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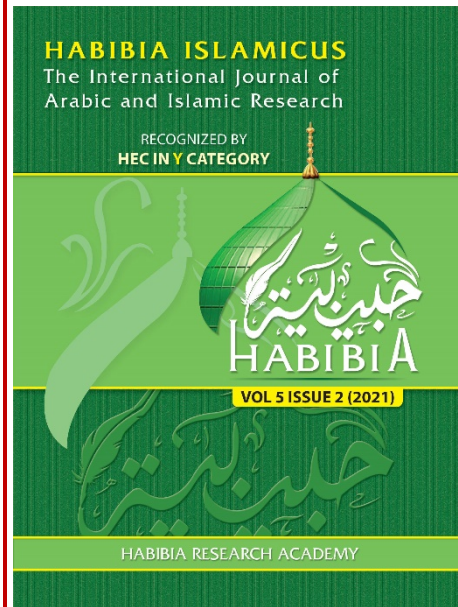
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**TOPIC:**

**SOFT SKILLS AMONG LEADERS:  
AN ANALYSIS FROM QURAN AND SUNNAH PERSPECTIVE**

**AUTHORS:**

1. Muhammad Farhan Bukhari, University of Karachi. Email: [Bukhari@nomail.com](mailto:Bukhari@nomail.com)  
Orcid ID:
2. Professor Dr. Khalid Mahmood Iraqi, University of Karachi.

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# SOFT SKILLS AMONG LEADERS: AN ANALYSIS FROM QURAN AND SUNNAH PERSPECTIVE

Farhan Bukhari,

Khalid Mahmood Iraqi

## ABSTRACT

This study is about soft skills among leaders in an organization. Most studies on individual skills are done by researchers from a Western perspective. While studies on soft skills based on the perspective of the Qur'an and Sunnah are less focused. In particular, this study is compiled to meet two (2) main objectives namely; (1) Explore the main concepts of personal skills based on the perspectives of Western and Islamic scholars and 2) List the characteristics of Western and Islamic soft skills into the practice of leaders. This study has chosen a descriptive qualitative approach through the analysis of written documents of scholars to formulate important themes related to the concept of individual skills in the perspectives of Western and Muslim scholars. The results of the study found that there are three main themes on individual skills based on the Quran and Sunnah. From the results of the study, it has been suggested that the leaders should adopt a hybrid soft skills approach that is a combination of Western and Islamic approaches.

**KEYWORDS:** Soft skills, analysis from Quran and Sunnah, individual skills, personal skills.

## INTRODUCTION:

Human beings whose nature is *Madani bi al-tab'i* are creatures who have been given the gift of *al-Bayan* by Allah (S.W.T.). The word '*al-Bayan*' with all its details and fragments means explanation, description, giving meaning or understanding of something (al-Mu'jam al-Asasi, 179). According to Ibn Kathir, al-Tabari and other commentators when interpreting the words of Allah (S.W.T.) in Surah al-Rahman (verses 3-4):

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ ۖ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ۖ

Translation: 'He is the one who created man' 'He is the One who has enabled man (to speak) to give and receive revelation'

Man is endowed with the ability to decipher something that is contained in his heart. It is able to express desires, translate the meaning and understanding of things, make interpretations, give names, and interact and communicate with each other. Such efforts are a blessing of the grace of Allah (S.W.T.) to humans. Human beings whose nature is *Madani bi al-tab'i*, that is, human beings need each other to interact, communicate and be active in order to continue life, build civilization and move civilization. The ability to interact and communicate well and effectively so as to attract the attention of others is different between human beings. Accordingly, the Prophet (S.A.W.A.S), narrated from Ibn Umar:

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مَسْلَمَةَ، عَنْ مَالِكٍ، عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ أَسْلَمَ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ، أَنَّهُ قَالَ قِيمَ رَجُلَانِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَخَطَبَا فَعَجِبَ النَّاسُ - يَعْنِي لِبَيَانِهِمَا - فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " إِنَّ مِنَ الْبَيَانِ لَسِحْرًا " . أَوْ " إِنَّ بَعْضَ الْبَيَانِ لَسِحْرٌ " .

Meaning: Indeed, part of the speech (description and explanation) is like magic (because it can attract attention and focus). - Sunan Abi Dawud 5007

Prophet Musa (A.S.) supplicate to Allah (S.W.T.) to be made the Prophet Harun (A.S.) as his friend to preach or dialogue with Pharaoh. This is because the prophet Harun (A.S.) more eloquent and clear in his language and speech expressions than those of his own. This story is immortalized by Allah (S.W.T.) in Surah Al-Qasas (Verse 34), which means:

وَأَخِي هَارُونُ هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا فَأَرْسَلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا  
يُصَدِّقُنِي إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ ﴿٣٤﴾

Translation:

*And my brother - Aaron, he is more eloquent in tongue than me, so send him with me as a supporter who acknowledges my truthfulness; surely I fear that they will deny me.*

- Al-Qasas 28:34

The above verses and hadiths explain several things:

1. The need for fluency of tongue and clarity of description in matters relating to dialogue between two parties.
2. Oral eloquence and fluency of speech is a gift of Allah (S.W.T.) and it occurs either through personal awards or through a process of education or training.
3. The fluency of the tongue and the adjustment of the language used can attract the attention of the listener and the audience.

Untiring exploration of the *nusus* (Quranic texts) al-Quran and al-Hadith, by focusing on the fields of study will find readers and researchers with the fields of knowledge and disciplines studied. The *nusus* either touches directly or indirectly with the field under study. In the aspect of individual skills for example, from the aspect of the concept, principle or practice based on the atmosphere and context required. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the development of the epistemology of Islamic knowledge related to soft skills based on the guidelines and teachings of revelation.

### 1. The Concept of Soft Skills According to the Qur'an and Sunnah

**Definition of Soft Skills:** Presented are some definitions from Western scholars as a guide to subsequent writings. Soft skills are those that are related to the way how an individual interact or communicate with other people. This interaction could be effective in changing a person's attitude, opinion or behavior. According to Kyllonen (2013) defined soft skills as the ability to understand others and use these abilities in interacting, collaborating, guiding and managing relationships with others. These skills allow one to understand the feelings, habits and desires of others. These skills can help in communicating and collaborating with others in producing a worthwhile project and can motivate others. Murti (2014) explained that soft skills are those that promote effective interaction and communication between two or more people. While according to Balcar (2016), soft skills promotes interaction communication between several people face to face, which allows each participant to capture the reactions of the other directly either verbal or non-verbal communication. In addition to the above, Matteson, Anderson & Boyden (2016) define

soft skills as a communication that has the characteristic that occurs from one person to another, communication takes place face to face and the result of communication leads to a reaction or effect on the individual when communication takes place. In conclusion, soft skills are those that come into view usually face to face, whether to exchange ideas, give views or so on that occurs verbally or non-verbally. Through this interaction, the communicators can continuously capture the reactions issued by others. From the definitions presented, it can generally be formulated according to the Islamic perspective.

**Soft Skills - The Skills of the Prophets:** The prophets in every age and place represent their communities, lead races as leaders and mentors for their people and nation. The word of Allah (S.W.T.):

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَيْمَةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا وَكَانُوا  
بِآيَاتِنَا يُوَفُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Translation:

*And We appointed from among them leaders who guided their people to Our religion, as long as they were patient and believed in Our Signs. - Al-Sajdah 32:24*

The word of Allah (S.W.T.):

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَيْمَةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ  
الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا  
عَلِيدِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

Translation: *And We made them leaders of the followers, guiding (mankind to the right path) by Our Command, and We inspired them to do good, and to establish prayer and to give alms. And they worship Us. - Al-Anbiyaa 21: 73*

In the same way, the words of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.S) explains the role of the prophets among the children of Israel (Narrated by Salamah bin Dinar al-Madani Abu Hazem):

- قَاعَدْتُ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ خَمْسَ سِنِينَ فَسَمِعْتَهُ يُحَدِّثُ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، قَالَ: كَانَتْ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ تَسُوسُهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ، كُلَّمَا هَلَكَ نَبِيٌّ خَلَفَهُ نَبِيٌّ، وَإِنَّهُ لَا نَبِيَّ بَعْدِي، وَسَتَكُونُ خُلَفَاءُ فَتَكْثُرُ، قَالُوا: فَمَا تَأْمُرُنَا؟ قَالَ: فُوا بِبَيْعَةِ الْأَوَّلِ، فَلَا أَوَّلَ، وَأَعْطُوهُمْ حَقَّهُمْ، فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَأَلَهُمْ عَمَّا اسْتَرَعَاهُمْ.

- Sahih Muslim, 1842

Meaning: *The Children of Israel were led by the prophets throughout ancient times, every time a prophet died then he was replaced by another prophet.*

The approach, methods and characteristics of the leadership of the prophets as a guide to the people to understand the concept of leadership and soft skills according to the torch of revelation.

**Leadership**

A. **Calm and Confident in the Face of Crisis:** The story of the prophet Musa (A.S.) and his followers who were pursued by Pharaoh with his army with all the strength and preparation immortalized by Allah (S.W.T) in the Quran. There was a quite bitter situation when Musa (A.S.) and his followers were barred by the sea in front of him, while the pharaoh with his army pursued from behind. The verse below proves the calmness and confidence of the Prophet Musa (A.S.) as a leader to his followers. When the followers panicked, worried and scared, then the Prophet Musa (A.S.) as a leader showing a calm and confident attitude with the help of Allah (S.W.T). According to Quran:

فَلَمَّا تَرَأَتْهُمَا أَجْمَعَانِ قَالَ أَصْحَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّا لَمَذْرُكُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

Translation: *When the two groups saw each other, the people of Moses said: "Surely we will be captured". - Al-Syu'araa 26:61*

قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٦٢﴾

Translation: *He said: Nay! Lo! My Lord is with me, and He will guide me. As-Syu'araa 26:62*

B. **Understand Related Issues and Problems So That They Can Be Resolved Well and Accepted Together:** The issues that occur are understood in depth before giving a sentence or setting a ruling. It is as described by Allah (S.W.T.) to the Prophet Sulaymān (A.S.) which inflicted a different punishment from the punishment which the prophet Dawud (A.S.). Wisdom and knowledge have been bestowed by Allah (S.W.T.) to both prophets (A.S.) yet an understanding of the issues at hand was only bestowed on the Prophet Sulaymān (A.S.). The sentence passed by the Prophet Dawud (A.S.) is correct and infallible, yet the punishment of the Prophet Sulaymān (A.S.) is more accurate based on the issues and problems that occur. According to Quran:

وَدَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ إِذْ يَحْكُمَانِ فِي الْحَرْثِ إِذْ نَفَسَتْ فِيهِ غَنَمُ

الْقَوْمِ وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ شَهِيدِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾

Translation: *And Dawud and Sulayman, when they were judging the crops when the flocks of his people destroyed it by night. and it is We Who observe and confirm their punishment. Al-Anbiyaa 21:78*

فَفَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ وَكُلًّا ءَاتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَسَخَرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ

الْجِبَالِ يَسْبِخْنَ وَالطَّيْرُ وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾

Translation: *So We gave Sulayman a better understanding of the law. And to each We gave wisdom and knowledge (in abundance); and We caused the mountains and the fowls to praise Us with Dawud; and We have the power to do all that. Al-Anbiyaa 21:79*

Verses related to the events of the judgment of the Prophet Dawud (A.S.) with his son the Prophet Sulaymān (A.S.) as stated above means that, the understanding of the Prophet Sulaymān (A.S.) on the issue at hand and the decree of punishment taken is a gift of Allah (S.W.T.) to him. Although wisdom and prudence were also bestowed on his father the Prophet Dawud (A.S.), yet an understanding of the issue and the accuracy of punishment was only bestowed on the Prophet Sulaymān (A.S.). In the Islamic civilization, it is part of the source of knowledge and seen from that aspect, apart from the revelation bestowed on the prophets, they are also endowed with inspiration or its mechanism varies between the prophets and other prophets.

**2. Patience and Firmness with the Cause and Behavior of the Followers:** The prophets are acknowledged by Allah (S.W.T.) as a man who is strong and steadfast in his patience, especially the *Ulu l-'azm* (Arch-Prophets) among the prophets. Yet in that steadfast patience, they remained firm with the decisions made, being decisive to the punishment that had been handed down. According to Quran:

فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَأُولُوا الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ لَهُمْ كَانَتْهُمْ يَوْمَ  
يُرَوْنَ مَا يُوعَدُونَ لَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنْ نَّهَارٍ بَلَّغَ فَبَلَغَ يَهْلِكُ إِلَّا  
الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

*Then be patient as the Messengers of Ulil-Azmi (who had determination and perseverance) from among the Messengers (before you) were patient. And do not ask for them to hasten on the punishment. Lo! When they see the doom which they are promised, they feel as if they had not stayed (in the world) but a moment of the day. Sufficient is a lesson (for those who repent). But none were destroyed except the rebellious people. Al-Ahqaaf 46:35*

**3. A Strong Relationship with God S.W.T.:** For the prophets (A.S.) apart from having a close and in -line relationship with human beings they (A.S.) also have a solid yet steady relationship with Allah (S.W.T.). Humans are treated as they should be according to their position, hence Allah (S.W.T.) criticizing the Prophet (S.A.W.A.S.) when he did not treat the short-sighted Abdullah bin Umi Maktum as he should be treated. Although the purpose or goal of the Prophet's treatment that offended his friend Abdulah bin Umi Maktum was good, that is, to expect the Islam of the Quraish leaders who were talking to him, but Islam insists that the goal does not legitimize the way. This story can be seen through the beginning of surah 'Abasa, 80: 1-9:



عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى ۖ أَن جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى ۚ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ يَزَّكَّى ۖ أَوْ  
يَذْكُرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ الْذِكْرَى ۚ أَمَّا مَنِ اسْتَغْنَى ۚ فَأَن تَلَهُ وَتَصَدَّى ۚ  
وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَّا يَزَّكَّى ۚ وَأَمَّا مَنِ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَى ۚ وَهُوَ يَخْشَى ۚ

Translation: 'He frowned and turned away' 'Because he was visited by a blind man' 'And what will make you know (the purpose, O Muhammad)? Maybe he wants to cleanse his heart (with the religious lessons he learned from you)! Don't do that again! In fact, the verses of the Qur'an are teachings and reminders (sufficient). Al-Abasa 80:1-9

In matters of relationship with Allah s.w.t. then it can be seen through the hadith of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.S) (Narrated by Hudhaifa ibn Al-Yaman):

عن حذيفة قال كان النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم إذا حزبه أمر صلى

Meaning: He, the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.A.S) when burdened or worried about something then he immediately prayed. - Sahih Abi Dawood, 1319

**4. Communication According to the Light of Revelation:** Based on the nusus of al-Quran and al-Sunnah, then several forms of communication can be formulated. Among them are:

**A. Say a Kind Speech or Word (حُسْنًا لِلنَّاسِ وَقُولُوا)**

According to Quran:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ  
إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ  
حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا  
قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

Translation: And (remember) when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel (saying): "Worship none but Allah and do good to parents and kinsmen and orphans and the needy." "And speak good words to one another, and establish worship and pay the poor-due." Then you turned away, except a few of you. And indeed you are the ones who disregard his covenant. - Al-Baqarah, 2:83

The meaning of a good speech or word is as stated by the Prophet (S.A.W.A.S.) through his hadiths (Narrated by Anas bin Malik).

- لَا يَسْتَقِيمُ إِيمَانُ عَبْدٍ حَتَّى يَسْتَقِيمَ قَلْبُهُ ، وَلَا يَسْتَقِيمَ قَلْبُهُ حَتَّى يَسْتَقِيمَ لِسَانُهُ ، وَلَا يَدْخُلُ رَجُلُ الْجَنَّةِ مِنْ لَا يَأْمَنُ جَارُهُ  
بَوَائِقِهِ

Meaning: A person's faith will not be pure until his heart is sincere, his heart will not be sincere until his tongue is true, he will not enter the paradise of a person whose neighbor is not safe from the depravity of his tongue. - **Sahih Al-Targheeb, 2554**

In another hadith, the Prophet (S.A.W.A.S.) rebuked Aisha (R.A.) when his wife responded to the Jewish greeting with a harsh yet painful answer (Narrated by Aisha (R.A)).

أَنَّ الْيَهُودَ أَتَوْا النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَقَالُوا: السَّامُ عَلَيْكَ، قَالَ: وَعَلَيْكُمْ فَقَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ: السَّامُ عَلَيْكُمْ، وَلَعَنَ اللَّهُ وَعَضِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَهْلًا يَا عَائِشَةُ، عَلَيْكَ بِالرِّفْقِ، وَإِيَّاكَ وَالْعُنْفَ، أَوِ الْفَحْشَ قَالَتْ: أَوْلَمْ تَسْمَعْ مَا قَالُوا؟ قَالَ: أَوْلَمْ تَسْمَعِي مَا قُلْتُ، رَدَدْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ، فَيَسْتَجَابُ لِي فِيهِمْ، وَلَا يَسْتَجَابُ لَهُمْ فِيَّ.

Meaning: A group of Jews came to the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.A.S.), then said, death be upon you, then he answered, upon you as well, then Aisha replied, death be upon you and the curse of Allah and His wrath, then the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.A.S.) rebuked Aisha by saying 'what is this Aisha? Be gentle and do not be harsh and rude with an oath of obscenity, then Aisyah asked, Did the Messenger not listen to what was said to you, the Messenger of Allah replied, did you not hear my answer to them? Have returned their statement to them, and my invocation against them will be accepted but theirs against me will not be accepted. - **Sahih Al-Bukhari, 6401**

B. **Saying the Right and True (Al-Qawl Al-Sadid) :** According to Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾

Translation: *O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and speak the truth.* - **Al-Ahzab, 33:70**

Among the interpretations and meanings of *al-Qawl al-Sadid* is a true, correct speech or word that evokes joy in the hearts of those who are being served as well as engenders a spirit of goodness and brotherhood as well as eliminating enmity among human beings.

Every speech, expression and word that leads to calmness, tranquility and good reception from the person in front of the speaker and creates a sense of acceptance among the community is counted as *al-Qawl al-Sadid*. There is no denying that spoken words have a profound effect on either a friend or an opponent while communicating. How much enmity can be resolved just because of a word of speech, it can also be observed how resentment can be appeased because of the utterance of soul-stirring words. Yet, the history of human civilization also proves that how much hostility is due to the utterance of scattered words.

True are the words (narrated by Mu'adh ibn Jabal):

" قُلْتُ بَلَى . فَأَخَذَ بِلِسَانِهِ فَقَالَ " تَكُفُّ عَلَيْكَ هَذَا " . قُلْتُ يَا نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّا لَمُؤْخَذُونَ بِمَا نَتَكَلَّمُ بِهِ قَالَ " تَكَلَّمَكَ أُمُّكَ يَا مُعَاذُ وَهَلْ يَكُفُّ النَّاسَ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا خَصَائِدُ السِّنِينَ " .

Meanings: I said: 'O Prophet of Allah, will we be brought to account for what we say?' He said: 'May your mother not found you, O Mu'adh! Are people thrown onto their faces in Hell for anything other than the harvest of their tongues? *Jami` at-Tirmidhi, 2616*

C. **Saying Gentle (Al-Qawl Al-Layyin):** It is stated in the Quran that:



فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لِّنَا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى ﴿٤٤﴾

Translation: *Then you shall say to him, in gentle words, may he remember or fear. Surah Al-Taha, 20:44*

The meaning of *al-Qawl al-Layyin* is a gentle speech or word that snaps a person's heart to return to himself, reflect on his shortcomings and return to the nature of his creation. This is based on the words of Allah (S.W.T.) in connection with the call of Musa (A.S.) to Pharaoh:

أَذْهَبَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ﴿١٧﴾  
فَقُلْ هَلْ لَكَ إِلَٰهٌ إِلَّا أَن تَرْكَبَ ﴿١٨﴾  
وَأَهْدِيكَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَتَخْشَىٰ ﴿١٩﴾

Translation: *(And it was said unto him): Go unto Fir'aun (Pharaoh)! Lo! He hath transgressed all bounds. And say to him: Do you wish to purify yourself? And shall I show thee the way of the knowledge of thy Lord, that thou mayest fear (Him)? Surah Al-Nazi, 79:17-19*

**5. Conclusion:** Looking at the guidelines of al-Quran and al-Sunnah related to soft skills, communication methods and interaction, it can be concluded that this field is directly related to human interaction among them based on individual skills in describing the meaning of desire based on morals and moral beauty. It is categorized in the concept of *habl min al-nas* (rope of people) and also *makarim al-khuluq* (generosity of creation). Although the statements of al-Quran and al-Sunnah are related to the concept of human *da'wah* to Islam, conceptually, it is the basis of thinking in the field of soft skills, communication and interaction among human beings. Each individual better understands himself, with whom he communicates and interacts, about what areas he speaks as well as how he should discuss then it depends on their own ideas, innovations as well as creativity. Each individual is of course skilled and understands the field of work and discipline of the field he is involved in, therefore he must be trustworthy and honest with himself, true and sincere to Allah (S.W.T.) as his Lord, as well as having a caring and empty nature with whom he speaks. These basic concepts are the core of human relationships that lead to well-being and peace of life. *Habl min al-nas* is to interact, communicate and deal with human beings based on good morals and can be accepted together regardless of racial and religious differences.

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