comfortable and *maintains a good relationship with people* of all genders, ethnicity, and different age backgrounds. At a different, informal interview the researcher witnessed how this imam was very calm in an exchange with one member of his local society.

The interview touched on several points. The most important point that was highlighted by the imam was the question of "diversity". Diversity is manifested as a cornerstone of Muslims' social cohesion around the world. But *diversity seemed to be part of negativity* in this setting. Drivers of this negativity range from ethnic cultural vanities which push harmful ideas and exclusive approaches, and as pointed out by the imam "lack of teamwork". The best example of lack of *teamwork* is the dominance of individuality. Individuality causes weakness at all levels of leading and following.

Furthermore, the imam believed that part of a leadership role is to "communicate vision" and to work hard to implement it. Explicitly stated vision, goals and aims are not enough without *communication and implementation.* While there is no sign of communication of a vision, it is the responsibility of all parties to talk about it and keep up the momentum to see implementation of new ideas through and to keep leadership accountable and responsible for their actions.

**The fourth interviewee** is a distinguished professor at one of Australia's leading universities. He is something of an outsider to Islamic organisations, but he is an insider in the sense of helping in the community and monitoring issues that require expertise. He lectures extensively on the relation between Islam and the west. The interview lasted for two hours, and it was interesting to discover how Muslim intellectuals think in terms of leading and organising.

This memo identified a different but important variable necessary to enhance leadership and followership among organisational and religious leaders and followers. The core challenge for leaders, as the professor believed, is to "bring quality to leadership". From this it is clear that quality flows through leaders who are accomplished professionals and intellectuals, leaders who show direction, work independently; take the initiative, and who have vision and inspiration. *Quality of leadership* can bring a meaningful contribution to an organisation and to the broader Australian community.

"Prejudice against Muslims" is a core challenge for Muslims and their leaders in Australia. Prejudice affects Muslims by preventing them from showing their true identity and *feeling the sense of belonging,* while subsequently engaging in work for their organisations. Leaders who engage in *micro management* businesses are unable to tackle the big issues such as a sense of belonging. A sense of belonging could be enhanced by religious leaders who work hard to create a sense of tolerance, respect and humility.

**The fifth interviewee** is an intellectual and an economist. The informant who gave me the name told me that this person is "a follower and a soldier for the cause". I realised during my interview that he is an economist expert, talks little and listens a great deal. The interview lasted for one hour, the main themes of the interview follows.

"Follower input" seems to be lacking in many organisational aspects. *Followers' interaction is limited*. This limitation affects organisational work, limits the ability of leaders to get on with the job, and limit their ability to put a system of monitoring the process of leadership in place. A Lack of followers' input encourages leaders to limit ability to put in place systematic line of action.

The limitation of follower input takes strength away from many resources. The first resource of this limitation is *unknown leadership*. "People do not know who their leaders are". "The time passes without any connection or communication". "The communication between leaders and followers is at its lowest level". The second

source of limitation is the *problematic processes of leadership and followership* about who is "running after power, status, and financial control". Followers maintain their momentum of work when they see their leaders striving for and serving the interests of the organisation, not using their position as a personal opportunity. The interviewee holds the strong belief that AFIC is used as a "personal opportunity" by its leaders.

Leadership usually initiates structure, but not in AFIC. Organising is at a low level due to the *low level of structure*. Structure combines many organisational levels such as human resources, financial control, an advisory body, a monitoring body and above all leadership which cares and shares. Much of the latter aspects are weak or missing in AFIC. The current setting needs a structure of "dedicated personnel and qualified people", it has to work hard on "transparency" and on initiating an "advisory body" which can infuse constant dialogue between leaders and followers.

### 4.3.2 Summary of open codes from the second stage of interviews

This second stage of interviews shed more light on the challenges facing AFIC. These challenges are more attached to concepts than to personalities. The interviewees talked about organisational representation being a problem, as well as leaders having an overseas culture mentality and lack of training. Members in AFIC are losing hope of leaders, see a lack of role models, a minimum overlap between generations, too much individuality, micro-management, minimum follower input, financial control as a prime target for leaders and poor connectivity between people at the top and at the grassroots level. Table 4.4 illustrates the important codes of this stage.

This second stage of interviews uncovered highly problematic. The overarching anxiety of both leaders and followers concerns a highly problematic and negative side of leadership, followership and organising, and inside this negativity the process of problem-solving and actual leading also emerged. After this stage of interviews the picture became clearer. However, at this stage, I reminded myself of the main objective of grounded theory, which is to generate an inductive conceptual

theory in a substantive area that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is central, relevant and problematic for those involved (Glaser, 2004). I asked again 'what is going on here?' What is the repetitive pattern that formulates the main process at this substantive setting?

**Table 4. 4 Open codes of the second stage of interviews**

1. Misleading representation of Australian Muslims
2. Losing hope in leadership
3. Leader's inability to be working leaders
4. Lack of basic Islamic leadership principles and transformational norms of leadership
5. Poor level of character
6. Low level of trust
7. Lack of basic level of organising
8. Need for generational overlap
9. Internal organisational conflict
10. Leaders need to be close to people
11. Negativity of diversity
12. Lack of teamwork
13. Lack of communication
14. Quality of leadership
15. Micromanagement
16. Sense of belonging
17. Limited followers interaction
18. Unknown leadership
19. Problematic processes of leadership and followership
20. Low level of structuring

## 4.4 Open codes consolidation through third stage of interviews

The next three interviews took place during the period between April and May 2009. The aim of the researcher was to consolidate the findings of the last eleven interviews, build upon them and embark on category building.

**The first interviewee** is a migrant businessman who came to Australia at the beginning of 1990s. He is currently a follower, and was previously a leader at the same local organisation. He began his membership in the local organisation several years ago, and then was elected as a president few years later. He lost the local level election in 2007. The aspects of both leading and following are very clear in his mind. My interview with him lasted for five inconsistent hours, and the memo of my theorising follows.

The leadership of religious leaders or imams is at stake here. It is a sort of "leadership in a very loose sense" because they cannot provide genuine leadership. Effective leadership cannot compromise "courage and speaking out" truth and justice in favour of personal interests. Many religious leaders are employed by their local organisation, which is limited in its ability to confront reckless leaders or to provide leadership on guiding followers. Limitation follows on a large scale when imams stay away from politics because "they are afraid to be seen as taking sides" between the ethnic divisions, and they are afraid to be seen as taking sides between the contested parties due to their fear of the consequences of the election. In many cases, imams have been sacked if the winning party is the one with which the imams have not aligned themselves.

I integrated the interviewee's thoughts in order to theorise about the theme of *political instability*. The researcher notes that there is much political instability and many divisions at the local and state levels. Instability can be pinpointed in several ways. The first is that people want to maintain "their identity" by holding leadership positions; leadership positions for many people are the entry for maintaining their own ethnic identity and *imposing their own ethnic cultural identity* on a large scale. The second source of instability is the politics surrounding the organisation. The attitude of "the people who don't want to come forward" recycles leadership over and over. The third source is *lack of achievement.* People seem unwilling to join AFIC because they consider that it is not achieving much, and they see it as an unsuccessful organisation. The fourth source of instability is the *attitude of followers* who have their own political ambitions, and they want to be leaders. It is not wrong

for someone to have ambition, but it is wrong if the ambition is to be a leader for the sake of the position, fame and name. Data shows that this is mostly the case of AFIC's leadership. At the current time, political unrest is seen to be one of the main drivers of the unpopular position of AFIC, and it creates an atmosphere of very low achievement.

**The second participant** in the third stage of interviews is an active member and leader in the Islamic local and state settings. He is an academic who devotes much of his time to advocating for the Islamic context in a wider Western society. The interview lasted more than two hours, and it was a turning point for the data due its richness and level of deep thinking. The interviewee is very passionate about advancing Islamic organisations in Australia, and getting these organisations back on their feet, as he put it in one of his answers in the interview. The following memos emerged during the interview, and much of it was written before the end of the interview.

Research is benefited by an exploration of how different participants look at leadership and followership issues from their own perspective, how they define these aspects in terms of their experience, and how they put their view in terms of the big picture. This interview discussed a broad range of issues that most of the last set of interviews did not touch. The second participant talked openly about different and controversial issues that most people in the Australian Muslim organisations abstain from. The data so far suggests that *leaders in formal positions are in a state of disarray.*

This interview opens the door for an exploration of *informal leaders working in silence* to bring life to Muslim organisations in Australia. Leadership is defined by who people feel is doing leading in the best way without any sign of personal swagger. This emerging type of leadership is still in its infancy but people can feel it coming. This interview identifies change in the mode of leadership, which requires further qualification and clarification in the next section of this chapter. What also

needs exploring is why the new form of leadership appears to occur predominately in silence.

The *current leadership environment thus far is not healthy*. The astonishing finding from this interview is that it is hard to solve leadership problems in the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils "because leaders are the problem". The leadership positions have been dominated mostly by migrant Muslims who were occupied with ego and gaining personal status. This generation of migrant leaders is still using a colonial mentality. Each leader combines several authorities and positions. As migrants, they have the problem of a language barrier. For the sake of publicity, leaders have created *impractical standards* for themselves and others. AFIC suffer from "leaders who set goals without achieving". The negative side of this is to understand why so many "goal setters don't become goal achievers".

The organisation enjoys the same low grade status as the leadership does. Structure is one of the main obstacles in AFIC, at both the federal and the state level. The "structure is at minimal level; many state level organisations do not have the proper setting for its offices and main staff". Leaders suffer from a *low level of accountability*. Accountability is one main driver of credibility. "Credibility of AFIC is tarnished and that makes young people abstain from joining it", so they do not lose their credibility. Credibility will be at stake without mechanisms set in place for making leaders accountable.

*Leaders' and followers' apathy* is a major problem because "people see these organisations to be ineffective". Instead of taking the initiative and acting to begin the long journey of putting the organisation on track, the majority of leaders and followers do nothing. Many different variables affect apathy, and this is a multi effect sort of problem. *Awareness of standards*, direction, and the roles of followers are at minimum level, simply because they barely exist. There was common talk among respondents about the need for the setting of standards and directions. When such important aspects barely exist, then apathy takes control.

Missing are four important concepts which connect the dynamic relationship between leaders and followers. These concepts are part of the core of leading and following. The first is *openness*, which is one of the important concepts missing among leaders and followers. Local organisations that form at the state level are seen as "closed shops without any degree of openness, they are inefficient, incompetent", and these faults are detrimental to the organisation. The second concept is *trust*. Lack of trust among followers and leaders is omnipresent. Followers see leaders as being hopeless at leading, and leaders see followers as being apathetic. It is a long process to bridge trust, and this process comes with putting in place measures to ensure that leaders and followers are trustworthy. The third concept is *respect and recognition of others*. While formal leaders struggle on many fronts, their disrespectful attitudes towards their followers, and minimum recognition for followers' efforts seems to increase the struggle, despite informal leaders' efforts to get followers to join in and play a part in the organisation. Respect and recognition is the missing ingredient between formal leaders and followers. It is the process that affects the work and performance of organisations, and lack of it can paralyse efforts to get followers to take part and start functioning. The fourth process is *the process of ambiguity*. Much ambiguity comes from "certain leaders" causing a rift between leaders and followers. This ambiguity is caused by leaders who have "no vision, no direction, and no plan". Leaders are interested in "keeping their positions" at the expense of the real work, which brings more ambiguity. The other important variable that affects ambiguity is leaders who do not have a genuine interest in everybody working together with membership and the community.

"Imams are capable of imposing ideas on the community" but they stop short of doing this. Being employees to certain local organisations, fear of losing their job, and favouritism are among many reasons for imams' lacked effect on followers. "Few imams are interested in the acquisition of knowledge" and that makes the religious authority a closed circle. Religious power is a reality in this setting, but this *power is frequently misused* in a way that suppresses people. Religious power is meant to influence and persuade people, not to suppress them.

*Knowledge-based culture* looks to be the missing ingredient at the core of this relationship between leaders and followers. Knowledge at the basic level represents awareness, and at the highest level it represents power. When knowledge is missing, awareness diminishes, and power turns to corruption.

*Awareness of the internal and external environment* is part of the important knowledge that formulates a healthy organisational culture. Leadership and followership are in need of education and awareness on every level. The main process here would be for leaders to embrace a knowledge-based culture.

**The third** participant in the second stage of interviews is an immigrant Muslim with universal cultural views who recently came to Australia. He was a dynamic figure in his homeland and he set himself the task of contributing to the wider Australian community. The interviewee gave a different insight to Islamic values and principles of leadership. The interview lasted for three hours and the researcher took memos during the interview.

The third interview in the third stage concerns some of the core, basic leadership concepts that are missing. These missing concepts are vital for ongoing success of the organisation. Leaders do not appreciate the differences and the diversity of their followers and the society they live in; this sort of attitude affects the work of the whole organisation. A *narrow-minded mentality* cannot bring in talent from outside to the closed circle of those leaders.

*Accountability* looks to be the *core priority* of many participants. They are very keen on the accountability process and how to hold those leaders accountable. Within this issue the researcher noticed the negative feeling of the participant towards leaders who failed to set measures and priorities of accountability.

It became apparent that the process of *avoiding many basic Islamic leadership values and Western leadership standards* should stop instantly. This process sets the

leaders apart from their grassroots followers and leaves them with little choice but to leave the organisation and probably become apathetic towards the organisation.

### 4.4.1 Summary of open codes from the third stage of interviews

This third stage of interviews consolidated some of the previous open codes and brings to light more internal concepts at this setting. These concepts are mentioned in Table 4.5.

**Table 4. 5 Open codes of the third stage of interviews**

1. Political instability
2. Imposing ethnic cultural identity
3. Lack of achievement
4. Attitude of followers
5. Leaders in formal positions are in state of disarray
6. Informal leaders working in silence
7. Current leadership environment is not healthy
8. Impractical standards
9. Lack of motivation
10. Low level of accountability
11. Leaders and followers apathy
12. Awareness of standards barely exists
13. Absent of openness
14. Lack of trust
15. The process of respect and recognition of others
16. Process of ambiguity
17. Power frequently misused
18. Knowledge based culture
19. Awareness of internal and external environment
20. Narrow mined mentality
21. Accountability is a core priority
22. Avoiding many basic Islamic leadership values and Western leadership standards

## 4.5 Focus group discussion and theoretical category building

After finishing the third stage of the interviews, I built the open codes into categories. Sixteen participants took part in a focus group discussion as part of a leadership training workshop. The participants were thirteen men and three women,

coming from different Islamic organisations. Some of these organisations are under the banner of AFIC and the others are independent organisations. I had interviewed some of the participants of the group previously, which made a re-commencement of the discussion easier. The group discussion lasted for one and half hours, and the ideas that came out of this discussion helped me to make comparisons and identify commonalities. The commonalities revolved around the problematic nature of leadership in this substantive setting. This can be easily identified two different styles of leadership; organisational leadership and religious leadership (or imams). All the discussion and the interviews point to a new style of leadership emerging which is intellectual leadership. The findings pointed directly or indirectly to three styles of leadership in this setting, and these are religious leadership, organisational leadership, and intellectual leadership. Each type of leadership is addressed in the following discussion.

The first type of leadership is that of religious leaders, who offer theological and Islamic cultural guidance on most aspects of Muslims' daily life. The authority of most of these leaders is dominated by the scholarly expertise of Islamic scholars or imams. The data obtained shows that these leaders are obviously constrained in undertaking work that could affect followers and the general Muslim community. They are constrained both internally within their organisations and externally. Internally, they are constrained by the closed circles in which most of them are living. One intellectual leader affirmed the negativity of traditional Islamic schools in the sense that they are very closed circles, where in the students become the teachers in these schools, giving little exposure to the complexity of the wider world. Imams are externally constrained by committees at the local level, and these committees force imams to be less open about certain issues, and to be silent on other issues which could be of benefit to the local organisation and its members. Imams are unable to express their views on certain practices of the committee members or on the leaders of these organisations.

The second style of Muslim leadership in Australia is organisational leadership. Imams and scholars do not get directly involved in organisational leadership, but they do have some influence within it. Organisational leadership is concerned with planning, organising and directing, as with any organisational leadership. Muslim organisational leadership is also concerned with internal and external political affairs, enhancing multicultural understanding, and empowering Australian Muslims. Because of the interaction with external business organisations, Muslim organisational leaders in Australia have always drawn upon different cultural and political issues, where imams often are concerned with purely religious affairs.

The third style of Muslim leaders in Australia is intellectual leaders, and this is a style which has emerged recently. This type of leadership consists of two categories. First there are the highly educated academics who specialise in general Islamic studies. Islamic studies cover a range of fields including politics, history and social science. Second there is the second generation of Muslims who have been born in Australia, and who have acquired knowledge and expertise through their engagement with the wider society. This category of leaders can be easily noticed in the states of Queensland, New South Wales and in Victoria, where these intellectual leaders dominate positions in the Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV). Islamic academic leaders have engaged in many activities around Australia, including participating in the Prime Minister's 2020 Summit held in April 2008. This was the most high profile forum where Muslim leadership was engaged, representing the Islamic community. Intellectual leaders have demonstrated they are a blessing for a generation of Australian Muslim youth. With the widening gap between the young generation and the rest of the Muslim community, intellectual leaders are doing their best to find a common ground on which to combine an Islamic way of life with Australian values and beliefs.

## 4.6 The next level of abstraction: Low-level category; problematic leadership

The data thus obtained shows that organisational leadership and religious leadership (imams) are linked to more problematic leadership, while the newer, positive way of leading is linked to intellectual leadership. Much of the data obtained shows that problematic leadership has the upper hand. While there are emerging signs of a new style of leadership, this new leadership still needs to go a long way before it becomes the dominant style of leadership. While new organisations are established to overcome leadership problems, the fact still remains that problematic leadership within AFIC is still dominating at the helm of organisational work. The complete set of open codes set out in Table 4.6, tells the repetitive story of leadership problems, fewer stories of following and organising problems, and a glimpse at a positive start in a different style of leadership from the younger generation of Muslims.

The first phase of data collection and analysis provided enough data to suggest the problematic nature of leadership. I looked extensively at my memos and remarks made during and after all the interviews to check whether the data obtained were exaggerated in any way. I again asked myself whether my feelings as a researcher imposed any preconceived ideas on these findings. On my part, I cannot judge my feelings, but I do feel that I took the side of the participants when writing up the unfolding codes and concepts of this stage, according to my knowledge and understanding of the complex phenomenon of leadership. I interviewed many people who are at the lead of their organisations to do justice to my study of leadership, not just through the eyes of followers, but also through the perceptions of the leaders.

**Table 4. 6 Complete set of phase one of open codes**

(Each box identifies one single open code)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Planning deficit | Apathy | Ego | Lack of communication and interaction with followers | Leadership problems and generations of failing |
| Organisational shortcoming and the need to develop transactional aspects | Inadequacy of commitment to common themes and basic principles of Islamic leadership | superseding the Australian born leadership | Internal organisational challenges | In-substantial leadership |
| Narrow leadership engagement | Lack of representation and followers struggle to lead | Basic steps: Doing well out of the box | Misleading representation of Australian Muslims | Losing hope in leadership |
| Leaders inability to be working leaders | Lack of basic Islamic leadership principles and transformational norms of leadership | Poor level of character | Low level of trust | Lack of basic level of organising |
| Need of generational overlap | Internal organisational conflict | Leaders need to be close to people | Negative diversity | Lack of teamwork |
| Lack of communication | Quality of leading | Micromanagement | Sense of belonging | Limited followers interaction |
| Unknown leadership | Problematic processes of leadership and followership | Low level of structuring | Political instability | Imposing ethnic cultural identity |
| Lack of achievement | Attitude of followers | Leaders in formal positions are in a state of disarray | Informal leaders working in silence | Current leadership environment is not healthy |
| Impractical standards | Lack of motivation | Low level of accountability | Leaders and followers apathy | Awareness of standards barely exists |
| Absence of openness | Lack of trust | The process of respect and recognition of others | Process of ambiguity | Power frequently misused |
| Knowledge based culture | Awareness of internal and external environment | Narrow minded mentality | Accountability is a core priority | Avoidance of many Islamic leadership values and Western leadership standards |

## 4.7 Properties of problematic leadership

To consolidate the findings so far and to turn to the open codes for the next level of abstraction, I began category building –as discussed in detail in Chapter 3– with a three way approach, namely; *intensive pattern searching, extra code interrogation and integrating patterns*. Category building resulted in twelve properties for the low-level category of problematic leadership. These properties are highly problematic and give a well documented explanation for the emergence of the lower-level category. Figure 4.1 shows problematic leadership and its twelve properties.

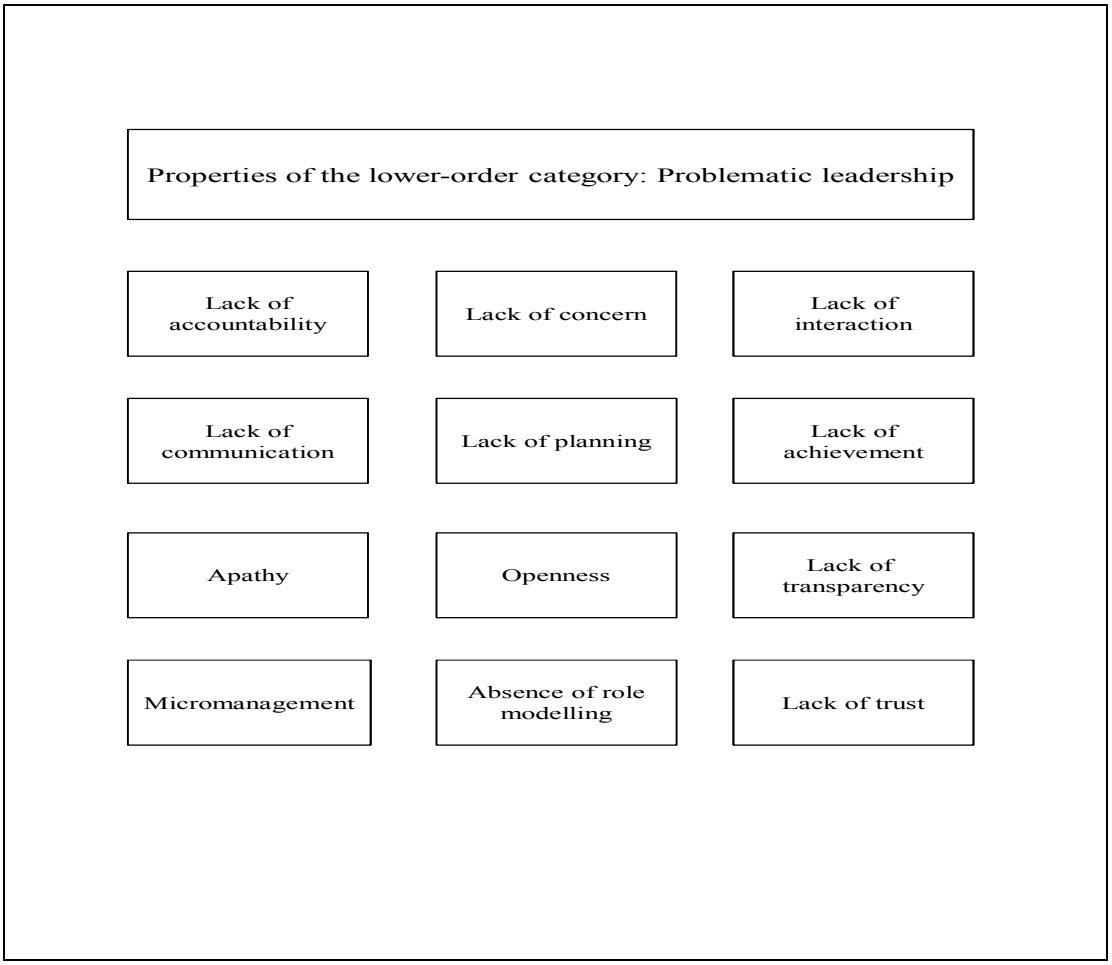


**Figure 4. 1 Properties of the lower-level category - problematic leadership**

The following discussion highlights properties of the lower-order category in detail. The discussion integrates an Islamic point of view, and points out how it links to modern leadership scholarly thinking.

**4.7.1 Lack of accountability.** Accountability is no less of worry to those in the non-profit sector than it is to those in the public and for-profit sectors (Geer et al., 2008). In this study, the theme of accountability was prominent in the minds of participants. Accountability defines the relationship between two parties in which one party (whether it is an individual, a company, stakeholders or an organisation) is directly or indirectly accountable to another party for something, whether it is an action, a process, an output or an outcome (Kearns, 1994; Osborne, 2004; Roberts, 2009; Walker, 2002). Accountability is a valuable tool in detecting and discouraging corrupt acts by requiring accounts to be given and actions to be reported. Effective accountability requires a separation of powers (Couturier, 2011; Osborne, 2004). In Islamic thought, Islam and accountability are synonymous. In fact, accountability is central to Islam, since accountability to God and the community for all activities is paramount to a Muslim's faith (Lewis, 2001). The word *hesab* is repeated more than eight times in different verses in the *Quran* (Askary and Clarke, 1997). *Hesab* in Arabic, or 'account' is the root of accounting, and the references in the Holy *Quran* are to 'account' in its generic sense, relating to one's obligation to 'account' to God on all matters pertaining to human endeavour for which every Muslim is accountable (Lewis, 2001).

Islamic organisations cannot conduct business without being held accountable and implementing accountability. Accountability was found to play a strong role in building trust between leaders and followers. If leaders lack accountability, the followers' trust is reduced, and vice versa. As one active member of an Islamic organisation, not under the umbrella of AFIC, noted:

> Organisations like ICV or IWAQ were held in a very high regard by the government because they demonstrated a lot of accountability with the funding they were given. But other organisations [are] very poorly regarded because their lack of accountability, so there wasn't a lot of trust between the government, for example, and those organisations. It is interesting to know that those same organisations that [are] trusted by the government [are] also trusted by the community. It is not a matter of Muslim or non Muslim, it is an objective criterion of trust and accountability.

Financial conduct is one aspect that AFIC can be judged on, but there are many other aspects as well. Leaders should be held accountable for the decisions they

make and the absence of that process minimises followers' trust. Taking decisions that the organisations' leaders do not adhere to diminishes their accountability. Accountability also covers the followers' commitment to those decisions. Interviewees echoed the importance of leaders being held accountable for achieving their goals and implementing their strategy. Such accountability helps to motivate leaders to go a step further.

Muslims believe that they are accountable to God for all actions. A constant theme that arose from the interviews was the lack of accountability measures in place and the consequent possible absence of accountability. The power of leaders is significant and it is essential that a balance is struck between these powers and accountability mechanisms which provide followers with greater levels of confidence. It is important that a balance be achieved and that mechanisms be established to give the followers confidence that their leadership is performing its functions in a way that is transparent and which respects its constituents. The interviewees elaborated on putting a system in place to ensure that the balance between leading and accountability be maintained.

**4.7.2 Lack of concern**. Leaders' concern for the organisation and its members is one of the main issues that was raised by the interviewees. Concern and care for followers is an important way to enhance outcomes. Data obtained revealed that achievement is likely to interconnect strongly with leadership's concern for followers. Interviewees regarded the care and support they received from their leadership to be a powerful source of development. This study found, as did Gasaway (2006), that followers will be more respectful and will work harder to achieve established goals if leaders show more concern about their members organisational work and social life. A leader shows a deep and genuine concern for the overall success and welfare of his/her followers by building followers' strengths, giving them more autonomy and accountability in pursuing the organisation's mission and achieving outcomes (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Brown, 1995; Gardner et al., 2005). Homrig (2001) sheds light on followers' connections with leaders' visions, which is manifested through the genuine concern leaders have for their

followers and the followers giving their trust in return. Bartram and Casimir (2007) are confident, as are the participants of this research, that if followers believe the leader is not genuinely concerned about their welfare, lacks integrity, or is incompetent, they will be unlikely to trust him/her.

For example, concern for followers was a major point for one of the respondents, who is a deep thinker and an active leader within a newly established organisation:

> Leaders are not speaking up on the issues concerning their organisations and the Muslim community. They do not want to offend their friends in the government; it is not the way Muslim leaders should be….. Leaders must put concern for their followers before their personal relationships with various politicians and personal relationships.

Another interviewee praises a leader for his concern:

> He demonstrates to me that he has quality; he is comfortable about accepting the ideas of others, and he is humble. He looks forward on issues, is able to communicate, and is not concerned about his status but is concerned about Islamic entity in Australia.

**4.7.3 Lack of interaction.** Interaction in an organisation is a reciprocal act. It is the two way effect that happens between followers and leaders. The natural state of affairs is that the leader interacts directly with members in the processes of developing an environment for teamwork (Balthazard et al., 2004). As for the members, their role becomes highly interdependent (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002), and the need for interaction spreads to include concern for personal and group outcomes, cooperation, and interaction with others' perspectives in respectful way. Keeping in touch with other members, and an exchange of information will enhance the level of the followers' performance, and the dynamic of interaction does not focus on having a leader in a position of authority. Instead the organisation needs a leader who will engage in interactions that can generate new outcomes (Lichtenstein and Plowman, 2009). Ismail et al. (2010) conducted an empirical study in the Malaysian context which highlights that interaction between leaders and followers does act as a full antecedent of job performance.

Interaction between leaders and followers as things stand currently in AFIC is at very low level. For example, when asked to comment about the level of how often leaders and members get together, senior manager expressed dissatisfaction with the way the leaders conducted their meetings. He said, 'feedback from both leaders and followers happens at the AGM, but that's only once a year, but it is unfortunate that's all that happens. The group should meet on a regular basis, but you need to strike a balance between regular meetings and communication, because not all committee members are free at certain times or every week'.

**4.7.4 Lack of communication.** Communication is a way to connect, share and exchange information, ideas, values, views and decisions, hence it is the substance of leadership (Macik-Frey, 2007). Without communication leaders will not know their followers' abilities, desires and needs. Without communication leaders cannot inspire a shared vision and cannot convince followers to support this vision. Communication is essential and underpins effective leadership. It depends on physical attributions, social and organisational relationships and open channels between followers and their leaders (Bass and Stogdill, 1990). Effective communication has been widely linked to leadership effectiveness (Klauss and Bass, 1982; Penley and Hawkins, 1985; Putnam, 1988). effective communication also allow leaders to create and propagate a powerful vision for followers (Bennis and Nanus, 2003; Gilley et al., 2009), but it is most effective when it leads to shared knowledge and understanding (Hackman and Johnson, 2008). An effective leader who aims to transform an organisation communicates sincerely, openly and frequently with his/her followers, articulates messages carefully, and seeks followers' input in order to gain their trust and commitment (Armajani, 2007; Bass, 1997, 1998; Bass and Stogdill, 1990; Popper et al., 2000; Smith, 2011; Tucker and Russell, 2004). Chia-Chen (2004) affirmed the view that the highly effective leader coordinates and exchanges regular, detailed and immediate smooth communication with his/her followers. Communication is seen as a very important process of in the manifestation of leadership. This important process is apparently lacking in AFIC.

One female high ranking leader stressed the need to "facilitate communication and networking between Islamic organisations, so we don't duplicate what we do, we are able to assist others in what they are doing, and we are able perhaps to collectively fill gaps".

Data obtained showed that one of the most important aspects of a successful organisation is effective communication between the leadership and the followers. It was found that a lack of communication can result in a very bad performance which can lead to negative effects. As one respondent said, "Definitely there is lack of liaison and communication with the Islamic community and wider community. You know it is easy to see the negative side of this lack of communication, which has resulted in a bad relationship between all levels of our people".

Another leader insisted that "during my time the relation between the head office and the community was on the fringe, and since I left office, I am afraid it has drifted away". A strong comment by another respondent was, "lack of communication is a system that exists to tell us things are not right. It is the first identifier feature to tell you that something is not right. One of the main reasons for this lack of communication is prejudice and not recognising the efforts of others".

**4.7.5 Lack of planning.** Leadership needs for careful planning was often remarked on views of the participants. Planning is not a matter of occasional meetings to decide on the next move or to point to a specific direction. It is a consistent process that involves people from different level of the organisation. It is the signal that the leadership is visionary and works steadily towards achieving its goals. Achieving goals is directly related to creative leaders who plan carefully (Woerkum et al., 2007). Organisational crafting consists of leaders creating an organisational structure to enhance the performance of an organisation. Leaders need to have a clear plan aimed at focusing on specific objectives that interrelate with guidance of the followers behaviour in a desired direction to achieve specific goals (Filion and Sanderson, 2011).

Followers raised a point of concern about the concept of planning which is currently absent from the scene. For example, one insider who was at the helm of a state organisation at that time confirms; 'when it comes to Islamic organisations, they are capable of planning, but they do not want to do it. I have not seen any future planning'.

From the above comment it is interesting to infer how many leaders not only do not understand the importance of a good plan, but they do not have any intention of their organisation adhering to the basics of the organisational manifesto. It was found that lack of planning has an impact on leaders, followers and managers at all levels. The personal dimension of the impact can be felt through interviewees' major concerns about the messy situation to which AFIC is heading. The professional impact goes beyond the internal affairs of the organisation to question the goals and the objectives of the organisation.

Working on plans and strategies to assure the accomplishment of objectives are all Islamic practices (Burhan, 1998), but unfortunately many Islamic organisations are known for their lack of planning (Beekun, 2011). Beekun stated that if Muslims examine the life of the Prophet Mohammad, they would easily realise that he understood and used strategy throughout his life. Planning, therefore, must be at the centre of any Islamic setting.

**4.7.6 Lack of achievement.** Achievement is a clear sign of the success of an organisation and its leaders. Leaders want to be in their positions because the expectation is that he or she will act in the members' best interests, and will strive to make a meaningful contribution to the achievement of the organisation and its followers. Leaders help organisations find meaning in accomplishments that are important to them. Organisation members like to see successful outcomes; therefore the leader achieves a goal that is an achievement for the whole organisation. Leaders are usually proud of their achievements and state them. The natural tendency of leaders is to ensure that their organisations excels and achieves the desired goals.

Leaders' achievements build a positive spirit in their followers and encourage them to work hard to maintain the high standards set by leadership.

According to the participants in this research, any achievement in AFIC is been long overdue. Their concern revolves around the idea that the organisation has to aim to meet the basic standards of achievement at this stage. Then their confidence will grow after the norms of achievement are attained. Organisations' achievement is also very important among the broader Australian society, because that success will prove that Muslim organisations are up to standards and their leaders' success signifies that they are up to the task of leading. Failure to achieve will put Muslims in Australia in a difficult situation. The difficulty of failure is that the non-achievers could not achieve at least the norms of the wider Australian society. It is important for leaders to achieve these standards because the young Muslims who are at the edges of the organisations, and even the non Muslims who are watching the situation from outside and perhaps thinking of joining these organisations, will have no desire to join these organisations unless they are outstanding organisations with outstanding individuals as leaders who are smart successful achievers.

One of the achievers among the young generations of Muslims explained:

> If people feel included, inclusiveness, and a sense of belonging, I think it is very important if they have that with the group, and they have a feeling of accomplishment, that they personally are contributing, that's been valued, and the group as a whole are accomplishing. I think that would inspire people.

Another female interviewee stated that: achievement is the crucial element that allows the younger generation to join AFIC.

**4.7.7 Apathy**. Leadership by its nature as a service, displaying commitment and hard work does not combine well with apathy (Shriberg and Shriberg, 2011). Respondents noticed that leaders and followers become dangerously apathetic and complacent about the fundamental issues in the organisation. As one senior leader explained:

> It is general wide spread apathy within the Muslim community, whether they are professional or not. I have been telling people, please do not wait for two years, and become a member of a society now, so in two years you are eligible to cast your vote or to be elected. I spoke to some professionals, they said we do not want to wait for that long, if we do not become members now, we are not interested. Can you see the apathy there?

One of the main reasons for an apathetic attitude is lack of cooperation and coordination between leaders and followers, due to long held suspicions and lack of trust. The experience of many people intending to join the organisation is low. Newcomers do not have enough time to develop stable work patterns within the organisation environment. The leadership needs to think about raising the level of knowledge of the newcomers in regard to organisational aspects (Saks and Ashforth, 2000). As an example, direction, standards, and roles of followers are not defined clearly. Such clarification could pave the way for followers to gain an understanding of their roles and enhance their trust, confidence and motivation. While trust, confidence and motivation is very connected to self-esteem, lack of self-esteem leads to apathy (Bass et al., 2008).

**4.7.8 Lack of openness.** The openness of leaders is a motivator that allows them to be more receptive to the ideas, views and feelings of those around them. If leaders listen more carefully to the opinions and concerns of members, they will gain the ability to recognise that they need to approach situations differently. When information is openly shared, strong relationships are built and trust and interdependence emerge (O'Neill, 2012). Within the Islamic tradition it is highly recommended that leaders open channels to listen to the concerns, aspirations and views of followers, even though the connotations may be harsh and persistent.

In the present research it was found that those leaders who had difficulty being open had personalities which were rooted in personal fears. Their fear manifested in their actions which prevented them from developing trust in others, and prevented them talking loudly about the interests of Australian Muslims and holding others accountable.

A problem widely felt among interviewees was lack of openness. Openness is the absent ingredient between leaders and followers. One young active Muslim leader articulated the need for openness: "I think from the outset, the leader needs to make it clear to the members that, he or she is open; here is my contact, here is my email, come and see me for things you want to talk about. They need constantly to enforce that openness with their members, keep open the line of communication". Interviewees considered openness from three different perspectives. First, leaders should be open to advice from followers. A leader for a Muslim advocate organisation said:

> Some leaders have negative qualities, let me give you a real account; they are very closed, they will not listen to others' perception or advice, where good leaders need to hear the advice of others. Leader M. is a very good example, he is very open. He will sit with people who far lower down the chain than him to hear their advice, he takes advice from people who are not at his level, just to include them, that level of openness is important.

The second perspective is openness to criticism. One Australian born woman said: "an important good attachment to a Muslim leader is his/her ability to be open at all times to critics. If the leader is aware of his duty, then critics may add significant enhancement to his/her work". The third perspective is openness to ethnic diversity. Another important message from a state leader to his fellow counterparts and the leaders of local organisations is "to keep their doors open to diverse people". He added "I have personally benefited from dealing with different ethnic people at all levels. They have different experience and different views that could be beneficial and insightful".

**4.7.9 Lack of transparency**. Transparency represents a pattern of openness and clarity of behaviour toward others, sharing the information needed to make decisions, accepting others' inputs, and disclosing personal values, motives, and sentiments that enables followers to more accurately assess the competence and morality of the leader's actions (Norman et al., 2010). The concept of transparency has been viewed as an essential leadership attribute or element in organisational structures and processes (Milton, 2009). Transparency is the essence of holding leadership accountable using a framework based on the measures of questioning, feedback, and open books (Meyer and Kirby, 2010). Leader transparency includes the following behaviours; sharing relevant information, being open to feedback, and

being forthright about motives and the reasons behind decisions with followers (Vogelgesang and Lester, 2009). Practically transparency could be met when organisations keep their conduct open for review through any credible source, and when organisations communicate with people and help them get the facts straight without emotional uncertainty (Crumpton, 2011). If a tight system of transparency is implemented, leadership will think twice before putting its own interests first. Transparency is an important variable and a great mechanism for building trust, active engagement, learning from mistakes, creating creativity and keeping apathy at bay (Vogelgesang and Lester, 2009).

Islamic principal stresses that leaders should make transparency the normal practice. The early Islamic state under Prophet Muhammad and the first four caliphs conducted its affairs in the most transparent manner, and the decision-making process was carried out in public (Kahn, 2001). The lifestyle of the rulers as both simple and visible, so that any indication of prodigality would become transparent immediately (Kahn, 2001). Islam encourages Muslims to maintain proper record of their affairs and to give full disclosure (Quran, 2:282).

Many respondents want to see a general practice of issuing annual reports and to see full accountability and transparency. Therefore, all reports which are issued should be transparent, have full disclosure and complete accounts. Moreover, respondents demand that accounts must be subject to scrutiny by an external auditor to avoid any conflict of interest. In fact, transparency and disclosure are integral parts of organising and reduce the information asymmetry (Patel et al., 2002).

A high ranking intellectual leader said:

> How could we have got it so wrong all these past years, how have we let things to go unnoticed? It is naive thinking to let the peak body do whatever because they attached themselves to Islam. They think this attachment will avoid them being held accountable. There are many factors that contributed to the corrupt system we have. I think the starting point was the lack of transparency and accountability across the board. Leaders are more concerned with political gain than being transparent.

Another active young Muslim blogger said; "there is absolutely no transparency or accountability in the way the organisation operates. AFIC seems to suffer from lack of transparency and accountability and ultimately has become a vehicle for a select few at the expense of the community".

**4.7.10 Micromanagement** commonly refers to the control of an enterprise in every particular and to the smallest detail, with the effect of obstructing progress and neglecting broader, visionary issues (White, 2010). Micromanagement is practiced by people who generally feel unsure and self-doubting (White, 2010).

One respondent said that AFIC leaders "get into a micro management kind of business" without "tackling the big headings that concern Muslims in Australia". Another respondent states "Our leaders are constantly concentrated on small bits and pieces without the big vision for the future". Instead of focusing on the small details, leaders need to establish and communicate the organisation's mission, goals, and objectives, and put measures in place to deliver these goals and objectives. Leaders have huge responsibility to establish roles and responsibilities and to empower their followers. The members' concern about avoiding micromanagement is at the heart of driving the organisation towards a good outcome, which leaders in any organisation need to consolidate the effectiveness of the organisation. Micromanagement can play a negative role while organisations struggle to manage change and overcome uncertainty. The uncertainty that confronts Muslims in Australia post September 11-2001 cannot be faced by leaders who are still working their way through the bits and pieces of small issues, neglecting the facts of the real challenges that constantly face them.

**4.7.11 Absence of role modelling.** Role modelling is fully illustrated when people listen to what leaders say (Marlier et al., 2009). Role models serve to enhance people's self-motivation, self-workability and self competence by emulating successful models who are leaders in their field (Hoyt et al., 2012). Participants express concern about an absence of role models. One participant does not see himself belonging to an organisation without role models. He did not see himself

reflected in the people who had made it to the top of the organisation. He added "people who make decisions could not reflect my inspirations, my admiration is going to people who do not belong to this organisation, even though they are outsiders; they are truly my role models". One pessimistic participant could not see anyone who was a role model, someone who became involved, had time to help others, who strove for the betterment of others. He said, "there is no role model in leadership to follow". Another important criterion for role models from the viewpoint of participants is the character and morals of people who adhere to the principles of leadership in Islam. Participants' overall view is that good character, high morals, principles and achievements are the major requirements for role-models in this setting and the current figures are poor role models.

A basic problem in this organisational setting is that the leaders are poor role models whose followers did not identify with their actions and behaviour. Many followers have never once seen these leaders during their organisational life. They have a poor record of interacting with followers or communicating with them. One interviewee stated frankly, "what I could not comprehend is those leaders who set a very negative example for our young generation. Their fights for positions were aired in public many times. What they are good at are just court cases against each other, showing off. Morals and principles are not on their agenda".

The overarching problem in AFIC's leadership is that the leaders are poor role models; consequently the followers are disappointed and disengaged from the organisation. One interviewee argued for leaders to be role models to inspire followers, and argued that leaders should improve themselves so they are able to help others and restore the trust in much of what they do, because leaders who dispirited are unable to inspire their followers. For one interviewee, a good role model is a hero inspiring courage in his followers.

An active imam questions the status of imams as religious leaders, and says this is a difficult situation. He expressed his sadness at some imams who did not realise the importance of being conscious of the young generation's observation of Imams'

talk, actions and behaviour. He said that "the young Muslim generation is very clever and they question him many times about certain behaviours he has forgotten that he did, even in the distant past". He declares that "imams should emulate the exemplary and magnetic character of the Prophet, because this helps them to become positive role models from whom the young generation can learn".

**4.7.12 Lack of trust.** Leadership in Islam is a trust (Al-Attas and Daud, 2007; Beekun and Badawi, 1999b). Often this trust takes the form of a pledge between a leader and his followers that he will try his best to guide them, to protect them and to treat them fairly and justly (Beekun and Badawi, 1999a). Participants put forward their pessimistic view of leaders as being untrustworthy. They cannot trust leaders to do the right thing, they even cannot think of them as being leaders any more. Greer (2002) explains that trust is the glue that holds key leadership qualities -honesty, integrity, reliability and justice – together, because without trust, a leader will have no followers.

The followers suffer severely from a lack of trust, and they feel no trust in their leaders. Leaders must to begin by building inner trust, and this means working hard to conduct oneself with good manners, high morals, good character and high achievement. This is not an easy task and it is not to say that trust can be divided, but that building trust is a very slow process. The data shows that followers appreciate leaders who try their best to be sincere and trustworthy, but they will not tolerate leaders who breach their trust and make no attempt to fix problems. As one organisational state leader affirmed, "We have become a community where we are sceptical of leaders. We have been let down so many times by leaders, and they turn out to be bad characters or something like that". He added confidently, "The people do not want to commit themselves completely to any person; they do not have complete faith in leaders". He elaborated, "And trust is a must, those guys in the top lost our trust, they don't earn our commitment, they have no achievements, no accountability, and no integrity". He held a high opinion of "those individual potential leaders who work hard to improve themselves to their best abilities".

The passage above gives meaning to the concept of trust. For participants, trust is the opposite of scepticism. When followers become doubtful of their leaders effectiveness, their trust fades quickly. Leaders who let their organisations down by not standing up to challenges, and by being bad of character, lose their credibility and lose the faith and commitment of followers. Trust cannot be gained instantly; trust has to be built up through much effort, commitment, accountability and exemplars of good morals.

## 4.8 Summary

The first phase of data collection and analysis informed the open coding. Analysis of all the text and data I had gathered, I coded with no preconceptions. I obtained a completely coded set of data at the end of the open coding process. This is the first step in the coding process.

The first phase of data collection and analysis was substantial not only in terms of problem identification, but also in terms of identifying the interconnections between different processes. This stage of interviews discounts the lower order category of problematic leadership. Through lengthy investigation and analysis I understood the frustrations the followers had with their leadership. Losing hope in leadership is a symptom, but it is not the cause. The words of the interviewees were analysed to capture the reality of the perception of lack of leadership that occurs in every interview. This perception has much to do with the processes going inside organisations.

The properties of the lower-order category of problematic leadership brought to light the inner processes that make leadership untenable. The highlights of the Islamic discourse in relation to the processes of leadership presented a challenge for leaders to put the theory into practice.

# Chapter 5 High-level category: problematic context

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and presents the findings of the second phase of data collection. Data collection of the second phase consisted of a focus group meeting, informal interviews and continuous document analysis. This chapter is organised in three main sections and several sub sections. The first two sections illustrate the reflections thus far and present a recap of the findings. The third section presents the concepts that have emerged from the focus group meetings. The fourth section is a discussion of the findings which explains the high-level category of the problematic context and the highlights of the subcategories which constitute the problematic context. A summary of the research findings is presented at the end of the chapter.

## 5.2 Reflections: where to from here?

The first phase of data gathering consisted of a preliminary coding process that generated a low-level category of problematic leadership. Following this, my focus turned towards the question of problematic leadership. This constant process of analysing data demands repeated analysis of the data, which is the essence of the constant comparison method. The empirical finding so far show some of the leadership problems that may have crippled AFIC, but possible links and rationale of the problems are yet to be discovered. Among other things it was necessary to ascertain what was so different about this setting from other settings. Before a workable model was proposed, it was necessary to find out what is wrong with the leadership. In one of my memos, and after contemplating the already identified problems, I wrote; “I am researching leadership in the peak Islamic organisation here in Australia. I am talking to lots of people, and all that they are telling me is that there is no leadership and lots of problems”. What is the cause of these problems? What is unique about this situation where these leadership problems exist? These types of questions, among others, are discussed in this chapter, which aims to identify the possible causes of problematic leadership.

## 5.3 Re-capping findings

Thus far the research has identified problems with leadership in AFIC. It is important to investigate the nature of the problems within these organisations. How and why have these problems originated? The axial coding process is very useful in answering the 'how' and 'why' questions by interconnecting categories and building relations between categories. Subsequently categories must be related in some way to the central phenomenon, either directly or indirectly (Glaser, 1978; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

I returned to the previous phase of data collection and analysis to investigate the questions of 'how' and 'why' the current setting is crippled by 'problematic leadership'. Two concepts were identified as being very important links to 'problematic leadership'. The first concept represents the inconsistent relationship of leaders with Islam. It is evident that the overarching description for any of the Muslim organisations is that they are Islamic. Observers can relate these organisations to the work of Islam and in an implicit way, understand that these organisations base their mandate on Islamic principles. Unfortunately, the data obtained show that this is not the case. For example, a young Australian born Muslim commented, "I don't think we practice Islam; we are just talking about it. There is a gap between what our leaders do and practices of Islam". He elaborated, "We need a fundamental change in the way we think about a Muslim leader. A Muslim leader of the future has to have a strong foundation of Islam, he has to be very articulate, he has to be well spoken and he has to be professional".

While leaders within the current setting declare that Islam is a way of life that governs all aspects of life, their actions show the opposite. Islam has much substance to offer at the societal, community, and organisational levels, but when it comes to leading and following, *Islamic principles are neglected.*

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The second concept is the perceived absence of leadership. The concept of 'bad' or 'no' leadership which emerged from phase one of the data collection adds to the *complexity and uncertainty* of the followers. As Bennis (2007) notes, there is

increasing interest in the dynamics of bad leadership. Organisations either have good, bad, or no leadership. Or as Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) suggest leadership is either good, bad or ugly; indications of non-leadership. As the aforementioned stages of interviews gradually uncovered the leadership within AFIC has retrogresses from one of bad leadership to one of no leadership. Phase one of the data collection and analysis demonstrates that bad processes, a consistently enacted one after another have brought the ultimate result of no leadership. 'No' leadership is the rationale for most of the problems within AFIC. The dynamics of no leadership has spread throughout various levels of leadership in formal positions. These formal positions attract many people who have ambition, but who do not have the potential to become leaders (Popper, 2001).

## 5.4 Outcome of Focus Group

Whilst contemplating the previous phase of data collection, I conducted a focus group to extract more data through participants who may have felt more comfortable in a group environment, hoping that this would enhance a greater depth of information. I decided to interview a group of Muslim women, all of whom were very active at both organisational and community level, to investigate, or tease out, specific concerns that were still unresolved about possible links which may give answers to the questions of 'how' and 'why' AFIC is impaired by problematic processes of leadership.

Until this time the majority of interviewees had been men, however this had not been the original intention, but was due to the fact that Islamic organisations were mostly led and that most of the followers were men. In order to uncover a different perspective, I decided to interview a number of leading Australian Muslim women. Five women agreed to participate in this study. The first woman is a lawyer working in a large law firm; she is articulate and highly educated. The second is a social worker in a local organisation. The third woman is an accountant with extensive life experience. The fourth is an academic scholar researching issues of Muslim families in Australia. The fifth woman is energetic, a deep thinker, well organised and an active member on the committee of an organisation advocating human rights. Two

other interviewees declined the invitation and agreed afterward to answer the questions in an informal meeting.

The focus group meeting lasted for two hours and the participants added ideas from their experience with many Islamic organisations around Australia, especially AFIC and affiliated organisations. The introduction of the focus group meeting began with the memo above mentioned in the introduction of this chapter 'I am researching leadership in the peak Islamic organisation here in Australia. I am talking to lots of people, and all that they are telling me is that there is no leadership and a lot of problems'. The reply of the women in this focus group was simply "that's right". I asked where all these problems came from? What is wrong with this situation? What is the process to describe all the problems? What is going on? How and why have these problems originated? These questions set the tone for the next two hours of discussion.

The discussion of the focus group meeting and informal interviews brought two important issues to light: the first problem to be revealed was lack of leadership training, lack of awareness and failure to promote a culture of leadership. The second notion that was discussed was recycled leadership and the absence of the qualified people as leaders.

One of the participants of this focus group, an academic scholar commented, "A lot of people don't actually know what being the president mean, what being the treasurer means, it is a very big responsibility because if anything goes wrong they are liable, they don't understand the responsibility that comes with the position". Elaborating on this another interviewee said, "leaders needs to be conscious of why they [are] in that position, what their responsibilities are". She also questioned "the unconsciousness' of Muslims towards the broader Australian community's standards and culture," and suggested that; "training workshops are the right way to change the current situation".

Training workshops, it was suggested, are a solution which could assist in solving some of the problems prevalent in AFIC. Furthermore, the group highlighted a number of possible causes for the existing problems including, lack of awareness about expectations and the failure to promote a culture of leadership because the negative story line has been in existence for a long time. Failure to promote a culture of leadership makes the struggle for power obvious, and the struggle for self-interest rather than a leadership working for the common good is also evident. Additionally, it was suggested that the community has expectations of female representation but the organisations' culture, as revealed in the present study, has not met this expectation. This is an indication of the *complexity of culture*.

The second issue that is a concern common to all interviewees who participated in the focus group meeting is the recycling of leaders and an absence of the qualified people. A female social worker said, "AFIC leaders are recycled and whoever comes in it is the same thing". Another highly qualified woman said, "There is no organised response to those recycled leaders, because simply most of the qualified people sit aside and do nothing". The aforementioned comments articulate the existence of a *power struggle and power vacuum* which must be rectified. There seems to be a constant struggle for power and positions within AFIC. The natural state of affairs is that people beg for resources, struggle for power, and want to be given orders rather than take them. The tendency is to be apathetic, to be self-centered, and this seems to be happening more than the members are happy with. The concern is how organisation members can stop this process, find leaders and create an organisation which is not apathetic, not struggling for power, and which is working for the common good.

## 5.5 Discussion of the findings

The aforementioned problems illustrate the deep problematic processes confronting AFIC. These concepts of culture complexity, power struggle, complexity and uncertainty and inconsistency with Islamic leadership principles give insight into the strong relationship to the organisational context under investigation. This relationship depicts the category of 'problematic context'.

Problematic context refers to the concepts that formed the basis of problem creation in the low-level category of problematic leadership. Culture complexity, inconsistency with Islamic principles, uncertainty and power struggle all point clearly to a problematic context. How this problematic context affects leading, following and organising processes informs the following discussion. Figure 5.1 captures the high level category and subcategories.

Two important points to be noted are first, that the researcher is not suggesting that the application of relationships and correlations should be considered as evidence of cause effect relationships. These correlations among concepts and categories do not represent causality between them, but acknowledges the relationship between these various concepts and categories. The second point is that some of the emerging data from this focus group meeting seems to concur with the data that has been collected from previous interviews. Data obtained from phase one of the data collection was compared with data that emerged from this focus group meeting and was integrated into the discussion of the findings.

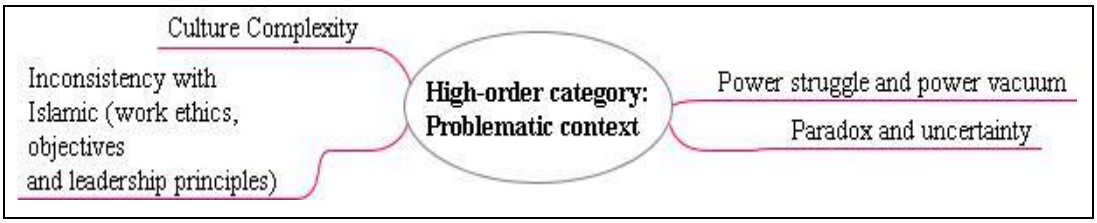


**Figure 5. 1 High-order category: Problematic context**

### 5.5.1 Culture Complexity

From the outset it is worth noting that Islam is not a culture - it is a world religion consisted of well over 1.3 billion diverse people with diverse cultures. Islam forms the basis of a world civilization, accommodating a great variety of local cultures (Tibi, 2001). Islam has a substantial connection with modern society and the policies which govern it. It is embedded in the Muslim's mind that Islam is the energiser of the human being at all times. Islam was established fourteen hundred years ago with

ideas that are relevant today. Islam is a way of life, not just a collection of ideas from the past with no connection to the present. Islam is a catalyst of life that ultimately transforms ideas into living reality and it is an all-encompassing religion (Tayeb, 1997).

Muslims in Australia consist of diverse communities spanning more than 60 nationalities, with diverse languages, customs and cultures. Notwithstanding this discussion, Muslims do not live in a vacuum separated from the societal surroundings of the broader Australian society. Active participation within Australian society guided early Muslim leaders in their establishment of AFIC.

Some of the leaders who participated in this research are founders and co-founders of their organisations. Some of those founders and co-founders who dominated leadership positions within AFIC had political connections, and few of the founders are highly educated intellectuals. Those leaders have brought different levels of societal and political versions of the cultures of their homeland as early generation migrants. Several contemporary well educated organisational leaders are fourth and fifth generation Australians who have participated fully in Australian life. The most recent generation has had a deep level of interaction with the wider community, and they think of themselves as purely Australian. Of course, some of the recent generation of leaders remain reliant on their ethnic constituencies.

The effect of the founding leaders upon culture and organisations vary between generations and organisations. Accordingly, Schein (1983) illustrates founding leaders' effects on organisations, which assumes that founders begin the process of organisational culture formation by instilling their major assumptions, views, vision and new ideas into their organisations.

Schein (1983: 16) identifies essential steps that are functionally equivalent in the founding of many organisations, despite their different histories. First, the founder has an idea for a new enterprise. Second, a founding group is created on the basis of an initial assumption that the idea is workable. Third, the founding group begins to

act concurrently to create the organisation and bring others as long as it is necessary within its fold. Schein (1983) states that during this process that the founder has a major impact on how the organisation solves its external survival and internal integration problems.

Kimberly and Bouchikhi (1995) asserted the importance of the recognition of organisational values of founding executives in the shaping of an organisation's direction. Bouchikhi and Kimberly (2003) affirm that the identity of founding leaders would not be in conflict with the organisation's direction if leaders set boundaries on how much an organisation can change and still remain the same in the eyes of its grassroots membership.

An interview with a founding leader confirmed that:

> …despite the endless efforts and good ideas of the early founding leaders, unfortunately the groups that came after nearly a decade of establishing AFIC seized the organisation for their own interests and sent the whole works into complex direction.

The interviewee acknowledged that groups was divisive and acted along ethnic lines without considering a coherent, uniting culture. While the aforementioned views about the effect of founding leaders' on shaping their organisations are sound and are validated, the unfolding story of AFIC is rather complicated. AFIC is an organisation that has been transformed into one which is the opposite of the original intent and became very complex within a few years of its establishment.

Culture is an interrelated concept that spans peoples' attitudes, behaviors, thinking, acting and emerging ideas. To question the problematic nature of culture is the first step towards enriching an organisation with illuminating ideas that may bring an end to the negative side of cultural complexity. Culture complexity has an immense impact on the leadership process. Culture complexity is one of the higher-order categories that emerged as an originator, or initiator, of problems within the organisations under study. The quotations from the focus group meeting and the quotations from interviewees demonstrate that culture complexity subsumed other sub categories such as ethnocentrism and obliviousness. Highlighting the latter

subcategories could explain the complexities surrounding the culture of Muslims in Australia and lead to understanding of how this complexity affects their work and plays a role in shaping the thought and the response of leaders to this contextual challenge.

#### 5.5.1.1 Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is the tendency to believe that one's own group (ethnic or otherwise) is the most important group and is superior to other groups, it also includes seeing one's own standards of value as being universal (Hammond and Axelrod, 2006).

The data obtained demonstrated that cultural or ethnic identity is much stronger than 'Islamic' identity. Although they are articulate about the pluralism of Islamic tradition, leaders within these groups are seen to be sticking firmly to ethnic cultural issues rather than to an organisational platform. The data also shows that no effort is made to be sensitive to different groups and there is no real attempt to counter ethnocentrism. One female leader said, "Each group assumes that what works for them should also work for all Muslims in Australia. This is not true! This kind of mentality is not well suited or applicable to the Australian society". Another female outsider confirmed that, "Muslim groups are narrow minded, exercising closed thinking without appreciating the different flavours of other cultures". A third interviewee claimed that, "unity within our community could not be reached because of the scattered groups".

The problem of ethnocentrism within organisations, Islamic or otherwise, rests on leaders-followers attitudes and behaviours. The main attitude is seeing one's own group as being more valuable and better than other groups. The behaviours are associated with cooperative relations existing within the in-group and absence of cooperative relations with the out-group, leading to cultural fragmentation rather than cultural cohesion (LeVine and Campbell, 1972).

Within Australian Islamic organisations, Cleland (2001) explained the situation clearly:

> There is a dearth of well-educated and culturally aware leaders who can present Islam in a positive light amongst Anglo-Australians. Many Muslims confuse their home cultures with Islam, for often the two have been viewed as identical for hundreds of years. One of our major problems is that ethnic groups prefer to bring religious leaders, imams, from their country of origin. They must be aware of cultural issues and not try to impose their own cultures alongside Islam. Such attempts only drive people away from Islam.

The above quotations show that leaders are highly loyal to their ethnic cultures. Instead of capitalising on, and recognising, positive cultural differences, they advocate divisions, rather than unity through richness of cultural diversity. While leaders could contribute substantially to achieving unity within different cultures, the diverse ethnic cultures make significant contributions to an organisation when they become aware of their harmony with Islam.

Leaders' implicit manifestation of ethnocentrism paralyses the work of AFIC. With such behaviours and attitudes, the outcome is not surprising. The negative outcome is represented by power struggles to maintain the group's grip on positions and by not letting talented men and women from different cultural groups participate in advancement of the organisation's work.

The lack of communication is another negative issue relating to ethnocentrism. A member of a state council confirmed that "usually within the same board of directors, the communication is lacking due to bitterly divided leaders who just behave on an ethnic basis and do not care about the functioning of the organisation".

One of the problems of problem identification that has arisen in the last chapter is that "leaders would like to see things undocumented so that they are not held accountable". One of the causes of this problem is ethnocentric thinking. The group that holds power does not want any trace of their conduct and practices that holds them accountable for their actions, and which subsequently may result in dismissal from power.

#### 5.5.1.2 Obliviousness

The current organisational context seems to be oblivious of the current cultural mix and oblivious to the basic assumptions and rules that govern the modern work of the organisational system. They are even oblivious to basic Islamic work ethics. Leaders have often been naïve, as well as frequently continuing to be oblivious to much of the organisation's standard practices. This neglect has allowed a large part of the organisation's work to be at a minimum standard of practice.

Obliviousness to a firmly articulated vision of what organising is and can be is paralysing the organisation. Obliviousness to the standard organisational system of procedures, processes, capacities and strategies often exposes followers to uncertainty and risk by causing speculation about inaccessible and less well understood environments. These risks lead to negative action that may have unanticipated, negative consequences. This negativity is the cause of the growing disaffection of constituents, and a persistent folly as Tuchman (1993) called it in her work *The March of Folly*. One respondent stated that:

> What happened in New South Wales (NSW) is alarming. AFIC supported the Islamic Council of New South Wales (ICNSW), when they become their opponent due to factions' interests; AFIC supported the creation of a new organisation.

At the core of the confusion and failure lies an un-Islamic approach that fails to join principles of good Islamic and Western governance, and their application to a modern socio-political condition. Therefore, it is legitimate to point out that leaders' obliviousness was unprecedented and completely disregarded the core principles of Islamic and Western contexts.

Undoubtedly, one of AFIC's failures is the leaders' obliviousness to women's participation in Muslim organisations in Australia. It must be remembered that Islam has nothing to do with this obliviousness, but it is the ethno-cultural background and the default social commitment that resides in the minds of many Muslim migrants through a history of ethnic shame and oppression against women and young people in general. As Ahmad (2008: 12) noticed, Islam at the beginning of its era encouraged women to take part in organisational development:

> Organisation is necessary for both men and women. It provides a positive environment in which we take inspiration from others. It is on account of being a part of this collective existence that we find motivation to do more better deeds. Therefore, God almighty has not deprived women of the blessings and spiritual benefits of belonging to an organisation. God almighty says in chapter nine verse 71: "And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends of one another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong and they establish worship and they pay the poor-due and they obey Allah and His messenger. As for these, Allah will have mercy on them. Lo! Allah is Mighty, Wise".

Ahmed (2008:12) added that, "It was due to the benefits of the organisational environment that the Prophet [Muhammad] took covenant from Muslim women as well. As a result, women felt that they were also part of an organisation and they too had allegiance to a leader".

An active member of a local organisation observed; "AFIC adds no meaning to our life". One imam commented "leaders are involved in politics and try to take control of power for their own groups and forget about what is better for the group". He added; "the current leadership is fully inclined to their old approach – ignoring others". Another woman affirmed that local organisations are "Drifting away to a weak position. I am not sure if the tide of wisdom can bring back these scattered organisations, but what I am sure about is the positive rule young leaders can play in days to come".

The aforementioned quotations demonstrate the following: first, the current setting doesn't promote Islamic values and beliefs among followers, and this affects the creation of a positive organisational culture. The organisational environment promotes individuality and demotes teamwork. Promoting individuality will definitely affect team work and performance. Cohen (1991) contended that team effectiveness and the make-up of teams is a reflection of organisational culture. According to Childress and Senn (1999), development of a balanced and high performance culture will lend itself primarily to values and behaviours of both leaders and followers which is necessary to create high performance teams. So values and beliefs of both leaders and followers effect the creation of positive organisational culture. Organisational culture impacts team effectiveness and the

make-up of teams. The make-up of teams and team effectiveness are contributors to the positive outcome of organisations.

Second, while the current situation does not tolerate the luxury of ignorance as Howard (2006) calls it, the combination of people of differing ethnic cultures are ignorant of the importance of the one shared basis that can unite these fragmented entities. This shared basis, as one participant in the focus group meeting noticed, "is the catalyst for putting some flavour into this tasteless culture". The addition of this ethnic flavour is a 'must do' ingredient necessary to overcome culture complexity at the current time. No doubt, ultimately cultural coherence will not be achieved, however it can be encouraged in order to pursue a shared platform among culturally divided entities.

The aforementioned analysis shows the ability of culture complexity to bring about different processes of interrelated problems. Within this environment the promotion of Islamic values and beliefs decreases, Islamic work ethics are not engaged, personal gain increases, racial identity emerges strongly and working teams vanish.

The leaders' task is to challenge obliviousness by seeking different paths that demonstrate the ability to understand the social, cultural and organising practices that work in the Australian society and the foundation that sustains it.

### 5.5.2 Inconsistency with Islamic work ethics, objectives and leadership principles

#### 5.5.2.1 Neglecting Islamic work ethics

Participants spoke of their experience of various failures during and after or before their careers. One woman made it a point to emphasise the importance of having a system in place, "if you put system in place, no matter who comes to a position he/she will know he/she will be held accountable". Another professional woman said, "We should have the strongest code of ethics and procedures, and this should be a mandatory code". A focus on the Islamic ethical dimensions of leadership

became a key theme in the interviews. A system of processes that manages ethics is the missing element that may cause many problems of leadership.

Another observer raised her deep concern about AFIC's misleading implementation of its own system when he commented upon Worrells Independent Consultant's Report (2005: 13-16) which is internal document that was leaked. It is still relevant in relation to AFIC's business conduct:

> It is a matter of grave concern that until the release of the Report, AFIC's system of payments did not comply with the requirements of its own constitution. One would have expected the auditors, the CEO and/or the accountant to have brought this to the attention of the executive. One wonders whether self-preservation was deemed more important than compliance with legal and constitutional requirements. It also reflects poorly on successive Executive Committees of AFIC that they were unable to address this issue earlier on. Such a fundamental issue of corporate governance must surely be a matter important enough for Executive Members to deal with at the earliest opportunity.
>
> The Worrells Report goes onto discuss the adequacy of the current payments system. It concludes that the system relies heavily on the CEO being "diligent in his duties to his employer". The report also mentions the role of the office manager and the treasurer. Clause 76 of the Worrells report states that the "current approach may not provide management with a high level of assurance that fraud will be prevented or detected in a timely manner". The Report recommends that AFIC appoint "a suitably qualified fraud prevention expert to review AFIC's authorisation and accounting systems and make recommendations on strengthening that system.

One interviewee affirmed the importance of accountability in creating trust between followers and leaders: "It is not a matter of being Muslim or non Muslim. It is an objective criterion of trust and accountability," he said.

Muslim researchers emphasise the importance of Islamic work ethics (Abeng, 1997; Abu-Saad, 1998; Ali, 1988, 1992; Ali and Al-Kazemi, 2007; Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008; Beekun, 1997; Moayedi, 2009; Riham Ragab, 2008; Yousef, 2000, 2001). Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) is a set of moral principles that distinguishes what is right from what is wrong in the Islamic context (Beekun, 1997). IWE emphasises hard work, commitment, dedication to work, work creativity, avoidance of unethical methods of wealth accumulation, cooperation and competitiveness at the work place

(Yousef, 2001). IWE is built on four primary concepts: effort, competition, transparency and morally responsible conduct (Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008).

Absence of the concept of IWE is a major contributor to many previously mentioned problematic processes. Analysis of the data showed that a major process of problem creation associated with the manifestation of absent leadership is the absence of IWE. Absence of IWE subsumed other categories of accountability, systems in place, procedures and standards, dedication to work, transparency and guidelines for an organisational system. Interviewees have repeated concerns about ethical issues, the necessity of putting a system in place to adhere to these ethics and to keep implementing the system. IWE in the broad sense consists of two issues, the first being ethics and the second being effort. Ethical behaviour is a moral obligation and effort is the whole issue of working within the confines of ethical behaviour. Effort in Islam is a virtue (Yousef, 2000). Overarching ethical behaviour is a system to implement moral obligation and to keep effort running. Moral obligations are about accountability, transparency, commitment, dedication and perseverance. Everything possible should be done to achieve goals and put a complete system in place to ensure that ethical behavior is being implemented, not just declared.

Ethical standards are central and paramount to Islam, which since its inception in the seventh century, has imposed comprehensive ethical standards on business, social and political activities. These standards, among other things, specify how to govern groups and entities. The rift between the ideal and reality is widening as never before within the current setting. The violation of ethical standards attracts many other problems for leadership, such as lacking dedication to work, acting in a selfish way and lowering achievement.

#### 5.5.2.2 Contradicting the higher objectives of Islam

Leadership in AFIC contradicts the mutual similarities of both the Islamic and Western higher objectives. An active Muslim leader clearly articulated this problem;

> Islam is not just what has been defined in Pakistan or Saudi Arabia or Turkey or whatever. We need to broaden our definition of what we mean by Islamic, and we need to be more embracing of what other people have offered. One of

> the misconceptions among Muslims is; Western equals un Islamic, but there are so many Western principles, systems, values, and institutions that are very Islamic, and unfortunately if we can prove that they got that idea from us, then we will accept it, but if it is something they invented on their own, we couldn't possibly think that could not be right, we cannot accept it.
>
> This is wrong. I think leaders need to convey that appreciation of Australia to their followers. Leaders shouldn't be too critical of the society and creating this mentality of us and them which disfranchises Muslims from being part of the broader community, nor the Muslim community. Australia has much in common with Islam. We need to be thinking about the higher objectives of Islam. We really are talking about a corridor way of life, we are talking about a system of morality more than anything else, and that's really what it comes down to. If you look at those things, they are universal, every upright and good meaning person will agree with these things. We are talking about justice, human rights, human dignity and equity between people socially, economically and so on. These are the higher objectives.

The higher objectives of Islam place heaviest emphasis on freedom, justice, equality, human rights, dignity, well-being, education, pluralism, accountability, transparency and civil society, not just for Muslims but for all mankind. Al-Allaf (2002) called the higher objectives of Islam a Maqasid Paradigm or Maqasid Theory. He contended that this theory emphasises the universality of the higher objectives. In conclusion, the overriding goal of Islam is to establish an ethical and justice system that preserves religion, life, intellect, procreation, and property (Raysūnī, 2005). The overriding objectives of Islam are similar to that of Western ones.

A leader of a local advocate organisation argued;

> We feel that there is narrow understanding about what is Islam, we feel that standing up for human rights is an Islamic cause, to support peoples' civil rights is Islamic, and to be conscious of the environment is Islamic. It is important for Muslims to convey what Islam is all about, especially because there are misconceptions about Islam.

The above interviewee's remarks brought forth the view that the leadership within AFIC does not reflect the essence of the higher objectives of Islam. One of the reasons behind it is a lack of knowledge about it. The other reason is the thought that these objectives are primarily Western objectives that conflict with Islam. The third point is that a conservative tone of rhetoric could not be achieved with the

promotion of such objectives. And the fourth point is that the promotion of those objectives will question the legitimacy of this current leadership.

#### 5.5.2.3 Conflicting Islamic leadership principles

The absence of Islamic leadership principles within the current context is noticeable. One participant replied to one of my questions, deeply frustrated at leadership that was blind to Islamic principles. He said, "Look! The implicit consensus is to act according to the Islamic principles of solving matters before going to courts, but when any dispute comes out not one of the leaders is willing to refer the matter to the laws of Islam". He continued that, "what the leadership's first step is, is to jump into the boat of state courts or federal courts to get the matters sorted out, and causing hefty expenses".

The absence of Islamic principles emphatically impacts the followers and causes a hugely negative effect on the whole image of leadership. One interviewee pointed very clearly to the absence of Islamic principles which, "..... Hurt our organisation, who struggles to put in a good image after all the troubles in Australia. I think the damaging blow that leadership has dealt gives a bad image to AFIC for a long time to come". Another interviewee demanded, "..... Leaders to hold firmly to Islamic principles of leadership" and see the absence of principles as "..... a gap between leaders and the trust of the Muslim community". He added, "There is a negative perception among the wider Australian community of Muslim leaders who are showing themselves in public, proclaiming values and principles, but where the real business matters it is rare to see an adherence to those same principles". Conflicting Islamic leadership principles correlate with many problems, such as a lack of proper approaches to leadership such as, trust, honesty, credibility and achievement.

### 5.5.3 Complexity and uncertainty

In the context of the present research, it seems that complexity and uncertainty flourish. Uncertainty and complexity are highly interrelated and are hard to separate. Complexity can create anxiety and uncertainty, as much as uncertainty can create complexity. It was found that currently the organisation is living with complexity

and uncertainty and effect on the leadership is obviously, entirely negative and reduces the standards of leadership to very low level. On the followers, this effect is just as bad. The effect upon the organisational structure tends to follow on from the effect on the leaders and the followers. The dimensions of complexity and uncertainty are vast and cannot be comprehensively covered as a point in this thesis, but this research focuses on the important aspects of these two phenomena that affect leadership. Complexity and uncertainty stem mainly from the situation of "no leadership" and paradoxical identity. The next sections discuss the above elements in order.

#### 5.5.3.1 No leadership

I was surprised at the interviewee's consistent emphasis on the aspects of 'no leadership' and 'no leading'. Since the first interviews, it was clear that interviewees talked much about an absence of leadership. Interestingly Interviewees often began the discussion with a comment like "it is better to talk about absence of leadership than talking about leadership in action, because you barely find leadership to find actions". One strong comment came from an interviewee about the role of imams: "I do not see any imam who could be defined as a leader; they are leaders in a very loose sense, in a way that they got religious knowledge. I do not think they provide a good leadership role as imams". At the first set of preliminary interviews, I asked myself many times whether the mode and the temperament of such interviews was the right option to pursue. I changed the order of the questions many times through a number of these interviews try to get away from the negative tone interviewees set concerning leadership, without success. I was unable to capture different positive views about leadership in AFIC.

Three aspects are linked to the absence of leadership. First is the idea that a leadership position brings pride and glory. The obvious example of the grab for a position without actually showing leadership is confirmed by a current, local organisation's president. He declared, "Leadership in our organisations is zero. There is no leadership. It is about chair-warming or seat-warming. A personal attitude is taking over the position and is doing nothing for the organisation".

The second aspect is the desire to be in these positions for as long as possible. One respondent talked about leadership of these councils as "recycled people from the past and coming again, they do nothing". One interviewee mentioned the case of "those leaders who experienced being in formal positions for a long time, with privileges such as a travel allowance and an accommodation allowance and connections with several politicians which they will not give up easily". So when the major aspects of leading evolve around people taking privileges for themselves, then the 'no leading' situation prevailed.

The third aspect of absent leadership is due to the absence of followers who have the ability to lead. For nearly five decades since the establishment of organisational work for Muslims in Australia, Muslim followers who possess the ability to lead have pursued a policy of disassociation from AFIC. This has led to the current state of disorder. However, during the interviews most respondents observed a separation between followers in general and Islamic institutions in particular.

#### 5.5.3.2 Paradoxical identity

A comment from an intellectual leader highlights an important aspect of complexity and uncertainty; "I think Muslim identity is a great challenge for leadership. Muslims in Australia try to define Islam in terms of their own package and their own tradition, and it is a great challenge to keep the community unified and heading towards one direction".

The above comment shows three important points. First is the negative effect of ethnically dominant groups. Second, within the Australian Islamic setting, identity crises are very connected to certain groups' dominance. Dominant ethnic identities relate to ethnic groups who try to impose their views on the grassroots level, and then a loss of shared identity prevails. One respondent added his suspicions about "the attitude of ethnic groups who take power to advance their own interests". Third, it is very hard to separate a preservation of ethnic identity from the struggle to maintaining power in this substantive setting. Identity for Muslims in Australia is

very well connected to power, or an absence of power. Ethnic identity plays an important role in creating the complexity and uncertainty of organisational direction.

A young Australian Muslim noted paradoxically that, "There are many different interpretations, and different ways that you can actually practice Islam in Australia, and still be compliant to one's faith", and "that naturally affects your identity as a Muslim Australian, because you wouldn't really know how to integrate Islam with your Australian identity, and make them fit comfortably". The aforementioned comments shows that young Australian Muslims are looking for an overlap between the Australian identity and an emerging Islamic identity, and a strong relationship between identification with a Muslim identity and a sense of self-efficacy and belonging.

One respondent reflected on the connection between the role of imams and the identity of Muslims in Australia, and said that "one kind of leadership role that imams can play is to create a sense of tolerance and humility". Another respondent said that the message from the imams should be, "Yes I have an identity as a Muslim, and I have a particular way of finding the truth and experiencing God and so on, but on the other hand there are many religions, they should equally be respected, and their faith equally regarded". Another interviewee noted that the notions of respect, humility and tolerance are very important. She went on to say that, "We should not have this mentality of persecution. We should feel at home in Australia. Don't live in this country as if you are in exile. We must create a sense of belonging." These feelings were wide-spread.

Another well educate interviewee explained the role of religious leaders and the paradox of identity;

> When you look, a typical imam is employed by the local organisation and they are supposed to guide the community. I haven't seen any imam who can provide the leadership on guiding the community and saying this is what Islam is all about to the wider community. If imams want to work inside the community then they need to provide leadership by spreading the message of harmony and peace within the Islamic diverse grassroots and the Australian community. I haven't seen many imams who have been actively involved in promoting peace and harmony in our local organisations. Imams are on the

> side. They don't want to get involved because they are employees, therefore protecting their jobs. They don't want to get involved in political activities, which could involve bringing people together in harmony and dialogue. In my experience I never see that is happening in my local setting. They stay away from that because they afraid to be seen as taking sides among the ethnic divisions. They are scared that they may be going against some people who have got their own agenda; therefore if they coming to power, they might get rid of them.

While the above comments cannot be over generalised, several important aspects can be drawn. The first aspect is about expectations about behaviour and identity. Australia is home of Muslims who have been born and raised in many countries, including Australia. Not only does Islam have its own conceptions of identity, but the mainstream cultures of those countries have many different expectations of how identity should be enacted. The question of Islamic identity and sense of belonging has not received due attention. Muslims in Australia face dual crises of adapting and surviving in the larger society, whilst integrating and developing an Islamic identity.

The second aspect is that the current setting might make leaders particularly susceptible, pessimistic and fearful of the identity of Australian leadership models (Carver et al., 1994), while the 'hoped-for' certain identity could be encouraged in a non-dominant culture (Carver et al., 1999). Muslims (migrants and Australian-born Muslims) have their own expectations of Islamic leadership identity, and the Australian society has different expectations of how leadership should be enacted. Migrant Muslims may fear an expectation by mainstream Australians of an organisational style of leadership (Oyserman and Markus, 1990). However, Australian-born Muslims also have their own expectations, they may well like a combination of the two mainstream identities - Australian and Islamic - 'possible-selves' and 'true-selves'- for themselves and in their leadership (Oyserman et al., 2006). Markus and Kitayama (1991) made it clear that different cultures have different expectations about behaviour and identity. The paradox of leadership identity which is marred by cynicism, anxiety, vulnerability and fear has a negative impact on leadership functionality in the long term. The lack of Islamic leadership to facilitate the process of identity development has complicated the situation.

The third aspect shows similarity with Akbarzadeh and Saeed (2003), and McPhee (2005) suggestion that, despite the important role of religion in shaping the identity of Muslims in the West in general, they have experienced an identity struggle and are currently searching for answers about this complex topic. The search for answers to the identity struggle is prevalent within the Australian Muslim community. The diverse origins and cultures of Muslims making the search for a shared identity culture even more complex and this quest could easily become separated from the Australian non-Muslim macro-context (Moran et al., 2007). These differing origins and cultural lines bring the discussion to the forefront within the Muslim community in Australia. This discussion across community boundaries and affiliations is aimed at easing the tension of identity among young generations of Australian Muslims, however ongoing tension leads to the current contradictions, and further contributes to the alienation of the young generation.

### 5.5.4 Power struggle and power vacuum

An active woman from an advocate organisation said;

> Are there people who are passionate about reforming AFIC? Leaders of AFIC are nailed to their chairs, they are recycled. We need enough people to stand up and say we have no confidence in you as leaders, please step down. They don't feel that they need to be changed. If you force them maybe they will hand over power. We have people who say it is not my business, so what.
>
> Regarding who we need to work in order to achieve what we aim to achieve, we need to step in the door somehow. Do we have the courage to sit down with president 'A' and say; you know and we know there is a necessity for change, how we do that, we cannot wait for a couple of decades for our young generation to push things through, let's work on things immediately. We need to get up and do it.

Commenting on the above view another woman said;

> Community money is given to state organisations for their votes. They manipulate organisations to get their votes in elections to keep their positions, it happens over and over again. Even if one or two people were forced out of the executive committee, the rest are the same with the same mindset. It is a serious hurdle that needs be pushed over. We need passionate people who keep pushing, pushing and pushing. We have to work at it from different angles and different people who want to do something positive for our community, I think eventually we will get there.

A state council member has eloquently summarised the power struggle and power vacuum;

> I think seeking positions of authority based on sense of false pride, many of the people holding positions; they are there for glory and pride. But this means if we walk away from our organisation then in the next few years there will be a gap there. This gap is filled now by others seeking to use this power. I would like to see someone honest and sincere to control what happens rather than what is taking place at the moment. This is my wish; I hope it could become a reality.
>
> Good people have to have their say. The power base is slipping from those individuals who seek to fix the situation, this is the fact nowadays. The younger generation is disenchanted, and is not running for positions held by the old generation of formal leaders. Those formal leaders think that they have a God given right to run the affairs of these organisations until they die. They want to maintain the status quo. They don't like to see young people in control, so if the young generation want to become leaders, it is going to be very hard for them, it is a sad scenario.

The above passages and the integrated interviewees' comments triggered several points for discussion and analysis. The complex nature of power creates uncertainty and inaction. As Foucault (1977: 194) articulated, "….power produces reality". This reality is both harsh and outrageous. It is harsh because the people involved in the power struggle can go as far as it takes to grasp the top positions. It is outrageous because the process of acquiring power and struggling for power is still unjustifiable, and can never be solved with the current arrangement. The dichotomy of the power vacuum and the power struggle is enmeshed in a puzzle. While the power struggle is a continuous rhythm, the power vacuum is apparent at every level of the organisational hierarchy.

The power struggle is represented by the continuous struggle for formal positions and the lead positions at every level of AFIC's in order to control people and resources. It is represented by excluding the young generation, especially women from the majority of positions. The power struggle is also represented by people who are trying to control the top job in the organisation, control the resources and by building bridges with the government to strengthen their positions in the organisation.

The power struggle creates a vacuum in peoples' motivation. A power struggle affects people negatively, making followers more involved in their personal affairs rather than the organisation's affairs. One local leader questions ….the logic behind organisations representing Muslims in the West. He questions "….the benefit of such organisations". He added, "Individuals who run for positions are acting on self-interest and fantasy without questioning what is best for their organisation". They become apathetic.

The power vacuum is created by formal leaders' dwindling influence in the organisation. Despite the formal leadership's realisation that people at the grassroots are not in the mood to put leaders under scrutiny, many people begin to question the legitimacy and the conduct of leaders. In many instances this questioning leads to the creation of informal leaders who gather momentum and support within the ranks of the organisation and its affiliated state councils. Those informal leaders could play a positive role in holding formal leaders somewhat accountable for their actions.

In addition to the comments mentioned above, an interviewee very clearly said, "There are leaders, but they are hesitant to come forward, maybe because of canvassing votes and the hassle this involves, or because they think they wouldn't make a good leader". Apparently there are many leaders and potential leaders who decide to sit aside and do nothing. Doing nothing creates a vacuum. It creates a vacuum when the people who have genuine leadership attributes stop becoming active and the people who craft the big picture of fame become leaders. This

combination again creates the problem of declining influence among the organisation's faithful, which in turn creates a big void in the system. This void is represented by people at the top who do whatever they like to keep their positions, and by the people who are well fitted to do the job, but who decide not to act. This vacuum creates a struggle over the quest for power and keeps recycled and bad leaders at the helm.

A power vacuum was created through leadership which did not have a compelling, clear and decisive vision and lacked ideas for the future. One interviewee noticed that, "….leadership has been unable to articulate a clear direction". He also noticed that the last decade was full of uncertainty facing the grassroots of Muslim society due to this lack of vision and direction. Another woman said, "….we need people who are really committed to serve and to care, people with a vision about how they could continue with the role. It is no longer a matter of self-interest". In his elaboration about vision, one academic participant said, "…..the problem is that leaders don't have vision to go forward and that's what's holding them back".

The leadership of AFIC has been limited in convincing their constituents and the broader society of their future direction and clear vision. Leadership workability starts with vision. With vision, leadership has a significant impact on organisations. This vision could be reflected in organisational performance and follower's effectiveness. A lack of vision is also powerful, and creates an even bigger vacuum. With no vision for the future, and no clear direction, followers could easily lose direction and could divert their attention with little concern for the common good of their organisation. This diversion leads them to their personal affairs, and keeps talented leaders from filling important roles in organisation, at the same time keeping the old leadership in control.

'No vision' is one of the many aspects that could add to the silence of followers. If followers do have vision and clarity about where the organisation needs to go and how they will constructively engage with the broader society, their reaction seems easy. It is the vacuum throughout the hierarchy of human resources and the void in the organisational system and structure, which prevents smooth succession planning

and talent-hunting. AFIC appears to capitulate to idea of letting leaders carry on with positions as long as they are warming leadership seats. There is a direct concern about the vacuum created through the lack of vision and by followers who have allowed visionless leadership to remain in place.

This power puzzle is correlated with many problems within AFIC and its affiliated organisations. Problems such apathy, lack of direction, lack of planning (or often no planning), a vacancy or weakness in the power structure, lack of proper interaction, corruption, and uncertainty are all apparent. When all these negative outcomes are combined, the result is organisational paralysis, confusion, frustration and a very negative effect on the morale of followers.

These problems have not been in hibernation lying under the surface of the organisation. They are very obvious. What is still lying under the surface is the problem of not speaking out about these problems, and a repetition of doing things for peoples' own interest, rather than for the common good of the community.

A power struggle and a power vacuum have been rising within AFIC since its inception and it is detested by the long time leaders, as is the petty politics that has poisoned the work of Australian Muslims in recent decades. Untroubled by controversy over its actions and deceived by its formal representativeness, AFIC seems pleasantly able to ignore its situation. A power puzzle creates a vacuum, and in this vacuum the organisation has claimed for itself a ludicrous self-importance, claiming that they are the leaders of the Australian Muslim community. That leadership is challenged by many in the community as being obscure. This vacuum leads a complete breakdown in a logical structure for the organisation. When capable individuals abstain from positions, then these positions may or may not be filled with capable leaders. The current situation creates prolonged problems.

One senior member of a local organisation said (rather emotionally):

> We are not frustrated and it is not enough to be concerned, we have to be active and responsible, otherwise we will get a default situation of unhealthy leadership. Yes we are against those who jump the queue, but at the same time, we are against those who do not want to do anything.

The passage above illustrates the vacuum that has resulted from this situation and expresses a deep and disturbing sentiment of the kind that has led to the present paralysis which describes the current state of leadership within AFIC.

One local member criticised the current situation, "It pained me to see a vicious struggle for power happening. I challenged all members to work hard for change. I am determined to be part of that change. I will not stand for laziness and cheating in any form, it is that simple". It is a strong message from followers and some leaders alike; do not be apathetic otherwise nothing changes. If followers keep silent and remain apathetic the vacuum will become bigger and this vacuum is creating the space for struggles and the weakness within the power structure at the same time.

Another interviewee questions the future:

> What is the choice? You know!! The choice is to get up, say no and do something. We will not accept leadership that is not grounded in fair elections, truth, integrity and service for the community. The current leaders are a burden on our shoulders, but there is hope for change, plenty of it.

The power struggle and conflict in the current organisational setting also occurs among ethnic groups. This struggle is rooted in national, ethnic and sectarian assumptions. Each side of the conflict uses a variety of justifications in order to dictate their terms and in their attempt to place themselves in a superior position. Each group's justifications stem from a multi-dimensional perception of the quest for power. The ethnic narrative is set on the basis of superiority of one ethnic race or background over others. One of the interviewees confirms, "The struggle for power remains intoxicating. Each group tries to hold on to power. They see this as a defensive measure for their own interests". The data obtained showed that some of these ethnic groups will not even allow any other group to contest the elections by manipulating the process of elections. A senior figure said sadly "….ethnic groups want to hold power and kick out the other groups". Up to now the ethnic groups have succeeded in stopping the logical flow of a transparent system of elevation to power.

An insider from one of the state councils stated;

> There is a more serious problem which is the sectarian groups among the Muslims, that makes things very difficult for all organisations. This so much divides the whole Muslim community, makes work very hard to be done and poses a very big challenge to leadership. Each group want to hold power without giving any real chance for others to share it with them.
>
> People like to follow somebody of their kind or type, and this is a big problem because it will jeopardise any effort to advance our organisations and our community. Look what happened at a previous Gold Coast Islamic centre election, there were two big different ethnic and nationalistic groups fighting each other. In the day of the election the situation was a mess. Nobody stopped for one second to ask: who is the more capable, who is better? We've lost the true essence of Islam, and that is to stand for what is right. Today the challenge of the Muslims is not to build mosques; today the challenge of the Muslims is to find good leaders who can unite us.

The above statement confirms that the struggle for power among Islamic ethnic groups remains strong. It manifests itself in two different phases. The first is relevant to the situation where the ethnic groups struggle for legitimate power to challenge another ethnic groups' firm grip on power and their discriminatory practices. Secondly, it is sometimes divisive when the ethnic groups who struggle for power consider themselves the most capable of leading and no-one else is up to the task. They tend not to believe in a power sharing arrangement, sharing control of the resources and the decision making process. This is why they aggressively hold on to power.

In addition, as the above passage shows, the struggle for power and the misuse of power makes the understanding of the term 'ethnicity' reside within a narrow conceptualisation among ethnic groups. In order to take the lead, the people whose eye is on leadership positions turn first to their fellows of similar background, or sect or nationality, to support them without questioning their merit for the job. Therefore, ethnicity works as a bridge between the leadership wilderness and the leadership power. It can be likened to a pool, in which the interest groups swim to cross the line, or fish to gain the rewards. Ethnicity serves as a soft approach for many to cling on to and abuse power. Precisely as ethnicity has no independent existence of its own in the Islamic tradition, it has been driven by groups' interests or the quest for power.

## 5.5 Summary

This chapter draws upon the problematic processes facing the organisational context. A problematic context is invariably problematic for the role of leadership, and the impact of contextual problematic processes is almost always a challenge to overcome. The problematic context is a weakness and a threat to the leadership and the challenge for leadership is how to overcome these weakness and threats. Also, problematic processes provide opportunities for leadership to change and accommodate challenges. The rise of the problematic context as a high-level category resonates with my endeavor to investigate the problematic processes, because leadership cannot be studied out of this problematic context. How leaders display or not display leadership is dependent on the situation they are in and the context to which they belong.

Culture complexity, the power struggle, inconsistency with the Islamic work ethics, objectives and principles, complexity and uncertainty, formulate the problematic contextual processes. Culture complexity draws upon two properties; ethnocentricity and obliviousness. Culture complexity stems from this substantive context as an ethnic or religious minority living within a substantially different mainstream culture, and this is imposing great difficulty upon its leadership.

Inconsistency with the Islamic discourse of leadership is a highly problematic dimension. This inconsistency emphatically impacts on followers or organisation. It displays the whole image of leadership negatively, and shows the huge gap between the current leaders and good approaches to leadership. It also correlates with many problems such as trust, honesty, credibility and achievement.

Complexity, uncertainty and power struggle are correlated with many problems, such as apathy, lack of direction, lack of planning, a vacancy or weakness in the power structure, lack of proper interaction, corruption, organisational paralysis, confusion, frustration, and a bad effect on the morale of both leaders and followers.

# Chapter 6 Near-core category: Reconciling Problems

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses first on linking the previous two phases of data collection in relation to the ongoing analysis. It discusses in details how the ideas regarding the problematic nature and context of leadership did not stop me from thinking about the positive aspects of the process of leading. Second, this chapter discusses the progression of thinking about the empirical positive notions regarding how leaders and followers can have an impact upon their organisations' positively, through the suggested categories of inclusive workability and reanimating leadership workability. Third, this chapter highlights how the near-core category of 'reconciling problems' developed after the previously suggested two categories and through the third phase of data collection. Fourth, and finally, it discusses in detail the near-core category of reconciling problems and the two properties of enacting leading and enacting following.

## 6.2 Recapping findings

Thus far, the first phase of data gathering highlighted problematic leadership, which was evidently repetitive during the discourse of the interviews. To a lesser extent the process of following was highlighted, and this is at the core of making sense of social interaction between leaders and followers. The first phase also clarified some of the challenges and the problems facing leadership. These challenges are more attached to concepts than to personalities of leaders and followers, and to the absence of a culture of organising, leading and following. Phase one of data gathering clearly outlined the negative side of the story of leadership processes in the organisations under question. At the end of phase one, the researcher decided to bring open codes to a higher level of abstraction, shedding light on the low-level category of problematic leadership and its properties (problems) that render the process of leading very difficult.

Phase two of data gathering probed the actual causes (originators) of the problems within AFIC, leading to a number of important questions. What is actually going on with the leadership process, and why do the problems remain unabated? Where did all of these problems originate from? What is unique about the situation that has led to these leadership problems? The participants in the first two phases of data gathering spoke about possible ways for leadership to begin to recover from its ongoing problems.

The open codes of 'doing well out of the box' and 'informal leaders working in silence' were signs of a hopeful positive path for leadership. This is despite the fact that the reality of incidents during the first and the second phases of data gathering concentrated on the problematic processes of leading and the problematic nature of context. The negativity surrounding leading and following does not completely negate the possibility of a positive outcome being able to emerge. The positive indications during the first and second phases of data gathering gave hope. It is interesting that in the early stages of data gathering, problems dominated the discourse. It was not until the subsequent phase, and subsequent iterations of theoretical sampling and coding, that a positive path to a positive outcome and potential solutions began to emerge.

At the second phase of data collection, participants talked about what they thought were the possible causes of existing problems in the leadership process and how best to solve them. Throughout phases one and two, I was theorising about how a positive storyline might emerge. After finishing the two phases of data gathering, I returned to the data to sum up what could be called 'positive notions' may possibly exist.

After lengthy thought, I realised that one of the major obstacles is the absence of inclusiveness (exclusivity dominated the organisation). The proposed category of 'inclusive workability' emerged as the main category after revising the two early phases of data gathering. The current proposed sub-core categories for inclusive

workability emerged as leadership workability and followers' workability. Figure 6.1 illustrates the proposed category of inclusive workability.


**Figure 6. 1 Inclusive workability**

Figure 6.1 indicates the current emergent point of the research in accordance with theorising after two phases of interviews. The two subcategories of inclusive workability and their properties are shown in Table 6.1.

**Table 6. 1 Leadership workability and followers' workability**

| Leadership workability | Followers workability |
|---|---|
| Knowledge base | Apathy change |
| Religion based ethics | Talented people |
| Broad culture base | Dedicated personnel |
| Education base | Qualified professionals |
| Reject personalisation | Generational overlap |
| Social leadership | Interaction |
| Ethnic inclusiveness | Responsibility |

The second phase of data gathering broadened the findings of the first phase and pointed to a new set of themes that can allow insight into what was happening within the organisations under question. The richness of the data allowed me to reflect on the findings and propose the emergence of another model that may lead to saturation. The views expressed by interviewees repeatedly concentrated on possible ways forward to revive the ailing leadership. After deep memoing, the category of 'reanimating leadership workability' emerged. Once again, I returned to Strauss and

Corbin's (1998) axial model to shed light on the main category of inclusive workability proposed in Figure 6.1. Reanimating leadership workability refers to the ability of the parties involved to get leadership back into action. Once that is done, this new model of leadership will be the cause and the originator of inclusive workability throughout the organisation. In its reaction to a leader's initiation of inclusive workability, the organisation can begin to function as it should, and followers will react accordingly.

The proposed new model places the process of 'reanimating leadership workability' as a main category and the themes of inclusive leadership workability, inward leadership manifestation, outward leadership manifestation, and followership manifestation as the new subcategories. Figure 6.2 shows the new model.

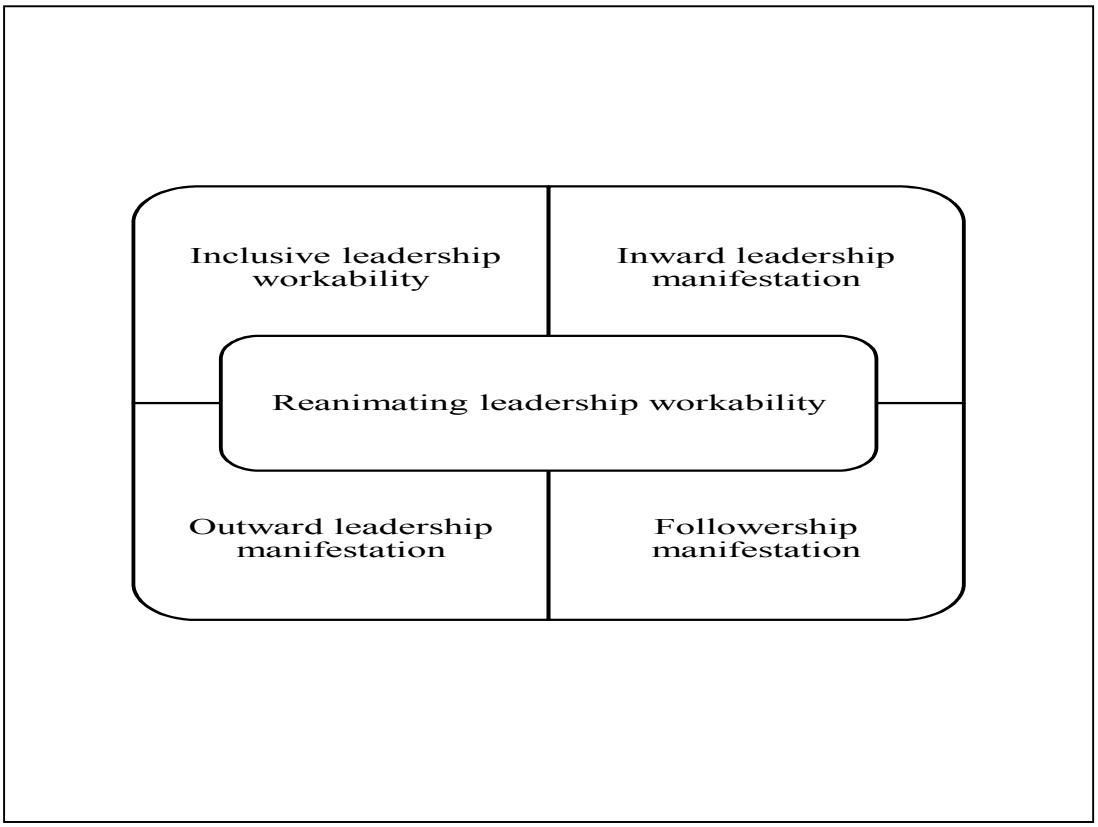


**Figure 6. 2 Proposed model of reanimating leadership workability**

At this time, I decided to consult with my supervisors to check the status of the results so far and to gain further insight into the data that had been collected. The

discussion was concise and illuminating. The major idea that emerged, points to a leadership development not to a leadership theory or process.

### 6.3 Informal and ad-hoc interviews, observations and ongoing document analysis: phase three of data gathering

Following the first two phases of data collection, I decided to embark on another set of interviews to enrich the existing findings gathered from phase one and two of this study. This new set of interviews would attempt to extract some of the stories of new leadership that was emerging in the newly established organisations. These organisations were still at the beginning stage of finding their way through the scheme of Islamic organisations. As mentioned earlier, positive indications began to emerge, but not enough to allow me to build a model of problem resolution. This made a new set of interviews an absolute priority if I wanted to generate a better model that could explain the leadership process rather than leadership development.

The next set of interviews targeted people who were successful both at the personal and the organisational level. Some of those participants were informal leaders and others were members of the few successful Muslim organisations, or had worked with them. Some had working links with some of the stronger wider community organisations. These participants had a successful organisational track record and hands on experience at state and local levels. I was unable to conduct formal interviews with these individuals due to their busy schedules, but managed to secure ten informal and ad-hoc interviews.

Beside informal interviews, I collected data through observation by participating in three community organised gatherings. The first of these was held at a university campus to discuss the experiences of young Australian Muslim leaders, the second was a consultation meeting regarding a current state-wide event, and the third was a fundraising dinner which attracted Muslim business leaders. Some of the informal interviews took place after these gatherings.

Through observations and the very first informal interviews, the first few concepts relating to a resolution model emerged. With each subsequent interview and observation, emerging concepts were compared and contrasted. I summarised and reflected upon the field notes and memos to find similarities or differences with data gathered in phase one and two, and to determine concurrence with the emerging concepts. At the same time, I analysed the data for infrequently mentioned concepts that might have been significant in analysing the leadership process. Concurrently, as part of constant comparison, I reread field notes and memos to improve the plausibility and explanatory power of the emerging ideas. Theoretical and reflexive memos were taken, alongside the field notes which included questions about repeated patterns, links to other theories, and conceptual ideas that developed during the research. I also included personal notes about the events I attended. These reflexive data were important because I was also member of the society within which the phenomenon was being researched.

## 6.4 The emergence of the near-core category— reconciling problems

Data presented in the first and the second phases of data collection and analysis introduced the positive concept of bringing leadership to life. Phase three was intended to investigate more data and to establish any differences and/or similarities. I took an overview of these similarities and/or differences and they were explored exhaustively, and then condensed into one fundamental category from which other subcategories flow. The clear similarity between the last two phases and the data from the current phase is an obvious and clear manifestation of the near-core category of 'reconciling problems'. Two subcategories of 'enacting leading' and 'enacting following' were also identified. The near core category of reconciling problems sets the tone of discussion in the following sections of this chapter. Figure 6.3 illustrates the near core category 'reconciling problems' and its relationship with the two subcategories.

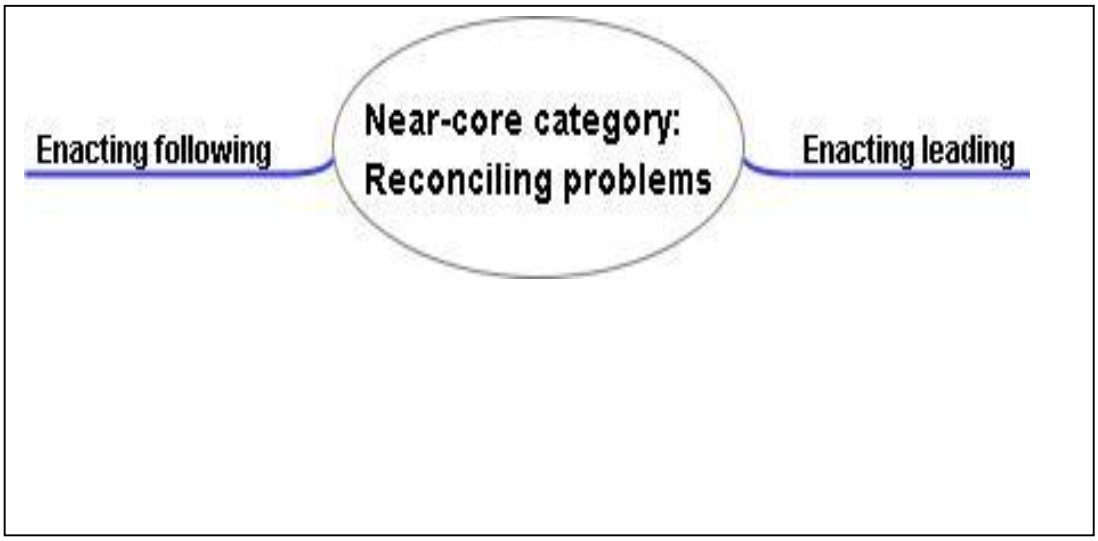


**Figure 6. 3 Near-core category: Reconciling problems**

## 6.5 Near-core category: reconciling problems.

Reconciling problems of leadership and followership appears to be the dominant level of abstraction at this stage. The data obtained in the first two phases of data gathering showed a repetitive negative storyline of leadership and context at federal, state and local levels that reflects its negative effect on the followers and the organisation. However, at the same time it contains data about positive notions of leadership. These positive ideas could be the cornerstone of how the few successful leaders and organisations under the umbrella of AFIC operate and interact with followers. These ideas can also suggest how the emerging leadership can set a tone of positive operation for followers to emulate and raise the standards of leadership at the federal, state and local levels to actually 'do leading'. Stakeholders should start acting on a variety of measures to generate workability and the reconciliation of problems is the first step of many. Phase 3 of observations and interviews consolidated the very first notions of articulating views of participants at the two previous phases of interviews and group discussions, about lifting the leadership and the followership from the current status of negativity, to a more practical and inspiring status. At its core, reconciling problems represents the normal operation mode of work and action to overcome these problems. The following sections consider the issue of reconciling problems from the two different angles that represent the properties of the near-core category.

### 6.5.1 Enacting leading

This is the first property of the near core category of reconciling problems which explained the operation process of the few successful role models. Additionally, it explained how interviewees view the leading process that influences the behaviours of followers and individuals, and suggests the way in which the leadership could operate.

This third phase of the study found that while the absence of leadership is apparent, many followers and leaders at different organisational levels put their concerns high on their agenda to move away from negativity and begin a new process of leadership. The leading process needs enacting. It needs people who 'dust off' leadership through basic measures that many people in AFIC may have never considered. 'Dusting off' leadership starts with interacting with people, talking and listening to them, feeling their emotions, seeking their input and so on. The aim is not just to bring life to leadership, but to show a manifestation of leadership loudly and clearly in a highly transparent fashion.

Leaders have many different roles and aspects of leadership to fulfill. Unless those roles are fulfilled, an absence of leadership may be apparent. It was found that roles and strategies of leadership in the current setting are not fulfilled. In one of the previous chapters I discussed 'no leadership' as one of the main driving forces of existing problems. Data obtained found that the leadership has been dysfunctional for a long time and the leaders have been neglecting calls from prominent figures in the Islamic community to change their ways of doing things in their capacity as leaders in formal positions.

At this phase of the research, participants confirmed similar ideas to those that emerged from the last two phases. The next section discusses the most important dimensions of the process of 'enacting leading'. Figure 6.4 shows the dimensions of 'enacting leading'.

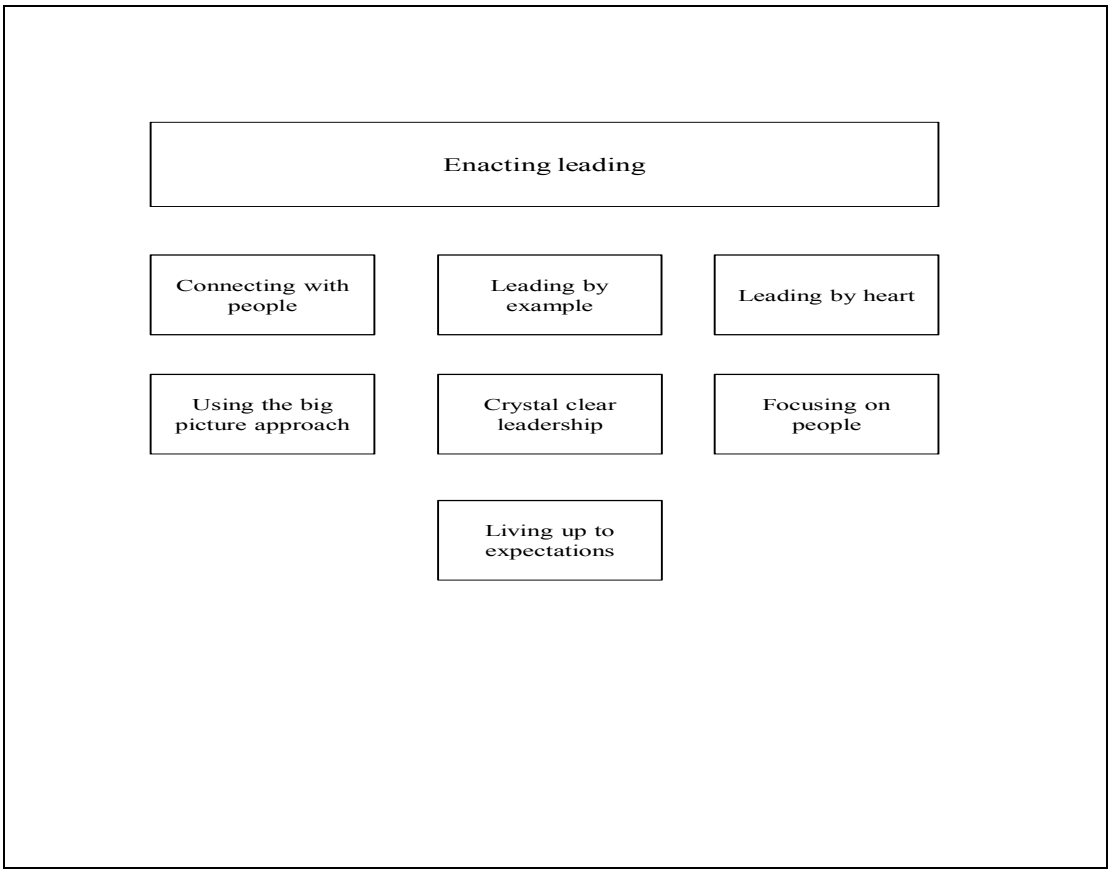


**Figure 6. 4 Dimensions of enacting leading**

### 6.5.1.1 Dimensions of 'enacting leading':

#### 6.5.1.1.1 Connecting with people

One of the main factors for manifesting positive leadership is to connect with the followers and at the grassroots level of community. At one of the events that I attended for this phase of data collection, I noticed that many people including followers did not know their leaders. This gap makes it difficult for followers to accept messages from leaders and complicates the process of getting work done. One young Muslim leader said, "To make change, leaders have to be part of the people, encourage them, talk to people and be humble about it, approach others, and get down to their level". For him, this is the recipe for success in getting leaders' message across and to effect change in their organisations. This feeling was reflected widely in the data.

Leaders who interact with people can make a difference because those leaders can connect with the followers who feel disadvantaged. Leadership can work at all levels of the organisational hierarchy to accommodate complex challenges and unpredictable situations. When leadership works on all levels, they do indeed establish a more stable environment. By interacting with people, leaders get more people involved and work towards a common purpose. Relationships and connections with followers lead to effective leadership, and this can result in collective organisational success. Without this close attachment to people, the leadership has neither influence over people nor over the processes of organising (George, 2003; Kouzes and Posner, 2010; McKee et al., 2008; Quinn, 2011; Thomas, 2008).

One woman who is active in the community said, "Leadership has to get down to our level and explain the current situation, why our organisation faces problems, and how we can assist in solving the problems. If they approach us on the ground, believe me, things will get better". This grassroots approach can help leadership to get good feedback from followers and implement better policies. This is the engagement many respondents talked about through this research, an engagement through meaningful activities.

With this close attachment with the society at the grassroots level, leadership can bring new blood to positions of leadership - a young generation who can be ready when the current leaders need to hand over leadership positions. One respondent is sure "…. it is not an easy task for the old generation who have spent many years in formal leadership positions to go", but close attachment will allow them to make this self-renewal a part of their vision for the long term.

Interviewees talked about the state of isolation of leaders from the Islamic community, followers, and subordinates at different levels. Connecting is the converse of isolation. One local organisation leader said; "We need the leaders to come down from the palace up there to the grassroots of our society".

#### 6.5.1.1.2 Leading by example

Failing to lead by example does not lead to sustainable success (Phillips, 2013). Problematic leadership processes in the organisational setting prevent leaders from providing a good example and subsequently overwhelm followers, stifle action and bring failure. Wherever followers looked, they were faced with unhappy stories about their leaders and spoke of very few leaders whose examples they would follow. Followers like to take the initiative, but they hope that formal leaders are motivators of change, rather than being obstacles to change. The data showed that leaders tended to think that they were good examples because they often gave presentations and speeches at big events. This false perception of good leadership aggravates already existing problems, because good leadership is not about 'preaching' and 'talking' at events. This was identified by participants as being a short cut to failure. Leaders forget that the key words are "example means action and hard work", as one respondent said. Another interviewee commented, "The attitude is taking the position and doing nothing for the organisation, and leaders should have a track record of their real work for the community". The track record and real work represent solid example of leadership in action, which could be an effective motivator for followers who wish to adopt their example of leadership.

#### 6.5.1.1.3 Leading by heart

Belinda Harris (2004) introduced the term 'leading by love and heart' and this is what seems to be lacking in the current setting under investigation. Harris's concept is consistent with Islam's approach where the heart is recognised as the core of spiritual and social values, peace, compassion, social justice, and respect for the other. Leading by heart and love opens the space for everyone to feel it and its potential is reflected in the organisation's governance, processes, management practices, cultural resonance and success (Nebelung, 2010).

A respondent expressed his worry about the separation of feelings and the levels of motivations among followers, "Look if leaders play the card of 'it is business as usual' without attention and sympathy, we will end up with a situation of no motivation". He added, "People want meaning that encourages them to feel proud

and give their best performance". His obvious frustration continues, "Humility will not be generated through the dry, tough and disputed environment surrounding us, but from leadership who feel deeply, who can show people a different way of attachment". Leadership relates to emotions and feelings. These leaders have to be heartily and emotionally connected with their constituents in order to deliver the effect upon them. As one respondent articulated, "Followers need to feel included and leaders should show them that they are part of the group. Their accomplishment should be shown strongly, and their personal contributions must be valued".

There are four points that resonate with the above observation: first, the leadership role is to energise and accommodate followers with guidance illuminated by heartfelt feelings. Second, leadership could deliver a positive impact by communicating very closely with people. Their challenge is to begin a positive, shared experience. This is not an argument for leadership to work dependent on emotions, or letting circumstances determine how they feel. Rather leadership needs a balance between the heart and the mind. Third, followers' feelings of connection and appreciation are vital as they search for a sense of belonging to their organisational setting, to bring their capabilities and professionalism to the fore in a more highly appreciative context. Fourth, leadership is presently poor because it seeks to motivate followers in a disputed environment lacking in inspiration.

For Muslims in general, the manifestation of leadership through the heart is integral to the teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad. Muslims throughout the ages have wholeheartedly loved the Prophet. This leader in their experience was a perfect role model, one who gave them so much love and gave of his whole emotions through a kind heart and strong morals. In the eyes of the Muslims, he is the best leader, and he is considered to be a model of perfection. His circle of influence spread throughout the world in very few years, and gave him the title of a man of great affection.

#### 6.5.1.1.4 Using the big picture approach

Data from the current phase of data collection and the previous two phases uncovered that AFIC has struggled with minor issues that dominated much of its work over the fifty years since inception. This was spoken about by interviewees who expressed their frustration at the way the leaders handle things on a day to day basis. They stressed that leaders have a "narrow minded mentality". One respondent, for example, stated that leaders must "focus on [the] big picture not minor details" and said that the community needs "leader[s] with vision; who can look ahead and show us direction".

The data obtained demonstrates that, within the current setting, engagement with minor issues consume much of a leaders' time, failing to apply a 'big' picture approach. One intellectual interviewee said, "team work and assigning responsibilities are not on the leaders' agenda, they are single minded". Delegating assignments and minor jobs to followers, subordinates and middle level managers is a fundamental process in embracing the big-picture approach. The process of delegating responsibilities is poorly functioning at the present due to mistrust and power issues.

(Denton, 2012) advises leaders not to focus too much on managing the details and missing the big picture, which could lead to ineffectiveness. He adds that groups could do a better job when they concentrate on the big picture and a future plan. The big-picture approach is a way forward, if leadership aims to create a vision and goals for followers. Leadership will be poorly manifested without a vision or a big-picture approach. Leadership has to focus on this big-picture approach if they want to help followers make shift in attitude from the negative to the positive.

#### 6.5.1.1.5 Crystal clear leadership

It is extremely important for leadership to be crystal clear on many issues in order to get things done. Leadership has to be clear on issues of accountability, vision, goals and objectives. Transparent leadership means leaders with more clarity who open their portfolio to their subordinates and followers, and connect to them through

organisational work. One respondent declared, "Leaders need to be very clear about their agenda and objectives and stick to something manageable".

When followers know what their leadership is all about, this is the first step to getting on with the job unhesitatingly. It gives followers a better understanding of key objectives, improves their trust in leadership and improves their efforts towards the end result. On the other hand, it gives leadership credibility, which in turn allows them to think continuously of the organisation's productivity, and encourages followers to strive for their organisation.

Effective leadership shows clear purpose and clear intention, and acts on that clarity in ways that others can understand and feel (Nebelung, 2010). With this clear and open manifesto between both parties, they can eliminate lack of confidence and apathy, energise their organisation and enhance accountability, trust, team work and the sensemaking which are impaired at the moment (Meyer and Kirby, 2010; Milton, 2009; Vogelgesang and Lester, 2009).

**6.5.1.1.6 Focus on people**

According to many of the interviewees', people must be at the top of the agenda because they are the main asset of any organisation. One participant called for leadership to, "…. enable people to participate". One woman encouraged leadership, "…. to provide support for followers to achieve their aims and share the decision-making process". On another note, one active young leader argued for "…. leaders to be more embracing of what other people have offered". The ability to accept people, their ideas, and their contribution is crucial to organisational work, just as much as getting work accomplished. Leaders are required to accept people as they are and admire their efforts, and if they see something which needs to be altered or changed, they can propose it in an acceptable way.

The focus on people is two-fold. First is what leadership can do to engage followers in all sorts of processes to develop their capabilities, which is vital, and then give them the ability to share in the decision-making process (Grayson and Speckhart, 2006). The second is leadership's willingness to accept different views and offers

from the grassroots levels of community and the followers. A focus on people and development is one of the main themes of manifesting leadership. Leadership cannot work in isolation, nor can it advance without peoples' contributions. A clear focus on people could create great leaders and great organisations (Riggio et al., 2008).

#### 6.5.1.1.7 Living up to expectations

Followers closely monitor the commitment of their leader to their organisation and will not commit themselves to leaders who do not live up to their expectations. Through the data collected, I found that followers will not give their commitment to leaders who they think are not committing themselves to the organisation's aims and aspirations. A member of a local organisation said, "I think people put the board in with certain expectations, of what they'll do". This begs the question: Under what conditions will followers give their loyalty to their leaders? The answer was expressed by one young leader who said that, "Loyalty is based on a lot of achievements and commitment". But commitment is a two way process that leads to mutual success; loyalty and hard work from followers comes in return for much dedication and achievement by the leadership. At the entry level of encouraging people to join an organisation, it is crucial for people to see the achievements of that organisation. Leaders' achievements are one of the primary motivations for followers' interaction and realistic expectations. Expectations range from the basic daily act of leadership to the achievement of goals and the aims of followers at the organisational level.

Lawson and Cox (2010) mention that outstanding leadership could exceed expectations if they put massive emphasis on developing people for the long term as the route to high performance. This goes way beyond the traditional mantra of people are the greatest asset. I found that leaders in AFIC do not even think of the expectations and desires of their followers. One active young state member said, "We are not expecting much at all from our leaders, once they get the position it is all over". He questioned the ".... ability of leaders to get in touch with them and understand their feelings and aspirations". When leaders acquire their positions, it is

their ultimate responsibility to work hard to fulfil the organisational mission, taking into consideration people's expectations and aspirations.

### 6.5.2 Enacting following

Enacting following is the second property of the near core category of 'reconciling problems'. It explains how leadership influences following and how followers might operate and adapt to following and leading. Followership is seen as being reciprocal to leadership (Montesino, 2003). As much as scholars and practitioners alike hailed leadership as the cornerstone of organisations, they also acknowledged that followership is the cornerstone of leadership and of organisations, and some scholars went further, acknowledging that leaders cannot exist without followers (Hollander, 1992, 1995).

This relationship between leadership and followership is interdependent and symbiotic in nature (Reicher et al., 2005). Collinson (2006) clearly articulated that leadership and followership are inextricably connected. Lundin and Lancaster (1990) affirmed that leadership effectiveness depends largely upon the ability to establish loyal, capable, and knowledgeable followers. Other research on leadership recognises that leaders and followers are partners in pursuit of a purpose (Chaleff, 2003). Shamir and Howell (2000) suggested that followers might play an active role, not only in the emergence of charismatic leaders and in reinforcing their influence, but also in affecting the leaders and empowering them.

Chaleff (2003) argued that some followers consider themselves as sharing a common purpose and are committed to the accomplishment of the organisation. He explained that while leaders have power within the organisation, followers also retain multiple aspects of power as well. These multiple aspects of power could give followers a boost in their relations with leaders. They might play an active role, not only in the emergence of charismatic leaders and in reinforcing their influence, but also in affecting the leaders and empowering them (Howell and Shamir, 2005). This sentiment was expressed by interviewees in this study.

The aforementioned research literature pinpoints the relationship between leadership and followership, and its high level of expectations and high degree of interdependence. The present research found much similarity between the aforementioned research and the current substantive setting. Followers and leaders from middle and lower management levels expressed their views very clearly regarding the role of followers and the kind of relationship between leadership and followership. They desire a leadership that clearly operates in a mode of complete dedication to strong followership, and at the same time, a followership which resonates and acts to a high standard of performance. This can elevate the followership to claim an effective leadership spirit at the first stage, and a leadership role after that. Figure 6.5 illustrates the dimensions of enacting following.

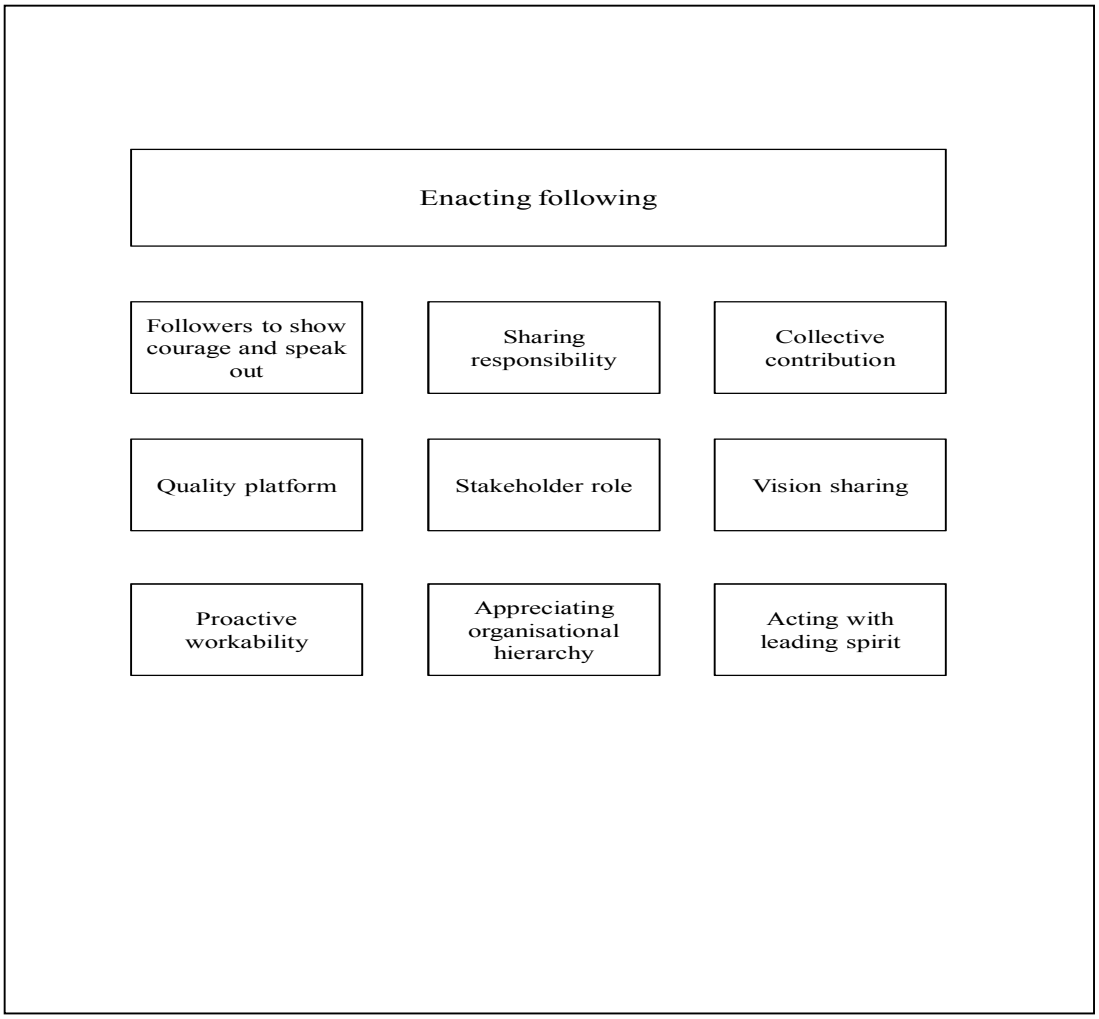


**Figure 6. 5 Dimensions of enacting following**

#### 6.5.2.1 Dimensions of enacting following

##### 6.5.2.1.1 Followers need to show courage and speak out

Interviewees noticed the silence of followers on many issues concerning leadership and organisation. One respondent noticed an incident where group members at one stage, "could convey the message clearly and loudly to leadership, but they stopped short of speaking out". Another woman stated, "Members and religious leaders need to speak out about leadership's wrong doing; our religion encourage us not to accept the wrong doing, and to seek advice". One intellectual interviewee demanded, "We should have enough integrity and enough courage to speak up about the issues that are most important to us" and he stressed that courage is one of the traits that Islam admires the most. This courage goes beyond just speaking out, rather "this courage means saying no while others are saying yes".

Followers' courage coupled with wisdom, confidence and their conviction to speak out and challenge the status quo can bring change to leadership and organisational work. If most followers maintain silence on many issues, then they cannot bring the desired change, and the leadership will continue to act as if everything is in order, while the reality is the opposite. One of the most important themes found which boosted followership was to show courage and speak out, and to share responsibility in the decision making process. Chaleff and Mellan (2011) praised courageous followers and they articulated that following is not a passive act; it is a participation that recognises different responsibilities while working toward a common goal. They add that if followers commit to serving the organisation, they have a platform from which to question their leaders when they feel that what they're doing is violating the values that they believe the organisation should operate within.

##### 6.5.2.1.2 Sharing responsibility

Sharing responsibility is a very important concept in Islam. Islam stresses the importance, and encourages the concept, of sharing responsibility. This is based on the Prophetic tradition (hadith) that stated, the similitude of believers in regard to

mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches (Al-Khattab, 2007). Abu Bakr, the first leader or Caliph (632-634 AD) after the Prophet Muhammad spoke about shared responsibility in his inauguration speech, "I have been given the authority over you, and I am not the best of you. If I do well, help me; and if I do wrong, set me right. Sincere regard for truth is loyalty and disregard for truth is treachery" (Rogerson, 2010:219) .This is the type of responsibility sharing that Islam asks for. The responsibility of followers towards their leaders is to correct them if they are wrong, and to support them if they are right. The followers cannot establish the process of sharing responsibility unless they partake in continuous work and ideas. Ideas suggested by staff could solve organisational challenges while simultaneously building morale (Underdahl, 2009).

In the previous chapter which dealt with problem identification, apathy was identified as one of the main obstacles which impacted on the whole set of organisational work. As the interviewees described, it is the disease that lies inside the organisation's body. Apathy is the opposite of sharing responsibility, and plays a destructive role in organisations.

Sharing responsibility gives the followers more cause to be active members of an organisation. When followers know the importance of their ideas and input towards their organisational work, they will surely strive for their organisation and will be active members of their organisation. This research found followers who do not share responsibility have a minimum or no impact on organisations or leadership.

Interviewees stressed the importance of the concept of sharing responsibility among followers and leaders alike. One respondent talked about the young Muslim generation who are able and willing to share responsibility, at various levels. He admired the recent forums and gatherings for Muslim youth around Australia that, "raise concern about the current status of Muslim organisations and bear the flag of sharing the burden". One senior religious figure interviewed here asked leaders to "empower followers". He challenged, ".... leaders to lift the banner of sharing work and achieving together".

#### 6.5.2.1.3 Collective contribution

Unplanned individual work within the organisational system will not reflect the essence of followership and team work. Individual work benefits individuals, not the organisation. The data obtained from interviews showed that continuous individual work dominates much of the organisational work. One interviewee complained that, "Unfortunately, teamwork is absent, when you don't have the basis, things go wrong easily". He added, "If we intend to succeed in this advanced society, we need to work as a group". Another highly concerned respondent showed his frustration regarding, ".... people who abstain from cooperating with colleagues in doing the good thing for the organisation in favour of their ego and self interest".

Isaac et al. (2001:214) echo the positive notion of collective efforts by affirming that ".... it is ultimately followers' effective efforts that collectively make it possible for the organisation to accomplish strategic ends that would otherwise fall by the wayside". A collective effort could contribute to problem solving and to reviving followers' and leaders' spirits. Leadership may start to change negativity by instituting teamwork, which negates dysfunctional, scattered input from individuals. For example, in a newly established organisation, I found that followers' collective contributions enabled the organisation to revive and correct itself more consistently and more rapidly.

#### 6.5.2.1.4 Quality platform

Participants urged members to aspire to the highest work quality standard. Aspiration to high standards gives followers the momentum to be active members and set the example as exemplary leaders when the chance arrives. A framework of quality standards gives followers a model for certainty against any organisational complexity.

I observed that followers' quality made a big impact on leaders because it forced leaders to think deeply about their roles and how they could perform to the best of their ability. Within this quality system, leaders are alert to possible changes if they do not strive to do their best. Followers' quality can upset the status-quo, if the

status-quo is not up to standard. One young Muslim demonstrated high aspiration when he spoke about the significance of, ".... quality standards between leaders and followers". Although pessimistic, he keeps his hopes alive by thinking of the young generation of Muslims who may change the status quo by bringing quality to their *modus operandi*. He said, "You know, the young generation of Muslims has shifted towards professionalism, this will equip them with tools to do things right and may change our present situation and improve the work quality".

Undoubtedly, the ideas of this young man regarding quality in leadership are influenced by the fact that Islam considers a quality platform as the basic level of followership-leadership. The codes of Islam urge Muslims in general to strive for excellence when they start any work. In fact, a high level of performance is an important goal for Muslims, as indicated by the saying of Prophet Muhammad, "Indeed God loves if any one of you embark on a job, that he seeks to perfect it" (Al-Tabarani, 1999:152). The above sentiment resonates with the recent view that work quality is not an option, it is an imperative for leaders/followers. A quality professional practice environment has a direct correlation with job satisfaction and front-line leadership (Barzegar et al., 2012; Rausch and Washbush, 1998; Telford, 2004). The above studies show that quality can bring change to organisational work. It can upset the status-quo, allow followers to grow and realise their potential, make followers feel they have all the qualities necessary to be leaders, and allow leaders to focus more on continuous achievements and facilitate more effective leadership.

#### 6.5.2.1.5 Stakeholders' role

Freeman (1984) came up with one of the early definitions of 'stakeholders' role' as those who are affected by and/or can affect the achievement of the firm's objectives. Followers are one of the main stakeholders in the context of this research. The in and out affect mentioned by Freeman seems to be mostly absent from the base of followers in this setting. The role of stakeholder means more than that of a member or a follower. The stakeholder is concerned about his organisation and its achievement, and is concerned about achieving the objectives of the organisation. This concern was also one of the concerns of the interviewees in this research. For

example, one young third generation Australian Muslim demanded, "People to do their share of work and give judgement". Another professional woman stressed the need for, "The young generation to be part of the organisation achievement in the days to come". A leader of a newly established organisation pointed out his approach to followers' engagement when he said, "Followers as leaders, they are an equal part of the decision making process".

#### 6.5.2.1.6 Vision sharing

The data obtained from this empirical investigation showed a lack of vision-sharing. Vision-setting indicates that organisations set their vision, goal and objectives formally, but working out and sharing the vision, goal and objectives, which is the responsibility of leadership and followers, falls short. Alexander (1989) advised organisations to begin vision sharing if they aim to achieve high performance, and to bring about more participation by members when initiating ideas and clearly stating expectations. With followers' participation and sharing the same vision as leaders, the organisation could achieve superior performance (Bass, 1985; Conger and Kanungo, 1987; Kouzes and Posner, 2010).

Interviewees frequently indicated that sharing the organisation's vision is one basis of strength and ability. One local leader said, "If we lack a clear goal and vision, people should correct it and demand that we set a direction and give guidance". One respondent indicated that the humble beginnings of AFIC were based on, ".... collective vision of a solid and well respected representation of Australian Muslims". He added, "The early generations of founding leaders understood how to share ideas with others, and they ended up establishing a federal representative organisation with a humble but successful beginning". Beekun (2011) stresses the view that a leader must share his/her vision with the organisation's members and must engage followers in the process of developing and executing strategic and operational plans in order to increase their cooperation and commitment.

#### 6.5.2.1.7 Proactive workability

Manifesting strong followership means followers who are pro-active in executing work, even engaging in critical thinking and activities critical to the organisation in order to accommodate uncertainty (Kelley, 1992).

This was evident in the statements made in the interviews. For example, one of the interviewees noticed the current situation of the followers and said, "People are known for keeping away from participating in activities. People must be a bit active; once they start they will move on". He expressed his ambitions for an active followers based organisation to, "Keep work right on track, and affirm the availability of active people in the future".

One active woman expressed her anger about those who kept talking and not doing the minimum requirement, "Don't just criticise, get over it and do something". She was disappointed in the people who confined themselves to criticising without showing active participation in the organisational work.

The above passages indicate that one of the most important characteristics of a follower is the willingness to be active in all situations. It is not enough to talk or speak in the voice of the majority. This talk should be followed by active participation. This active participation can lead to the uplifting of the organisation. Another indication may entail that followers stop thinking in the traditional way of putting leaders always in a proactive position and themselves in the back seat, and just taking what is given to them by the leaders. In the current setting, change could come from proactive followers who see things differently from others. One respondent was discouraged when others looked at things from an angle of, "Challenge will lead to chaos", without much concern about moving the organisation forward.

The present situation in the current context of AFIC requires constant attention from both leaders and followers in order to attain workability. Workability is the act of promoting the responsibility of all parties to be proactive in seeking constructive input and leading by example.

#### 6.5.2.1.8 Appreciating organisational hierarchy

One of the state leaders gave example of someone queue jumping the organisational hierarchy:

> Now a young man who is very impatient, in a hurry came to the meeting and wanted to be nominated. But you are not a member of this society, we cannot nominate you. He said I am qualified; I am willing to work; why I should be a member. This impatience becomes the norm.

Another local leader said, "Johnny comes lately, to upset the whole system".

The above passage describes individuals who increasingly interact in ways that do not put the interest of their organisation first. They try to jump formal hierarchies. In so doing they sometimes succeed in obtaining these positions, violating the hierarchical structure, and at other times fail in their bid to be in these positions immediately. Some of these members are highly qualified individuals who can make a difference within the organisation, but by their behaviour they lose out and the organisation loses out as well.

Another interviewee talked about, "The harmful ideas of migrant leaders who want to put forward their countries of origin traditions as the only framework here in Australia". The effect of ethnic cultures and national cultures on the way members of AFIC act is widely felt. Many of the Islamic countries around the world, where many members of these organisations came from lack order and structure. These members seem to infuse the type of disorder prevalent in their respective home countries, into the organisation.

One respondent talked about the, "…. power and culture of control and corruption of many Islamic countries that migrants to Australia inherited". He was defiant in his claim and asked the followers to present themselves as desirable and professional members, easily allowing them to obtain positions in organisations. Another young person asked followers to implement order and a system to craft their way up the organisational hierarchy. He stressed the importance of members who are capable of managing their work by planning, organising, and acting upon organisational interests.

#### 6.5.2.1.9 Acting with leading spirit

Islam stresses the importance of people and followers to act as leaders at all levels of life and organisation. This spirit gives individuals a sense of responsibility and a spirit of leadership. Grassroots and organisational members and followers are considered by Islam as leaders, in the sense of holding responsibility, forward planning, organising and acting upon achieving organisational goals and expressing organisational vision. This type of followers will consider themselves as self appointed leaders at all stages of organisational life (Isaac et al., 2001), and will step forward and act as leaders to accommodate the organisational challenge.

Different interviewees conveyed the same message of Islam as the grassroots members. In one of the youth forums held in Brisbane during 2010, one youth said, "We are considered to be the dynamic people around, and if we don't act regardless of the situation we are criticising, things will get off track fast. We have to behave with responsibility". An intellectual interviewee put it very clearly, "We are experiencing a top-base crisis". He stresses the logic of a fresh start for all members, "Indeed, in order for us to step forward, we have to leave the problems behind us and think positively for the future". Another active young person said, "We have to start somewhere with vision and determination".

## 6.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed the near core category of 'reconciling problems'. It has illustrated how this near core category integrates the expected operation mode of leading and following. The operation mode depicts the normal way of carrying out leading and following. To operate on leading and following, the demand is from leaders and followers to stop the reaction mode in responding to incidents and actions. The dimensions of enacting leading and enacting following have been conceived as the catalyst that may bring life to the processes of leading and following in the current setting under investigation. The two dimensions of enacting leading and enacting following are delineated by a reciprocal relationship which needs followers to be up to the task when leading is enacted and leaders to be down to earth when following is enacted.

# Chapter 7 The basic social process

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter makes up the final phase of data collection, aimed at reaching saturation. The chapter first explores the processual nature of leadership. The chapter builds on previous findings and attempts to examine how best to understand processes of leadership within Muslim organisation operating in a 'Western'/ Australian context. In doing so, this phase includes three stages of data collection and analysis; the first stage was conducted in the nation capital, Canberra, and consists of two formal interviews, two informal interviews, one focus group meeting, an official consultation meeting and two conferences. The first stage highlights the emergence of the two near-core categories 'accommodating complexity' and 'sensemaking'. The second stage was conducted in far North Queensland and consists mainly of 'participant observation' in one local organisational setting, in addition to two formal and four informal interviews, and one focus group meeting. The second stage highlights the emergence of the core category of 'embracing basics'. The third stage was conducted in Melbourne and consists of six formal interviews and one focus group meeting. The third stage wraps up data collection and analysis and highlights the saturation point. This chapter concludes with the discussion of the findings and summary.

## 7.2 Leadership as a social process

Leadership scholars recognise that leadership is not the result of a sole action or behaviour (Hunter et al., 2007). It is a social process, a series of activities and exchanges engaged in over time and under varied circumstances to influence the social setting (Bass, 1998; Conger, 1998; Hunter et al., 2007; Parry, 1997, 1998, 1999; Rost, 1993; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Yukl, 2006). The interactive nature of leadership between the leader and the follower is the main core of this process (Neubert, 1999).

Mangham and Pye (1991: 59) explain:

> The measure of any piece of behaviour is the response to it: following is the measure of leading, and leading the measure of following. Neither makes any sense in the absence of its effects, we take some particular activity to be an example of good leading by *the followers* playing their parts; a good piece of following is known by a leader playing his or her part. Acceptance of [this view], of course, implies that leading/following is not simply a matter of individuals and roles but also an instance of process.

The social processual nature of leadership encourages others to derive grounded theories of leadership (Irurita, 1990, 1994; Kan and Parry, 2004; Parry, 1999; Rowland and Parry, 2009). The present research is not an exception. It follows the same road taken by several other researchers to enhance an understanding of the leadership process, but this time in a unique setting; Islamic organisations in Australia. It has the same aim of deriving a theory that explains the social influence process of leadership within this substantive context. This aim reached fruition during this last phase of data collection and analysis.

## 7.3 Recapping findings

It was not until summer 2011 that the research started to take the final shape and the basic social process began to emerge. Before this, the researcher finished three phases of data collection and analysis. Until then, the findings had emerged from a smooth flow of data. The research thus far identified many problematic processes, which represents the lower order category of problematic leadership. The second phase of the research attempted to shed light upon the problematic notions of 'how?' and 'why?' This phase represented the higher-order category of problematic context where the researcher began sifting through and explaining the subcategories. The third phase was the phase of problem resolution, where the researcher embarked on identifying the near-core category of reconciling problems and its properties of enacting leadership, and following. The near-core category of the third phase is the first step for leaders to begin acting on a variety of measures to generate workability. The researcher intends to validate or invalidate the previous findings through interviews with different Muslim personalities in leadership positions. These personalities are different in terms of the positions they hold, their status, and their

charisma. They are very successful leaders and personalities within the organisations they represent, and they are role models for Muslim youth in Australia. The researcher also had the chance to meet informally with participants during the few meetings he observed. Those participants represent members, state leaders, and local leaders of the organisation.

## 7.4 Data collection and analysis: phase four (the final phase)

### 7.4.1 First leg of final phase: The emergence of the two near-core categories 'Accommodating complexity' and 'Sense-making'.

The first leg of the fourth phase of data collection and analysis took place in the nation's capital, Canberra. The schedule was very busy, and consisted of two formal interviews, two informal interviews, one focus group meeting, an official consultation meeting and two conferences. All of the above took place in just two days. What follows is an analysis of what was observed at the conferences and the meetings, followed by analysis of data collected from the interviews and focus groups.

***Observations from conferences***

The conferences were not originally in the researcher's schedule. A key informant asked the researcher to attend the event and to take part in an official consultation meeting to discuss issues and ways of finding solutions to future community developments. These events took place during two days in mid-summer, 2011. They took up most of the whole two days of extensive interviewing and meetings. During these events, the researcher saw many problematic leadership processes that were not anticipated. The dynamics of the meetings were coloured with conflict and various peoples' aspirations. For example, it was evident that leaders at federal and state levels did not speak to each other. Furthermore, observations demonstrated that leaders' -religious and otherwise- at the state level were far apart in their ideologies, and although living in the same city, they were bitterly divided. Divisions seem to take place on many grounds due to power struggles, ethnic backgrounds and above all, narrow-mindedness. Close observation also showed that the actions of

participants in these events demonstrated the absence of unity and cooperation, and the presence of conflict and disagreement.

What is significant is that most of the attendees ignored the current issues of discussion on the agenda. Instead, they spent most of the time engaged in tit-for-tat arguments with no sign of peace or agreement. When the researcher came to the conference, he thought the hand-shaking and welcome greetings exchanged on the day were a sign of unity and were thus encouraging. But as one participant sadly put it, "The hands are shaking, while the hearts are apart and broken". Clearly there was a power struggle and the players' actions and gestures seemed to indicate that there was no intention of calming down, even for a very short time. The power struggle looked like the motive for each motion, without reasonable consideration being given to organisational and community issues.

As a participant in conferences, the researcher approached some members with an open mind to gain more information about the processes that were taking place on the ground. In one instance, the researcher approached one of the participants (a local state leader) to ask him about an issue that was on the public record, and which was known to many members of the organisation. To the researcher's amazement, the participant refused to answer the question in a frank and straightforward way. The researcher witnessed many moments of discontent among the leaders. This discontent appeared to negatively affect the current setting.

On the other hand, I noticed several extensive and diligent attempts by one leader to create reconciliation between leaders from local and state organisations. Despite the humility and repeated attempts by this leader, there was outright rejection from other leaders, and even followers, at the state and federal levels. I asked one member of a state council (who has a good relationship with these leaders) about his interpretation of this reconciliation attempt, and the pessimistic outcome of events. He replied, "People are suspicious and simply they don't have a minimum degree of trust of each other" and, "It is all about positions, personal interests and ethnic

control priority". This answer indicated a complexity between relationships and a power struggle on the grounds of interests and ethnicity.

The representation above confirms the often-repeated category of the power struggle and organisational complexity. Studying the data gained thus far, with the help of constant comparison method, it became clearer that the near-core category of reconciling problems mentioned in Chapter 6 can play an important role within problem solving in a less severe environment under stable conditions. However at the beginning of organisational upheaval, amid complex situations, a different process is required to overcome the hurdles facing the manifestations of leading and following. This process is known as 'accommodating complexity'. Accommodating complexity will enhance both leading and following processes. When personalities work hard on managing complexity, the flow of good processes of leading and following will follow. The highlight and definition of the social process of 'accommodating complexity' will be dealt with in section 7.5.1.

***Observations from official consultation meeting***

In contrast with the above negative scenarios, observations from an official consultative meeting held in Canberra showed healthier signs of the leadership process. This meeting demonstrated that individuals from various disciplines do come together to do their best to put the organisation's interests before their personal interests. Many of the participants are seen as role models for the young Muslim generation, although they are without 'formal' positions. Participants of this meeting freed themselves from their busy schedules and flew interstate to discuss ways in which they could advance the organisational interests of Muslims in Australia.

This particular meeting was a brain storming session, preparing for a conference on the topic of Muslims and multiculturalism, and it lasted for three hours. The meeting was a valuable experience in learning how individuals strive to put their community and organisational interests above their own interests. The participants were united in their aim of working for the concerns of Muslims in Australia. What was particularly significant is that everyone agreed that consistent work is necessary to

bring change, and everyone felt responsible as a community member to bring that to fruition. The participants engaged in a conscious process of brain storming, differing in their views, but certain to approach the end in peace and agreement. All the participants applauded the process and thought of it as the future they aim to achieve, and one that can be achieved. Their personalities were humble, and in their attitudes and behaviours they always returned to the basic principles of leadership in Islam, such as sincerity, humility, diligence and good work ethics.

The meeting touched on important issues. At the start of the meeting one of the participants suggested discussing the priorities when presenting the views of Muslims to the public. This first priority was on how Muslims should respond to the attacks from politicians on Islam and Muslims in Australia which were happening at that time. The discussion and the suggestions revolved around: (1) how intellectual, organisational and religious leaders can defend their setting without offending the society at large; (2) How followers are assured that their leadership can stand up firmly and defend members and present their case to the public; (3) How organisational members and the community can understand that politics is a game of convincing others of a solid case, but the question is how the Islamic case can be presented and established. They discussed the situation of Muslims in Australia who have so much to say in presenting their point of view, but are limited by their resources.

The second priority in the context of Muslims in Australia as a minority was to argue for the free and peaceful environment that civil societies uphold in high esteem, which allows them to practice the basic obligations of their religion in the spirit of freedom. Another participant suggested arguing the 'similarities' of Islamic values to Australian values, such as freedom, justice, and equality.

The participants at this formal consultation meeting discussed ways of doing something different; to establish a new direction for Muslim organisations in Australia. The new direction involved different mentalities, different personalities, different strategies and different processes. They discussed how to harness the

energy of talented young Muslim men and women with Australian accents, who could appeal more to organisational followers and the wider public.

The attendees at this meeting discussed internal and external complexities of the Muslim presence in Australia. For them, the complexity of Muslim presence is the obstacle that they should overcome. They also discussed how they could change the current organisational situation for Australian Muslims, acknowledging the difficulties and hurdles ahead. Despite these positives, the researcher noticed a lack in leadership skills and competencies among the attendees. Accordingly, while they discussed how to bring about future change, they failed to stipulate how exactly they could do this. At this meeting all were very sincere and highly motivated, but the lack of leadership ability and basic organising skills were apparent. For positive change to occur, leaders should have a deep knowledge of their organisation's current situation, set objectives, aims and goals, then work hard to set out a plan to work out how to achieve their mission.

***Interviews***

I conducted two formal interviews, two informal interviews and one focus group meeting, and met with a high profile leader during the two-day visit. The formal interview lasted for four non sequential hours. The interview was non sequential because the interviewee, besides his official position as high ranking leader, holds several unofficial responsibilities. He is a media spokesperson, a high level representative on state and federal levels, an event organiser, and also is a director on the board of groups of Islamic schools in different states. Additionally, he is a business owner and has a position as a high level employee with a state-wide company.

The interview was illuminating, and confirmed much of the data gathered in the last phases of data collection. But one matter is still unclear; how could one person hold so many responsibilities at the same time and function effectively? It is an illustration of the current unhealthy organisational situation. The load upon this person is an example of that of many leaders at AFIC who hold many titles and

responsibilities and who are unwilling to share the load. Our interviewee is not one of them *per se*, but he has done nothing to share his responsibilities with others, because as he said, "The people around him are not up to the job or not willing to give a hand". On the other hand, some members see him as a one man show, who likes to be at centre stage at all times.

It is the dilemma of both leadership and followership, and is the complexity which cannot easily be comprehended or accommodated. People see a slim chance for change, and is obvious that participants in these meetings were talking about and aiming for, new ways to change the situation for this substantive setting. This change will come at a high cost of awareness, courage, determination, sincerity and sacrifice. Changing the situation in this setting was tested in different ways at various levels.

One of the complex issues that currently require change is the way elections are conducted. The high profile leader mentioned above told of an incidence of complete failure while he was trying to resolve an issue of a power struggle within AFIC. He sent letters and spoke to people at one state organisation in a bid to change the way voting was carried out to choose the executive committee at the federal level. The plan was to allow all local organisations from each state to vote, instead of getting the state organisations to manipulate and dictate the whole set of election procedures. This state organisation is one example of a role model organisation that emerged as a positive organisation recently in Australia. Unfortunately, the interviewee received a very disappointing response, even from those who are seen as being positive examples of leadership.

This leader tried to manifest a basic way of leading, consultation and responsibility-sharing to resolve a huge problem of a power struggle. He attempted to show followers effective and organised ways to carry out elections, however he failed. This is due to the inability to construct a complete picture of ways to resolve a complexity of power. He tried his best to reconcile the election problem, however his narrative was ineffective. His cues from stories of the past were not drawn upon.

His lack of foresight in identifying and clarifying the problematic situation, and his lack of knowledge of how to reach a sceptical audience who hold preconceived notions, fell short of accommodating this complex issue. His achievements are still in doubt among many followers. The knowledge of how, when and where does make a big difference.

This story, along with data from other interviews, demonstrates that leaders' lack of awareness of giving meaning to activities and events represents a core process of success (Weick, 1967, 2000). Data shows that leaders at this setting cannot begin accommodating complexity without identifying and clarifying the problematic situations and without using both foresight and knowledge. They must challenge the preconceived notions of others and respect other people's views as well. They have to harness the talents of others in trying to make sense of recent success in organisations both inside and outside the umbrella of AFIC. This represents 'sensemaking' at a higher level of the leadership process, which is why the social process of sensemaking subsumed the social process of accommodating complexity.

The high-level category and social process of sensemaking is vital in creating a suitable environment to bring about a lessening in complexity. The data obtained showed that there is no complete solution to the constraints, but with an infusion of sensemaking, the leadership and the followership can arrive at a better way of doing things, and therefore reduce complexity.

### 7.4.2 Second leg of final phase of data collection: Emergence of basic social process

I began the second leg of the fourth phase of data collection and analysis by asking what was going on, and considering how the incoming interviews were going to unfold. The second leg of data collection took place in far north Queensland in 2012 where I spent a week undertaking the following: (1) direct observation of participants' behaviours at one local organisational setting; (2) two formal and four informal interviews, and (3) one focus group meeting.

***Direct observations***

Upon close observations I noted that participants' conduct at the local meeting was in line with most previous data collected from interviews, in terms of consolidating the existing concepts and categories. Further analysis allowed me to go through a week of memos and field notes in more detail and consider the views of the participants. These views touched on the practices of leadership and its link to any possible future change. Participants urged leaders for change and to adhere to, and implement the basics of Islamic leadership, and the basics of contemporary leadership.

***Interviews***

During the week I interviewed two Muslim personalities giving careful consideration to their insightful, creative thinking and their deep understanding of the current situation of the Islamic setting in Australia. A part from clarifying comments and questions, I was happy to just listen.

I went back to my previous memos and contemplated the current and previous remarks to find similarities or differences. Further comparison and analysis of the data showed several different concepts of what participants signalled as being basic. One important basic concept is 'awareness'. Several quotations from interviews state awareness as being an important basic ingredient of effective organisations. One interviewee talked about the, "…. importance of awareness of internal and external environments". Another interviewee talked about awareness by mentioning the, "…. importance of education and knowledge-based culture". Knowledge-based culture was mentioned several times as well, which highlights the importance of knowledge as a means to eliminate complexities of identities and harmful ethnic-based organisations and to facilitate leading with the use of a breadth of knowledge and awareness. One interviewee demanded "an open dialogue", which could enhance awareness and transparency.

Another core principle for the participants was consultation. One participant stated, "Consultation must be the core of practiced leadership". Basic values are vital as

well, as this participant said, “Values have a direct effect on how people lead in organisations”. Many participants share the view that, “Islamic rhetoric alone will not get leaders credibility, but they have to be based in strong faith and fear of God”. For Muslims, strong faith (known as *Iman*), is the foundation of strong commitments to do well, and fear of God is a motivator for abstaining from working for one’s own ego and caprice. Another basic principle of good leadership was summed up by a young Muslim, “To succeed leaders should not compromise Islam”.

Furthermore, consideration of higher objectives came across as an expected basic principle, such that leaders need to, “Think about the higher objectives of Islam to advance the case of Muslims in Australia and subsequently the organisational manifestation”. Coupled with these Islamic principles, participants recognised the need for Western principles of leadership, as this participant noted, “There are so many Western principles, systems, values, and institutions that are very ‘Islamic’ and in tune with Islamic values”.

A comment from a highly respected figure affirmed the notion of sticking to principles, “We need a new methodology that focuses on the principles that Islam has to offer, let’s look in the context and the concept”, and, “Islamic values and leadership principles are the core manifestation for Islamic organisations”. A successful woman conveyed her message to leaders “to practice Islam” and to “appreciate differences as Islam does”.

Another well-known medical practitioner expected Islamic “Organisations to develop themselves according to the basic Islamic ethical standard”. Ethics in Islam is about basic rules and principles. It is about character for individuals and groups. It is about understanding what is good and what is bad. The data revealed that leaders in this setting anticipated engaging themselves more actively in respecting the core principles and roles of human and Islamic ethical standards.

A leaders’ prime job is to make decisions, which may or may not adhere to certain principles or standards. Data obtained revealed that leaders in this setting do not

seem to consider the principals and standards required by Islam, or any other good leadership practices. Leaders seem to care less about good and systematic decision making, hence contradicting the belief that great leaders make responsible and great decisions, resulting in great outcomes (Hoffberg and Korver, 2003). It is critical to think about these decisions in relation to principles and responsibility.

Evidence collected here demonstrates that formal leaders do not care much about those core principles, and this is seen by participants/followers as a recipe for failure. This phase of data collection and analysis revealed incidents where several formal leaders who are very well known and knowledgeable (sensemaking) did not succeed in their attempts to influence followers to participate in organisational work, functions or elections, or even take part in community based activities. This finding triggered more analysis and examination of the data.

Upon continuous examination of the data and emerging categories, it became clear to the researcher that sensemaking as a process incorporates the social process of accommodating complexity, positively affecting change from problematic situations to more acceptable, settled situations. Sensemaking appears to be a vital basic process and at the same time is subsumed by a higher-order process that is yet to be theorised about. Sensemaking as a process fell short of answering concerns about why some leaders in the current setting fail when they try to enact sensemaking, and why some other informal leaders or personalities are able to get their message across more easily. The second concern is why very few organisations at local and state levels succeed in delivering sensemaking and accommodating complexity, and why other organisations, including at the federal level, fail in their bid to influence followers even with trials of sensemaking and accommodating complexity. The third concern is why sensemaking in this setting does not explain why leaders only respond and react to sudden incidents (knee-jerk reaction). The three concerns above pose limitations on the ability of sensemaking to explain and integrate aspects of leading.

Participants at different phases of data collection expressed their admiration for the few examples of respected leaders who make change and difference through hard work and sincerity. They presented stories regarding the newly established Islamic organisations that can be a model to emulate, stories of those informal and potential leaders who work hard without seeking self interest, but just for the betterment of their organisational setting. There is much talk about those informal leaders who are simple, down-to-earth personalities who stick to the basics of leading. Data obtained showed that change is very hard to bring about without consolidating principles, processes and procedures, and the hard work of individuals and followers along with leaders who are able to adhere to, and implement, those processes.

From the above mentioned elaboration and the previously mentioned limitations of sensemaking, it became clear that sensemaking was part of the higher social process, which involved comprehending the *basics of leading*. The examination mentioned above allowed the emergence of the core category and the social process of 'embracing basics'.

### 7.4.3 Related selective category building and saturation

By now the two social processes and near-core categories of 'sensemaking' and 'accommodating complexity' and the basic social process of 'embracing basics' are identified. This identification commences the analysis toward saturation and the delimitation of theory. I conducted what could be a final leg of the fourth and the final phase of data collection and analysis. The journey of the latter stage took place in Melbourne on autumn 2012. Six formal interviews and one focus group meeting took place in two consecutive days. The interviews took place within a short time of the emergence of the basic social process. The interviewees are of different calibre. All of them are high professionals who are very successful in both their professional careers and the organisational work concerning Muslims in Victoria. Most of them are prominent Australian Muslims who experienced the negative and positive sides of leadership. They are articulate and they are all creative thinkers. These interviews are part of theoretical sampling to further advance the conceptualisation of the major categories already discussed, and to examine any similarities or differences that may

exist. Before these final stage took place, I revisited most of the previous data and memos to gain more insight about related categories that emerged and to ask questions targeting these related categories and properties to check the conformity or otherwise with future data at this interview. By the end of this phase it was clear that most of the data gained from this last phase was consistent with the previous findings, which enhanced my previous findings. These findings provided excellent, rich and focused data. I went back again and reflected on some of the newly practical and theoretical explanation for the near-core categories and the basic social process, which wraps up the saturation phase.

Upon reaching this stage, it was obvious that the saturation had been achieved and it was time to wrap up and start illustrating and articulating the model of the basic social process. At this time I revisited all previous phases of data collection, and last but not least, documents and some of the news cuttings I had preserved. It is noteworthy that the portion from the data of the previous phases of data collection fits nicely in the evolving model. The delimitation of the theory arrived after four phases of interviews, observations, focus groups, and document analysis. The next three sections discuss the near-core categories of accommodating complexity and sensemaking; and the core-category of embracing basics.

### 7.4.3 Building the conceptual hierarchy of the findings

A central purpose of this research was to develop a theory of leadership which explained the social processes of leadership in AFIC. Discussion of the basic social process in this chapter draws heavily on the findings from Chapters Four, Five and six, which discussed the concepts and processes by which leadership is nullified, by which contextual problems are manifested, and by which the near-core category of reconciling problems begins the positive leadership processes.

*Lower-order category and the higher-order category*

The first main finding of this research was the low-level category of *problematic leadership*. Problematic leadership has several dimensions that affect the processes of leadership and followership. Further examination of the data showed that the high

level category of *problematic context* has subsumed problematic leadership. Problematic context refers to the concepts that formed the basis of problem creation for the low-level category of problematic leadership.

*The near-core categories*

*The first one was reconciling problems*. Upon examining the flow of data, it became obvious to the researcher that leaders who enact leading could influence following, and followers who enact following could influence both leading and following, to certain extent. Further analysis showed that the near-core category of reconciling problems can play an important role within problem solving in a less severe environment under stable conditions. However at the beginning of organisational upheaval, amid complex situations, a different process is required to overcome the hurdles facing the manifestations of leading and following. This process is known as 'accommodating complexity'. The complexity of culture and the complexity of power could be resolved by leaders who work with processes of accommodating complexity. Leaders who do not try hard to accommodate complexity find it very difficult to reconcile problematic processes of leadership and context. Those leaders who work effectively on accommodating complexity are more able to reconcile problematic processes. *Accommodating paradox is the second near-core category* which subsumed 'reconciling problems'.

Upon continued examination of the data and the emerging concepts, it became apparent to the researcher that this process of accommodating complexity was subsumed by another process of sensemaking. Data shows that leaders at this setting cannot begin accommodating complexity without identifying and clarifying the problematic situations and without using both foresight and knowledge, which represents 'sensemaking' at a higher level of the leadership process. *Sensemaking is the third near-core category* which subsumed accommodating complexity.

*The core-category*

Additional examination showed that sensemaking stopped short of explaining further variations generated by the data. One of the main variations concerned the

possibility of there being few role models which could have influence, while the majority of leaders and organisations do not have influence. The answer to these concerns led the research to the core category of *embracing basics*. Embracing basics integrates both accommodating complexity and sensemaking and explained other discrepancies which could emerge from the lower-level category, the higher-level category and the near-core category of reconciling problems.

The process of leadership was found to have six levels of categorisation at which it was represented conceptually. These six levels are the basic social process of embracing basics, the social process of sensemaking, the social process of accommodating complexity, the near-core category of reconciling problems, the high-order category of problematic context and the lower-order category of problematic leadership. Figure 7.1 shows the conceptual hierarchy of the findings which have six levels of categorisation and Figure 7.2 shows the sequential generation of the ascending level of abstraction form the low-level category up to the highest level of abstraction.

The next section commences with discussion about the near-core category of accommodating complexity. Discussion follows of the near-core category of sensemaking, and concludes with detail on the core category and basic social process known as embracing basics. Discussion of the above mentioned categories include the sub-categories which considered being the cornerstone of theoretical explanation at a higher level of abstraction that draw upon and integrate the processes associated with the low level category, the high level category and the near-core category reconciling problems.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Basic social process and core-category** | **Embracing Basics** | | | | | |
| **Social process** | **Sensemaking** | | | | | |
| **social process** | **Accommodating complexity** | | | | | |
| **Near core category** | **Reconciling problems** | | | | | |
| | Enacting leading | Enacting following | | | | |
| **High level category** | **Problematic context** | | | | | |
| | Culture complexity | Inconsistency with Islamic work ethics, objectives and leadership principles | Complexity and uncertainty | Power struggle and power vacuum | | |
| **Low level category** | **Problematic leadership** | | | | | |
| | Lack of communication | Lack of concern | Lack of interaction | Lack of planning | Lack of achievement | Apathy |
| | Lack of openness | Lack of account -ability | Lack of transparency | micromana gement | Absence of role modelling | Lack of trust |

**Figure 7. 1 Conceptual hierarchy of the findings**

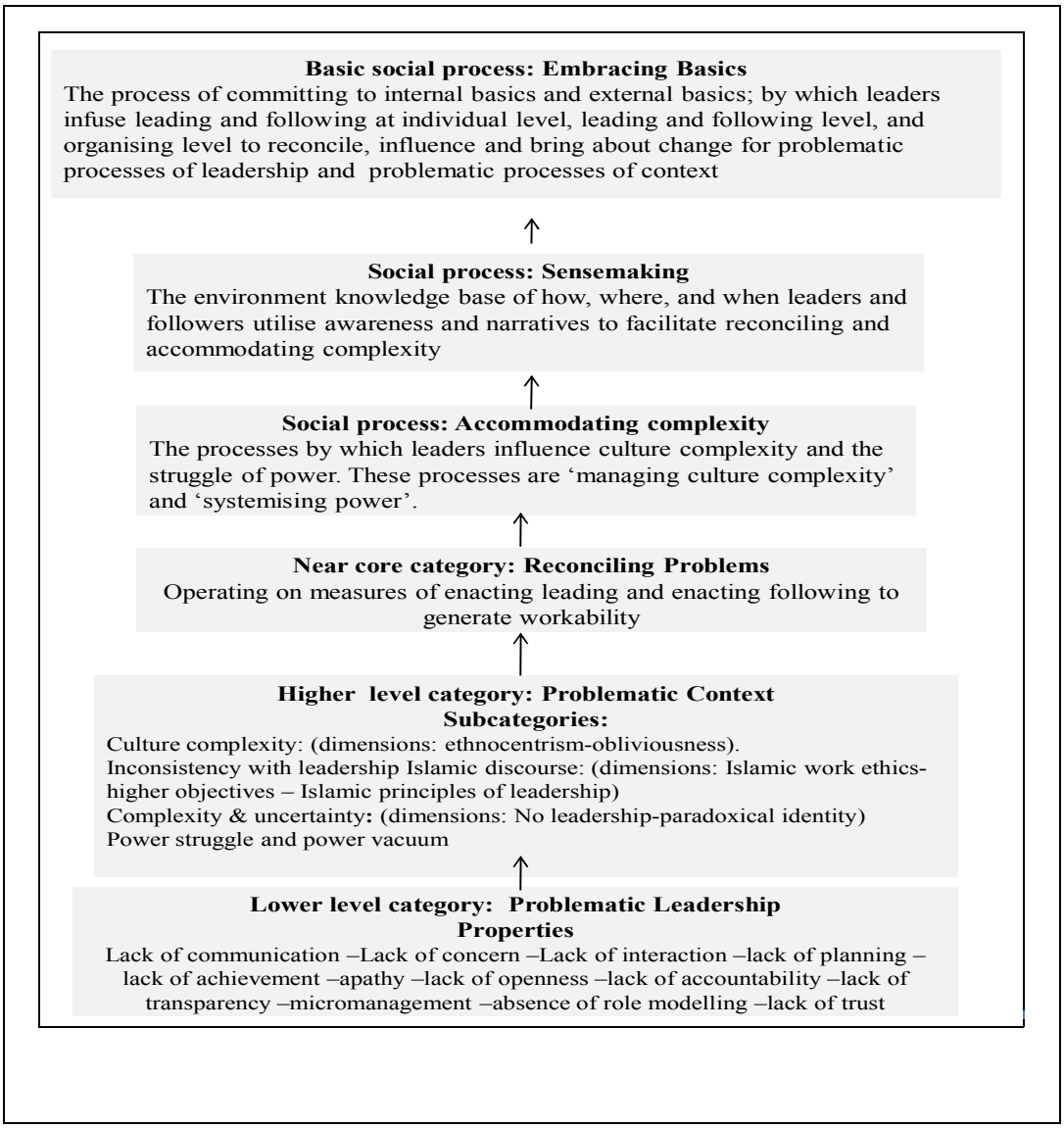


**Figure 7. 2 Main categories: Ascending level of abstraction**

## 7.5 Discussion of the findings

### 7.5.1 Social process: accommodating complexity

Accommodating complexity is a higher-level concept that integrates and explains the variations that the near-core category of reconciling problems cannot explain. Leaders could influence their followers and the context in which they operated by reconciling problems relating to leading and following, however, this influence was minimised by the complex factors of culture and the power struggle. These complex factors need a higher process to minimise their effect, and to potentially achieve

greater influence. This higher-order process is known as accommodating complexity. Accommodating complexity is the process by which leaders influence culture complexity and the struggle for power. Further theoretical memos assisted the researcher in an elaboration of the two subcategories and properties of managing culture complexity and systemising power. Managing culture complexity and systemising power are discussed below. Figure 7.3 capture the social process which is accommodating complexity.


**Figure 7. 3 Social process: Accommodating complexity**

#### 7.5.1.1 Managing culture complexity

The data obtained so far showed that cultural diversity within the community of Muslims in Australia plays a role in the evolution of the cultural complexity in this context. However, it is notable that ethnic cultures divide followers more than they unite them. This division has a negative impact on organisational work.

Leadership and organisational culture tend to be tightly intertwined, according to Peters and Waterman (2004), and leaders of transformation help shape and maintain the desired culture of an organisation (Schein, 2010). The current setting of AFIC is not exception to the intertwined and the evolving nature between leadership and culture. Islamic principles urge leaders to avoid narrow assumptions based on cultural issues. Faris and Parry (2011) claimed that the leadership process of minimising the effect of ethnic cultures within the Islamic community would impact positively upon the organisational context of Muslims in Australia. To conclude this section, it is important to point out that Islam accommodates diverse cultures, but to impose certain ethnic cultural values upon the spectrum of other cultures poses a particular challenge for organisational leadership. In the case of this setting this challenge is a major one and poses a hindrance to the implementation of effective

leadership. It is important to accommodate cultural complexity because it will ease the difficulties leaders face and will influence the practice of leadership. While the current cultural setting is inhibiting participation in leadership roles, managing culture complexity could enhance participation in leadership roles.

#### 7.5.1.1.1 Understanding organisational culture

Alvesson (2002) pointed out that understanding organisational culture is the first step in gaining a broader perspective of the behaviour of organisations. Alvesson added that the concept of culture is a key issue within management and organisational studies. Understanding organisational culture helps leaders and followers alike to come to terms with their differences, and to work to a better system of cooperation and cohesion. Organisational culture can be understood as an important source of organisational identity (Whetten, 2003). As well, scholars perceived organisational culture as being a source of cues supporting the "sensemaking" action carried out by leaders as they re-evaluate their conceptualisation of their organisation, and as a platform for "sense giving" actions aimed at affecting internal perceptions (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006). The current melting pot within the current setting is made up of many different ethnic cultures. Understanding these different cultures and their origins is the first step in penetrating the complexity of this cultural mix, and to avoid the negative effect of imposing on different culture lines. That is why an understanding of aspects of organisational culture is the first step in gaining a broader perspective of the behaviour of organisations and influencing followers (Kefela, 2010).

Awareness is one of the significant requirements necessary in gaining an understanding of cultural complexity. AFIC's leadership and the grassroots community are obliged to embrace important issue of knowledge, awareness and understanding of different cultures within their organisations. If this understanding is initiated, then gradually the hopes for a new era for effective organisational work would begin.

#### 7.5.1.1.2 One organisational culture with plural identity

One of the important functions of leaders is to pave the way in front of the organisation to be united with a plural identity. The term 'organisational culture' is very new to Muslim organisations despite its growth in the Western-based organisations.

The data obtained demonstrated that the best way to eliminate the effect of ethnic identities and ethnic cultures is to concentrate on the real substance of one system which represents the broad notions of Islamic values. The rhetoric featuring varying ethnicities affects the ability of leaders to communicate their message to followers, while the clashing cultures minimise the inclination of followers to unite. One interviewee who is Australian born Muslim feels proud to be getting along harmoniously with other cultures:

> The Muslim community is not homogenous it is very diverse, diverse linguistically, diverse ethnically, diverse nationally, diverse in sects, so the challenge is to unify all these different groups and that is a great challenge for any leader in the community. We need to have leaders who prepare to transcend all different groups and bring people together along one platform on themes that are important to all of us.

Organisationally, one culture and a plural identity mean a united leadership with followers from diverse cultures on one platform of cohesiveness. The followers then feel that they belong to an organisation which has one goal, one mission, and one vision and this would be a great asset for leadership to lift AFIC from its present organisational dysfunction. Even the very basic idea of presenting a united culture can play a role in bringing this idea to fruition. A vision of a united organisational culture with a plural identity is vital in promoting leadership and followership. People like to join organisation with vision and direction for the future. A leader who leads a united organisation can easily influence followers who are intertwined within one system, having a united vision. As Schein (2010: 73) stated, "Leadership and culture may be two sides of the same coin".

#### 7.5.1.1.3 Embrace other cultures

It is important for leaders to embrace other cultures, and to absorb what is good within them. My observations throughout this research found that leaders who are really involved with others from other facets of life have the ability to influence events and people. Leaders who respect other people's identities are able to build the foundation for successful organisational relationships.

An active member in a newly established organisation said, "I think the leader's task is to make Muslims comfortable with the fact that you can be Australian and a Muslim". He suggested that at the moment, "…. the feeling is you cannot be both. We need to change the way Muslims feel about being part of the Australian society". He believes that many imams articulate in a way that makes their people feel "…. ashamed that they are Australians". "You know", he elaborated, "I am not ashamed. I am Australian. I was born here. I think it is a great society, and I think there is no other place I'd rather live. At least I am honest enough to admit that". However, he suggested that others enjoy living here, and yet they say it is "hell on earth". Part of the challenge he sees is to focus on the good aspects of what we have in Australia and embrace and learn from them as well as from the imams and traditions. He elaborated that, "A lot of human experience is trial and error really - we have one system then it fails, then we adapt another system, eventually we get a good system, we get it right". Many interviewees reflected this same challenge concerning their Muslim identity.

Empirical data from newly established Islamic organisations shows that unlike the leaders in AFIC, the recent generation of leaders was exposed to both Islamic and Western values. This multicultural context provides fertile ground for new generation leaders. Australian society exposes Muslims to Western values, and it also brings them into contact with Muslims from other ethnic backgrounds. Indeed, it is a new generation of Australian Muslims that seems to have most confidently embraced this cross-cultural experience of living in Australia. This generation is maintaining the view that they have something distinctive to contribute to understandings of justice, morals and values; despite the fact that they are now

struggling to accommodate religious and cultural identities, and are facing internal and external pressures.

#### 7.5.1.2 Systemising power

Systemising power is the most practical expression I can use within this context. This expression has to do with expressing a very ethical and practical way to hold positions within AFIC. Systemising power aims at treating the origin of an internal challenge which affects the way AFIC has done business during the last six decades. The struggle of power has been mentioned in Chapter 5, and data obtained during the various stages of interviews proves that one of the major challenges of this setting is the struggle of power.

I thoroughly checked all previous four phases of data collection. Highlighting the main themes that been mentioned, directly or indirectly, about power in addition to the expressed views of ways of dealing with it. The main theme which emerged was systemising power. The concept of systemising power is a continuous process of enfolding power into the organisational environment. Systemising power begins with continuous effort from all stakeholders to begin the painful journey of generational transition. The second important theme which emerged was initiating procedures and processes of power. The third theme to emerge was the setting of clear guidelines for three different types of leadership to enact in order to avoid conflict. The fourth theme is to focus on the visionary concepts of systemising power. The following sections elaborate on these four themes.

##### 7.5.1.2.1 Begin with continuous generational transition

The data obtained showed that the generation gap between young people and the current formal leaders within AFIC has widened. Respondents admitted that for formal leaders to give up their positions is not always easy, but in order to make the desired change it is crucial to make the transition. The younger generation often voice their feelings of frustration at many meeting and within the Muslim community gatherings. As an academic interviewee said, “Leaders should relinquish power to younger generations”. One young woman advised leaders that, “They

should not see themselves as permanent". Consequently, these young Muslims find it difficult to find a place for themselves in the organisation against the old guard of leaders who have held power for so many years. One respondent commented sadly, "It is very hard for young people to be able to take positions in AFIC". These comments showed that the leadership has failed to promote a transition between generations. The leadership has resisted the idea that both emerging and established leaders can and must work together to ensure strength in the organisation's future.

One interviewee affirms, "Passing power to the young generation is fundamental for us". The revival of leadership is seen as being very important for a new positive chapter of leadership. This revival will bring new blood to the leadership, a long awaited way step to move forward with new and inspiring leaders.

#### 7.5.1.2.2 Initiating procedures and processes of power

Different respondents strongly affirmed the view that long term procedures should take effect quickly to clear the way for people to take part in the organisation. This might require the introduction of clear procedures for elections, forgoing the use of techniques that have been in use for the last sixty years.

Procedures of power begin with setting one clear election law for all state and federal organisations. An election law of the latest standard should be legislated within AFIC. This new law should open the door for more affiliated organisations and more followers to have a say in all affairs. Until now, the law has restricted the election of AFIC's president to representatives from state councils, without considering the vote from the local organisations. This arrangement fails to hire the right people because even the local organisations question the legitimacy of the way state councils are presently formed.

Procedures giving a fair go to all state councils and local organisations should be implemented. One of the procedures suggested is to target the way leaders spend money on resources. Many respondents affirmed incidents before and during the time of the elections when some high level committee members promised

considerable amount of money to some states, and abandoned other states. This should not go unnoticed. The new piece of legislation is vital in order to divide an equal share of the resources among all seven states.

#### 7.5.1.2.3 Structure guidelines

The power struggle among the three different types of leadership mentioned in Chapter 4 was noticeable during this research. In one instance, I noticed a federal leader who tried to approach an imam to make an announcement regarding an issue of concern to all Muslims in his area in front of the imam's congregation. This meeting did not occur because of a long-standing dispute between the two leaders, and the result was a missed opportunity for all members in that area. Another instance of a meeting between a state leader and a federal leader took place, however in the background was their dispute about the legitimacy of a previously held election, due to ethnic differences. This led to complete funding cut for that state.

Structure guidelines give power to policy above individuals and positions. At present there is apparently a shortfall in the guidelines for different types and levels of leaders. This research found that AFIC is still run by people who give priority to personal interests above organisational work. A revision of the guidelines will set a clear mandate for organisational work above positions and interests. Among other things, the guidelines will clearly set out the job description for all types of leadership, and ways to handle disputes. There should not be any more cases of individuals who place personal interests over the organisation, or a leader who seeks to carry on a dispute, regardless of the organisation's interests. These guidelines will consider the organisational legitimacy matter as a principal definition to be applied when events giving rise to personal disputes first occur, regardless of whether the matter is at a local or a federal level.

#### 7.5.1.2.4 Visionary concepts of systemising power

Power sharing is one of the fundamental, visionary concepts of the systemising power processes. The current culture of power does not promote healthy concepts that people can absorb, adhere to and implement. Promotion of these concepts brings

about an environment of leadership going forward. Sharing power is one of the most important concepts and should be elevated to centre stage. Sharing power defuses the idea of central power and allows talented people to share the many facilities of organisational work.

As much as the current power struggle causing pain to the rank and file members, the visionary and practical concepts of systemising power could reverse this struggle, changing organisational environment to a more cooperative one.

### 7.5.2 Social process: sensemaking

Within this substantive setting which is currently dogged by cultural complexity, the power struggle, and counteraction of Islamic leadership principles, it became clear that manifestation of leadership and followership and accommodating of complexity are very hard to implement without some form of sensemaking. It was found that this new category was not contained by the near-core category of reconciling problems and the near-core category of accommodating complexity. The new category is the concept of 'sensemaking'.

Sensemaking fills important gaps in organisational theory and plays a significant role in organising (Weick et al., 2005). Weick (1995:17) suggested that sensemaking helped to organise social constructions; he added that this was achieved by being grounded in identity construction, by being retrospective, by being social and processual, and being driven by plausible images. However, organising can be structural as well as social. Pye (2005) framed leadership as being an example of sensemaking. She concluded that an understanding of leadership as a sensemaking process helps illustrate more clearly what happens in the daily doing of leading.

Weick et al. (2005: 409) inform us that "Sensemaking is the ongoing, retrospective development of plausible images that rationalise what people are doing." They also state that sensemaking as a process involves turning circumstances into a situation that serves as a springboard for action. In the same research, the authors mention their enthusiasm for restating sensemaking as visible, behaviourally defined more

macro, meshed with issues of emotions and sense giving, less backward looking and more boldly linked with identity. With fascinating elaboration about the latter definition of sensemaking, Herbert (2010: 32) added:

> Sensemaking comes into play when people encounter disruptions to their worlds – events that deviate from the normal order of things, people who challenge their preconceived notions, and actions that are unexpected or unusual. When people encounter these kinds of interruptions to the norm, they seek to explain them using their preexisting frames of knowledge and worldview.

Herbert (2010: 32) continues on elaboration of sensemaking as, "A cycle of creating our experiences and environments by such activities as identifying the specific problems within problematic situations and identifying cues to be attended to in the process of interpreting events, and clarifying situations in order to understand and act upon them".

This research found empirical support for Weick et al. (2005) definition of sensemaking and Herbert's (2010) explanation and elaboration of sensemaking within this unique setting. This uniqueness comes from the complexity of this setting, and the difficulty facing both leaders and followers when they try to enact sensemaking in their complicated situations and events. It is even unique to sensemaking through culture complexity, where different cultures and Islam are competing; the ethnic cultures, Australian culture and Islamic ideals. It is not just complex events and situations at stake, but also complex surroundings and complex settings.

What makes sensemaking different within this context is its attachment to both leadership and followership. Sensemaking in this study is not just an example of leadership (Pye, 2005), but it is an example of followership as well. Followers in this setting try to make sense of their world. They search for clues about better leadership for their present and for their future. Some eloquent followers clearly stated their interpretation of the present situation and expressed their deep concern about it. They also expressed their strong desire to benefit from the wisdom of role

models from the Islamic past, and mentioned their views of the few excellent examples which they hope will help to guide the organisation in the future.

Regarding the current situation, the research has extensively identified problematic processes and constraints, and the processes of lack of leadership and lack of followership which has characterised AFIC for the last six decades. The research demonstrates processes of complexities and contradictions in relation to leading, following and organising. It demonstrates how people as leaders and followers acted, and how they have become who they are. Leaders and followers cannot communicate effectively, to the extent that in some cases, they avoid talking to each other. There is distrust between leaders and other leaders, and followers and leaders; obviously a lack of appropriate channels of information, and the challenges are increasing both internally and externally.

At a higher level of analysis, the researcher analysed in detail the constraints of culture, power struggle and uncertainty, and how these high level constraints influence and pressure followers to be who they are in terms of current actions and behaviours. This research gives the participants an open-ended environment in which to express their thoughts, ideas and stories about how they engaged their leadership as followers and how leaders engaged their followers.

The idea of a glamorous past is part of the data which the researcher collected through his journey of data collection and analysis. Participants are adamant that previous role model Muslims set the tone for a glamorous past. Islamic values, beliefs, and principles are the defined path for many previously great Muslims. The participants talk about it passionately, in order to differentiate the past from the current negative cycle. According to the interviewees, the history of great models shows the way for future great models. Part of their identity is embedded within the successful past. They remembered great Muslim scholars and leaders who they considered to be the bridge between the Islamic Renaissance and other civilisations. They acknowledged previous Muslim leaders who considered leadership as a

process of conviction which was solely based on merit and principles. To put it simply, they try to find an answer for the future from the past.

The future, according to the organisation members, is a story in the making for Muslims in Australia. The research found that current stories of successful role model Muslims could show the way to the future, and these role models occupy the minds and hearts of many followers, including leaders. The cornerstone for the future is to build legitimacy, belonging, reputation and success. It is not a completely easy answer for the future, but it shows the way for leaders who can contend, comprehend and live with uncertainty and complexity, and this is what leadership is all about. This research brings to light followers' hopes for significant change for Muslims in Australia, and demonstrates that sensemaking is an example of followership as well.

Manifestation of sensemaking is communicated through narratives that express the current situation in clear terms, extracting success from the past and looking for current role models to enlighten the future. Weick (1995) saw narrative as the basis of sensemaking, and it is at the heart of accomplishment. The preoccupation with history, and the veneration of the past, is arguably part of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Many respondents implicitly confirm all seven of Weick (1995) properties of sensemaking. These properties appeared to be frequently present within the narratives of respondents. These seven properties include identity construction, retrospection, enacting one's environment for future action, social construction, ongoing actions, cues from the environment, and a plausible end in sight.

The other aspect of confirming the process of sensemaking is that frequently participants talk about knowledge base and education as part of enhancing the future situation. Du Toit (2003) argues that knowledge is a sensemaking process. Du Toit (2003) mentioned that knowledge also empowers people to respond to new situations and complexities. Weick (1995) explains sensemaking as the process of reducing complexity to a level at which people can make sense. The leadership

social process of sensemaking represents a new emergent mechanism to resolve and overcome challenges.

Further theoretical examination of the data through the constant comparison method helped the researcher to confirm that enacting narrative and awareness are the vital subcategories of sensemaking. The *process of sensemaking* within this context is a leadership process and a followership process, to resolve the problems and achieve leading and following. Furthermore, sensemaking represents the environment knowledge base of how, where and when leaders and followers utilise awareness and narratives to facilitate the reconciliation and accommodation of complexity. Figure 7.4 capture sensemaking and two properties of enacting narrative and awareness. The next section is the elaboration about these subcategories.

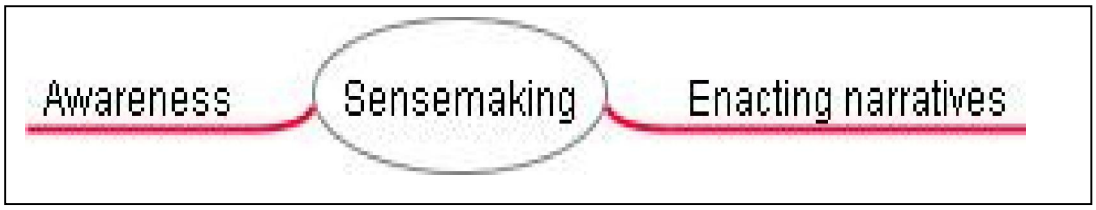


**Figure 7. 4 Social process: Sensemaking**

#### 7.5.2.1 Enacting narrative

I used the term 'enacting' to denote it is importance as a process, Smircich and Stubbart (1985), and to capture Weick's (1998) highlight of the term. Weick (1998: 36) suggested that the term enactment is used to "preserve the central point that when people act, they bring events and structures into existence and set them in motion". Weick (1998: 36) added that, "People who act in organisations often produce structures, constraints, and opportunities that were not there before they took action". Narrative, or the story by itself, may not produce the desired outcome, but attachments to the narrative like, understanding the situation, adjusting the constraints and articulating the vision could produce the desired outcome. These attachments are vital in order for the narrative to be effective.

Storytelling is a craft that creates a significant narrative. Storytelling can be considered as a tool in the act of sensemaking, and stories are an outcome that influences future sensemaking (Boyce, 1995; Cavanagh, 2005; Gabriel, 2000; Sole and Wilson, 2003; Weick, 1995; Wilkins, 1983, 1984). Some scholars affirmed the potential effect of storytelling on sensemaking through times of organisational change and turbulence (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Boje, 1991, 1995; Feldman, 1990; Mills, 2000, 2003; Parry and Hansen, 2007).

Gabriel (2000) indicates that storytelling carries the multifaceted meanings of the organisational realm. To Gabriel, storytelling generates sensemaking. Similarly, Denning (2005) suggests that storytelling generates leadership, which in turn facilitates following from other members of the organisation. Therefore the connecting thread of power and influence can be followed through storytelling (Simmons, 2006). Boje (2001) emphasises that storytelling has an effect on follow-ability. Parry and Hansen (2007) argue that organisational stories represent leading and organising, which in turn generate following.

Examination of the data showed that one of the most important channels for communicating the organisational message was storytelling, and therefore leaders might be able to establish a more effective way of communicating their message through storytelling rather than through the usual monthly or yearly written statements or newsletters. It was also clear that storytelling could build a meaningful relationship between leading and following that reflects a stable structure and relationship between members of an organisation, which therefore reflects a high level of organising. One interviewee noticed, “The importance for people to hear positive stories” at this complex setting. Positive stories empower followers to do their best and try to emulate figures who act positively. The stories told by members of the Islamic community help to challenge the status quo. In so doing, they turn problem-ridden narratives into effective and realistic narratives. At the core of this research are the stories of participants who made sense of their context in their search to accommodate problematic leading, following and organising.

The data obtained demonstrated that sensemaking stories play an influential role in empowering young people to be part of organisational success. Weick (1995) suggested that plausibility, as opposed to accuracy is more important in sensemaking stories, while maps that explain and energise are important to empowering people to discuss, act, work hard and contribute. Empowering others would give rise to the hidden talents of people within the organisations they belong to. The process of empowering others will give followers a greater sense of belonging to such organisation and energise them to act in a positive way, leading to behavioural change. Leaders as active storytellers and sense makers could bring hesitant followers into the fold of the organisation. This active storytelling can help followers to consider their stories, deriving new meaning in their lives, nourishing a positive self-image.

The empirical data of this study led the researcher to consider the power of the story within this substantive setting of AFIC in enhancing sensemaking of leading. Three concepts of complexity and one concept of success drive the power of narratives in the participants' reflections of sensemaking in action. These three concepts of complexity are identity, the power struggle, and women's participation. The story of success was generated from one of the newly established Islamic organisation. The following four narratives elaborate on the four concepts.

*Narrative 1- telling the story of identity***.** I found that many stories about identity were told within the context of Islamic discourse. Some of these narratives look for an overlap between the Australian identity and an emerging Islamic identity.

A narrative from a non AFIC affiliated organisation came via an Australian born Muslim regarding how the real substance of Islam can play a very large part in bringing something of substance to shape the thinking and identity of Muslims within the Australian context. He said:

> We were going to bring HK, who is a very well renowned scholar in Islamic studies, but he is modern, shaven, and he usually wears a suit, so when he comes to speak, just a handful of people will come to see him and listen. But, if you bring a quote-unquote 'imam' to this place who has a long beard, cap and gown, tens of hundreds come and see him, why is that?

He suggested that, "We are more interested in images and slogans from people, rather than substance", and that because what the renounced scholar HK said is, "…. not really consistent with the way Muslims have traditionally thought about issues like higher objectives, Islamic society statehood, and so on". The belief is that Muslims would rather listen to someone who says things that are "consistent with their sort of safe conservative view". "Even if HK's speech is coming straight from the original sources of Islam and early Islamic history, because it is not consistent with the whole sort of Islamist conservative movement, he doesn't attract bigger audience." This concern is shared mainly by Australian born Muslims, about a cloudy Muslim identity that concurrently wants to be part of mainstream Australia, yet at the same time wants to reflect traditional Islamic principles.

The researcher could clearly ascertain that the emerging identity of Muslims in Australia was paradoxical and multi-faceted. The identity was simultaneously one of independence and of belonging. However, the more that Muslims integrate these conflicting notions of identity and achieve a sense of an Australian Muslim identity, the more their sensemaking about broader issues was enhanced. The more these stories were told, the closer Muslims got to clarifying their identity in Australia. In one sense, they could overcome the twin hegemony of traditional Islam and of mainstream Australian culture, as suggested by Brown and Humphreys (2006) in order to establish their self-efficacious identity. They had a better sense of *who* they were; of *what* they can and cannot do in Australia; of *when* and *where* they can be of this identity; and perhaps most importantly, of *how* they can manifest this identity. Stories told about an Australia Muslim identity correlated positively with enhanced sensemaking.

*Narrative 2- telling the story of internal organisational power struggle.* To understand the complexity of the internal power struggle within AFIC, it is important to understand firstly the complexity of leadership, and then highlight the power struggles that go on within it.

This research found three dimensions to leadership in the setting under study. The first dimension of leadership is the religious leaders, or imams, who offer theological and Islamic cultural guidance on most aspects of Muslim daily life. The second dimension of Muslim leadership in Australia is traditional organisational leadership. Muslim organisational leadership is also concerned with enhancing multicultural understanding, and empowering Australian Muslims. The third dimension of Muslim leadership in Australia is intellectual leaders, who have emerged recently. This type of leadership consists of those highly educated academics who specialise in general Islamic studies. I found that intellectual leadership has shown itself to be a blessing in relation to problem solving for a generation of Australian Muslim youth.

One example of a story about the internal power struggle is that of the controversial AFIC President, Mr A, who was 'ousted' in a 'coup' at its 44th Annual Conference (O'Brien, 2008). Six out of seven state councils of AFIC backed a vote of no-confidence in Mr A. Mr A, was replaced by Mr B, an Australian-born lawyer. Mr A was accused of having a dictatorial style, and an allegedly unaccountable leadership style. Some months later, with the intervention of the NSW Supreme Court, Mr A was reinstated as Federal President of AFIC.

The prevalence of narrative about internal power struggles correlated with the cultural complexity within the Muslim community. Although these seem like the internal power struggles that weigh down any organisation, in the current setting these struggles are between people from many different countries. They have differing levels of commitment to religious leadership, while some of them were born in Australia. These struggles all take place against a backdrop of being seen by the general public as being representative of a "foreign religion".

One respondent was sufficiently close to this narrative to understand what was happening, yet was sufficiently apart from it to remain objective. He echoed the feelings of many when he identified the motivations of leaders as being the main source of leadership problems. He said:

> I am not sure if leaders can solve the problems because I think in many cases, leaders are the problem, I think in organisations like this one it seems to me that there is a group of people who struggled to become the leaders or become prominent in those positions, and I don't think they deliver for the community as well as other people have. I think part of the problem may be the intention they have, the reason why they are in these positions, and that's part of the problem.

Another younger interviewee commented on the silent power struggle between generations, when he talked about an "ego struggle". He believed there was a problem with people in leadership positions being motivated by "personal status" rather than by a commitment to the organisation. He said, "The problem is the intention and sincerity about why people are in the position they are in". He went on to say that there was "a generational difference here", with some younger Muslims not being very interested in "being favoured by the government", but rather being motivated by service to their community. While, "The previous generation would run to meet government officials, but our generation doesn't care".

While this narrative might sound negative and pessimistic, it actually was found to enhance sensemaking. People could understand the complexity of the narrative, and by giving themselves a role within the narrative, they came to a resolution about where this narrative was taking them.

*Narrative 3- telling the story about the role of women*. The situation of Muslim women globally is too complex and contradictory for one comprehensive critique (El-Matrah, 2005). Not surprisingly, in Australia the topic of Muslim women has gained much attention in recent years. A perceived heavy negative media concentration on Muslim women in Australia has put Muslim women "on the defensive most of the time". The negative stereotype does not originate exclusively with the media. It comes from politicians, religious leaders, some members of the Australian wider community, and even some members of Muslim community. The lack of representation of Muslim women in Islamic organisations, government, and community groups is a concern for all stakeholders in Australian society. El-Matrah (2005) said that, in a nutshell, Muslim women are a disadvantaged group within a disadvantaged group.

With all the hurdles, the big issue for Australian Muslim women is still empowering themselves and being active members of the Australian Muslim community and of Australian society. As one young Muslim woman put it in one of my interviews, "Don't worry about us, we are not any more that sort of what they called closed-mentality Muslims. We are relaxed, ambitious, talented, intelligent, critical thinkers, confident and energetic". She said that they are, "…. very proud to be Muslims in Australia, even with all difficulties that surround us", and that they are looking forward to, "…. use our religion and talent to advance our cause and our organisations and community".

One woman who responded is in her twenties, very talented, well spoken, and a critical thinker. She articulated the interaction between identity, the internal power struggle and the role of women. She noted that people are getting better educated, and, "…. the younger generation could realise there is a problem with authoritative people who hold positions of authority, who want to stay there and they do not want to move". She thought that the younger generation, "…. will get educated and empower themselves and then the mindset is going to change". She thought of the metaphor of, "The early days of Islam, when it took the Prophet thirteen years to change the way people are thinking". She thought that the younger generation will, "Incorporate their Islamic identity, and their own identity, and the Australian identity and come up with a new mix of who they are as individuals, they will actually reach positions, and force those people out of these kind of positions. There will be a shift but it is going to take time". She reflected the feelings of many people by having a positive outlook. She saw her role within the narrative as being challenging but ultimately rewarding for her and for her peers. All of the respondents could make sense of these narratives, and the emotions that were generated were generally positive.

*Narrative 4- telling the story of the clues for success.* Stories of success represent the role modelling of leadership in action for the future. This research found that telling stories of success inspires young Muslims, encouraging them to participate, to be effective, and even take leadership positions. The stories of success provide an

example to follow, and this why it is a powerful sensemaking tool. These stories put forward an example of instilling values, principles, and a striving leadership for followers to emulate. While many leaders find it difficult to convince followers to be active in their organisation, the stories of success provide the real context of doing leading that can make it easier for followers to begin the long journey, starting following and leading.

This research found that the gap is widening between leaders and followers. It is widening because followers just experience speeches and talks of leaders without experiencing any action. Stories of success come at a very important time to divert the negative image of no leadership to more acceptable example of doing leading in the future. Gioia and Mehra (1996: 1229) have suggested an important role for prospective sensemaking, "If retrospective sensemaking is making sense of the past, prospective sense making is an attempt to make sense for the future. Retrospective sensemaking is targeted at events that have transpired; prospective sensemaking is aimed at creating meaningful opportunities for the future". The next narrative is an inspiring story for future success, centered on a recently established Islamic organisation:

> We've been invited to the parliament, and we have dinner with one minister, one of the things this minister said: it is about time that the Muslims have an organisation such MBN, and the qualities of the Muslim leaders I am meeting now are different from previous ones. I understand what he mean by that, we are educated, articulate, we can speak English as they speak, we are not afraid, we can communicate with them, they realise that we are not somebody we can push, we are not frightened any more. We are here with certain talent and skills; we are using it for the benefit of our Islamic organisations. Now some politicians start to look at us as a normal people like them, we are not terrorists, we are ordinary blokes. With starting inviting politicians to our activities, they start to realise that we are contributors to the country in such a positive way, that we cannot do harm to the country. The misconception about Muslims is starting to vanish from politician's minds; they now look at us as responsible citizens. The official launch of MBN took place in 2006 in the Queensland parliament, there were a lot of ministers and politicians. We had the opposition leader and representatives from Canberra came over, the statement made in that official launch was: if you want to have unity, harmony and peaceful coexistence, you must not make any group feel left out, in this regard your role as politicians is to make a positive

> statements. At this evening you saw that Muslims controlling assets worth billions of dollars, we pay millions in taxes, we are employing thousands of people. That must go out from you politicians to show that Muslims are good people, they are wanted, and they are contributing to the country. We have influenced the politicians to large extent, one of the ministers wrote recently on the occasion of Ramadan: Muslims are valued citizens of our country, they make a positive contribution.

#### 7.5.2.2 Awareness: process for sensemaking

Ancona (2012) thinks that sensemaking is a process by which leaders gather data about the problem facing the organisation. In the search for sensemaking, Ancona suggests exploring the wider system, creating maps that are plausible representations of what is happening, and which act on the system to improve our understanding of reality. Endsley (1994, 2004) explains sensemaking as an understanding process and awareness of a situation. Alberts and Hayes (2007) asserted that the key outputs of a sensemaking process are awareness, understanding, prediction and decisions. Snook et al. (2012) see sensemaking as often involving moving from the simple to the complex and back again. This move occurs as new information is collected and new actions are taken. They added that as patterns are identified, and new information is labelled and categorised, the complex becomes simple once again, albeit with a higher level of understanding. Du Toit (2003) confirmed that knowledge is a sensemaking process shared through narrative.

The above scholarly passages show that awareness and knowledge are great assets for enacting sensemaking in organisations. Similarly, the views and narratives of the participants to this study, show that awareness and knowledge are great assets. A woman with high profile spoke of the importance of, "Awareness of the internal and external environment". This awareness brings the first step, coalescing the case and making sense of the situation and the event. This awareness should start "on every level". Another active young Australian Muslim brought insight to the knowledge and awareness of the Australian born Muslims affecting organisation positively, "The Australian born Muslims can make good leaders because they know the troubled nuances of the Australian culture, they have a broader vision, they are in tune with typical Australian people, know how to present themselves, know how to talk, and how to interact with the wider society, the government or the media".

Another well-respected woman shared her vision of solving many problems by, "Getting everybody to the table and having very robust discussions". She noticed the absence of any sort of discussion within AFIC which could give a clear picture of the situation and resolve problems. She elaborated that it does not make sense that people cannot get together to look after their backyard. A high-level leader put his concerns about, "Leadership's absent connection with all parties". He encouraged leaders to convene an "open dialogue and information sessions", if they have real and genuine concerns about the situation. He reinforced his message to leaders to implement 'a knowledge base system' to begin the process of sensemaking.

An imam challenged the Islamic leaders to "embrace knowledge based culture" and said that through knowledge, "Organisations can bring an end to Muslims pre-modern thinking". He encouraged leaders to, "Build bridges with the wider community".

The above passages show that cultural awareness is a critical skill to be brought to the process of sensemaking. Making sense is at the core of leading people from several and different backgrounds, cultures and origins. It is difficult to think of leading diverse people with no awareness of their culture, values, beliefs, norms and likenesses, which after all constitute a culture. It is important for leaders to understand the adversary's organisation and underlying cultural dynamics as a means of ensuring the smooth functioning of organisational work. Cultural awareness can reduce ambiguity and improve followers' ability to achieve. An understanding of organisational cultures is also critical to build interaction between followers of diverse cultures over the long term. This awareness is critical in development of appropriate policies, and allows leaders to determine how best to plan, organise, lead and empower cross cultural followers. A sense of awareness is critical in sensemaking and success.

### 7.5.3 Embracing basics: the basic social process

Repeated examination of the data gives the researcher complete confidence to point out that the overarching leadership problem was to reconcile problematic process of leadership and problematic process of context that paralysed organisational work and outcomes within AFIC. Problematic processes have been endured by followers and potential leaders for a very long time. Further analysis indicates that the social process of accommodating complexity is a strategy for leadership to use in its efforts to solve the major obstacles which hinder the initiation of manifesting leadership and followership. Upon further examination, I found that to facilitate the problem solving process, the social process of accommodating complexity cannot operate in the absence of sensemaking. Sensemaking was found to subsume the process of accommodating complexity. However, sensemaking has several limitations in any attempt to explain the social interaction within the present research. It was found that leaders who are considered by followers to be role models would influence their followers and would stop negativity in the long term. Leaders who attain the principles of role modelling in Islam, and who attain the characteristics of core values of Western leadership, have the ability to bring and sustain change using the strategies of accommodating complexity and sensemaking. Leaders who are not in tune with these principles are far from being able to influence this setting even using strategies of sensemaking and accommodating complexity. It is very difficult to implement sensemaking and accommodate complexity in a vacuum of leadership basics. Embracing the basics is the process to fill that vacuum which has been in existence for decades.

A clear example of the centrality of the basic social process of embracing basics, is the following empirical finding which revealed another point, which helped in gaining an understanding of why embracing basics subsumed the social process of sensemaking. This finding was disagreement concerning issues within the very work of the organisations, disagreement would not affect the way the organisation conducted its business or affected its outcomes. Undoubtedly disagreement is considered to be a sign of a healthy organisation. What is distinguishable here is that disagreement brings enmity, bitterness and antagonism among the leaders

themselves, and among the leaders and the followers. When the climate of enmity prevails, the normal course of action points to the idea that sensemaking should take place. Instead, however, sensemaking falters, enmity is widespread, and the "making of sense" (Weick, 1995: 4) disappears.

My interviews and observations of many incidents indicated that some individuals go as far as accusing others, acting as if they are in the right and everyone else is fundamentally wrong. Their extreme anger is very hard to cope with. They may lie, make false claims and use deceptive arguments to muddle the issues. Feelings of enmity grow, disagreement about views, ideas, ideology and politics rises, and interactions between people become harsh.

Serious questions come to the minds of organisation members. First, what could bring such disagreement to an end? What could be done to bring harmony to peoples' relations? These questions are answered with another observation of several different incidents. Individuals (leaders or followers) who are embracing basics provide the answers. In extreme circumstances, those individuals remain calm and sensible. They articulate their disagreements in a clear and precise manner. They treat all people including their opponents with respect. They consider their opinion together with many others to be debated and questioned. They preserve their harmonious relationships with others when they disagree. Their moral values and principles are practiced not just held as theories. They uphold values even if they are in powerful positions. As one young leader summed up, "We have to understand that we can agree or disagree, and there is variance in all aspects. From this variance the leadership can work towards common goals".

'Embracing basics' is the process by which leaders infuse leading and following at a personal level, a leading level, and an organisational level to reconcile, influence and bring about change for the problematic process of leadership and the problematic process of context. Embracing basics illustrates the basic social process which explains the phenomenon under investigation.

‘Embracing basics’ has assumed three important considerations in its ability to overcome problematic processes within AFIC and to explain the three variations of and shortfalls in sensemaking. The first major consideration would be for leaders to have the ability to consolidate at an individual leadership and followership level by enabling moral characters as role models. The second consideration would be having the ability to bring about strong leadership that is able to lead more effectively. The third consideration would be having the ability to establish a normal operating mode of organising and leading. The core-category of embracing basics works on three interacting levels: the individual level, the leading and following levels and the organising or contextual level.

‘Embracing basics’ as a basic social process appears to integrate the individual’s personal and leadership ability to ease the transition from problematic processes to more effective and less problematic ones, by influencing followers and bringing about change, and sustaining long term effectiveness. Embracing basics gives the ability for people to establish a positive operating organising mode among leaders and followers. This positive mode attracts mutual acceptance and reciprocal obligations which overcome the unhealthy environment of people who react to evolving incidents. The strategies of embracing basics have the potential to overcome problematic leading and problematic context by working on three levels which are not accounted for within ‘sensemaking’ and ‘accommodating complexity’. These levels are the individual level comprising followers and/or potential leaders, the leading level and the organising level.

Interviewees are not in tune with AFIC ailing leadership. Specifically, these people are those who have abused their positions and lost their moral relevance; who have abandoned responsibility and trust in favor of short-term gains and ego; who are viewed by followers with cynicism and skepticism; who have abandoned inspiration, motivation, serving others, and those who use power to dominate instead of exerting a positive influence on others. Participants in this study repeat their views that leaders who embrace basics have the ability to change their personalities to become better leaders, and then change the mind sets of their followers and their

organisation. Leaders who embrace basics have the ability to accommodate complexity and enact sensemaking, and leaders who are far from embracing basics display a very weak ability to accommodate complexity and enact sensemaking. Embracing basics appears to fit and explains the phenomena under investigation.

Embracing basics are repetitive theme, echoed through all stages of interviews, and become the strongest during the final stage of interviews. The interviewees repeat their statements about the importance of returning and sticking to the basics of enacting leadership. The pattern observed all through this research shows a theme which is well defined as being the social process of embracing basics.

Further theorising of the data at this stage and at the previous stages of data collection leads me to follow some of these basic themes. The basic necessary for effective leadership are in two parts. The first part is the elements of the internally embedded basics as being a motivator of individual and leadership levels. These basic elements mainly target four subcategories. The first is moral principles. The second subcategory is the Islamic work ethics which is important to the organisational system and to development of codes of behaviour. The third subcategory is the higher objectives of Islam. The forth subcategory is the principle of meaningful presence. The second part is the externally embedded basic elements being a motivator at the organising level and at the contextual level, which is to act upon the Western system of leading, specially embracing the basic development of standards and organisational process. Figure 7.5 captures embracing basics and two sub core-categories of internal embedded basics and external embedded basics.


**Figure 7. 5 Core category: embracing basics**

#### 7.5.3.1 Embracing internal embedded basics

The heading above indicates three terms; the first term is internal. The second term is embedded, and the third term is basics. Internal applies to peoples' interior concepts, which grow from childhood to maturity. Concepts people listen to and hear all their lives from their families at the start of their learning journey, from people they socialise with, and from their religious leaders every time they listen to a sermon on weekly basis, and even on a daily basis within this context. Basics symbolise these concepts as being fundamental in the way people conduct their lives and their business. To be concise, it is having a core set of beliefs and values and being committed to it. Thus, beliefs and values bring high moral standards, consequently peoples' demeanour is revealed them in action.

Internal embedded basics are the result of the participant's Islamic values and beliefs. These internal Islamic values and beliefs may contradict assumptions of practices taken for granted as being the normal way of acting (Schein, 2010), or contradict the problematic organisational culture of the substantive context they occupy as followers and leaders. Following is a summary of the aforementioned important basics.

##### 7.5.3.1.1 Moral basics

The principles of moral Islamic leadership such as sincerity, piety, patience, responsibility, obligation and wisdom may lift AFIC from its present state of disorder to a one of organisation and order. As noted in the section on the emergence of the basic social process, participants' repetitive idea is that, "Islamic values and leadership principles is the core manifestation for Islamic organisations". The participants to this study were adamant that "Leaders' beliefs and values have an impact on how they choose to lead". The participants insisted on going back to the "principles of leadership in Islam" and building upon the prime way of education as a prime target for the future. This would help followers and leaders to learn and understand their own beliefs and value systems, which in turn would help them to understand and modify their approach to leadership. The participants would like their leaders to move away from showing themselves in public as adhering to

Islamic morals, because where the real business matters, it is the adherences to those same principles can barley be seen. Several moral principles are given below. They cover the broad spectrum of moral principles mentioned through interviews and observations such as “we need pious people; we need sincerity, diligence, wisdom and kindness”. “If the leaders taking full responsibility of becoming in the leadership positions, then they need to do their best in order to deliver what are the needs for the followers and they have to be liable”, “The people will follow the upright, sincere, straight person, a person who can articulate and understand the wisdom of knowledge” and “.... in my honest opinion, there is a lack of sincerity”. The discussion below highlights the relationship between of the principals and the modern organisational work, how it affects the substantive setting, and how it resonates with the leadership process.

***Sincerity*** is the first embedded basic concept. Sincerity, from an Islamic perspective, is the foundation of all actions and thoughts. No matter who you are as an individual, sincerity is a must for him/her to succeed in life and the hereafter. For a Muslim to do any work or to give any talk, he/she must be sincere both in mind and heart. It’s the first declaration for him/her that I am doing this work or job for the sake attaining God’s pleasure and for the sake of fulfilling the organisational mission and goals. With sincerity he/she cannot cross personal interests with his/her job, no place for personal interests or others (friends or relatives) interests.

Sincerity is the opposite of self interest, ego, dominance, and hunger for power. Initially no individual has the knowledge whether others, leaders or followers, are sincere or otherwise, because sincerity lies in the heart, and their actions show whether a person is sincere or not. Whilst the sincerity of a person cannot be known exactly, Muslims are not in business to determine the sincerity of others. As public figures, leaders’ actions reveal their sincerity. If leaders see themselves as being better than others, if they hold on to power without legitimacy, squander organisation money, and demonstrate little achievement, this then is a clear indication of a low level of sincerity.

The sincerity of leaders and followers sets a clear mandate for improving work within AFIC. Participants cannot identify themselves with the current leaders who lack sincerity. They can easily see how insincere their behaviour and action are. They express their desire to see sincere people in current positions. Embracing sincerity is one of the top priorities leaders and followers need in order to begin fixing problems and advancing the organisation.

From an Islamic perspective, the Prophet set the standard saying: "Religion is sincerity, his companions' asked to whom? He said: to Allah (God); to his book; to his prophet; to the rulers of the Muslims and to their common folk" (Siddiqui, 2000: 88). This prophetic saying underlines the importance of sincerity in the life of a Muslim, whether male or female, and it underlines the fact that Islam is based upon sincerity.

The sincerity of Muslim leaders entails acting upon compassionate and just ground in dealing with their followers. It requires that they show their followers love and mercy, and adore the righteous and just people among them. Leaders must advise followers sincerely about what is best for them in their work and they must provide every possible means for them to learn and advance their knowledge. Leaders must place priority on the organisational interests and set aside their personal interests. Sincerity among followers means to recognise their responsibility, to do their job in the best possible manner and standard, recognise the authority of leadership, the hierarchy within the organisation, strengthen solidarity and avoid disunity and dissention.

***Piety*** is one example of a moral principle that was highlighted during all phases of data collection. Piety in an organisational sense is the hidden, consistent individual's hard work and self-striving to put away self-interest and harmful interests through good and bad times, and to act with fairness, justice, courage, humbleness and truthfulness. Piety is solely based on a deep spiritual fear of God. It is the work of lifting self first, and then the group and the organisation. Individuals who begin with themselves are more able to bring about change within the organisational setting.

The important ingredient of piety is attained by a continuous struggle to put self interest aside and put the organisation's interest first. Followers and leaders who are pious deny their own ego and pride and strive towards the organisation's success. If they feel others are mistaken, then it is not the opportunity for them to take advantage, but it is the opportunity to set the record straight. Organisational work is not an occasion for self advantage, but it is an occasion for organisational progress. Denial of self interest is not an easy task whilst leaders are using the resources of the organisation and at the same time use every possible advantage to hold others rather than themselves accountable.

One of the characteristics of people who attain piety is related to justice, fairness and truthfulness. Individuals whether leaders or followers, who attain piety, are just, fair and truthful. Justice is a synonym for piety, "be just for this is nearer to piety" (Quran, 4: 8). Leaders who show piety are untroubled by making fair decisions, whether for promotion of members, using the appropriate resources, or looking after the best interests of stakeholders. Justice, fairness and truthfulness contribute to organisational effectiveness, job satisfaction, accountability, transparency, informed decision-making, employee engagement and commitment (Al-Zu'bi, 2010; Choudhry et al., 2011; Salleh et al., 2013).

The ultimate meaning of piety in the Quran is enjoining good and forbidding wrong. Piety is the essence for human existence "O mankind, worship your lord, who created you and these before you, in order to realise Piety" (Quran, 2:21). The Quran frames piety as the highest moral grounding of peoples' responsibilities to God and to their fellow humankind: "O humankind! We have created you out of male and female and constituted you into different groups and societies, so that you may come to know each other - the noblest of you, in the sight of God, are the ones possessing Piety" (Quran, 49: 11-13). Piety is a synonym for honour and leadership "Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is the one with the most Piety" (Quran, 49:13), "And we appoint from among them leaders giving guidance under our command, so long as they persevered with patience and continue to have faith in our signs" (Quran, 32:24).

***Patience*** is vital principle. Patience indicates peoples' inclination to endure responsibility and difficulty without annoyance. Patience implies forbearance, self control and constancy of doing things without rushing.

The diversity within the Australian Muslim community gives priority to patience. Leaders deal with a variety of people from different backgrounds, origins and nationalities every day. Managing relations with diverse people is not easy and demands a lot of patience. Knowing habits, mentalities, customs, and certain views involves more patience. Facing challenges, complexity and uncertainty indeed requires patience. This research found that both leaders and followers lack patience, and impatience is related directly to organisational disorder.

Patience in the Islamic context implies many different meanings, as the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet acknowledge. Muslims are encouraged to practice patience, "And we shall try you until we test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience" (Quran, 47:31). In a direct note, God almighty urges his messenger to be patient, "O Messenger of Allah! Therefore, be patient like the messengers before you who possessed strength and resorted to patience" (Quran, 46:35), and ultimately "Be patient with gracious patience" (Quran, 70:5).

The Prophet advises humans to be patient, not to get angry, and to avoid the causes that lead to anger. He advises humans to be firm or patient in adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Al-Bukhari (870 AD) narrated that a man said to the Prophet: "Advise me". He said: "Do not become angry". The man repeated his request several times, and each time the Prophet said to him: "Do not become angry" (Khan, 1995: 137).

Ibnul Qayyim (1292 AD) the renowned Islamic scholar, affirmed that mankind's happiness in this life and their salvation on the day of judgement depend on patience (Al-Jawzīyah, 1997). He explained that having patience meant having the ability to stop ourselves from despairing, to refrain from complaining, and to control ourselves in times of sadness and worry.

***Responsibility*** is critical principle. Islam places exceptional burden on the individual and on organisations and society. It is the individual who should think carefully before any act and upon this act he or/ she is liable and bound by his/her actions in front of people, society in this life and in front of God on the day of judgement. It is the individual's prerequisite to understand his or/ her rights and to discharge duties in the best possible manner and form. On the other hand, organisations and society impose a requirement on individuals to work together to fulfil their duties towards the group, the organisation and society.

Within the Quran, responsibility is "namely, that no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another; that human can have nothing but what he/she strives for" (Quran, 53:38-40). God urges humans to watch their conduct very carefully and take full responsibility "Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good see it and anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it" (Quran, 99:7-8). The above quotations are a clear message from the Quran regarding responsibility. The other clear message for leaders to uphold responsibility for their followers comes from the Prophet's saying "Whoever becomes a leader and responsible for three people, will face God in the hereafter with chained hands. If he was ruling justly, he will walk free otherwise he remains chained" (Alhytami, 1994:16/3).

In Muslims' minds, the principle of responsibility represents leadership on earth. Leadership, the purpose behind it, and its preliminary qualifications of feeling the burden, shortcomings, onerous, and justice, hold leaders morally responsible for their role, and for the decisions they make in undertaking it. One active woman clearly said, "Leaders should have consciousness that they are responsible to their organisations".

Responsibility is one of highest moral concepts in Islam. Islam advises individuals to gain an understanding of continuous responsibility in life. Everyone is responsible for every bit of his or her life. He or she is responsible for his or her wealth, is it gained and used lawfully or unlawfully? Each Muslim is responsible for the knowledge he acquires, and asks does it benefit humanity and in what aspects? Did

he/she use knowledge for his own desires or benefits, or for the common good of the society or organisation? If he/she holds a leadership position did he/she exploit it for corrupt means? Is his or her practice in favour of the organisation or is it destructive? This feeling of responsibility pushes those who claim power to think deeply, count every measure they take and every decision they make. It is a continuous, restless movement for Muslims to be just and responsible, to make sure as follower or as a leader that peace of mind in this world and in the destiny to come depend on fulfilling his or her responsibility in a striving and sacrificial fashion. Feeling responsible in life and the destiny to come is a powerful reason to free both followers and leaders from arrogance, lies and greed, and to put their organisational work on track.

Responsibility as a moral Islamic principle has a higher effect than accountability. Responsibility is holding oneself accountable, but accountability is imposing checks and balances on bodies and structures within the organisational hierarchy, whether it is the board members or the board of directors. This is not to say that accountability is not important, on the contrary it is very important to keep things functioning to a high standard, but responsibility adds a very high standard from within oneself for those who are in positions of power, and for those who are not in positions of power.

***Obligation*** in Islam is a concept which spans many different aspects. Leading and following with an open mind is the very substance of the obligatory way of doing things. There is an obligation on leaders and followers to discharge their duties to their best ability without showing off or seeking self-interest. This obligation is attached to Muslims' belief of doing well at all times, otherwise it constitutes a sin! So doing good, or doing something to the best of one's ability is not just attached to the current reward system of organisation, but it attached deeply to beliefs and the general good of the community.

Furthermore, one of the main obligations of organisations claiming to represent the Muslim community is to consult with that community in the widest sense, and in particular with their members. Consultation is at the heart of obligatory themes that

Muslims should practice within organisational or state affairs. Islam imposes an obligation to consult in all affairs. A leader, even someone with considerable knowledge, has to consult on the general aspects of leadership and vice-versa, to reach a desirable outcome.

***Wisdom*** is an essential basic. Wisdom is having an organised life.(Climer et al., 2006: 919). Wisdom is defined by Hays (2007) as essentially doing the right thing. Within the current research, wisdom is the function of thinking deeply, then subsequently acting from a solid base of knowledge, and having the ability to analyse the situation, taking into consideration the context of events.

My research revealed that wisdom as a basic principal is one that is lacking within AFIC's organisational setting. Many incidents revealed by this research depict an absence of wisdom in leaders. As an example, three different organisations were formed within a short period of time to represent one well known state council. The first state council was in dispute with the federal organisation, therefore AFIC established another state council to represent its interests in that state. A third Islamic council was established in response to the second council. The three Islamic councils within one state are still remaining but are dividing the local organisations in that state. Again, the above incident shows how much Muslim leaders give preference to their own self-interests.

The data obtained through investigation of this incident showed that a lack of interaction, unwillingness to communicate, divisions along ethnic lines, pre-conceived judgement, giving preference for personal interests above the wellbeing of the organisation, disquiet over accountability and transparency, and taking an easy solution without strategising were all behind the establishment of these three state councils within one state. Wise leadership in this incident would have convened an open forum for all the stakeholders and shown courage in debating the problems without giving favour. Courage, commitment to the basic core values of Islam such as justice, equality, fairness, transparency, accountability, taking the big picture approach, vision for the future, and giving up self-interest for the good of the

people, are actions which imply deep thinking and non traditional approaches. This is wisdom. Those leaders who acquire such talent are the greatest in sensemaking and commonsense. Within AFIC, wise actions rarely happen and organisational work deteriorates. This indicates that wisdom is an important construct, albeit missing individually and collectively within many organisations.

This study revealed that wisdom has the ability to bring change and illumination to this complex setting, and the participants stressed the priority of wisdom. One woman pointed out that, "Wisdom is the fundamental requirement to become an imam". The essentiality of wisdom was echoed throughout the four phases of data collection. The political, cultural and social complexity of this setting highlights the importance of wise thinking and wise actions. It is not a normal organisational setting whereby ordinary judgement can prevail. The conflict among the three different types of leadership, religious leaders, intellectuals and organisational leaders gives important priority to wise messages and wise action. The attainment of wisdom deserves more appreciation from all leaders and followers, because wisdom leads to more creative, critical thinking. AFIC's leaderships' tortuous path in solving problematic issues has been built on chameleon-like personalities, not on wise ideas or decisions. Wisdom is attributed to people who have a genuine conviction about the acquisition of wisdom.

What makes the difference? It is the acquisition of wisdom as an organised asset (Bierly et al., 2000). This is the difficult part of the process. How do people acquire what they think is hard to attain and sustain? First of all, leaders and organisations cannot belittle wisdom. It is in the interests of the organisation for leaders to firmly commit themselves to acquiring wisdom and committing themselves to find all possible ways for themselves and others to learn and commit to wisdom. Commitment to gaining wisdom is the first step of the journey.

The next step is the formulation of a plan with a long term strategy to facilitate the options for acquisition of wisdom. This plan may span different processes, increasing the chances for acquisition of wisdom. Petrick et al. (1999: 60) eloquently

elaborated on the understanding of complex issues, seeking different strategic perspectives, exercising balanced judgement, and considering the consequences of action as part of an action plan, as the best global leaders are able to do. The action plan requires strategic training and education on different facets of organisational complexity which allow for reflection on ideas and actions based on deeply held values and beliefs. This plan of action together with anchoring wisdom as an organisational asset recommends that much of the work be systemised. Whilst organisational wisdom becomes important to organisational success, leadership, more than ever before, is obligated to intertwine wisdom with sensemaking.

Embracing traditional wisdom is a high priority concept in Islam. Wisdom is the highest quality for humanity in Islamic practices. Many verses in the Quran emphasise the high status of wisdom and consider it to be a basic cornerstone for good living. God sends messengers for the purpose of teaching people wisdom. God stated "We have sent among you a Messenger of your own, rehearsing to you our signs, and sanctifying you, and instructing you in scripture and wisdom" (Quran, 2:151). The Quran also informs Muslims about wisdom through the words of someone named Luqman. Luqman was not a prophet, he was a person of piety, but God granted him enormous wisdom. His wisdom enabled him to occupy an entire chapter named after him in the holy Quran. God says "And indeed we bestowed wisdom upon Luqman" (Quran, 31:12). Hart (1978) in his famous book "The 100, a ranking of the most influential persons in history" put Prophet Mohamad the first on the list, and one reason for this is his great wisdom.

#### 7.5.3.1.2 Basics of Islamic Work Ethics

Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) is one of the central themes that emerged from this analysis. For participants in this research, work ethics and business are very much overlapping. Work ethics concerns the development of standards or codes of behaviour expected for the group to which the individual belongs. In the Islamic context, without specifying any situational context, ethics governs all aspects of life whether conducting business or carrying out daily activities.

There were calls from participants for the leaders to "establish ethical procedures and processes", such as implementing a system that organises the whole set of procedures and regulations, setting a clear mandate for the process and procedures of power, and establishing terms of reference and a code of behaviour. Implementation of these procedures could help to regulate and move the organisation towards becoming a more professional body. One middle-level leader mentioned the ways in which leaders avoid ethical standards by claiming money without legitimate reasons. He made it very clear that "some leaders, when it comes to money, they don't care about right or wrong, what they care about is their hip pocket".

This comment sheds light on an important issue, where ethical obligation is crucial. A leader's failure to adhere to work ethics puts organisations at risk. Leaders must be responsible for their own actions and decisions, and must implement a comprehensive system of checks and balances, otherwise their integrity is compromised. If the leaders do not uphold the highest standards of Islamic work ethics, assume full personal and professional responsibility for every action and decision, and fail to implement a system to check their actions and decisions, they are risking the failure of their relationship with their followers and the community at large. Failing to commit to ethical obligation equals negative consequences for organisational work. Implementation of systems of accountability, transparency, commitment, dedication and perseverance will ensure that leaders not only fulfil their obligations, but that leaders will achieve their goals, will make behavioural change within the organisation. An ethical system within an organisation helps motivate and challenge both leaders and followers to go the extra mile.

#### 7.5.3.1.3 Basics of the higher objectives of Islam

*Maqasid al-Shari'ah*, or the goals and objectives of Islamic law, is an evidently important and yet somewhat neglected theme. Generally, the Shari'ah is predicated on the benefits of the individual and that of the community, and its laws are designed to protect these benefits and facilitate improvement and perfection of the conditions of human life on earth (Kamali, 2008).

The Shari'ah is defined as a system of ethics and values covering all aspects of life, personal, social, political, economic and intellectual, with its unchanging bearings as well as its major means of adjusting to change (Dusuki and Abdullah, 2007). Dusuki and Abdullah (2007:31) in tune with Imam al-Ghazzali (1058CE) view:

> The very objective of the Shari'ah is to promote the well-being of the people, which lies in safeguarding their faith, their lives, their intellect, their posterity and their wealth. Whatever ensures the safeguarding of these five serves public interest and is desirable, and whatever hurts them is against public interest and its removal is desirable (Dusuki and Abdullah, 2007:31).

Auda (2007:xxi) reiterated the importance of Ibn al-Qayyim's (d.748 AH/ 1347 CE) words:

> Shari'ah is based on wisdom and achieving people's welfare in this life and the afterlife. Shari'ah is all about justice, mercy, wisdom and good. Thus, any ruling that replaces justice with injustice, mercy with its opposite, common good with mischief, or wisdom with nonsense, is a ruling that does not belong to the Shari'ah, even if it is claimed to be so according to some interpretations.

Looking at the higher objectives of Islam, Islamic organisations in the West share common ground with Western objectives. Islam's higher objectives are to establish freedom, justice, equality, human rights, well-being, education, pluralism, accountability and transparency. These Islamic objectives are, in broad sense, the same objectives of Western nations including Australia. By advocating and emphasising the importance of these objectives, Islamic organisations' eventually find themselves as being as similar to the Western system as any home-grown organisation operating in a welcome environment, rather than one in conflict with the basics of western societies. A duty of leadership is to insist on the universal values and objectives that unite fellow Muslims with the broader society, and give them greater encouragement to contribute to the goodwill of people in general. Avoiding the basics of the higher objectives of Islam drags the leaders down to defend their grassroots members every time a crisis occurs. This defensive position keeps the current organisational mode of AFIC in fear, which weakens both followers and leaders. One respondent thinks that, "It is time for Australian Muslims to take a lead on presenting themselves in different way and to talk about what Islam and Muslims are, as opposed only to what they are not".

One overarching theme which emerged from the analysis of the data is that leaders who take the initiative in presenting the higher objectives of Islam as an ethical system resonates well with Australian values. The higher objectives of Islam have an important role in bridging the gap between Muslims and the broader community in Australia. By itself, this role cannot be activated unless the leaders step up and link the higher objectives of Islam to the values of Australia. By so doing, they could moderate the effects of uncertainty and complexity within their organisations, and reconcile with their followers on important internal issues that at present have a negative effect on the organisations.

One highly critical interviewee articulated the factors that played an important role for leaders to shape the thinking of the Muslim community in Australia before 1991, and the development after that period:

> The community were like other Australians except they practice a different religion, and it wasn't practiced in a way that was in disharmony with the wider society. But from 1991 I noticed a big change, and that was many people came from overseas and brought with them a lot of cultural aspects of Islam from their countries, and this somehow created some difficulties for Muslims integrating with the wider society.
>
> I think those ideas have been pushed long quite a lot over the years, but the point still stands that ideas can impact on societies. But we have reached a point now that the conservative type rhetoric should really come to an end and should not go beyond that. The idea I'd like to see infusing this community is the idea of looking at the higher principles of Islam, not looking at literal, classical, doctrine and things like that. We have to move beyond that sort of rhetoric, and going further, looking to the Quran and prophetic tradition, to the highest objectives that Islam holds true.
>
> I think we have been selling Islam short, when we restrict it to just norms and practices that relate to different cultures. I think only when we go to the higher objectives, then we find the universal values of Islam, and when we look at those, we can see that they are eagerly implemented and in fact embraced by the Australian society. I think we now need to start thinking in these terms for a positive end result.

The above passage resembles Auda's (2008) view of the same issue, he wonders about the reality of wrong practices. Current applications (or rather, misapplications) of Islamic law are reductionist rather than being holistic, literal rather than being moral, one-dimensional rather than being multi-dimensional, binary rather than

being multi-valued, deconstructionist rather than being reconstructionist, and are caused rather than being teleological. The current trend of adhering to conservative rhetoric is one practice that is clearly outdated. Until leadership removes conservative rhetoric, and moves to an understanding and discussion about the higher objectives of Islam, Muslims will see themselves in contradiction with the wider Australian community. This contradiction is playing a negative role in the processes of leading and following of Muslims in Australia, in their internal organisational work, and in reaching and enabling a meaningful involvement within the Australian society.

Leadership must acknowledge the context in which they operate and the reality and status of Muslims as a minority group. Appreciating such a context in the spirit of the higher objectives does not go against the principle of Islam; in fact it is part of Islamic practicality, realistic reasoning and teachings. This research found that contradicting the higher objectives of Islam correlates negatively with daily activities, encourages apathy due to fear of involvement in organisations that have been the focus of the media and politics for quite some time, feeds the disfranchised sentiment of followers within the broader society, and consequently gives rise to the many problems within AFIC. This contradiction affects the aspiration of generations of Muslims to become active, valued citizens of a wider Australian society. Finally this contradiction makes it difficult for leadership to bring about a transformation that could yield a solution to the problems caused by the many negative processes.

#### 7.5.3.1.4 Basics of the meaningful presence

One interviewee touched on the point of complexity and uncertainty from a different angle. He expressed his concern that it is hard to remove uncertainty unless, “Muslims contribute to the wider Australian community”. This argument comes with no surprise considering Maussen’s argument. Maussen (2005) argues that Islamic organisations should make their presence in the West meaningful. Data from this research demonstrated that to make the Muslim presence meaningful, leadership must construct a three-fold pragmatic argument. First, a new frame of reference should be established regarding Islam and the West. Islamic leadership should argue for a satisfactory, not contradictory, situation, as a contradictory situation implies

Islam versus the West. A satisfactory situation may imply Islam ***in*** the West. Second, Muslim leadership has a responsibility to unite the Islamic community in creating a vision, leave sectarian and ethnic characteristics of their country of origin behind, and present one platform that opens venues for dialogue and harmony with the western world. Third, it is preferable that Muslim leadership sends a strong message to Western societies. This message which concerns the interaction of the younger generation of Muslims with the broader community should be on the basis that everyone is equal, rather than carrying the sentiments of disenchanted and alienated citizens. An attitude of equality will have a deep effect upon younger generation Muslims because it reflects the core principles of an Islamic leadership – one of which is based on fairness. Fair, equitable, honest leadership in Islamic thought is the core from which everything else evolves. Muslims have a strong belief that if the leader of any institution or state does not adhere to high standards of justice, the days of that institution are numbered. Pragmatic and just leadership is among the shortfalls in leadership in the current setting. Without such principles, the road ahead is difficult.

Leaders should think carefully about the perception of Islam in Australia. The ongoing negative perception of Islam in Australia leaves Muslims helpless in terms of their ability to make their presence meaningful, and affects the ability of Muslim leaders to encourage followers to work at the organisational level. A young Australian born Muslim said that, "The important issue here is perception, and part of the problem from 1990 onward is that Islam has been treated as a foreign religion in Australia". The feeling in the Muslim community and in the non-Muslim community is that Islam is the religion of a certain type of immigrants. In order to overcome this perception, the Australian public and the government want, "To hear an Australian accent when Islam is being talked about. That's critical I think, and that is the only way to demonstrate to the Australian society at large that Islam is another one of Australia's religions, not a foreign religion". For all Australians, in spite of the nation's claims to multiculturalism, it is still important to speak without "a strong foreign accent" in order to avoid a perception that you are a member of a "foreign religion". Giving Islam an Aussie accent is at the core of making the

presence of Muslims meaningful and delivering a leadership message from both Muslims followers and the Australian public to a large audience.

#### 7.5.3.1.5 How internal basics can affect individual and leadership levels

The shared sentiment across much of the interviews, and what can enhance the process of leadership is loud and clear, strong individual moral character. Character exemplifies the features of morals, manners, reputation, conduct and qualities of personal representation. The character of a leader affects his or her influence and integrity among followers. Followers have a high regard for a leader's moral integrity and good conduct. At the same time they hold in low esteem leaders who lack morals and good manners. One interviewee who is a very active member of one organisation working outside the banner of AFIC affirmed that, "Leaders with no morals simply cannot be trusted and should call it a day".

According to the above interviewee, the first process to be mediated is trust. Trust is very low because they don't 'walk their talk'; they have low credibility and accountability, among other things which constitute a moral character. Followers who are very attached to basics distance themselves from a leadership that is low in morals and manners.

Individual Muslims set their complete trust in their creator, and their trust of leaders stems from the leader's relations with God. Leaders who don't place trust and confidence in God, lose the trust of followers. Trust stems from basic Islamic morals and is built through morals and ethics. The first stage of building trust starts at the individual level. Building trust depends on morals and hard work. Morals are the driver behind hard work. Those individuals who hold high moral values would not hold positions without their inner commitment to hard work. If they feel incapable of performing, they abstain from holding positions, because holding a position means hard work and delivery of results. A leader might have great skill and talent to work hard, but if he or she is not holding high moral values and honesty, followers are not going to trust that leader. It is essential for leaders to know these propositions and work upon building and inspiring trust. Systemising trust should be

the focus of leaders and followers within this organisational setting. Explicit articulation of the importance of trust must be communicated. Systemising trust takes it beyond the individual level and extends it to the leadership and organisational levels, and this can result in a positive shift.

A very successful leader who heads a local organisation delivered his verdict, "We still have not got leaders who have charisma, the respect, and authority to represent Muslims, our leadership has been very poor" and went on, "AFIC does not have the respect, it is all about power and money, AFIC has been a failure because the people are not fair and not just, leadership must have a respect, none of them have it".

Respect is another important leadership concept lacking in this setting. Respect for Muslims is a cornerstone of relations in general and for follower-leader relationship in particular. The data obtained in this research shows that respect has a great effect on follower's motivations and ability to work hard for the organisation. And lack of respect minimises followers' motivation and ability to work for the organisation. The term "respected leadership" is very common within Muslims' social terminologies, and this term is an indication of the admiration and willingness of people to do the extra bit for their leadership.

The penultimate passage identified a third concept attached to morals and character which was lacking in this setting. This process is authority. Weber (1997) noted that the exercise of power is legitimated through authority. Heifetz (1994) considered authority to be power granted for a purpose. This purpose such as particular beliefs, perceptions and positions become accepted by followers. Those followers are united in a common perspective and come to expect and value certain patterns of influence (Pfeffer, 1981). Authority is power of influence that has been legitimated by the consent of followers, not by force. Culture, religion and social contracts are often the sources of legitimate authority (Burns, 1978). Participants interwove their perspective of authority with a leader's morals and character. High morals and character bring high authority. Lower morals and character means less authority. Whether they are leaders or followers, a strong moral character is important in

delivering the message across organisations and in mobilising both leaders and followers. From many interviews, discussions and participant observation, I noticed closely that young Muslims and informal leaders have brought a new reality, one that lends itself easily to the above categorisation of Islamic morals and principles, and hence requires special attention. For any individual or/and a leader to deliver his or her message and to mobilise followers or the larger Muslim communities in Australia, leaders must have a very strong Islamic moral character. The religious nature of the organisational setting for Muslims in Australia gives an absolute consonance amongst the leaders' thoughts, actions and expression. The above finding resonates with Beekun and Badawi's (1999b) view that Muslim leaders must develop a strong Islamic moral character if they are to excel in their work and act in accordance with the injunctions of God and his Prophet.

**7.5.3.1.6 How internal basics can generate leading, attract following and organising, and effect contextual challenges.**

"The people will follow the upright, sincere, straight person, a person who can articulate and understand the wisdom of knowledge", this is a representative answer from many interviewees to the question: who do you look up to and who do you follow? Embracing basics would generate following and generate role modelling. Role modelling is the overriding element in manifesting leadership. Without role models, it becomes the overarching problem for manifesting leadership. The process of embracing basics is the big determinant of manifesting leadership.

Role modelling was highlighted throughout all the interviews. It is the centrepiece of thinking about the revival of effective leadership. Individuals have to set a good example of their capacity for their followers and leaders. Islam emphasises deeds more than speech, and deeds are the actions that are different in setting role modelling and in people's minds and hearts. Role models are the people who others look up to and try to emulate. For three years, I observed a newly established Islamic organisation and met with two of its consecutive leaders and many committee members. I concluded that the two leaders had a huge effect on committee members and even followers, to the extent that they had the same way of

thinking and behaving towards many issues and events. The two leaders of the aforementioned organisation hold high moral values and are very energetic. They have tremendous ability to create a vision; to create team work, to motivate people around them, to listen, to share and to care. They are down to earth, wise, sincere, hard working, humble, pious, responsible, and followed procedures and standards and achieved much during their short tenure.

The above observations show that role modelling affects much of the organisational work. Many concepts mediate work through role modelling. Those concepts are trust, admiration, inspiration, motivation, learning, realising potential, involvement, encouragement, shaping ideas and culture, real action and enthusiasm, just to name a few. This finding gives a solid backing for the proposition that basics could influence leading, attract following, shape the organisational culture and subsequently change the context. Also the data showed less concern among participants about a leader's identity. The people who were identified with were those who had achieved much achievement and had high moral character. The above finding also gains support from a leading scholar. According to Yukl (2006), followers may imitate leaders with whom they identify as role model examples of good behaviour and good conduct.

Basic principles and morals in Islamic ethos are an asset to role models, and without these basics, role modelling loses its significance. Basic morals are the inner core values of Muslims, and empirical findings support Islamic thought and theory. The Quran (68:4) affirms this notion to Muslims, "Indeed, you are of a great moral character" and "Indeed for you in the messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow" (Quran, 33:21). The Prophet put his message on the line to achieve high moral character, "Indeed, I was only sent to complete the most noble of character traits" (Albani, 1988:464). The historian Michael H. Hart (1978:33) wrote, "My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels". The Prophet has set the best example of behaviour for Muslims and humanity in general,

and his legacy continues to shape Muslim life today. Ayad (2009) affirmed the notion that Prophet Muhammad changed world history in 23 years, and continues to shape the lives of more than 1.2 billion people, because he is a great inspiration in deed indeed! A most noble, excellent role model for all mankind throughout the ages. Ayad (2009:1) stressed the inspirational nature of the Prophet as a role model:

> Today both our youth and adults look at the life of Allah's Messenger for inspiration and guidance. What is it that pulls us toward him and inspires us to emulate his words and deeds? For over 1400 years his story has been passed down from generation to generation to keep his legacy alive in our hearts and lives. How could this humble merchant who could not read or write change the face of Arabia as well as every corner of the world? The answer lies in the virtues of his character. These virtues brought about his success in this world and the next.

Interviewees argued that leaders should emulate the example of the Prophet and take their role as leaders seriously. They also argued that leaders should enhance their character and personal behaviour because if they do not, they will have a detrimental effect on the organisational culture. Role models enhance the organisational work and reflect on how their followers follow their example. Many interviewees noticed that the young Muslim generation in Australia follow the few role models who emulate the Prophet and his ability to endure, his inspiring words, his outstanding attitudes and behaviours.

#### 7.5.3.2 Embracing external basics

External basics are the basics revealed of the participants experience and assumptions about the broad context they live in as citizens, employees and migrants. The Western system of basics organising is a big call for Muslim leadership to follow. Organising is the fundamental of leading and following and without the basic level of organising, leading and following loses its foundation. Leading, following and organising are simply and obviously interconnected.

While much of the current social research gives precedence to leading and following, this research found that organising in its simplest form will generate both following and leading simply because organising must begin almost from scratch to initiate structure. All interviewees requested that their organisations be well

disciplined. Weick (1995) suggested that a focus on the process of organising is more important than an emphasis on organisational outcomes. The following sections highlight embracing organising and structural basics.

#### 7.5.3.2.1 Initiating structure

Richmon and Allison (2003: 31) argue that, "Leadership can be (and has been) understood as a process of exercising influence, a way of inducing compliance, a measure of personality, a form of persuasion, an effect of interaction, an instrument of goal achievement, a means of initiating structure, a negotiation of power relationships or a way of behaving". This argument strengthens my finding from the data, finding that for any entity or organisation to survive, the minimum structural requirement and basic resources must exist. The data obtained from interviews revealed a lack of basic and necessary resources within AFIC. A state leader affirms, "One of the problems is that we do not have an official office. I try very hard to get an office for our state but with no luck. I tried very hard with the Muslim business leaders, but no answer. With all the money that AFIC has, they are not giving us money due to the internal politics". Previously stated quotations from Chapter 4 strengthen the argument. The interviewees stated, "We have first of all to establish an official office, and this will lay the foundation for big changes. I am happy that you raise this question. The state council at the present time has no organisational structure. Another interviewee stated, "We need to have structures in place, and those structures must [be] headed by people who [are] quite strong, who know what they are doing".

The objective of an organisational structure is to define the guidelines, borders, hierarchal framework and the procedural processes necessary for members to accomplish their main goal. It is the basic element of an organisation to define the staffing and departmental structures. Structure spans levels of authority, staff, departments, and departmental hierarchy. An organisational structure organises priorities of tasks and job related activities. Within the research investigation, the data revealed almost a complete absence of administrative structure. Some

interviewees questioned the way leaders conducted their work and noticed the absence of administrative hierarchy, especially in the main states offices.

#### 7.5.3.2.2 Putting a system in place

Tyson (1998: 39) defined organising essentially as the process of establishing structures to perform the group task: roles, rules, communication channels, work procedures, and so forth. When a group of people come together to accomplish a goal, they have to set certain integrated coherent departments in order to complete the job. These coherent departments are the system of the organisation, requiring infrastructure, or a basic level of resources or inputs, through certain standards and procedures to achieve the desired output.

The data obtained from the current investigation showed a serious concern among respondents regarding the absence of any system. One successful ex-state leader said:

> The local Islamic organisations cannot do what they like. If they do something wrong, they are going to be questioned by a higher authority; right! If this basic level here is doing something wrong, and people are not happy with it; where do they go? They are going to go to somebody higher up. In our organisation there is nowhere to go! This is what I said to the president of the state organisation couple of weeks ago. I said; we need a system here were the local organisations is answerable to the state organisation, which in turn is answerable to the federal organisation.
>
> If I have a grievance here at local level, I have nowhere to go; whether I am right or wrong, whatever; nobody cares to hear me. They really lack an independent judiciary kind of organisation who listens to this kind of thing. We should have a revised constitution.

This testimony is echoed frequently by other interviewees at all levels. The followers are eager to see systems and subsystems that allow the organisation, first to function correctly, and then to achieve its mission.

#### 7.5.3.2.3 Paid employees

One of the greatest challenges facing AFIC is the issue of volunteering. One respondent said, “The problem with AFIC and the reason it does not function well is the voluntary work. All the people including the president are volunteers”. One of

the leaders has said openly, “Whoever takes the presidency should have time, and this job should be a full time job, not on a voluntary basis”. Another leader pointed out, “I think it is a critical issue. It is time for the members to decide that the personnel serving in any organisation should be paid”. This view is echoed by empirical research in Canada by (Catano et al., 2001). The above research concluded that in volunteer organisations there is no employment relationship between the members and the organisation. This affects overall performance and minimises effective transactional culture.

This research found that this setting, at the basic level, requires full time employees who are fully paid and committed to the job. Those who will come to fill these occupancies should be chosen on motivational merit, ability and commitment to provide richer organisational work and support effectiveness.

#### 7.5.3.2.4 Professionals’ resources

Professionalism is the asset which is absent within AFIC. Respondents frequently stressed the view that the organisation should, “Move toward professionalism”. They acknowledged the lack of professionalism in the organisation and insisted that professionalism is an absolute requisite in this rapidly changing environment.

One respondent made it very clear, “I think the biggest hurdle is the lack of educated and professional people occupying positions in the Islamic organisations”. A second leader commented, “The right people are not there, look at it now; beside the president we do not have any professional people on the executive committee. When you do not have substance how can you be a good leader, how can you contribute, how you can have a full side?” Another leader said, “We have to move towards a professional organisation. The leader should be a professional person, because if you a leader it is very important for you to understand the administration aspect. It is not enough to have religious education only, but it should go a long with real life education as well”.

#### 7.5.3.2.5 Youth and women

Many interviewees noted, "There is a lack of representation. They are all men working in there, and there is no representation for women and young people. We have a lot of professional women in our community, and they have a lot to contribute". This problem has to be addressed if progress in these organisations is to take place. As one active young Muslim pointed out "Things regarding women's participation are getting slowly better. Youth are also absent and a lot more has to be done, the constitution is very clear regarding the participation of women and youth but it is not implemented. If we want to move ahead in our work surely we have to address this problem". Another state leader added, "We have to bring the youth within the fold of the wider community, and address unemployment among the Muslim youth". The lack of young men and women has put the organisations in the hands of the older generation who are tired, frustrated most of the time and have no plan or vision for the future. Young men and women are energetic, enthusiastic and can bring hope and change for the organisation.

#### 7.5.3.2.6 Bringing a system of basic standards into effect

One of the main tasks of leadership is to try making an organisation run smoothly with a set of procedures which formulate the standards of the organisation. Planned procedures can produce predictable outcomes.

A Leader's liability is to think of developing policies and procedures that offer mechanisms of integrity and accountability, offer certainty and stability for members, give them a voice that can be heard without hindrance, and set a clear path to change the seat of power regularly.

While these standards are missing in the current setting, their presence can play a decisive role in combating corruption and in reflecting the Islamic and universal standards of honesty, fairness and responsibility. One young female spoke at length about the standards, and sees it as the bridge to success. She made a comparison between what she experienced in her work as a professional and the poor situation as

she described it in AFIC. She encourages leaders to adopt, "Terms of reference to regulate the work and to develop themselves according to the standard".

Another active female leader was willing to show the young members the way to success at the organisational level:

> As an example is the model of IWAQ as an organisation service for migrant women especially those coming from Islamic countries, to get them to integrate easily within the Australian society, they do it professionally. At the organisational level their policies in place reflect their formal position. They set a benchmark standard for transparency and accountability. The process is right, the limitations are there, the policies show their ability to promote responsible conduct.

Another respondent shed light on the positive side of standards, "Standards can protect a follower's right to perform effectively and to share information of interest that can help us to go forward and make our voice heard".

## 7.6 Summary

From the outset, the outstanding purpose of this research was to generate a processual theory of organisational leadership. My analysis revealed that the near core category of reconciling problems was insufficient to explain certain incidents in the current substantive setting. Upon interrogation of the data it was established that the social process of accommodating complexity was sufficient to explain the variations which reconciling problems could not explain. Additional data brought doubts about the ability of the social process of accommodating complexity to explain processes and incidents within the current context. Further elaboration revealed that the social process of sensemaking is able to explain various realities that the social process of accommodating complexity was unable to legitimise. The social process of sensemaking stopped short from explaining why leaders with sensemaking capabilities could influence followers, while other leaders with the same capabilities could not influence followers. Additional investigation revealed that a higher level of abstraction is necessary to justify the shortfalls of sensemaking and accommodating complexity. The higher level of abstraction developed as the core category of embracing basics. Embracing basics is the process by which leaders infuse leading and following at a personal level, a leading level, and an organising

level to reconcile, influence and bring about change for the problematic process of leadership and the problematic process of context. Embracing internal basics and embracing external basics are the sub-categories of the basic social process. These sub-categories of the basic social process illustrate the basic moral values of traditional Islam and the core organising standards in the Australian context.

The current context under investigation has unique status. It is unique because first, the context is of a minority of Muslims within a predominantly Western context (Australian). Second, it represents a minority culture within various sub-cultures within a predominantly Western culture. Third, it is a mix of migrants and non migrants within a predominantly migrant country. The grounded theory of embracing basics is substantive to this unique setting (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), but there as much in this theory that may be applicable to other contexts. The next chapter explores this in full detail. It can be adapted to other settings taking into consideration that the same questions and investigation are applied rigorously.

# Chapter 8 Conceptual model and discussion of the theory's place within extant literature

## 8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to generate a theory of leadership at a high level of abstraction, which explains the social interactions by which leaders' influence following and organising within the context of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC). Chapters four, five, six and seven are the basis for this chapter, and this chapter flows from them. Chapters four, five and six discuss the problematic leadership, problematic context, and reconciling problems by strategies of enacting leadership and following. Chapter seven discusses leadership process at a higher level of theorisation represented by the near-core categories of accommodating complexity, sensemaking and the core category of 'embracing basics'.

This chapter begins with section 8.2 elaborating on the story thus far, section 8.3 discusses the grounded theory model. Section 8.4 provides an explanation of the model. Section 8.5 presents the comparison with extant literature. Section 8.6 summarises the chapter.

## 8.2 The story thus far

The problematic leadership processes and the problematic context have posed serious difficulties for potential leaders and followers in taking on leadership responsibility. These problematic processes play a restrained role in the ability of followers to play their followership role and individuals' ability to join the organisation as followers and leaders. The problematic processes create a problematic atmosphere paralysing the ability of leaders and followers to act normally and jeopardise basic organising.

Upon examining the flow of data, it became obvious to the researcher that leaders who enact leading could influence following, and followers who enact following could influence both leading and following, to certain extent. Later phases of data collection, selective coding and constant comparison method led the researcher to examine the two near categories; accommodating complexity and sensemaking. Leaders who do not try hard to accommodate complexity find it very difficult to reconcile problematic processes of leadership and context. Those leaders who work effectively on accommodating complexity are more able to reconcile problematic processes.

Further theorising shows that accommodating complexity falls short of answering the failures of activities and incidents, by which leaders try to change the current problematic processes to less problematic situations. The next set of analysis shows that sensemaking subsumes the near core category of accommodating complexity, and answers variations on the data not answered by reconciling problems and accommodating complexity.

The following examination indicates sensemaking's shortcoming in answering variations in the data and incidents. Those variations were concerned about leadership's failure to infuse sensemaking in most cases, whilst a few incidents of leadership's success in acting on sensemaking occurred. The second concern is why very few organisations at local and state levels, and few potential leaders succeed in influencing followers through sensemaking, and why other organisations including the federal body fail in their bid to influence followers, even using trials of sensemaking. The third concern is why sensemaking is connected with inconsistency in a normal operating mode. The three concerns above pose limitations on the ability of sensemaking to explain and integrate aspects of doing leading. Moreover, questioning revealed that leaders and potential leaders (followers) who achieved good results in overcoming problematic processes are the ones who are inclined towards a social process of embracing basics. Those who are not inclined towards embracing basics have little influence and subsequently they are far from overcoming problematic processes.

These categories are part of the conceptual theoretical model generated by the views, perceptions and beliefs of those interviewees involved in the present study. The conceptual model of the generated theory has six levels. The six levels are the core category of embracing basics, the near-core categories of sensemaking, accommodating complexity and reconciling problems, the high-level category of problematic context, and the low-level category of problematic leadership. The model is represented in Table 7.1.

## 8.3 The grounded theory model

Based on Strauss and Corbin's (1998) primary requirements for judging a good grounded theory; 'embracing basics' was selected as the core category for six reasons. First, it is the central category around which all conceptual categories are related. Second, it explains all the variations in other categories. Third, it illustrates all the interaction among conceptual categories. Fourth, references to the core category occurred throughout all phases of data collection. Fifth, as a theoretical construct it is abstract enough to suggest that further research could be conducted in other substantive settings. Sixth, it explains the dynamic nature of the social process of leadership. Considering the above Strauss and Corbin's (1998) requirements the grounded theory model was proposed as shown in Figure 8.1.

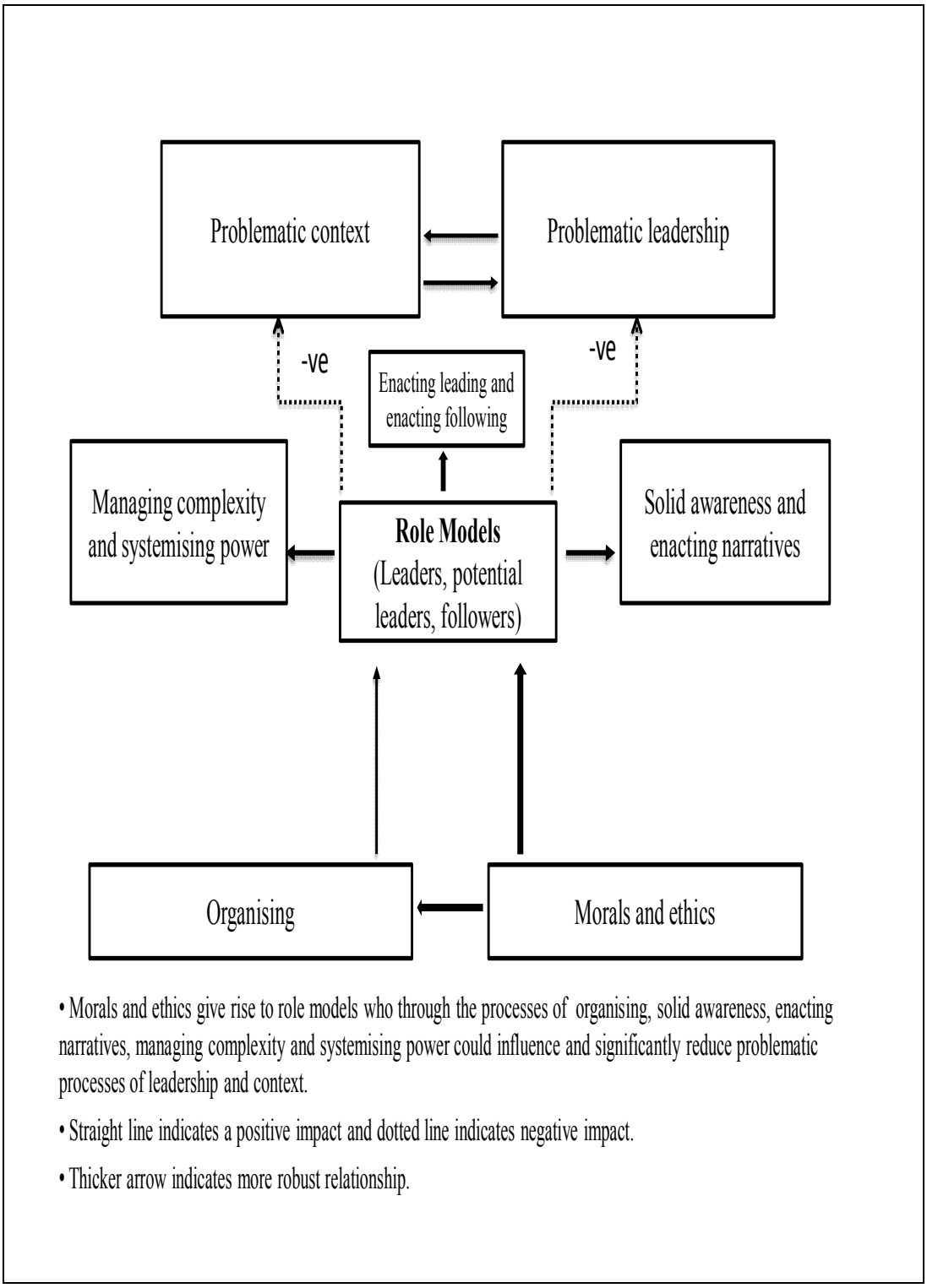


**Figure 8. 1 Embracing basics: A grounded theory for leadership**

## 8.4 The model explanation

The grounded theory and the core process developed in this study is the processual leadership theory of embracing basics. Embracing basics was found to have six levels of categorisation at which it was represented conceptually as shown in figures 8.1. The first level is the basic social process of embracing basics which is represented by organising, morals and ethics. Morals and ethics represent the internal embedded basics while organising represents the external embedded basics. Internal embedded basics and external basics represent the main sub-categories for the core process of embracing basics. The second level is the social process of sensemaking which is represented by solid awareness and enacting narratives as shown in figure 8.1. The third level is the social process of accommodating complexity which is represented by managing complexity and systemising power as shown in the grounded theory model 8.1. The Forth level is the near-core category of reconciling problems which is represented by enacting leading and enacting following. The fifth level is the high-order category of problematic context, while the sixth level is represented by the lower-order category of problematic leadership. The core process which is represented by embracing basics will have detrimental effect on creating role models who could work with organising, sensemaking, accommodating complexity, and reconciling problems to bring about change to problematic leadership and problematic context which is represented as the fifth and six levels of categorisation in the model.

*The following model discussion* elaborates on the core social process of embracing basics, elements within the model, links and relations of the core process with the near-core categories to overcome the high-level category of problematic context and the low-level category of problematic leadership.

### 8.4.1 The core category (Morals, ethics and organising)

The model depicts the functionality of the core process. Leaders who engaged in the basic social process of embracing basics were found to be engaging in embracing morals and ethics, and organising. Ethics, moral and organising represent the core category within this model.

The social process of embracing basics represents the main antecedent to stop and overcome problematic processes. It has the utmost ability to interconnect three near core categories to overcome negativity and to affect the problematic processes positively. The three near-core categories in the model have an antecedent to start with. This antecedent is the core category of embracing basics. Concurrently, interconnection of the basic social process with the three near-core categories could affect the whole process positively.

The core process works intensively and effectively upon leading and following concepts, giving rise to authentic, moral and respected leadership that resonates fully with followers' satisfaction and acceptance of leadership efforts to overcome non-leading and non-following situations by mobilising good leadership and followership processes.

The core process of embracing basics strengthens the character of potential leaders and followers through emulating the few successful role models and reciprocating role modelling and moral behaviours. It has the ability to infuse followers' respect for leaders who base their conduct on ethical and moral principles. Followers consider those leaders to be close to their hearts, speak their feelings, interact with their inspirations, and talk in understandable and sensible language.

This core process is a type of coherent and persistent process that could bring a simple and normal act of leading, and sustain and anchor positive change and accommodate new challenges. Embracing basics is able to join two different perspectives of leadership, the Islamic perspective through the sub-category of internal embedded basics represented in the model by morals and ethics, and the Western perspective through the sub-category of embracing external basics represented in the model by organising. The core process represents a mechanism that could help the future involvement of many positive actions and interactions.

Morals and ethics integrate leading and following into an operational level represented in the conceptual model by role models who could be able to transcend basic organising and work ethics to improve organisational work and influence followers. Specifically, role models leaders who embrace ethics and morals were found to engage in sensemaking, accountably, transparency, consultation, power struggle resolution, resolving cultural complexity, reconciling leadership and followership problematic processes, and starting and implementing basics of organising.

The above engagement of embracing basics shows its centrality within the substantive setting under investigation. Detail is now provided on the relationship of the core category with other elements of the proposed model.

### 8.4.2 Solid awareness and enacting narratives (Sensemaking)

Ethics and morals facilitate the way for leaders to infuse sensemaking based on meaningful narratives and awareness of the surrounding situation. Sensemaking could be more operational and easier to do with role model personalities who embrace basics. The operational aspects work through normal behaviour towards adapting to change in the face of contextual problems where it helps leadership's bid to be flexible and patient with all challenges that arise. Leadership with embedded basics and sensemaking could redirect the flow of contextual challenges to a positive destination. The operational mode of embracing basics and sensemaking could improve the rhythm of the systemised organisational work of followers and potential leaders.

The manifestation of sensemaking can obviously be observed through disagreement, problem solving, ambiguity, conflict and even success, but the question still stands, what works against this manifestation? Or as Snook et al. (2012) frame it: what gets in the way of effective sensemaking? The answer they crafted is that threat and fear result from sudden and complex evolving events. They added that the threat and fear are associated with rigidity, a need for direction, and erratic behaviour, which work against sensemaking. Rigidity can obviously be noticed through threat, which is

often is more associated with inertia, protection of the status quo, and apathy (Snook et al., 2012). Snook et al. (2012) clarify that the need for direction and role models are highly important in the face of uncertainty. Snook et al. (2012) elaborate that erratic behaviour is a consequence of threat and fear, as leaders try to overcome in a disorganised search for something that works. However, such dramatic shifts in behaviour make it very difficult to engage in adequate sensemaking (Snook et al., 2012).

The above answer to ineffective sensemaking brings embracing basics to light. Rigidity as inertia and protection of the status quo are contrary to the action and behavior of people who embrace basics. As mentioned in the section on embracing basics, leaders and followers who are in tune with basics are far removed from preserving the status quo if it opposes organisational interests. They have the courage to act without delay and to act sensibly. The need for direction connects with leaders' care and concern that are related to people of piety and benevolence. A need for direction also connects with leaders' plans to move ahead and this relates to leaders who embrace the basics of organising. Erratic behavior is contrary to the consistency which informs the essence of embracing basics. The core process of embracing basics subsumes the social process of sensemaking and explains all the variations of the theory in this substantive setting.

### 8.4.3 Managing complexity and systemising power (Accommodating complexity)

Ethics and morals are able to work effectively with managing complexity and systemising power. The present research found that leaders who are preoccupied with moral and ethics are able to accommodate complexity. Leaders who are committed to vision, ethics, sincerity and wisdom could influence organisational culture and ease the tensions inherent in the power struggle. Organisational culture would be less complex with leaders who have aligned themselves with inclusive workability, humility, gratitude and respect for all members of the organisation.

On the other hand, a power struggle could be eased with leaders who are committed to using power as a means to serve the organisation, rather than their personal interests. Those leaders who embrace basics are capable of systemising power with free and fare organisational elections without the manipulation of endorsement that allows potential leaders to be elected.

Power could be a test of leaders and currently it is causing uncertainty at AFIC. The power struggle stems from several causes, as mentioned before in chapter 6 that deals with problematic context. One cause is individuals who put their individual interest, ego, pride, name and fame above the organisational interest. Keeping the struggle for power, regardless of legitimate reasons, minimises leaders' ability to influence followers and distances them from sensemaking and basics. Leaders who intend to overcome problematic leadership processes find it very difficult without embracing basics.

Power could reveal the attachment of individuals to basics. Individuals who are in positions of authority and continue to uphold basics are strong enough to accommodate complexity and uncertainty. If individuals attain power and continue embracing basics, upholding moral values, maintaining affection for others, remaining humble, then they are able to show effective leadership and following. This consistency of action, behaviour and attitude, whether individuals are in power or not, plays an important role in leading, influencing others and accommodating complexity.

### 8.4.4 Enacting leading and enacting following (Reconciling problems)

Reconciling problems consists of the properties of enacting leading and enacting following. Within this connection it is legitimate to claim that embracing basics denotes consistency of attachment with doing leading. Those individuals who strongly hold basics are the ones, either in leadership roles or follower's roles, who are able to show consistent action, behaviour and attitude. Holding formal positions could be a test of leaders' morals and principles. The problematic processes within the current setting of AFIC are a test for leaders and followers alike. The hardship

generated through problematic processes tests a leader's ability to lead, influence and bring change. Those who withstand basics have the ability to lead in a consistent fashion and those who do not hold basics lose their legitimacy to lead and are described as non-leaders. The data revealed the same can be said with regard to generating a process of following. When a leader is sincere, regardless of the problematic circumstances, he or she will find someone from the lower level of responsibility to help and to be associated in a substantial way. Leaders of good character and morals have the ability to attract followers' collaboration and response in times of hardship and change.

## 8.5 Comparison with extant literature

The place and purpose of the literature review in grounded theory study is to situate the research outcome within the body of extant literature, and thus to assess its position and place within the main body of relevant literature (Christiansen, 2011). The developing theory should direct the researcher to appropriate extant theories and literature that have relevance to the emerging grounded concepts (Goulding, 2005: 296). The focus of the literature is on the comparison of concepts. The literature comparison is not contextual, so it is not based on the origin of the data (Christiansen, 2011). The argument behind a late comparison with literature is to avoid preconceived ideas about influencing emergent theory (Glaser, 1992), and to allow a more informed comparison through delimiting the scope of the emergent theory (Glaser, 2001).

The results of this study have been generated through analysis of the triangulation of different data sources. The analysis of data at a higher level of abstraction generated the grounded theory of embracing basics. *Embracing basics* accounts for action, behaviour and attitude patterns of embracing internal and external leadership basics by which leaders are able to enact leading and following, and reduce problematic processes. Accordingly, literature relating to internal basics and external basics are within the comparison confines. The embracing basics theory is comprised of three high level categories based on influence on the problematic processes: reconciling

problems, accommodating complexity, and sensemaking. The theory explains how internal and external basics help determine positive processes among the high level categories. The theory also provides insight into the operation mode through the three high level categories. Accordingly, comparison of the three high level categories, reconciling problems, accommodating complexity and sensemaking, with the extant literature is highly desirable.

The literature review and comparison are divided into three sections. First, the place of the theory within the Islamic discourse, second, comparison with the extant grounded theory leadership literature, and thirdly, the comparison with non grounded theory literature on the basis of ethical and moral dimensions.

### 8.5.1 The place of the theory within traditional Islamic discourse

In the context of this research, internal embedded basics are about Morals and ethics. These basics are principles embedded in the minds and hearts of Muslims through their belief in, and affection for, Islam. Members within this setting are not an exception; they all have a strong relation with their religion and Islam is the driving force in their lives. So it is important for the very nature of objectivity to point out that for Muslims, Islam is a way of life, and it is not a set of laws and commands or life confinements within a strict religious order. As Asad (1999: 95) argued, "Islam is much more than a program of political action: it is a system of beliefs and morals, a social doctrine". He added, "It is a call to righteousness in all individual and communal concerns; it is a complete, self-contained ideology which regards all aspects of our existence - moral and physical, spiritual and intellectual, personal and communal - as parts of the indivisible whole which we call human life".

In Islamic discourse, morals and character are the top priority. Prophet Muhammad is reported as having said, "I was sent to perfect good moral character" (At-Tarjumana and Johnson, 2012: 47.1.8). So if morals are very important for ordinary Muslims, it is then crucial for leaders to attain, sustain and implement them. To excel in life, Islam should not be an empty word. Muslims, followers and leaders

alike, must coordinate their outward social behaviour with the beliefs they acknowledge (Asad, 1999).

The ethical anticipation of leadership connects the combination of organisational skills with moral standards and ethical values to generate good leaders (Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999). This is exactly the same as the Islamic understanding of leadership. Leadership in Islam is attached to high moral standards. Islam encourages followers to stick with morals, and make these morals as the highest end result of all the deeds they perform. This is consistent with Prophet Muhammad's saying, "The best amongst you are those who have the best manners and character" (Khan, 1995: 4.56.759).

Islam does not ask for uniqueness in morals but maintains that there are good universal common morals, which if followed, can lead to effective leadership and effective followership. Islam gives each and every moral the place it deserves and calls on Muslims and people of other faith traditions, leaders and followers, to establish a system of moral principles, putting that into practice and adhere to the principal of establishing what is good and beneficial and remove what is harmful.

The framework of Islamic leadership represents a comprehensive view of leadership that is based on capability, honesty, difficulty, responsibility and service. To appreciate the nature of Islamic leadership and followership, and to understand their aims, it is essential to comprehend the message of the Quran, the character of the Prophet Muhammad, and the purpose of his life as a role model. The Holy Quran and the life of the Prophet together present a comprehensive code of conduct for Muslims (Toor, 2008).

To Muslims, the Quran is the Book of God and continues to be the source of guidance for Muslims. The Quran is seen by Muslims as the greatest source of lessons about leadership (Esposito, 1998), because it contains lessons from the lives of the greatest personalities, namely the prophets and the messengers of God; their lives' enduring journeys and the high moral conduct they embraced.

For Muslims, the Prophet's short life (*Seerah* in Arabic) clearly defines the exemplar of leadership (Bangash, 2001). Allah (God) describes the Prophet's character "as the most beautiful pattern of conduct and verily in the messenger of God you have a good example" (Quran's, 33:21). Muslims look to Muhammad's example as the highest moral conduct of leadership and guidance in all aspects of life, and to them he is the role model for human beings to follow (Esposito, 1998). Without a proper understanding of the *Seerah*, Muslims can neither follow his example fully nor obey him in the manner as commanded by God (Bangash, 2001).

Prophet Muhammad was born in Makah in the year 570 C.E and he began his mission of preaching Islam from the age of forty to the age of sixty-three (Adil, 2002). De Lamartine (2009: 276-277) highlighted the leadership model of the prophet:

> If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and souls, his forbearance in victory, his ambition, which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire; his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death; all these attest not to an imposture but to affirm conviction. Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, and restorer of rational dogmas: that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?

The *Seerah*, therefore, offers many important lessons in leadership and Muslims have been asked to follow the Prophet as a role model (Bangash, 2001). Based on the Prophet's leadership model, this research asserts that AFIC has failed to adhere to this model. Lack of knowledge based culture and learning apathy among the old generation, and carelessness among the young generation has dragged Muslims from the good practices of leadership. Embracing basics could be the right recipe for a match between traditional Islamic perspectives and the practicality of leading.

### 8.5.2 Comparison with contemporary Islamic leadership discourse

In contemplation about leadership, Ali (2009: 163) explains:

> Leadership in Islam is a shared influence process. Leaders are not expected to lead or to maintain their roles without the agreement of those who are led, and at the same time, decisions made by these leaders were expected to be influenced by input from their followers. The process is dynamic and open ended and the ultimate aim is to sustain cohesiveness and effectiveness.

Ali (2009: 165) elaborates:

> Mohamed (saw)[1] viewed leadership as a process of shared influence. In his general conduct of affairs, whether religious or otherwise, Mohamed utilized a public open forum where members of the community had immediate input and contributed on the spot to civic and administrative matters. He instructed his representatives by saying, "God blesses those who benefit others." That is, leadership is valid only when it results in a benefit to a society, regardless of the setting.

Leadership in Islam is considered as an enormous responsibility and a mighty task. Leaders in Islam are responsible for their actions and decisions. Responsibility comes from leaders being strictly accountable to their organisation or the group they lead and they face serious account in front of God in the hereafter, depending on their positions and their actions. Leadership is a mighty task because leaders face an obligation to discharge their duties in the best manner they are capable of, and to do so they must apply a high level of sincerity, respect and justice in their interactions. They are asked to operate to the degree of benevolence within their means. On the other hand, followers have a religious obligation to obey the leaders, provided that such obedience does not contravene the law and spirit of the teachings of Islam.

This research found that among the problems of Islamic leadership in the Western context is the failure to appreciate the deep moral and religious characteristics Islam attaches to organisational leadership, and the practical, successful concepts of leadership in the Western context.

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[1] Abbreviated words of honor and salutations attached to the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw). These words mean: 'may God send blessings and salutations on him.'

Among other aspects, Islamic discourse places vast emphasis upon the following types of leadership, which intersect with the core category of embracing basics.

***Servant leadership***

Beekun and Badawi (1999a) acknowledge that from an Islamic perspective, one primary role of leadership is servant like, where servant leaders seek followers' welfare and guide them toward good. Prophet Muhammad urged Muslim leaders to be servants to their followers, to look after their welfare and serve them to the best of their ability (Beekun and Badawi, 1999a).

Sarayrah (2004) account of servant leadership in the Islamic context places a great deal of emphasis on listening, persuasion, consultation, caring and attention to people's needs. Servant leaders have compassion and empathy, have a high level of consideration for others, and have no sense of pride or superiority toward others. Servant leadership in Islam evolves with practices such as caring for others and serving grassroots to the maximum ability.

***Guardian leadership***

Another primary and important role of leadership from an Islamic perspective is guardianship (Beekun and Badawi, 1999a). The guardian leader is one who acts as a protector for his followers against any internal or external forces that can cause harm or inflect pain on the organisation and its followers.

The guardian leadership in Islam provides and secures the needs of individuals and groups within the organisation (Al-Buraey, 1985). The guardian leader cannot use an authoritative display of power; rather he must use cooperative methods to ensure a humanistic approach, and the wellbeing of his followers (Al-Buraey, 1985). With his followers' cooperation he must protect the group, supervise its activities, and bear all legal responsibility not only for his own actions but also the actions of all group members (Al-Buraey, 1985).

***Righteous leadership***

Righteous leaders in Islam are those who have strong commitment, sufficient respect, and adequate wisdom to fulfil the Quran's mandates (Rashid, 2000). Abu Bakar, the first leader of the Islamic state after the demise of the Prophet was the most righteous leader in Islam (Sacranie, 2003). Sacranie (2003) examined the first address of Abu Baker during which he declared that he is not the best among his people and he asked his people to help him if he is right and to correct him if he is wrong. Sacranie (2003) noted that Abu Baker's concept of transparent leadership, social justice and accountability, sounds more familiar to us here in the West than to people living in Muslim countries.

***Visionary leadership***

Visionary leadership in Islam entails accurate knowledge of aims and goals to be achieved, accompanied by a well designed plan to achieve it (Mohtsham, 2007). The vision is to include a set of clear goals, unity of purpose, and unity of mission (Mohtsham, 2007). The general idea for leadership is to share its vision with the organisation's members in order to increase their commitment to its application (Beekun, 2011). The core of this vision includes creative and innovative ideas for the future, based on morals and ethics. Vision for the future has played an important role in the evolution of the Islamic civilization through history.

The aforementioned Islamic leadership styles resonate with the social process of embracing basics. First, servant leadership is highly similar to leadership of embracing basics. The qualities of Islamic servant leaders are similar to those who embrace the basics of sincerity, benevolence and piety. Second, bearing responsibility is a major factor within guardian leadership, and is a major factor as well within the morals of internal basics. Third, the core of righteous leadership is conceptually similar to the core of internal basics of sincerity, piety, benevolence and wisdom. Fourth, strategies of visionary leadership from an Islamic perspective are similar to the pursuit of a strategy of external embedded basics.

### 8.5.3 Comparison with grounded theory studies

Glaser (1998) points out that focused reading should only occur when the emergent theory is well formulated. Focused reading entails the comparison to be focused as well. The core category and the near-core categories are the main targets for focused comparison with extant grounded theories literature.

#### 8.5.3.1 Strategies for embracing basics

Bezzubetz (2009) investigated organisational instability during change in a Canadian healthcare organisation. He used grounded theory methodology to develop a theoretical model describing the causal conditions for sustainable change, the phenomenon resulting from the causal conditions, and the strategies used to sustain change.

The results of Bezzubetz's (2009) study revealed that necessary conditions such as adequate funding and a transparent, trusting environment were created to sustain the vision through the cycle of change. The research demonstrated that an evidence-based change process engaging the workforce with adequate administrative and financial resources ensures successful change and sustainability. Conditions within Bezzubetz's research, such as adequate administrative and financial resources, support the external basics of the basic structure of the present research, and conditions such as transparency and trust reflect aspects within moral basics. Consistency of actions and behaviours of leaders who embrace basics in the present research was supported by sustainability in Bezzubetz's research.

Schwalb (2011) used a grounded theory method to develop a theory of the competencies of a sustainability leader. She identified a sustainability leader as an individual who creates profit for his/her stakeholders, while protecting the environment and improving the lives of those on whom he/she impacts as a result of his/her leadership.

Schwalb (2011) coded thinking style and positive psychological constructs as antecedents to leadership competencies. Thinking style is about how information is

used, awareness and reflectivity, which depict some of the sensemaking characteristics in the present research. Positive psychological constructs are different values that were necessary, including hope, integrity, intention, respect, stewardship, virtuosity, thoughtfulness, compassion, honesty, bravery or courage, thankfulness, spirituality, accountability, inclusiveness and servitude. These values which were developed in Schwab study are similar to the internal embedded basics within this present research. The obvious similarity of both studies is the finding that the core values are required as antecedents to leadership effectiveness.

Schwab (2011) identified intervening conditions to have a direct impact on the competencies needed for effective leadership. Competencies could be a result of the knowledge, skills, style, interaction and vision. While knowledge, skills and style that were generated from Schwab research were mirrored in different ways in the present research, the interaction process and vision are central themes in the present research. Although there are similarities with the present study to Schwab's findings, the two studies differ. Schwab's study investigated competencies of leaders; the present research investigates processes of leadership.

Mom-Chhing (2009) used grounded theory to identify Cambodian cultural factors that inhibit or enhance Cambodian Americans' participation in leadership roles. As an American of Cambodian descent, two realities intrigued Mom-Chhing. First the difficulties facing Cambodian Americans to accommodate their culture and leadership styles within the dominant American cultural context, because Cambodian leadership, cultural values, beliefs and practices are in direct contention with those of the dominant American culture. Second, the huge attention paid to European and American leadership styles without paying attention to the scarcity of cross-cultural leadership studies.

The themes which emerged from Mom-Chhing's study endorsed cross-cultural leadership research, which revealed the influence of cultural values on leadership perspectives. The Cambodian cultural factors appeared to have an immense influence on the factors that inhibit or enhance leadership roles. The main inhibiting

cultural factors are; first, the influence of Buddhism on leadership processes, second, the lack of education, third, the lack of trust in people who hold positions of authority, and fourth, the age factor. With regard to the factors that enhance participation in leadership roles, the study identified four factors; family values, education, age and influence of mainstream culture. It was clearly obvious from the findings that the factors that inhibit participation in leadership roles are the same as the factors that enhance the participation in those roles, taking into consideration different themes within the same factor.

Mom-Chhing's research has similarities and differences with the current research in regards to the above factors. First, Buddhism is considered as an inhibiting factor for leadership, but in Islam, the source of morals and ethics is the way of life for Muslims. It is the motivator, and the most important factor within the current research which enhances the leadership process. Second, education is similar to the need for awareness and for education in the current research. Third, the effect of trust is extensively felt within both studies. Fourth, the positive influence of mainstream culture on Cambodian Americans is similar to the category of embracing external basics within the current research.

#### 8.5.3.2 Strategies for sensemaking in action

Smerek (2009) utilised grounded theory methods to investigate and theorise about the leadership process of new college presidents. He found three salient categories affecting the work of a new leader. The first was a communication process where presidents spoke using ambiguous language stating broad goals, and using safe language. The second was their cautious withholding of knowledge about things they did not know. Finally, their need for internal key informants who could give contextual information and help interpret the meanings of things.

Whereas all the new college presidents were outsiders, they were relied upon to offer new meaning and direction despite the specific context. This new meaning and direction came in several forms that directly informed the process of sensemaking. These forms were issues such as priority-setting, framing, setting forth an inspiring

future image, constructing crises as a means to initiate change, and re-labelling and re-organising.

The problematic side of communication, awareness and contextual environment that affects the newcomer leader in Smerek's, (2009) research, shows similarities with categories that make leadership and context problematic within my research. The core strategy to deal with the problematic processes within Smerek's research is the same as the social process of sensemaking in the present research.

Kern (2010) investigated the experience of school administrators as they performed and embraced their leadership roles. He found that the theory of navigating is suitable to describe and explain the basic social process. Navigating is the core experience that administrators describe as they take action while preparing themselves for their leadership roles in their respective work settings. Navigating as a theory consists of four major categorical processes (stages), mapping the territory, staking a claim, caretaking and leading.

The first process, mapping the territory, is where administrators seek to understand their unfamiliar work environments. Administrators understanding needs guidance, to gain leverage over the unknown, and to ensure that the situation does not stifle their performance. The first process of mapping the territory was mirrored throughout awareness as a process of sense-making in the present research.

The second process was staking a claim, by which administrators seek to become leading members of the organisation and are willing to 'hunker down' to get the work done. This process is very similar to the property of getting down to the grassroots level in the present research. Kern's third process was caretaking, reflecting an ongoing commitment by administrators to manage complex issues in the organisation by achieving credibility and transparency. These concepts in Kern's research were similar to concepts of accountability and openness in the present research.

The fourth process was leading. Leading has a significant dimension of reflecting. The dimension of reflecting from Kern's research illustrates the process of sensemaking in the present research.

#### 8.5.3.3 Strategies for accommodating complexity

While Kan and Parry (2004) investigated nursing leadership in a New Zealand hospital setting, they identified processes that facilitate leadership; and processes that confound it. The processes that confound leadership are the near-core category of repressing leadership, and the category of multiple realities. The other processes that facilitate leadership are legitimising and/or reconciling complexity. The highest level of abstraction of the data that explains this situation is the substantive basic social process of identifying paradox. In the present research, processes that confound leadership reflect the nature of problematic leadership and context. Accordingly, the basic social process and categories that facilitate leadership in Kan and Parry's research reflect the near core category of reconciling problems and accommodating complexity in the present research.

Kan and Parry's (2004) research brings an internal validity to the present research as follows. First, both Kan and Parry's research and my study support the notion that leadership is a dynamic process occurring in dynamic context. Second, both studies support the idea that grounded theory can generate insights into leadership and followership processes. Third, both studies generate a grounded theory explaining the phenomenon of leadership within two different environments. Kan and Parry's processes of identifying paradox and reconciling paradox, that explains leadership in a hospital environment, are similar in some ways to the near core categories of sensemaking, reconciling problems and accommodating complexity within my research. These similarities help to provide internal validity for my research.

Kan and Parry's (2004) research also brings an external validity to the present research. Although the two contexts are different from each other, some of the main findings in both studies are similar enough to suggest that generalisation could be

achieved by grounded theory studies which if applied to a different or similar situation, will allow the researcher to interpret, understand and predict phenomena of leadership processes.

Baran and Scott (2010) theorised about the leadership process of organising ambiguity. The authors collected data through participant observation and analysing the near-miss reports to provide some measure of contextual information regarding operations within the fire service. In this case, participant observation enhances validation of the coding categories used to describe the near-miss report data. The research's in-depth analysis found three high level processes of framing, adjusting, and heedful interrelating. Further examination led them to single out a common origin which existed for these three processes. The underlying social process within dangerous contexts is organising ambiguity. Their data suggest that within dangerous contexts, group members engage in the sub processes of framing, heedful interrelating, and adjusting as informal patterns of behaviour through eight secondary categories which describe five leadership concepts; situational awareness, talk, knowledge, agility, and trust, and three sets of leaders' actions; direction setting, role acting, and role modelling, to organise the ambiguity that they face. The basic social process of organising ambiguity has much in common with the social process of accommodating complexity in the current research.

Nish (2011) examined conflict in the academic workplace. She observed the dominant pattern of 'realigning' which was instated as the core variable and the basic social process. She explained realigning as the process by which certain behaviours are employed to bring individuals back in line with the system's core values. Realigning behaviours aim to minimise the impact of the individual who is perceived as not being in alignment. Realigning in Nish's study is reflected by embracing basics within the present research.

To resolve the conflict in terms of core values, Nish suggested four stages of the realigning process. The four primary stages in Nish's, (2011) research are changing tides, countering, justifying and resolving. The four stages are not relating directly to

the present research, although the nature of these stages resembles the same categorical influence of processes reconciling problems and accommodating complexity in the current research.

Monks (2011) theorised about how people discover and overcome deficiencies. The core variable 'increasing capacity' explains people's common goal of being free from anxiety and enjoying tasks. Increasing capacity is an attempt to reach the highest level of capacity that will enable people to work at ease. Monks's investigation found that the theory of increasing capacity is useful for all people. Within this core category, people address deficiencies through five stages: becoming aware, choosing, considering options, engaging in increasing capacity and working at ease. The theory of increasing capacity has similar functionality with the near core category of accommodating complexity.

#### 8.5.3.4 Comparison with grounded theory studies - highlights

The grounded theory of embracing basics and the two processes of accommodating complexity and sensemaking have some support from research that used grounded theory to investigate organising and leadership.

Bezzubetz (2009), Schwalb (2011) and Mom-Chhing (2009) researched strategies to sustain change, competencies to sustain leaders and factors affecting leadership roles. Their findings echoed with findings from the present research and generated some differences as well. The key similarities are:

a. Adequate administrative and financial recourses are important basics for organisations.
b. Instability and uncertainty is a serious challenge for leadership.
c. The leadership challenge is to bring suitable conditions, strategies of leading and organising.
d. Values such as honesty, courage, spirituality and servitude are crucial basics for leadership workability.
e. The values mentioned above are antecedents to leadership effectiveness.

The key differences are:

a. The focus of the three studies concerns personalities who are in leadership roles and the priority of the present research is leadership processes.
b. Styles and competencies of leaders are one of the core elements of sustaining functionality of organisations in the three aforementioned studies while continuous good action and interaction (processes) are seen to be the effective way of sustaining functionality in the present research.
c. Moral issues stem from positive psychological constructs in the extant literature, while moral issues stem from traditional and spiritual sources in the present research.

Smerek (2009) and Kern (2010) discussed processes of leadership within education contexts through investigation of actions and behaviours of new college presidents and school administrators. The comparison between the present study and the studies of Smerek and Kern has showed similarities and differences. The key similarities are:

a. Communication is a key element in the sensemaking process.
b. Awareness and knowledge based culture are highly crucial for initiating sensemaking as a leadership process.
c. Understanding the big picture approach may substantially add to sensemaking.
d. Being equipped with knowledge and reflection from social interaction could enhance the influence of leading.

This comparison has shown that there are differences at a contextual level between an education context and the Islamic context, even though the three studies were conducted within a Western context. This research has shown that there are sufficient differences to show that leadership is affected by contextual influence.

The key differences are:

a. The relationships between leaders and followers or staff differ between the contexts of the three studies. While educational contexts are specified with leaders and staff from educational and academic backgrounds, the Islamic context is a combination of diverse leaders and followers.
b. The contextual challenges are different between the three contexts.
c. The process of acquiring positions and power are different. While the process of acquiring positions in an educational institution is very well organised, the same process could be under intense manipulation in the case in this study.
d. The process of navigating in educational research is an antecedent for leaders to begin their leading role, while sensemaking in the present study is a continuing process through varied incidents and circumstances.

Kan and Parry (2004), Baran and Scott (2010), Nish (2011), and Monks (2011) researched leadership in various contexts. All four contexts described ambiguity, conflict, anxiety and deficiencies. The processes developed to facilitate leadership through these contexts, which are identifying paradox, organising ambiguity, realigning and increasing capacity, have some similarity with the process of accommodating complexity in the present research. Although the processes of accommodating complexity have certain similarities with the four different processes, they differ in sub-processes and the actions required to be implemented. The differences in sub-processes originated from differences and uniqueness of each context from other contexts, in terms of the cultural, structural, social, situational and geographical aspects.

### 8.5.4 Comparison with non-grounded theory studies (Moral and ethical dimensions)

The current thesis is informed heavily by leadership problems and contextual problems. First, through the findings of the current empirical research, these problematic processes were an eye-opener in regard to the moral and ethical dimensions of leadership. At the heart of the basic social process of embracing

basics, lie the two dimensions of moral basics and Islamic work ethics. The latter two dimensions will be subject to comparison with non-grounded theory studies. Second, the current substantive setting is a formulation in the context of a culturally diverse people that is fit to compare with similar contexts and cross-cultural leadership research.

There is no shortage of theoretical underpinnings for the ethical and moral dimensions of leadership. Leadership influence is linked to ethical and moral values. Ciulla (2004) considers ethics to be the heart of leadership and morals to be the heart of ethics. She goes further to suggest that ethics is the core of leadership effectiveness (Ciulla, 2005). Orme and Ashton (2003: 186) put ethics at the forefront of human identity, being fundamental to who we are, and buried deep within our value system, "They grow and evolve with us, and changing our ethics involves changing at the very heart of our being". Thompson's (2004: 2) considers leadership to be a fundamentally moral endeavour and there is an inescapable moral dimension to the exercise of power, whether or not it is formally acknowledged. The present study has solid support from Thompson's (2004: 2) research in considering that leaders who have solid morals are able to engage with others in building, by example and constructive effort, an environment within which individuals and groups are free and encouraged to discern and actualise the right and the good in fulfilment of shared goals, values and purpose. Kidder (2005) considers moral values to be the core of ethics. (Kanungo and Mendonca) asserted that, "In true and effective leadership, the leader's behaviour and influence process are consistent with ethical and moral values" (1998:133).

While investigating the link between integrity and transformational leadership, Parry and Proctor-Thomson (2002) suggest that ethical leadership has positive impacts on organisational effectiveness, and that ethical development is likely to become integral to an individual's practical success as a leader. Through a national sample of 1354 managers in New Zealand they found a moderate to strong positive relationship between perceived integrity and the demonstration of transformational leadership behaviours. They also found that individuals who have a strong set of

internal values are effective in transforming and motivating followers to act for the general good rather than for self interest. While their research did not suggest that values are antecedents to effectiveness as the present research does, similarities between the two studies still stand in terms of the link of values and integrity with effectiveness.

Toor and Ofori (2009) empirically investigated ethical leadership in Singapore's construction industry. They took into consideration the relation of ethical leadership with employee job performance as the main factor for their study. Their research revealed that ethical leadership may play a mediating role in the relationship between organisational culture and employee outcomes. It also revealed that ethical leadership is positively related to transformational culture and supportive context for ethical practices within the organisations. The study showed that ethical leadership positively impacted leaders' effectiveness. It is likely to bring employees job satisfaction, and willingness of employees to put in extra effort. Ethical leadership will allow a positive atmosphere to flourish, which will ultimately lead to increased employee and organisational performance. Although the research was undertaken in the construction industry, which is a different context to the present one, still the similarities of the two studies are obvious. Ethics positively impacts context, leadership effectiveness and employee performance. Also Toor and Ofori (2009) claimed that "leadership which lacks ethical conduct can be dangerous, destructive, and even toxic" (2009: 533). The negative impact of the absence of ethics and morals in this current research is widely felt.

Karakas (2009) implied the need for a moral paradigm in leadership, especially for the four paradigms: ethical leadership, spiritual leadership, transformational leadership and servant leadership, in order to develop a model of benevolent leadership.

He used both inductive and deductive approaches to assess how leaders demonstrate benevolent leadership. The inductive approach is based on an extensive review of the literature, pilot interviews conducted with three managers on what constitutes

benevolent leadership and benevolent leader behaviour, and the deductive approach is based on a questionnaire-based survey within different organisations across Canada.

Karakas (2009) empirically conceptualised benevolent leadership as a model aimed at developing new ways of understanding how to nurture the human spirit in workplaces and to build a collective sense of creativity and vitality in organisations. This model was built through creating a process of encouraging, initiating and implementing positive change in organisations through ethical decision-making and moral actions, developing spiritual awareness and creating a sense of meaning, inspiring hope and courage, and constructing a community positive role model.

Karakas's (2009) research has much in common with the present research. The main theory for his research revolved around the ethical model; benevolent leadership. Benevolence within the current research is the cornerstone of Islamic morals. Likewise the working model for benevolent leadership from Karakas's research is well-considered within the current research. Ethical decision making and moral actions from Karakas's research is at the heart of embracing internal basics within the current research. Creating sense of meaning is similar to sensemaking. Inspiring hope and courage is intoned with the dimension of enacting leading from the near core-category of reconciling problems. Constructing a positive role model is intone with role modelling of enacting leading.

Sutherland (2010) examines the ethical leadership of leaders and how the leaders' behaviour affect the way people behave in an organisation. Second, he examined the relationship between ethical leadership and its association with employee commitment. Third, he examined relationships between ethical leadership behaviours and transformational leadership. The sample for this study was 250 people from across-section of business professionals, rather than a specific industry, in the state of Florida USA. The study used three data instruments namely; Three-Component Model of Organisational Commitment (TCM) to measure respondents' level of organisational commitment, the Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) to assess a

follower's perception of ethical leadership, and a Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) to assess a follower's perception of leadership behaviours.

Sutherland's (2010) research confirms the theory that followers have higher perceptions of ethical leadership, leading to a positive influence on their organisational commitment, and in turn higher levels of perceived ethical leadership are associated with higher levels of intuitive commitment. The analysis revealed a similar effect that ethical leadership and transformational leadership dimensions of idealised influence and individualised consideration have in common. Both dimensions predicted levels of intuitive commitment. This similarly predicted that both types of leadership may have common characteristics and may suggest that the two scales essentially are measuring similar attributes. This striking finding suggests that all four transformational leadership dimensions correlated more positively to other desired employee outcomes of extra effort, effectiveness, and job satisfaction than did the ethical leadership construct.

Sutherland's (2010) study demonstrates the importance notion of ethics on leadership effectiveness and commitment, but stops short of linking that to followers' extra effort and job satisfaction, which are more attracted to transformational leadership than ethical leadership. Sutherland's research has similarities with the current research, and differences as well. The noticeable similarity is the common ground which links ethics to leadership effectiveness, and the noticeable deference is that transformational leadership has more positive impact regarding the job satisfaction in Sutherland's research, but ethics and morals are antecedents to any transformational leading within the current research.

Khaliq and Ogunsola (2011) examined Islamic leadership principles within a Malaysian context, namely the International Islamic University of Malaysia. The authors used a questionnaire based survey to examine the principles, approaches and sources of leadership adopted within the university.

The findings revealed first that the three leadership approaches, transformational, transactional and servant-leadership, were established within the university, but academic administrators often used the processes of the servant-leadership approach. Second, the majority of respondents acknowledged that Islam has a great influence on the practice of leadership and followership principles within the university. Third, respondents were asked to give their view on practicing eight Islamic leadership principles, namely faith and belief in God, mutual consultation, knowledge and wisdom, courage and determination, endurance, morality and piety, and expressing gratitude and patience. The majority of respondents indicated that the principles are of equal importance in any behaviour or practical leadership situation.

Khaliq and Ogunsola's (2011) research appears to be in contrast with the current research. Although respondents from both studies acknowledged the importance of Islamic principles of leadership, the actual leaders' practice of these principles within the current context is low, while the practices among the administrators within the Malaysian context is high. Additionally both contexts have differences in terms of diversity and organisation type.

## 8.6 Summary

This chapter presented the practical model of the core process, elements within the model, links and relations of the core process with other processes and categories. The core process represents the emergent grounded theory of embracing basics. Within the emergent theory of embracing basics, reconciling problems, accommodating complexity and sensemaking represent the concepts and near-core categories which are considered to be operations and actions to elevate leading and following to a higher state of performance. This would allow people to put a stop to the problematic aspects of leadership and context, and work beyond the limits of negativity to reach a positive stage. Individuals who adhere to these three near-core categories without embracing basics find it difficult to influence positive outcomes, while individuals who embrace basics are able to rectify the gap of the problematic processes and influence leading and following and generate positive outcomes.

Second, the chapter presented the place of the theory within the extant literature. The theory of embracing basics is well situated within the Islamic discourse and has many similarities with the Islamic theory of leadership. Comparison with grounded theory studies demonstrates support for the theory of embracing basics and the three near core-categories of reconciling problems, accommodating complexity and sensemaking. Non-grounded theory studies have differences in terms of the context impact and the setting environment, but maintain strong support for the moral and ethical dimension with the grounded theory of embracing basics.

# Chapter 9 Conclusion and recommendations

## 9.1 Introduction

This research aimed to generate a grounded theory of the leadership process within the context of an Australian Islamic organisation. The previous chapters have detailed the research problems, given an overview of the context, methodology, research findings and the comparison between grounded theory generated by the present research and the extant literature. Chapter 8 also presented the leadership model based on the grounded theory of embracing basics and related categories.

This final chapter presents the summary of the findings, discusses the recommendations and implications of this research, explains the limitation and elaborates on further and future research.

## 9.2 Summary of the main findings and culmination

The research question that guided this study was:

1 How does the process of leadership function within an Australian Islamic organisational context?

The peak Islamic Australian authority is represented by the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC), which consists of state councils and community-based organisations. AFIC was chosen as the substantive setting under investigation. The Islamic setting in Australia is much diversified and Muslims are not a homogenous group. Diversity of this setting spans different nationalities, ethnicities, cultures, backgrounds, and professions.

A qualitative, grounded theory approach with reflexive interpretation was used in order to respond to the research question mentioned above. Several methods of data collection ranging from interviews, observations and document analysis informed the basis of data collection. The sampling strategy was considered very carefully in

order to bring about rich data. Sampling strategy incorporated purposive sampling and theoretical sampling to satisfy the broader limitation and delimitation of grounded theory. Grounded theory is considered to be an appropriate and fascinating method in researching new phenomenon within a new substantive context. Leadership is well situated within reach of grounded theory to gain insight about its social processes and dynamics. This research looked at the process of leadership rather than the sole action of a leader.

Four phases of data collection and analysis brought the findings to light. Phase one of data collection and analysis uncovered the lower-order category of *problematic leadership* and ten properties of the lower order-categories. The second phase informed about the higher-order category of *problematic context* and the four dimensions of culture complexity, contradicting Islamic leadership principles, the power struggle, complexity and uncertainty. The third phase unveiled the near- core category of *reconciling problems* and the two sub-categories of enacting leading and enacting following. The fourth and the final phase of data gathering and analysis disclosed the two near-core categories and social processes of *sensemaking* and *accommodating complexity* and the basic social process of *embracing basics*. Phase four wrapped up the data collection and analysis by reaching theory delimitation, and saturation. The next sections present a summary of the main categories of this research.

### 9.2.1 Lower-order category

One lower-order category that emerged was *problematic leadership*. Problematic leadership indicated the indulgence of leaders in deficit actions and problematic processes. Problematic processes are represented by the deficiency and absence of accountability, communication, concern, planning, openness, role modelling, interaction, achievement, transparency and trust. It was also represented by the obvious presence of apathy and micromanagement. Problematic leadership processes stifle following and organising. Followers consider themselves as outsiders with no sense of belonging or commitment to the current setting. Organisations barely function without systematic actions and coordinated parts.

### 9.2.2 Higher-order category

One high-order category was identified as *problematic context*. Problematic context denotes the complexity, uncertainty and contradictions. Four main sub-categories informed the complexity of this setting. First, culture complexity has a negative impact on leadership processes. Culture complexity subsumed the sub categories of ethnocentrism, and obliviousness. The latter subcategories could explain the complexities surrounding culture, and the negative effects facing the work of AFIC, and the role culture plays in shaping thought and the response of leaders to this contextual challenge. Second, is the inconsistency with Islamic higher objectives, work ethics and Islamic leadership principles. The overarching description for any organisation that represents the interest of Muslims is 'Islamic'. While such organisations claim to take their mandate from Islam, the present practice is of contrary behaviour. Islamic codes of conduct are far from being adhered to. This inconsistency brings challenges for implementing leading and attracting following. Third, is complexity and uncertainty; the negative effect of complexity and uncertainty is significant upon leading and following. Fourth, are the power struggle and the power vacuum. The complex nature of power creates uncertainty, struggle and inaction. The power struggle and the power vacuum create a serious challenge for leading and following.

### 9.2.3 Near-core categories

Three near-core categories originated. The first one was *reconciling problems*. The second and the third were *accommodating complexity* and *sensemaking*. The latter two represent a higher level of abstraction than reconciling problems. It was found that to cross lines of problematic leading, leaders and followers need to reconcile problems by sub categories of enacting leading and enacting following. It is not enough to talk about leading and following, but it is necessary to start pushing through practical concepts of leading and following.

Despite the effect of the category of reconciling problems, this fell short of corresponding to the high levels of complexity. Further interrogation of the data brought about the near core-category and social process of accommodating complexity. Accommodating complexity is a higher level concept that integrates portions of the higher order-category of problematic context, and which explained the variations that the near-core category of problem reconciling cannot explain. Accommodating complexity is the process by which leaders influence cultural complexity and struggle of power by the subcategories of managing cultural complexity and systemising power.

Notwithstanding the above, further analysis showed that the concept of accommodating complexity cannot explain the lack of influence in bringing about change within this substantive setting. Further investigation led to the near core-category and social process of sensemaking. Sensemaking within this context represents the ability of leaders and followers to utilise an environment knowledge base, awareness and narratives to facilitate reconciling problematic processes and accommodation of complexity.

### 9.2.4 The core category

Additional examination showed that sensemaking stopped short of explaining further variations generated by the data. One of the main variations concerned the possibility of there being few role models which could have influence, while the majority of leaders and organisations do not have influence. The answer to these concerns led the research to the core category of *embracing basics*. Embracing basics integrates both accommodating complexity and sensemaking and explained other discrepancies. Embracing basics is a leadership process of embracing internal and external basics. Internal basics consist of morals, values, ethics and the higher objectives of Islam, while external basics consist of the basics of organising. Embracing basics is the social process by which leaders infuse leading and following at a personal level, a leading level, and an organising level to reconcile, influence and bring about change for the problematic processes of leadership and the problematic processes of context.

### 9.2.5 Culmination

The purpose of grounded theory research is to create a new knowledge about the substantive area under investigation, and to create a theory that is grounded in the data, which could be a starting point for further broad discussion and analysis. Grounded theory is the appropriate method to use where no research has been previously conducted within the area under investigation and little research exists. The inductive nature of the grounded theory method helps the start of categorising, where the researcher finds connections and establishes relations between categories. These connections and relations brought about the basic social process and a model of high level of abstraction.

Undoubtedly grounded theory is a discovery process. Through my research journey I refined my admiration for grounded theory, because the methodology cultivates reliability, integrity and adherence to the quality of qualitative research. I considered myself to be walking on the wild side until the theory of *embracing basics* emerged. Before that saturation moment, I had several different ideas about what could constitute my future grounded theory. I reached different categories where I thought these categories represented the grounded theory. I was very pleased when I finally reached the core category destination of embracing basics. It was not reached before a systematic rigorous process of analysing data through the constant comparison method, theoretical sampling and open, axial and theoretical coding. The main concern and focal point of the participants who were interviewed was to find individuals, whether leaders, potential leaders or followers, who adhere to the basics of morals and ethics and the basics of organising. Morals and ethics represent a major concern of many leadership studies around the globe. The place of morals and ethics becomes central to the desirable outcome (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Khaliq and Ogunsola, 2011; Seligman, 2002).The participants in this research did not find themselves attracted to, or influenced by, leadership which did not embrace standards and morals. The data revealed that embracing basics is suitable for the context under investigation. Furthermore, the comparison with extant literature revealed that the theory of embracing basics has a strong connection with other cultural and organisational settings.

## 9.3 Recommendation

The findings of this research suggest three major recommendations for organising, organisational change and role modelling that could help AFIC to overcome the problematic processes of leadership. Each major recommendation is now discussed.

### 9.3.1 Organising

Organising is mainly concerned with establishing structures to perform tasks through roles, rules, communication channels and work procedures (Tyson, 1998:39). AFIC lacks the minimum structure requirement and basic resources. Organisations cannot operate without minimum structures and resources. An organisational structure organises priorities of tasks and job related activities. Structure spans levels of authority, staff and departments, to name a few. So the initial step for leaders is to initiate a structure.

Another important organising task for leaders is to restore resources, which are crucial for organisational success. One important resource is employees. Leaders must restore basic level of full time employees who are fully paid to do the job. Those who will come to fill these occupancies should be chosen by merit, motivation and commitment to providing a richer organisation. They also should be chosen by levels professionalism. This research shows clearly that currently, professionalism is the absent asset. Lack of professionalism causes dismay and concern. The number of professionals coming into the organisation is inadequate, therefore most of the work in the organisations is carried out by non-professionals. The professionals suggested in the study are the right personnel to do the job, and this is personnel who have multi-faceted experience. Since this is not the case at present, this is one of the resources which should be provided.

After choosing the right professional personnel, leaders should keep in mind that there is currently a lack of representation by women and young people. The lacks of young men and women places the organisations in the control of the old generation who are often tired, often frustrated and have no plan or vision for the future. Young

men and women are energetic, enthusiastic and can bring hope and change. This problem has to be addressed if progress in these organisations is to take place.

While initiating the structure and restoring resources, the next recommendation is to address lack of basic standards. A demand has been made for the leaders to put a system of basic standards into effect. The leaders' task is to set in place processes and procedures which formulate the standards of the organisation. Planned processes and procedures can produce predictable outcomes. The leaders' ability is to think of developing policies and procedures that offer mechanisms of clarity, certainty and stability for members and the organisation.

### 9.3.2 Organisational change

Leaders and followers need to embark on new ways to stop the current process of problematic leadership and followership. They need to work through difficulties and inconvenience and reform themselves to bring about change in minds and hearts of followers.

Positive change could enlarge peoples' vision, and rebuild organisations with strong beliefs, high principles, and decent values. Leaders and followers are required to undertake the painful process of intrinsic change. No structure will change or have a good outcome unless the people running these structures have also changed, and agree to better themselves. This is the main channel to address the fundamental problem of the moral, ethical and personal decline that underlies the severe crisis in leadership within AFIC.

Collectively, the organisation must create legitimate and deep systemic, structural change, build systems instead of concentrating on personalities and ensure that those who are advocating deep structural change are moral, sincere and trustworthy. They also need to ensure that they have a good record in planning, sharing responsibilities and achieving good outcomes. A demand of the leadership is that they should start creating and communicating a detailed plan for improvement by focusing on solving critical issues rather than sticking to minor issues.

Intensive work is recommended to put Australian born Muslims in the picture in regard to organisational affairs. After many years of neglect, Australian Muslims can do something to enhance organisational work. In order for leaders to be effective, they need to rethink different ways of doing things. They need to start to acting on the aforementioned categories of the social basic process.

Organisational change has to spread to the organisational culture. A system needs to be put in place that embraces change for cohesive organisational culture by understanding cultural diversity, and which can create one, uniting organisational culture.

### 9.3.3 Role modelling

Leaders and followers need to take leading by example seriously and start working on a role model approach with sincerity, commitment, dedication and patience. Leadership needs to connect and reach out to the grassroots levels by all means possible, including open state conferences, local community meetings, professional meetings, and brain storming workshops. When reaching out, leaders need to listen carefully to everyone, empathise with peoples' concerns and worries, and acknowledge their commitment and contributions. Leaders can play an effective role in better shaping the organisational relations, and can mediate the external and internal negative challenges.

Role modelling requires revisiting the whole relationship among different types of leaders who have influence. Those leaders range from intellectuals, organisational leaders, and of course, the religious leaders or imams. Different types of leaders need to work together in harmony and need to work out legitimate processes of power, power being a means of effectiveness rather than a matter of ego, pride or personalities. Informal leaders also need to play a major indirect positive role and be part of a leadership team. They need to participate in leading rather than leaving the running of the organisation to the formal leaders in formal positions who are doing the minimum for the organisations. Or in other words, the organisation needs to embrace and emulate the emerging positive models.

## 9.4 Implication for practice and policy makers

The following are a number of implications for practice and policy makers arising from this dissertation.

*First*, the theme that problematic leadership processes has negative impact on followers and potential leaders. Among the serious problematic processes found in Australian Islamic organisations are lack of accountability, lack of planning and lack of communication. Leaders, accordingly, have to work hard in addressing these serious problems in order to influence followers and bring change to organisation. Leaders need to ensure that independent accountability mechanisms should be implemented to provide followers with greater levels of confidence that their leadership is performing its functions in a way that is transparent and which respects its constituents. Leaders need to have a clear plan focusing on specific objectives to achieve specific goals consistent with followers' expectations. Finally, leaders need to be effective communicators who communicate sincerely, openly and coordinate and exchange regular, detailed and immediate communication with followers. They need to articulate messages carefully, and seek followers' input in order to gain their trust and commitment.

*Second*, the theme of cultural complexity that brings different problematic processes. The findings from this research show that within cultural complexity environment, the promotion of Islamic values and beliefs decreases, Islamic work ethics are not engaged, personal gain increases, racial identity emerges strongly and working teams vanish. The leaders' task is to challenge these apparent problems by understanding the social, cultural and organising practices that work in the Australian society and the foundation that sustains it. It is important for leaders to embrace that which is useful, beneficial and merely harmless of other cultures, and to absorb what is good within them. Leaders need to respect other people's cultural identities which could help in building the foundation for successful organisational relationships. Leaders, as well, need to pave the way to allow the organisation to be united with a plural identity. AFIC's leadership and the grassroots community are obliged to embrace important issue of knowledge, awareness and understanding of

different cultures within their organisations to allow for the creation of successful leading and following. Finally, it is important to accommodate cultural complexity because it will ease many of the difficulties leaders face, and will influence the practice of leadership and could enhance participation in leadership roles.

*Third*, the leadership of AFIC has been limited in convincing their constituents and the broader society of their future direction and clear vision. A lack of vision creates vacuum in an organisation's work. With no vision for the future, and no clear direction, followers could easily lose direction and could divert their attention with little concern for the common good of their organisation. This diversion leads them to concentrate on personal interests, and keeps talented leaders away from filling important roles in organisation, at the same time keeping the old leadership in control. Leaders need to know that leadership workability starts with setting a vision and a clear direction. With vision, leadership has a significant impact on organisations. This vision could be reflected in organisational performance and follower's effectiveness.

*Fourth*, the role of followers is still not activated in Australian Islamic organisations. This research shows that followers and leaders from middle and lower management levels expressed their views very clearly regarding the role of followers and the kind of relationship between leadership and followership. They desire a leadership that clearly operates in a mode of complete dedication to strong followership, and at the same time, a followership which resonates and acts to a high standard of performance. Members are willing to be active in all situations. The present situation in the current context of AFIC requires constant attention from both leaders and followers in order to attain workability. Workability is the act of promoting the responsibility of all parties to be proactive in seeking constructive input and leading by example. This can elevate the followership to claim an effective leadership spirit at the first stage, and a leadership role after that.

*Fifth*, is the crisis of power struggle and power vacuum. There is a huge concern from all stakeholders for the continuous rhythm of power struggle and power vacuum which are apparent at every level of the organisational hierarchy. The power

struggle is represented by the continuous struggle for formal positions and the lead positions at every level of AFIC in order to control people and resources. It is represented by excluding the young generation, especially women from the majority of positions. The power struggle is also represented by people who try to control the top job in the organisation, control the resources and by engagement with government to strengthen their positions in the organisation. This research shows that power struggle creates a vacuum in followers' motivation. A power struggle affects people negatively, making followers more involved in their personal interests rather than the organisation's interests, which in turn keep recycled, corrupt and ineffective leaders at the helm.

Leaders and all stakeholders need to begin the process of *systemising* power. Systemising power begins with continuous effort from all stakeholders to begin the painful journey of generational transition. Leaders need to initiate procedures and processes of power. Procedures of power begin with setting one clear election guideline for all state and federal organisations. An election law of the highest standards should be legislated within AFIC. This new law should open the door for more affiliated organisations and more followers to have a say in all affairs. Until now, the existing law has restricted the election of AFIC's president to representatives from state councils, without considering the vote from the local organisations. This arrangement fails to hire the right people because even the local councils question the legitimacy of the way state councils are presently formed. Procedures giving a fair go to all state councils and local organisations should be implemented. One of the procedures suggested is to target the way leaders spend money on resources. There should be a new piece of legislation in order to systemise dividing an equal share of the resources among all seven states without leadership manipulation of the vote of these states on time of elections.

*Sixth*, is the negative perception of Muslims in Australia. Leaders should think carefully about the perception of Islam and Muslims in Australia. The ongoing negative perception of Islam and Muslims in Australia leaves Muslims helpless in terms of their ability to make their presence meaningful, and affects the ability of Muslim leaders to encourage followers to work at the organisational level. The

feeling in the Muslim community and in the non-Muslim community is that Islam is the religion of a certain type of immigrants. Muslims' contradiction of the higher objectives of Islam correlates negatively with the perception of Islam and Muslims in Australia. The negative perception correlates with followers' apathy due to fear of involvement in organisations that have been the focus of the media and politics for quite some time, which feeds the disfranchised sentiment of followers within the broader society, and consequently gives rise to the many problems within AFIC. This affects the aspiration of generations of Muslims to become active, valued citizens of a wider Australian society. In order to overcome this negative perception, leaders and followers need to give Islam a local voice. Leadership must acknowledge the context to which they operate and the reality and status of Muslims as a minority group. Appreciating such a context in the spirit of the higher objectives of Islam does not go against the principle of Islam; in fact it is part of Islamic practicality, realistic reasoning and teachings.

*Seventh*, a key contributor to the wellbeing of Australian Muslim organizations is an effective leadership. A substantial federal and state funding package should be provided to a range of Australian Islamic organisations to undertake leadership training which can help in promoting healthy leadership. Leadership training could lead to an understanding of leadership, healthy participation, responsibility and commitment to organisation success.

## 9.5 Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations which are discussed below.

First, gathering of data was sourced mainly through interviews, organisational documentation and observations. The intensive process of data collection limits these investigations to the main body of the organisation under investigation, and the main branches in the major Australian states rather than the branches where there are very few participants. An extension of the study to include the latter could make the research very expensive.

Second, the researcher is an Australian Muslim. This potential delimitation could confound the objectivity of the analysis. However, the researcher hopes to balance his implicit theories with enhanced theoretical sensitivity. The researcher acknowledges the two potentially different perspectives of the same phenomenon through his knowledge about leadership on one hand, and being part of the context under investigation on the other.

Third, this study addresses the substantive area of the social influence process of leadership across the whole organisation. It considers the leaders' and followers' behaviours, actions, attitudes and the perceptions concerning the leadership process among various stakeholders. A few people who were approached by the researcher declined to participate, and they were beyond the researcher's accessibility.

Fourth, the selection process of participants could be a limitation. Participants were selected through key informants. Those key informants made a huge effort in choosing people with rich data, but that does not mean they are the only people with rich data. It could be equally right that there are other people who the key informants do not know who could have provided greater knowledge.

## 9.6 Future research

First, the limitations mentioned above are also an opportunity for further research. That opportunity might lie in the generation of the meta-narratives of other minority groups within a mainstream culture. The generation of a number of these meta-narratives will ultimately allow other researchers to generalise about the social process of leadership.

Second, this study focused on leadership process within the not for-profit organisation that caters for a minority Islamic context within a dominant Western society. Future research regarding leadership processes within Islamic profitable and professional organisations would be highly desirable in order to check whether the processes resulting from the current research are supported or modified, extended or rejected.

Third, future studies could use the same grounded theory approach to include broader local community organisations, and many newly established Australian Islamic organisations and a large base for Australian born Muslims, which could acknowledge additional insight into the dynamic of leadership processes. A change in sample may generate similar or different perspectives on leadership; thus extending or enriching understanding of the Australian Muslims' leadership process and interaction.

Fourth, the core category of embracing basics could have relevance outside the Australian Islamic setting, and therefore could evolve further beyond organisational leadership, to for example educational and political leadership. Within such future endeavour the suggestion is that quantitative research targeting a large sample be undertaken, which could unveil new interpretations and further evaluation.

Fifth, the near core-category and the social process of sensemaking may be adequate for further research. Although sensemaking is well established theoretically, the practical aspects and empirical research about it are still scarce. Sensemaking within the current research is different from the already established research because it is

attached to both leadership and followership. Sensemaking within this study is not just an example of leadership but it is an example of followership as well. The attachment of sensemaking to followership needs further investigation.

## 9.7 Final remarks

This study was one of the first to examine the leadership process within a Muslim organisation in a Western context. I began this study intending to understand what goes on in leadership practices and interaction in the unique context of AFIC. The first two stages of data collection and analysis brought an empirical breakdown for the whole idea of leadership processes. Instead of finding the dynamics of leadership, I found the dynamics of no leadership. Conducting this research provided me with greater understanding of the grounded theory methodology. The magic question 'what is going on here?' guided me to discover both the presence and absence of leadership dynamics within this complex setting. Not surprisingly, the findings indicate that the term "no leadership" holds many negative dynamics. Within the so called negative dynamics, deeper positive interactions were happening. The grounded theory methodology helped me to consider the ongoing and significant factors regarding the interaction of leadership manifestation.

The grounded theory of 'embracing basics' provides an intellectual rigour that accounts for the actions, interactions, and the nature of leadership social process. It is anticipated that the grounded theory of embracing basics establishes more understanding about the processes of the positive operation of leadership. It is also anticipated that this research may contribute to the development of moral and ethical leadership theory. I hope that this study revealed the richness of the leadership process, and that more innovative research takes place with the disclosure of more and richer dimensions.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Ethical clearance approval letters

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

11-Nov-2009

Dear Mr Faris

I write further to your application for a variation to your approved protocol "A qualitative test of the leadership process in the Islamic councils of Australia" (GU Ref No: GSM/04/07/HREC). This request has been considered by the Office for Research.

The OR resolved to approve the requested variation:

Requested extension of ethical clearance from 31/12/2009 to 31/12/2011

This decision is subject to ratification at the next meeting of the HREC. However, you are authorised to immediately commence the revised project on this basis. I will only contact you again about this matter if the HREC raises any additional questions or comments about this variation.

Regards
Dr Gary Allen
Manager, Research Ethics
Office for Research
Bray Centre, Nathan Campus
Griffith University
ph: 3735 5585
fax: 3735 7994
email: g.allen@griffith.edu.au

At this time all researchers are reminded that the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research provides guidance to researchers in areas such as conflict of interest, authorship, storage of data, & the training of research students.

You can find further information, resources and a link to the University's Code by visiting http://www62.gu.edu.au/policylibrary.nsf/xupdatemonth/e7852d226231d2b44a25750c0062f457?opendocument PRIVILEGED, PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

11-Apr-2012

Dear Mr Faris

I write further to your application for a variation to your approved protocol "A qualitative test of the leadership process in the Islamic councils of Australia" (GU Ref No: GSM/04/07/HREC). This request has been considered by the Office for Research.

The OR resolved to approve the requested variation: Requested extension of ethical clearance from 31/12/2011 to 31/7/2012. Please note that this is the maximum of 5 years allowable under any one application. Should data collection be ongoing after this date, a new application would be required to be submitted.

This decision is subject to ratification at the next meeting of the HREC. However, you are authorised to immediately commence the revised project on this basis. I will only contact you again about this matter if the HREC raises any additional questions or comments about this variation.

Regards
Dr Gary Allen
Manager, Research Ethics
Office for Research
G39 room 3.55 Gold Coast Campus
Griffith University
ph: 3735 5585
fax: 07 5552 9058
email: g.allen@griffith.edu.au

At this time all researchers are reminded that the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research provides guidance to researchers in areas such as conflict of interest, authorship, storage of data, & the training of research students.

You can find further information, resources and a link to the University's Code by visiting

http://www62.gu.edu.au/policylibrary.nsf/xupdatemonth/e7852d226231d2b44a25750c0062f457?opendocument

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## Appendix B: information sheet and the informed consent

Information sheet and informed participation consent

Leadership Process in the Australian Islamic organization

Who is conducting the research?

Student researcher

**Nezar Faris (PHD Candidate)**

Contact details

Griffith Business School

Department of Management
170 Kessels Road
Nathan, Queensland 4111
Australia
Phone: 0434 64 8578
www.griffith.edu.au
N.Faris@griffith.edu.au

Principal supervisors

**Prof Ken Parry**

**A Prof M. Abdalla**

**Contact Details**

(07) 373 56983

0407921978

Mt Gravatt Campus

M.abdalla@griffith.edu.au

Why is the research being conducted?

The objective of these interviews is to collect data for a PhD project about the leadership process in the Islamic organizations mainly AFIC. The purpose of such project is to investigate the current practices of leadership and to generate a theory of leadership within the Islamic organisations of Australia.

The basis by which participants will be selected

The entire sample will be selected through key informants in the Islamic organisations.

The expected benefits of the research

It is expected that this research will be beneficial in several ways. Apart from the contribution to theory, the report to practitioners will benefit the leadership of their organizations.

Expressing consent

By phone or email, or by signing this document, you acknowledge your consent to participate in the research.

**Privacy Statement**

NO ORDINARY DISCLOSURE

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at www.gu.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3875 5585.

**Signature:**

**Name:**

**Date:**