

Toward a Tawhidic-Prophetic Educational Leadership Model: From Moral Exemplarity to Institutional Governance

Habibullah¹, Deny Haryadi²

¹ Kementerian Agama Kota Lubuk Linggau, Lubuklinggau, Indonesia

² Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Curup, Indonesia

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Abstract

Educational leadership in Muslim societies is frequently interpreted through models developed outside Islamic intellectual traditions, while Islamic concepts are added as ethical descriptors rather than treated as an integrated account of purpose, authority, practice, and institutional responsibility. This critical narrative review synthesises Islamic leadership scholarship, mainstream educational leadership research, and recent empirical studies to develop the Tawhidic-Prophetic Educational Leadership (TPEL) model. The review distinguishes normative foundations, leader capacities, relational processes, institutional practices, mechanisms, and outcomes, and explicitly separates evidence-supported components from theory-derived propositions. TPEL comprises seven domains: purpose and moral orientation, exemplary integrity, learning-centred stewardship, consultative and distributed governance, relational care and inclusion, capability and adaptive innovation, and institutional accountability and continuity. Its distinctive claim is not that Islamic values replace established leadership mechanisms, but that prophetic leadership becomes educationally meaningful only when moral commitments are translated into observable, contestable, learning-centred, and accountable organisational routines. Available evidence associates prophetic leadership with teacher job satisfaction, competence, collaboration, and organisational development, but is geographically concentrated and largely cross-sectional or qualitative. Accordingly, TPEL is presented as a falsifiable theory-building framework rather than a validated causal model. Future research should test discriminant validity against adjacent leadership constructs, use multilevel and longitudinal designs, incorporate independent institutional outcomes, and examine failure conditions such as symbolic Islamisation, paternalism, and leader dependence.

Keywords

Islamic Educational Leadership; Prophetic Leadership; Tawhid; Educational Administration; Institutional Accountability; Learning-Centred Leadership.

Corresponding Author

Habibullah

Kementerian Agama Kota Lubuk Linggau, Lubuklinggau, Indonesia;
habibullahkemenag@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership affects learning mainly through direction setting, teacher development, organisational conditions, and the quality of instruction rather than through direct leader effects.



Reviews of school effectiveness therefore place leadership among the strongest school-level influences after classroom teaching (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2008). Instructionally focused practices tend to show stronger relationships with student outcomes than broad transformational influence alone, although successful leaders combine instructional and transformational strategies over time (Robinson et al., 2008; Day et al., 2016). More recent syntheses emphasise coherent goals, productive working conditions, professional learning, and context-sensitive organisational design (Leithwood et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2021). The current global policy synthesis similarly frames effective leadership around setting expectations, focusing on learning, collaboration, and people development (Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2024).

These findings do not settle a prior question: what educational purposes should leadership serve, and what moral account of authority should regulate improvement? Leadership models are not culturally neutral packages. They embody assumptions about knowledge, the person, organisational success, and legitimate power (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; House et al., 2001). In Muslim settings, religious and cultural knowledge informs how leaders and followers interpret authority, responsibility, teaching, and community (Shah, 2006; Shah, 2010). Yet leadership curricula and research may still privilege theories developed in different institutional environments (ElKaleh, 2019; Ahmed, 2023). Cultural-value research further cautions that preferred leader attributes and power relations vary across societies (Hofstede, 1980).

Scholarship has begun to respond. Islamic-oriented educational leadership has been formulated from expert interpretations, and a psychometric scale has recently been developed (Alazmi & Bush, 2024; Alazmi, 2025). A recent review distinguishes an inward spiritual core from outward administrative principles (Arar et al., 2026). Earlier work describes Islamic leadership through justice, trust, knowledge, consultation, and shared influence (Ahmad & Ogunsola, 2011; Ali, 2009). Related models emphasise spiritual meaning, balanced leadership, and prophetic character (Egel & Fry, 2017; ElKaleh, 2023).

Three gaps remain. First, Islamic, prophetic, spiritual, Rabbani, and qalb leadership are often treated as interchangeable even though they differ in sources, mechanisms, and outcomes (Salamun et al., 2021; Mutalib & Rafiki, 2021). Second, personal virtues are not consistently translated into curriculum, staffing, governance, safeguarding, or accountability. Third, religious vocabulary may coexist with paternalism, symbolic compliance, or weak instruction (Hawass, 2019; Yaseen & ElRefae, 2019). The central thesis of this review is therefore narrower than a general synthesis of Islamic leadership: prophetic educational leadership becomes theoretically distinctive only when Islamic moral commitments are institutionalised through observable educational practices and accountable organisational systems.

This review asks three questions: (1) which normative and historical foundations distinguish an Islamic account of educational leadership; (2) what does the empirical literature actually support; and (3) how can those foundations be translated into an observable and testable institutional model? It develops Tawhidic-Prophetic Educational Leadership (TPEL), defined as the institutionalisation of Islamic moral purpose through learning-centred, participatory, capable, and accountable educational practice. The intended contribution is explanatory rather than taxonomic: TPEL specifies the mechanisms, institutional locations, boundary conditions, and observations that should strengthen or weaken confidence in the model.

2. METHOD

2.1 Review design and source identification

The article uses a critical narrative-review design because the relevant evidence spans historical and conceptual scholarship, qualitative cases, correlational surveys, psychometric studies, reviews, books, and policy reports. The objective is integrative theory development, not pooled effect estimation. The source base began with a foundational Islamic leadership model and a bibliography of 122 records. DOI- and title-based deduplication produced 79 unique records; targeted database and reference-chain searches expanded the final cited corpus to 120 sources. Searches were updated through July 2026. Table 1 summarises the review protocol, while the discussion following Table 1 explains the analytical safeguards used to avoid presenting a narrative review as an exhaustive systematic review.

Targeted supplementation used combinations of the search concepts “Islamic leadership”, “prophetic leadership”, “educational leadership”, “school leadership”, “madrasah”, “pesantren”, “Muslim societies”, “teacher outcomes”, “shura”, “amanah”, and “institutionalisation”. Sources were considered when they contributed directly to normative foundations, leadership in Muslim educational settings, observable educational practices, measurable educator or organisational outcomes, or boundary conditions such as culture, gender, follower agency, digitalisation, and accountability. Because the original database-export history was unavailable, exact database-by-database yields cannot be reconstructed; this limitation is stated explicitly rather than retrofitted into a PRISMA-style flow.

Table 1. Review protocol and analytical safeguards

Element	Procedure
Purpose	Critical narrative synthesis and theory development; no pooled effect estimate and no claim of exhaustive retrieval.
Source base	122 starting records; DOI/title deduplication yielded 79 unique records; targeted supplementation produced 120 cited sources.
Update window	Literature available through July 2026; English-language and accessible Indonesian-language sources considered.

Search concepts	Islamic/prophetic leadership; educational/school leadership; madrasah; pesantren; Muslim societies; teacher outcomes; shura; amanah; institutionalisation.
Eligibility	Direct relevance to normative foundations, educational practice, measurable outcomes, or boundary conditions; non-educational studies used only for transferable mechanisms.
Coding logic	Normative foundation → capacity → relational process → organisational practice → mechanism → outcome; coding was iterative and concept-led.
Quality/evidence appraisal	Evidence classified as normative, conceptual, empirically suggestive, or causally demonstrative; design limitations and transferability were recorded.
Verification	Full-text checking of four central empirical articles; numerical claims checked against reported tables/figures; DOI/title consistency reviewed for the reference list.
Limitations	Original database-export history and independent duplicate coding unavailable; selectivity, language bias, and publication bias remain possible.

2.2 Appraisal, coding, and theory-building procedure

Two analytic passes were used. The first pass coded sources by evidentiary role: normative foundation, conceptual mechanism, educational practice, measurable outcome, or boundary condition. The second pass compared whether the same idea was expressed as a value, a leader capacity, a relationship, an institutional routine, or an outcome. This distinction matters: *amanah*, for example, is an ethical commitment; transparent delegation, auditable finance, grievance procedures, and answerability are organisational enactments of that commitment. Coding was iterative rather than statistically inductive. Competing interpretations were retained when they affected the model's boundaries, particularly around authority, paternalism, gender, and the relationship between religious identity and instructional quality. Evidence was included in the architecture only when it satisfied one of two thresholds. A component was labelled evidence-supported when at least one educational study provided direct empirical description or association. A component was labelled theory-derived when it followed from Islamic normative reasoning or adjacent leadership research but lacked direct prophetic-leadership evidence in education. This distinction is used again in Table 4 and prevents proposed indicators from appearing more mature than the evidence permits. Four central empirical articles were examined in full for figures and numerical results (Atiqullah, 2024; Dewantoro & Susilo, 2025; Juhji et al., 2025; Muslihah et al., 2025). Descriptive cases were not treated as causal evidence, and non-educational studies were used only to clarify mechanisms or boundary conditions. Table 1 therefore functions as a transparency device for disciplined narrative synthesis. It also makes visible where future replication would require a more systematic search and independent duplicate coding.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 From prophetic community to contemporary educational administration

The language of prophetic leadership cannot be transferred directly from seventh-century religious authority to contemporary educational offices. Historical Islamic discussions of authority developed through changing institutional forms: prophetic community, caliphal governance, jurisprudential and scholarly traditions, charitable and educational institutions, and, later, modern bureaucratic schooling. Classical ethical reasoning linked authority with trust, justice, knowledge, consultation, and reciprocal obligation, while Ibn Khaldun's historical sociology drew attention to the relationship between solidarity, authority, and institutional durability (Ibn Khaldun, 1989; Ali, 1989). Modern reconstructions of Islamic management likewise interpret leadership through the interaction of moral commitments and organisational form rather than through sacred status (Ali, 2005; Ali, 2009).

This genealogy matters for educational administration because the meaning of legitimate authority changes when leadership is exercised through principals, rectors, school boards, professional standards, financial systems, safeguarding duties, and public accountability. Biography and contemporary reconstruction of prophetic practice emphasise moral example, community building, delegated responsibility, persuasion, and conflict management (Armstrong, 1992; Udin & Dananjoyo, 2023). Yet the historical fact of prophetic authority cannot itself validate a modern managerial arrangement. TPEL therefore treats prophetic exemplarity as a normative source whose educational relevance must be demonstrated through institutional practices and outcomes.

Postcolonial and contemporary Muslim schooling introduces another layer. Leadership is shaped simultaneously by religious commitments, state regulation, professional norms, global leadership discourse, and local culture. Shah's work on Islamic educational leadership and culture shows why belief systems influence the meaning of authority and educational purpose rather than merely adding values to a universal model (Shah, 2006; Shah, 2010). This historical-institutional framing also clarifies the journal-relevant question: how older moral vocabularies are translated, contested, and administratively reconstituted in present educational organisations.

3.2 Core concepts and operational meanings

Tawhid is used here as an integrative premise: knowledge, ethics, work, and social responsibility are not separate domains. Maqasid is used in a contemporary teleological sense informed by maqasid al-shari'ah: attention is directed from formal compliance toward beneficial human and social purposes, while the specific educational indicators remain contestable and open to evidence (Mergaliyev et al., 2021). Taqwa and ikhlas locate intention within accountability to God, and amanah construes authority as entrusted and bounded rather than owned. In education, that trust concerns students' development,

educators' dignity, public or charitable resources, knowledge, and institutional continuity (Ali, 2005; Mergaliyev et al., 2021).

Prophetic leadership is often summarised through *sidq*, *amanah*, *tabligh*, and *fatanah*. These concepts indicate truthful congruence, trustworthy stewardship, responsible communication, and contextually intelligent judgement. Broader Islamic leadership scholarship adds justice, mercy, consultation, patience, excellence, and responsibility (Alshehri & Alkhelewi, 2019; Almoharby & Neal, 2013). Table 2 defines these terms once and distinguishes normative meaning from proposed educational enactment; Table 2 is therefore a conceptual translation device rather than a validated measurement scale.

Table 2. Key Islamic Concepts and Their Proposed Educational Translation

Concept	Normative Meaning	Educational Translation
Tawhid	Coherence of divine accountability, knowledge, ethics, and social responsibility	Alignment of mission, curriculum, resource priorities, and evaluation
Maqasid	Purpose-oriented pursuit of benefit and prevention of harm	Outcome framework extending beyond examination performance to flourishing, justice, and access
Amanah	Entrusted and bounded authority	Transparent stewardship, answerability, safeguarding, succession
Sidq	Truthfulness and congruence	Accurate reporting, acknowledgement of error, non-manipulative communication
Tabligh	Responsible and audience-sensitive communication	Accessible explanation, stakeholder dialogue, transparent decisions
Fatanah hikmah	/ Intelligent, context-sensitive judgement	Evidence use, risk assessment, adaptive decision-making
Shura	Consequential consultation	Staff, student, and parent voice that can influence alternatives
Rahmah and 'adl	Compassion joined to justice	Care, due process, equitable opportunity, protection from paternalism
Muhasabah	Reflective accountability	Institutional review, learning from error, corrective action
Itqan	Excellence and disciplined quality	Teaching quality, professional learning, responsible innovation

Dewantoro and Susilo provide an educationally specific representation of humanisation, liberation, and transcendence. Figure 2 is useful because it visualises their overlap rather than treating the three values as independent virtues. Humanisation protects dignity, liberation addresses ignorance and organisational stagnation, and transcendence locates action within divine accountability (Dewantoro & Susilo, 2025). Figure 2 also anticipates a central TPEL claim: no single value is educationally sufficient when detached from institutional checks.

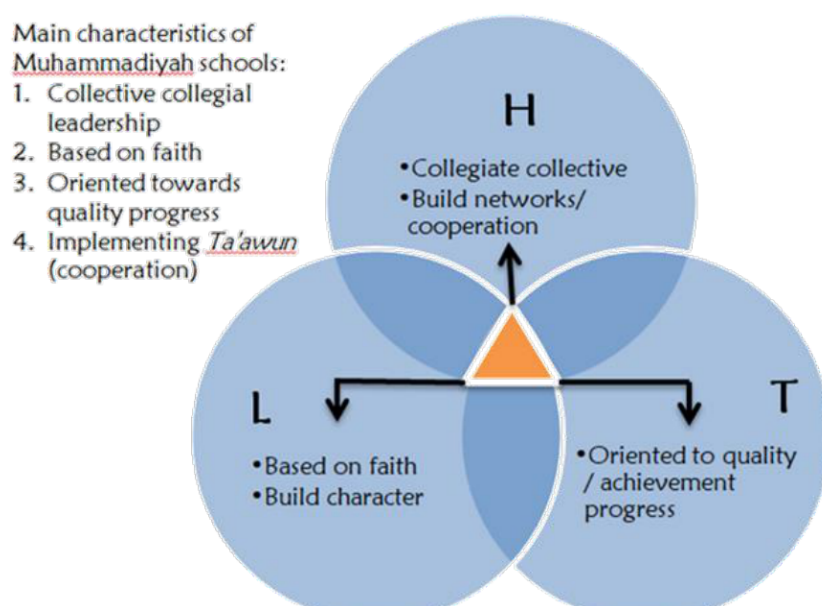


Figure 1. Humanisation, Liberation, and Transcendence as Overlapping Prophetic Values.

Source: Dewantoro And Susilo (2025), Figure 1.

The overlap shown in Figure 1 is analytically important. Transcendence without humanisation can legitimise hierarchy; liberation without learning capability can remain rhetorical; and humanisation without institutional accountability can become benevolent paternalism. These risks motivate the later separation of moral purpose, relational care, instructional stewardship, and accountability within TPEL (Hawass, 2017; Yaseen & ElRefae, 2019).

3.3 Evidence hierarchy and convergence with adjacent leadership theories

The review uses four evidence levels. Normative claims concern the interpretation of Islamic moral commitments. Conceptual claims explain plausible mechanisms. Empirically suggestive claims are supported by qualitative patterns or associations. Demonstrated causal claims would require designs that establish temporal order, comparison, and plausible control of alternative explanations; such evidence is not yet available for TPEL. Table 3 applies this hierarchy to the principal literatures, and Table 3 is used throughout the review to avoid treating classical texts, contemporary models, cross-sectional surveys, and outcome research as equivalent forms of evidence.

Islamic leadership selectively converges with established theories. Servant leadership prioritises service and follower development (Greenleaf, 1977). Ethical leadership explains social learning from what leaders model and reward (Brown et al., 2005). Spiritual leadership connects calling, membership, and hope to motivation (Fry, 2003). Relational leadership treats leadership as a social process (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Distributed leadership locates practice across people, tasks, and situations (Spillane, 2006; Spillane et al., 2004). Transformational leadership contributes vision and change processes, but its moral

ends are not predetermined (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Comparative religious-worldview theory further clarifies that spiritual meaning is not unique to one tradition and must be distinguished from TPEL's specifically Islamic account of accountability (Kriger & Seng, 2005).

Table 3. Conceptual Traditions and Evidence Hierarchy Relevant to TPEL

Tradition / Evidence Base	Core contribution	Evidence level	Principal limitation	Key sources
Classical reasoning	ethical Trusteeship joined to justice, knowledge, consultation, reciprocal obligation	Normative / conceptual	Historical interpretation does not establish contemporary effects	Asaf (1987); Ali (1989); Ibn Khaldun (1989)
Prophetic-caliphal/contextual models	Reciprocal influence, personalism, authoritarianism, institutionalisation	Conceptual with limited empirical testing	Broad social models do not specify educational mechanisms	Ali (1995); Ali (2009); Khadra (1990)
Islamic leadership principles	Justice, trust, knowledge, communication, service, accountability	Conceptual and cross-sectional	Construct overlap and social-desirability bias	Ahmad & Ogunsola (2011); Almoharby & Neal (2013); Marbun (2013)
Spiritual/qalb/balanced leadership	Calling, discernment, hope, membership, moral-practical balance	Conceptual / organisational	May under-specify governance, instruction, and power	Fry (2003); Egel & Fry (2017); ElKaleh (2023)
Islamic-oriented educational leadership	Contextualised Muslim school leadership; model and scale development	Expert-derived, review, psychometric	Causal and discriminant evidence remains early	Alazmi & Bush (2024); Alazmi (2025); Arar et al. (2026)
Instructional leadership	Curriculum, teaching, assessment, professional learning	Review, meta-analysis, empirical	Does not independently define moral purpose	Hallinger (2005); Robinson et al. (2008); Hitt & Tucker (2016)
Integrated transformational-instructional	Vision and instructional improvement across development phases	Meta-analytic / longitudinal	Normative legitimacy remains external	Marks & Printy (2003); Day et al. (2016); Leithwood & Sun (2012)
Distributed / systems leadership	Expertise distributed across people, tasks,	Conceptual and review	Distribution can reproduce	Spillane et al. (2004);

	situations, organisational levels		hierarchy without attention to power	Nguyen et al. (2020); Shaked & Schechter (2014)
Culturally responsive / social-justice	Dignity, voice, equity, community advocacy, structural barriers	Review and qualitative theory- building	Risk of reducing Islam or culture to fixed categories	Khalifa et al. (2016); Shields (2010); Theoharis (2007)
Sustainable / adaptive leadership	Continuity, capacity building, crisis learning, responsible innovation	Conceptual / emerging empirical	Technology and continuity indicators weakly validated	Hargreaves & Fink (2006); Fullan (2001); Harris & Jones (2022)

Discussion

4.1 Empirical Evidence Across Educational Settings

The empirical field is expanding but remains uneven. Ahmed's review of 362 publications documented rapid growth alongside geographic and topical concentration; 44% of the reviewed literature had appeared in the preceding four years and 45.6% of knowledge production was concentrated in Turkey, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates (Ahmed, 2023). Mapping of educational leadership models likewise shows persistent dominance of instructional, transformational, distributed, and teacher leadership approaches, with newer attention to context, inclusion, social justice, and culture (Gümüş et al., 2018; Gümüş et al., 2026). This unevenness is important when interpreting the smaller prophetic-leadership literature.

Figure 3, reproduced from Juhji et al., illustrates that prophetic leadership is connected to teacher, motivation, performance, and satisfaction clusters, but the network remains relatively sparse. The network structure in Figure 3 supports theory integration rather than a claim that prophetic educational leadership already constitutes a mature empirical field. A recent literature review similarly identifies application, rather than the availability of values, as the principal gap (Hakim & Zahra, 2024).

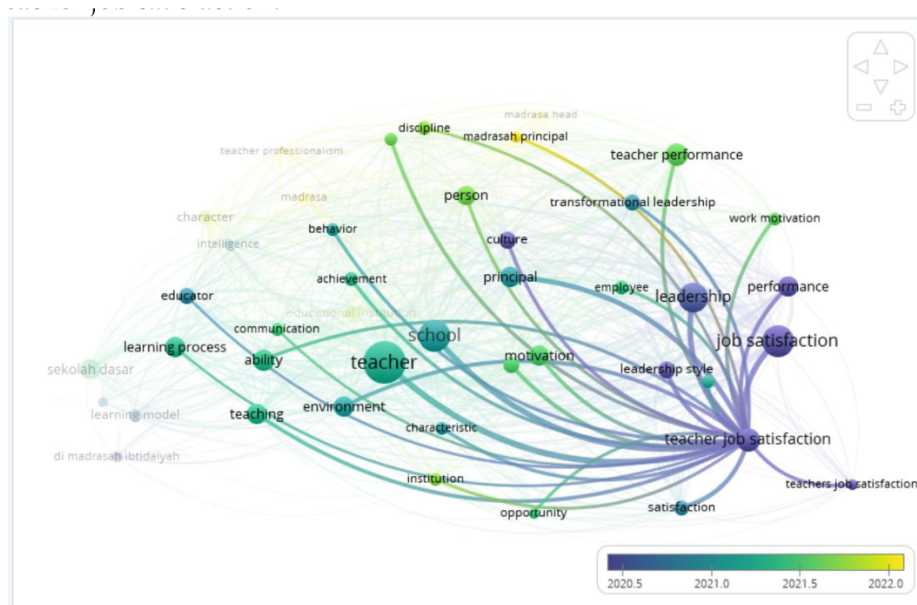


Figure 2. Keyword Network Connecting Prophetic Leadership with Teachers, Motivation, Performance, and Satisfaction.

Source: Juhji et al. (2025), Figure 1.

Figure 2 should not be read as evidence of effects. Its value is diagnostic: it shows the emerging vocabulary and the fragmentation of empirical attention, which justifies separating normative constructs from tested mechanisms in Table 4.

School and madrasah studies provide the clearest practice descriptions. Across five Muhammadiyah institutions, Dewantoro and Susilo identified collegial-collective leadership, faith orientation, progressive quality, and ta'awun. Reported implementation across humanisation, liberation, and transcendence ranged from 71.4% to 92.9%, but these percentages describe implementation rather than effects (Dewantoro & Susilo, 2025). Earlier Muhammadiyah research linked prophetic missions with student achievement, character, independence, enterprise, and leadership goals (Hamami et al., 2021). Pesantren studies add tradition, khidmah, mentorship, delegation, conflict resolution, and religious culture, while also revealing dependence on the authority of the kiai (Abidin & Sirojuddin, 2024; Dewi et al., 2024). Kiai leadership research grounded in local wisdom extends this concern to succession, radicalism prevention, and institutional legitimacy (Ma'arif et al., 2026). Mixed-method evidence from an Islamic school in Canada links perceived leadership with teachers' organisational commitment, illustrating the relevance of minority-Muslim settings (Hussein & da Costa, 2008).

Two quantitative studies offer suggestive, not causal, evidence. Juhji et al. surveyed 179 facilitator teachers from 27 Indonesian provinces. Their reported regression equation was $\hat{Y} = 56.827 + 0.514X$, with $R = .452$ and $R^2 = .205$; thus, a one-unit increase in the prophetic-leadership score was associated with a

0.514-unit increase in job satisfaction, while approximately 20.5% of variance was accounted for by the model (Juhji et al., 2025). These statistics support association, not causal impact, and cannot resolve omitted-variable or common-method bias. Muslihah et al. compared student reports in two secondary institutions. At MTsN 1 Serang (n = 36), prophetic leadership was 67.59%, teacher competence was 72.93%, and $r = .529$ ($p = .001$). At SMPN 1 Baros (n = 37), corresponding values were 74.45%, 72.18%, and $r = .751$ ($p < .001$) (Muslihah et al., 2025). Figure 4 makes the contextual contrast visible: the public school reported higher prophetic-leadership scores although it was not formally Islamic. Figure 4 therefore challenges institutional labelling as a proxy for practice; however, its two-site, self-report design sharply limits generalisation.

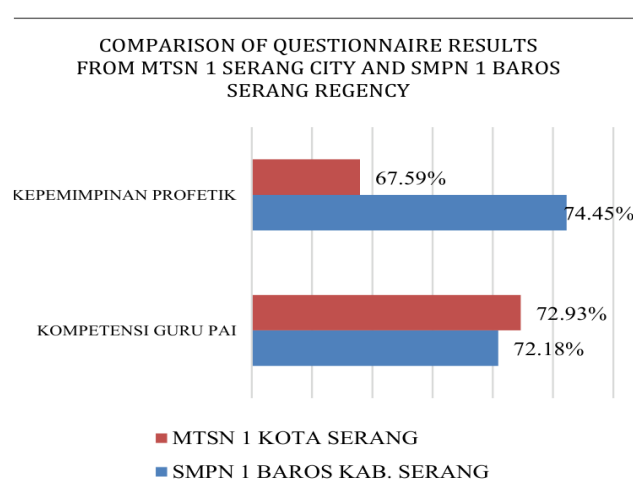


Figure 3. Reported Prophetic Leadership and Teacher-Competence Percentages in Two Secondary Institutions.

Source: Muslihah et al. (2025), Figure 1.

The contrast in Figure 3 is theoretically important because it separates formal religious identity from observable leadership practice. It also motivates TPEL's insistence that institutional indicators should be evaluated independently of labels or leader self-description.

Higher-education evidence extends the construct beyond principals. Atiqullah's phenomenological study of ten participants in two private universities identified humanisation, liberation, and transcendence, alongside barriers such as comfort zones, weak cross-unit synergy, insufficient socialisation, and limited policy clarity (Atiqullah, 2024). Studies of university human-resource development, teacher education, and women's education similarly connect prophetic leadership to ethical formation, innovation, and agency, but remain qualitative or conceptual (Anwar et al., 2026; Owa-Onire Uthman, 2026; Makruf et al., 2022). These studies are useful for mechanism development, not effect estimation. Other educational studies point to parent partnership, cultural

intelligence, communication, and digital adaptation. Recurring teacher-parent structures in Islamic early-childhood education illustrate how consultation can become routine rather than occasional (Kabiba et al., 2026). Prophetic communication has been associated with reflective questioning, tolerance, and culturally responsive interaction (Idrus & Ghani, 2023; Qub'a & Eljack, 2026). Social-media engagement and digital talent systems show that Islamic values can govern innovation, but these studies do not demonstrate that a religious label improves technology decisions (Asmendri et al., 2024; Fijjar & Manaf, 2026). Qur'anic discourse analysis also identifies tact, modesty, and context-sensitive communication (Arifianto et al., 2023).

Evidence outside education clarifies possible mechanisms and risks rather than supplying direct educational proof. Islamic leadership has been associated with commitment and performance in service organisations, although findings vary by mediator and context (Zaim et al., 2024; Munandar et al., 2026). Studies in Morocco, Jordan, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt show that Islamic values interact with kinship, tribal norms, organisational incentives, and national institutions (Forster & Fenwick, 2015; Alqhaiwi et al., 2023; Patel et al., 2019). These findings reinforce the distinction between espoused Islam and Islam-in-use and make contextual moderation central rather than peripheral (Yaseen & ElRefae, 2019). Public-school evidence on information leadership points toward learning performance, but it is not a test of prophetic leadership (Rahim et al., 2024). Islamic visionary leadership has been associated with organisational commitment and performance in state-owned enterprises, providing adjacent rather than educational evidence (Yulius, 2022). Governance research on zakat institutions similarly links spiritual service and organisational commitment, but its sector-specific measures should not be treated as educational evidence (Santoso et al., 2024).

Table 4. Evidence-supported components and theory-derived TPEL propositions

Component	Current support	Key limitation	Status in TPEL
Moral purpose / integrity	Directly described across Islamic and prophetic leadership studies; psychometric support emerging	Mostly perception-based; limited independent outcomes	Evidence-supported foundation
Learning-centred stewardship	Strong evidence in mainstream educational leadership; limited direct prophetic-leadership testing	Transfer from instructional leadership requires explicit testing	Theory-derived TPEL integration
Consultative / distributed governance	Qualitative educational descriptions of collegiality, parent collaboration, delegation	Influence quality and power distribution rarely measured	Partially evidence-supported

Relational care / inclusion	Conceptual and adjacent evidence on dignity, trust, psychological safety, cultural responsiveness	Religious care can mask paternalism	Theory-derived with adjacent support
Adaptive capability / innovation	Qualitative evidence on digitalisation and organisational adaptation	Few validated technology or decision-quality indicators	Emerging / theory-derived
Institutional accountability / continuity	Strong normative rationale and systems-leadership support	Minimal direct prophetic educational evidence	Primarily theory-derived
Teacher outcomes	Associations with job satisfaction, competence, commitment	Cross-sectional/common-method bias	Empirically suggestive
Student learning / institutional sustainability	Central educational outcomes proposed by TPEL	No convincing causal evidence specific to TPEL	Unproven; priority for testing

Table 4 deliberately exposes the asymmetry of the evidence base. It prevents direct empirical findings on teacher attitudes from being used to imply that the complete seven-domain architecture has already been validated. The distinction in Table 4 also informs the falsifiable propositions developed below.

4.2 Layered architecture and derivation of the seven domains

Figure 1 presents TPEL as a layered, configurational model. Spiritual-ethical foundations orient leader capacities; capacities become relational processes; relationships are embedded in institutional practices; and practices work through trust, psychological safety, professional learning, participation, motivation, and mission coherence. Outcomes concern student learning and flourishing, educator development, justice, organisational learning, and continuity. Context moderates each layer, while shura and muhasabah create recursive correction. Figure 1 therefore separates values, capacities, processes, practices, mechanisms, and outcomes that are frequently blended in virtue-centred accounts. The seven domains were not selected as an exhaustive list of Islamic virtues. They were derived by asking what organisational function is required if the normative concepts in Table 2 are to become observable in educational institutions. Purpose and moral orientation answers the question of ends; exemplary integrity concerns credibility and bounded authority; learning-centred stewardship protects the entrusted good of education; consultative and distributed governance regulates participation and authority; relational care and inclusion links compassion with justice; capability and adaptive innovation concerns intelligent response to changing conditions; and institutional accountability and continuity protects the institution beyond the incumbent leader. Figure 2 informed the separation of humanisation, liberation, and transcendence, while mainstream educational leadership supplied the mechanisms needed to translate those values into practice.

These domains are hypothesised to be complementary, not empirically proven to be mutually reinforcing. The distinction matters. A school may display high interpersonal care but weak safeguarding, strong religious symbolism but poor instructional quality, or active consultation without meaningful decision influence. TPEL therefore treats coherence across domains as a proposition to be tested rather than an established fact.

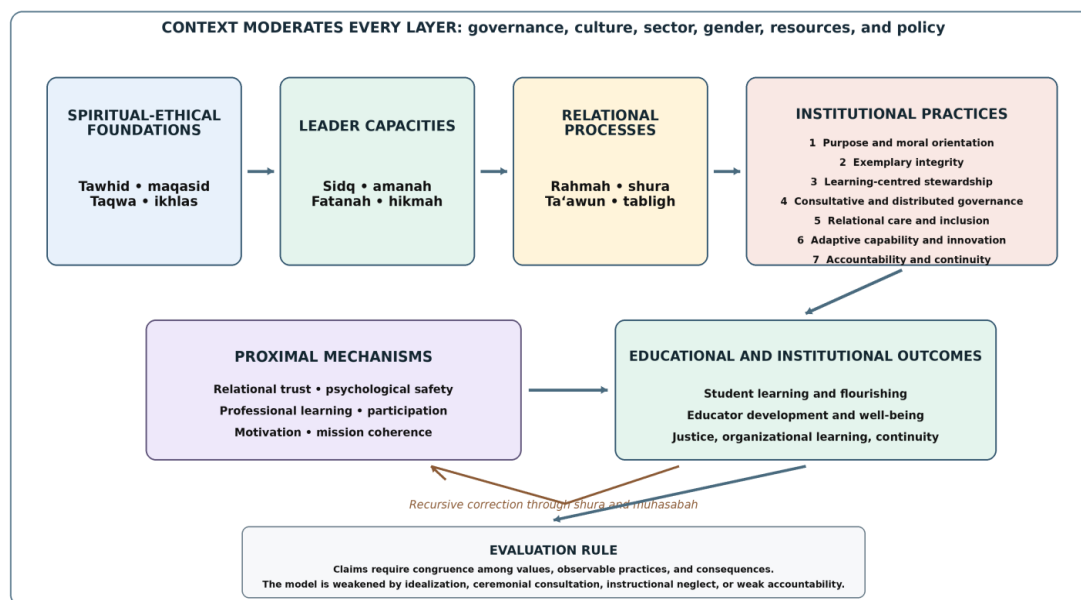


Figure 4. Layered Architecture of the Tawhidic-Prophetic Educational Leadership (TPEL) Model

Source: Authors' Synthesis.

The architecture in Figure 4 also clarifies the unit of analysis. Leader character is a necessary but insufficient input; the primary analytical target is the ethically governed institution. This shift becomes especially important when leadership changes hands, because continuity requires routines, distributed capability, and review processes rather than personal charisma alone.

4.3 Distinguishing TPEL from adjacent leadership models

TPEL is closest to Islamic-Oriented Educational Leadership (IOEL), which established a culturally grounded model of holistic Islamic education and model leadership from expert interpretation (Alazmi & Bush, 2024). Its subsequent scale provides an important psychometric platform and evidence of relationships with teacher engagement and school performance (Alazmi, 2025). TPEL builds on this work but changes the explanatory emphasis: institutionalisation, instructional quality, failure conditions, and continuity are constitutive rather than supplementary. It also differs from the two-layer spiritual-core framework by specifying educational mechanisms, institutional locations, and observations that could falsify the model (Arar et al., 2026). Table 5 compares TPEL with adjacent models across the dimensions most relevant to theoretical distinctiveness. The point of Table 5 is not to claim superiority. Instead, it identifies where TPEL makes additional predictions that can be tested

empirically. If those predictions do not add explanatory value beyond IOEL, ethical, servant, instructional, or distributed leadership, TPEL should not be retained as a separate construct.

Table 5. Theoretical Differentiation of TPEL from Adjacent Leadership Models

Model	Moral / theoretical basis	Primary unit	Core mechanism	Empirical maturity	Distinctive relation to TPEL
IOEL	Islamic worldview and holistic education	Primarily leader/school model	Holistic Islamic education and model leadership	Emerging through validated scale	TPEL adds explicit institutional routines, failure modes, continuity, and falsification
Ethical leadership	Normatively appropriate conduct; social learning	Leader-follower	Modelling, reinforcement, trust	Moderate/strong	TPEL specifies Tawhidic moral ontology plus learning-centred stewardship and institutional review
Servant leadership	Service and follower development	Leader-follower/comm unity	Service, empowerment , development	Moderate/strong	TPEL adds explicit educational purpose, justice constraints, and accountability beyond benevolence
Instructional leadership	Improving teaching and learning	School leadership practice	Curriculum, observation, professional learning	Strong educational evidence	TPEL adds moral legitimacy, participation, care, and institutional accountability
Distributed leadership	Leadership across people, tasks, situations	Practice/system	Shared expertise and influence	Substantial descriptive/revie w evidence	TPEL specifies moral criteria for distribution and guards against informal hierarchy
TPEL	Tawhidic moral purpose translated into accountable educational institutions	Institution as primary unit; leader as one component	Moral purpose → capacities → relations → routines → mechanisms → outcomes	Early; model not yet validated	Distinct only if institutionalisati on and cross-domain coherence add discriminant predictive value

Figure 5 compresses the same discriminant logic visually. TPEL borrows mechanisms from established theories but makes a narrower claim: Islamic moral commitments should predict educational outcomes only when translated into learning-centred and accountable institutional routines.

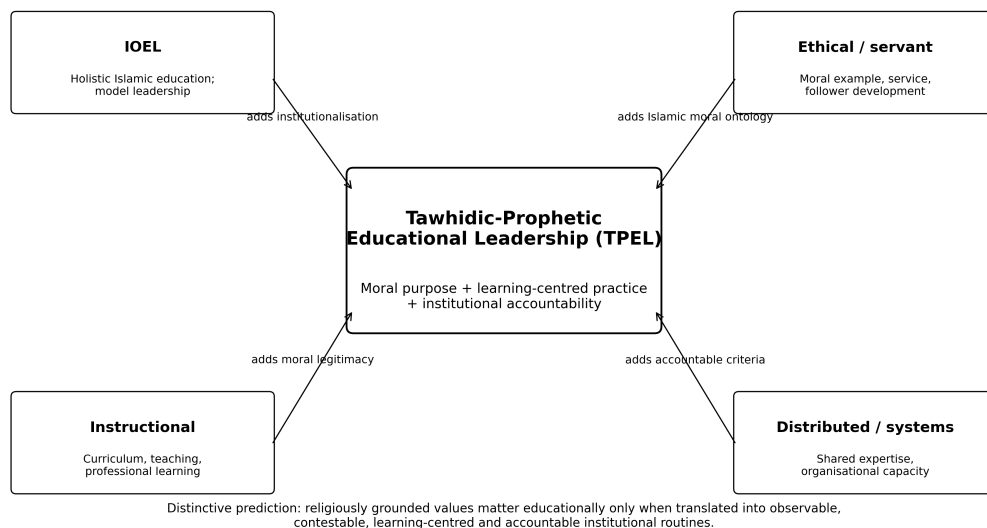


Figure 5. Discriminant Logic of TPEL in Relation to Adjacent Leadership Models.

Source: authors' synthesis.

The comparison in Figure 5 therefore generates a direct test of theoretical necessity. If generic ethical, servant, instructional, or distributed leadership fully explains outcomes after TPEL-specific institutionalisation variables are introduced, the argument for a separate TPEL construct is weakened.

4.4 Operational domains and indicators

Purpose and moral orientation aligns mission, curriculum, incentives, and resources. Exemplary integrity connects *sidq* and *amanah* with truthful reporting, fair appointment, conflict-of-interest control, confidentiality, and acknowledgement of error. Learning-centred stewardship treats beneficial learning as the primary entrusted good and incorporates instructional observation, curriculum coherence, evidence use, mentoring, and educator development (Hallinger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Consultative and distributed governance makes participation consequential and places authority where competence can be exercised (Harris, 2004; Nguyen et al., 2020).

Relational care and inclusion join *rahmah* with *'adl* so that care expands agency rather than dependency. Culturally responsive and social-justice scholarship strengthens attention to voice, structural exclusion, and community advocacy (Khalifa et al., 2016; Theoharis, 2007). Capability and adaptive innovation combines *fatanah*, *hikmah*, and *itqan* with evidence use, risk assessment, and

ethical technology governance. Institutional accountability and continuity converts values into transparent finance, safeguarding, grievance systems, succession, and leadership review. Systems and sustainable leadership research supports the movement from individual heroism to organisational capacity (Shaked & Schechter, 2014; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006).

Table 6 translates the seven domains into observable practices, proposed indicators, and failure conditions. These indicators are proposals for validation, not an established scale. Table 6 should therefore be read alongside Table 4: some domains have direct educational evidence, whereas others are theory-derived and require independent empirical testing.

Table 6. Operational domains of the TPEL model

TPEL domain	Values / capacities	Observable educational practices	Proposed indicators	Failure condition	Key sources
Purpose and moral orientation	Tawhid, maqasid, niyyah	Mission-linked curriculum, resource allocation, appraisal, public priorities	Goal coherence; holistic outcomes; mission-aligned budget	Mission rhetoric detached from incentives	Shah (2006); Campbell et al. (2003)
Exemplary integrity	Sidq, amanah, taqwa	Truthful reporting, fair appointments, conflict controls, confidentiality, acknowledgment of error	Audit findings; decision transparency; appeal outcomes; trust	Idealisation or symbolic piety	Brown et al. (2005); Daud et al. (2018); Yaseen & ElRefae (2019)
Learning-centred stewardship	Itqan, beneficial knowledge	Curriculum coherence, instructional observation, evidence use, mentoring, targeted support	Teaching quality; educator development; learning/access gaps	Spiritual identity substitutes for instructional quality	Hallinger & Murphy (1985); Hallinger et al. (2020); Grissom et al. (2021)
Consultative and distributed governance	Shura, ta'awun, reciprocity	Consequential staff/student/parent voice; delegated authority; succession	Decision influence; leadership density; participation quality	Ceremonial consultation or informal exclusion	Harris (2004); Kabiba et al. (2026); Ogunbado et al. (2016)
Relational care and inclusion	Rahmah, 'adl, dignity	Psychological safety, restorative discipline, equitable opportunity,	Belonging; safety; retention; discipline/promotion equity	Benevolent paternalism	Bryk & Schneider (2002); Edmondson (1999); Anadol &

Capability and adaptive innovation	Fatanah, hikmah, itqan	community advocacy Evidence use, digital governance, assessment, mentoring, responsible experimentation	Decision quality; digital equity; innovation benefit; staff capability	Technocratic adoption without ethical review	Behery (2020) Basir & Rahman (2022); Fijjar & Manaf (2026); Asmendri et al. (2024)
Institutional accountability and continuity	Amanah, muhasabah, justice	Transparent finance, safeguarding, grievance systems, leadership review, succession	Complaint resolution; ethics data; continuity after transition	Personal dependence or metric capture	Ali (2009); Nasution et al. (2021); Hargreaves & Fink (2006)

4.5 Falsifiable propositions

Five propositions make the model contestable. P1 predicts that spiritual orientation will not improve educational outcomes directly when institutional practices are absent. P2 predicts that integrity strengthens trust, but learning outcomes improve only when integrity is joined to instructional capability. P3 predicts that shura improves legitimacy and knowledge use only when participants receive relevant information and can influence alternatives. P4 predicts that relational care improves psychological safety and retention only when it is constrained by justice and due process. P5 predicts that continuity depends more on distributed capability and accountable routines than on leader charisma. Table 7 operationalises these propositions by specifying predictors, mediators, outcomes, moderators, units of analysis, and competing explanations. The purpose of Table 7 is to make failure informative: null incremental effects, poor discriminant validity, or contradictory independent outcomes should trigger revision rather than rhetorical defence of the model.

Table 7. Operationalisation and Falsification Logic for TPEL Propositions

Proposition	Predictor	Mediator	Outcome	Moderator	Unit	Competing explanation / falsifier
P1	Spiritual-ethical orientation	Institutionalisation of practices	Teaching quality; student/educator outcomes	Strength of routines; context	School/institution	Generic religiosity or social desirability explains scores

P2	Exemplary integrity	Trust	Learning / professional outcomes	Instructional capability	Leader-team-school	Ethical leadership fully accounts for the relationship
P3	Shura consultative governance	/ Decision legitimacy ; knowledge use	Decision quality; participation	Information access; real influence	Team/school	Consultation is ceremonial and adds no effect
P4	Relational care	Psychological safety	Retention; belonging; voice	Justice and due process	Team/school	Paternalism explains apparent care effects
P5	Distributed capability + accountability	Organisational learning	Continuity after leader transition	Succession routines; system support	Institution over time	Charisma or individual leader quality fully explains continuity

4.6 Boundary Conditions, Falsification, and Sectoral Translation

A prophetic label is not evidence of prophetic governance. Leader idealisation is the first failure condition: the unique religious status of the Prophet cannot be transferred to principals, rectors, or kiai. Charismatic attribution can bind followers to a person rather than to shared values and institutions (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Howell & Shamir, 2005). A second condition is benevolent paternalism, in which care masks restricted voice. A third is symbolic Islamisation, in which ceremonies or vocabulary coexist with opaque finance, favouritism, or weak teaching (Hawass, 2017; Hawass, 2019). Young leaders' receptiveness to a historical Islamic style also shows that exemplar-based models are interpreted by contemporary audiences rather than simply reproduced (Putra et al., 2025). Negative and null evidence is limited. This scarcity may reflect publication bias, social-desirability effects, normatively framed instruments, and the rarity of independent outcomes. Existing organisational studies show both effective and ineffective conduct within Islamic cultural fields, and scale development on self-centred leadership demonstrates that culturally legitimate authority can serve leader needs (Patel et al., 2019; Hawass, 2019). Findings from Islamic banking also show that expected mediators are not always significant (Munandar et al., 2026). TPEL should therefore be revised or rejected where it adds no discriminant validity, where its domains fail to predict independent outcomes, or where institutions score highly while stakeholders report injustice, weak learning, opaque decisions, or unsafe conditions. Figure 5 makes this falsification logic visible: TPEL only warrants separate

theoretical status if the institutionalisation pathway adds explanatory information beyond adjacent models. Figure 4 adds an empirical warning from a different direction: an institution's formal Islamic identity cannot be treated as a proxy for prophetic practice. Together, Figures 4 and 5 shift validation away from labels and toward observable routines and outcomes.

Sector matters. Schools concentrate curriculum, child safeguarding, parent relations, and principal influence. Pesantren combine schooling, residence, religious formation, and personal authority. Universities distribute authority across faculties, senates, professions, and external accreditation. Muslim-minority institutions must express Islamic commitments in ways that protect civic inclusion and plural participation (Shah, 2006; Ellethy, 2014). Gender is a decisive test of justice rather than an optional add-on. Historical and hermeneutic work identifies resources for women's agency while challenging decontextualised restrictions (Abdullah, 2020; Muin et al., 2026). Faculty perceptions also vary by gender and context, although single-site findings should not be essentialised (Alharthi, 2024). Table 8 translates TPEL across sectors and identifies sector-specific risks. The contrasts in Table 8 are intended to prevent a single model from becoming a uniform administrative script. More broadly, cultural intelligence and humanistic leadership show why dignity, humility, and contextual understanding must be linked to institutional rights rather than leader benevolence alone (Anadol & Behery, 2020; Hammad et al., 2023).

Table 8. Sectoral Translation and Boundary Conditions

Sector		Priority Enactment	Illustrative Evidence	Principal Boundary Condition
Schools and madrasahs		Instructional stewardship, development, safeguarding, partnership, transparent management	teacher parent transparent (2025); Juhji et al. (2025); Muslihah et al. (2025)	Religious identity may be mistaken for evidence of practice; effects are mediated by teachers and school conditions
Pesantren boarding institutions	/	Formation through tradition, mentorship, practice, succession	through service, communal delegation, successions Abidin & Sirojuddin (2024); Dewi et al. (2024); Ma'arif et al. (2026)	Residential and personal authority can strengthen formation while increasing dependence on the kiai
Universities teacher education	/	Distributed governance, HR development, professional autonomy, research integrity, ethical innovation	governance, development, autonomy, integrity, ethical innovation Atiqullah (2024); Anwar et al. (2026); Owa-Onire Uthman (2026)	Senates, accreditation, and professional norms diffuse authority beyond one leader
Women's leadership / diverse communities		Equitable recruitment, voice, promotion, interpretive inclusion	recruitment, safety, pluralism, inclusion Abdullah (2020); Makruf et al. (2022); Muin et al. (2026)	Inherited cultural restrictions may be presented as religious requirements

Crisis, communication, public interface	Continuous communication, expert advice, cultural intelligence, stakeholder trust	Basir & Rahman (2022); Hamid et al. (2025); Wan & Ji (2026)	Urgency can centralise authority; transparency and review must remain active
Cross-sector organisational learning	Adjacent evidence used only to clarify moral example, meaning, commitment, performance mechanisms	Beekun (2012); Kriger & Seng (2005); Yulius (2022)	Business/public-administration findings cannot be transferred mechanically to education

Table 8 also shows why measurement invariance is essential. A valid TPEL instrument cannot assume that the same behaviour has identical institutional meaning in a school, pesantren, university, or minority-Muslim setting. Sectoral translation should preserve moral criteria while allowing organisational expression to vary.

4.7 Research Agenda and Implications

Three priorities are decisive. First, TPEL requires construct validation and discriminant testing against IOEL, ethical, servant, instructional, transformational, culturally responsive, and distributed leadership. Multi-source measures should distinguish observable behaviour from perceived piety and test invariance across countries, sectors, genders, and Muslim-majority and minority settings. The psychometric advances of Alazmi (2025) provide a platform, while established work on leadership-model comparison offers methodological guidance (Gümüş et al., 2018; Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Table 5 and Table 7 together provide the conceptual and statistical questions that such validation must answer.

Second, mechanisms require multilevel and longitudinal testing. Teachers are nested within institutions and institutions within policy systems. Studies should examine whether changes in leadership precede changes in trust, professional learning, competence, retention, belonging, and student outcomes. Current associations with job satisfaction and competence are promising, but common-method and temporal ambiguity remain (Juhji et al., 2025; Muslihah et al., 2025). Evidence on psychological safety, self-determination, and instructional leadership offers testable mediators (Edmondson, 1999; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Third, the unit of evaluation should shift from the 'prophetic leader' to the prophetically governed institution. Audits should combine stakeholder experience with appointment records, resource distribution, safeguarding, grievance resolution, teaching quality, digital governance, and succession. Measurement must avoid metric capture, especially when institutions use scores for branding. Leadership development should integrate Islamic ethical reflection with observation of teaching, data

use, conflict resolution, finance, community engagement, and technology risk (El Kaleh & Samier, 2013; Harris & Jones, 2022). Table 6 provides candidate indicators, but those indicators should be piloted and subjected to validity testing before use in performance appraisal.

For policy and practice, selection should assess ethical judgement and technical competence together. Leadership standards can use the seven domains without mandating religious slogans. Evaluation should compare mission claims with ordinary decisions, especially those affecting less powerful groups. Maqasid-oriented scorecards may broaden outcomes beyond examination performance, but indicators should remain open to evidence and stakeholder challenge (Mergaliyev et al., 2021). Figure 1 can guide local theory-of-change design, while Table 8 reminds users that institutional form changes how each principle should be enacted.

Finally, historical analysis should remain part of the research agenda rather than a decorative preface. Studies of how prophetic, caliphal, managerial, and professional vocabularies have been translated across colonial, postcolonial, national, and transnational educational systems could clarify which elements are historically contingent and which are claimed as enduring normative principles. Such work would also protect contemporary leadership theory from treating present administrative arrangements as timeless expressions of Islam.

CONCLUSIONS

This review asked which foundations distinguish an Islamic account of educational leadership, what the empirical literature currently supports, and how those foundations can become an observable institutional model. First, the distinguishing foundation is not a list of virtues but a Tawhidic account of moral purpose, entrusted authority, justice, consultation, and accountability whose contemporary meaning must be interpreted historically and organisationally. Second, the evidence supports positive associations and qualitative patterns involving teacher satisfaction, competence, collaboration, trust, and organisational development, but it does not yet establish causal effects on student learning or institutional sustainability. Third, TPEL translates these foundations into seven institutional domains, observable practices, mechanisms, failure conditions, and falsifiable propositions. The model's central shift is from an exceptional individual to an ethically governed institution. That shift is theoretically useful only if it survives discriminant testing. TPEL should add explanatory value beyond adjacent leadership models, predict independent educational outcomes, remain sensitive to sector and context, and fail when moral language is not matched by learning quality, consequential participation, justice, transparent systems, and continuity beyond the incumbent leader. In that sense, prophetic educational leadership is credible not because an institution claims the label, but because its moral commitments can be observed, challenged, measured, and sustained.

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