

Islamic leadership in construction project management: Conceptual foundations, practical challenges, and prospects



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Abstract The construction industry plays a vital role in economic development, but continues to face critical challenges such as corruption, cost overruns, weak governance, and ethical lapses that hinder sustainable progress. As the industry evolves with increasing complexity and global collaboration, there is a pressing need for leadership models that integrate moral accountability with professional excellence. In response, this study aims to explore the role and significance of Islamic leadership principles in enhancing ethical conduct, operational efficiency, and managerial effectiveness within construction project management. Employing a narrative literature review (NLR) approach, the study systematically analyzed 19 peer-reviewed sources published between 2010 and 2025, encompassing insights from classical Islamic teachings based on Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as contemporary frameworks in leadership and project management. The findings reveal that four foundational attributes of Islamic leadership, which are truthfulness (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), sound judgment (*faṭānah*), and effective communication (*tablīgh*), form an ethical and operational framework that strengthens decision-making integrity, builds stakeholder trust, and promotes sustainable project outcomes. These values closely align with modern management paradigms such as transformational leadership, Lean Construction, and Building Information Modelling (BIM), enabling synergy between spiritual ethics and technological innovation. However, the study also identifies implementation challenges, including cultural resistance, weak ethical commitment, limited leadership competency, and difficulty integrating Islamic values into diverse and multinational project environments. Despite these barriers, evidence shows that leaders who embody Islamic ethical attributes foster transparency, accountability, and social responsibility. Overall, the study concludes that embedding Islamic leadership principles within construction project management frameworks can serve as a transformative strategy for achieving ethical governance, sustainable development, and holistic human advancement in the construction sector.

Keywords: ethical governance, project sustainability, moral excellence, spiritual-based management, organizational integrity

1. Introduction

The construction industry is one of the pillars of contemporary economic growth, influencing almost everything from road and bridge construction to job creation and urbanization (Lopes & Banaitienė, 2024). However, despite its importance, the sector is plagued by persistent challenges that slow its progress. Ethical challenges, poor management, cost overruns, schedule overruns, and stakeholder antagonism are increasingly common, thereby highlighting the need for more effective leadership models that can address these issues holistically (Bariono & Kamaruding, 2025; Rahman et al., 2022). Traditional, more technical, and managerial-only leadership modes may lack the skills needed to address the complex, ethical, and social considerations that underlies modern construction work. This calls for a more holistic leadership approach that integrates ethics and operational efficiency so that these initiatives are not only implemented with operational excellence but also in a way that will foster trust, accountability, and the health and well-being of project-related communities in the medium term (Kamaruding et al., 2018; Senam et al., 2015).

Islamic leadership is a powerful solution where leadership is not isolating but offers spiritual and practical leadership that is intrinsically linked to the principles of the Quran and Sunnah (Kamaruding et al., 2018; Abu & Gazi, 2020). The fundamental principles of Islamic leadership, such as truthfulness (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), sound judgment (*faṭānah*), and effective communication (*tablīgh*), offer a solid framework for implementing ethical behavior and managerial decision-making in project management. These principles go beyond moral philosophy and are very useful in the daily work of



construction project management. For example, truthfulness and transparency foster openness in communication, which leads to reduced misunderstandings and the development of trust among stakeholders (Johan & Baharudin, 2021).

Trust has the consequence that the project manager's responsibilities are seen to be taken seriously, commitments to stakeholders are fulfilled, and a team is formed that is collaborative and professional work team (Zahri et al., 2024). Attention to knowledge is based on repeated experiences of the need for continuous learning and application of knowledge, which ensures that the project manager's knowledge is sufficient to cope with the ever-changing and complex nature of construction projects (Johan & Baharudin, 2021). Successful communication is essential to ensure alignment between project goals, deadlines, and stakeholder expectations, thus enabling the project to run smoothly (Johan & Baharudin, 2021).

There is potential for great advantage in integrating an Islamic approach to leadership mentality in construction project management. These principles are not just moral tools; they also have practical benefits in projects by promoting transparency, collaboration, and ultimately sustainability. The ethical and spiritual values of Islamic leadership motivate a leader to go beyond the immediate objectives of the action and reflect on how the outcome will meet, at the same time, the material and spiritual needs of society. This dual-axis system guarantees that building projects are no longer endeavor strictly defined as technical and economic deliverables but rather as some social good to the global community (Zahri et al., 2024; Mubarak et al., 2021).

The flexibility and relevancy are the biggest strengths of the Islamic leadership in their contemporary setting. Meanwhile, as the construction industry grows more complex with more stakeholders, stricter regulatory practices, and growing emphasis on sustainability, the Islamic leadership tenets provide into a strong management model to address such challenges. For example, the principle of participatory decision-making, which is a hallmark of Islamic leadership itself, fosters an environment of interaction and pluralism as it allows all community members to have a say in the plan-making process (Zahri et al., 2024). It not only encourages more informed and balanced decisions but also leads to increased stakeholder support and satisfaction.

Furthermore, Islamic authority supports the proposition that managers should also be responsible for the social and environmental effects of their actions, even outside the economic realm, in which their activity has a greater social and environmental impact. This is in line with the growing role of sustainable development in the construction industry. According to the Islamic management, people have a responsibility to be quite careful managing such resources, and growth should proceed in a way that itself simply benefits the present generations but also the future generations (Zahri et al., 2024). Through the intersection of these principles, construction projects may be designed (and deployed) with the least possible environmental footprint and the greatest possible contribution to social value, resulting in the optimal growth of the built environment and the surrounding communities.

Hence, the aim of this article is to provide the application, challenges, and the potential unity of Islamic leadership values to construction project management. To show how these principles can be generalized to the practical reality and how they fit in discussions of contemporary leadership practice, this article is going to try to show that Islamic leadership will help transform the building and construction industry into an ethical, sustainable, and an efficient place of work. More specifically, the combination of the Islamic leadership values with modern project management principles has yielded a rich set of tools to deal with the multidimensions of the industry problems occurring today.

2. Methodology

This study used the narrative literature review (NLR) approach, which analyzes the literature of Islamic leadership principles in construction project management, the problems related to their implementation, and their advantages for the ethical and sustainable development of the project. The narrative review method was chosen because it offers the appropriate tools for integrating evidence and viewpoints collected from a variety of disciplinary areas, including leadership, management, ethics, and construction. Thus, given the absence of literature, the diversity of ideas, and the empirical nature of the topic of Islamic leadership, which involves multiple theoretical and applied perspectives, and a clear commitment to it, the narrative review is the best choice.

The search for literature in the study was undertaken using various academic databases, which include Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate, during the period from January to August 2025. Boolean operators and related keywords, including Islamic leadership, Islamic management, construction project management, ethical leadership, value-based leadership, applications, challenges, and prospects, were used in the search. Only articles from 2010 to 2025 were selected to enable a review of both foundational and recent publications relevant to the study objectives. Peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, conference proceedings, and industry reports that contain conceptual, theoretical, or empirical information relevant to Islamic leadership as a management style or relevant in the context of construction project management were reviewed.

Inclusion criteria meant that papers that dealt with the application of Islamic or ethical leadership principles to the management of a construction project could be selected. Articles must be well-grounded in academics, explaining their conceptual rigour and relevance to either ethical or managerial practice. All materials without direct relevance to leadership or construction were excluded, as were non-academic articles such as op-eds or linear news publications, as well as papers that are not research-based or have no practical implications. Incidentally, an initial list of approximately 80 sources was identified.

Following a careful screening and evaluation of relevance and conceptual rigour, a total of 19 papers were selected as the core texts for in-depth analysis, review, and synthesis.

The selected studies were analyzed through qualitative content analysis, emphasizing the identification of key ideas, recurring patterns, and thematic relationships. Manual coding was used to preserve the interpretive depth and contextual meaning of each study. Three primary analytical dimensions guided the synthesis: the application of Islamic leadership principles in project management, the challenges faced in implementing these principles in the construction industry, and the opportunities for aligning Islamic leadership with modern project management practices such as Building Information Modeling (BIM), Lean Construction, and transformational leadership. The themes were compared and interpreted to construct a cohesive understanding of how Islamic ethical values, namely, truthfulness (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), sound judgment (*faṭānah*), and effective communication (*tablīgh*), can enhance ethical governance, decision-making, and sustainability in construction projects.

This narrative approach is justified by the multidisciplinary and exploratory nature of the topic, which demands interpretive synthesis rather than statistical generalization. It enables a comprehensive understanding of the evolving discourse on Islamic leadership while acknowledging contextual, cultural, and operational variations within the construction sector. Nevertheless, the method carries inherent limitations, including potential selection bias and the subjective interpretation of findings. These limitations were minimized by maintaining clear inclusion criteria, ensuring transparency in the selection process, and cross-verifying themes across multiple sources. The findings of the review are summarized in Table 1, which outlines the key studies reviewed, their focus, and their relevance to construction project management.

As shown in Table 1, the reviewed literature demonstrates that Islamic leadership principles have been widely discussed across conceptual, theoretical, and applied contexts, though their integration into construction project management remains relatively underexplored. The selected 19 studies collectively emphasize that Islamic leadership is grounded in four essential traits: truthfulness (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), sound judgment (*faṭānah*), and effective communication (*tablīgh*) which together establish a moral and operational foundation for ethical governance in project environments. The literature reveals three interrelated themes: first, the application of Islamic values to enhance decision-making, stakeholder trust, and transparency; second, the challenges encountered in operationalizing these principles amid cultural diversity, ethical lapses, and organizational resistance; and third, the opportunities for aligning Islamic ethics with modern project management tools such as BIM, Lean Construction, and transformational leadership. These themes form the analytical framework for the following section, which discusses how Islamic leadership principles can be conceptually and practically integrated into construction project management to promote ethical conduct, sustainability, and organizational excellence.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Conceptual foundations of Islamic leadership for construction project management

As identified in the reviewed literature, several core Islamic leadership principles form the ethical and functional foundation for effective management. Table 2 presents these key principles, which are truthfulness (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), sound judgment (*faṭānah*), and effective communication (*tablīgh*), along with their definitions, benefits for project management, and key references. This table contextualizes how each principle can shape the moral and operational dimensions of project leadership.

As summarized in Table 2, Islamic leadership guidelines for construction project management provide a unique and comprehensive model of ethical, trustworthy, and participatory behavior within a community that is inherently based on Islamic principles (Rafiki, 2020). Under this principle, both the fulfillment of project success realized physically and the spiritual satisfaction of everyone involved are considered equally important. If honesty, transparency, and accountability are encouraged by emphasizing characteristics such as truthfulness (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), this leads to leaders being trusted by stakeholders and subsequently executing projects smoothly (Johan & Baharudin, 2021; Zahri et al., 2024).

Furthermore, sound judgment (*faṭānah*) focuses on the value of making informed decisions, an equally important aspect in construction projects due to the dynamic and complex nature of projects over time. The ability to adapt to the use of knowledge at any stage of the project enhances relevance and learning power (Johan & Baharudin, 2021). Also, effective communication (*tablīgh*) is important to ensure continuity and provide all parties with accurate and up-to-date information to avoid ambiguity and facilitate cooperation (Johan & Baharudin, 2021). This is due to the broad ethical and social accountability in Islamic leadership that leads to the values of justice and integrity. This action not only allows for the development of trust but also enables the development of trust, both of which are important variables in establishing stakeholder relationship trust (Zahri et al., 2024; Mubarak et al., 2021).

The principles of Islamic leadership further highlight engagement in society and ecological governance, in line with a strong sense of responsibility towards the community and the environment. This is in line with Islamic governance, which advocates for the sustainable and optimal use of resources (Zahri et al., 2024; Ismail et al., 2024). In terms of procedural legitimacy, Islamic leadership encourages participatory decision-making, creating a perception among all participants that they will have a stake in the new order so that they actively participate in shaping the new order. This participatory approach comes

with reliability, where decision-makers will be able to adapt to whatever may arise while remaining aligned with the Islamic code of ethics (Zahri et al., 2024).

Table 1 Summary of reviewed studies on Islamic leadership and construction project management.

Author(s) & Year	Publication Type	Study Focus	Main Findings	Relevance to Construction Project Management
Abu & Gazi (2020)	Journal article	Foundations and traits of Islamic leadership	Identifies <i>ṣiḍq</i> , <i>amānah</i> , <i>faṭānah</i> , and <i>tablīgh</i> as key leadership traits; emphasizes Qur'an and Sunnah as ethical guides.	Provides conceptual grounding for ethical leadership models applicable in project environments.
Ahmad et al. (2023)	Book chapter	Transformational leadership and innovation	Shows how transformational leadership enhances innovation; links leadership behavior to performance.	Highlights potential synergy between Islamic and transformational leadership in project management.
Bariono & Kamaruding (2025)	Journal article	Issues of foreign labor in Malaysian construction	Analyzes labor-related challenges and management strategies.	Reinforces the need for ethical leadership to ensure fairness and welfare in project teams.
Ibrahim (2015)	Journal article	Accountability (<i>hisbah</i>) in Islamic management	Explores the concept of <i>hisbah</i> as moral accountability and public responsibility.	Provides a framework for ethical supervision and accountability in construction leadership.
Ismail et al. (2024)	Book chapter	Islamic principles in engineering education	Identifies strategies for integrating Islamic values into technical curricula.	Suggests educational pathways for developing ethical engineers and future project leaders.
Johan & Baharudin (2021)	Book chapter	Factors influencing Islamic leadership in project management	Highlights trust, communication, and knowledge as leadership drivers.	Empirically links Islamic traits with project success factors.
Kamaruding et al. (2018)	Journal article	Concept of Islamic-based project management	Proposes a conceptual model integrating Islamic teachings with project management.	Serves as a theoretical foundation for Islamic leadership integration in the construction sector.
Kamaruding et al. (2021)	Journal article	Islamic values among project management actors	Examines preliminary evidence of Islamic leadership values in Malaysian projects.	Supports the application of Islamic ethics in professional project settings.
Kamaruding et al. (2022)	Conference proceeding	Corruption issues in project management	Explores intention and behavior correction through Islamic ethics.	Addresses ethical challenges and proposes value-based corrective mechanisms.
Kholifah & Mulyana (2023)	Journal article	Islamic leadership and organizational learning culture	Shows leadership's influence on performance through learning culture.	Demonstrates organizational benefits of Islamic leadership in construction contexts.
Mubarak et al. (2021)	Journal article	Ethical leadership and Islamic work ethics	Confirms link between ethical leadership, empowerment, and performance.	Reinforces ethical empowerment as a tool for effective project management.
Rafiki (2020)	Book chapter	Comparative qualities of Islamic leadership	Reviews similarities between Islamic and contemporary leadership theories.	Enhances conceptual understanding of leadership integration in construction management.
Rahman et al. (2022)	Conference proceeding	Subcontracting relationships and success factors	Analyzes trust and ethics in subcontractor relationships.	Emphasizes ethical collaboration and stakeholder engagement under Islamic values.
Sami & Rahim (2017)	Journal article	Islamic ethics and values in the construction industry	Discusses ethical principles in Islamic perspective to counter unethical practices.	Demonstrates how Islamic ethics can address corruption and negligence in construction projects.

Senam et al. (2015)	Journal article	Islamic leadership and contemporary leadership comparison	Discusses the meeting of Western and Islamic leadership paradigms.	Illustrates the adaptability of Islamic leadership in modern project environments.
Senam et al. (2017)	Conference proceeding	Application of Islamic leadership in JKR Malaysia	Applies the Delphi method to identify practical Islamic leadership traits.	Provides empirical validation of Islamic principles in construction project contexts.
Siddique et al. (2023)	Journal article	Islamic perspective on leadership	Examines key characteristics and moral obligations of leaders.	Supports integration of moral accountability within project governance.
Yusuf et al. (2024)	Journal article	Qur’anic construction of leadership meaning	Analyzes leadership concepts derived from Qur’an and their implications.	Strengthens theoretical link between Islamic teachings and ethical leadership in projects.
Zahri et al. (2024)	Journal article	Islamic approach to project management	Reviews project management processes through Islamic values.	Demonstrates that Islamic principles can enhance project ethics, collaboration, and sustainability.

Table 2 Core Islamic leadership principles and their impacts on construction project management.

Islamic Leadership Principle	Definition / Summary Description	Benefits for Project Management	Key References
Truthfulness (Şidq)	Refers to honesty, transparency, and sincerity in speech, decision-making, and actions, reflecting moral integrity in all dealings.	Builds trust among stakeholders, enhances communication accuracy, and minimizes conflict and misinformation in project delivery.	Johan & Baharudin (2021); Zahri et al. (2024); Abu & Gazi (2020)
Trustworthiness (Amānah)	Denotes reliability, responsibility, and the fulfillment of commitments entrusted by others, reflecting accountability before God and society.	Strengthens credibility of project managers, promotes ethical resource management, and ensures adherence to contractual and professional obligations.	Kamaruding et al. (2018); Mubarak et al. (2021); Ibrahim (2015)
Sound Judgment (Faţānah)	Reflects intelligence, wisdom, and the ability to apply knowledge effectively in solving complex project challenges.	Enhances decision-making quality, improves risk assessment and planning, and promotes innovation and adaptive problem-solving in construction management.	Johan & Baharudin (2021); Ahmad et al. (2023); Kholifah & Mulyana (2023)
Effective Communication (Tabliĥ)	Represents clarity, openness, and the capacity to convey information accurately and persuasively while engaging others constructively.	Fosters teamwork and stakeholder alignment, ensures smooth coordination, and enhances transparency across project phases.	Zahri et al. (2024); Senam et al. (2017); Rafiki (2020)

Besides, the divine will in Islam directs human beings toward the ultimate aims of leadership: attaining God’s approval (marđātillāh) and achieving success in both worldly and spiritual realms. These goals endow leaders with a profound sense of purpose and responsibility that transcends material achievements (Senam et al., 2015; Abu & Gazi, 2020). The cultural and spiritual foundations of Islamic leadership further enhance its significance. Grounded in the Qur’an and Hadith, it provides a moral framework that guides leaders to be authentic, responsible, generous, and inclusive. Such qualities not only ensure effective leadership but also demonstrate the universality and adaptability of Islamic principles across diverse contexts (Kamaruding et al., 2018; Abu & Gazi, 2020; Siddique et al., 2023). By integrating character, ethics, and spirituality into the very fabric of project management, Islamic leadership promotes a holistic approach that addresses the technical, ethical, and human dimensions of construction projects while safeguarding the integrity of both humanity and the environment.

3.2. Integrating Islamic leadership with construction project management practices

For the principles of Islamic leadership in construction project management to be effectively implemented, they must be systematically integrated throughout the entire project lifecycle, encompassing honesty, trust, competence, and communication. Together, these parameters form a strong ethical foundation that promotes transparency, accountability, and shared responsibility among all project participants. When applied consistently, these principles enable project managers not only to enhance operational performance but also to achieve greater stakeholder satisfaction and develop a socially responsible model for project execution. Grounded in the teachings of the Qur’an and Hadith, Islamic leadership provides a holistic and integrated framework that unites professional excellence with spiritual fulfillment. This integration equips industry leaders with



practical tools to address the complex challenges within the construction environment through ethical foresight, collaborative engagement, and effective decision-making, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 Practical integration of Islamic leadership principles in construction project management.

Principle / Value Applied	Practical Application Method in the Project Lifecycle	Observed Results or Impacts	Suggested Tools / Methods for Implementation
Truthfulness (Şidq)	Ensure transparency during project planning, tendering, and reporting through honest cost estimation, progress updates, and stakeholder communication.	Builds credibility and mutual trust; reduces disputes and misinformation.	Open communication platforms, transparent procurement systems, and regular progress audits.
Trustworthiness (Amānah)	Demonstrate accountability by fulfilling commitments, protecting entrusted resources, and maintaining ethical conduct in financial and material management.	Strengthens stakeholder confidence; promotes responsibility and integrity among team members.	Project charter with ethical code, performance tracking dashboards, and integrity monitoring tools.
Sound Judgment (Faṭānah)	Apply informed decision-making during project design, risk analysis, and problem-solving by integrating technical knowledge with moral reasoning.	Improves decision quality; enhances adaptability and efficiency in managing project challenges.	Decision-support systems, risk assessment frameworks, and professional development programs.
Effective Communication (Tabliḡh)	Promote clear, consistent, and respectful communication among project teams, clients, and subcontractors throughout the project lifecycle.	Enhances collaboration, minimizes misunderstandings, and ensures timely delivery.	Communication management plans, stakeholder engagement workshops, and digital collaboration tools.
Justice (Adl)	Uphold fairness in resource distribution, workload allocation, and conflict resolution across all project participants.	Prevents favoritism and promotes team harmony; improves morale and productivity.	Fair work allocation matrix, grievance redress mechanisms, and transparent evaluation criteria.
Consultation (Shūrā)	Encourage participatory decision-making by seeking diverse inputs before key project decisions.	Improves collective ownership and innovation; increases stakeholder satisfaction.	Regular consultation meetings, feedback systems, and collaborative design sessions.
Accountability (Hisbah)	Monitor and evaluate project activities against ethical and performance standards; report deviations responsibly.	Promotes continuous improvement, compliance, and ethical governance.	Quality assurance checklists, compliance reporting systems, and periodic performance reviews.

The concept of *şidq* or truthfulness lies at the heart of any business interactions, and it ensures that integrity and honesty guide every contract, decision, and any other aspect of the engagement. By putting emphasis on truthfulness, there is a buildup of confidence within stakeholders while fostering trust, mutual understanding, and synergy. Trustworthiness (*amānah*) is one of the most fundamental characteristics of Islamic leadership. It requires the project managers to keep their promises and act accordingly. This builds a culture of reliability, which is instrumental in the achievement of good and effective project goals (Johan & Baharudin, 2021; Zahri et al., 2024). Faith also places emphasize on sound judgment (*faṭānah*). For a project manager, faith does not only mean knowing the knowledge but also applying it in thinking rationally. It is gained through accumulated experience and applied expertise. This is the basic principle of continuous Islamic learning, which aids self and professional development while enabling project managers to at least have a better understanding of the challenges in construction (Johan & Baharudin, 2021).

Effective communication (*tabliḡh*) and flexibility further support the integration of Islamic values into project management practices. First, it helps to shape the project objectives according to the goals of the stakeholders through a transparent and productive dialogue as well as engaged stakeholders. Through constructive feedback, project managers can establish consensus, proactively resolve issues, and strengthen teamwork. The participatory approach not only makes the work transparent but also nurtures a culture of shared responsibility and synergy in dealing with challenges, which is of utmost importance in project delivery (Johan & Baharudin, 2021).

The application of Islamic behavioral principles is not limited to administrative positions; it also covers social duties and behavior in general. Justice and fairness are the rules of the game in Islamic ethics, and they serve as guiding laws in case challenges happen in a complicated situation that could reduce violations and in just or unjust projects (Sami & Rahim, 2017). It is in reference to that, project activities take fellowship views on how the environment and contribution of the community

should be prioritized. By considering this holistic perspective, the social and environmental goals of a project take place at the planning stage, and their outcomes benefit not only stakeholders but the majority of people. The output clearly shows the embedment of ethical and spiritual values found in Islamic leadership (Zahri et al., 2024; Mubarak et al., 2021).

In addition, participatory decision-making reflects cooperation and equality as Islamic values by making active users of the participants in the planning and execution of projects. Through this participatory method, it creates an environment of ownership, responsibility, and participation, which in aggregate contribute to the success of the project. Through the involvement of various stakeholders in the process, project managers can come up with appropriate decisions on risks and contingency plans, which improve the outcomes of leadership as well as the objectives of the team or community (Zahri et al., 2024). When a project's goals are in line with those overarching objectives of attaining God's approval (*marḍātillāh*), they evoke a deeper inner connection with the underlying motivation for success. It creates an assurance that projects will be ethically, responsibly, and compassionately pursued, with sustainable business opportunities and contributions to society in the medium and long term. Such overall contributions to social welfare of society have verifiable outputs of success (Senam et al., 2015; Abu & Gazi, 2020).

More importantly, incorporating the tenets of Islamic leadership into construction project management shall create a work environment that thrives based on ethical behavior, transparency, and social responsibility. By embedding this data in a participatory decision-making process and thereby facilitating the long-term sustainability nature of the project, project managers can observe that the projects can be implemented in the most efficient manner, and that spiritual and communal development could arise. Not only does this integrative paradigm solve the day-to-day problems of the construction industry, but it directly furthers the long-term goal of social welfare, proving that the relevance and applicability of Islamic leadership in the professional sphere remain active today.

3.3 Practical Challenges in Applying Islamic Leadership to Construction Projects

Islamic leadership principles are powerful in construction project management, providing a strong ethical and leadership model. However, their effective application is based on overcoming several serious challenges and related issues, as summarized in Table 4.

One of the main challenges lies in the implementation of core qualities such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, knowledgeable, and communication. These principles are the foundation of Islamic leadership, but their application in the construction field is often inadequate. This means that this inconsistency or lack of identity in the realization of a project can generate severe problems in the form of project delays, budget explosions, and failure to match what is projected to the expectations of stakeholders (Johan & Baharudin, 2021; Zahri et al., 2024). The gap needs to be addressed through a shared commitment to embedding these values into the organizational culture and daily team practices, which should follow Islamic principles while upholding operational effectiveness.

The construction industry also faces cultural and ethical dilemmas in transferring Islamic leadership guidelines. Ethical issues, such as corruption, negligence, and malpractice, are prevalent in industry and constitute a persistent obstacle to practical ethical project management (Kamaruding et al., 2022). Islamic leadership, which holds that behavior that flourishes in the sight of God (*marḍātillāh*) must follow God's will, as well as its accountability to stakeholders within and outside society, offers an excellent countermeasure to this threat (Ibrahim, 2015; Abu & Gazi, 2020). However, cultural resistance to changes and differences in interpretation of Islamic principles among regions and vice versa can make it difficult to standardize and accept these principles by project teams. Challenges are overcome through education, training, outreach, and promotion of awareness and commitment to Islamic ethical principles. Perhaps the main issue is the complexity of construction projects and stakeholder management.

Today's construction work is carried out through multidisciplinary interactions among different stakeholder groups who, based on their own circumstances, cultural differences, and goals, interact with each other. This complexity has caused confusion, which has resulted in communication errors that have prevented the project from being completed. The true leadership tenets derived from the Quran and Sunnah are used to guide the process of addressing these challenges, where consultation (*shūrā*), justice (*adl*), and reciprocity (Kamaruding et al., 2018) are at the forefront. However, there are several principles that need to be implicitly applied to current project management techniques, for example, stakeholder analysis, risk management, and agile techniques to ensure their transferability with changing project demands.

To make Islamic leadership values relevant in an organization, a commitment to them as part of the organization's strategy is required. These findings suggest that Islamic principles can be very powerful in creating project success by providing a strong ethical foundation and creating an effective leadership model (Zahri et al., 2024; Mubarak et al., 2021). Consensus on the use of these principles can be established through facilitation (e.g., a Delphi-facilitated process involving experts in refining and standardizing leadership practices). In addition, communication and trust should also be made as important as other factors of a successful project. Proactive communication, supported by the Islamic tradition of *Tabligh*, ensures that project goals are well understood, feedback is sought and shared, and transparency is maintained (Johan & Baharudin, 2021). Furthermore, potential sources of risk or misunderstanding between the project manager and stakeholders should be effectively mitigated to minimize overall project risk (Rahman et al., 2022).

Table 4 Practical challenges and solutions in applying Islamic leadership to construction projects.

Identified Challenge / Barrier	Potential Impact on the Project	Proposed Mitigation Strategies or Solutions	Key References
Cultural Resistance and Misunderstanding of Islamic Values	Misinterpretation of Islamic leadership principles may cause skepticism, a lack of adoption, or conflict in multicultural project environments.	Conduct awareness and training sessions emphasizing universal ethical values within Islamic principles; promote inclusivity and cross-cultural dialogue.	Senam et al. (2015); Rafiki (2020); Yusuf et al. (2024)
Weak Ethical Commitment and Corruption Practices	Results in project delays, inflated costs, and loss of stakeholder trust.	Strengthen ethical codes of conduct; implement integrity-based monitoring systems; enforce accountability mechanisms through <i>hisbah</i> and transparent audits.	Kamaruding et al. (2022); Sami & Rahim (2017); Ibrahim (2015)
Limited Knowledge and Leadership Competency	Poor decision-making, ineffective communication, and lack of coordination within teams.	Provide leadership development programs integrating Islamic leadership training with professional certification; promote mentorship by experienced leaders.	Johan & Baharudin (2021); Ahmad et al. (2023); Ismail et al. (2024)
Organizational Resistance to Change	Slow adoption of ethical reforms or value-based leadership practices due to entrenched conventional norms.	Introduce gradual change through pilot projects; demonstrate positive outcomes of ethical leadership for organizational performance.	Kholifah & Mulyana (2023); Mubarak et al. (2021)
Lack of Integration Between Islamic Values and Modern Project Tools	Disconnection between spiritual values and technological systems such as BIM or Lean Construction; loss of ethical oversight.	Integrate Islamic ethical criteria into digital project management tools; develop guidelines aligning Shariah-based ethics with contemporary methodologies.	Zahri et al. (2024); Ahmad et al. (2023); Rahman et al. (2022)
Inconsistent Enforcement and Accountability	Failure to monitor and evaluate ethical compliance across project phases; diminished trust.	Establish ethics committees and periodic <i>hisbah</i> -style reviews; link accountability to performance appraisals and project audits.	Ibrahim (2015); Kamaruding et al. (2018); Yusuf et al. (2024)
Communication Gaps Among Multilevel Stakeholders	Misunderstandings and delays due to unclear instructions or lack of transparency.	Implement structured communication channels guided by the principle of <i>tabligh</i> ; conduct regular stakeholder meetings and feedback sessions.	Johan & Baharudin (2021); Zahri et al. (2024)

In the long term, although Islamic leadership principles offer a unique and holistic moral framework, contemporary practices must be adapted to cope with the increasing complexity of construction project management. Today's design tools and approaches, such as BIM, lean construction, and project management tools, should be used in conjunction with Islamic values to develop a supportive strategy (Senam et al., 2017). This integration ensures that Islamic leadership principles are intact and implementable and offer a strategic advantage in both successfully and ethically executing projects (Zahri et al., 2024).

In brief, Islamic leadership principles hold transformative promise for construction project management, but implementation challenges include cultural barriers, ethical weaknesses, and incorporating Islamic principles into modern construction project management practices. When, at the project level, transparency, honesty, communication, and ethical appropriateness are in place, it is only natural to ensure a strong start to the project life cycle. Furthermore, the application of participatory decision-making along with the incorporation of principles comprising Islamic law and contemporary tools can help organizations to better cope with the complexities of building projects. Furthermore, the application of Islamic leadership principles not only improves project outcomes but also promotes a sustainable and morally based construction management approach that has a positive impact on people, businesses, and society.

3.3. Prospects for Islamic leadership in construction project management

Islamic leadership characteristics provide a wealth of potential in reforming the evolution of construction project processes through the integration of value-based and ethical leadership models into the fabric of the management process (Yusuf et al., 2024). These principles have the potential to lead to greater project and stakeholder success at a higher level of

sustainability and an ethical foundation for the built environment industry. Perhaps the most direct is the optimization of project performance. For example, a sense of inquiry study conducted at the Malaysian Public Works Department (JKR) showed that the application of Islamic leadership principles resulted in greater consensus and agreement among various stakeholders (Senam et al., 2017). This consensus also facilitated rational decision-making, conflict resolution, and subsequently, better project outcomes, which is indeed an implication of embedding these principles in the project management process (Johan & Baharudin, 2021; Zahri et al., 2024). In Islamic ethical leadership and accountability, there is a structure within which project goals can be realized honestly and continuously (Senam et al., 2017).

The basic attributes of Islamic leadership in construction, namely truthfulness (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), sound judgment (*faṭānah*), and effective communication (*tablīgh*) behaviors as a leadership approach, are very sensitive and appropriate for construction projects that experience various challenges. These functions facilitate transparency, robustness, and evidence-based decision-making, which are among the most critical factors in the success of project implementation. However, the gaps caused by variability between current practices often cause delays, cost overruns, and conflicting expectations among various stakeholders (Kamaruding et al., 2018; Zahri et al., 2024).

Since the concepts involved in building a great organizational culture are inherent in the leadership model, construction project managers can build such an organizational structure based on trust and accountability that will lead to responsible and efficient project implementation. Ethical and value-based leadership is an attractive possibility. Islamic leadership emphasizes ethics, equity, and justice, all of which are important considerations for addressing ethical dilemmas and misconduct in the construction industry. This method also applies to Islamic teachings, namely the Quran and Sunnah, which emphasize the accountability of stakeholders, the entire ecosystem, and society at large (Abu & Gazi, 2020). As these principles are brought into the field of project management, Islamic leadership not only protects against malpractice but also ensures that project goals are achieved in a good and satisfactory manner. This synergistic effect of worldly success and spiritual obligations provides an inclusive view that is specifically relevant to Islamic leadership and is particularly appropriate in areas where ethical issues are acute (Ibrahim, 2015).

In addition, the emergence of adaptations to modern Islamic leadership patterns is an active domain that makes it possible to enhance not only the topicality and authenticity of Islamic leadership principles. Also, as Islamic values are incorporated into the factors and methods of transformational leadership, it is possible to build an organizational culture to support innovation, resilience, and long-term sustainability of construction projects (Kholifah & Mulyana, 2023). Transformational leadership issues are about collective motivation and inspiration (Ahmad et al., 2023), topics that fit the Islamic concept of *Tabligh*, and the importance of shared vision. By infusing Islamic leadership ethics into the modern ad hoc and customer-driven leadership paradigm, project managers will be prepared to address the current issues of modern construction projects, both for ethical reasons and through operational excellence (Sami & Rahim, 2017).

Muslim contractors demonstrate Islamic leadership qualities, which simultaneously reflect a management model aligned with their religious beliefs and principles. Grounded in the principle of *Tawḥīd* (the oneness of God), Islamic leadership directs all endeavors toward attaining God's approval as the ultimate goal. This spiritual orientation serves as a powerful impetus for moral integrity, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship. In turn, these values contribute directly to the broader aim of sustainable development (Mubarak et al., 2021). There is also a mutual reinforcement of their willingness to maintain the quality of the output, which benefits their stakeholders as well as society.

Overall, the Islamic leadership framework provides a comprehensive pathway to enhance construction project management through its focus on ethical, value-based, and responsible leadership. By integrating Islamic principles into project governance, organizations can strengthen transparency, accountability, and sustainability while ensuring the moral integrity of decision-making processes (Johan & Baharudin, 2021; Zahri et al., 2024). The incorporation of ethical guidelines drawn from Islamic teachings contributes to improved project outcomes, more effective management of ethical issues, and the establishment of best practice standards for implementing Islamic contractual and operational principles. Moreover, the synergy between Islamic and contemporary leadership competencies creates a dynamic interaction between moral responsibility and innovative transformation, empowering leaders to manage complex construction challenges with both professionalism and spiritual awareness.

As highlighted in Table 5, the future prospects of Islamic leadership in construction project management align strongly with global sustainability and ethical governance agendas. Embedding Islamic leadership values into modern project frameworks promotes social equity, environmental stewardship, and long-term organizational resilience. The literature further indicates that integrating Islamic leadership principles with digital technologies and Lean Construction practices can enhance collaboration, efficiency, and transparency across project stages. In essence, Islamic leadership provides not only a moral compass but also a strategic framework for cultivating an ethical, innovative, and sustainable construction industry in the future.

Table 5 Future prospects and benefits of Islamic leadership in construction project management.

Leadership Principle / Characteristic	Possible Contribution to Project Performance	Ethical, Social, or Environmental Impact	Supporting References
Truthfulness (Ṣidq)	Encourages transparency in project reporting, procurement, and stakeholder relations; improves project accountability and accuracy.	Promotes integrity-driven work culture and strengthens public confidence in project outcomes.	Abu & Gazi (2020); Zahri et al. (2024)
Trustworthiness (Amānah)	Enhances long-term client relationships and efficient management of project resources.	Reduces corruption, promotes ethical stewardship, and ensures fair distribution of benefits.	Kamaruding et al. (2018); Mubarak et al. (2021)
Sound Judgment (Faṭānah)	Supports effective decision-making, risk assessment, and strategic planning; increases innovation and adaptability.	Fosters responsible leadership that balances productivity with moral reasoning and sustainability.	Ahmad et al. (2023); Johan & Baharudin (2021)
Effective Communication (Tablīgh)	Strengthens coordination among multidisciplinary teams, ensuring clarity across project stages.	Builds harmony, mutual respect, and social cohesion among project stakeholders.	Zahri et al. (2024); Rafiki (2020)
Justice ('Adl)	Improves fairness in task delegation, resource allocation, and conflict management; reduces workplace disputes.	Promotes equality and respect, leading to socially sustainable and inclusive project environments.	Senam et al. (2017); Yusuf et al. (2024)
Accountability (Hisbah)	Reinforces continuous monitoring, ethical audits, and performance review mechanisms.	Enhances institutional transparency and ensures environmentally responsible project delivery.	Ibrahim (2015); Kamaruding et al. (2022)
Consultation (Shūrā)	Strengthens participatory decision-making and stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle.	Encourages collaboration, democratic governance, and shared responsibility among all project actors.	Rahman et al. (2022); Ismail et al. (2024)

4. Future Perspectives

The findings of this study open several promising directions for future research and practice on Islamic leadership in construction project management. While the present narrative review consolidates key concepts, challenges, and benefits, further work is needed to deepen empirical understanding and operationalize these principles within diverse project environments. Future studies should explore how Islamic leadership principles can be applied across different scales of construction projects, ranging from small enterprises to large multinational operations. Comparative analyses between Islamic and non-Islamic management models could also provide valuable insights into the universality and adaptability of Islamic leadership ethics. Moreover, longitudinal research examining how these values influence project outcomes over time would contribute to stronger evidence-based validation of their effectiveness.

There is significant potential to integrate Islamic leadership principles into professional development frameworks, project governance systems, and higher education curricula in engineering and management. At the industry level, practical applications may include the incorporation of ethical leadership indicators into project performance assessments, the design of training modules that combine Shariah-based ethics with modern management tools, and the promotion of value-driven leadership as a benchmark for sustainable construction practices. However, despite this promise, several obstacles may hinder the implementation of Islamic leadership in construction, such as resistance to cultural change, limited awareness of Islamic management philosophy, and inconsistent organizational commitment to ethical governance. Addressing these challenges requires stronger policy alignment, leadership advocacy, and continuous professional education to foster a culture that values moral integrity alongside technical excellence.

Methodologically, future research could benefit from adopting mixed-method or case study designs to investigate how Islamic leadership functions in real project environments. Action research approaches may also be valuable for testing leadership interventions within ongoing construction projects, providing practical feedback and iterative learning. Qualitative tools such as thematic analysis, grounded theory, and digital ethnography could further enrich the understanding of the ethical and behavioral dimensions of leadership in construction. Meanwhile, technological advancements such as BIM, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Lean Construction offer new opportunities to embed Islamic ethical principles within digital project management systems. These technologies can be adapted to include ethical decision-making checkpoints, transparent communication mechanisms, and accountability structures inspired by core Islamic values such as trustworthiness (amānah) and truthfulness (ṣidq), thereby promoting integrity and sustainability in project delivery.

The advancement of Islamic leadership in construction project management also presents opportunities for greater interdisciplinarity. Collaboration with disciplines such as psychology, education, sociology, and information technology can deepen understanding of how spiritual intelligence, organizational behavior, and digital systems shape ethical and professional

conduct. By bridging faith-based ethics with contemporary management science, Islamic leadership can evolve into a holistic framework that unites technical proficiency, moral responsibility, and social well-being that contributing not only to successful project outcomes but also to the broader transformation of the construction.

5. Conclusion

Islamic leadership principles are transformative agents for the built environment because of their ability to solve technical and moral problems of project management. With the lessons from the Qur'an and Sunnah, Islamic leadership principles guide morals and spirituality and serve as ethical and spiritual guidelines for Islamic leadership in ensuring project implementation based on transparency, accountability, and sense of responsibility to all involved parties. Underlying precepts for Islamic leadership are honesty, trust, competence, and communication that will foster a team culture producing an ethical culture, which in turn will be evidence of operational excellence.

Despite being hampered by issues including cultural unwillingness, ethical error, and the complexity of modern building, Islamic leadership principles offer a powerful base on which to navigate these challenges. Because of the effectiveness of those principles, they can be applied to the benefit of education, information, and the use of new tools and techniques to resolve the concerns of stakeholder management, risk mitigation and project implementation. The promise that Islamic leadership principles can deliver goes beyond project completion. It also relates project aims to spiritual growth and social and environmental objectives, and introduces way of thinking that is moral, social and environmentally oriented in construction activities which are morally justifiable and operationally feasible.

The adoption of Islamic leadership traits causes a cultural transformation in the way a construction project is managed. It offers a method that not only enables achieving successful project outcomes but also ensures ethically sound action and sustainable operation in the long run. This integrative approach represents a concretization of the principle of universal applicability and clearly illustrates the place of Islamic faith in the provision of solutions for the challenges of the contemporary period as well as the place of Islamic leadership as a practical instrument in the attainment of facilities from the management of construction projects on the benefit of all parties, organizations, and society.

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Ethical Considerations

Not applicable.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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