

Islamic Transformational Leadership in Remote Work Environments: A Narrative Literature Review

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Abstract-The rapid adoption of remote work environments has transformed organizational management practices and increased the importance of effective leadership in virtual settings. Although transformational leadership has been widely recognized as an effective leadership approach, its effectiveness in remote work environments remains a subject of debate due to challenges related to communication, trust, and employee engagement. Furthermore, limited studies have integrated Islamic leadership values into the discussion of transformational leadership in virtual workplaces. This study aims to synthesize the existing literature on Islamic Transformational Leadership in remote work environments through a Narrative Literature Review approach. The review analyzed fifteen peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2025 that were selected based on relevance, academic quality, and thematic suitability. The findings indicate that transformational leadership positively influences employee engagement, organizational commitment, trust, team collaboration, and organizational performance in virtual work settings. The review also reveals that Islamic leadership values, including *amanah* (trustworthiness), *adl* (justice), *shura* (consultation), *ihsan* (excellence), and *mas'uliyah* (accountability), strengthen leadership effectiveness by enhancing ethical behavior, organizational trust, and employee commitment. This study proposes a conceptual framework in which trust and communication quality serve as key mediating mechanisms between Islamic Transformational Leadership and organizational performance. The findings contribute to the development of leadership literature by integrating Islamic leadership principles into contemporary remote work contexts.

Keywords: Islamic Transformational Leadership; Remote Work Environment; Organizational Trust; Employee Engagement; Organizational Performance

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology, organizational transformation, and changes in global work patterns have changed the way companies manage human resources and carry out business activities. These changes were further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic which prompted organizations around the world to adopt remote work and hybrid work systems as part of business continuity strategies (Kniffin et al., 2021). Even though the pandemic has ended, various organizations still maintain flexible work models because they are considered to be able to improve operational efficiency, expand access to global talent, and provide higher flexibility for employees (Choudhury et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). However, virtual work environments also present significant challenges, such as decreased social interaction, weak team coordination, reduced direct supervision, increased risk of *digital fatigue*, and decreased employee engagement and commitment to the organization (Carillo et al., 2021; Larson et al., 2020).

In facing these challenges, leadership is a key factor that determines the success of an organization in managing a geographically dispersed workforce. The management literature shows that transformational leadership is one of the most effective leadership styles in driving organizational change, increasing motivation, and building employee commitment (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Yukl, 2020). Transformational leadership emphasizes the leader's ability to inspire subordinates through a clear vision, provide high motivation, encourage creativity and innovation, and give individual attention to each member of the organization. Various studies show that transformational leadership contributes positively to improved performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, innovation, and *employee engagement* (Banks et al., 2019; Hoch et al., 2018).

However, the effectiveness of transformational leadership in a virtual work environment is still a debate in the literature. Some research shows that transformational leadership remains relevant and even more important in the context of remote work because it is able to build trust, strengthen communication, and increase employee engagement through the effective use of digital technology (Contreras et al., 2020; Purwanto et al., 2021). In contrast, other research suggests that limitations in face-to-face communication can reduce the effectiveness of transformational leadership because it degrades the quality of interpersonal relationships, weakens social learning processes, and increases the risk of communication misunderstandings (Wang et al., 2021; Gilson et al., 2021). These differences in findings suggest that transformational leadership success in a remote work environment cannot be explained through conventional leadership perspectives alone.

In this context, the perspective of Islamic Transformational Leadership offers a more comprehensive approach. Transformational leadership in Islam is not only oriented towards achieving organizational goals, but also emphasizes spiritual, moral, and ethical values that are sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith. Principles such as *amanah* (trust), *adl* (justice), *shura* (deliberation), *ihsan* (excellence), and *mas'uliyah* (accountability) are the main foundation in building relationships between leaders and followers (Beekun & Badawi, 1999; Abbas & Asghar, 2010). In a virtual work

environment that has limited direct supervision, the value of trust is very important because the success of the organization is highly dependent on the integrity of individuals in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

The Islamic leadership perspective also emphasizes that leaders are not only responsible for the organization and stakeholders, but also have a moral responsibility to Allah SWT for every decision and action taken. This concept distinguishes Islamic leadership from conventional leadership approaches that generally focus on achieving organizational targets and stakeholder satisfaction. In a remote work system, the spiritual dimension has the potential to strengthen employees' commitment, work discipline, and ethical behavior even though they are not under direct supervision (Ali, 2009; Ahmad & Ogunsola, 2011).

Several previous studies have shown that Islamic leadership values contribute to increased organizational trust, employee loyalty, *organizational citizenship behavior*, and individual performance (Bouma et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2022). On the other hand, research on remote work has more highlighted aspects of technology, virtual communication, and work flexibility without considering the ethical and spiritual dimensions that can affect leadership effectiveness. As a result, there is still a limited understanding of how Islamic leadership values can support the effectiveness of transformational leadership in a virtual work environment.

In addition, most research on transformational leadership in remote work environments is conducted in Western countries with individualistic cultural characteristics and relatively high levels of digitalization (Zaccaro & Bader, 2021). Meanwhile, studies that integrate the perspective of Islamic leadership in the context of virtual work are still relatively limited, especially in the management and organizational literature. This gap demonstrates the need for a more comprehensive synthesis of literature to understand how Islamic leadership principles can strengthen the effectiveness of transformational leadership in the face of the challenges of the digital workplace.

Based on these conditions, there are three research gaps that are the basis of this study. First, the results of research on the effectiveness of transformational leadership in remote work environments still show mixed findings and have not reached a consensus. Second, most previous research has focused on the technical and behavioral dimensions of leadership without integrating the spiritual and ethical values that are at the core of Islamic leadership. Third, there is still limited research that synthesizes literature on Islamic Transformational Leadership in the context of remote work.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze and synthesize the literature on Islamic Transformational Leadership in Remote Work Environments through the Narrative Literature Review approach to scientific articles published in the period 2020–2025. This study seeks to identify key themes, theoretical debates, and patterns of relationships that develop in the literature. In addition, this study develops a conceptual framework that explains how the values of amanah, adl, shura, ihsan, and mas'uliyah strengthen the influence of transformational leadership on *employee engagement*, organizational trust, team collaboration, and organizational performance in a virtual work environment. The main contribution of this research is to expand the leadership literature by integrating the perspective of Islamic leadership into the study of transformational leadership and remote work so as to produce a more comprehensive understanding of effective leadership in the digital age.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study uses the Narrative Literature Review (NLR) approach to analyze the role of Islamic Transformational Leadership in improving organizational effectiveness in *remote work environments*. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to conduct conceptual synthesis of previous research, identify key themes, explore theoretical debates, and develop a conceptual framework that explains the relationship between Islamic transformational leadership and the effectiveness of virtual work.

In contrast to the Systematic Literature Review which focuses on quantitative synthesis and very strict selection procedures, the Narrative Literature Review provides greater flexibility in exploring the concepts, theories, and relationships between variables that develop in the literature (Baumeister & Leary, 1997).

2.2 Literature Search Strategy

Literature searches are conducted through Google Scholar databases, Scopus Preview, and relevant international academic sources. The search was conducted in the January–February 2026 period with a focus on articles published during 2020–2025. Keywords used include: “Transformational Leadership”, “Islamic Leadership”, “Islamic Transformational Leadership”, “Remote Work”, “Virtual Leadership”, “E-Leadership”, “Remote Working Environment”, “Employee Engagement”, “Virtual Teams”. “Leadership in Digital Workplace”

The combination of these keywords is used to obtain articles that are relevant to the focus of the research.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the quality of the literature used, this study applies the following inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication Year	2020–2025	Before 2020

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Document Type	Journal Articles	Books, Editorials, News Articles
Research Focus	Leadership, Islamic Leadership, Remote Work	Unrelated Topics
Accessibility	Full Text Available	Abstract Only
Academic Quality	Peer-Reviewed Journals	Non-Peer-Reviewed Sources

2.4 Article Selection Process

An initial search yielded 126 relevant articles. After filtering by title and abstract, 42 articles were obtained. Furthermore, a full-text evaluation was carried out based on the suitability of the theme, the quality of the journal, and the contribution to the research. The final results showed that 15 articles met all the criteria and were used as primary sources in the synthesis process.

Table 2. Literature Screening Process

Selection Stage	Number of Articles
Initial Search Results	126
After Title Screening	68
After Abstract Screening	42
Full-Text Assessment	23
Final Articles Included	15

2.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Thematic Narrative Synthesis. The analysis process is carried out through four stages:

- Identify the research objectives, theories, and methods used in each article.
- Extraction of key findings from each article.
- Grouping findings based on themes that have conceptual similarities.
- Synthesis is critical to identifying patterns of relationships, contradictions, and theoretical implications.

The analysis yielded four main themes, namely:

- Transformational Leadership in Remote Work Environments.
- Islamic Leadership Values in Virtual Organizations.
- Employee Engagement and Trust in Remote Teams.
- Organizational Performance and Digital Workplace Effectiveness.

2.6 Selected Articles

Table 3. Selected Articles for Narrative Literature Review (2020–2025)

No	Authors	Year	Journal	Main Focus
1	Contreras, Baykal, & Abid	2020	Frontiers in Psychology	E-Leadership and Teleworking
2	Wang et al.	2021	Applied Psychology	Remote Work Effectiveness
3	Kniffin et al.	2021	American Psychologist	Workplace During COVID-19
4	Gilson et al.	2021	Organizational Dynamics	Virtual Team Leadership
5	Choudhury et al.	2021	Strategic Management Journal	Work-from-Anywhere
6	Purwanto et al.	2021	Journal of Industrial Engineering & Management	Leadership and Employee Performance
7	Hoch & Kozlowski	2021	Leadership Quarterly	Virtual Team Leadership
8	Larson, Vroman, & Makarius	2020	Harvard Business Review	Managing Remote Workers
9	Carillo et al.	2021	European Journal of Information Systems	Telework Adjustment
10	Bouma et al.	2021	Journal of Islamic Management Studies	Islamic Leadership
11	Khan et al.	2022	International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management	Islamic Leadership and Performance
12	Ali et al.	2022	Journal of Management Development	Ethical Islamic Leadership
13	Abbas & Asghar	2020	International Journal of Leadership Studies	Leadership Effectiveness
14	Ahmad & Ogunsola	2021	Journal of Islamic Business and Management	Islamic Leadership Values
15	Zaccaro & Bader	2021	Leadership Perspectives	E-Leadership Challenges

Source: Compiled by the authors from peer-reviewed journals (2020–2025).

2.7 Research Trustworthiness

To increase the credibility of the research, all articles used come from academic journals that have gone through a *peer review process*. In addition, the use of transparent selection criteria and thematic synthesis processes allows research to produce findings that are more systematic and can be replicated by other researchers. Although this study uses the Narrative Literature Review approach, the selection and analysis process is carried out in a structured manner to minimize interpretation bias.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Overview of the Reviewed Literature

An analysis of 15 articles published in the 2020–2025 period shows that research on transformational leadership in a remote work environment has increased significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Most research focuses on the influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement, organizational commitment, trust, virtual team effectiveness, and organizational performance. In addition, some studies are beginning to integrate the perspective of Islamic leadership to explain the importance of ethical values, integrity, and responsibility in a digital work environment. The results of the synthesis show that transformational leadership remains one of the most effective leadership approaches in managing the virtual workforce. However, its effectiveness is greatly influenced by the quality of digital communication, the level of trust of the organization, the work culture, and the technological readiness of the organization.

Table 4. Cross-Study Synthesis of Main Findings

Theme	Supporting Articles	Main Findings
Transformational Leadership	Contreras et al. (2020); Hoch & Kozlowski (2021); Purwanto et al. (2021)	Increase employee motivation, engagement, and commitment
Remote Work Effectiveness	Wang et al. (2021); Choudhury et al. (2021)	Flexibility increases productivity, but poses communication challenges
Trust and Collaboration	Gilson et al. (2021); Larson et al. (2020)	Trust is a key factor in the success of virtual teams
Islamic Leadership	Bouma et al. (2021); Khan et al. (2022); Ahmad & Ogunsola (2021)	The value of trust, adl, and ihsan strengthens leadership effectiveness
Organizational Performance	Kniffin et al. (2021); Ali et al. (2022)	Effective leadership improves organizational performance and resilience

3.2 Theoretical Debate on Transformational Leadership in Remote Work Environments

One of the main findings of the literature is the debate about the effectiveness of transformational leadership in a virtual work environment. The first group argues that transformational leadership remains effective even though interactions are done online. Leaders who are able to clearly communicate the organization's vision, provide emotional support, and build strong interpersonal relationships can increase employee motivation and engagement. Contreras et al. (2020) and Hoch and Kozlowski (2021) found that transformational leadership contributes positively to trust, collaboration, and virtual team performance.

On the other hand, the second group showed that the limitations of digital communication can reduce the effectiveness of transformational leadership. According to Media Richness Theory, virtual communication has limitations in conveying emotional and symbolic messages that are usually the main characteristics of transformational leadership. Wang et al. (2021) show that a lack of face-to-face interaction can decrease the quality of leader-subordinate relationships and increase the risk of misunderstandings of communication.

These contradictory findings show that transformational leadership does not always produce the same outcomes in every organization. The effectiveness of leadership is greatly influenced by the organizational context, the quality of communication technology, and the ability of leaders to build trust through digital media.

3.3 The Strategic Role of Trust in Virtual Organizations

The results of the synthesis show that trust is the most common factor in the literature as a mediator between transformational leadership and the effectiveness of remote work. In a virtual work environment, limited in-person interaction leads to trust being the main foundation for team collaboration and coordination.

Gilson et al. (2021) found that virtual teams with high levels of trust tend to show better productivity than teams with low levels of trust. Similar findings were also reported by Larson et al. (2020) which showed that leaders who are able to build open and transparent communication can increase team members' trust in the organization.

In the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, trust is formed through a positive reciprocal relationship between leaders and subordinates. When leaders provide support, rewards, and attention to employees, employees will respond through increased commitment and positive work behavior.

3.4 Islamic Transformational Leadership in Remote Work Environments

An interesting finding from the literature synthesis is that Islamic leadership values have high relevance in a virtual work environment. In contrast to conventional transformational leadership that focuses on motivation and inspiration, Islamic transformational leadership integrates spiritual and ethical dimensions in the leadership process.

Table 5. Islamic Leadership Values and Their Relevance in Remote Work

Islamic Value	Meaning	Relevance in Remote Work
Amanah	Trustworthiness	Mendorong integritas dan tanggung jawab kerja
Adl	Justice	Menjamin perlakuan yang adil terhadap seluruh karyawan
Shura	Consultation	Memperkuat partisipasi dan komunikasi tim
Ihsan	Excellence	Mendorong kualitas kerja yang optimal
Mas'uliyah	Accountability	Memperkuat akuntabilitas dalam pekerjaan virtual

Bouma et al. (2021) and Khan et al. (2022) show that leadership based on trust and adl values is able to increase organizational loyalty and commitment. In the context of remote work, the value of trust is very important because direct supervision of employees has become more limited. Therefore, the success of remote work depends not only on the technological system, but also on the moral and ethical qualities possessed by the leaders and members of the organization. These findings expand the transformational leadership literature by showing that the integration of Islamic values can strengthen leadership effectiveness in a virtual work environment.

3.5 Toward a Conceptual Framework of Islamic Transformational Leadership

Based on the synthesis of all articles, this study proposes that the success of remote work environments is influenced by the relationship between transformational leadership, trust, employee engagement, and organizational performance. In this framework, Islamic leadership values function as a reinforcement that improves the quality of the relationship between leaders and subordinates.

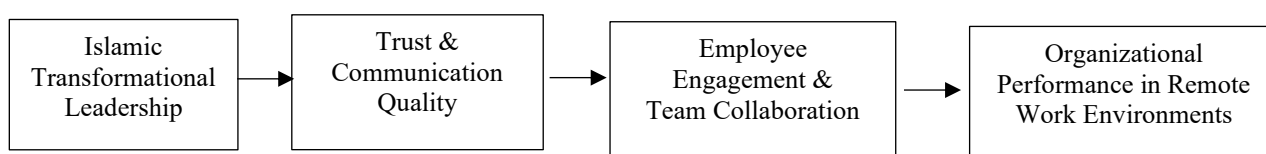


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Framework

This conceptual model shows that transformational leadership does not directly affect organizational performance. This influence occurs through increased trust, communication quality, and employee engagement. Islamic values such as amanah, adl, shura, ihsan, and mas'uliyah strengthen all these relationships resulting in higher organizational effectiveness in a virtual work environment.

The main contribution of this research is to expand the literature on transformational leadership by integrating the perspective of Islamic leadership into the context of remote work environments. In addition, this study shows that the success of remote work is not only determined by technology and work flexibility, but also by leadership qualities and underlying ethical values.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to synthesize the literature on Islamic Transformational Leadership in remote work environments through a Narrative Literature Review approach to 15 articles published in the 2020–2025 period. The results of the synthesis show that transformational leadership remains a relevant leadership approach in supporting organizational effectiveness in the digital work era. However, the success of leadership in a virtual environment is not only determined by the leader's ability to inspire and motivate employees, but also by his or her ability to build trust, improve the quality of communication, strengthen team collaboration, and encourage employee engagement. The main findings of this study show that trust is a central mechanism that bridges the relationship between leadership and organizational performance in a virtual work environment. In conditions of reduced direct supervision, trust becomes an important foundation that allows coordination, commitment, and productivity to be maintained. In addition, the literature synthesis shows that Islamic values such as amanah, adl, shura, ihsan, and mas'uliyah strengthen the effectiveness of transformational leadership by providing a stronger foundation of ethics, integrity, and responsibility than leadership approaches that are only oriented towards achieving organizational goals. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in the development of a conceptual framework that integrates Islamic Leadership Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory in the context of remote work environments. This study proposes that the influence of Islamic Transformational Leadership on organizational performance occurs through increasing trust, communication quality, employee engagement, and team collaboration. Thus, this study expands the leadership literature by showing that the spiritual and ethical dimensions have a strategic role in supporting organizational effectiveness in the digital era.

Practically, the results of the study imply that organizations implementing remote work systems need to develop a leadership model that not only focuses on managerial competence and the use of digital technology, but also on strengthening the values of integrity, fairness, participation, and accountability. Such an approach can help organizations create a more productive, collaborative, and sustainable virtual work culture. This study has limitations because it only uses fifteen articles that meet the selection criteria in the Narrative Literature Review approach. Therefore, further research is recommended to empirically test the proposed conceptual models in various different organizational sectors and cultural contexts, especially in sharia-based organizations, educational institutions, and companies that implement virtual and hybrid work systems.

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