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Uncovering The Leadership Gap In The Digital Transformation Of Islamic Financial Institutions: A Literature Mapping Analysis

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Abstract

Digital transformation has reshaped the financial industry, compelling Islamic financial institutions to adopt technological innovation while adhering to Islamic principles. Although studies on fintech and digital transformation within Islamic finance have expanded rapidly, the leadership dimension has not been explicitly integrated into existing analyses. This study aims to map the scientific landscape of digital transformation in Islamic finance and explore opportunities to position leadership as a conceptual bridge between governance and sustainability. A bibliometric analysis was conducted using Scopus data from 2014-2024. Keyword such as 'fintech', 'digital', 'Islamic' and 'transformation' were analyzed through co-occurrence and density visualization to identify dominant themes. The analysis reveals that research trends are concentrated on governance, risk, value creation and digital adaptation. These clusters implicitly suggest the importance of leadership in driving institutional change, even though the term itself was not a search variable. Based on this insight, the study proposes a conceptual framework of Islamic digital leadership that integrates transformational, ethical and servant leadership dimensions. The research concludes that strengthening leadership grounded in Islamic values is essential for ensuring a sustainable and value-driven digital transformation in Islamic financial institutions.

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Introduction

Digital transformation has emerged as a primary catalyst of change in the global economic landscape, redefining how organizations create value, engage stakeholders and conduct their operations (Bhadarwaj et al., 2023; Vial, 2019). The advancement of technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain and big data analytics has accelerated the shift from conventional systems toward a more integrated, adaptive and data-driven digital ecosystem (Verhoef et al., 2021). In this context, digitalization is not merely an instrument of efficiency but a strategic enabler that determines organizational competitiveness and sustainability across sectors.

Within the Islamic economic ecosystem, digital transformation has gained remarkable traction. The integration of Islamic values into technological innovation has given rise to new business models such as Islamic fintech, digital zakat platforms and halal marketplace (Widyarma et al., 2023) that emphasize profitability also social welfare and ethical sustainability (Abubakari, 2025; Hasan et al., 2020; Ridho et al., 2025). The digitalization of Islamic financial institutions, including banking, Islamic social finance and the halal industry, has enhanced transparency, expanded financial inclusion and helped mitigate *maysir* and *gharar* practices that contradict Islamic principles (Ridho et al., 2025). Nevertheless, these developments also introduce new challenges, particularly regarding cybersecurity, digital trust and the readiness of human resources to adapt to technological disruption.

Although research on digital transformation in Islamic finance has grown rapidly, the leadership dimension remains underexplored as a key driver of successful transformation (López-Figueroa et al., 2025; Northouse, 2022). Leadership plays a crucial role in bridging governance and sustainability by setting strategic direction, fostering organizational culture and embedding ethical values into digital practices. In an environment characterized by volatility and technological uncertainty, leaders must possess not only technical competence but also moral integrity, adaptability and a forward-looking vision to steer digital change effectively.

In this regard, prophetic leadership provides a strong moral foundation for value-based digital leadership. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplified visionary and inclusive leadership rooted in compassion, empathy and justice, while Prophet Yusuf (AS) demonstrated strategic and data-driven leadership in managing economic and social crises (Hamid et al., 2025; Majid et al., 2025; Yacine, 2024). These prophetic models align closely with modern notions of transformational and adaptive leadership, such as emphasizing inspiration, resilience and ethical decision-making, which are increasingly relevant in guiding digital organizations toward sustainable change.

This study aims to map the scientific landscape of digital transformation in Islamic finance and business and to highlight the conceptual opportunities for positioning leadership as a bridge between governance and sustainability. A bibliometric approach is employed to identify research trends, thematic interrelations and conceptual gaps, ultimately offering a theoretical foundation for the development of a value-based model of Islamic digital leadership.

Literature Review

Digital Transformation: From Technological Evolution to Socioeconomic Integration

Digital transformation has evolved from a purely technological shift into a multidimensional process that reshapes business models, institutional structures, and socio-economic behaviors. Initially, digitalization was understood merely as the adoption of new technologies aimed at increasing operational efficiency. However, as Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) developed, the scope of digital transformation expanded, redefining not only the way organizations create value but also how they interact with stakeholders, communities and regulatory systems (Bhadarwaj et al., 2023; Vial, 2019; Yoo et al., 2012).

The evolution of digital transformation can be traced through several critical phases. Early studies emphasized the integration of information systems and the automation of traditional processes. Subsequent developments focused on the strategic dimension of digital business models and platform-based ecosystems that leverage big data, artificial intelligence and cloud computing (Verhoef et al., 2021). In its most recent stage, digital transformation has reached a holistic dimension, also encompassing social, ethical and sustainability considerations that affect institutions and communities.

This comprehensive nature of digital transformation has led to diverse research streams covering fields as varied as education, finance, law, governance and social change. In the Islamic context, these transformations have extended into various domains, including Islamic banking, Islamic social finance, the halal industry, and digital governance, reflecting the convergence between technological innovation and Islamic ethical values. Consequently, digital transformation today also represents a paradigm shift influencing organizational leadership, cultural adaptation and collective pursuit of sustainable and inclusive development.

The Penetration of Digital Transformation into Islamic Business

Digital transformation has not only redefined conventional business operations but has also permeated the broader Islamic economic ecosystem, including banking, social finance and the halal industry. This transformation has brought about fundamental shifts in institutional structures and market behavior, where Islamic values serve as guiding principles in digital innovation. According to (Hasan et al., 2020), the emergence of Islamic fintech marks a new phase of inclusive Islamic finance that emphasizes not only technological efficiency but also fairness and Sharia compliance as its foundational pillars.

Recent studies highlight that digital transformation within Islamic financial institutions occurs in tandem with a growing awareness of governance and sustainability. (Shehadeh et al., 2024) emphasize that digitalization in Islamic finance acts as a catalyst for broader financial inclusion, reaching underserved communities and strengthening the social mission of Islamic economics. Technology, therefore, plays a dual role: expanding access while reinforcing the ethical and social dimension of Islamic financial practices.

Beyond expanding accessibility, digital transformation also enhances the governance

quality of Islamic business institutions. The use of digital systems promotes transparency and accountability in financial reporting, particularly in Islamic social finance activities. As noted by (Abubakari, 2025) and (Ridho et al., 2025), digital reporting tools and blockchain-based applications have enabled more traceable, auditable and real-time documentation of fund collection and distribution, significantly reducing the risks of misuse or data manipulation. This technological advancement also supports compliance with Islamic ethical principles by reducing elements of uncertainty (*gharar*) and speculation (*maysir*) in financial operations. Nevertheless, (Hasan et al., 2020) caution that while digital systems increase efficiency and transparency, challenges related to cybersecurity, data protection and regulatory adaptation remain critical issues for sustainable transformation.

Moreover, digital transformation has become increasingly evident in the Islamic social finance sector, comprising *zakat*, *infaq*, *shadaqah* and *waqf*, which leverages digital platforms to enhance transparency and operational efficiency. Studies by (Abubakari, 2025) and (Ridho et al., 2025) It reveals that digitalization in Islamic social finance also improves institutional accountability in managing charitable funds. In this regard, digital technology functions not merely as a tool of modernization but as a medium for cultivating trust and reinforcing the moral legitimacy of Islamic financial institutions.

Nevertheless, the penetration of digital transformation into Islamic business also presents conceptual and organizational challenges. Many Islamic financial institutions continue to face constraints related to human capital readiness, infrastructural capacity and the integration of technological innovation with ethical and spiritual values. In this context, leadership becomes a decisive factor in steering digital transformation that aligns with the principle of justice, trustworthiness and social benefit. Strategic leadership is expected to bridge the gap between technological innovation and value-driven governance, ensuring that digital transformation in Islamic business evolves also as a holistic process of ethical renewal and institutional sustainability.

Leadership in the Digital Industry

The rapid pace of digital transformation has not only driven technological innovation but also redefined the paradigm of leadership across sectors, including Islamic finance and business. Digitalization has disrupted traditional work patterns, organizational structures and decision-making models, positioning leadership as a crucial factor in ensuring sustainable and value-driven transformation. In the digital era, leadership is no longer confined to hierarchical authority but is increasingly characterized by the ability to build shared vision, manage uncertainty and foster a culture of innovation and adaptability.

According to (Northouse, 2022), classical leadership theories, such as transformational, adaptive and servant leadership, remain relevant in explaining leadership behavior amid changing environments. Although Northouse does not explicitly discuss digital contexts, these foundational concepts can be adapted to address the challenges of leadership in the digital age. Meanwhile, (López-Figueroa et al., 2025) introduced the notion of e-leadership to describe leadership practices that leverage digital technologies to influence, direct and motivate organizational members. Digital leadership thus requires the integration of technological literacy with effective communication, agile decision-making, and the ability to manage relationships across distributed and virtual environments.

Within Islamic finance and business, digital leadership carries an added layer of

complexity, as it must balance technological efficiency with moral and Islamic-based principles. Leaders are expected to ensure that technological innovation aligns with fundamental values such as justice, trust and social welfare. Consequently, digital leadership in Islamic financial institutions is not merely about fostering innovation and productivity but also about maintaining ethical integrity and moral accountability throughout decision-making processes.

Prophetic leadership provides a compelling moral foundation for this value-based model of digital leadership. (Yacine, 2024) highlights Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as an exemplar of visionary and inclusive leadership founded on compassion (*rahmah*), empathy and social justice. He inspired trust, collaboration and social innovation through ethical conduct and dialogue as principles that align closely with the modern concept of transformational leadership, where leaders not only directly but also inspire and empower their followers to contribute meaningfully to collective goals.

Similarly, (Majid et al., 2025) emphasize the leadership of Prophet Yusuf (AS) as a model of strategic and knowledge-driven leadership. In addressing Egypt's economic and social crisis, Prophet Yusuf demonstrated analytical foresight, long-term planning, and moral steadfastness. His leadership illustrates how data-driven reasoning and prudent resource management can coexist with ethical and humanitarian values –qualities highly relevant to the governance of contemporary digital organizations.

From these prophetic models, it can be inferred that ideal leadership in the digital transformation era is defined not merely by technological competence but by moral integrity and human-centered vision. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) embodies transformational and inclusive leadership grounded in ethics and empathy, while Prophet Yusuf (AS) exemplifies strategic and analytical leadership grounded in wisdom and foresight. Together, these archetypes offer a conceptual synthesis for digital leadership that is visionary, ethical and sustainability-oriented –providing a valuable framework for guiding Islamic financial institutions and modern business organizations in the age of digital transformation.

Methodology

This study employs a bibliometric approach to map the scientific landscape of digital transformation in Islamic finance and to identify conceptual opportunities for integrating leadership within this context. The bibliometric method enables systematic visualization and analysis of research trends, conceptual relationships and thematic evolution across scholarly publications.

Data Collection

The dataset was retrieved from the Scopus database, selected for its comprehensive coverage and credibility as a global index of peer-reviewed research. The search was conducted using the following combination of keywords:

‘fintech’ OR ‘fin-tech’ OR ‘digital’ AND ‘Islamic’ AND ‘transformation’

The search period was set from 2014 to 2025 covering the emergence and development of Islamic fintech and digital transformation research over more than a decade. Based on this query, 158 documents were identified as relevant. These publications represent a wide range of disciplines including Islamic social finance, banking, education, organizational studies, the halal industry, Islamic law and socio-historical analysis. All retrieved data were exported in .csv format for bibliometric processing.

Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted using VOSviewer software, developed by (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). This tool enables the construction and visualization of bibliometric networks, including co-authorship, co-citation and particularly co-occurrence of keywords, which was the focus of this study.

The visualization revealed four major thematic clusters within the literature:

1. Challenges, values and institutional context (red cluster)
2. Financial innovation and fintech dynamics (green cluster)
3. Risk, security and digital trust (blue cluster)
4. Governance and service quality (yellow cluster)

Each cluster was examined based on keyword prominence, density visualization and conceptual interlinkages to identify dominant research directions and underlying relationships. The combination of network mapping and density analysis enabled the identification of lightly concentrated topics, such as digital transformation and challenges, and the detection of emerging or underexplored themes.

Interpretive and Conceptual Analysis

Following the quantitative mapping, an interpretive analysis was undertaken to connect the bibliometric findings with leadership theory. Although leadership was not explicitly included as a search term, the study sought to explore how the identified clusters, particularly those related to governance, innovation and sustainability, implicitly reflect leadership dynamics within Islamic digital transformation.

By synthesizing the bibliometric evidence with established leadership perspectives such as transformational, adaptive and ethical leadership, this study contributes a conceptual novelty: positioning leadership as a bridging mechanism between governance and sustainability in the context of Islamic digital finance. Consequently, the analysis not only maps the intellectual structure of the field but also advances a theoretical foundation for understanding leadership as a critical enabler of value-driven digital transformation.

Results and Discussion

Conceptual Gaps Among Clusters

The bibliometric visualization reveals that research on digital transformation within Islamic finance has evolved into four major thematic clusters that are distinct yet conceptually interlinked. The red cluster revolves around digital transformation and Islamic bank, emphasizing studies on technological adoption, innovation processes, and institutional adaptation to digital disruption within the Islamic banking system. The green cluster focuses on risk and banking, reflecting the growing concern for prudential governance, regulatory compliance and Islamic supervision in managing technological innovation. The blue cluster, characterized by keywords such as Islamic finance, fintech and financial technology, represents the development of Islamic financial products, digital payment integration and inclusive finance rooted in Islamic principles. Lastly, the yellow cluster captures the notions of challenge, integration and development, which underline the social and structural adaptation issues in the pursuit of equitable digital progress.

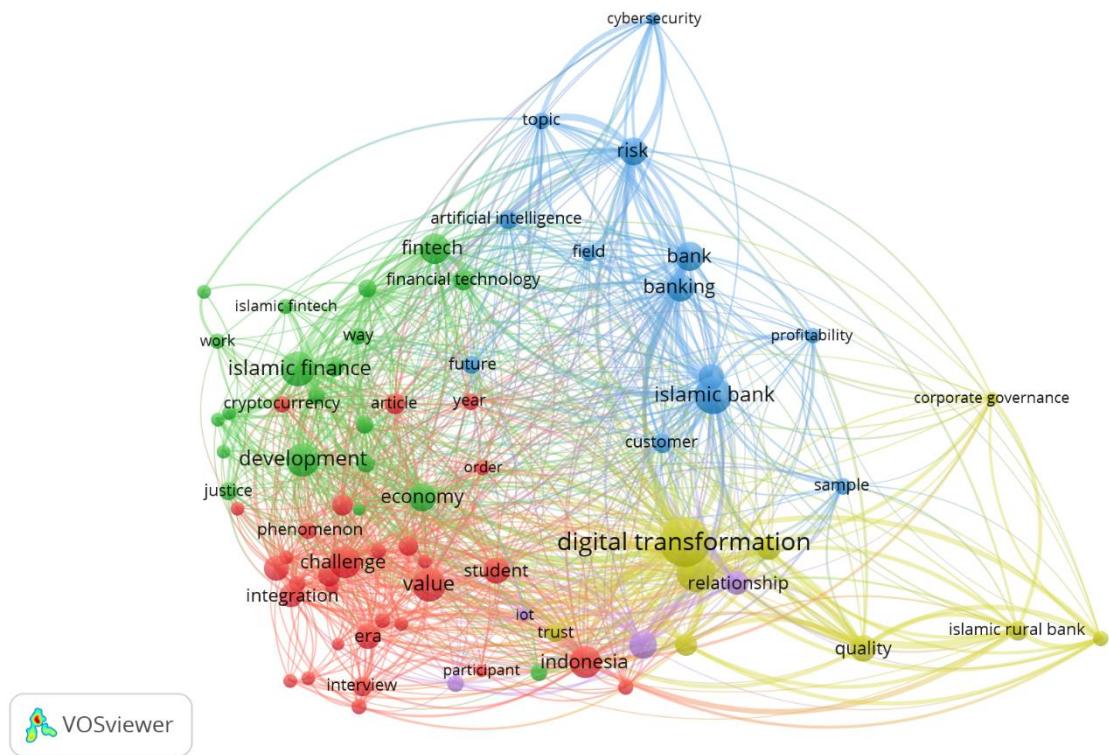


Figure 1. Co-occurrence Map of Islamic Digital Transformation

Together, these clusters illustrate a multi-layered landscape in which Islamic digital finance is being shaped through technological, institutional and societal dimensions. However, the co-occurrence and density visualization analyses show that while digital transformation, risk and Islamic bank emerge as the most luminous and dominant nodes, the term leadership is absent. This absence should not be interpreted as a lack of leadership in practice but rather as an indication that leadership has not yet been conceptually articulated or empirically examined as a key construct in the literature. Theoretically, leadership serves as a crucial mechanism that links visionary technological innovation with governance discipline and sustainability grounded in Islamic values.

From an epistemological standpoint, this finding reveals a conceptual gap as a missing link between the established clusters. Each cluster appears to operate within its own disciplinary domain: digital transformation speaks the language of technological progress, risk management operates within governance frameworks, and social development discourse highlights justice and inclusivity. In this fragmented landscape, leadership could function as the integrative axis that bridges these domains. It connects the visionary and innovative orientation of digital transformation (red cluster) with institutional prudence and governance (green cluster), guides the ethical and value-based direction of fintech development (blue cluster) and provides moral and strategic coherence for responding to socio-economic challenges (yellow cluster).

Recognizing leadership as a conceptual bridge is therefore not only analytically significant but also strategically vital. It positions leadership as the dynamic force that ensures digital transformation in Islamic finance is not reduced to mere technological modernization but becomes a process guided by vision, integrity and Islamic ethical values. This identified conceptual gap thus provides a strong theoretical rationale for advancing the discussion toward a framework of Islamic digital leadership as a model capable of harmonizing innovation,

governance, and moral sustainability in the digital age.

Cluster Analysis and Its Connection to Leadership Potential

The keyword network analysis reveals four major clusters that are conceptually interconnected, reflecting the broad thematic landscape of digital transformation in Islamic finance, from governance and technological innovation to institutional and socio-economic challenges. Although leadership was not explicitly included in the keyword search, the emerging themes indicate its conceptual relevance as a potential bridge connecting these clusters. The following discussion explores each cluster in greater depth, emphasizing their dominant nodes, thematic characteristics and latent links to leadership within the context of Islamic digital finance:

1. Red Cluster: Challenges, Values and Institutional Context

The red cluster is the largest and most densely connected, characterized by keywords such as ‘development’, ‘value’, ‘integration’, ‘challenge’ and ‘Indonesia’. This cluster is primarily conceptual and contextual, emphasizing economic digitalization, value-based transformation and implementation challenges at institutional and national levels. The prominence of Indonesia, one of the most frequent nodes, illustrates the country’s growing academic and practical relevance as a leading hub for Islamic fintech development.

From a leadership perspective, this cluster highlights the need for adaptive and contextual leadership, emphasizing the capacity of leaders to balance technological advancement with local realities and ethical values. The presence of terms such as integration and challenge suggests an environment that requires leaders capable of navigating complexity, coordinating diverse stakeholders and maintaining coherence between innovation, regulation and value orientation.

2. Green Cluster: Financial Innovation and Fintech Dynamics

The green cluster centers on ‘Islamic finance’, ‘fintech’, ‘financial technology’ and ‘development’. It represents the innovation-driven dimension of Islamic financial research, focusing on modernization, inclusion and competitiveness through digitalization. Compared to the red cluster’s value-oriented nature, the green cluster reflects the engine of technological progress in the Islamic finance ecosystem.

Within this cluster, innovative and visionary leadership becomes essential. Leaders play a pivotal role in fostering organizational change, building an innovation-oriented culture, and ensuring that digital solutions are not only adopted but also embedded within ethical financial practices. The green cluster thus provides fertile ground for examining how leadership styles – such as transformational or collaborative leadership – can accelerate fintech adoption and strengthen public trust in technology-based Islamic finance.

3. Blue Cluster: Risk, Security and Digital Trust

The blue cluster includes keywords such as ‘banking’, ‘risk’, ‘cybersecurity’ and ‘artificial intelligence’, emphasizing risk management, data protection and technological integration in Islamic banking systems. Temporal analysis shows that cybersecurity has become one of the most recent and intensively studied topics, signaling a shift in research attention from implementation to digital resilience and sustainability.

The blue cluster underscores the importance of strategic leadership in risk and digital security management. Leaders in Islamic financial institutions must balance innovation with compliance, set the tone for ethical data governance, and cultivate a culture of digital awareness

among employees. The growing prominence of cybersecurity also invites further exploration into how leadership can act as a coordinating mechanism between technological sophistication and a sustainable governance framework.

4. Yellow Cluster: Governance and Service Quality

Although smaller and less dense than other clusters, the yellow cluster features crucial keywords such as ‘corporate governance’, ‘quality’, ‘relationship’ and ‘Islamic rural bank’. It represents the governance-oriented dimension of Islamic finance, emphasizing institutional accountability and service excellence –particularly among smaller financial institutions. Notably, digital transformation appears as the largest node in this cluster and across the entire network, suggesting its centrality as a bridging concept.

Here, ‘governance leadership’ becomes a key lens through which digital transformation can be sustained. The connection between corporate governance and digital transformation indicates that effective digital change requires strong leadership commitment to transparency, accountability and service quality. This cluster opens opportunities to investigate how leaders can reinforce institutional integrity and value-based oversight in digitally driven Islamic finance ecosystems.

Collectively, the four clusters demonstrate that while leadership does not explicitly appear in the mapped data, leadership dimensions are implicitly embedded across all major research themes in innovation (green), risk management (blue), governance (yellow) and contextual adaptation (red). Leadership thus emerges as a missing conceptual connector that integrates strategic direction, innovation culture and institutional values within the digital transformation of Islamic finance, as summarized on table 1.

Table 1. Leadership Potential Across Clusters in Islamic Digital Transformation Research

Cluster	Main Theme	Dominant Keywords / Nodes	Potential Leadership Connection
Red	Challenges, values, institutional context	Development, value, integration, challenge, Indonesia	Leadership as adaptive and contextual, balancing innovation with local realities and ethical values
Green	Financial innovation and fintech dynamics	Islamic finance, fintech, financial technology	Leadership as innovative and visionary, driving organizational transformation and fostering an innovation culture
Blue	Risk, security and digital trust	Banking, risk, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence	Leadership as strategic and risk-sensitive, ensuring digital resilience and security governance
Yellow	Governance and service quality	Corporate governance, quality, relationship, Islamic rural bank, digital transformation	Leadership as governance-oriented, strengthening accountability, transparency, and service excellence.

Source: Author's analysis based on Scopus data

Leadership as a Conceptual Bridge Between Governance and Sustainability

The analysis of the research landscape reveals that digital transformation in Islamic finance is not merely a technological phenomenon but a multidimensional process that intertwines institutional, behavioral and value-driven dynamics. On one hand, governance provides the structural foundation for transparency and accountability in the financial system, but on the other hand, sustainability represents the long-term aspiration to create an inclusive, adaptive and value-oriented digital ecosystem. Positioned between these two poles, leadership functions as a conceptual bridge—connecting strategic governance with sustainability outcomes.

In the context of digital transformation, effective governance cannot operate in a purely mechanistic manner. It requires leadership capable of harmonizing technological vision with institutional integrity. Insights from the yellow cluster –dominated by corporate governance, relationship and digital transformation—suggest that successful digitalization demands leaders who emphasize collaboration, continuous learning and the balance between technological efficiency and social accountability.

Leadership, in this sense, operates as the integrative mechanism that binds governance principles to transformative practice. Leaders serve as enablers who articulate strategic direction, mobilize resources and ensure that innovation remains anchored in the framework of institutional values and regulatory compliance. The absence of explicit focus on leadership in the existing literature indicates a conceptual gap that deserves further exploration, specifically, how leadership quality strengthens governance effectiveness in the digital era.

The bibliometric results –particularly from the red and blue clusters—highlight the growing scholarly attention to challenges, risk and cybersecurity in recent years. This shift signals a transition from technological implementation toward maintaining digital resilience and long-term sustainability. Within this context, leadership acts as a driver of sustainability, not merely responding to technological changes but proactively shaping strategies that ensure economic, social and environmental continuity.

Such leadership requires systemic and visionary thinking, recognizing that sustainability is not only about operational efficiency but also about maintaining trust, resilience and ethical coherence within digital ecosystems. In the context of financial institutions, sustainability-oriented leadership contributes to data security, information integrity and the cultivation of an organizational culture that is both risk-aware and socially responsible.

Viewed holistically, leadership can be conceptualized as a central connecting node linking the three major domains identified in the bibliometric analysis: values (red cluster), technology and innovation (green cluster) and governance and risk (yellow and blue clusters). Together, these domains form the foundation of sustainable digital transformation. Leadership ensures that values are not merely abstract ideals, technology not merely instrumental tools, and governance not merely procedural compliance. But that all coalesce into a coherent strategic direction.

Conceptually, leadership operated as a driving element that maintains balance between innovation and stability, efficiency and ethics, growth and sustainability. Leaders are also architects of change, shaping organizational purpose, aligning digital vision with institutional trust, and translating innovation into enduring value.

Although leadership does not appear explicitly in the bibliometric mapping, its influence permeates all identified dimensions of research. It serves as a conceptual variable bridging the

gap between governance and sustainability, ensuring that digital transformation in Islamic financial institutions remains ethical, adaptive and sustainable. By positioning leadership as a mediating construct, future research can illuminate how leadership behaviors, capabilities and orientations determine the long-term success of digital transformation beyond mere technological adoption.

Implications and Future Research Directions

The analysis reveals that digital transformation within Islamic financial institutions is not merely a process of technological adaptation, but rather a reflection of institutional dynamics that demand a balance between governance, sustainability and organizational values. Here, leadership holds a strategic position as an integrative driver that unites these three dimensions.

Conceptually, this study emphasizes the importance of broadening the digital transformation paradigm toward a more holistic perspective –where leadership functions also as a normative force that shapes the direction of organizational change. The integration between governance and sustainability through leadership enables digital value creation that also prioritizes trust, social responsibility and long-term stability.

Practically, these findings guide policymakers, managers and regulators in the Islamic financial sector to develop a model of digital leadership aligned with the unique characteristics of the industry. Effective digital leadership requires clarity of vision, the ability to foster cross-functional collaboration and sensitivity to both ethical and technological risks. Strengthening leadership capacity can thus serve as a strategic instrument to ensure that technological innovation progresses in harmony with sound governance and sustainability objective.

This study highlights how the evolving discourse of Islamic fintech and digital transformation is still dominantly shaped by economic, regulatory and technological narratives, with limited integration of leadership dimensions. Theoretically, this indicates that the leadership role –particularly in guiding ethical governance, organizational adaptation and social inclusion –remains an underexplored catalyst in driving digital transformation within Islamic financial ecosystems. Incorporating Islamic leadership values such as *Amanah*, *shura* and *maslahah* could offer a distinct theoretical contribution, bridging the gap between technological innovation and moral stewardship in Islamic economics.

Future research should therefore focus on empirically linking leadership behaviors within digital innovation outcomes in Islamic fintech contexts. This can include exploring how leadership styles influence the adoption of technology, ethical decision-making, or stakeholder trust across Islamic financial institutions. Further bibliometric or qualitative studies may also map how emerging leadership themes, such as digital ethics, transformational leadership, and socio-spiritual motivation, intersect with fintech development, thus deepening the understanding of how leadership can serve as both a strategic and moral compass in the digitalization of Islamic finance.

Conclusion

This study mapped the scientific landscape of digital transformation in Islamic finance through a bibliometric analysis of 158 Scopus-indexed documents published between 2014 and 2025. The mapping identified four major thematic clusters that define the intellectual structure of this field: Challenges, values and institutional context; Financial innovation and fintech dynamics; Risk, security and digital trust; and Governance and service quality. Each cluster reflects a distinct research trajectory while also revealing underlying connections to leadership as a key

conceptual dimension.

In the red cluster (challenges, values and institutional context, leadership potential lies in adaptive leadership, as the ability to navigate complex intersections between technological innovation, institutional constraints and ethical values. The green cluster (financial innovation and fintech dynamics) highlights the need for transformational leadership that inspires innovation, drives cultural change and fosters sustainable digital inclusion. The blue cluster (risk, security and digital trust) underscores the importance of strategic leadership in maintaining cybersecurity, ensuring data integrity and balancing innovation with compliance. Finally, the yellow cluster (governance and service quality) demonstrates the relevance of ethical leadership in upholding transparency, accountability and service excellence within Islamic digital ecosystems.

Collectively, these findings reveal that although the term leadership does not explicitly appear among dominant keywords, its conceptual essence is deeply embedded across the literature on Islamic digital transformation. Leadership thus serves as a conceptual bridge connecting governance and sustainability, functioning as the driving force that ensures ethical, adaptive and value-driven digital transformation. Furthermore, the study suggests that prophetic leadership, rooted in vision, integrity and moral responsibility, offers a meaningful philosophical foundation for digital leadership within Islamic financial institutions.

Future research should broaden the analytical scope by explicitly incorporating leadership-related keywords such as leadership, digital leadership and Islamic leadership into bibliometric or empirical studies. Doing so would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how leadership functions as a driving force in Islamic digital transformation. Integrating theories of transformational, adaptive and ethical leadership with Islamic principles, such as justice, trust and social welfare, could also advance the conceptual framework for leadership studies in Islamic finance.

From a practical standpoint, leaders in Islamic financial institutions are encouraged to strengthen their digital literacy, ethical awareness and strategic foresight to navigate technological change responsibility. By cultivating leadership that is both digitally competent and morally grounded, these institutions can ensure that innovation aligns with Islamic values, safeguards data integrity and promotes inclusive, sustainable growth.

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