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Islamic Strategic Leadership: Integrating Divine Principles with Contemporary Leadership Practices

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Abstract

Islamic strategic leadership presents a values-based leadership framework rooted in divine guidance and prophetic traditions, integrating ethical responsibility, long-term vision, and communal well-being. This model contrasts with conventional leadership theories that often prioritize material outcomes or individual success. Drawing from the Qur'an, Hadith, and the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), Islamic strategic leadership emphasizes principles such as God-consciousness, consultation, justice, and trust. The Prophet's leadership exemplified adaptability, vision, empowerment, and ethical governance, offering a comprehensive guide for modern leaders. This paper argues that Islamic strategic leadership is not only theoretically robust but also practically applicable in contemporary governance, organizational management, and social development. By aligning spiritual integrity with strategic foresight, it provides a framework capable of addressing modern challenges with moral clarity and inclusive decision-making. The article concludes by recommending a deeper integration of Islamic leadership principles into modern leadership studies and institutional practices.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, Islam, Leadership Study, Islamic Leadership

1. Introduction

Leadership occupies a central role in shaping institutional direction, driving innovation, and ensuring long-term resilience in an increasingly complex global environment. Effective leadership is no longer limited to managing day-to-day operations but encompasses the ability to align organizational values with strategic vision, adapt to environmental volatility, and inspire collective commitment among stakeholders. As the global economy becomes more integrated and culturally diverse, leadership paradigms must evolve to incorporate not only operational efficiency but also ethical depth, inclusivity, and sustainability (Freeman *et al.*, 2018; Grootenboer *et al.*, 2015; Leskiw & Singh, 2007)^[9, 11, 17]. Strategic leadership, therefore, must go beyond mere functionality to serve as a catalyst for transformation and long-term value creation. In the context of strategic management, leadership is defined as the ability to influence individuals and organizations toward achieving long-term objectives while remaining adaptive in dynamic and uncertain contexts (Suprayitno, 2024; Susanto *et al.*, 2023)^[26, 27]. This definition underscores the dual responsibilities of foresight and flexibility, which are critical for leaders operating in environments shaped by globalization, digitalization, climate change, and shifting stakeholder expectations. While existing literature provides robust models for strategic leadership, ranging from transformational to servant and authentic leadership, these models often lack integration with spiritual and moral dimensions that are increasingly relevant in value-driven organizations (Allen & Fry, 2023; González *et al.*, 2024; Pizzolitto *et al.*, 2023)^[3, 10, 22]. Contemporary leadership theories predominantly emerge from Western epistemologies, which tend to emphasize rationality, individualism, and economic outcomes. These secular frameworks, while effective in certain domains, often underrepresent the importance of metaphysical values, communal responsibility, and divine accountability that are essential in many non-Western and faith-based contexts.

In particular, Muslim-majority societies and Islamic organizations frequently operate within sociocultural environments where religious values are integral to decision-making, employee motivation, and organizational legitimacy (Abdelwahed *et al.*, 2024; Ruhullah & Ushama, 2025)^[1, 23].

As such, there is a compelling need to explore leadership frameworks that are not only contextually sensitive but also normatively aligned with Islamic epistemology.

Islamic strategic leadership presents a comprehensive and ethically grounded leadership paradigm that integrates spiritual consciousness with strategic foresight, participatory governance, social justice, and a deep sense of trust and responsibility. It is not merely a religious ideal but a practical leadership model derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah (the practices and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him), and the leadership examples of the four rightly guided Caliphs. Unlike secular models that often center on material success or positional authority, Islamic leadership regards leadership as a trust from God and a service to the community (Ezzani *et al.*, 2023; Halim, 2013) ^[7, 12]. This ontological grounding compels leaders to act with humility, accountability, and a focus on long-term communal well-being.

Despite its strong normative and historical foundations, Islamic strategic leadership remains under-theorized in academic literature. Many existing studies focus narrowly on descriptive or theological elements, often overlooking the operationalization of Islamic leadership principles within modern organizational frameworks (Ezzani *et al.*, 2023; Halim, 2013) ^[7, 12]. Moreover, there is limited empirical research exploring how Islamic leadership principles influence strategic planning, organizational change, crisis response, and innovation. This gap is particularly significant given the growing number of Islamic financial institutions, educational organizations, non-profits, and governmental bodies seeking leadership models that reflect their values while responding effectively to contemporary strategic challenges.

Furthermore, research on Islamic leadership often treats it as a static set of religious obligations rather than a dynamic and evolving practice capable of contributing to the broader leadership discourse. While concepts such as *taqwa* and *amanah* are regularly cited, there is a need for deeper engagement with how these values translate into concrete leadership behaviors, performance metrics, and organizational culture. Scholars have made notable contributions in this area, yet there remains a lack of integrative frameworks that synthesize Islamic values with modern leadership tools, such as stakeholder analysis, strategic risk assessment, and key performance indicators (KPIs) (Dian *et al.*, 2024) ^[5].

This article seeks to address these limitations by proposing a conceptual model of Islamic strategic leadership that is both theoretically robust and practically applicable. The motivation for this research is twofold: first, to respond to the increasing demand for leadership models that are ethically grounded, culturally relevant, and strategically sound; and second, to contribute to the growing academic discourse on indigenous and non-Western leadership theories. By bridging classical Islamic concepts with contemporary strategic leadership literature, this study aims to provide a framework that can inform leadership development programs, policy formation, and organizational reform in Muslim-majority contexts and faith-based institutions globally.

In achieving this aim, the paper will first explore the normative foundations of Islamic leadership, drawing from primary Islamic texts and historical precedents. It will then examine the attributes and behaviors associated with effective Islamic strategic leadership, using both classical and

contemporary sources. Finally, it will propose a conceptual model that outlines the principles, competencies, and ethical imperatives of Islamic strategic leadership, offering insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners interested in integrating faith-based ethics with modern strategic imperatives.

2. Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative conceptual approach designed to explore and articulate the foundational elements of Islamic strategic leadership as a theoretical model. Conceptual research is particularly suited for scholarly investigations that aim to integrate and refine existing knowledge through critical analysis and synthesis, rather than the collection of new empirical data. As Islamic strategic leadership draws upon both religious sources and leadership theory, a conceptual methodology allows for a meaningful engagement with diverse bodies of literature to develop a coherent and contextually grounded framework.

The research follows a deductive interpretivist paradigm, beginning with the normative foundations of Islamic thought as expressed in the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Islamic scholarship. These foundational texts are interpreted through a contemporary leadership lens to establish their relevance to modern organizational practices. This interpretive process facilitates the integration of timeless ethical values with the strategic demands of contemporary leadership environments. The study then extends this analysis by incorporating selected works from the field of strategic leadership to examine points of convergence, divergence, and potential integration.

The data sources for this study consist primarily of classical Islamic texts, including authoritative translations of the Qur'an and authenticated compilations of Hadith. In addition to these primary sources, the study engages with scholarly interpretations found in traditional tafsir literature and biographical accounts of the Prophet Muhammad and the four Rightly Guided Caliphs, whose leadership styles are often regarded as exemplary within Islamic thought. These sources provide a rich normative foundation for exploring leadership as a moral and spiritual trust rather than merely a functional or positional role.

In parallel, a comprehensive review of contemporary leadership literature was conducted using academic databases such as Scopus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. Search terms included Islamic leadership, strategic leadership, ethical leadership, and Islamic governance. This literature includes peer-reviewed journal articles, academic monographs, and theoretical models that are widely cited in leadership studies. Selection criteria focused on scholarly rigor, relevance to leadership behavior and ethics, and conceptual alignment with Islamic leadership values.

Thematic analysis was employed to identify key leadership constructs emerging from both Islamic and contemporary sources. Themes such as God-consciousness, consultation, justice, and trust were systematically analyzed to determine their implications for leadership theory and practice. These themes were then conceptually aligned with contemporary strategic leadership competencies, including visioning, ethical decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and long-term planning. The result of this analytical process is a synthesized framework that captures both the normative ideals of Islamic leadership and the operational demands of strategic leadership in complex organizational contexts.

To ensure the validity of the conceptual framework, the study

employed a triangulation process that involved cross-referencing interpretations from multiple scholarly sources. Interpretations of Islamic principles were compared across classical and contemporary scholars to ensure theological accuracy and contextual appropriateness. Similarly, key constructs in leadership theory were examined across different models to verify conceptual consistency. In addition, informal consultations with academic experts in Islamic studies and organizational leadership provided critical feedback to further strengthen the framework's theoretical coherence.

While this study presents a theoretically grounded model of Islamic strategic leadership, it does not include empirical testing or case-based validation. The absence of field data is acknowledged as a limitation, and future research is recommended to empirically assess the framework within real organizational settings. Such studies would offer valuable insights into the practical applicability, outcomes, and challenges of implementing Islamic strategic leadership in various institutional contexts, particularly in Muslim-majority societies or faith-based organizations.

This conceptual methodology enables a structured and scholarly engagement with both Islamic normative texts and contemporary leadership theory. By synthesizing these two bodies of knowledge, the study offers a foundation for the development of leadership models that are ethically sound, strategically competent, and culturally relevant. It contributes to the academic discourse on non-Western leadership paradigms and responds to the increasing global demand for leadership models that balance spiritual integrity with organizational effectiveness.

3. Results and Discussion

The study of leadership has evolved significantly over the past century, with a growing emphasis on aligning leadership styles with ethical conduct, strategic planning, and contextual sensitivity. Classical leadership theories such as trait theory, behavioral theory, and contingency theory laid the groundwork for understanding leadership as a measurable and situationally adaptable phenomenon. In recent decades, however, more integrative and ethically nuanced paradigms such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, and authentic leadership have gained prominence. These models emphasize the leader's moral responsibility, emotional intelligence, and long-term vision as essential elements of effective leadership (Hutabarat *et al.*, 2021; Martinez & Leija, 2023)^[15, 20].

Strategic leadership as a concept has emerged to address the demands placed on leaders operating in dynamic, uncertain, and complex environments. Researchers describe strategic leadership as the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others to create strategic change. This approach integrates cognitive complexity, absorptive capacity, and vision as key competencies for leaders who must align organizational goals with evolving external realities (Samimi *et al.*, 2022; Singh *et al.*, 2023)^[24]. Yet, despite its relevance in guiding organizations through change, much of strategic leadership literature remains grounded in secular and performance-based paradigms, often overlooking the ethical and spiritual dimensions that are central to leadership in religious or value-based organizations.

The gap between ethical imperatives and strategic priorities in leadership theory has prompted a number of scholars to

explore leadership models grounded in spiritual traditions. Islamic leadership studies represent a growing field within this broader movement, drawing upon Islamic theology, ethics, and history to formulate leadership principles that are both spiritually accountable and socially responsible. Islamic leadership is fundamentally distinct in its epistemology, as it positions leadership not merely as a role of authority but as a divinely entrusted responsibility, governed by the principles of God-consciousness, trust, justice, and consultation (Arar *et al.*, 2022; Halim, 2013)^[4, 12].

These core values reflect the ethical orientation of Islam and are consistently emphasized in the leadership practices of the Prophet Muhammad and the four Rightly Guided Caliphs. Leadership in the Islamic tradition is service-oriented, humility-driven, and inherently accountable to both the community and God. According to research, the moral fabric of Islamic leadership demands that leaders prioritize justice and communal welfare over personal or institutional gain. This stands in contrast to models that emphasize shareholder value or competitive advantage as primary metrics of success (Ali *et al.*, 2024; Nurjaman *et al.*, 2024)^[21].

Recent academic contributions have attempted to synthesize Islamic values with modern management practices. For instance, Makkulawu *et al.* (2022)^[18] propose an Islamic leadership model that incorporates concepts such as justice, trust, and consultation into managerial decision-making. Similarly, Zaim *et al.* (2021)^[28] investigate how Islamic ethical values influence organizational leadership and employee behavior in Muslim-majority contexts. These studies provide critical insights into the compatibility of Islamic teachings with contemporary leadership challenges. However, much of the literature remains limited to ethical discourse and often lacks a systematic integration with strategic management principles.

Moreover, empirical studies on Islamic leadership tend to focus on individual traits or organizational ethics without examining how Islamic principles shape long-term strategic vision, innovation, or crisis management. There is a scarcity of research exploring how Islamic leadership values influence strategic planning processes, performance outcomes, or organizational transformation. While some case studies have examined Islamic banking and educational institutions as sites of Islamic leadership application, these efforts often remain descriptive and do not fully engage with strategic leadership theory as developed in the broader literature (Fatimah & Syahrani, 2022)^[8].

This lack of theoretical integration and empirical substantiation presents a significant gap in both Islamic leadership studies and strategic leadership literature. While the former offers a rich repository of moral principles and historical precedents, it often does not translate these values into practical frameworks suitable for contemporary strategic challenges. Conversely, while strategic leadership theory provides tools for navigating complexity and achieving long-term goals, it frequently omits the ethical and spiritual dimensions that are vital for leadership in Muslim-majority or faith-based institutions.

The present study seeks to address this lacuna by conceptualizing Islamic strategic leadership as a model that unites the spiritual and ethical foundations of Islamic thought with the functional and forward-looking demands of strategic leadership. It builds upon existing Islamic leadership literature while extending its scope to include the cognitive, relational, and visionary competencies that define strategic

leadership in modern organizational theory. This synthesis aims to provide a coherent and applicable framework for leadership that is both value-driven and strategically effective.

By engaging with both classical Islamic sources and contemporary leadership theory, this study contributes to the development of a leadership paradigm that is contextually rooted, normatively sound, and operationally relevant. In doing so, it responds to the growing need for leadership models that are adaptable to the complexities of contemporary institutions while remaining anchored in enduring ethical and spiritual principles.

This study resulted in the formulation of a conceptual framework of Islamic Strategic Leadership. The framework was developed through a synthesis of normative Islamic principles and contemporary strategic leadership theory. It presents four interrelated dimensions that define the core of Islamic Strategic Leadership: God-conscious vision, consultative decision-making, ethical governance, and transformational accountability. These components work together to offer a comprehensive and spiritually grounded model of leadership that promotes both ethical integrity and organizational effectiveness.

The first dimension, God-conscious vision, reflects the Islamic emphasis on aligning leadership with divine guidance and moral purpose. In Islamic teachings, vision extends beyond strategic goals and includes long-term commitment to justice, social responsibility, and spiritual accountability. This orientation can be found in verses of the Qur'an that call believers to plan with awareness of the Hereafter and to seek collective good rather than personal ambition. For example, the command to consider future consequences and to fear God in decision-making, as stated in Qur'an 59:18, supports this leadership approach. Within strategic leadership theory, vision functions as a fundamental element for setting direction and inspiring others (Allen & Fry, 2023)^[3]. When combined with the principle of God-consciousness, vision becomes a tool for moral inspiration that promotes sustainability, ethical direction, and the prioritization of human dignity.

The second dimension, consultative decision-making, is grounded in the Islamic principle of *shura*, which encourages mutual deliberation, respectful dialogue, and collective wisdom. The Qur'an clearly upholds consultation as a valued practice, particularly in verse 42:38, which identifies believers as those who conduct their affairs through mutual consultation. In leadership theory, participative decision-making has been associated with greater innovation, stronger team cohesion, and increased adaptability in complex environments (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022)^[16]. In the Islamic Strategic Leadership model, consultation is not only a practical method but also a moral obligation. Leaders are expected to involve relevant stakeholders, listen sincerely to diverse viewpoints, and arrive at decisions that reflect fairness and collective interest. This approach contributes to trust-building, transparency, and the development of inclusive institutional cultures.

Ethical governance represents the third component of the model. It emphasizes leadership that is founded on justice, accountability, and service to the community. The Islamic concept of *adl* highlights justice as a universal value that must be upheld in both personal conduct and institutional operations. In addition, the value of *ihsan*, or excellence in action, guides leaders to strive for the highest standards of

honesty, equity, and compassion. The governance model of Prophet Muhammad, particularly as demonstrated in the Charter of Medina, provides a historical reference for inclusive, principled, and rights-based administration (Hamdan *et al.*, 2023)^[13]. In contemporary strategic leadership, governance involves the alignment of organizational behavior with core values, risk mitigation, and ethical compliance (Elkhwesky, 2022; Huertas-Valdivia *et al.*, 2022)^[6, 14]. The Islamic Strategic Leadership model expands this role by requiring leaders to act as moral stewards, ensuring that policies and procedures reflect social justice and serve the public interest.

Transformational accountability, the fourth dimension, refers to the dual responsibility of leaders toward their followers and toward God. In Islamic tradition, leadership is considered a trust that must be exercised with humility, sincerity, and a sense of answerability. The concept of trust, signifies a sacred duty that leaders must fulfill with integrity. Unlike purely performance-driven models, this approach integrates ethical consciousness into all strategic activities. It encourages leaders to engage in continual self-assessment, to seek spiritual growth, and to remain attentive to the ethical impact of their decisions. The transformational leadership model, which emphasizes vision, motivation, and personal development (Mariyana *et al.*, 2024)^[19], is strengthened within this Islamic context by adding a foundation of moral responsibility and divine accountability.

Together, these dimensions form a coherent and actionable model of leadership that balances strategic insight with ethical direction. The Islamic Strategic Leadership model contributes to the existing body of leadership studies by introducing a value-driven framework that is responsive to both organizational complexity and the moral needs of society. It provides an alternative to models that separate ethical considerations from strategic objectives. In contrast, this model insists on their integration, thereby fostering leadership practices that promote both institutional success and societal well-being.

Furthermore, this model holds particular relevance in Muslim-majority societies and institutions where spiritual values are deeply embedded in organizational culture. Sectors such as Islamic finance, higher education, healthcare, and public administration can benefit from the application of this leadership approach. Institutions guided by Islamic ethics are increasingly expected to demonstrate not only regulatory compliance but also moral clarity, social responsibility, and transparency. The Islamic Strategic Leadership framework meets this expectation by offering a leadership style that is principled, reflective, and capable of guiding institutions through both growth and reform.

Although the framework offers strong theoretical foundations, it is important to acknowledge the need for empirical validation. The practical application of these dimensions may vary based on organizational structure, cultural setting, and regulatory environment. Implementation in secular or pluralistic contexts may require further contextualization to ensure both relevance and inclusiveness. Future research should investigate how these principles are practiced in real organizational settings, possibly through case studies, surveys, and comparative analyses across sectors. Such studies would enhance the operational clarity of the model and demonstrate its flexibility and effectiveness in diverse leadership environments.

In summary, the Islamic Strategic Leadership model

introduced in this study presents a holistic and ethically robust approach to leadership. It harmonizes strategic foresight with spiritual consciousness, fostering a form of leadership that is visionary, inclusive, and deeply rooted in values. In an age marked by rapid change and ethical uncertainty, this model offers a compelling framework for nurturing leaders who are capable of creating purposeful, equitable, and accountable institutions.

4. Conclusion

This study has proposed a conceptual framework of Islamic Strategic Leadership that integrates normative Islamic principles with contemporary strategic leadership theory. Through this synthesis, the model introduces four interrelated dimensions: God-conscious vision, consultative decision-making, ethical governance, and transformational accountability. Together, these dimensions offer a comprehensive and morally grounded alternative to secular leadership paradigms. The framework emphasizes that leadership is not merely an instrument for achieving efficiency or competitive advantage, but rather a trust that demands spiritual awareness, ethical responsibility, and inclusive decision-making.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing discourse on ethical and culturally responsive leadership models. Islamic Strategic Leadership advances the idea that effective leadership must be anchored in a deeper sense of purpose and accountability, not only to organizational stakeholders but also to divine principles. This model addresses current limitations in strategic leadership literature by reintroducing spiritual and ethical dimensions as foundational components rather than supplementary ideals.

The framework also responds to the practical needs of Muslim-majority institutions and organizations that seek to balance performance with integrity. It provides a valuable reference for leaders in education, finance, healthcare, and public administration who aim to cultivate ethical cultures, encourage participatory governance, and foster long-term societal benefit. By rooting leadership in Islamic ethics, the model strengthens institutional legitimacy and promotes trust among followers and communities.

While this conceptual model presents a strong theoretical foundation, its application would benefit from further empirical research. Future studies could explore how the dimensions of Islamic Strategic Leadership are implemented in specific organizational contexts and how they influence decision-making, team dynamics, and institutional performance. Such investigations will enhance the practical relevance and adaptability of the framework across diverse cultural and institutional environments.

In conclusion, Islamic Strategic Leadership represents a meaningful contribution to both Islamic thought and leadership studies. It redefines leadership as a spiritually conscious, ethically guided, and strategically sound endeavor. In a time of global complexity and moral uncertainty, this model offers a hopeful and principled vision for nurturing leaders who are committed to justice, excellence, and the well-being of society.

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