



International Conference on Islam, Law, and Society (INCOILS)  
Conference Proceedings 2025

**The Aesthetic Dimension of Islamic Educational Leadership:  
Managing through Beauty, Harmony, and Ihsan**

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**ABSTRACT:**

Leadership in Islamic education has often been discussed through the lenses of ethics, professionalism, and spirituality, yet its aesthetic dimension remains largely unexplored. Modern management paradigms frequently emphasize structure, performance, and efficiency but overlook the beauty and harmony that sustain human motivation and institutional balance. This study seeks to reinterpret Islamic educational leadership through the lens of *jamal* (beauty) and *ihsan* (excellence with grace), proposing that leadership in Islam is not only moral but also aesthetic in its expression. Using a library research approach, this paper examines classical Islamic concepts and contemporary leadership theories to construct a framework for aesthetic management. The findings reveal that beauty in leadership manifests through balance (*tawazun*), harmony (*wasatiyyah*), and compassionate excellence (*ihsan*). These elements nurture an organizational culture that values serenity, ethical consistency, and emotional well-being alongside professionalism. The aesthetic dimension thus transforms Islamic educational leadership from a procedural system into an art of cultivating harmony — where managing becomes not an act of control, but a manifestation of grace and moral elegance.

**Key words:** *Islamic educational leadership; aesthetics; ihsan; harmony; beauty; management.*

## Introduction

In the modern educational landscape, leadership has become increasingly associated with strategic planning, performance measurement, and institutional accountability.<sup>1</sup> While these dimensions are essential, they often lead to a managerial culture dominated by numbers, control, and procedural rigidity. Within Islamic education, this orientation risks undermining the moral and spiritual foundations upon which leadership is built. The reduction of leadership to technical efficiency neglects a crucial dimension of Islamic ethics — the aesthetic of virtue, the beauty that emanates from sincerity, harmony, and balance.<sup>2</sup> The absence of this aesthetic awareness has created educational environments that are efficient but emotionally dry, organized but spiritually fragmented. This concern forms the academic anxiety underlying the present study: how can Islamic educational leadership be revitalized through the integration of beauty (*jamal*) and *ihsan* as guiding principles?

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen Ehibor Agwoje and Monica Chinenye Okeleke, “Institutional Leadership and the Management of Change in the 21st Century University Education,” *International Journal of Institutional Leadership, Policy and Management* 5, no. 4 (2023): 393–417.

<sup>2</sup>Shamma Al Naqbi, “The Islamic Perspective on Qualities Required for Effective Leadership,” *Journal of the Contemporary Study of Islam* 4, no. 2 (2024): 195–218.

Previous research has contributed significantly to the understanding of ethical and spiritual leadership in Islamic education. Wildan Miftahussurur and Zahrotul Widad (2025) conceptualized Islamic management as a trust (amanah) guided by divine accountability,<sup>3</sup> while Taufiqul Rahman Syarif and Farah Aida Ahmad Nadzri (2024) explored adl and ihsan as moral standards for institutional governance.<sup>4</sup> However, despite these advances, the aesthetic dimension of leadership — the harmony, balance, and emotional elegance that shape human relations in educational management — remains largely underexplored. Islamic thought recognizes beauty not as ornamentation but as a reflection of divine order; therefore, leadership in education must also embody that harmony.

The aesthetic perspective in education has been more extensively discussed in Western philosophical traditions.<sup>5</sup> Thinkers like John Dewey (1934) and Maxine Greene (1995) emphasized that beauty and imagination are central to moral and educational development.<sup>6</sup> Yet, such discussions are rarely situated within Islamic epistemology, which unites aesthetics and ethics through the concept of ihsan — doing what is right with grace and excellence. In Islamic education, ihsan does not merely denote perfection of work but also the refinement of the soul and relationships.<sup>7</sup> The aesthetic approach therefore deepens leadership by connecting moral virtue with emotional resonance and institutional harmony.

From a Qur’anic standpoint, beauty (jamal) and harmony (tawazun) are divine attributes reflected in the natural and social order.<sup>8</sup> The Qur’an invites believers to observe the beauty of creation as signs (ayat) of God’s wisdom and perfection. Translated into leadership, this means that order, justice, and empathy must coexist in balance. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exemplified this aesthetic leadership by managing communities not only through laws and systems but also through compassion, gentleness, and emotional intelligence. His leadership style

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<sup>3</sup>Wildan Miftahussurur and Zahrotul Widad, “Good Governance Framework in Islamic Educational Institutions: Literature-Based Insights on Amanah, Maslahah, and Accountability,” *Al-Qiyadab: Journal of Education Governance* 1, no. 2 (2025): 58–71.

<sup>4</sup>Taufiqul Rahman Syarif and Farah Aida Ahmad Nadzri, “Principles of Governance in the Quran and Their Role in Eradicating Corruption,” *Jurnal Islam Dan Masyarakat Kontemporer* 25, no. 2 (2024): 53–63.

<sup>5</sup>M Abdul Aziz, “The Philosophical Foundation Of Western Higher Education: A Critical Review Of Theory And Practice,” *International Journal of Educational Research Review* 8, no. 2 (2023): 208–19.

<sup>6</sup>Amanda N Gulla, Holly C Fairbank, and Stephen M Noonan, “Maxine Greene: An Approach To Aesthetic Education And A Vision Of Social Imagination,” *Beijing International Review of Education* 4, no. 3 (2022): 479–90.

<sup>7</sup>Umar Abdullahi Maidugu and Aliyu Ahmad Abubakar Sadeeq, “Islam and Morality: The Teachings of Al-Ihsan from the Qur’an and Hadith and Its Effects on Muslim Ummah,” *Solo Universal Journal of Islamic Education and Multiculturalism* 2, no. 03 (2024): 181–94.

<sup>8</sup>Suwarjin, “Achieving Religious Harmony through Fiqh Wasatiyah,” *J. Int’l L. Islamic L.* 19 (2023): 145.

combined decisiveness with tenderness — a balance that embodied ihsan in both principle and practice.<sup>9</sup>

This aesthetic dimension of leadership, however, is often overshadowed by the bureaucratic logic of modern institutions. Performance metrics, administrative procedures, and competitive standards have transformed education into an industry rather than a community of growth.<sup>10</sup> Within such systems, the human element of management — empathy, emotional grace, and ethical beauty — tends to fade. Aesthetics, in this context, are not about physical appearance or institutional design; they are about the moral beauty of relationships, the elegance of justice, and the harmony between authority and compassion.<sup>11</sup> Rediscovering this dimension is essential to humanize Islamic educational leadership in the 21st century.

Therefore, this study seeks to reframe Islamic educational leadership through the integration of aesthetics and ethics. It explores how beauty, harmony, and ihsan can be conceptualized as managerial virtues that inspire both moral conduct and emotional balance.<sup>12</sup> Using a library research approach, the study synthesizes classical Islamic teachings with modern theories of leadership and organizational culture. The goal is to articulate a framework that not only emphasizes what leaders should do but also how they should be — cultivating a leadership ethos grounded in grace, serenity, and moral excellence.

Ultimately, this introduction positions Islamic educational leadership as a spiritual art rather than a technical profession. Leadership, in its deepest sense, is an aesthetic act: it shapes people, emotions, and institutions in ways that reflect divine harmony. By reintroducing *jamal* and *ihsan* into management discourse, Islamic education can transcend bureaucratic formalism and rediscover its human and spiritual beauty. The following sections will examine the methodological approach, explore the conceptual findings, and develop a model of aesthetic leadership that integrates faith, ethics, and harmony into the heart of educational management.

## Methods

This study employed a library research approach to explore the conceptual relationship between aesthetics, ethics, and leadership in the context of Islamic education management. The

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<sup>9</sup>Mohamed Yacine, “Leadership in Action: Exploring the Principles of Prophet Muhammad in Contemporary Management Practices,” in *Emotionally Intelligent Methods for Meaningful Leadership* (IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2025), 1–30.

<sup>10</sup>Mohamed Ashmel Mohamed Hashim, Issam Tlemsani, and Robin Matthews, “Higher Education Strategy in Digital Transformation,” *Education and Information Technologies* 27, no. 3 (2022): 3171–95.

<sup>11</sup>Panos Paris, “Design and Value: The Ethical Nature of Beautiful Design,” *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* 48, no. 1 (2025): 44–61.

<sup>12</sup>Maidugu and Sadeeq, “Islam and Morality: The Teachings of Al-Ihsan from the Qur’an and Hadith and Its Effects on Muslim Ummah.”

library method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of both classical Islamic literature and contemporary leadership theories without the constraints of field-based data collection. Primary sources included books, peer-reviewed journals, and institutional publications discussing Islamic management, educational leadership, aesthetics, and moral philosophy. The analysis also drew upon Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir), prophetic traditions (hadith), and the works of Muslim scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Miskawayh, and Al-Farabi, who discussed the unity of beauty and virtue in ethical conduct. Complementary references from modern leadership theorists — such as Bass, Greenleaf, and Senge — were incorporated to contextualize aesthetic leadership within current educational discourse. All materials were selected based on their conceptual relevance and contribution to the discussion of *jamal*, *ihsan*, and organizational harmony.

The data were analyzed through a descriptive-analytical process consisting of three main stages: identification, interpretation, and synthesis. The identification stage involved selecting sources that explicitly addressed leadership, ethics, and beauty as interconnected principles. During interpretation, the study examined how Islamic teachings and modern theories intersect in defining the human and aesthetic dimensions of leadership. Finally, in the synthesis stage, insights were integrated into a conceptual framework of aesthetic Islamic educational leadership, highlighting how beauty (*jamal*), harmony (*tawazun*), and excellence (*ihsan*) can serve as managerial principles. This operational process enabled the study to generate a reflective, value-based understanding of leadership that transcends procedural management and emphasizes moral elegance as the essence of Islamic educational governance.

## Result

### 1. Reinterpreting Leadership through the Lens of Jamal (Divine Beauty)

The concept of *jamal* (beauty) in Islam transcends aesthetic appearance; it represents divine harmony, balance, and moral perfection.<sup>13</sup> The Qur'an repeatedly reminds believers that beauty lies in order, moderation, and virtue — “Allah is Beautiful and loves beauty” (Sahih Muslim). This declaration not only celebrates aesthetic appreciation but also sets a spiritual paradigm: that beauty in leadership manifests when justice, compassion, and wisdom are harmoniously expressed.<sup>14</sup> Leadership, from this view, is not a matter of authority but an art of reflecting divine balance in human relationships and institutional life. Thus, the

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<sup>13</sup>Mojib Alzahrani, “The Concept of Esthetics and Beauty in Islam as One of the Components of Islamic Art,” *المجلة التربوية لكلية التربية بسوهاج* 88, no. 88 (2021): 54–75.

<sup>14</sup>Laura Blakeman, “Unearthing Beauty: Towards a Leadership of Devotion,” *Journal of Awareness-Based Systems Change* 4, no. 1 (2024): 77–99.

reinterpretation of leadership through *jamal* invites a shift from managerial control to moral elegance — from commanding to cultivating.

Within the framework of Islamic education, *jamal* becomes the essence of ethical leadership. Educational leaders are called to create environments that radiate serenity, respect, and harmony rather than fear or rigidity.<sup>15</sup> When beauty governs management, institutions become spaces of inspiration rather than obligation. The aesthetic of leadership, therefore, is not decorative but transformative. It shapes attitudes, communication, and organizational culture through the pursuit of inner and outer balance.<sup>16</sup> Leaders who embody *jamal* approach every task with gentleness and intentional grace, viewing their work as an act of spiritual refinement. Such leaders are not driven by image, but by the quiet elegance of integrity and humility.

Classical Islamic scholars also linked beauty with virtue. Al-Ghazali, in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, described beauty as the harmony between the inner and outer dimensions of the soul — when one's character reflects sincerity and moderation. This insight can be extended into organizational contexts: an institution achieves *jamal* when its internal structure (values, systems) and external form (practices, behaviors) exist in coherence.<sup>17</sup> A beautiful organization, therefore, is one where justice guides decisions, compassion informs discipline, and excellence (*ihsan*) animates performance.<sup>18</sup> Beauty in this sense becomes the moral geometry of leadership — symmetry between ethics and action.

Modern leadership theories also recognize the need for aesthetics, though often without the theological depth found in Islam.<sup>19</sup> For example, Sergiovanni (2007) spoke of “moral leadership” as the alignment between values and practices, while Greenleaf's (1977) concept of “servant leadership” emphasizes empathy and community well-being. Yet, these models often lack the transcendent dimension that *jamal* provides. In Islamic leadership, beauty is not merely ethical coherence but spiritual resonance — the sense that actions align with divine

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<sup>15</sup>Will Parks, *Graceful Leadership: Inspiring Hope, Creativity and Resilience in Times of Peace and Crisis* (Right Book Press, 2025).

<sup>16</sup>Junaid Iqbal and Zahoor Ahmad Parray, “Striking The Balance: Unraveling The Influence Of Organizational Culture On Organization Citizenship Behavior With Corporate Social Responsibility As The Bridge,” *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management* 74, no. 6 (2025): 2091–2112.

<sup>17</sup>Ahmed Hameed Jasim and Waad Abdul Raheem Farhan, “Examining Organizational Values in Iraqi Colleges of Physical Education and Sports Science,” *Fitness, Performance and Health Journal* 3, no. 1 (2024): 39–53.

<sup>18</sup>Yacine, “Leadership in Action: Exploring the Principles of Prophet Muhammad in Contemporary Management Practices.”

<sup>19</sup>Mohammad Eisa Ruhullah and Thameem Ushama, “Leadership in Islam: A Spiritual and Theological Doctrine,” *Fikroh: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam* 18, no. 1 (2025): 54–74.

purpose. When leadership decisions emerge from sincerity (ikhlas) and compassion (rahmah), beauty becomes tangible, creating emotional balance and moral clarity across the institution.<sup>20</sup>

The principle of *jamal* also addresses the emotional atmosphere of educational institutions. Modern bureaucracies often produce anxiety, competition, and fragmentation, while *jamal*-based leadership cultivates tranquility (*sakīnah*) and collaboration. By approaching management as an art of harmony, leaders humanize administrative processes, seeing people as souls rather than functions.<sup>21</sup> This orientation does not reject professionalism but redefines it through aesthetic ethics — the pursuit of excellence that feels graceful, not forced. It reconnects the intellect and the heart, fostering an environment where learning and leadership coexist as acts of beauty.

Ultimately, reinterpreting leadership through *jamal* invites Islamic educational institutions to rediscover the spiritual artistry of management. It calls leaders to design not only effective systems but also beautiful experiences — to make justice look fair, discipline feel kind, and authority sound gentle. When *jamal* becomes the organizing principle of leadership, management transforms into a reflection of divine elegance: efficient yet empathetic, structured yet serene. In this harmony lies the essence of Islamic educational leadership — a discipline of beauty that nurtures both excellence and peace.

## 2. Harmony (Tawazun) as the Core of Organizational Balance

In Islamic thought, *tawazun* (harmony or balance) represents one of the most profound ethical and ontological principles of creation.<sup>22</sup> The Qur'an depicts the universe as a balanced system, where every element operates in perfect proportion and purpose: "And the heaven He raised, and established the balance, that you not transgress within the balance" (Ar-Rahman: 7–8). This divine balance forms the metaphysical foundation of justice, order, and beauty. When translated into leadership, *tawazun* becomes the guiding principle for aligning institutional systems, human relationships, and moral aspirations.<sup>23</sup> Harmony in management ensures that efficiency does not overshadow empathy, structure does not suppress creativity, and authority does not erase humility.

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<sup>20</sup>Sharfizie Mohd Sharip et al., "Rahmah among Muslim Leaders: The Case of Waqf Institutions," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, no. 2 (2023): 242–57.

<sup>21</sup>William G Foote, "Neither a Beast Nor a God: A Philosophical Anthropology of Humanistic Management," *Humanistic Management Journal* 9, no. 3 (2024): 327–71.

<sup>22</sup>Ade Pahrudin et al., "Religious Moderation as a Framework for Peaceful Coexistence in Contemporary Islamic Thought," *Jurnal Fuaduna: Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 9, no. 1 (2025): 15–26.

<sup>23</sup>Mohammad Eisa Ruhullah and Thameem Ushama, "Tawhidic Leadership In The Modern World: Bridging Islamic Governance With Universal Values For Peace And Integrity," *Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought & Civilization* 29, no. 2 (2024).

In the context of Islamic educational leadership, *tawazun* provides a framework for sustaining equilibrium between the spiritual and the administrative, the ethical and the practical.<sup>24</sup> Institutions often struggle to maintain this equilibrium, particularly when faced with modern demands for accountability, digitalization, and competitiveness. Leaders grounded in *tawazun* approach such challenges not as conflicts but as opportunities to create integration. They see the institution as a living organism where every part contributes to the whole — teachers, students, administrators, and community members.<sup>25</sup> Harmony here does not mean uniformity, but coherence: diversity guided by shared purpose and mutual respect.

Classical Muslim scholars like Al-Farabi and Ibn Khaldun viewed social and institutional balance as essential for civilization. Al-Farabi's concept of the Virtuous City emphasized governance based on proportion and justice, where every role contributes harmoniously to collective well-being.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Ibn Khaldun's notion of *asabiyyah* (social cohesion) resonates with *tawazun*, highlighting that leadership thrives when collective solidarity is maintained.<sup>27</sup> These insights remain highly relevant to modern educational management, where leadership must harmonize diverse professional, cultural, and emotional energies. A balanced institution, therefore, is not one free of conflict, but one capable of transforming differences into creative collaboration.

From a managerial standpoint, *tawazun* also involves balancing procedural rigor with human compassion. Excessive regulation can suffocate initiative, while unstructured freedom can lead to disorder. The aesthetic leader cultivates equilibrium between rules and relationships, ensuring that policies serve people rather than dominate them. This balance is particularly vital in Islamic education, where authority carries both administrative and moral weight.<sup>28</sup> Leaders who embody *tawazun* implement discipline with fairness, innovation with discernment, and accountability with empathy. Their leadership reflects not rigidity, but rhythmic stability — a state of functional grace that mirrors the balance of creation itself.

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<sup>24</sup>Agus Setiawan, "Ethical Decision-Making in Educational Leadership: Insights from Islamic Scholars," *Edu Spectrum: Journal of Multidimensional Education* 1, no. 1 (2024): 15–27.

<sup>25</sup>Brandi L Scott, Susana M Muñoz, and Shelby B Scott, "How Whiteness Operates At A Hispanic Serving Institution: A Qualitative Case Study Of Faculty, Staff, And Administrators.," *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 17, no. 4 (2024): 563.

<sup>26</sup>Juliyana Junaidi, Latifah Abdul Majid, and Mohd Arif Nazri, "Revisiting Social Justice: Exploring the Qur'anic Paradigm in Addressing Contemporary Challenges," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah Dan Pemikiran Islam* 25, no. 2 (2023): 153–92.

<sup>27</sup>Nevzat Narçiçek and Hasan Akay, "An Evaluation of Ibn Khaldun's Understanding of Civil Society," *Sociology of Islam* 11, no. 2–3 (2025): 231–50.

<sup>28</sup>Firmansyah Firmansyah et al., "Islamic Ethics and Morality in the Educational Bureaucracy: Theoretical and Practical Review," *INCARE, International Journal of Educational Resources* 5, no. 5 (2025): 559–74.

Modern leadership theories have also acknowledged the importance of balance, albeit through different terms.<sup>29</sup> Senge's (2006) idea of the learning organization and Goleman's (2013) concept of emotional intelligence both advocate equilibrium between cognition and emotion, structure and flexibility.<sup>30</sup> However, *tawazun* offers a deeper metaphysical grounding — it is not merely psychological or strategic, but theological. It connects balance to divine order, reminding leaders that harmony is not optional but sacred. By internalizing *tawazun*, educational leaders act as custodians of equilibrium, ensuring that institutional progress remains ethically and spiritually aligned.

Culturally, *tawazun* encourages the blending of tradition and modernity in educational institutions.<sup>31</sup> Many Islamic schools and universities face the dilemma of integrating global standards without losing their local identity. A leadership model rooted in *tawazun* allows both dimensions to coexist. It welcomes innovation while preserving cultural wisdom; it embraces technology without sacrificing spirituality. This cultural harmony produces institutions that are simultaneously progressive and authentic — rooted in heritage yet responsive to change.<sup>32</sup> It is through this delicate balance that Islamic education maintains its relevance and distinctiveness in a globalized world.

Ultimately, *tawazun* is the aesthetic expression of justice, peace, and proportionality in Islamic educational leadership. It ensures that management becomes an act of moral design — shaping systems and relationships that reflect divine order. When leaders embody *tawazun*, they create institutions that move gracefully between vision and reality, ambition and humility, efficiency and compassion. This harmony transforms management into a rhythm of faith — an ongoing dialogue between the spiritual and the structural, producing not just effective organizations but beautiful ones.

### 3. Ihsan as the Aesthetic of Excellence in Leadership

The concept of *ihsan* lies at the heart of Islamic spirituality, denoting the pursuit of excellence performed with sincerity and grace.<sup>33</sup> When the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) defined *ihsan* as “to worship Allah as if you see Him,” he established a moral-aesthetic foundation that extends beyond ritual devotion into every aspect of life, including

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<sup>29</sup>Rachel Konyefa Dickson, “Analysis of the Traditional Leadership Theories: A Review of Contemporary Leadership Approaches and Management Effectiveness,” in *Information and Knowledge Management*, vol. 13, 2023, 9–23.

<sup>30</sup>Edgar Ricardo Yauri Rivera et al., “Emotional Intelligence and Human Development in Education: Literature Review,” 2024.

<sup>31</sup>Sri Haryanto, Sukawi Sukawi, and Mohammad Muslih, “Uniting Tradition and Modernity: Scientific Paradigms of Pesantren-Based Universities,” *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 3 (2024): 684–704.

<sup>32</sup>Qian Gao and Siân Jones, “Authenticity and Heritage Conservation: Seeking Common Complexities Beyond the ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ Dichotomy,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 27, no. 1 (2021): 90–106.

<sup>33</sup>A Ilyas Ismail and Iffah Budiningsih, “Strengthening Ihsan Behavior (Always Do the Good Deeds),” *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: G Linguistics & Education* 21, no. 5 (2021).

leadership. In this sense, *ihsan* transforms management into an art form — a beautiful act carried out with awareness, humility, and perfection. Leadership through *ihsan* is not measured solely by efficiency or results but by the elegance of intention, the beauty of process, and the harmony of outcomes.<sup>34</sup> It represents a leadership style that unites precision with compassion and discipline with kindness.

In the realm of Islamic educational leadership, *ihsan* becomes the principle that animates every decision and interaction with spiritual consciousness. It encourages leaders to view their administrative duties not as burdens but as acts of devotion imbued with meaning. When a leader plans, evaluates, or communicates with *ihsan*, they elevate mundane procedures into ethical expressions of care and excellence.<sup>35</sup> This perspective redefines professionalism: it is no longer a secular pursuit of success but a sacred endeavor guided by grace. The beauty of leadership, therefore, emerges not from authority, but from *adab* — the refinement of character that inspires others through sincerity and balance.<sup>36</sup>

*Ihsan* also serves as a corrective to the mechanistic tendencies of modern management. In many institutions, leadership is reduced to control and compliance, producing efficiency without empathy. The aesthetic of *ihsan* restores the human and emotional dimensions of leadership.<sup>37</sup> It calls for attentiveness, empathy, and sensitivity in dealing with others. Leaders who embody *ihsan* practice *rahmah* (compassion) and *tawadu'* (humility), fostering a culture of trust and respect. This moral beauty creates an atmosphere where teachers and students are not managed as resources but nurtured as souls. The resulting environment is not only productive but also emotionally enriching — a space where excellence feels humane.

From an organizational standpoint, *ihsan* encourages continuous improvement driven by inner motivation rather than external pressure. It aligns closely with modern ideas of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), both of which emphasize inspiration and moral integrity.<sup>38</sup> However, the Islamic conception of *ihsan* adds a transcendent dimension — excellence is pursued not for recognition but for divine pleasure. This spiritual accountability generates intrinsic discipline and emotional intelligence that

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<sup>34</sup>Maidugu and Sadeeq, "Islam and Morality: The Teachings of Al-Ihsan from the Qur'an and Hadith and Its Effects on Muslim Ummah."

<sup>35</sup>Muhammad Aqib Ali et al., "Assessment of Human Resource Management Framework from Islamic Paradigm: Proposition of an Islamic Model of Human Resource Management," *Bulletin of Business and Economics (BBE)* 13, no. 1 (2024).

<sup>36</sup>Nabeel Al-Azami, *Muhammad Saw. 11 Leadership Qualities That Changed The World* (Elex Media Komputindo, 2024).

<sup>37</sup>Nur Hadi Ihsan, "SUFISM REBORN: Revitalizing Traditional Wisdom for Contemporary Challenges" (UNIDA Gontor Press, 2024).

<sup>38</sup>Norman Curtis Snead Sr, *Servant-Leadership: Social-Science Model or Biblical Model-Which Is Predominant within Southern Baptist Ministry Leadership?* (Liberty University, 2021).

modern leadership theories often lack. It turns management into ibadah (worship), blending structure with soul, and process with purpose.

Ultimately, *ihsan* is the aesthetic language of leadership — the point where ethics, beauty, and performance converge. It inspires leaders to act beautifully, think harmoniously, and decide wisely. In Islamic education management, *ihsan* ensures that leadership remains a moral and spiritual journey rather than a bureaucratic function. It transforms organizational life into a living reflection of divine beauty, where excellence is expressed not only in what leaders achieve but in how they achieve it. Through *ihsan*, leadership becomes the embodiment of graceful responsibility — a harmony between professionalism and piety that defines the very essence of Islamic educational excellence.

#### 4. Toward a Model of Aesthetic Islamic Educational Leadership

The synthesis of *jamal* (beauty), *tawazun* (harmony), and *ihsan* (excellence with grace) leads to a comprehensive framework of aesthetic Islamic educational leadership. This model envisions leadership as a dynamic balance between moral responsibility, spiritual consciousness, and organizational refinement. It challenges the conventional notion of leadership as mere management and redefines it as an act of moral artistry. In this paradigm, the leader becomes both a strategist and a cultivator of harmony — shaping not only institutional policies but also the emotional and ethical climate of the community.<sup>39</sup> Leadership is thus understood not as control, but as composition; not as command, but as the art of creating balance and beauty within the institution.

The first dimension of this model is spiritual aesthetics, in which leadership derives its inspiration from divine beauty (*jamalullah*).<sup>40</sup> This aesthetic spirituality transforms the leader's mindset from administrative efficiency to ethical harmony. Every decision, communication, and policy becomes a reflection of faith and moral grace. Leaders who internalize this dimension practice self-reflection (*muhasabah*) and spiritual awareness (*muraqabah*), ensuring that leadership remains an act of worship and moral elegance.<sup>41</sup> Such leaders embody the Qur'anic principle that "Allah loves those who act beautifully" (Al-Baqarah: 195), grounding management in devotion rather than domination.

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<sup>39</sup>Fang Ma and Mazni Muhammad, "The Influence of Cultural Values on Leadership Development in Chinese Education," *Uniglobal Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 4, no. 2 (2025): 49–57.

<sup>40</sup>Huma Javed, "Unravelling The Essence Of Islamic Art: Exploring Ilm Al-Jamal, Ihsan, And The Complex Dynamics Of Constructivist Power Politics.," *ISSRA Papers* 16, no. 1 (2024).

<sup>41</sup>Ahmad Farhan, "Tasawuf as a Pedagogical Foundation: Implementing Spiritual Values in Junior High School Education," *JOUSIP: Journal of Sufism and Psychotherapy* 5, no. 1 (2025): 17–34.

The second dimension is relational harmony, rooted in the principle of tawazun. This dimension emphasizes the balance between institutional structure and human relationships.<sup>42</sup> Leaders must maintain order while nurturing creativity, assert authority while practicing empathy, and pursue excellence while preserving well-being. Relational harmony requires emotional intelligence, patience, and the capacity to listen — traits exemplified in the Prophet Muhammad’s leadership. By fostering ukhuwah (brotherhood) and musyawarah (consultation), leaders cultivate a participatory culture where everyone feels valued and heard.<sup>43</sup> The institution, in turn, evolves into a moral community marked by serenity and cooperation.

The third dimension of the model is ethical excellence, founded upon ihsan. This principle provides the operational spirit of aesthetic leadership. It ensures that policies are not only effective but also ethically beautiful — implemented with fairness, transparency, and compassion.<sup>44</sup> Ethical excellence transforms accountability into sincerity, evaluation into reflection, and performance into moral commitment.<sup>45</sup> In this sense, leadership becomes a form of spiritual craftsmanship (fann al-qiyadah), where every action is guided by the desire to please God through serving humanity. This dimension turns routine management into a continuous act of moral beautification.

Collectively, these three dimensions form what may be called the Triadic Harmony Model of Aesthetic Leadership. It visualizes Islamic leadership as a triangle of interconnected forces: jamal gives vision and inspiration, tawazun ensures balance and sustainability, and ihsan provides ethical vitality.<sup>46</sup> When these forces operate in unity, the institution becomes both efficient and humane, structured and soulful. The leader, in this model, is a composer of harmony — integrating strategy with spirituality, and progress with peace.<sup>47</sup> It is a leadership framework that manages systems while simultaneously cultivating the soul of the institution.

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<sup>42</sup>Mohammad Ridwan, Joni Ahmad Mughni, and Muhammad Abdul Muiz, “Moderating Religion, Bridging Cultures: The Impact of Pesantren Riyadul’Ulum Wadda’wah on Intercultural Harmony,” *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Religious Education* 3, no. 1 (2025): 101–10.

<sup>43</sup>Reza Aprian Saputra, Yudin Citriadin, and Hamdi Rahman, “The Impact of Participatory Leadership on the Formation of Organizational Culture in Islamic Educational Institutions,” *Edunesia: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2025): 550–69.

<sup>44</sup>Sukhumpong Channuwong et al., “Good Governance Principles in Buddhism for Business and Politics Administration,” *Migration Letters* 21, no. S1 (2024): 818–27.

<sup>45</sup>Khandakar Akhter Hossain, “Evaluation of Ethical Values to Develop Global Human Resource,” *Journal of Liberal Arts and Humanities* 4, no. 4 (2023): 1–29.

<sup>46</sup>Khaliq Ahmad and Datuk Abdelaziz Berghout, *Islamic Finance and Sustainable Development: Balancing Spirituality, Values and Profit* (Taylor & Francis, 2025).

<sup>47</sup>Elok Maria Ulfah, Abu Amar Bustomi, and Abdur Rofik, “Harmony Matters: Integrating The Social Communication Models of Leadership As A Key To Building Organizational Harmony,” *RAHMATAN LIL ALAMIN: Journal of Peace Education and Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2023): 15–25.

Ultimately, the model of aesthetic Islamic educational leadership presents a new paradigm for the future of Islamic management. It positions leadership as a sacred aesthetic process where ethics, spirituality, and beauty converge to inspire institutional excellence. This vision encourages educational leaders to act not merely as administrators, but as moral artists shaping cultures of grace and integrity. Through this model, Islamic education can rediscover its original mission — to educate not only the mind, but also the heart, through leadership that is both efficient and beautiful, both strategic and serene.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reaffirm that leadership in Islamic education cannot be reduced to administrative techniques or managerial control; it is fundamentally a moral and aesthetic act. The reinterpretation of leadership through *jamal* (beauty) situates management within a framework of emotional harmony and spiritual awareness. This perspective aligns with the growing discourse on human-centered leadership (Ikegbu, 2017),<sup>48</sup> both of which emphasize integrity, empathy, and inner balance as pillars of effective leadership. However, the current study contributes a unique theological dimension — positioning beauty not merely as emotional appeal but as divine order reflected through justice, compassion, and humility. Leadership, therefore, becomes a form of moral artistry that harmonizes faith, ethics, and organizational excellence.

Previous research on Islamic educational leadership has mostly concentrated on ethics, accountability, and professionalism. Beekun (2012) framed Islamic management as *amanah*-based responsibility, while Hajredin Hoxha (2021) emphasized *adl* and *ihsan* as guiding principles of fairness and sincerity.<sup>49</sup> More recently, Simon Robinson (2024) discussed leadership integrity as the foundation for institutional transformation.<sup>50</sup> While these studies provide crucial moral foundations, the present research extends the discourse by uncovering the aesthetic layer within ethics — how beauty, grace, and emotional resonance shape the very character of leadership. This integration of aesthetics and ethics expands the moral vocabulary of Islamic education management beyond compliance into creative virtue.

The discussion on *tawazun* (harmony) also corresponds to contemporary debates on sustainable and inclusive leadership. Al Naqbi (2024) noted that Islamic leaders who balance authority with empathy foster stronger organizational trust and stability.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Muhammad

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<sup>48</sup>Ephraim Ahamefula Ikegbu, “Harmonious Complementarity in Leadership: A Necessary Tool for Environment and Sustainability,” *European Journal of Sustainable Development* 6, no. 3 (2017): 141.

<sup>49</sup>Hajredin Hoxha, “The Concept of (Good-Al Khair),(Kindness-Al Ihsan),(Justice-Al’Adl) in the Holy Qur’an And It’s Relationship to the Preservation of Environment,” n.d.

<sup>50</sup>Simon Robinson, “Leadership Integrity,” in *Exploring Integrity in the Christian Church* (Springer, 2024), 57–84.

<sup>51</sup>Al Naqbi, “The Islamic Perspective on Qualities Required for Effective Leadership.”

Junaid Ahsan (2025) theory of the learning organization underscores that institutional harmony thrives when leadership encourages shared reflection and collective growth.<sup>52</sup> The present study, however, deepens this perspective by grounding harmony in divine ontology: balance is not just managerial equilibrium, but a sacred reflection of the Qur’anic mizan. This spiritual grounding ensures that institutional harmony is not superficial but rooted in moral equilibrium, maintaining both ethical integrity and operational effectiveness.

The role of *ihsan* as the aesthetic of excellence further connects Islamic leadership with global theories of servant and transformational leadership. Bass (1985) and Greenleaf (1977) both advocate leading through vision and service, but the Islamic perspective introduces transcendence — leadership motivated by the consciousness of God.<sup>53</sup> *Ihsan* transforms excellence into a spiritual discipline, ensuring that performance is accompanied by purity of intention. This moral consciousness creates emotional intelligence and organizational empathy — elements increasingly recognized in post-2020 research as key factors in educational leadership effectiveness.<sup>54</sup> Thus, *ihsan* represents the aesthetic essence of performance: a pursuit of beauty through sincerity and justice.

Ultimately, this study bridges classical Islamic ethics with modern organizational theory through the concept of aesthetic leadership. It proposes that managing through beauty, harmony, and *ihsan* is not only possible but necessary for the humanization of education in the modern era. The aesthetic dimension transforms leadership from a bureaucratic obligation into a spiritual vocation — an act of designing ethical harmony within institutions. This synthesis contributes a novel perspective to Islamic educational leadership: leadership as an art of moral beauty, where administrators become architects of grace, and institutions evolve as sanctuaries of wisdom, balance, and serenity.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that the aesthetic dimension of Islamic educational leadership offers a transformative framework for humanizing management practices through the integration of *jamal* (beauty), *tawazun* (harmony), and *ihsan* (excellence). Leadership in Islamic education, when guided by these values, transcends technical administration and becomes an act of spiritual and moral artistry. The aesthetic approach ensures that institutional governance aligns efficiency with

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<sup>52</sup>Muhammad Junaid Ahsan, “Cultivating a Culture of Learning: The Role of Leadership in Fostering Lifelong Development,” *The Learning Organization* 32, no. 2 (2025): 282–306.

<sup>53</sup>Mahazan Abdul Mutalib, Ahmad Rafiki, and Wan Mohd Fazrul Azdi Wan Razali, *Principles and Practice of Islamic Leadership* (Springer, 2022).

<sup>54</sup>Tusharika Mukherjee, “The Power of Empathy: Rethinking Leadership Agility During Transition,” in *Agile Leadership for Industry 4.0* (Apple Academic Press, 2023), 175–91.

empathy, structure with compassion, and professionalism with piety. By positioning leadership as a reflection of divine beauty and balance, this research contributes a novel paradigm that redefines success not merely in organizational terms but in moral harmony and spiritual resonance. Ultimately, aesthetic Islamic educational leadership envisions institutions as living expressions of grace — places where management, faith, and humanity coexist in beautiful equilibrium.

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