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## ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABILITY: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW USING PRISMA

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### ABSTRACT

This paper presents a systematic literature review on Islamic leadership for sustainability with the aim to survey the state of knowledge on the topic. The paper reviews the scope of Islamic leadership initiatives for sustainable development in a variety of contexts. The study employed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) method as a guideline for systematic data collection. Data was surveyed from journal articles over two decades, i.e., between 2000 and 2021. The analysis included a total of 63 articles from the EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) database. Results show that the frequency of publications on Islamic leadership for sustainable development was increasing for the past ten years, led by Muslim countries. This study also shows that Islamic leadership and conventional leadership styles share many values. The *tawhidic* paradigm emerges as a distinguishing feature of Islamic leadership. Findings indicate that Islamic leadership is geared towards comprehensive efforts for social sustainability, at individual, organizational and national levels.

Keywords: leadership, sustainability, Islamic, systematic review, PRISMA

### INTRODUCTION

Leadership plays a critical role in organizational survival and sustainability. Members of an organization seek directions and orders from their leaders to act. During the pandemic COVID-19, for example, leaders play the roles as a sense maker, technology enabler, emotional stabilizer, innovative communicator, and financial sustainer for the organization (Beilstein et al., 2020; Dirani et al., 2020; Wilson, 2020). The leader requires a team to play these vital roles in guiding multiple units across the organization to manage a crisis effectively and to sustain the overall business operations efficiently (Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020; Obrenovic et al., 2020; Sharif, 2019). Leadership is continuously being examined because it is essential to any social system at individual, group, and organisational levels across various contexts.

In an Islamic context, scholars have emphasized many roles of a Muslim leader, and the concept of Islamic leadership has been grounded on the specific word '*khalifah*' revealed in the Holy Quran in Verse 2:30 which refers to the Prophet Adam and Verse 38:26 which refers to the Prophet Daud (Sohaib Mukhtar et al., 2022). In Arabic, the noun's trilateral root for *khalifah* is *kha lam fa* which originally means a successor. Later, based on al-Tabari's work of *tafsir*, the Qur'anic term *khalifah* takes on the meaning of a ruler or a leader who has the missions to cultivate the earth, lead the people to the perfection of selves, and implement God's Commands over them (Liew, 2016). In an organizational setting, a leader is responsible for developing the organization's excellence and guiding the ways for employee well-being. To take on these responsibilities, the Islamic leader must be equipped with multiple attributes, skills, competencies, and intelligence (Jamil, 2015; Khattab & Wong, 2018; Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020). Effective leaders are then considered to possess an overall capability to balance their personal attributes, specific skills, and spiritual intelligence to ensure sustainable development of the people and the organization (Kessi et al., 2022).

Leaders with Islamic orientation are also expected to engage with today's global agenda that focuses on sustainable growth in every social, economic, and environmental context. However, the state of knowledge about Islamic-oriented leadership in relation to sustainability appears limited and specifically fewer research available on Islamic leadership principles for sustainable development goals (Ogunsola et al., 2020; Rashed & Shah, 2021; Tahir, 2020). Although there has been a growing interest in the Islamic leadership concept in recent years, the role of Islamic leadership in promoting sustainable practices is not well explored (Bakar, 2010; Karia, 2020; Rashed & Shah, 2021). According to Karia (2020), other leadership styles like transformational, charismatic and consultative are found more convenient to support sustainability initiatives compared to Islamic leadership style. This is potentially due to the non-capitalistic view of Islamic leadership that depends mostly on the leadership system that follows only religious guidelines. Therefore, there is uncertainty whether the Islamic leadership will promote sustainable practice or not.

The uncertain implications of Islamic leadership on sustainability are evidence based on the existing mixed research findings. According to Hamid (2020), the failure of socioeconomic sustainability among the Muslims was due to their Islamic leadership style that are mixed with disagreeable tendencies such as political prejudice. In addition to other behavioural issues that were also associated with Islamic leadership such as selfishness and sectionalism which adversely affect the effectiveness of their leadership, reduce economic productivity, and potentially causing social disorders (Hamid, 2020). Some Muslim leaders abused their leadership power and created disorders that impaired the good governance which led to socioeconomic degradation.

Leaders are responsible to establish engagement with their followers and build a trusted relationship in the groups or organisations. According to Meiyani and Putra (2019), Islamic leadership has a significant and positive effect on employee engagement in an Indonesian production company. A study conducted by these scholars argued that Islamic leadership style can be an alternative solution for today's organizations and has a significant impact on achieving organizational goals and sustainability (Meiyani & Putra, 2019). Their study examined critical elements such as reliability and trust of a leader to facilitate employees' engagement and job satisfaction to realize sustainable business revenues. It is worth noting that reliability, trust, selfishness, and politics are not only central to Islamic leadership but also constitute the common concepts that are closely linked with other leadership styles.

Based on the literature reviewed so far, it appears that the scholars have contradicting opinions about the Islamic leadership approach to sustainability. The diverse opinions are mainly attributed to the key values, the primary concerns, and the main contributions of Islamic leadership to sustainable development efforts. For example, Hamid (2020) found that accountability was the key value or principle for Islamic leaders as compared to justice as suggested by Meiyani and Putra (2019). The primary concerns were also varied as some Islamic leaders gave more attention to the socioeconomic

sustainability of the people (Hamid, 2020) while others emphasised more on people engagement for organisational sustainability (Meiyani & Putra, 2019). The same goes with the main contributions of Islamic leadership in sustainable development which were diverse between tangible and intangible benefits such as product innovation (Trishananto et al., 2022), financial performance (Febriani & Sa'diyah, 2021), job satisfaction (Bismala, 2021), and social justice (Hamid, 2020).

Thus, the diversity of the existing literature on Islamic leadership for sustainability motivates this study, specifically, to survey the state of knowledge on the topic and to recognize what are the values, concerns, and contributions of Islamic leadership towards sustainable development. To achieve this objective, the following research questions were formulated to guide the systematic review:

- (1) What are the values that are being associated with Islamic leadership?
- (2) Why do Islamic leaders concern about sustainability?
- (3) How does Islamic leadership contribute for sustainable development?

The next sections provide descriptions of the research methodology covering the procedures for data collection and analysis.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This literature review adopted the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guideline (Moher et al., 2009). The PRISMA method has mainly being used in medical research; however, the method had been recently adopted by other non-medical studies such as in social sciences and sustainable development research (Mensah & Casadevall, 2019). Previous review papers often do not report in detail the procedures to undertake the article selection process that is categorized as a data collection step in research. However, PRISMA guidelines do provide a standard methodology to conduct a systematic literature review that contributes for reliability and quality of the revision process (Abelha et al., 2020). A review method was established for this study that describes the search strategy based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, and data analysis procedures.

### ***Data Sources and Search Strategies***

This review used secondary data that was sourced from an electronic database, the EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) with institutional access and collected relevant literature. The EDS is an online research database that has a comprehensive collection of more than 3.7 billion records from approximately 11,000 different publishers through the index (EBSCO, 2020). The literature was identified through an advanced search using a combination of the Boolean/Phrase mode, nested and truncating techniques for keywords that are associated with Islamic, leadership, and sustainable development. The actual search terms used were: (islam\* leadership) AND “sustain\* development”. The initial step searched the terms in all fields in the literature and did not specify date in order to obtain a preliminary number of occurrences of these terms being used in the literature. Consequently, the initial search identified a total of 1,036 literature and published from 1980 to 2021.

### ***Selection of Studies***

Literature that was not relevant to the Islamic leadership and sustainability or sustainable development theme was excluded. To avoid the risk of excluding relevant academic literature, reference lists of the initial search were screened based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The step-by-step screening process involved reviewing the literature for duplicates and document type. In this study, only literature

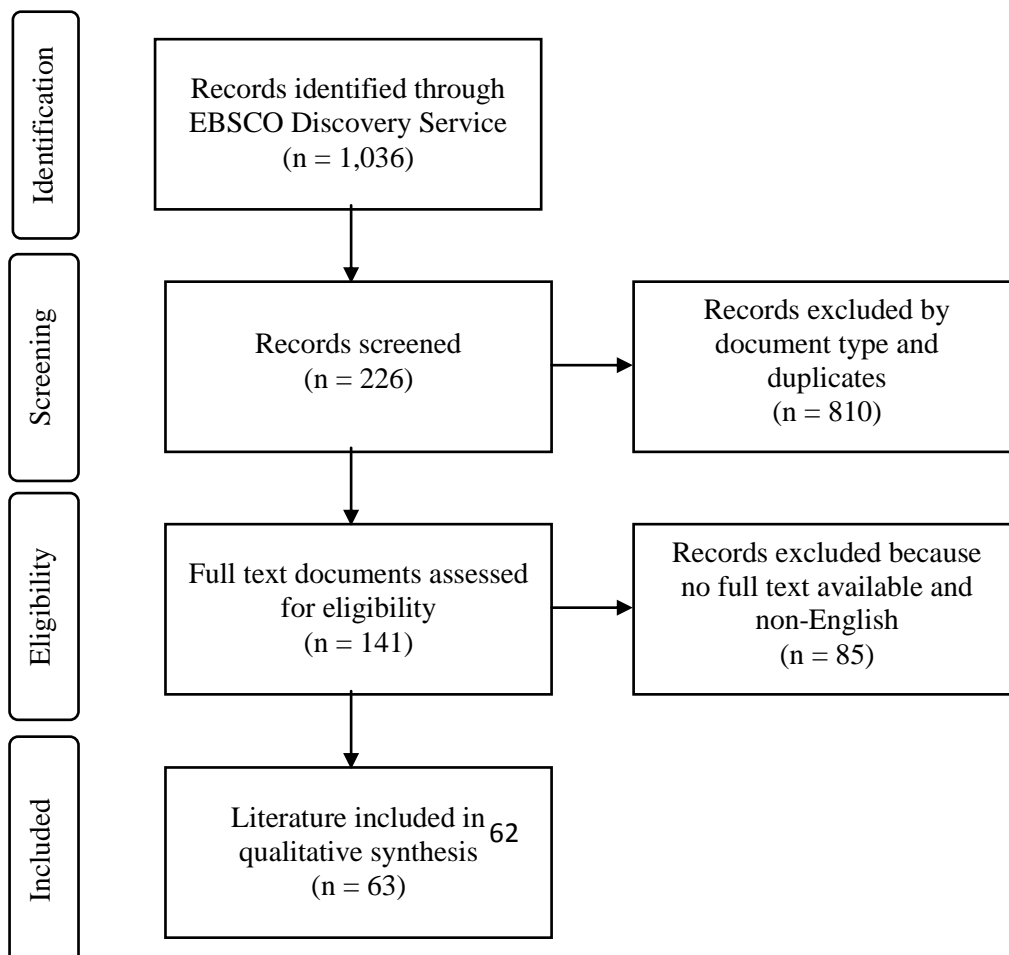
that was categorized as academic journals was selected and document types such as news, reports, books, and other electronic resources like magazines and dissertations were excluded. One of the benefits using the EDS is that the search function will automatically screen for duplicates and remove them from the reference search list. Finally, a total of 226 literature were selected after applying the screening process.

**Eligibility Criteria**

The literature was further screened based on availability of full text document and language. Only full text and English documents were included in the study. Non-English and no full text documents were excluded at this step. As a result, a total of 141 literature were eligible for further assessment. The first examination of the literature was the screening of the title and abstract to determine the eligibility of the literature with the current research objective.

**Included Literature**

The final reference list was extracted, and meta-data of the literature was exported to a reference manager software, the Mendeley. A literature review matrix was developed and organized by year of publication and then by alphabetical order of the first author’s name. Legitimization of the qualitative data was achieved by consensus among the authors. The literature was critically reviewed using the PRISMA quality checklist in stages to ensure corroboration of the findings and answer the research questions (Moher et al., 2009). The first review stage focused on the title and the abstract. Further records on the editors' notes, complementary indexes, annotated listings, news items, bibliography, and book reviews were excluded because the contents were irrelevant for data analysis. In summary, the PRISMA method consisted of four key steps in selection of literature for a systematic review, and each step has predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The PRISMA flowchart for this research is shown in Figure 1.



**Fig 1. The PRISMA flowchart**  
**Source: Adapted from Moher et al. (2009)**

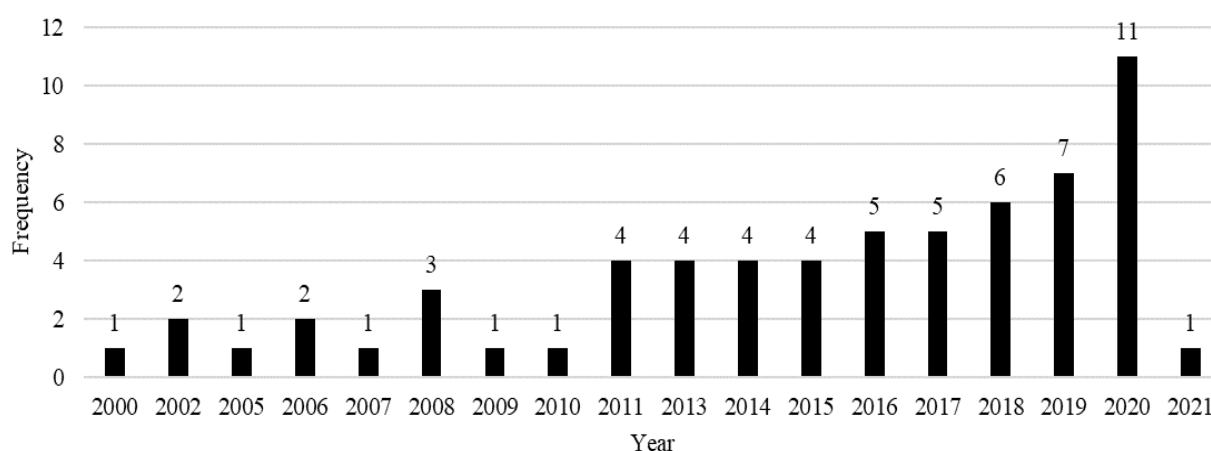
A total of 63 literature (i.e., about 45% from the eligible records) were included because they fulfilled the final inclusion criteria. A quality assessment was performed on the literature and recorded in a literature review matrix (Appendix A).

## RESULTS

A descriptive analysis was performed on the included literature to summarize the data by characterizing general features of the publications (Haneem et al., 2017). In the analysis, a frequency distribution was used to measure the number of occurrences of the literature based on specific categories. After that, a thematic content analysis was conducted on the included literature based on methods outlined by Gaur and Kumar (2018).

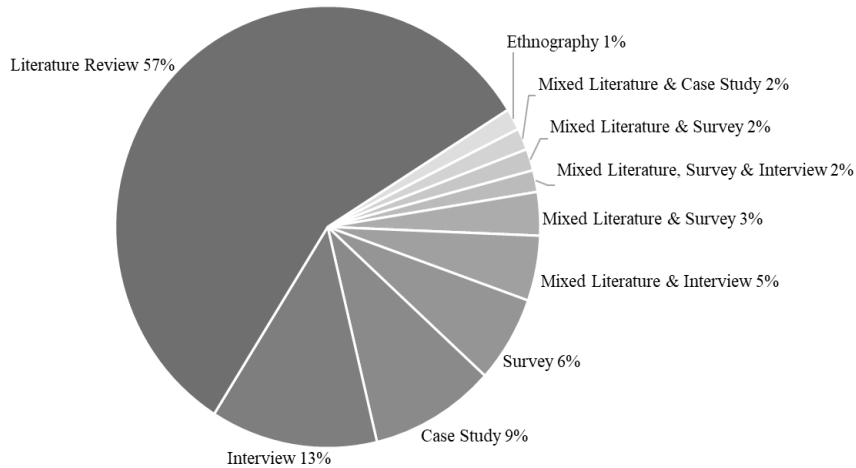
### *Characteristics of the Included Literature*

The publication years for the included literature range between 2000 and 2021 as shown in Figure 2. There was an increasing trend in the number of literatures on Islamic leadership and sustainability particularly since 2015 with a significant increase in 2020. It is noted that the number of publications in 2021 was low mainly because this study was conducted early of the year (i.e., March 2021) which limits interpretations of the study for that year.



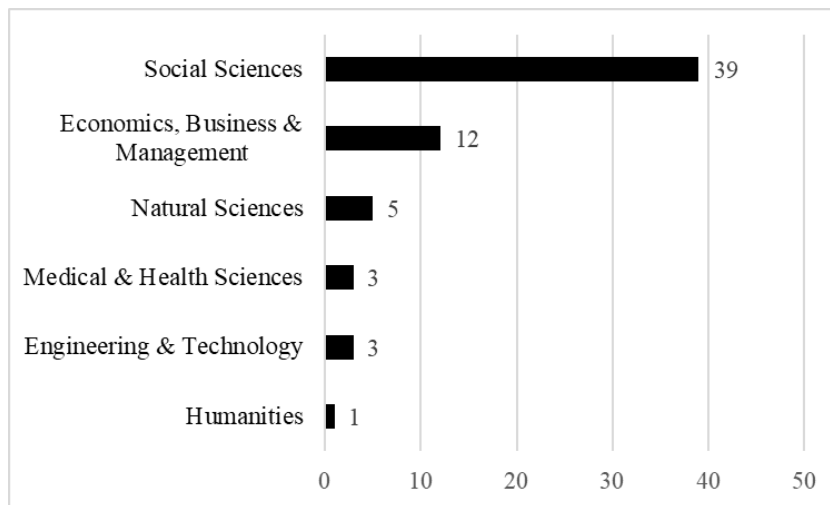
**Fig 2. Frequency of publication per year (n = 63)**

In terms of type of literature, a review paper was more predominant in the publication with 57% (n = 36) as compared to a research paper with 43% (n = 27) as shown in Figure 3. Sources of data for the review paper were mainly secondary data such as academic literature and reports. Meanwhile, the methodology adopted by the research paper incorporated qualitative and quantitative studies. Figure 3 shows the techniques used to collect the research data mainly used an interview technique (13%), followed by case study (9%), survey (6%), and the remaining used mixed methods. Other methods found in the literature were ethnography and triangulation between two and more sources of data.



**Fig 3. Frequency of publication based on research method (n = 63)**

Regarding the fields of knowledge, the included literature was classified according to the Malaysian Research and Development Classification System (MASTIC, 2011). Figure 4 shows a sizeable number of the literature under review belongs to social sciences (n = 39) consistent with the main themes explored in the study on leadership and sustainability. The other specific fields of knowledge included in the review were economics and business, natural sciences, medical, engineering and technology. Results show that the paper on a national history contributed to the humanities category.



**Fig 4. Frequency of publication based on field of research (n = 63)**

A map was charted to identify the origin of the publications across countries and the categorisation was based on the specific location of the data collection. For unknown location, the author's organisational affiliations were checked for categorising the publication origin. Figure 5 shows more publications originated from Malaysia (n = 8), followed by Pakistan (n = 6), and Iran (n = 6) as indicated by the darkest colour on the map chart. Three publications each were originated from Indonesia, Nigeria, and South Africa, respectively. Other publications (n = 34) were distributed across 20 countries globally ranging between one and two papers for each country.



**Fig 5. Frequency of publication according to country**

### ***Thematic Analysis of the Included Literature***

Content analysis was performed on the manifested contents of included literature to identify the themes. The purpose of the analysis was to answer the research questions and corroborate the findings. The second stage of analysis used the PRISMA quality checklist to analyse the literature (Moher et al., 2009). This stage gave attention to the introduction, methods, results, and discussion sections of the literature. There are three questions of interest pertaining to leadership and sustainability as discussed below.

#### *(1) What are the values that are being associated with Islamic leadership?*

A study conducted by Ab. Wahab and Masron (2020) had rigorously identified a set of Islamic work values. The research adopted a qualitative approach by collecting secondary data on Islamic values at work from legal Islamic texts (i.e., the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith*) and Islamic literature. The preliminary set of Islamic work values was then verified by a group of *muftis*, the Islamic jurists who have legal authority to give formal opinion (*fatwa*) on Islamic law (*sharia*). The scholars have emphasised that it is imperative for Islamic leaders to uphold the Islamic work values. Among the core Islamic work values that are closely associated with the Islamic leadership values are cooperation, justice, consultation, responsibility, good intention, integrity, piety, kindness, justice, trust, honesty, and quality work.

A review conducted by Bukhari et al. (2020), on the other hand, viewed the Islamic leadership from a 'green' perspective. The review extracted from secondary data on green banking and validated its congruence with the teachings from the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. The scholars assumed that 'green' nature is a vital part of the belief and value of Islamic principles. For example, Islam teaches the Muslim that this world is a place to worship Allah and that it should be maintained, free from damage and wastage, and its resources should be used responsibly. The principles of green banking are also similar with the Islamic 'green' values. For example, the green banking principles on environmental conscious, peaceful approach, practice ethical and responsible manner, commit to social benefits and engagement are relevant to Islamic leaders (Bukhari et al., 2020).

In the context of education, a study conducted by David and Abukari (2020) among a group of school teachers who attended a leadership training in the United Arab Emirates indicated a strong need for improving the existing standards for school leaders appointment. The research collected primary data through focus group discussions and had used the national standards for education leaders as the research framework. The standards outline common elements of an effective educational leader such as having clear vision, good ethics, cultural responsiveness, care for students, teachers and staff, including meaningful engagement with families and community. According to David and Abukari (2020, p. 57), a leader is someone who “expend[s] spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted coordinated effort to achieve the prophetic vision of the future in clear terms that resonates with the follower(s) beliefs and values in such a way that follower(s) can understand and interpret the future into present-time action steps.”

Other Islamic values or concepts identified in the reviewed literature that are associated with Islamic leadership are meticulous work, clear planning, work hard, risk taker, responsible, worship Allah SWT, ethical, obedient to religious duties, and beneficial to communities (Fathonih et al., 2019); learning, fairness and respect for individual enterprise and performance (Khan, 2016); truthfulness, sincerity, sense of direction, and competency (Ab Hamid, 2015); trust, *tawhid* (a declaration of the absolute oneness of God), practice good and avoid evil, seeking the pleasure of Allah SWT only, and striving for a divine achievement (Senam et al., 2014); attached to group work, social responsibility, cooperation and giving full consideration to others (Chester et al., 2013); diligence, competence in work, relationship-oriented and supportive (Assad, 2002); including liberty, equality, fraternity, consultation, consensus, independent reasoning, and accountability (Monshipouri & Motameni, 2000). Therefore, the study found many values associated with the Islamic leadership that are common with other conventional leadership styles. But one distinct feature about Islamic leadership is the *tawhidic* paradigm denotes one faith in Allah as the underlying principle for the Islamic leaders.

## (2) *Why do Islamic leaders concern about sustainability?*

The objective of a field study conducted by Mustafa and Usman Qazi (2008) was to understand the social and environmental impacts of modern water irrigation system in the province of Balochistan, Pakistan. The study compared between *karez* (an ancient underground irrigation tunnel) and tube well irrigation system. Based on the primary data collected, the study found that the tube well system had negative impacts to the local society and environment. The study concluded that a transition from a traditional to modern water management technology has significant negative impacts to the sustainable development of the Balochistan's ecology and sociology.

A survey conducted by Soltani et al. (2015) was primarily aimed to add academic knowledge on the types of managerial mindsets toward corporate social responsibility (CSR) among Muslim organisations in the Middle East region. Based on the qualitative data collected, it was found that the corporate managers lack core values for Islamic ethics and CSR. For example, the research participants admitted that the role of quality improvement and environmental concerns in realising CSR values is very minimal in the organisation. The study recommended that organisational managers must go beyond the operational use of CSR and adopting CSR for ethical reasons that lead to sustainable development of the society.

A research conducted by Uddin and Mohiuddin (2020) investigated the problem of negligible role of Islamic social finance in the national development plan of Bangladesh. The study employed a mixed method for data collection and analysis among industrial stakeholders. The results found that the lack of an enabling policy framework to enhance the effectiveness of Islamic social finance contributed for underutilised resources for poverty alleviation across Bangladesh. Although *zakah* (obligatory almsgiving) and *amqaf* (perpetual endowments) have been part of Bangladeshi society, the Islamic social



finance institutions still play a minor role in national development plan and the country faces significant challenges to improve the societal living standards especially among the rural population.

Other reasons that motivate the Islamic leaders to focus on sustainability were community resistance and prevailing misconceptions about reproductive healthcare in Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2021); leadership crisis that affected the re-development process of the state in Iraq (Ali et al., 2020); searching for alternative leadership measures to sustain the society in Malaysia (Ogunsola et al., 2020); limited implementation of environmental law in current Islamic legal system in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia (Ramlan, 2020); gender stereotyping and unfavourable attitudes about women and their abilities in Bangladesh (Asadullah et al., 2019); the stigma of fearing Islam as a political instrument to mobilise political parties in Europe such as in Germany, France, Netherlands, Italy, and Greece (Kaya & Tecmen, 2019); insufficient skilled labour force and leadership development practices for Arab leaders (Khattab & Wong, 2018); challenges on poverty, hunger, unemployment that pose serious threats to national security and sustainable development in Nigeria (Abdurraheem & Suraju, 2018); global poverty as major challenges for political leadership across countries (Amir-ud-Din et al., 2018); challenges to implement environmental compliance requirements among the Arab countries (Abdelzaher & Abdelzaher, 2017); Islamic resistance movement in Lebanon (Marusek, 2018); and the gendering of Palestinian citizenship (Jad, 2011a). Therefore, this study found that Islamic leaders had various concerns in relation to sustainable development efforts ranging from individual capacity building to political group influence, to sustainable organisational performance, and national socioeconomic development in general.

### *(3) How does Islamic leadership contribute for sustainable development?*

A study conducted by Ogunsola et al. (2020) emphasised the role of Islamic leaders to form policies that synchronise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with spiritual responsibilities. The study adopted a constructivist grounded theory method and tested an Islamic Performance Instrument (IPI) among Muslim managers from various industries such as information technology, construction, legal, banking, oil, and gas industry. The study suggested that the IPI principle could be an alternative to existing servant leadership tool. For example, a leader who seeks the Pleasure of Allah in the process of employee management contributes toward uniting people while creating a harmony and friendly environment, which then have positive effects to employee personal growth and increase organizational productivity.

A review conducted by Rashed and Shah (2021) on the roles of private sector in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) suggested that there are challenges in the process to achieve the SDGs. Among the challenges faced by the private sector in their SDGs implementation were lack of leadership supports, inharmonious relationships with business counterparts, incompatibility between the goals and targets, and lack of monitoring and evaluation methods. Thus, leaders play a critical role in finding the most ideal solutions that could address the SDGs and at the same time influence others to act on sustainability efforts in every aspect of life.

A literature review conducted by Tahir (2020) on the leadership style of Umar ibn Abd Al-Aziz, the eighth caliph of the Umayyad Caliphate found various significant contributions and reformations made by the caliph to the societies. The study recommended that leaders in Muslim countries must adopt the leadership style among the pious predecessors to succeed in alleviating poverty which is well-corresponded with the SDGs. For instance, the government under Umar ibn Abd Al-Aziz ruling had a great role in providing job opportunities in society, stopping unjustified taxes, providing a conducive environment with justice, security, and freedom in trading with sufficient supervision by the authorities. Indirectly, these initiatives had motivated the society to seek for alternative resources and depend on themselves instead of placing burden of the community on the government.

Overall, the Islamic leadership contributed for sustainable development by one or more ways through garnering support and engagement in the sustainable programme implementation (Ahmed et al., 2021); establishing an effective *zakah* institution that can enhance social equality, social security and social harmony (Abdurraheem & Suraju, 2018); coordinating a balance between demand and supply of goods and services to fulfil the financial, social and environmental objectives (Hafezalkotob, 2017); providing training and continuous education of for people development (Ganguli & Matar, 2016); holding ethical obligations to justly contribute towards socio-economic development and community well-being (Khan, 2016); engaging in economic cooperation (Quie, 2014); circulating the resources and wealth for collective social welfare of the people (Daud & Azam, 2011); fostering collaboration among the teams (Al-Damkhi et al., 2009); creating healthier and safer environment for the people (Middleton, 2008); and influencing policy with wider human and environment interactions (Mustafa & Usman Qazi, 2008).

## DISCUSSION

This paper provides insight into the practices of Islamic leadership for sustainability across countries. It begins by identifying the trends and characteristics of the academic literature in the field of Islamic leadership and sustainability. The results reveal that publications on Islamic leadership for sustainability have started to gain more attention among the academics. Although many of the publications were reviews of secondary data in nature that focused mainly on social sciences, literature that was based on empirical evidence in other fields of research also has equal significance and insights on Islamic leadership for sustainability. Particularly, research conducted in Muslim majority countries that are largely categorised as developing nations. The scopes of the study were either targeting at macro level (e.g., for a country) or at micro level (e.g., for a company or an individual).

A total of six articles from Pakistan selected for this study were research papers that reported findings based on primary data collection from studies conducted in fields of health and natural sciences including economics and social sciences. During the critical review process, the term 'Islam or Islamic' is not frequently mentioned in the articles. But the scholars did introduce the subject matter from an Islamic contextual background. There were a significant number of publications selected for the study categorised as 'global' (n = 7) because it is a collaborative authorship between scholars from many origins and the data collected was also from multiple countries. Malaysia has the highest number of publications selected for the study (n = 8) with even distribution between research and review articles that mainly focus on the fields of economics, business, management, and social sciences.

The paper continues with a systematic review of the selected literature (n = 63) to answer the research questions for this study. The first question is: What are the values that are being associated with Islamic leadership? The results reveal a set of values or concepts espoused by the Islamic leaders. Some of the values are common to other conventional leadership approaches such as cooperation, justice, consultation, responsibility, good intention, kindness, justice, trust, truthfulness, quality work, environmentally conscious, peaceful, ethical, professional, participation, sincerity, sense of direction, commitment, competency and engagement (e.g., see Ab Hamid, 2015; David & Abukari, 2020; Fathonih et al., 2019; Khan, 2016).

However, the Islamic leadership has distinct features because it is closely linked to a *tanbidic* paradigm that is a declaration of the absolute oneness of Allah (Ogunsola et al., 2020; Senam et al., 2014) and Islamic spiritual values such as *taqwa* that is being cognizant of Allah (Tahir, 2020). These values guided the Islamic leaders in their rulings and practices that are consistent with the adherence to the Islamic legal texts of the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* (Ab. Wahab & Masron, 2020; Bukhari et al., 2020). Overall, the faith in Allah is the underlying principle for Islamic leaders and central to their leadership style.

The second question posited in this study is: Why do Islamic leaders concern about sustainability? To answer this question, the study reviews problems or issues that are being emphasised in each literature. The results reveal that the leaders had multiple and interrelated reasons concerning sustainability for the society. Publications in the field of sciences and technology, for example, were concerned with the tangible impacts of human activities on environment and natural resources which eventually affected the society at large (e.g., see Al-Damkhi et al., 2009; Al-Damkhi, 2008; Mustafa & Usman Qazi, 2008). On the other hand, publications in the field of social sciences and economic had more concern with intangible aspect of ineffective leadership or management which has certain impacts on sustainable social and economic development such as poverty, politic, and finance (e.g., see Abdurraheem & Suraju, 2018; Ali et al., 2020; Amir-ud-Din et al., 2018; Daud & Azam, 2011).

In general, it appears that many publications highlighted immediate problems faced by the society and priorities of the leaders to solve the issues as the main purpose of the literature. These publications operationalised sustainability or sustainable development as an indirect objective or merely as a mission statement compared to few literature that specifically focused on sustainable development goals (e.g., see Ogunsola et al., 2020; Rashed & Shah, 2021; Tahir, 2020).

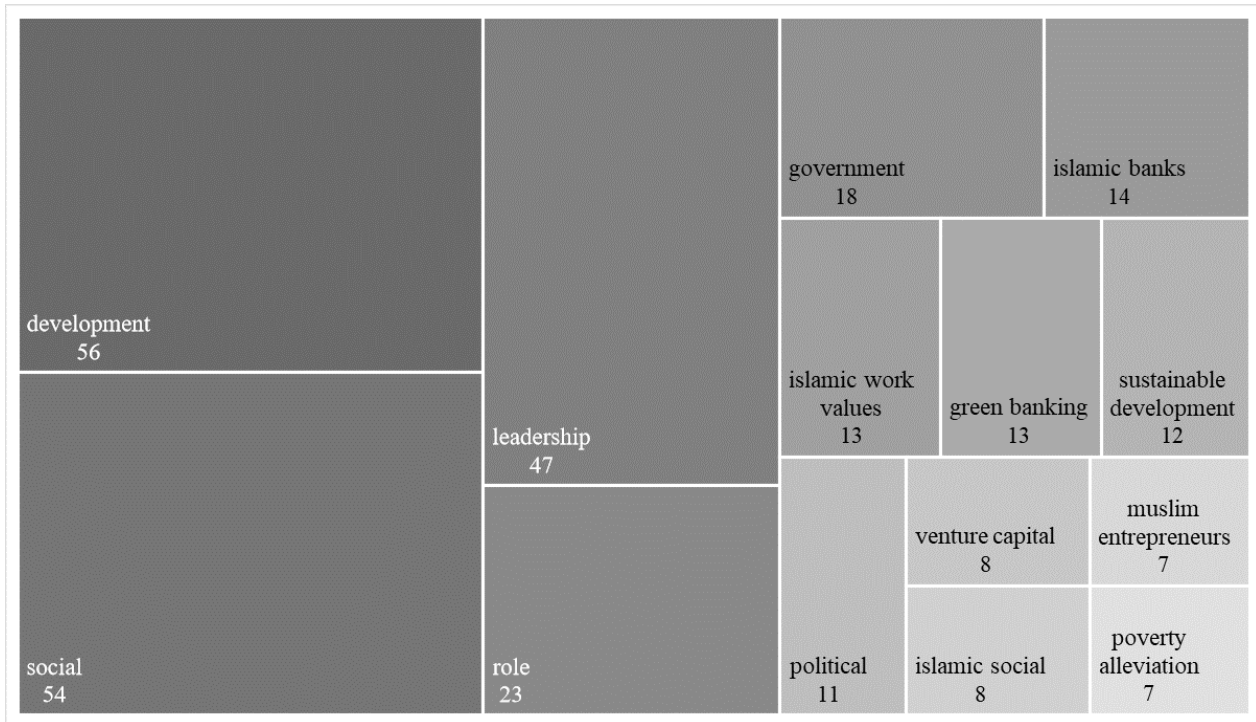
Lastly, the third question asks: How does Islamic leadership contribute for sustainable development? The results reveal the Islamic leaders contribute for sustainability in many ways, whether the leaders use a top-down approach such as by developing national policy for keeping the society, economy, and environment sustain (e.g., see Mustafa & Usman Qazi, 2008) or a bottom-up approach by supporting the sustainable development initiatives and engaging in the implementation of the sustainability efforts (e.g., see Ahmed et al., 2021). The Islamic leaders have a very critical role to play in achieving the success of sustainable development goals as it is considered as one of the Muslim leaders' responsibilities to achieve organizational or national excellence.

A review conducted by Thambipillai (2020), for example, emphasised in detail the roles and commitment of the Head of State and Government of Brunei, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah to advancing comprehensive social and economic development of the state. Although Brunei received global attention on its Islamic law system, the Sultan never neglected contemporary sustainable developmental issues. From the Islamic perspective, leadership style construed by the Prophets and the pious predecessors are deemed fit to resolve the myriad society, economy, and environment problems. The Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH), for instance, founded his leadership style on three main values that is mercy, kindness, and justice (Ali, 2009). For more than 1,400 years, the Muslims follow the Prophet Muhammad PBUH's teachings as Allah SWT last messenger, the successor of previous prophets, and the supreme leader of all humankind.

As a final remark, the paper synthesises main themes from the selected literature being reviewed in this study as illustrated in Figure 6. The chart portrays the frequency of words and phrases. Overall, the primary themes are associated with the role of leadership for social development along with other secondary themes. The four themes predominantly quoted in the literature were 'development', 'social', 'leadership' and 'role' as indicated by the darker and larger rectangles. The Islamic-related themes and 'sustainable development' were less cited in the literature represented by lighter and smaller rectangles.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper aims to share a systematic literature review on Islamic leadership for sustainability by surveying the state of knowledge on the topic. The paper reviews the scope of Islamic leadership initiatives for sustainable development in various contextual settings. The paper highlights the values and concepts of Islamic leadership, their concerns, and contributions on sustainability. Descriptive



**Fig 6. Frequency of themes in the publications**  
**Note: Based on thematic analysis of the abstracts**

analysis shows Muslim countries become the most significant contributor of the literature on social sciences and review studies over the last decade. The results identify many values associated with Islamic leadership that are common with other conventional leadership styles. But one distinct feature about Islamic leadership is the *tawhidic* paradigm with one faith in Allah as the underlying principle for the Islamic leaders and central to their leadership style. Both Islamic leadership and conventional leadership share some styles. Notwithstanding, Islamic leadership emphasizes comprehensive efforts for social sustainability at individual, organizational and national levels. Prophetic leadership is still valid with regard to sustainable goals.

***Theoretical and Practical Implications***

This study shows that Islamic leadership and conventional leadership styles share many similar values. The *tawhidic* paradigm, however, emerges as a distinguishing feature of Islamic leadership. The findings indicate that Islamic leadership is also geared towards comprehensive efforts for social sustainability, at individual, organizational and national levels. In the context of this study, the Islamic leadership initiatives for sustainable development were reviewed based on 63 journal articles selected from the EBSCO database using PRISMA method.

The study has theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. In terms of theoretical contribution, the results of this study confirm that Islamic leadership – in addition to the *tawhidic* principle – espoused a set of values or concepts common to other conventional leadership approaches such as cooperation, justice, consultation, responsibility, good intention, kindness, justice, trust, truthfulness, quality work, environmentally conscious, peaceful, ethical, sincerity, sense of direction, commitment, and engagement (David & Abukari, 2020; Fathonih et al., 2019; Khan, 2016). The Islamic leaders had multiple and interrelated concerns on contemporary issues of sustainable development especially on tangible and intangible impacts of human activities on environment and natural resources which eventually affected the society at large (Al-Damkhi et al., 2009; Al- Damkhi, 2008; Mustafa &

Usman Qazi, 2008). Thus, the Islamic leaders have a very critical role to play in achieving the success of sustainable development goals and considered as one of the Muslim leaders' responsibilities to achieve organizational or national excellence.

For methodological implication, the research design employed is robust based on the PRISMA method coupled with a rigorous article review checklist. This leads to the generation of reliable and legitimate findings. In terms of practical implication, the findings of this study can be used as references for Islamic leadership practices by highlighting the common values and concerns associated with contemporary efforts to make sustainable development goals a success. Since not many Islamic countries apply the theories of Islam for sustainability (or perhaps unreported), the results can be used as insights for the Muslim leaders to plan a comprehensive and collaborative effort among the Islamic countries to achieve the global agenda on sustainable development.

### ***Recommendations for Further Research***

In this review, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) method was used as a guideline for systematic data collection from the EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) database. It is conceivable that the database search might not incorporate some key words related to Islamic leadership and sustainable due to limited number of keywords allowed in journals and the contemporary labels used that reflect sustainability. Thus, future research may include equivalent terms in the past that capture the spirit of sustainability. Using other databases will probably generate comparative numbers of literature on the subject matter.

### **DECLARATIONS**

This research received no internal or external funding, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. The secondary data drawn for this study is available from EBSCO database, and code for data cleaning or analysis is not applicable in this paper.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/12259276.2018.1464109>

## Appendix A

No.	Author (Year)	Journal	Title
1	Ahmed et al. (2021)	International Journal of Environmental Research & Public Health	A cross-sectional community readiness assessment for implementing school-based comprehensive sexuality education in Islamabad, Pakistan
2	Ab. Wahab and Masron (2020)	Journal of Islamic Accounting & Business Research	Towards a core Islamic work value: Evidence from Islamic legal texts and the muftis' verification
3	Ali, Qati, and Alwan (2020)	Campos en Ciencias Sociales	Leadership and post-conflict state rebuilding: Iraq after 2003: Case study
4	Bukhari et al. (2020)	Journal of Islamic Marketing	Green banking and Islam: Two sides of the same coin
5	David and Abukari (2020)	International Journal of Educational Management	Perspectives of teachers on the selection and the development of the school leaders in the United Arab Emirates
6	Ogunsola, Sarif, and Fontaine (2020)	International Journal of Islamic Business Ethics	Islamic Performance Instrument (IPI): An alternative Servant Leadership (SL) tool for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
7	Ramlan (2020)	Asia Pacific Journal of Environmental Law	Implementing Islamic law to protect the environment: Insights from Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia
8	Rashed and Shah (2021)	Environment, Development and Sustainability	The role of private sector in the implementation of sustainable development goals
9	Sandra and Nandram (2020)	Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion	Driving organizational entrainment through spiritual leadership
10	Tahir (2020)	International Journal of Economics, Management & Accounting	Poverty alleviation strategies implemented by 'Umar Ibn Abd Al Aziz': Lessons for Muslim economists on achieving SDG of poverty alleviation
11	Thambipillai (2020)	Southeast Asian Affairs	Brunei Darussalam in 2019: Issues revisited
12	Uddin and Mohiuddin (2020)	Law & Development Review	Islamic social finance in Bangladesh: Challenges and opportunities of the institutional and regulatory landscape
13	Asadullah, Amin, and Chaudhury (2019)	Journal of Development Studies	Support for gender stereotypes: Does <i>madrasah</i> education matter?
14	Chowdhury, Wahab, and Islam (2019)	International Social Work	The role of faith-based NGOs in social development: Invisible empowerment
15	Cooke and Johari (2019)	Journal of Southeast Asian Studies	Positioning of Murut and Bajau identities in state forest reserves and marine parks in Sabah, East Malaysia

16	Fathonih, Anggadwita, and Ibraimi (2019)	Journal of Enterprising Communities	Sharia venture capital as financing alternative of Muslim entrepreneurs: Opportunities, challenges, and future research directions
17	Hapsari and Himawan (2019)	Indonesian Journal of Islamic Literature & Muslim Society	The role of the Islamic figure in regional development of Bangkalan regency
18	Kaya and Tecmen (2019)	Review of Faith & International Affairs	Europe versus Islam? Right-wing populist discourse and the construction of a civilizational identity
19	Khattab and Wong (2018)	Studies in Adult Education and Learning	Integrating western and Arab leadership development practices an example of the challenge of bridging global and local adult learning perspectives
20	Abdurraheem and Suraju (2018)	Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies	Taming poverty in Nigeria: Language, <i>zakat</i> and national development
21	Amir-ud-Din, Abbas, and Javed (2018)	Social Indicators Research	Poverty as functioning deprivation: Global estimates
22	Gamon and Tagoranao (2018)	Studia Islamika	Zakat and poverty alleviation in a secular state: The case of Muslim minorities in the Philippines
23	Marusek (2018)	American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences	Beyond secular liberalism: Islamic activism in Lebanon
24	Saghaye-Biria (2018)	ReOrient	Decolonizing the 'universal' human rights regime: Questioning American exceptionalism and orientalism
25	Zakar, Zakar, and Hamid (2018)	Asian Journal of Women's Studies	Gender mainstreaming in politics: Perspective of female politicians from Pakistan
26	Abdelzaher and Abdelzaher (2017)	Journal of Business Ethics	Beyond environmental regulations: Exploring the potential of 'eco-Islam' in boosting environmental ethics within SMEs in Arab markets
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