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**Integrating Visionary Leadership and Islamic Strategic Planning-  
A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Educational  
Institutions**

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**Article Information**    **ABSTRACT**

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This study addresses a theoretical gap in the literature regarding the lack of integration between Visionary Leadership and Islamic strategic planning in explaining sustainable competitive advantage in educational institutions. Although these constructs have been examined separately, limited attention has been given to their combined explanatory mechanism within value-driven educational contexts. The study adopts a conceptual qualitative approach based on systematic literature review and thematic synthesis to develop an integrated theoretical framework. The proposed model explains how Visionary Leadership generates strategic direction and innovation, which is subsequently translated into sustainable competitive advantage through Islamic strategic planning grounded in Maqasid al-Shariah. The framework advances four theoretical propositions, positioning Islamic strategic planning as a mediating value-based mechanism. The conceptual analysis indicates that Islamic strategic planning operationalizes leadership vision into ethically aligned and sustainability-oriented institutional strategies. This integration reconceptualizes competitive advantage as a multidimensional construct encompassing organizational performance, ethical coherence, and institutional sustainability. The study contributes a novel value-based mediation model to the leadership and strategic management literature and provides a foundation for future empirical validation in educational contexts.

**Keywords:** Visionary Leadership; Islamic Strategic Planning; Sustainable Competitive Advantage; Maqasid al-Shariah; Educational Leadership; Value-Based Management.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary educational institutions face increasing challenges driven by rapid knowledge and technological transformations, accompanied by growing demands for quality, innovation, and sustainability. These developments have prompted educational institutions to seek leadership and management approaches capable of improving organizational performance and strengthening their ability to achieve

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sustainable competitive advantage in increasingly dynamic and competitive environments (Asshobri et al., 2025; Hidayah, 2025).

In this context, Visionary Leadership has emerged as a leadership approach that enables institutions to navigate future challenges by articulating a clear vision, inspiring individuals toward shared goals, and fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement. The literature further suggests that competitive advantage is not achieved solely through tangible resources; rather, it depends on an institution's ability to leverage human capital, develop organizational capabilities, and adopt effective leadership and strategic practices (Wijayanti et al., 2022; Khatib & Mudaris, 2025).

At the same time, strategic planning serves as a key mechanism for translating institutional visions into actionable goals and programs. Within the Islamic context, strategic planning acquires an additional value-based dimension grounded in the principles of stewardship, accountability, and responsibility, thereby ensuring alignment between institutional effectiveness and broader ethical and social commitments (Hidayah, 2025).

Despite the growing body of research on Visionary Leadership and the expanding literature on Islamic strategic planning, limited attention has been given to the integrative relationship between these two perspectives in explaining how competitive advantage can be achieved within educational institutions, this gap highlights the need for a comprehensive theoretical framework that connects contemporary leadership approaches with value-based strategic planning. Accordingly, this article seeks to develop an integrative conceptual framework that explains the role of Visionary Leadership in achieving competitive advantage in educational institutions through the lens of Islamic strategic planning. In doing so, it aims to address an important theoretical gap in the literature and provide a foundation for future empirical research.

### **1.1. Problem statement**

According to recent research, Visionary Leadership is a critical managerial approach for improving organizational performance, creativity, and flexibility in educational institutions. However, previous research has mostly focused on its structural and behavioural aspects, paying little attention to the underlying value systems that guarantee ethical coherence and long-term sustainability (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013; Northouse, 2021). This gap is particularly evident in Islamic educational settings, where moral and spiritual accountability are essential to understanding leadership performance (Wijayanti et al., 2022; Subaidi et al., 2023). Similarly, Islamic strategic planning is becoming more recognized as a framework that guides administrative and educational decision-making based on value. Nevertheless, in comparison to modern leadership theories, it is still conceptually immature, which limits both its theoretical and practical development and practical application in educational contexts (Al-Aidaros, Shamsudin, & Idris, 2013; Lukmanul Jamil et al., 2025).

Therefore, the main issue addressed in this study is the lack of an integrated conceptual framework that explains how Islamic strategic planning and Visionary Leadership work together to create sustainable competitive advantage in educational institutions. As educational leaders are under growing pressure to demonstrate institutional success while maintaining Islamic ethical identity, this gap becomes especially crucial in educational institutions that require both high performance and strong value-based orientation.

This problem can be understood through three key dimensions, First, most studies explain visionary leadership as a set of observable behaviours, such as inspiring employees, empowerment, and communicating a clear vision. However, limited attention has been given to the ethical values and principles that shape these behaviours and guide leadership practice (Khatib & Mudaris, 2025). Second, Islamic strategic planning is often discussed as a set of general principles and guidelines, but it is rarely combined with leadership theories, As a result, there is still a gap in understanding how Islamic planning principles can be applied through leadership practices in organizations (Hidayah, 2025; Asshobri et al., 2025). Third, educational institutions that operate under an Islamic value system often face the challenge of balancing ethical commitments with the need to remain competitive. Without a clear framework that combines both

objectives, institutions may either focus heavily on performance at the expense of their values or become less effective while trying to preserve those values (Fatima et al., 2026; Subaidi et al., 2023).

There are two significant consequences if this gap is not filled. Theoretically, it limits the explanatory capacity of models by maintaining a disjointed view of strategy and leadership in value-driven educational contexts. Practically, it leaves educational leaders without coherent guidance for integrating Islamic ethical governance with visionary direction, which might compromise both institutional performance and moral validity.

## 1.2. Research Objectives

1. To summarize the conceptual dimensions of Visionary Leadership and evaluate their applicability within Islamic educational institutions.
2. To identify and evaluate the constituent dimensions of competitive advantage in relation to educational contexts.
3. To examine how Islamic strategic planning's value-based foundations are related to educational leadership practice.
4. To develop and theoretically justify an integrated conceptual framework that mediates the relationship between Visionary Leadership and sustainable competitive advantage in educational institutions via Islamic strategic planning.

## 1.3. Research Questions

1. What are the conceptual definitions and constituent dimensions of Visionary Leadership in educational institutions?
2. What are the core dimensions that constitute competitive advantage in educational contexts?
3. How does Islamic strategic planning provide a value-based framework to support educational leadership practice?
4. How can Visionary Leadership and Islamic strategic planning be conceptually integrated to explain sustainable competitive advantage in educational institutions?

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Nature of the Study

This study utilizes a conceptual theory-building methodology based on integrative synthesis and deductive reasoning. Studies that seek to create new explanatory relationships between categories and integrate disparate theoretical views are especially well suited for conceptual research (Jaakkola, 2020). Accordingly, the study builds an integrated conceptual model by methodically analyzing and synthesizing existing scholarly literature rather than relying on primary empirical evidence.

Given the conceptual nature of this inquiry, the term “methodology” in its empirical sense is not applicable. Rather, the study employs a structured analytical procedure comprising literature selection, thematic categorization, comparative analysis, conceptual synthesis, and framework development.

The literature review was conducted through a structured search of Scopus as the primary database, supplemented by Google Scholar for snowball sampling and identification of additional relevant sources. Google scholar was used only as a supplementary source for retrieving additional references and conducting snowball research, rather than as a primary database for systematic literature selection. The search was executed in January 2026. Table 1 presents the search strategy and results.

Table 1 : Literature search strategy and results

Database	Search focus	Search string (condensed)	Raw hits	Downloaded after relevance screening
Scopus	Visionary Leadership	("Visionary Leadership" OR "visionary leader") AND ("education" OR "school" OR "institution")	103	34
Scopus	Islamic Strategic Planning	("Islamic strategic planning" OR "Islamic strategic management") AND ("education" OR "school")	1	0
Scopus	Maqasid al-Shariah	("Maqasid al-Shariah" OR "Maqasid") AND ("leadership" OR "strategic planning")	5	2
Scopus	Competitive Advantage	("sustainable competitive advantage" OR "competitive advantage") AND ("education*" OR "school effectiveness")	17	5
Google Scholar	All constructs	Various combinations (not systematically quantified)	Not quantified	Additional sources downloaded as needed (included in above counts where duplicates removed)

The review primarily focused on studies published between 2015 and 2025 to capture recent theoretical and empirical developments, while selectively incorporating seminal foundational works (pre-2015) necessary for the conceptual grounding of the core constructs (e.g., Barney, 2000; Nanus, 1992; Porter, 1985).

## 2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Included studies were required to: (1) demonstrate direct conceptual or empirical relevance to at least one of the three core constructs (Visionary Leadership, Islamic strategic planning, sustainable competitive advantage); (2) address educational leadership, strategic management, Islamic management, or organizational sustainability; and (3) be published in peer-reviewed academic sources (peer-reviewed journals or scholarly books). Studies lacking theoretical relevance, methodological clarity (for empirical papers), or direct connection to the conceptual relationships examined in this study were excluded.

After applying the inclusion criteria and removing duplicates, 41 scholarly sources were retained for full analysis: 34 on Visionary Leadership, 2 on Maqasid al-Shariah, and 5 on competitive advantage in educational contexts. Although one record on Islamic strategic planning was retrieved from Scopus, it did not meet the inclusion criteria for the final analysis. Given the limited number of standalone studies on Islamic strategic planning, the conceptual foundation of this construct where derived from broader literature on Islamic management and Maqasid al-Shariah, governance, and value-based strategic decision-making.

## 2.3. Analytical Procedure

The analytical procedure consisted of four interrelated stages, detailed as below:

### Stage 1: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring concepts, dimensions, and theoretical patterns across the selected literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Each source was coded inductively for descriptive themes (e.g., "vision articulation," "ethical decision-making," "institutional adaptability") and then aggregated into analytical themes representing the core dimensions of each construct.

Table 2 provides an illustrative example of the thematic coding process.

Table 2: Illustrative Example of Thematic Coding

Source	Raw text excerpt	Initial code	Analytical theme
Subaidi et al. (2023)	“Visionary leaders articulate a clear future direction that mobilizes organizational resources”	Future direction	Vision articulation
Hidayah (2025)	“Leaders who inspire collective commitment achieve higher educational quality”	Collective commitment	Inspiration
Kirkpatrick & Locke (1996)	“Charismatic leaders communicate high performance expectations and demonstrate confidence in followers”	Confidence transmission	Empowerment

This process yielded the dimensional structures presented in Table 4 (see Theoretical Framework section).

### Stage 2: Comparative Conceptual Analysis

To explore the overlap and tension between mainstream leadership models (e.g., transformational, and Visionary Leadership) and Islamic strategic perspectives. This comparison made it possible to identify common themes, key differences, and gaps in current knowledge, which informed the development of the integrated framework proposed in this article.

The analysis reveals several important insights. Both visionary leadership and Islamic strategic planning share a strong focus on long-term goals, active stakeholder engagement, and purpose-driven action. This suggests a high level of compatibility between the two approaches. At the same time, while visionary leadership literature explains how leaders can create and communicate a future vision, it provides limited guidance on the ethical principles that should govern strategic decisions. In contrast, Islamic strategic planning offers a clear ethical foundation through the principles of Maqasid al-Shariah, which can help guide leadership practices and organizational decision-making.

### Stage 3: Conceptual Synthesis

Following Snyder's (2019) conceptual synthesis approach, these insights were integrated into a unified framework. In this model, Islamic strategic planning serves as a mediator between visionary leadership and sustainable competitive advantage. The mediating role is preferred over moderating or direct effect specification for a clear theoretical reason: Vision precedes planning, and planning precedes outcomes. This logical sequence -vision → planning → Competitive advantage -which supports the mediating function role within the proposed model.

### Stage 4: Deductive Reasoning and Proposition Development

The four theoretical propositions (P1–P4) were developed from the relationship identified in the literature and incorporated into the proposed conceptual framework. Together, they provide a theoretical explanation of how visionary leadership and Islamic strategic planning contribute to competitive advantage in educational institutions.

## 2.4. Methodological Rigor and Transparency

To ensure analytical rigor, the criteria outlined in Table 3 were adopted.

**Table 3: Methodological Rigor Criteria Applied in This Study**

Criterion	Application in this study
Clarity and Documentation	The search strategy, inclusion criteria, and review procedures were clearly documented.
Transparency of Review Process	This selection of sources and extraction of key concepts were systematically guided by their study's objectives.
Conceptual coherence	The proposed propositions were developed in alignment with the synthesized conceptual framework derived from the literature.
Analytical Rigor	The interpretation of literature was conducted in a structured and consistent manner to ensure logical integration of themes.

This study is subject to the inherent limitations of conceptual research. First, the proposed framework has not been empirically tested; its validity rests on logical coherence, construct clarity, and alignment with established theory rather than statistical validation. Second, the literature selection, while systematic within Scopus, relied on Google Scholar in an unstructured manner; the exact number of sources reviewed from Google Scholar was not quantified, which limits replicability. Third, the identification of themes and dimensions involves interpretive judgment; other classifications are feasible. These limitations do not reduce the value of the study, but they highlight its scope and emphasize the need for future empirical research to test the framework.

### 3. RESULTS

To ensure analytical transparency, Table 4 presents a structured mapping of the key literature and the conceptual dimensions derived from each domain.

Table 4: Mapping of key literature and extracted conceptual dimensions used in developing the proposed framework

Domain	Key Authors	Core Concepts	Extracted Dimensions
<b>Visionary leadership</b>	Nanus (1992); Sashkin (1988); Kirkpatrick & Locke (1996); Subaidi et al. (2023); Hidayah (2025)	Vision creation, inspiration, future orientation, influence	Vision articulation, inspiration, empowerment, value orientation
<b>Islamic Strategic Planning</b>	Al-Faruqi (1992); Chapra (2016); Kamali (2008); Auda (2008); Dusuki (2008)	Maqasid al-Shariah, ethical decision-making, societal welfare, long-term orientation	Maqasid-oriented planning, ethical alignment, sustainability, societal value
<b>Competitive Advantage (Education)</b>	Barney (2000); Porter (1985); Teece et al. (1997); Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka (2015); Fatima et al. (2026)	Value creation, resource-based view, innovation, adaptability	Innovation capability, institutional adaptability, sustained competitive advantage

As presented in Table 4, the study systematically integrates the core dimensions underpinning the proposed conceptual framework. These dimensions are not randomly selected; rather, they are grounded in theory and consistently appear in the reviewed literature. The following subsections explain each dimension in more detail, discuss key issues and gaps in the existing studies, and then combine them into a single, integrated model.

#### 3.1. Visionary Leadership in Educational Institutions: Beyond Behavioral Dominance

**RQ1: What are the conceptual definition and constituent dimensions of Visionary Leadership in educational institutions?**

Visionary leadership has been widely recognized as a contemporary leadership approach that emphasizes foresight, the articulation of a compelling future vision, and the ability to inspire individuals toward long-

term institutional goals. Unlike traditional leadership models focused on administrative control and short-term performance, visionary leadership is grounded in meaning-making, strategic direction, and transformational influence (Nanus, 1992; Westley & Mintzberg, 1989). In educational institutions, visionary leadership plays a pivotal role in guiding organizations through complexity, uncertainty, and continuous change. Leaders with a clear and shared vision mobilize human resources, strengthen organizational commitment, and cultivate a culture of innovation and continuous improvement (Oweida, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Contemporary literature commonly conceptualizes visionary leadership through four interrelated dimensions: vision formulation, inspiration, empowerment, and a strong value orientation (Kirkpatrick, 2004). Recent empirical evidence reinforces this conceptualization. Hallinger (2020) emphasizes that leadership oriented toward vision and transformation significantly enhances school effectiveness by fostering a strong learning-oriented organizational culture. Similarly, Zhong et al. (2022) highlight leadership as a critical determinant of successful organizational change, particularly in complex environments requiring adaptability and innovation.

Empirical findings in educational contexts further support these arguments. Yulius (2022) suggests that visionary leadership exerts a significant positive effect on organizational commitment and employee performance. Liswati, Hariyati, and Uulaa (2023) confirm that visionary leadership enhances teachers' performance and fosters innovation by translating strategic vision into practical educational practices. A particularly robust contribution by Subaidi et al. (2023) provides strong quantitative evidence from Islamic education institutions, revealing that visionary leadership significantly improves school quality and organizational performance, indirectly strengthening institutional competitiveness.

**Synthesis and Critical Tension:** Despite strong recognition of visionary leadership as a driver of organizational effectiveness, existing literature remains predominantly oriented toward performance enhancement, structural efficiency, and behavioral influence (Northouse, 2021; Avolio & Yammarino, 2013). This dominant orientation reflects a predominantly performance-oriented managerial logic that prioritizes outcomes such as productivity and innovation while paying limited attention to the ethical and metaphysical foundations that shape leadership meaning and purpose. Three unresolved tensions emerge from this literature: (1) whether visionary leadership's effectiveness derives primarily from leader characteristics or organizational systems; (2) whether visionary leadership's performance effects are conditional on cultural value alignment; and (3) whether visionary leadership can be sustained without explicit ethical governance mechanisms. In educational contexts governed by strong value systems—particularly Islamic education—this narrow interpretation is insufficient. Consequently, there is a need to reconceptualize visionary leadership within a broader value-based framework that integrates moral, spiritual, and cultural dimensions of leadership practice. This gap provides a rationale for introducing Islamic strategic planning as a mediating mechanism.

**In addressing the first research question,** the reviewed literature indicates that visionary leadership is a multidimensional leadership construct that extends beyond administrative authority and managerial control. It is commonly conceptualized through four interrelated dimensions: vision articulation, inspiration, empowerment, and value orientation. Together, these dimensions enable leaders to communicate a compelling future direction, align organizational members around shared goals, encourage innovation, and strengthen institutional commitment.

The literature further suggests that the effectiveness of visionary leadership is not determined solely by its capacity to improve performance or organizational efficiency. Rather, its long-term sustainability depends on the values and ethical principles that guide leadership practice. This observation highlights an important conceptual gap in existing leadership research and provides the rationale for examining Islamic strategic planning as a value-based mechanism capable of translating leadership vision into sustainable institutional outcomes.

### 3.2. Competitive Advantage in Educational Institutions: Beyond Market-Based Strategic Logic Assumptions

#### RQ2: What are the core dimensions that constitute competitive advantage in educational contexts?

The concept of competitive advantage originates from strategic management theory and refers to an organization's ability to achieve sustained superior performance through distinctive resources, capabilities, or strategic positioning (Porter, 1985; Barney, 2000). In recent decades, it has gained increasing relevance in educational institutions in response to globalization, accountability pressures, and growing demands for quality assurance.

In educational settings, competitive advantage extends beyond operational efficiency to include the quality of educational outcomes, institutional reputation, and human capital development (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). Sustainable advantage is achieved when institutions effectively integrate strategic leadership, innovation, and organizational learning into their core missions. Recent studies highlight the importance of leadership and organizational culture in fostering innovation and strengthening competitiveness (Fatima et al., 2026). Contemporary perspectives emphasize that competitive advantage is dynamic, requiring institutions to develop adaptive capabilities that enable them to respond to change and leverage emerging opportunities. Empirical evidence in education further supports this view, showing that visionary leadership combined with institutional quality significantly enhances competitive positioning (Subaidi et al., 2023).

**Synthesis and Critical Tension:** Although the concept of competitive advantage has been extensively developed within strategic management literature through the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities perspective (Barney, 2000; Teece et al., 1997), its application in educational institutions remains largely influenced by a market-driven logic. This has led to an overemphasis on institutional performance, efficiency, and positioning, often at the expense of ethical responsibility and social purpose. In educational settings—particularly those grounded in Islamic values—such a perspective is conceptually incomplete. It fails to account for the moral legitimacy and value coherence required for sustainable institutional development. Therefore, competitive advantage in education requires a reconceptualization beyond economic and performance-based indicators toward a multidimensional construct that integrates ethical sustainability and value alignment. This study advances such a reconceptualization by positioning sustainable competitive advantage as an outcome that encompasses not only innovation and adaptability but also ethical coherence, stakeholder trust, and long-term institutional legitimacy.

**In addressing the second research question,** the analysis indicates that sustainable competitive advantage in educational institutions is a multidimensional construct that extends beyond operational efficiency and market positioning. The literature identifies several interrelated dimensions, including educational quality, innovation capacity, institutional reputation, human capital development, resource sustainability, organizational learning, and ethical coherence.

The review further suggest that these dimensions cannot be fully understood through conventional performance-based perspectives alone. In value-based educational contexts, sustainable competitive advantage depends on the extent to which institutional performance is aligned with ethical principles, stakeholder trust, and long-term social responsibility. Consequently, competitive advantage is reconceptualized in this study as a combination of strategic effectiveness and value coherence rather than as a purely economic or performance-oriented outcome.

### 3.3. Islamic Strategic Planning and Maqasid al-Shariah: A Codified Value Framework

#### RQ3: How does Islamic strategic planning provide a value-based framework to support educational leadership practice?

Islamic strategic planning represents a distinctive approach that integrates conventional strategic planning principles with an Islamic worldview and values, alongside Maqasid al-Shariah (the higher objectives of

Islamic law). It emphasizes purposeful action, ethical accountability, stewardship (*khilafah*), consultation (*Shura*), justice (*adl*), and excellence (*itqan*) (Al-Faruqi, 1992; Beekun, 2006; Chapra, 2016).

Unlike conventional planning models that prioritize efficiency and competitive positioning, Islamic strategic planning embeds moral and ethical considerations as central components of organizational decision-making. It ensures that strategic goals align with justice, responsibility, transparency, and the broader societal well-being. Within educational institutions, this framework provides a normative foundation that guides vision formulation, policy development, and performance evaluation. It enhances institutional legitimacy by aligning leadership practices with ethical and spiritual principles, thereby strengthening both effectiveness and moral accountability.

**Explicit Integration of the Five Maqasid:** The framework of Maqasid al-Shariah, as systematized by scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Al-Shatibi, and contemporary authors like Auda (2008), comprises five essential objectives that Islamic strategic planning must preserve and promote:

Table 5: Relevance to Educational Strategic Planning

Maqasid (Objective)	Relevance to Educational Strategic Planning
Hifz al-Din (Preservation of faith)	Ensuring curriculum, governance, and institutional culture reflect Islamic principles; protecting students' religious identity
Hifz al-Nafs (Preservation of life)	Providing safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments; promoting physical and psychological well-being
Hifz al-'Aql (Preservation of intellect)	Fostering critical thinking, knowledge acquisition, research, and innovation; protecting education from anti-intellectualism
Hifz al-Nasl (Preservation of lineage/family)	Strengthening family engagement; promoting ethical socialization and character education
Hifz al-Mal (Preservation of property/resources)	Ensuring transparent, accountable, and sustainable resource management; preventing waste and corruption

These five Maqasid provide a comprehensive ethical architecture within which visionary leadership's strategic direction must operate. an educational strategy that achieves high performance but neglects any of these objectives is, from an Islamic perspective, incomplete and potentially illegitimate. conversely, a strategy that preserves all five Maqasid while failing to achieve competitive positioning is equally unsustainable. the proposed framework therefore positions Islamic strategic planning as the mechanism that translates visionary leadership into strategies that simultaneously pursue performance excellence and Maqasid-aligned value coherence.

**Synthesis and Critical Tension:** The preceding analysis highlights a clear theoretical fragmentation across the three core domains. visionary leadership is predominantly conceptualized as a performance-oriented behavioral construct. competitive advantage is largely grounded in a market-based strategic logic. Islamic strategic planning is often treated as a normative ethical framework with limited integration into leadership theory. This fragmentation limits the ability of existing literature to explain how leadership vision is systematically translated into sustainable, value-based institutional outcomes. Accordingly, there is a pressing need for an integrative framework—which this study now proposes.

**In addressing the third research question,** the review indicates that Islamic strategic planning provides a value-based framework that guides educational leadership practice through alignment with the objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah. Rather than functioning solely as an administrative planning tool, it integrates ethical governance, accountability, consultation (*Shura*), stewardship (*Khilafah*), and social responsibility into institutional decision-making processes.

The analysis further demonstrates that Islamic strategic planning translates the five objectives of Maqasid al-Shariah preservation of faith, life, intellect, lineage, and property into practical strategic priorities that shape policy formulation, resource allocation, and performance evaluation. Through these mechanisms, educational leaders are able to align institutional goals ethical obligations while maintaining organizational effectiveness and long-term sustainability. Consequently, Islamic strategic planning serves as a structured mechanism that supports both strategic performance and value coherence within educational institutions.

### 3.4. From Fragmentation to Integration: The Mediating Role of Islamic Strategic Planning

#### **RQ4: How can Visionary Leadership and Islamic strategic planning be conceptually integrated to explain sustainable competitive advantage in educational institutions?**

Building on the preceding theoretical foundations, this study proposes a framework explaining how visionary leadership contributes to sustainable competitive advantage in educational institutions through Islamic strategic planning as a mediating mechanism. Visionary leadership provides strategic direction, inspiration, and organizational alignment, thereby shaping institutional readiness for innovation and change (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). However, its effectiveness is fully realized only when translated into structured, value-based strategic processes.

In this framework, Islamic strategic planning, grounded explicitly in the five Maqasid al-Shariah, functions as the key mediating mechanism that operationalizes leadership vision within an ethical system. It ensures that strategic decisions are guided not only by performance considerations but also by principles of justice, accountability, stewardship, and societal well-being. This process transforms leadership vision into systematically transformed into coherent institutional strategies that are ethically aligned and sustainability oriented.

As a result, sustainable competitive advantage is viewed as a multidimensional outcome that extends beyond efficiency and innovation. It includes educational quality, innovation capacity, institutional reputation, ethical coherence through alignment with Maqasid al-Shariah, and long-term sustainability reflected in responsible resource use and positive community impact.

Accordingly, Islamic strategic planning acts as the critical bridge between visionary leadership and competitive advantage, ensuring that institutional performance is both value-driven and strategically effective. Figure 1 presents the conceptual model illustrating the direct effect of visionary leadership on sustainable competitive advantage and its indirect effect through Islamic strategic planning as a mediating construct.

### 3.5. Theoretical Contributions

The proposed integrative framework offers several important theoretical contributions to the literature on educational leadership and strategic management literature. First, it extends visionary leadership theory by viewing leadership as a strategic capability whose impact depends on its translation into value-based planning processes rather than leadership action alone. Second, it introduces Islamic strategic planning as a mechanism that explains how vision can be transformed into sustainable competitive advantage within educational institutions. Third, it broadens the concept of competitive advantage by incorporating educational quality, ethical responsibility, social impact, and long-term sustainability alongside organizational performance. Finally, the framework bridges a gap in the literature by combining the ethical foundation of Islamic strategic planning with their practical leadership process emphasized in visionary leadership research. This framework provides a foundation for future empirical research across different educational contexts.

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Proposed Conceptual Model

Building on the four theoretical propositions (P1–P4) introduced in the theoretical framework, Figure 1 presents the proposed integrative conceptual model. The model specifies three core constructs. Visionary leadership serves as the independent variable and includes vision articulation, strategic direction, inspiration, empowerment, and value orientation. Islamic Strategic Planning functions as the mediating construct and evolves alignment with Maqasid al-Shariah, ethical governance, strategic coherence, accountability and stewardship (*kebilafah*), and stakeholder consultation (*Shura*). Sustainable competitive advantage is dependent

variable and is conceptualized as a multidimensional outcome that encompasses educational quality, innovation capacity, institutional reputation, human capital development, and organizational learning.

The model suggests that visionary leadership influences sustainable competitive advantage in two ways: directly and indirectly. The direct effect occurs when visionary leadership contributes immediately to enhancing competitive advantage. The indirect effect occurs through Islamic strategic planning, where leadership vision is first translated into structured strategic plans, which then lead to sustainable competitive advantage outcomes.

The mediating role of Islamic strategic planning is theoretically justified. A clear vision is considered the starting point for strategic planning, while ethical governance ensures that strategic actions remain aligned with long-term sustainability. This is particularly important in value-based educational contexts where maintaining ethical coherence is essential for achieving sustainable competitive advantage.

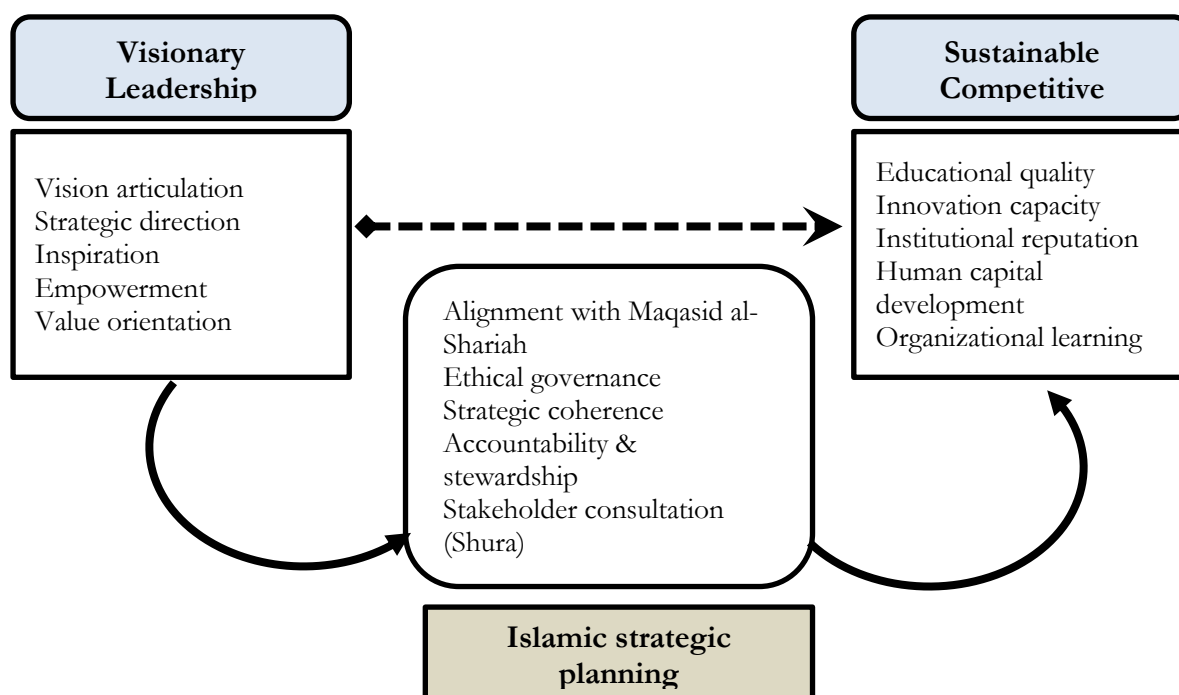


Figure 1: An Integrative Model of Visionary Leadership and Sustainable Competitive Advantage: The Mediating Role of Islamic Strategic Planning

#### 4.2. Why Islamic Strategic Planning as a Mediator?

The positioning of Islamic strategic planning as a mediator rather than a moderator or independent predictor requires explicit justification. There are three interrelated arguments support this specification.

##### 4.2.1. Logical Temporality

Visionary leadership, by definition, is about constructing a vision of the future before developing strategic plans. (Nanus, 1992; Bennis & Nanus, 1985). In other words, the vision comes first and shapes how organization plan. Strategic planning, on the other hand, takes the existing vision and turns it into practical actionable steps. Therefore, the temporal sequence is: visionary leadership → Islamic strategic planning → competitive outcomes. This sequence comfortably satisfies the temporal sequencing requirement for mediation.

#### 4.2.2. Theoretical Necessity

Evidence suggests that visionary leadership does drive performance improvements (Subaidi et al., 2023; Hidayah, 2025). However, the sustainability, particularly in contexts where value matter deeply, calls for more than vision alone—it needs explicit ethical governance. Without Islamic strategic planning, visionary leadership may either be effective in achieving results but lack an ethical foundation, or remain strong in value but weak in practical implementation strategies. The mediating role explains how ethical principles are translated into concrete strategic actions.

#### 4.2.3. Reconceptualizing Sustainable Competitive Advantage

A central contribution of this framework is the reconceptualization of sustainable competitive advantage as a multidimensional construct that integrates performance excellence with ethical coherence. Drawing on the five Maqasid al-Shariah, the framework specifies the following dimensions:

Table 6: Dimensions of Sustainable Competitive Advantage and their Alignment with Maqasid al-Shariah

Dimension	Definition	Maqasid Alignment
Educational quality	Measurable learning outcomes, teacher effectiveness, curriculum relevance	Hifz al-‘Aql (intellect)
Innovation capacity	Ability to develop pedagogical and administrative innovations	Hifz al-‘Aql (intellect)
Institutional reputation	Stakeholder trust, legitimacy, and brand recognition	Hifz al-Din (faith/identity)
Human capital development	Continuous professional growth of staff and students	Hifz al-Nafs (life) & Hifz al-Nasl (lineage)
Resource sustainability	Transparent, accountable, and efficient resource management	Hifz al-Mal (property)
Ethical coherence	Consistency between stated values and institutional practices	All five Maqasid

This broader conceptualisation extends beyond conventional market-based definitions of competitive advantage, which primarily emphasise efficiency, resource superiority, and measurable performance outcomes (Porter, 1985; Barney, 2000). In the present framework, sustainable competitive advantage is understood not only in terms of institutional performance and innovation but also through value-based criteria, including ethical coherence, social responsibility, institutional legitimacy, and long-term sustainability. Accordingly, an educational institution may achieve high levels of efficiency and measurable outcomes; however, if its practices lack ethical consistency, it cannot be regarded as possessing sustainable competitive advantage. Over time, ethical inconsistency may weaken institutional legitimacy, reduce stakeholder trust, and undermine long-term sustainability.

The findings indicate that Visionary Leadership and Islamic Strategic Planning should not be viewed as independent constructs. Rather, they function as complementary and interdependent dimensions within an integrated educational framework. Visionary Leadership provides strategic direction by articulating a compelling future orientation, encouraging institutional transformation, and mobilising stakeholders towards shared goals. Islamic Strategic Planning, in contrast, operationalises this vision by translating it into structured, value-driven actions grounded in the higher objectives and moral principles of Shariah.

Within this framework, Islamic Strategic Planning functions as a mediating mechanism between visionary intent and institutional implementation. It enables educational leaders to transform strategic aspirations into practical policies, programmes, performance indicators, and resource-allocation decisions. By embedding Islamic ethical principles within planning processes, institutions can ensure that their strategies remain both performance-oriented and morally grounded. This integration strengthens institutional legitimacy, enhances stakeholder confidence, and contributes to the development of sustainable competitive advantage over time.

The integrative framework developed in this study makes four distinctive contributions. First, it extends Visionary Leadership theory by demonstrating that leadership vision requires ethical governance mechanisms to support long-term institutional sustainability. This dimension remains relatively underexplored in mainstream leadership literature. Second, the framework operationalises Islamic Strategic Planning as a mediating construct, moving it beyond a normative concept towards a clearly defined and empirically examinable mechanism. Third, it broadens the concept of sustainable competitive advantage by framing it as a multidimensional institutional outcome that integrates performance, innovation, ethical coherence, and sustainability aligned with Maqasid al-Shariah. Finally, the framework provides a foundation for future empirical research by translating the proposed relationships into explicit propositions (P1–P4), which may be tested across different educational contexts using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study addressed four research questions focusing on the dimensions of Visionary Leadership, the nature of sustainable competitive advantage, the role of Islamic strategic planning, and the integration of these constructs within educational institutions. The findings suggest that Visionary Leadership constitutes a multidimensional leadership capability, while sustainable competitive advantage represents a multidimensional, value-driven institutional outcome. Islamic strategic planning, grounded in Maqasid al-Shariah, functions as an ethical and operational framework through which leadership vision is translated into sustained institutional performance.

The study concludes that Visionary Leadership plays a key role in strengthening competitive advantage in educational institutions by providing strategic direction, fostering innovation within organizational cultures, and aligning human resources with shared institutional objectives. However, its long-term effectiveness and sustainability are significantly enhanced when embedded within the ethical framework of Islamic strategic planning.

Through this integrative perspective, sustainable competitive advantage is conceptualized more comprehensively, extending beyond performance and innovation to include ethical responsibility, institutional quality, and long-term sustainability. Accordingly, Islamic strategic planning serves as a guiding mechanism that ensures leadership practices remain aligned with moral principles, social responsibility, and sustainable institutional development (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Lukmanul Jamil et al., 2025).

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All tables and figures include in this manuscript were independently developed by the authors based on the synthesis and interpretation of their reviewed literature.

## Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

**Author 1** (Main Author): 60% – Developed the conceptual framework, conducted the literature review and analysis, and wrote the core sections of the manuscript.

**Author 2:** 20% – Critically reviewed the manuscript for intellectual content and provided theoretical guidance.

**Author 3:** 10% – Assisted with editing, final proofreading, and reference management.

**Author 4:** 5% – Performed final formatting and language editing checks.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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