Nafs Maturity as Foundation of Islamic Leadership, Work Behavior, and Organizational Performance

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Research Paper *Article history:* Received: 1 December 2025 Revised: 25 December 2025 Accepted: 12 January 2026 **Keywords:** Nafs Maturity, Islamic Leadership, Work Behavior, Organizational Performance, Islamic HRM	This study examines how *nafs* maturity influences the internalization of Islamic leadership values and its implications for work behavior and organizational performance. Previous leadership and human resource management studies, including Islamic perspectives, largely emphasize structural and managerial factors, yet provide limited explanation for variations in employees' responses to identical leadership values. Employing an analytically oriented qualitative literature review, this study synthesizes findings from reputable national and international journals in Islamic psychology, leadership, and organizational behavior. Qualitative content analysis is applied using a comparative and interpretative approach, mapping empirical findings onto the *nafs* typology (*ammarah*, *lawwāmah*, and *muṭma'innah*). The findings reveal that *nafs* maturity determines the depth of leadership value internalization, shaping self-control, Islamic work ethic, emotional regulation, and behavioral consistency. Higher *nafs* maturity is associated with deep internalization and sustainable performance, while lower maturity tends to result in formal compliance and passive resistance. This study highlights *nafs* maturity as a foundational internal mechanism linking Islamic leadership, work behavior, and sustainable organizational performance.

INTRODUCTION

In Islamic intellectual tradition, human beings are often portrayed as the most unpredictable of creatures, as reflected in the proverb stating that "the depths of the human heart are known only to God." This inner uncertainty reflects the complexity of human psychological structure, which in Islam is understood not merely as a biological phenomenon but as a field of moral and spiritual struggle. The Qur'an emphasizes that the human inner state is constantly situated within a dynamic tension between inclinations toward goodness and impulses toward wrongdoing, such that outward behavior does not always fully represent one's inner condition (Iman, 2024). Within this framework, Islamic psychology

and Sufism conceptualize *nafs* as the center of motivation, awareness, and inner struggle that ultimately determines the direction of human action (Zahra et al., 2023).

Conceptually, *nafs* encompasses instinctual tendencies, rational dimensions, and the spiritual capacity of human beings. Al-Ghazālī positions *nafs* as an element that may become a source of moral degradation if left unchecked, yet simultaneously holds the potential for self-perfection when guided through the process of spiritual purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) (Burlian, 2013; Ripaan, 2023). Drawing upon Qur'anic reflection and spiritual experience, Al-Ghazālī classifies *nafs* into three principal levels, *nafs al-ammarah*, *nafs al-lawwāmah*, and *nafs al-muṭma'innah*, which describe the trajectory of inner transformation from domination by base impulses toward spiritual tranquility (Basharat, 2020).

The first level, *nafs al-ammarah*, represents a psychological condition in which individuals are dominated by impulsive drives, desires, and egoistic interests. At this stage, behavior is driven by immediate gratification without sufficient moral or rational consideration. The Qur'an describes this state as the soul that "indeed commands toward evil," except when it receives divine mercy and guidance (QS. Yusuf [12]: 53). In Sufi interpretation, this condition reflects human submission to instinctual impulses that have not yet been spiritually disciplined (Iman, 2024). Al-Ghazālī emphasizes that the dominance of *nafs al-ammarah* constitutes the primary source of moral corruption, as reason and the heart have not yet attained authority over desire (Burlian, 2013). In comparative terms, this condition bears resemblance to the concept of the *id* in Western psychology, which represents a personality structure oriented toward immediate satisfaction without ethical consideration (Basharat, 2020).

The second level, *nafs al-lawwāmah*, marks the emergence of reflective awareness within the individual. At this stage, individuals begin to engage in moral self-evaluation and experience remorse when violating ethical values. The Qur'an refers to *nafs al-lawwāmah* as the self-reproaching soul, indicating the presence of ethical awareness and inner responsibility (QS. Al-Qiyamah [75]: 2). In Al-Ghazālī's Sufi perspective, this condition reflects the initial functioning of reason (*'aql*) and the heart (*qalb*) as regulators of desire, although the struggle between impulse and moral values remains ongoing (Burlian, 2013; Ripaan, 2023). Psychologically, *nafs al-lawwāmah* may be understood as a transitional stage toward more mature self-regulation, wherein individuals have not yet achieved full stability but possess an internal corrective mechanism for their behavior (Zahra et al., 2023).

The highest level, *nafs al-muṭma'innah*, represents a state of the soul that has attained tranquility, balance, and alignment with divine values. The Qur'an describes this soul as one that is peaceful and invited to return to God in a state of contentment and acceptance (QS. Al-Fajr [89]: 27–28). At this stage, instinctual drives no longer function as sources of internal conflict, but have been transformed to align with moral and spiritual values. Al-Ghazālī regards *nafs al-muṭma'innah* as the culmination of the prolonged process of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, in which desire, reason, and the heart are harmoniously integrated (Burlian, 2013). This condition reflects psychological and spiritual maturity, characterized by inner peace, stable self-control, and a life orientation grounded in goodness and transcendent meaning (Abdilah et al., 2025).

An understanding of the levels of *nafs*, particularly *nafs al-lawwāmah* and *nafs al-muṭma'innah*, offers a more applied perspective for explaining human resource work behavior. Employee behavior is shaped not only by formal rules, incentive systems, or leadership styles, but also by inner dynamics that influence ethical awareness, self-control, and the meaning individuals attach to their work. From a human resource management perspective, this view is especially relevant as it suggests that compliance, engagement, and performance are often the outcomes of value internalization processes that occur within individuals, rather than merely responses to externally imposed organizational mechanisms. Despite its relevance, this inner dimension remains relatively underexplored in HRM scholarship, including studies on Islamic leadership, which tend to emphasize normative prescriptions and structural arrangements.

The majority of leadership and HRM research, both in general and within Islamic perspectives, positions leadership style, organizational culture, and motivational systems as the primary determinants of employee behavior and performance. While such approaches are effective in explaining the structural relationships between leadership and performance, they do not fully account for why identical leadership values are deeply internalized by some employees, while in others they result only in formal compliance, superficial engagement, or even passive resistance. This gap in the literature reflects a

limited focus on the individual's inner condition, particularly the level of *nafs* maturity, as an internal factor explaining variations in employee responses to leadership practices and HRM policies.

Addressing this gap, the present study positions *nafs* as an analytical construct that bridges Islamic leadership values with employee work behavior and performance within organizations. The study is grounded in the assumption that the level of *nafs* maturity shapes how individuals internalize leadership values, which is subsequently reflected in self-control, work ethic, and consistency of performance. Accordingly, this study raises a central research question: how does the level of *nafs* maturity influence the process of internalizing Islamic leadership values, and what are its implications for employee work behavior and performance? In line with this question, the study advances the conceptual proposition that the effectiveness of Islamic leadership and organizational performance is determined not solely by organizational systems and policies, but also by employees' inner readiness to accept, embody, and translate leadership values into everyday work practices.

The study aims to explore how the level of *nafs* maturity influences employees' internalization of Islamic leadership values and how this internalization is manifested in work behavior and contributes to organizational performance. By doing so, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the internal mechanisms linking Islamic leadership to employee behavior and performance, while enriching leadership and human resource management scholarship through the integration of individuals' inner dimensions as an explanatory factor.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In human resource management scholarship, employee work behavior is commonly explained through structural approaches such as reward systems, leadership arrangements, and organizational culture. While these perspectives clarify formal mechanisms shaping behavior, they often overlook the inner dimensions that influence how individuals interpret, respond to, and internalize organizational values. Islamic intellectual traditions address this inner dimension through the concept of *nafs*, which represents human drives, awareness, and internal struggle. Hasan (2020) and Islam et al. (2024) emphasize that individuals within organizations should be understood not merely as productive assets, but as moral agents who bring values, consciousness, and inner orientations into their work practices. Accordingly, attention to *nafs* provides a more comprehensive foundation for explaining variations in work behavior and organizational performance.

Levels of *Nafs* and the Dynamics of Work Behavior

In Islamic psychology, *nafs* denotes stages of inner development that shape individual decision-making and behavioral tendencies. *Nafs al-ammarah* reflects the dominance of instinctive impulses and self-interest, which in organizational settings may manifest as opportunistic behavior, weak discipline, and resistance to ethical standards. *Nafs al-lawwāmah* signifies the emergence of reflective awareness and internal self-correction, whereby individuals become increasingly attentive to integrity, responsibility, and fairness in their work. At the highest level, *nafs al-muṭma'innah* represents inner maturity characterized by emotional stability, sustained self-control, and alignment between personal values and organizational principles. This perspective resonates with Islamic human capital approaches that emphasize the integration of competence, morality, and spiritual awareness in fostering sustainable work behavior (Hasan, 2020; Islam et al., 2024).

Internalization of Islamic Leadership Values

Islamic leadership is therefore understood not merely as a set of managerial styles or techniques, but as a value-driven process grounded in ethics, role modeling, and justice. Majeed, Khalid, and Khan (2011) argue that Islamic leadership contributes to organizational effectiveness primarily through shaping morally aligned work behavior rather than relying solely on structural control. Similarly, Gazi (2020) and Mutalib et al. (2022) highlight that the effectiveness of Islamic leadership depends on the extent to which its values are internalized by employees, rather than merely communicated in normative terms. This internalization process is closely related to individuals' inner conditions, particularly their

level of *nafs* maturity. Individuals characterized by *nafs al-lawwāmah* tend to begin adopting leadership values as moral reference points, although they still require consistent role modeling and environmental reinforcement. In contrast, those with *nafs al-muṭma'innah* are more likely to embody Islamic leadership values as personal commitments, guiding voluntary, consistent, and sustainability-oriented work behavior that supports long-term organizational performance.

Work Behavior: Self-Control, Work Ethics, and Commitment.

Work behavior represents the tangible expression of the interaction between leadership values and employees' inner conditions. Within human resource management literature, dimensions such as self-control, work ethics, and organizational commitment are widely recognized as central determinants of individual performance. Wen et al. (2019) demonstrate that effective leadership significantly influences work behavior, yet employee responses remain highly variable. The *nafs* perspective offers an explanatory lens for this variation by emphasizing that self-control and ethical conduct are not shaped solely by supervision or formal rules, but also by inner awareness and moral regulation. Employees with higher levels of *nafs* maturity tend to display more consistent, responsible, and goal-aligned work behavior, reflecting a deeper internal alignment between personal values and organizational expectations.

Organizational Performance from an Islamic Perspective

From an Islamic perspective, organizational performance is not assessed merely through output and efficiency, but also through quality, consistency, and long-term sustainability oriented toward collective well-being (*maslahah*). Annuar and Ali (2021) as well as Firdaus and Ahmad (2023) emphasize that sustainable performance emerges from the integration of sound managerial systems and the moral quality of human resources. Within this framework, the internalization of Islamic leadership values and work behavior grounded in self-regulation constitute essential prerequisites for achieving stable and high-quality organizational outcomes. *Nafs* thus functions as an inner foundation that links leadership values, work behavior, and organizational performance in an integrated manner.

This research framework (Figure 1) illustrates that levels of nafs maturity shape the internalization of Islamic leadership values, influencing employees' work behavior and organizational performance. Leadership effectiveness and outcomes are not determined solely by structural factors but also by the inner maturity of human resources. By integrating Islamic psychology with HRM perspectives, this study offers a human-centered, ethical, and practically relevant contribution to organizational behavior literature.

Figure 1: Research Frame work

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach using an analytically oriented literature review with an empirical–conceptual focus. This design was selected to systematically and critically examine prior studies relevant to Islamic psychology, Islamic leadership, management psychology, and human resource behavior and performance within organizations. The literature review is not treated as a normative exposition, but as an integral component of the scientific inquiry aimed at developing conceptually grounded explanations supported by empirical evidence and theoretical synthesis relevant

to contemporary management studies (Hadi & Afandi, 2021). Data sources consist of reputable national and international journal articles addressing *nafs*, self-control, emotional regulation, ethical leadership, and organizational performance, including studies on burnout, production deviance, and leadership value internalization. Literature selection was conducted purposively based on thematic relevance, methodological rigor, and empirical contribution to the advancement of human resource management and organizational performance research (Macke & Genari, 2019; Adula et al., 2022).

Data analysis was conducted through qualitative content analysis employing comparative and interpretative strategies. Each selected article was examined to identify recurring patterns linking individuals' inner conditions, self-regulation, leadership practices, and organizational performance, which were subsequently mapped onto the *nafs* typology of *ammarah*, *lawwāmah*, and *muṭma'innah*. This approach facilitates the integration of empirical findings from management psychology and HRM, such as the roles of self-control, moral identity, and well-being-oriented leadership, with inner dynamics articulated in Islamic psychology. The final stage of analysis involved constructing a theoretical synthesis and developing a conceptual framework that explains how levels of *nafs* maturity shape the internalization of Islamic leadership values, the formation of employee work behavior, and sustainable organizational performance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research framework presented in Figure 1 illustrates the relational pathway from individuals' inner dimensions to organizational outcomes. The model positions employees' *nafs* maturity, comprising *al-ammārah*, *al-lawwāmah*, and *al-muṭma'innah*, as an internal foundation shaping the acceptance and internal appreciation of Islamic leadership values. *Nafs* is conceptualized not merely as a spiritual notion, but as a psychological basis influencing how individuals interpret leadership direction, moral exemplarity, and justice within organizational life.

The accompanying tables map the focal themes of prior studies relevant to this conceptual pathway. Leadership-related dimensions are presented to highlight the analytical emphasis of each study rather than to equate their research objectives with the present inquiry. Building upon these findings, the study integrates Islamic leadership as the source of values, work behavior as the mediating mechanism, and organizational performance as a sustainable outcome within a unified analytical structure.

Table 1: Theoretical Mapping of Leadership Studies

No	Researcher (year)	Leadership Focus	Key Variables	Main Findings	Contribution to This Study
1	Salehzadeh (2017)	Leadership style	Leadership style, follower preference	Followers' preferences determine leadership effectiveness	Demonstrates the role of individual psychological readiness in accepting leadership
2	Razak et al. (2018)	General leadership	Leadership style, motivation, discipline, performance	Leadership significantly influences performance through motivation	Highlights the importance of value internalization in work behavior
3	Dewi & Wibowo (2020)	Leadership & culture	Leadership style, culture, motivation, performance	Synergy between leadership and culture enhances performance	Supportive environment strengthens individual internal mechanisms
4	Astuti et al. (2020)	Islamic leadership	Islamic leadership, motivation, job satisfaction, performance	Islamic leadership influences performance via motivation and satisfaction	Supports the pathway: value internalization → behavior → performance
5	Daulay & Kurnia (2021)	Islamic culture & emotions	Islamic culture, emotional	Emotional intelligence reinforces performance	Relevant to the concept of self-control (nafs)

			intelligence, performance		
6	Hajiali et al. (2022)	Leadership & competence	Leadership, competence, motivation, performance	Leadership affects performance through job satisfaction	Highlights the role of employees' psychological conditions
7	Suryani & Triyono (2022)	Islamic leadership	Islamic leadership, ethics, commitment	Islamic leadership enhances organizational commitment	Commitment as an outcome of value internalization
8	Wahyudi et al. (2023)	Public sector leadership	Leadership, motivation, environment, performance	Environment and leadership mutually reinforce performance	External factors are effective when aligned with internal readiness
9	Rabbad et al. (2024)	Comprehensive Islamic leadership	Islamic leadership, motivation, satisfaction, performance	Islamic leadership has both direct and indirect impacts	Supports the integrative leadership–inner self–performance model
10	Faliza et al. (2024)	Effectiveness of Islamic leadership	Leadership effectiveness, Islamic work ethic, performance	Islamic work ethic moderates organizational performance	Ethics as an expression of inner maturity (nafs)

The internalization of Islamic leadership values encompassing ethics, moral exemplarity, and justice is subsequently reflected in employees' day-to-day work behavior. This process gives rise to behavioral expressions such as self-control, ethical work orientation, and stronger organizational commitment, which collectively contribute to the consistency, quality, and sustainability of organizational performance. Performance is therefore not treated as an isolated outcome, but as the manifestation of a layered internal process that unfolds from inner maturity to concrete work practices.

The theoretical mapping presented in Table 1 synthesizes relevant publications published between 2017 and 2024 that examine the relationships among leadership, values, work behavior, and organizational performance. These studies were selected because they directly address key variables underpinning the proposed research framework. Taken together, their findings provide an empirical foundation for understanding how leadership values, particularly within Islamic leadership scholarship, are internalized by individuals and translated into organizational behavior.

An analysis of ten core publications indicates a gradual shift in leadership research emphasis. Early studies, such as Salehzadeh (2017), highlighted follower preferences as a determinant of leadership effectiveness, suggesting that individuals' psychological readiness shapes the extent to which leadership direction is accepted. This perspective is reinforced by Razak et al. (2018), who demonstrated that leadership influences performance through motivation and discipline, underscoring the role of value internalization in shaping work behavior.

Subsequent research began linking leadership to broader organizational dimensions. Dewi and Wibowo (2020) emphasized the synergy between leadership style and organizational culture in producing stable performance, while Astuti et al. (2020) extended this understanding through Islamic leadership by showing its indirect effects via motivation and job satisfaction. These findings indicate that moral and spiritual values operate as tangible mechanisms within managerial practice. Daulay and Kurnia (2021) further highlighted emotional intelligence as a performance enhancer, whereas Hajiali et al. (2022) identified competence and job satisfaction as psychological bridges connecting leadership and performance outcomes.

More recent studies increasingly foreground values, ethics, and internal alignment. Suryani and Triyono (2022) demonstrated that Islamic leadership strengthens organizational commitment, while Wahyudi et al. (2023) showed that leadership effectiveness depends on the alignment between the work environment and employees' internal conditions. Rabbad et al. (2024) proposed a comprehensive Islamic leadership model with both direct and indirect effects on performance, and Faliza et al. (2024) emphasized Islamic work ethic as a moderating factor, reflecting variations in individuals' inner maturity when responding to leadership values.

Tabel 2. Theoretical Mapping on Work Behavior

No	Researcher (year)	Leadership Focus	Key Variables	Main Findings	Contribution to This Study
1	Baumeister & Vohs (2007)	Individual self-regulation	Self-regulation, ego depletion, motivation	Self-control is limited and influences behavior and motivation	Theoretical foundation of self-control as a basis for nafs regulation
2	Lian et al. (2017)	Work behavior	Self-control, job behavior, performance	Self-control plays a key role in adaptive work behavior	Self-control as the main mechanism of work behavior
3	Johnson et al. (2018)	Work behavior regulation	Employee self-control, motivation, performance	Self-control is the primary driver of effective self-regulation	Reinforces the internal pathway (nafs) → work behavior
4	Wehrt et al. (2020)	Daily work dynamics	Self-control motivation, self-control failure	Motivation determines the success of self-control at work	Explains behavioral variation despite internalized values
5	Aminnuddin (2019)	Islamic work ethic	Religiosity, Islamic work ethic	Religiosity predicts ethical work behavior in Islam	Work ethic as an expression of internalized Islamic values
6	Javed et al. (2017)	Islamic work ethic	Islamic work ethic, innovation, performance	Islamic work ethic fosters innovative and adaptive behavior	Work ethic as a mediator of value-driven behavior
7	Rawwas et al. (2018)	Organizational politics	Islamic work ethic, job outcomes	Islamic work ethic moderates negative effects of workplace politics	Work ethic as a stabilizer of work behavior
8	De Clercq et al. (2018)	Leadership & ethics	Islamic work ethic, helping behavior	Islamic work ethic encourages prosocial behavior	Highlights the social dimension of work ethic
9	Aflah et al. (2021)	Motivation & commitment	Islamic work ethic, motivation, commitment, performance	Islamic work ethic affects performance through commitment	Commitment as an outcome of value internalization
10	Udin et al. (2022)	Family business	Islamic work ethic, affective commitment, performance	Islamic work ethic enhances commitment and performance	Strengthens the pathway: work ethic → commitment → performance
11	Andrew (2017)	Employee commitment	Employee commitment, performance	Commitment significantly impacts organizational performance	Commitment as a key output of work behavior
12	Fesharaki & Sehhat (2018)	iHRM	Islamic HRM, justice, commitment	Organizational justice enhances employee commitment	Justice as an internalized leadership value
13	Uddin et al. (2019)	Work engagement	Engagement, commitment, OCB, performance	Commitment mediates the relationship between engagement and performance	Commitment as a mechanism for collective behavior
14	Prasetyo et al. (2021)	Islamic leadership	Islamic leadership, commitment, performance	Commitment moderates performance based on Islamic values	Commitment as spiritually informed loyalty

The theoretical mapping presented in Table 2 positions work behavior as the point of convergence between individuals' psychological capacities and internalized values within organizations. Self-control, work ethic, and employee commitment are not treated as isolated constructs, but as interrelated behavioral processes that collectively shape sustainable work quality.

Research on self-control highlights individuals' ability to regulate impulses, emotions, and attention as a fundamental prerequisite for effective self-regulation at work. Baumeister and Vohs (2007) introduced the concept of ego depletion to explain the limits of self-regulatory resources, which was subsequently extended to organizational settings by Lian et al. (2017) and Johnson et al. (2018). These studies demonstrate that self-control functions as a primary driver of adaptive, ethical, and performance-oriented behavior. Wehrt et al. (2020) further emphasized that motivation for self-control plays a critical role in determining daily behavioral regulation, indicating that self-control operates not merely as a static psychological capacity but as a dynamic process shaped by work conditions. Conceptually, these findings resonate with the notion of nafs regulation, whereby inner maturity strengthens individuals' capacity for conscious and responsible action.

The work ethic dimension explains how internalized values are translated into behavioral orientation and work quality. Aminnuddin (2019) demonstrated that religiosity significantly contributes to Islamic ethical work behavior. This evidence is reinforced by Javed et al. (2017) and Rawwas et al. (2018), who showed that Islamic work ethic not only promotes innovative and adaptive behavior but also serves as a buffer against workplace strain and negative dynamics. De Clercq et al. (2018) further revealed that leadership influences the extent to which Islamic work ethic encourages prosocial behavior. Additional support is provided by Aflah et al. (2021) and Udin et al. (2022), who consistently found that Islamic work ethic enhances performance through strengthened motivation and employee commitment. Within this framework, work ethic is positioned as a behavioral manifestation of internalized Islamic leadership values.

Employee commitment emerges as a subsequent outcome of sustained self-control and ethical work behavior. Andrew (2017) emphasized the pivotal role of commitment in enhancing organizational performance, while Fesharaki and Sehhat (2018) showed that Islamic value-based human resource practices foster perceptions of justice and employee loyalty. Uddin et al. (2019) further identified commitment as a mediating mechanism between individual engagement and team performance. In value-driven organizations, Prasetyo et al. (2021) demonstrated that employee commitment strengthens the relationship between Islamic leadership and performance, indicating that loyalty extends beyond affective attachment to encompass normative and spiritually grounded dimensions.

Tabel 3. Theoretical Mapping on Organizational Performance

No	Researcher (year)	Leadership Focus	Key Variables	Main Findings	Contribution to This Study
1	Rana & Malik (2017)	Islamic principles in HR	HR practices, Islamic principles, performance	Islamic principles strengthen the impact of HR practices on organizational performance	Confirms the role of Islamic values as a reinforcing factor between HR practices and performance
2	Dhar et al. (2018)	Islamic HR	Islamic HR practices, commitment, performance	Commitment mediates the effect of Islamic HR on performance	Positions commitment as a behavioral mechanism leading to performance
3	Mohammad et al. (2018)	Islamic work ethic	Islamic work ethic, workplace outcomes	Islamic work ethic significantly enhances workplace outcomes	Reinforces work ethic as a value-to-performance pathway
4	Ekawati et al. (2019)	Islamic organizational culture	Islamic culture, company performance	Value-based Islamic culture positively impacts performance	Highlights the role of institutionalized values
5	Nasution & Rafiki (2020)	Islamic work ethic	IWE, commitment, job satisfaction	IWE increases commitment and job satisfaction	Connects values, work attitudes, and outcomes
6	Buldan et al. (2021)	Islamic business ethics	Islamic business ethics, market	Islamic ethics positively contribute to	Emphasizes Islamic values as strategic resources

			conditions, performance	organizational performance	
7	Candra et al. (2022)	Islamic leadership	Islamic leadership, work ethic, performance	Islamic culture strengthens the influence of leadership on performance	Demonstrates the moderating effect of organizational values
8	Setyawati et al. (2023)	Sharia work ethos	Commitment, work ethos, competence, performance	Commitment and work ethos significantly affect performance	Reinforces work behavior as a determinant of performance
9	Gano et al. (2024)	Islamic-based HRM	Islamic HR, ethics, organizational success	Integration of Islamic values drives organizational success	Highlights the importance of value-based HR
10	Irawan et al. (2024)	Islamic integrity values	Work ethic, motivation, performance	Inner values enhance motivation and performance	Directly bridges nafs dimension with organizational performance

Table 3 synthesizes prior studies that explain how Islamic leadership values and work ethics are institutionalized through human resource practices, organizational culture, and employee commitment, ultimately shaping organizational performance. At this level, performance is understood not merely as a technical outcome but as an indicator of successful value internalization and the maturation of work behavior rooted in individuals' inner dispositions. The theoretical mapping demonstrates that organizational performance emerges through a gradual internal process, beginning with Islamic leadership and management practices, followed by the formation of employee attitudes and work behaviors, and consolidated through sustained organizational commitment.

Empirical studies by Rana and Malik (2017) and Dhar et al. (2018) confirm that Islamic values embedded in human resource practices do not operate mechanically, but exert their influence through the strengthening of employee commitment and behavioral orientation. These findings highlight the mediating role of internal processes in translating leadership values into performance outcomes.

Islamic work ethics and organizational culture function as key linkages between values and performance. Mohammad et al. (2018), Nasution and Rafiki (2020), and Buldan et al. (2021) demonstrate that the internalization of Islamic ethical principles consistently enhances work quality, employee satisfaction, and organizational performance. This relationship is further reinforced by Ekawati et al. (2019) and Candra et al. (2022), who emphasize the role of Islamic leadership and culture in amplifying the performance effects of value-based management.

More recent studies provide deeper insight into the sustainability of these processes. Setyawati et al. (2023) and Gano et al. (2024) underline that value-driven work behavior, competence, and commitment constitute essential foundations for long-term organizational performance. Irawan et al. (2024) extend this perspective by demonstrating that inner values and Islamic integrity serve as intrinsic sources of motivation and performance achievement, explicitly bridging inner disposition with organizational outcomes.

Discussion
Based on a synthesis of 34 studies published between 2007 and 2024 and systematically mapped in Tables 1, 2, and 3, this study identifies a coherent theoretical pattern explaining how leadership, work behavior, and organizational performance are interconnected through layered value internalization processes. The synthesis demonstrates that organizational performance should not be interpreted as a direct outcome of leadership style, but rather as the result of gradual internal dynamics shaped by individuals' inner readiness, value orientation, and behavioral mechanisms.

Findings summarized in Table 1 indicate that leadership effectiveness is strongly contingent upon followers' internal conditions, including psychological readiness, value preferences, and alignment between leadership characteristics and individuals' inner orientation (Salehzadeh, 2017; Razak et al., 2018; Dewi & Wibowo, 2020). Within Islamic leadership, values such as role modeling, justice, and ethics do not operate as immediate determinants of performance; instead, they exert influence through internalization processes that depend on individuals' capacity to receive and embody these values. At this stage, nafs maturity functions as a theoretical construct that explains variation in employee responses to value-based leadership by integrating spiritual and psychological dimensions into the understanding of how leadership values are translated into behavioral orientation and organizational outcomes (Astuti et al., 2020; Rabbad et al., 2024).

The synthesis presented in Table 2 highlights work behavior as the primary channel through which internalized leadership values are expressed in concrete actions. Research on self-control and self-regulation consistently shows that individuals' ability to manage impulses, emotions, and attention constitutes a prerequisite for behavioral consistency and performance quality (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007; Lian et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2018). In this study, self-control is positioned as an operational manifestation of nafs regulation, enabling individuals to act consciously and ethically under complex work demands (Wehrt et al., 2020; Küçük & Taştan, 2020).

Further theoretical mapping demonstrates that Islamic work ethic serves as a normative mechanism that stabilizes the translation of leadership values into sustained behavioral orientations. Prior studies show that Islamic work ethic not only explains adaptive and prosocial behavior but also strengthens the value–performance linkage by embedding moral and transcendental meaning into work practices (Javed et al., 2017; Rawwas et al., 2018; De Clercq et al., 2018). Accordingly, work ethic is conceptualized as the outcome of value internalization refined by inner disposition, positioning work behavior as a critical bridge connecting nafs regulation and Islamic leadership values with consistent and high-quality performance (Aminnuddin, 2019; Aflah et al., 2021).

Insights from Table 3 extend this framework by identifying employee commitment as a binding mechanism that sustains work behavior and amplifies its long-term impact on organizational performance. Previous studies consistently position commitment as a mediator linking values, work attitudes, and organizational outcomes (Andrew, 2017; Dhar et al., 2018; Nasution & Rafiki, 2020). Within value-driven Islamic organizations, commitment encompasses affective, normative, and moral dimensions that strengthen individuals' attachment to the organization as a space for value realization, allowing performance to reflect the integration of leadership values, behavioral consistency, and inner readiness (Fesharaki & Sehhat, 2018; Gano et al., 2024).

From this analytical perspective, the study adopts management psychology as an integrative lens to explain how leadership values are transformed into work behavior and organizational performance through internal psychological processes. Recent evidence suggests that organizational outcomes are shaped not only by formal structures and systems but also by psychological dynamics such as work engagement, motivation, moral identity, and self-regulatory capacity (Al Halbusi et al., 2023; Kurniawan et al., 2024). These findings reinforce the argument that leadership effectiveness is fundamentally dependent on internal individual conditions that determine how leadership values are perceived, internalized, and enacted in everyday work behavior. Management psychology thus provides a robust framework for explaining the leadership–behavior–performance relationship through internal, dynamic, and human-centered mechanisms

Further evidence from management psychology indicates that demands related to impulse control and self-regulation in the workplace are closely associated with psychological well-being, burnout, and the risk of behavioral deviance, underscoring the importance of individuals' inner conditions in explaining variation in behavior and performance under different leadership practices (Kao et al., 2025). From an Islamic perspective, human psychological phenomena are understood as an integrated unity of cognitive, moral, and spiritual dimensions that collectively shape behavioral orientation (Mar'ah & Ar-Romli, 2025). Integrating management psychology with Islamic psychology therefore enables a deeper understanding of the internal processes underlying employees' responses to value-based leadership, while conceptually positioning nafs maturity as a psychological foundation that connects Islamic leadership, work behavior, and organizational performance.

At the theoretical level, the synthesis of Tables 1, 2, and 3 yields an integrative proposition that organizational performance should not be viewed as an immediate outcome of leadership style or managerial systems, but as the result of interrelated internal processes that unfold progressively. This sequence begins with nafs maturity as an inner condition that determines individuals' capacity to receive values, continues through the internalization of Islamic leadership values into work orientation, and is operationalized through self-control and ethical conduct in daily activities. The process is further consolidated by employee commitment, which sustains behavioral consistency and extends the influence of leadership values on performance over time. The primary contribution of this study lies in positioning nafs not merely as a normative or spiritual construct, but as a conceptual foundation that integrates psychological, moral, and behavioral dimensions in explaining the relationship between Islamic leadership and organizational performance.

This study advances Islamic leadership literature by offering a nuanced explanation of the internal mechanisms underlying value-based leadership. The proposed framework (Figure 2) emphasizes that leadership influence operates through internalization processes shaped by individuals' inner dynamics. By positioning nafs maturity as the analytical starting point, the study provides a unifying perspective linking ethics, motivation, and commitment to sustainable performance, leadership effectiveness, and work behavior in value-driven organizations.

Figure 2. Internalization of Islamic Leadership Values and Organizational Performance

Figure 2 synthesizes the findings derived from Tables 1, 2, and 3 by illustrating the conceptual flow linking Islamic leadership, work behavior, and organizational performance. The figure conceptualizes organizational performance as the outcome of a progressive internal process that begins with nafs maturity as an individual's inner condition, continues through the internalization of Islamic leadership values, and is operationalized through self-control and ethical conduct in daily work practices. This process is further strengthened by employee commitment, which stabilizes behavioral consistency and sustains performance over time. Accordingly, the figure serves as an integrative conceptual synthesis that connects spiritual, psychological, and behavioral dimensions in explaining the sustainability of performance in value-driven organizations.

CONCLUSION

This study addresses the central research question concerning how levels of nafs maturity shape the internalization of Islamic leadership values and influence work behavior and employee performance. The findings demonstrate that nafs maturity functions as a decisive internal factor determining the depth of value internalization. Employees with higher levels of nafs maturity internalize leadership values more profoundly, as reflected in stronger self-control, consistent adherence to Islamic work ethics, and effective emotional regulation. In contrast, lower levels of nafs maturity are associated with superficial internalization, formal compliance, and a greater tendency toward passive resistance to organizational policies.

These findings support the study's core proposition that the effectiveness of Islamic leadership and organizational performance is not determined solely by systems, policies, or organizational culture, but by employees' inner readiness to accept, internalize, and enact leadership values in daily work practices. The proposed analytical framework clarifies the causal mechanism through which value internalization strengthens self-control and ethical orientation, which in turn shapes work behavior, reinforces moral commitment, and ultimately sustains organizational performance over time.

From a theoretical perspective, this study underscores the importance of incorporating internal individual conditions, particularly nafs maturity, into Islamic leadership and human resource management scholarship. This approach explains variations in employee responses that cannot be fully accounted for by structural arrangements or managerial policies alone. By positioning nafs maturity as a foundational psychological construct, the study integrates spiritual, moral, and behavioral dimensions into a unified explanation of leadership effectiveness and performance sustainability.

Practically, the findings indicate that organizations should move beyond an emphasis on formal compliance toward initiatives that cultivate employees' psychological and ethical readiness. Value-based development programs, ethical training, and mentoring practices become essential instruments for fostering deeper internalization, consistent work behavior, and stronger organizational commitment. In operational terms, recruitment and selection processes should assess not only technical competence but also value orientation, integrity, and self-regulatory capacity through behavioral assessment and reflective interviews. Employee development initiatives should prioritize self-awareness, emotional regulation, and meaningful engagement with work, ensuring that training functions as a process of value formation and inner maturity rather than skill acquisition alone.

Performance management systems should further align ethical orientation with long-term organizational goals by incorporating indicators that capture behavioral quality, value consistency, and contributions to a healthy and principled work environment. Beyond formal mechanisms, human resource management plays a strategic role in cultivating value coherence through fair communication, transparent policies, and reward systems that reinforce ethical and responsible behavior. Mentoring, career development, and supportive leadership practices strengthen employee engagement and moral commitment, positioning HRM not merely as an administrative function but as an architect of human development. Through this integrative approach, Islamic leadership and HRM practices can more effectively foster ethical, sustainable, and value-aligned organizational performance.

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