

A Conceptual Model of Ethical Leadership in Ulil Albab-Oriented Islamic Higher Education

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Abstract

Keywords:

ethical leadership; Ulil Albab; Islamic higher education; Islamic work ethics; moral identity; institutional ethics climate; business education

Purpose: This article develops and sharpens an Ulil Albab-oriented ethical leadership framework for Islamic higher education, with particular relevance to business and economics programmes that are expected to integrate professional competence, moral reasoning, spiritual accountability, and public responsibility. **Design/methodology/approach:** The study uses an integrative literature review to synthesize seminal and recent scholarship on ethical leadership, Islamic work ethics, spiritual leadership, moral identity, institutional ethics climate, and Ulil Albab education. The analysis is organized around four conceptual categories: moral person, moral manager, Islamic virtue-based leadership, and institutional ethics climate. **Findings:** The review indicates that ethical leadership in Islamic higher education cannot be reduced to compliance, charisma, administrative control, or symbolic religiosity. It becomes educationally transformative when leaders embody amanah, justice, consultation, truthfulness, benevolence, and maslahah while institutionalizing these values through transparent assessment, academic integrity systems, service learning, reflective pedagogy, and quality assurance. The proposed model positions Ulil Albab ethical identity, expressed through dhikr, fikr, and amal, as a mediating mechanism between Islamic ethical leadership and student/institutional ethical outcomes. Institutional ethics climate strengthens this relationship by converting values into daily academic routines. **Originality/value:** The article contributes a theoretically grounded and testable model that links modern ethical leadership theory with Islamic educational anthropology. It offers propositions, operational indicators, and empirical research directions for future studies in Islamic business and economics education.

Abstrak

Tujuan: Artikel ini mengembangkan dan mempertajam kerangka kerja kepemimpinan etis yang berorientasi pada Ulil Albab untuk pendidikan tinggi Islam, dengan relevansi khusus bagi program-program bisnis dan ekonomi yang diharapkan dapat mengintegrasikan kompetensi profesional, penalaran moral, akuntabilitas spiritual, dan tanggung jawab publik. **Desain/metodologi/pendekatan:** Penelitian ini menggunakan tinjauan pustaka integratif untuk mensintesis karya-karya ilmiah penting dan terkini mengenai kepemimpinan etis, etika kerja Islam, kepemimpinan spiritual, identitas moral, iklim etika kelembagaan, dan pendidikan Ulil Albab. Analisis ini disusun berdasarkan empat kategori konseptual: pribadi yang bermoral, manajer yang bermoral, kepemimpinan berbasis kebajikan Islam, dan iklim etika kelembagaan. **Temuan:** Tinjauan ini menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan etis dalam pendidikan tinggi Islam tidak dapat disederhanakan menjadi kepatuhan, karisma, kontrol administratif, atau keagamaan simbolis. Kepemimpinan ini menjadi transformatif secara pendidikan ketika pemimpin mengimplementasikan amanah, keadilan, musyawarah, kejujuran, kebaikan, dan maslahah, sekaligus menginstitutionalisasi nilai-nilai tersebut melalui penilaian transparan, sistem integritas akademik, pembelajaran berbasis pelayanan, pedagogi reflektif, dan jaminan mutu. Model yang diusulkan menempatkan identitas etis Ulil Albab, yang diekspresikan melalui dhikr, fikr, dan amal, sebagai mekanisme perantara antara kepemimpinan etis Islam dan hasil etis mahasiswa/institusi. Iklim etika institutional memperkuat hubungan ini dengan mengubah nilai-nilai menjadi praktik akademik sehari-hari

Keywords: kepemimpinan etis; Ulil Albab; pendidikan tinggi Islam; etika kerja Islam; identitas moral; iklim etika kelembagaan; pendidikan bisnis

INTRODUCTION

Universities are increasingly expected to produce graduates who are not only technically competent but also capable of responsible judgement in ethically complex environments. This expectation is especially urgent in business and economics education because graduates will later influence financial decisions, accounting practices, market behaviour, employment relations, organizational cultures, social welfare, and public trust. When professional competence is separated from moral formation, knowledge can be converted into manipulation, opportunism, or narrow efficiency. Therefore, a programme that carries an Islamic intellectual identity must demonstrate that ethics is not a decorative supplement to professional learning, but a central element of graduate competence and institutional legitimacy.

The demand for ethical graduates also reflects a wider crisis in contemporary higher education. Universities are increasingly evaluated through measurable outputs, employability, rankings, publications, and institutional performance indicators. These indicators are important, but they may unintentionally narrow educational success into technocratic achievement when moral formation is not made explicit. Islamic higher education should resist this reduction by affirming that knowledge is valuable when it is connected with truthfulness, accountability, social benefit, and service. Ethical leadership becomes crucial because leaders translate institutional ideals into policy, assessment, supervision, communication, and daily academic culture.

The concept of Ulil Albab provides a strong anthropological basis for such an educational mission. In the Islamic educational tradition, Ulil Albab is commonly associated with persons who integrate spiritual consciousness, critical reasoning, and righteous action. Recent scholarship on Ulil Albab education frames this integration through *dhikr*, *fikr*, and *amal sholeh*, thereby refusing the separation between spiritual devotion, intellectual inquiry, and socially useful practice (Sarkowi, 2024). This integrative logic is highly relevant for Islamic higher education because it positions ethics as a habit of mind, a discipline of the heart, and a practice of action. It also offers a bridge between Islamic educational ideals and international scholarship on moral identity and ethical leadership.

At the institutional level, Universitas Islam Indonesia provides a relevant context because its *Catur Dharma* emphasizes education and teaching, research, community service, and Islamic *da'wah*. UII's quality assurance discourse also connects higher education with faith, noble character, useful knowledge, transparency, accountability, justice, effectiveness, and social benefit (Universitas Islam Indonesia, 2018). These values create a normative foundation for leadership practices that are not merely managerial, but also ethical and formative. The implication is that leadership in Islamic higher education should be assessed not only by administrative efficiency, but also by its capacity to form ethical academic subjects.

Despite the growth of research on ethical leadership, Islamic work ethics, and Islamic educational management, several gaps remain visible. First, ethical leadership is often studied in general organizational settings without sufficient attention to Islamic educational anthropology. Second, Islamic leadership studies frequently emphasize virtues such as *amanah*, *shura*, justice, and *ihsan*, yet do not always explain the psychological and institutional mechanisms through which these virtues shape student character. Third, Ulil Albab education is commonly discussed as a pedagogical or philosophical model, but its leadership implications for programme governance, academic integrity, student mentoring, and quality assurance remain underdeveloped.

A further gap concerns the relation between declared institutional values and lived academic practice. Many universities formulate noble values in vision statements, but these values may remain symbolic if not embedded in assessment systems, lecturer conduct, research supervision, student services, and organizational routines. This gap between value declaration and value

enactment is the point at which ethical leadership becomes analytically important. Ethical leaders do not merely announce moral ideals; they make values visible through decisions, sanctions, rewards, communication, and institutional design. In Islamic higher education, this means that values such as amanah and maslahah must be visible in academic governance rather than confined to ceremonial discourse.

This article addresses these gaps by developing a conceptual model of ethical leadership for Ulil Albab-oriented Islamic higher education. The model is designed for future empirical testing in Islamic business and economics education, particularly in programmes that aim to integrate academic excellence, professional ethics, and Islamic character formation. The central argument is that ethical leadership influences institutional and student outcomes most strongly when it develops an Ulil Albab ethical identity and is reinforced by an institutional ethics climate. The article does not claim empirical causality; rather, it offers a theoretically justified framework that can be tested through quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method designs.

METHOD

This article uses an integrative literature review. Unlike a narrow systematic review that answers a single empirical question through rigid database screening, an integrative review is appropriate when the objective is to synthesize theoretical traditions, identify conceptual gaps, and construct a model for future empirical testing. The review combined seminal leadership theory, Islamic work ethics, spiritual leadership, moral identity theory, Islamic education, and recent Ulil Albab scholarship. The objective was not to count publications but to clarify conceptual relationships that can guide future empirical research.

The review was guided by three questions: (1) How does ethical leadership theory explain moral influence in educational institutions? (2) Which Islamic ethical principles are most relevant to leadership in Islamic higher education? (3) How can the Ulil Albab paradigm function as an ethical identity mechanism that links leadership practices with educational outcomes? These questions were used to maintain analytical focus and to prevent the review from becoming a general discussion of Islamic education or leadership.

The literature was selected using four criteria. First, the work had to provide a recognized theoretical foundation for ethical, transformational, spiritual, or Islamic leadership. Second, the work had to relate leadership to ethics, organizational culture, student/employee outcomes, identity formation, or Islamic educational values. Third, recent empirical and review articles were prioritized where they offered evidence from Islamic education, Islamic organizations, business ethics, or higher education. Fourth, sources were excluded when they discussed leadership only as administrative control without ethical or educational relevance.

The synthesis followed a concept-centric procedure. First, key constructs were identified from each stream of literature. Second, overlapping mechanisms were compared, especially moral modelling, reinforcement, identity formation, and institutional climate. Third, Islamic values were mapped onto ethical leadership mechanisms in order to avoid treating Islamic concepts as decorative terminology. Fourth, a framework was developed by specifying the independent construct, mediating construct, moderating condition, and expected outcomes. Finally, propositions and operational definitions were formulated to support future empirical testing.

Table 1. Analytical structure of the integrative literature review.

Review component	Analytical focus	Contribution to model development
Ethical leadership theory	Moral person, moral manager, social learning, role modelling, reinforcement and ethical decision-making.	Defines leadership conduct and explains how moral influence becomes visible and credible.
Islamic ethical leadership	Amanah, adl, shura, sidq, tabligh, ihsan, maslahah and Islamic work ethics.	Grounds leadership in Islamic moral accountability and public benefit.

Ulil Albab education	Dhikr, fikr, amal; integration of cognitive, affective and action domains.	Explains ethical identity formation and links moral awareness with professional responsibility.
Institutional ethics climate	Rules, assessment, transparency, integrity systems, complaint channels, service learning and quality assurance.	Explains how values become shared expectations and sustainable organizational routines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Ethical Leadership as Moral Person and Moral Manager

Ethical leadership is widely conceptualized as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions, interpersonal relations, communication, reinforcement, and decision-making. Brown et al. (2005) positioned ethical leadership within social learning theory: followers observe leaders, interpret their conduct as credible, and imitate ethical standards when those standards are consistently rewarded. This view explains why ethical leadership is not limited to possessing good intentions. It must also be visible, communicative, institutionally reinforced, and experienced as fair by members of the academic community.

Treviño et al. (2003) distinguished two complementary dimensions of ethical leadership: being a moral person and being a moral manager. The moral person dimension concerns honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, care, humility, and principled decision-making. The moral manager dimension concerns deliberate efforts to communicate ethical expectations, use reward and sanction systems consistently, and make ethics salient in organizational routines. In higher education, these two dimensions are inseparable because students and academic staff learn not only from formal rules, but also from the lived behaviour of leaders and lecturers.

Social learning theory strengthens this perspective because it explains why leadership conduct becomes a model of acceptable behaviour. When leaders demonstrate fairness in assessment, transparency in policy, respect in communication, and accountability in resource use, ethical behaviour becomes observable and legitimate. Conversely, when leaders speak about integrity while tolerating plagiarism, favouritism, opaque decision-making, or instrumental treatment of students, ethical discourse loses credibility. The analytical point is that leadership functions as a hidden curriculum: it teaches students what the institution truly values beyond what is written in formal documents.

The moral person and moral manager distinction is particularly useful for Islamic higher education because it prevents two common reductions. The first reduction is moralism, where leadership is evaluated only by personal piety or good intention without examining institutional systems. The second reduction is proceduralism, where ethics is reduced to rules, forms, and sanctions without moral exemplarity. A strong ethical leadership model must avoid both. It must show personal integrity while building structures that make integrity teachable, measurable, and sustainable.

2.2 Islamic Ethical Leadership

Islamic ethical leadership extends the ethical leadership discussion by grounding leadership in accountability before God, responsibility toward humans, and commitment to public benefit. Core values often associated with Islamic leadership include amanah (trustworthiness), adl (justice), shura (consultation), sidq (truthfulness), tabligh (communicative responsibility), ihsan (excellence and benevolence), and maslahah (social benefit). These values position leadership as a moral trust rather than a private privilege or purely bureaucratic authority.

The value of amanah requires that authority be exercised as a trust. In the university context, this trust includes responsible curriculum governance, honest student assessment, transparent

allocation of academic resources, and protection of academic integrity. The value of adl requires fairness in grading, supervision, opportunity distribution, conflict resolution, and access to institutional services. Shura requires meaningful consultation with stakeholders, especially when decisions influence students, lecturers, and the broader academic community. Sidq and tabligh require truthful and responsible communication, including honesty in reporting institutional limitations, performance indicators, and academic standards.

Islamic work ethics also emphasizes diligence, responsibility, honesty, cooperation, and the belief that work has moral and spiritual significance. Ali and Al-Owaihah (2008) argued that Islamic work ethics links economic activity with intention, justice, and community welfare. In educational institutions, this means that administrative work, teaching, mentoring, assessment, supervision, and student services should be interpreted as forms of ethical service rather than bureaucratic routines. Work is not separated from worship when it is performed with sincerity, competence, fairness, and social responsibility.

Recent empirical studies also show that Islamic leadership and Islamic work ethics are relevant to organizational engagement and performance. Sodiq et al. (2024), for example, found that Islamic leadership affected sharia engagement and job satisfaction in Islamic banking, although its direct effect on performance was not always significant. In an educational context, Aceh et al. (2024) reported that Islamic work ethic and job satisfaction significantly affected teacher performance, while Islamic leadership operated partly through job satisfaction. These findings suggest that leadership values require mediating mechanisms and supportive institutional conditions to influence outcomes.

For business and economics education, Islamic ethical leadership has additional significance because the disciplines taught in these programmes deal directly with power, resources, markets, consumption, wealth, and institutional trust. Ethical dilemmas emerge in financial reporting, marketing communication, taxation, investment, entrepreneurship, labour management, data analytics, and corporate governance. Islamic ethical leadership can help programmes frame these dilemmas not merely as technical or legal problems, but as moral questions involving trust, justice, accountability, and *maslahah*.

2.3 Ulil Albab as Ethical Identity Formation

Ulil Albab education integrates spiritual remembrance, intellectual reasoning, and righteous action. Sarkowi (2024) explains that Ulil Albab-oriented education combines cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains through the internalization of *dhikr*, *fikr*, and *amal sholeh*. This triadic structure is important for leadership studies because it provides a model of ethical identity formation: students are not only expected to know what is right, but also to remember moral accountability, reason critically, and act responsibly in concrete situations.

The Ulil Albab model also addresses a common weakness in ethics education, namely the separation between theoretical ethics and practical conduct. Ethical knowledge may fail to influence behaviour if it is not connected to self-regulation, institutional habits, and social responsibility. Through *dhikr*, students cultivate spiritual awareness and moral humility. Through *fikr*, they develop analytical reasoning, evidence-based judgement, and critical reflection. Through *amal*, they translate knowledge and faith into accountable action. Leadership becomes essential because it shapes the learning environment in which these three dimensions are made visible, practicable, and institutionally valued.

Moral identity theory helps clarify this mechanism in terms that can be understood within international research. Moral identity refers to the degree to which moral traits are central to a person's self-understanding. When morality becomes central to self-concept, ethical behaviour is more likely to be internally regulated rather than dependent only on external monitoring. Ulil Albab ethical identity can therefore be interpreted as an Islamic form of moral self-concept in which spiritual awareness, critical reasoning, and responsible action become central to the learner's identity as a Muslim intellectual and future professional.

In the context of business and economics education, Ulil Albab identity may be operationalized through academic integrity, ethical financial reasoning, responsible data use, social entrepreneurship, concern for vulnerable communities, anti-corruption attitudes, fairness in

economic exchange, and responsibility in digital decision-making. Thus, Ulil Albab is not only a religious ideal but also an educational outcome with professional relevance. It offers a way to connect Islamic anthropology with responsible management education, professional ethics, and civic character formation.

The analytical strength of Ulil Albab lies in its integrative nature. Dhikr without fikr may become unreflective piety; fikr without dhikr may become instrumental rationality; amal without both may become activism without moral depth. Ethical leadership is needed to hold these dimensions together. Leaders model the integration, lecturers teach and assess it, and institutional systems provide opportunities for students to practice it.

2.4 Institutional Ethics Climate

Ethical leadership becomes sustainable only when personal virtue is embedded into institutional climate. An institutional ethics climate refers to shared perceptions that ethical conduct is expected, supported, rewarded, and protected within an organization. In higher education, such a climate is visible through transparent academic rules, fair assessment systems, anti-plagiarism practices, respectful communication, student support, accountable leadership, complaint mechanisms, and opportunities for service learning.

For Islamic higher education, institutional ethics climate must also reflect religious and civic responsibility. UII's Catur Dharma and its emphasis on education, research, community service, and Islamic da'wah provide an institutional architecture through which ethical leadership can be operationalized. The leadership task is therefore to translate values into curriculum design, lecturer conduct, student mentoring, research culture, community engagement, and quality assurance systems. Values become credible when students experience consistency between institutional slogans and the daily practices of teaching, assessment, supervision, and service.

The ethics climate is analytically important because it explains why ethical leadership may not automatically produce ethical outcomes. A leader may communicate integrity, but the effect may be weakened when assessment is inconsistent, plagiarism response is symbolic, or complaints are ignored. Conversely, a strong ethics climate can amplify leadership because students encounter similar ethical expectations across courses, student organizations, internships, community service, and administrative services. Therefore, institutional ethics climate functions as a reinforcing condition that converts leadership influence into repeated academic experience.

In an Ulil Albab-oriented programme, ethics climate should not be limited to rule enforcement. It should also provide formative experiences, such as reflective assignments, ethics-based case discussions, responsible entrepreneurship projects, community service, student leadership mentoring, and supervision practices that connect knowledge with social responsibility. This broader view prevents integrity from becoming merely punitive and makes it part of character formation.

4. Conceptual Synthesis and Propositions

4.1 Ethical Leadership as Value Embodiment

The first synthesis is that ethical leadership in Islamic higher education begins with value embodiment. Leaders and lecturers cannot promote ethical learning convincingly when their behaviour contradicts institutional values. Value embodiment requires consistency between speech, policy, assessment, and interpersonal conduct. In Islamic terminology, this relates closely to amanah and sidq because trustworthiness and truthfulness must be visible in everyday leadership practice. Students learn not only from what leaders say about ethics, but from how leaders use authority when decisions are difficult.

This dimension includes transparent decision-making, fair treatment of students, responsible use of authority, integrity in academic supervision, and willingness to correct mistakes. In a programme context, ethical leadership is therefore practiced not only by the dean, rector, or head of programme, but also by lecturers who design assessment, supervise students, evaluate learning outcomes, and respond to academic misconduct. The analytical implication is that ethical leadership in higher education is distributed across academic roles. It is embedded in the entire learning ecosystem.

4.2 Ethical Leadership as Moral Management

The second synthesis is that value embodiment must be supported by moral management. Ethical leadership becomes educationally powerful when leaders communicate ethical expectations clearly, design fair procedures, and reinforce integrity through consistent consequences. Moral management is especially important in higher education because academic misconduct often emerges where rules are ambiguous, monitoring is weak, assessment pressure is high, or sanctions are inconsistent. A programme cannot form ethical graduates if integrity is left to personal preference alone.

In an Ulil Albab-oriented programme, moral management should include an academic integrity policy, transparent rubrics, reflective ethics assignments, clear supervision standards, mentoring for student organizations, responsible use of digital tools, and public recognition for ethical service. These mechanisms prevent ethical leadership from remaining at the level of inspirational language. They also demonstrate that Islamic values have operational meaning in academic practice. The stronger the alignment between values and systems, the more likely students are to experience ethics as part of institutional reality.

4.3 Ulil Albab Ethical Identity as a Mediating Mechanism

The third synthesis is that Ulil Albab ethical identity can mediate the relationship between leadership and outcomes. Ethical leadership influences students and academic staff by shaping how they understand themselves as moral agents. When institutional leaders model spiritual accountability, intellectual honesty, and social responsibility, students are more likely to internalize an identity that integrates dhikr, fikr, and amal. This identity explains why leadership may influence behaviour beyond direct supervision.

This identity mechanism is important because behaviour is not shaped by rules alone. Students may obey rules temporarily without developing moral commitment. Ulil Albab identity provides a deeper motivational basis: ethical behaviour becomes part of who the student seeks to become as a Muslim learner, future professional, and member of society. In this sense, Ulil Albab is not simply a label for religious students; it is a model of moral agency that combines awareness, judgement, and action.

4.4 Institutional Ethics Climate as a Reinforcing Condition

The fourth synthesis is that institutional ethics climate strengthens the effect of leadership. Ethical leaders can inspire, but their influence will be fragile if institutional systems reward opportunism or ignore misconduct. A strong ethics climate makes moral expectations normal, predictable, and collectively owned. In Islamic higher education, this climate should connect academic integrity with worship, knowledge with service, and professional competence with social benefit.

For business and economics programmes, the ethics climate may include case-based learning on fraud, Islamic finance ethics, responsible entrepreneurship, anti-corruption education, zakat and waqf management, sustainability, consumer protection, labour justice, and digital business ethics. These themes translate Islamic values into professional contexts and make ethical learning relevant to graduate practice. The point is not to add religious language to existing curricula, but to create an educational climate in which Islamic values shape how professional dilemmas are interpreted and resolved.

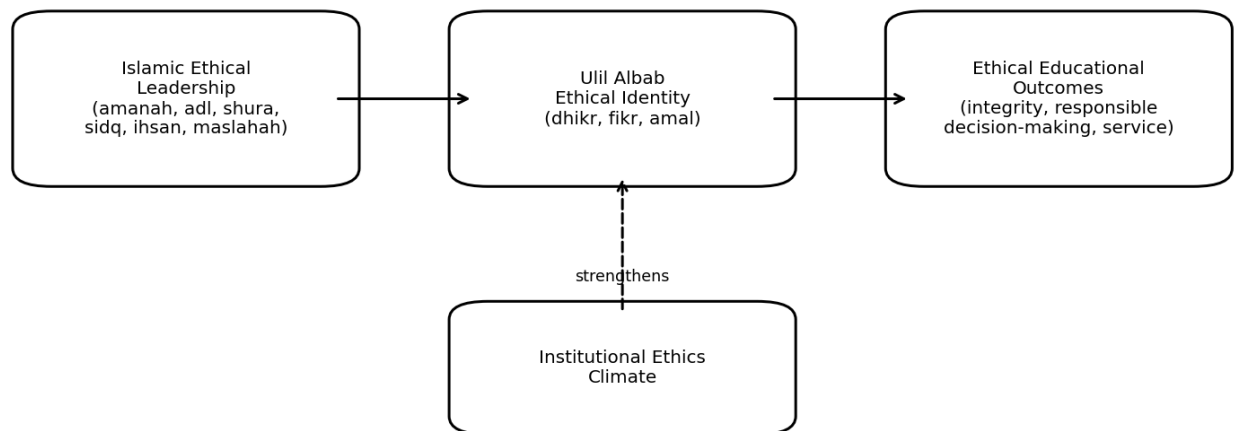


Figure 1. Conceptual model of ethical leadership for Ulil Albab-oriented Islamic higher education.

4.5 Research Propositions

P1. Islamic ethical leadership positively influences Ulil Albab ethical identity among students and academic staff. Leaders who consistently demonstrate amanah, justice, consultation, truthful communication, and benevolent accountability provide credible models for ethical self-understanding.

P2. Ulil Albab ethical identity positively influences academic integrity, responsible decision-making, service orientation, and civic character. Students who integrate dhikr, fikr, and amal are expected to show stronger consistency between moral knowledge and responsible conduct.

P3. Ulil Albab ethical identity mediates the relationship between Islamic ethical leadership and ethical educational outcomes. Leadership affects outcomes not only through external rules but also through the internalization of ethical self-concept.

P4. Institutional ethics climate positively moderates the relationship between Islamic ethical leadership and Ulil Albab ethical identity. Leadership becomes more credible when institutional systems, assessment practices, communication, and sanctions are consistent with declared values.

P5. Institutional ethics climate positively moderates the relationship between Ulil Albab ethical identity and ethical educational outcomes. Ethical identity becomes more visible when students have structured opportunities to practice integrity, reflection, service, and responsibility.

P6. The indirect effect of Islamic ethical leadership on ethical educational outcomes through Ulil Albab ethical identity is stronger when institutional ethics climate is high. This proposition integrates mediation and moderation into a conditional process model suitable for future SEM or mixed-method validation.

4.6 Operational Definitions for Future Empirical Testing

The proposed framework can be converted into an empirical model by developing indicators for each construct. The indicators below are not final questionnaire items; they are construct domains that should be adapted from validated scales, reviewed by experts in Islamic education and leadership, and tested through reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and robustness analysis. This operational clarification is important because Q2-level international manuscripts require clear movement from concept to measurement rather than broad normative argument alone.

Table 2. Proposed construct operationalization for future quantitative or mixed-method research.

Construct	Conceptual definition	Suggested indicators	Possible measurement approach
Islamic ethical leadership	Leadership conduct that combines moral modelling, ethical communication, justice, trustworthiness, consultation, and benevolent accountability.	Amanah; fairness; shura; transparency; role modelling; responsible authority; stakeholder care; ethical sanction consistency.	Likert-scale items adapted from ethical leadership and Islamic leadership literature; interviews with leaders and lecturers.
Ulil Albab ethical identity	A self-concept that integrates spiritual awareness, critical reasoning, and responsible action.	Dhikr orientation; critical reflection; academic honesty; ethical courage; social responsibility; professional amanah; amal sholeh.	Student self-report, reflective portfolio, ethics case response, lecturer assessment.
Institutional ethics climate	Shared perception that ethical behaviour is expected, supported, assessed, and protected by institutional systems.	Clear rules; fair assessment; anti-plagiarism systems; transparent communication; complaint mechanisms; service learning; quality assurance.	Climate survey among students and academic staff, policy audit, misconduct data, curriculum mapping.
Ethical educational outcomes	Observable outcomes of ethical learning and leadership formation.	Academic integrity; responsible decision-making; service orientation; civic character; ethical professional readiness; anti-corruption attitude.	Survey, behavioural indicators, portfolio, interviews, alumni tracer study.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Contribution

The proposed framework contributes to ethical leadership theory by extending its moral person and moral manager dimensions into an Islamic educational context. It shows that ethical leadership in Islamic higher education should not be interpreted only as personal morality, nor only as compliance management. It requires the integration of moral exemplarity, institutional systems, spiritual accountability, and student identity formation. This integration responds to a central weakness in many leadership discussions: the tendency to separate leader character from institutional design.

The framework also contributes to Ulil Albab scholarship by positioning dhikr, fikr, and amal as leadership-relevant mechanisms. Existing Ulil Albab discussions often focus on curriculum and epistemology. This article adds that leadership is the institutional condition that enables Ulil Albab values to become visible in policy, assessment, mentoring, and organizational culture. In this sense, Ulil Albab formation is not only a pedagogical concern but also a governance concern.

For Islamic business and economics education, the model clarifies how religious values can be linked to professional competencies. Ethical leadership should produce graduates who are not only employable but also trustworthy, fair, analytically careful, socially responsible, and prepared

to resist unethical market practices. The framework therefore contributes to international discussions on responsible management education by offering a model rooted in Islamic educational anthropology while remaining compatible with global ethical leadership theory.

The model further clarifies the distinction between symbolic Islamic identity and operational Islamic ethics. Symbolic identity may appear in slogans, ceremonies, or institutional branding. Operational ethics appears when values shape assessment, leadership behaviour, student services, quality assurance, and professional learning. The contribution of this article lies in shifting the discussion from value declaration to value enactment.

5.2 Practical Implications for Islamic Higher Education Programmes

First, programme leaders should embed ethical leadership into curriculum governance. This can be done by mapping every course to at least one ethical competence, such as academic honesty, fairness in economic exchange, responsible use of data, Islamic financial ethics, consumer protection, social entrepreneurship, or community accountability. Ethics should not appear only in a single course; it should become a cross-curricular graduate attribute. In business education, this mapping is important because ethical dilemmas differ across accounting, finance, marketing, management, entrepreneurship, and economics.

Second, lecturers should be developed as ethical role models. Lecturer behaviour in assessment, feedback, supervision, punctuality, communication, research collaboration, and plagiarism response sends strong moral signals to students. Professional development should therefore include ethical pedagogy, assessment integrity, supervision ethics, responsible use of artificial intelligence, mentoring, and Islamic academic values. Such development prevents ethics from being reduced to student discipline and recognizes that academic staff are central actors in institutional character formation.

Third, student leadership should become a laboratory of Ulil Albab formation. Student organizations, community service, business plan competitions, internships, religious activities, and entrepreneurship projects should be evaluated not only by outputs but also by ethical process: consultation, transparency, fairness, inclusion, service orientation, accountability, and reflection. This approach transforms student activities from event management into formative moral experience.

Fourth, quality assurance should include ethics indicators. An Islamic higher education programme can assess ethical climate through regular student surveys, academic misconduct reports, supervisor-student communication audits, service-learning portfolios, curriculum audits, and graduate tracer studies on ethical professional behaviour. These indicators help programmes identify whether declared values are actually experienced by students and staff.

5.3 Suggested Empirical Design

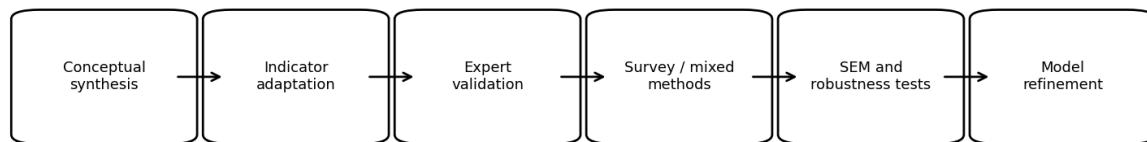
The conceptual model can be developed into an empirical article using a quantitative or mixed-method design. A quantitative design may survey students and lecturers using Structural Equation Modeling. The independent variable would be Islamic ethical leadership, the mediator would be Ulil Albab ethical identity, the moderator would be institutional ethics climate, and the dependent variables would be academic integrity, responsible decision-making, and service orientation. A conditional process model would allow researchers to test whether leadership influences outcomes indirectly through identity and whether this indirect effect becomes stronger when institutional ethics climate is high.

A mixed-method design may strengthen the study by combining survey data with interviews, document analysis, and reflective portfolios. Interviews with programme leaders, lecturers, and students can explain how ethical leadership is experienced in everyday academic life. Document analysis can examine whether curriculum, assessment rubrics, academic integrity policies, community service programmes, and quality assurance documents already reflect Ulil Albab values. Reflective portfolios can show how students connect dhikr, fikr, and amal with real ethical dilemmas.

The empirical version should clearly state sampling procedures, measurement adaptation, validity and reliability tests, common method bias control, ethics approval, and robustness checks. The discussion should avoid purely normative claims and show how Islamic concepts

contribute to global ethical leadership theory. Researchers should also consider comparative designs across faculties or Islamic universities to examine whether the proposed model is context-specific or generalizable.

Longitudinal research would provide the strongest contribution because ethical identity is formed over time. Researchers could compare first-year and final-year students, examine changes after service-learning or leadership programmes, or track whether exposure to ethical climate predicts growth in academic integrity and responsible decision-making. Such designs would move Ulil Albab research beyond conceptual assertion and toward stronger empirical evidence.



Future empirical validation pathway for the Ulil Albab ethical leadership framework

Figure 2. Roadmap for empirical validation of the proposed Ulil Albab ethical leadership framework.

CONCLUSION

This article develops a conceptual model of ethical leadership for Ulil Albab-oriented Islamic higher education. The central argument is that Islamic ethical leadership influences ethical educational outcomes through the formation of Ulil Albab ethical identity and through the reinforcement of institutional ethics climate. Ethical leadership is therefore not merely a matter of personal piety or administrative control. It is a systematic educational practice that connects moral exemplarity, transparent governance, reflective pedagogy, professional competence, and socially responsible action.

The model offers a pathway for Islamic higher education programmes, especially in business and economics, to align professional competence with Islamic ethical formation. It shows that Ulil Albab can be developed as a measurable ethical identity mechanism rather than only a philosophical slogan. Future studies should empirically test the proposed propositions through SEM, mixed methods, or longitudinal designs. Such research can clarify how Islamic values contribute to global debates on ethical leadership, responsible management education, and character-based higher education.

DECLARATIONS

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Data availability: No empirical dataset was used in this conceptual manuscript. Future empirical testing is recommended.

Ethical approval: Not applicable for a conceptual integrative literature review.

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