

A QUR'ANIC AND PROPHETIC MODEL OF POLITICAL INTEGRITY: AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK BASED ON THE QUR'AN AND SUNNAH

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Keywords:

Political Integrity, Prophetic Leadership, Qur'anic Ethics, Hadith Studies, Amanah, Justice, Accountability

ABSTRACT

Political integrity remains a major ethical challenge in contemporary Muslim societies, particularly in relation to corruption, abuse of authority, injustice, and declining public trust in leadership. Although the Qur'an and Sunnah provide comprehensive ethical guidance on governance, leadership, trust, justice, accountability, truthfulness, and moral excellence, existing studies often discuss these principles separately and illustratively rather than synthesising them into a structured model of political integrity. This study aims to develop a Qur'anic-Prophetic model of political integrity through thematic analysis of selected Qur'anic verses and authentic Hadiths related to leadership ethics and governance. Employing qualitative content analysis, the study analyses selected Qur'anic passages, authentic Hadiths from major canonical collections, and classical exegetical and Hadith commentaries. The findings identify five key principles of political integrity in Islamic governance: amānah, 'adl, mas'ūliyyah, ṣidq, and ihsān. These principles collectively frame political authority as a divinely entrusted responsibility that must be exercised with justice, accountability, transparency, truthfulness, and God-conscious moral excellence. The study contributes to applied Hadith studies and Islamic governance discourse by proposing an integrated Qur'anic-Prophetic model of political integrity relevant to contemporary discussions on ethical leadership and anti-corruption governance.

Received: March 25, 2026

Accepted: April 16, 2026

Online Published: June 30, 2026

1. Introduction

Political integrity is crucial for ethical governance and sustainable development, particularly in contemporary Muslim societies. Political integrity has become one of the most urgent ethical concerns in contemporary Muslim societies, particularly in relation to corruption, abuse of authority, injustice, and the erosion of public trust in leadership. These challenges weaken governance institutions, undermine social stability, and create a significant gap between the normative ideals of Islamic governance and the realities of political practice. Corruption, bribery, misuse of public office, and selective enforcement of justice continue to affect many Muslim-majority societies despite the strong ethical foundations provided by Islamic teachings.

Modern political theory generally defines political integrity through institutional transparency, anti-corruption mechanisms, accountability, and the rule of law (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016; Brown, 2014). While these structural approaches are important, many scholars argue that integrity cannot be sustained through institutional reforms alone. Ethical governance also requires moral leadership, spiritual

consciousness, and personal accountability among those entrusted with authority. In Islamic political thought, leadership is not merely an administrative function but a moral responsibility grounded in *amānah* (trust), *‘adl* (justice), *mas’ūliyyah* (accountability), *ṣidq* (truthfulness), and *ihsān* (moral excellence).

The Qur’an and Sunnah provide a comprehensive ethical framework for governance and leadership. Political authority is viewed as a divine trust rather than personal privilege, and leaders are accountable both to Allah and to society. Classical Muslim scholars such as al-Māwardī, Ibn Taymiyyah, and al-Ghazālī consistently emphasize justice, public welfare, trustworthiness, and moral purification as essential foundations of legitimate governance. Contemporary scholars further connect these classical principles with modern governance discourse, particularly in the areas of anti-corruption governance, public accountability, and ethical leadership.

Despite the abundance of Qur’anic verses and Prophetic traditions addressing leadership ethics, contemporary studies often employ these sources only illustratively rather than systematically. Many studies on Islamic governance prioritise political theory, institutional design, or general Qur’anic ethics, while Hadith-based analyses of political integrity remain fragmented and insufficiently synthesised. Prophetic traditions are frequently cited selectively without thematic integration capable of producing a structured model of political integrity.

Recent scholarship shows increasing efforts to address this limitation. Studies by Fauziah et al. (2025), Junaidi et al. (2025), and several other contemporary researchers have adopted thematic Hadith analysis to examine leadership, accountability, and justice in Islamic governance. However, these studies remain largely focused on specific dimensions of leadership and have not fully integrated Qur’anic foundations, Prophetic praxis, and classical exegetical insights into a coherent and comprehensive model of political integrity. The existing literature therefore still lacks a consolidated Qur’anic–Prophetic framework that systematically connects leadership ethics, governance responsibility, and anti-corruption principles.

Accordingly, this study aims to develop an integrated Qur’anic–Prophetic model of political integrity through thematic analysis of selected Qur’anic verses and authentic Hadiths related to leadership ethics and governance. The study focuses on five interrelated ethical principles repeatedly emphasised in both the Qur’an and Sunnah: *amānah*, *‘adl*, *mas’ūliyyah*, *ṣidq*, and *ihsān*. By synthesising these principles into a structured conceptual model, this research contributes to the growing field of applied Hadith studies and offers an ethical framework relevant to contemporary discussions on Islamic governance, political leadership, and anti-corruption reform.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Political Integrity and Corruption in Modern Governance

Political integrity is commonly understood as the consistent alignment between public authority, ethical responsibility, and institutional accountability. In modern political thought, integrity is closely associated with transparency, anti-corruption measures, legal accountability, and the prevention of abuse of power (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). Johnston and Brown similarly emphasise that effective governance requires independent integrity institutions capable of ensuring public trust and reducing corruption (Brown, 2014).

However, scholars such as Rose and Heywood (2013) argue that integrity extends beyond institutional mechanisms alone. Legal reforms and anti-corruption agencies may regulate behaviour externally, but sustainable political integrity requires internal moral commitment among leaders themselves. Matsiliza and Zonke (2017) further highlight that ethical governance depends not only on administrative systems but also on societal values, moral responsibility, and leadership character.

Corruption remains one of the most serious threats to political integrity. In Islamic discourse, corruption includes bribery (*risywah*), abuse of public trust, manipulation of authority, and unlawful personal gain. Syed Hussein Alatas (1995) defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for personal benefit, while Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1994) identifies bribery as one of the most dangerous forms of consuming wealth unlawfully. Bribery undermines justice, distorts decision-making, and weakens institutional legitimacy by

replacing merit and fairness with private interest. This demonstrates that political integrity must be understood not merely as administrative efficiency, but as an ethical commitment to justice and public trust.

2.2 Islamic Political Ethics and Governance

Islamic political thought provides a more comprehensive moral framework for governance by integrating legal responsibility with spiritual accountability. Leadership in Islam is not merely a political function but a form of *amānah* (trust) that must be exercised with justice, sincerity, and moral responsibility before Allah. Al-Māwardī, in *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, emphasises that rulers are trustees rather than absolute sovereigns, responsible for justice, public welfare, and social stability. Leadership legitimacy is grounded in *al-‘adl* (justice), *amānah* (trustworthiness), and *maṣlaḥah* (public welfare). Similarly, Ibn Taymiyyah views justice as the universal foundation of political authority, asserting that leadership without justice loses legitimacy regardless of formal political structure. Al-Ghazālī further strengthens this ethical model by introducing the concept of *tazkiyah al-nafs* (moral purification), arguing that personal spiritual refinement is a prerequisite for ethical governance. According to him, effective leadership begins with internal moral discipline before institutional authority. Contemporary scholars such as Mohammad Hashim Kamali and Tariq Ramadan connect these classical foundations with modern governance discourse, particularly in areas of accountability, transparency, public participation, and anti-corruption reform. These perspectives collectively demonstrate that Islamic governance is fundamentally *akhlaq*-centred, where political authority is inseparable from moral character, God-consciousness, and public responsibility.

2.3 Bribery and Corruption in Islamic Governance

Corruption remains one of the most serious threats to political integrity, particularly in contemporary governance systems where abuse of authority and private interest frequently undermine public trust. In Islamic discourse, corruption includes bribery (*risywah*), abuse of entrusted power, manipulation of public office, and unlawful personal gain. The term *risywah* originates from the Arabic word *al-rishwah*, which refers to something given in order to obtain benefit through improper influence or inducement. Al-Fayyumi (n.d.) defines it linguistically as a means used to attain personal interest, while Ibn al-Athir (n.d.) explains that it refers to something offered to secure a particular need or desired outcome through persuasion. From a juristic perspective, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Kuwait (n.d.) defines *risywah* as something given to invalidate truth or uphold falsehood. Syed Hussein Alatas (1995) further defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted authority for personal benefit. Similarly, Yusuf al-Qaradawi (1994) identifies bribery as one of the most dangerous forms of unlawful wealth consumption, particularly when money is given to rulers or officials to influence judgment, delay procedures, prioritize personal interests, or harm opponents unjustly. Bribery fundamentally destroys justice because it replaces merit and fairness with private influence and selective privilege. It weakens institutional legitimacy and transforms leadership from public service into personal exploitation. For this reason, Islamic governance treats bribery not merely as an administrative violation but as a serious moral and spiritual offense that threatens the integrity of both leadership and society.

2.4 Hadith Studies and the Gap in Political Integrity Research

Although the Qur’an establishes the normative foundations of Islamic governance, the practical operationalisation of these principles is most comprehensively demonstrated through the Prophetic Sunnah. Hadith literature provides detailed ethical guidance on leadership responsibility, justice, accountability, anti-corruption governance, and public trust. Recent studies have increasingly employed thematic Hadith analysis (*mawḍū‘ī*) to examine leadership ethics. Fauziah et al. (2025), for example, analyse leadership authority, leader selection, and moral accountability through Prophetic traditions. Junaidi et al. (2025) similarly construct a leadership framework based on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, focusing on justice, integrity, and responsibility. Other recent studies between 2023 and 2025 also demonstrate growing scholarly interest in deriving governance principles directly from Hadith literature.

Nevertheless, these studies remain largely fragmented. Most focus on individual dimensions such as justice, consultation, or accountability without integrating them into a consolidated model of political integrity. In many cases, Hadith functions only as supporting moral illustration rather than as a primary epistemological source for governance theory. Furthermore, limited studies combine Qur’anic foundations,

Prophetic praxis, and classical exegetical interpretation within one systematic analytical framework. This study addresses that gap by developing an integrated Qur'anic–Prophetic model of political integrity through thematic analysis of selected Qur'anic verses and authentic Hadiths. Rather than treating *amānah*, *'adl*, *mas'ūliyyah*, *ṣidq*, and *ihsān* separately, this study synthesises them into a structured framework capable of explaining ethical leadership, governance accountability, and anti-corruption principles in contemporary Muslim societies.

Although the Qur'an establishes the normative foundations of Islamic governance through principles such as *amānah*, *'adl*, and *mas'ūliyyah*, the practical implementation of these ethical values is most comprehensively demonstrated through the Prophetic Sunnah. Hadith literature provides concrete examples of leadership responsibility, justice, anti-corruption governance, and accountability in public administration. Existing studies often discuss Qur'anic political ethics and Prophetic leadership separately, without integrating both into a unified conceptual framework. Many works prioritize either Qur'anic normative principles or Hadith-based leadership analysis, while few studies systematically synthesize both sources into a structured model of political integrity. This fragmentation creates a significant gap in contemporary Islamic governance studies. Accordingly, this study seeks to develop an integrated Qur'anic–Prophetic model of political integrity by combining thematic analysis of selected Qur'anic verses and authentic Hadiths. This approach allows political integrity to be understood not merely as institutional governance, but as a comprehensive ethical system grounded in revelation, Prophetic praxis, and classical Islamic scholarship.

4. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative content analysis approach grounded in thematic Hadith interpretation (*al-dirāsah al-mawḍū'īyyah*) to develop an integrated Qur'anic–Prophetic model of political integrity. The research focuses on selected Qur'anic verses and authentic Prophetic traditions related to leadership ethics, governance, accountability, justice, anti-corruption, and public trust. The primary sources of the study consist of selected Qur'anic verses, authentic Hadiths from the major canonical collections particularly Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī, and Sunan Ibn Mājah as well as classical exegetical and Hadith commentaries such as *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, *Jāmi' al-Bayān* by al-Ṭabarī, and *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* by al-Nawawī. These classical works were employed to strengthen textual interpretation and ensure consistency between normative analysis and established scholarly understanding.

The selection of Hadiths was guided by three criteria. First, the Hadith must directly address ethical themes related to political leadership, including *amānah* (trust), *'adl* (justice), *mas'ūliyyah* (accountability), *ṣidq* (truthfulness), and *ihsān* (moral excellence). Second, priority was given to Hadiths classified as ṣaḥīḥ or ḥasan according to recognised Hadith scholars such as al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Hajar, and al-Albānī. Third, the selected narrations had to demonstrate relevance to contemporary governance issues such as corruption prevention, abuse of power, transparency, and leadership legitimacy.

A brief takhrīj process was conducted for each selected Hadith by identifying the original source, book chapter (kitāb), relevant section (bāb), Hadith number, and scholarly grading of authenticity. This procedure was necessary to ensure methodological rigor and to position the analysis within the discipline of applied Hadith studies rather than purely normative ethical discussion. The analytical procedure was conducted in four stages. First, key ethical concepts central to Islamic political integrity were identified through preliminary review of Qur'anic and Hadith literature. These concepts include *amānah*, *'adl*, *mas'ūliyyah*, *ṣidq*, and *ihsān*. Second, relevant Qur'anic verses and Hadith texts were extracted and grouped according to these thematic categories. Third, the selected texts were analysed using thematic content analysis by examining their ethical implications, leadership principles, and governance applications through reference to classical tafsīr and *sharḥ* literature. Finally, the recurring ethical patterns were synthesised into an integrated conceptual model of political integrity grounded in both Qur'anic foundations and Prophetic leadership practice.

This methodological approach is appropriate because Islamic political ethics is fundamentally rooted in revelatory sources rather than empirical institutional observation alone. Thematic analysis allows the study to move beyond isolated textual citation and toward systematic conceptual synthesis, thereby contributing to the growing field of applied Hadith studies and contemporary Islamic governance discourse.

5. A Qur'anic–Prophetic Model of Political Integrity

The ethical foundation of political integrity in Islam is primarily rooted in the Qur'anic worldview, where governance is framed as a moral, spiritual, and social responsibility rather than merely a political function. The Qur'an establishes a set of normative principles that guide leadership conduct, institutional justice, and public accountability. These principles are not presented as isolated ethical injunctions, but as an integrated moral framework that shapes the epistemological basis of Islamic governance. This section examines key Qur'anic concepts that underpin political integrity namely *amānah*, *'adl*, *mas'ūliyyah*, *ṣidq* and *ihsān*. Each concept is analysed through relevant Qur'anic verses and supported by classical exegetical interpretations, forming the normative foundation upon which Prophetic leadership is later elaborated.

5.1 Amanah

Amānah constitutes the foundational principle of political integrity in Islamic governance, framing leadership not as a privilege, but as a divinely mandated trust that entails moral responsibility, accountability, and ethical stewardship. Within the Qur'anic worldview, authority is not autonomous rather, it is entrusted by Allah and must be exercised in accordance with justice and moral obligation. Allah SWT states:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ ۚ ﴾

Meaning: :Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people, to judge with justice.

Surah Al-Nisa (4:58)

According to Ibn Kathīr (1999), in *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, this verse establishes a comprehensive command encompassing all forms of trust, including obligations towards Allah such as acts of worship, as well as responsibilities among human beings, particularly in matters of leadership, governance, and social dealings. The Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

أَدِّ الْأَمَانَةَ إِلَىٰ مَنْ اتَّيَمَنَكَ، وَلَا تَخُنْ مَنْ خَانَكَ

[Narrated by Abū Dāwūd in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Kitāb al-Buyū, Bāb fī al-Rajul Ya'khudhu Ḥaqqahu min Taḥti Yadihi, Hadith no. 3534; also reported by al-Tirmidhī in *Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī*, Hadith no. 1264. Al-Tirmidhī classified the narration as ḥasan, while al-Albānī graded it ṣaḥīḥ].

Meaning: Render the trust to the one who entrusted you, and do not betray the one who betrays you.

This phrase emphasizes that trust must be upheld regardless of the behaviour of others, thereby establishing *amānah* as an absolute ethical obligation rather than a reciprocal social norm. From an analytical perspective, *amānah* operates on multiple interconnected levels within Islamic political ethics. First, it defines leadership as a sacred mandate (*taklīf*) rather than a source of personal authority, thereby rejecting power-centric models of governance. Second, it establishes a framework of dual accountability, where leaders are answerable both to Allah (vertical accountability) and to society (horizontal accountability). Third, it necessitates the alignment of authority with competence (*ahliyyah*), indicating that the misplacement of authority constitutes a breach of trust and a source of systemic corruption.

This multi-layered understanding of *amānah* is supported by contemporary scholarship, which consistently identifies trustworthiness as a prerequisite for legitimate leadership. Sidqy et al. (2025), for instance, describe *amānah* as an absolute condition for leadership eligibility, while Syarif et al. (2024)

position it as a central principle in preventing corruption within governance systems. Similarly, Chanifah et al. (2024) highlight *amānah* as a defining characteristic of Prophetic leadership, reflecting integrity, responsibility, and moral consistency.

The Qur'an also explicitly warns against the violation of trust, as stated in Surah al-Anfāl (8:27), which prohibits betrayal of Allah, His Messenger, and entrusted responsibilities. This prohibition indicates that the erosion of *amānah* is not merely an ethical lapse, but a foundational disruption of social and political order. In this regard, *amānah* serves as the epistemological basis of political integrity: when trust is preserved, governance retains its legitimacy; when it is violated, both moral authority and institutional credibility collapse.

5.2 Adl'

'Adl (justice) represents the operational core of political integrity in Islamic governance, functioning as the mechanism through which moral responsibility is translated into concrete governance practices. While *amānah* establishes the ethical foundation of leadership, '*adl* ensures its manifestation through fair judgment, impartial decision-making, and the protection of rights. In this sense, justice in Islam is not merely a legal construct, but a comprehensive moral principle that governs both individual conduct and institutional order. Allah SWT states:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَنِ وَإِيتَايَ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۚ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ٩٠ ﴾

Meaning: :Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving to relatives, and forbids immorality, wrongdoing, and oppression.

Surah Al-Nahl (16:90)

According to Ibn Kathīr (1999), in *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, this verse constitutes one of the most comprehensive ethical directives in the Qur'an, encapsulating the essence of moral order by commanding fairness ('*adl*) and encouraging benevolence (*ihsān*) while prohibiting injustice and transgression. The command of '*adl* here is not restricted to judicial settings, but extends to all forms of interaction, including governance, leadership, and social relations.

Analytically, '*adl* in Islamic political ethics operates across several interrelated dimensions. First, it establishes legal impartiality, requiring that laws be applied consistently without discrimination based on status, lineage, or power. Second, it embodies substantive justice, ensuring that rights are protected and obligations are fulfilled, particularly for vulnerable groups within society. Third, it reflects a transcendental moral standard, where justice is anchored not merely in human consensus or legal systems, but in divine command, thereby transcending relativistic interpretations of fairness.

This multidimensional conception of justice is supported by contemporary scholarship. Keri et al. (2022) define Islamic justice as impartial and rights-based, emphasizing equitable treatment and the fulfillment of individual entitlements. Similarly, Khan et al. (2023) highlight the necessity of fair and independent adjudication as a core component of justice, while Hussein et al. (2024) and Hasan et al. (2025) underscore its role in protecting vulnerable and minority groups within pluralistic societies. These perspectives collectively affirm that '*adl* is both a legal and moral imperative, integrating procedural fairness with social equity.

However, unlike secular legal frameworks that often confine justice to institutional mechanisms, the Qur'anic conception of '*adl* embeds justice within the moral character of the leader. As noted by Mukhlishin et al. (2020), '*adl* extends beyond positive law, requiring an internalized ethical consciousness that guides decision-making even in the absence of external enforcement. This indicates that justice in Islamic

governance is not sustained solely by institutional structures, but by the ethical integrity of those entrusted with authority.

Accordingly, *'adl* serves as the structural expression of political integrity. While *amānah* defines leadership as a trust, *'adl* operationalizes that trust through equitable governance. The absence of justice not only undermines public trust, but also erodes the legitimacy of political authority, leading to systemic imbalance and social instability. In this regard, *'adl* functions as both a moral obligation and a governance mechanism, ensuring that political integrity is realized in practice rather than remaining an abstract ethical ideal.

5.3 Mas'uliyah

Mas'uliyah (accountability) represents the regulatory dimension of political integrity in Islamic governance, ensuring that the exercise of authority remains subject to continuous moral and social evaluation. While *amānah* defines leadership as a trust and *'adl* operationalizes it through justice, *mas'uliyah* functions as the mechanism that holds leadership accountable for the fulfillment of that trust. In this sense, accountability is not an external constraint imposed upon leadership, but an intrinsic ethical obligation embedded within the Islamic conception of authority. The principle of *mas'uliyah* is explicitly articulated in the Prophetic tradition:

كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، فَالْإِمَامُ رَاعٍ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ فِي أَهْلِهِ
 وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ فِي بَيْتِ رَوْحِهَا وَمَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهَا، وَالْخَادِمُ رَاعٍ فِي مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ
 وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، أَلَا فِكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ.

In his commentary on this hadith, Al-Nawawī (1972), in *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, explains that formulates a general legal maxim: authority is inseparable from responsibility, and the scope of accountability corresponds directly to the extent of one's authority. This establishes a fundamental principle in Islamic governance whereby no position of power exists without a corresponding obligation of answerability.

Analytically, *mas'uliyah* in Islamic political ethics operates through a dual accountability framework. First, it encompasses vertical accountability (*ḥabl min Allāh*), where leaders are answerable to Allah as the ultimate source of authority. This dimension introduces a transcendental form of accountability that persists beyond institutional oversight, ensuring ethical conduct even in situations where external monitoring is absent. Second, it involves horizontal accountability (*ḥabl min al-nās*), whereby leaders are responsible to the community for their decisions, actions, and the consequences of governance.

This dual structure distinguishes Islamic accountability from secular governance models that primarily rely on institutional checks and balances. In Islamic thought, accountability is simultaneously spiritual, moral, and institutional, integrating internal self-regulation with external social responsibility. Contemporary studies reinforce this multidimensional understanding. Salman et al. (2022) conceptualize accountability as a relationship that binds individuals to both divine and societal expectations, while Kusumaningtias et al. (2021) empirically demonstrate that accountability encompasses responsiveness, responsibility, appropriateness, and effectiveness within organizational contexts. Similarly, Hatta et al. (2023) emphasize that accountability must be understood as an act of worship (*'ibādah*), rather than merely a procedural requirement.

From a governance perspective, *mas'uliyah* serves as a critical safeguard against the abuse of power. By linking authority with answerability, it prevents the concentration of unchecked power and promotes transparency in decision-making. Moreover, it reinforces the moral dimension of leadership by ensuring that political actions are continuously evaluated against ethical and spiritual standards. Importantly, *mas'uliyah* also introduces the concept of continuous accountability, where leaders are not only judged based on outcomes, but also on intentions, processes, and adherence to ethical principles. This holistic

approach extends accountability beyond legal compliance to include moral integrity and sincerity, thereby strengthening the overall framework of political integrity.

Accordingly, *mas'ūliyyah* functions as the regulatory pillar of Islamic political ethics. While *amānah* establishes trust and *'adl* ensures justice, *mas'ūliyyah* guarantees that both are consistently upheld through mechanisms of answerability. Without accountability, trust becomes symbolic and justice becomes selective; with it, governance is sustained within a system of ethical responsibility that is both internally grounded and externally enforced.

5.4 Sidq

Ṣidq (truthfulness) constitutes the ethical core of transparency and integrity in Islamic governance, ensuring that political authority is exercised with honesty, consistency, and moral credibility. While *amānah* establishes leadership as a trust, *'adl* operationalizes it through justice, and *mas'ūliyyah* regulates it through accountability, *ṣidq* safeguards the integrity of governance by anchoring it in truth. In this regard, truthfulness functions as a protective mechanism against deception, manipulation, and corruption within political and institutional processes. Allah SWT states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

Meaning: O you who believe, fear Allah and be with the truthful.”

The imperative form “*كُونُوا*” (be) signifies a binding ethical obligation, indicating that truthfulness is not merely recommended but required as a defining characteristic of believers. According to Ibn Kathīr (1999), in *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, this verse was revealed in connection with the incident of Ka'b ibn Mālīk, demonstrating that adherence to truth even under difficult circumstances leads to moral redemption and divine acceptance. Thus, *ṣidq* encompasses not only truthful speech, but also sincerity of intention, consistency of action, and fidelity to moral commitments.

From an analytical perspective, *ṣidq* operates across several critical dimensions within Islamic political ethics. First, it establishes epistemic integrity, ensuring that information conveyed by leaders is accurate, reliable, and free from manipulation. Second, it promotes institutional transparency, whereby governance processes are conducted openly and truthfully, enabling public scrutiny and trust. Third, it reinforces moral consistency, requiring alignment between words, actions, and intentions, thereby preventing hypocrisy (*nifāq*) within leadership.

This multidimensional understanding of truthfulness is supported by contemporary scholarship. Rusyidi et al. (2023) identify honesty as a foundational element of effective governance, while Salin et al. (2023) emphasize *ṣidq* as a core prophetic trait essential for maintaining organizational integrity. Similarly, Chanifah et al. (2024) highlight the role of truthfulness in preventing corruption, particularly through fostering transparency and ethical decision-making. However, existing studies remain largely conceptual, with limited empirical measurement of the direct impact of truthfulness on governance outcomes such as institutional performance and public trust.

Importantly, the Qur'anic conception of *ṣidq* transcends procedural transparency by embedding truthfulness within *taqwā* (God-consciousness). This indicates that truth is not merely a communicative standard, but a moral and spiritual commitment that governs both public and private conduct. As such, *ṣidq* functions as an internal ethical regulator, ensuring that leaders uphold integrity even in contexts where deception may yield short-term advantage.

From a governance perspective, *ṣidq* plays a critical role in sustaining public trust and institutional legitimacy. The absence of truthfulness leads to misinformation, erosion of credibility, and eventual breakdown of governance systems. Conversely, the presence of *ṣidq* fosters trust, enhances accountability, and strengthens the moral contract between leadership and society.

Accordingly, *ṣidq* serves as the ethical safeguard of political integrity. While *amānah* defines trust, *‘adl* ensures fairness, and *mas’ūliyyah* enforces accountability, *ṣidq* guarantees that all these principles are upheld through truthfulness and transparency. Without truth, accountability becomes performative, justice becomes distorted, and trust loses its substance. Therefore, *ṣidq* is indispensable in ensuring that political integrity is both authentic and sustainable.

5.5 *Ihsān*

Ihsān represents the highest ethical and spiritual dimension of political integrity in Islamic governance, elevating leadership beyond procedural compliance and institutional accountability toward a state of moral and spiritual excellence. While *amānah*, *‘adl*, *mas’ūliyyah*, and *ṣidq* collectively establish the structural and ethical framework of governance, *ihsān* transforms this framework into a value-driven system grounded in God-consciousness (*taqwā*) and internal moral excellence. The concept of *ihsān* is most clearly articulated in the well-known Hadith of Jibrīl:

فَقَالَ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ، أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِحْسَانِ
 قَالَ: أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

Meaning: *Ihsān* is to worship Allah as though you see Him; and if you do not see Him, know that He sees you.

This hadith defines *ihsān* as a state of heightened spiritual awareness in which actions are performed with sincerity, excellence, and constant consciousness of divine observation. Within the context of governance, this implies that leadership is not merely evaluated based on outward performance, but on the internal moral state that drives decision-making.

Analytically, *ihsān* introduces a transcendental dimension of governance, operating beyond the structural mechanisms established by the preceding principles. First, it establishes internal moral regulation, whereby leaders act ethically not due to external enforcement, but due to an intrinsic awareness of accountability before Allah. Second, it promotes excellence in conduct, encouraging leaders to go beyond minimum ethical standards and strive for the highest level of moral performance. Third, it cultivates spiritual integrity, aligning political actions with sincerity (*ikhhlās*) and God-consciousness, thereby preventing ethical complacency.

Contemporary scholarship reinforces this understanding of *ihsān* as a framework of moral excellence. Supriyanto et al. (2016) and Nasir et al. (2025) define *ihsān* as the commitment to performing actions with the highest level of quality and ethical awareness, while Maidugu et al. (2024) conceptualize it as an aspirational orientation toward ethical perfection. Within leadership studies, *ihsān* is often positioned as an extension of *amānah*, functioning as a motivational force that drives leaders to uphold integrity even in the absence of external monitoring (Nasir et al., 2025).

From a governance perspective, *ihsān* serves as the culminating principle of political integrity, ensuring that ethical governance is sustained not only through systems and regulations, but through the internal transformation of the leader. Without *ihsān*, governance risks becoming procedural and compliance-driven; with it, governance becomes value-driven, ethically consistent, and spiritually grounded.

Accordingly, *ihsān* completes the Qur’anic framework of political integrity by integrating structural ethics with spiritual consciousness. While *amānah* establishes trust, *‘adl* ensures justice, *mas’ūliyyah* enforces accountability, and *ṣidq* safeguards truth, *ihsān* elevates all these principles into a unified system of moral excellence. It is through this integration that political integrity in Islam transcends administrative efficiency and becomes a form of ethical and spiritual responsibility before Allah SWT.

6. Prophetic Leadership as the Ethical Exemplar

While the Qur'anic framework establishes the foundational principles of political integrity through the concepts of *amānah*, *'adl*, *mas'ūliyyah*, *ṣidq*, and *ihsān*, these principles require further elaboration in their practical and applied dimensions. The Qur'an provides the normative and conceptual basis of ethical governance; however, its operationalization is most comprehensively demonstrated through the Prophetic Sunnah.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ embodies these principles in lived practice, translating abstract ethical injunctions into concrete models of leadership, governance, and institutional conduct. Accordingly, the following section examines Prophetic leadership as the ethical exemplar of political integrity, focusing on how these Qur'anic values are actualized within real governance contexts.

Figure 1 illustrates Prophetic leadership as the ethical exemplar of political integrity. The model positions the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as the central ethical core, surrounded by four interrelated domains: leadership as service, anti-corruption governance, justice without bias and institutional ethics. Together, these dimensions demonstrate that political integrity in Islam is not merely personal virtue, but a comprehensive moral system embedded within leadership conduct, governance practices, legal justice, and institutional culture.



6.1 Leadership as Service Rather Than Privilege

سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " مَنْ وَلَّاهُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ شَيْئًا مِنْ أَمْرِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَاحْتَجَبَ دُونَ حَاجَتِهِمْ وَخَلَّتْهُمْ وَفَقَّرَهُمْ احْتَجَبَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ دُونَ حَاجَتِهِ وَخَلَّتْهُ وَفَقَّرَهُ " . قَالَ فَجَعَلَ رَجُلًا عَلَى حَوَائِجِ النَّاسِ .

[Imam Abi Daud, Sunan Abi Daud, Kitāb al-Kharāj wa al-Imārah wa al-Fay', Bāb fīmā yalzamu al-imāma min amri al-ra'iyyah wa al-ḥajabah 'anhu, No hadis 2948, Sahih (al-Albani)]

Meaning: I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say: If Allah puts anyone in the position of authority over the affairs of the Muslims, and he secludes himself (from them), not fulfilling their needs, wants, and poverty, Allah will keep Himself away from him, not fulfilling his need, want and poverty. He said: He (Mu'awiyah) appointed a man to fulfil the needs of the people.

The Imam of the Muslims is the one who oversees the interests of the Muslims. This position is a role of responsibility, which entails many rights for the subjects, and the Imam is accountable for his community. He must attend to the needs of the people and not withhold himself from anyone who comes to him with a need, especially the poor and those with urgent matters. A severe warning has been conveyed regarding the Imam who isolates himself from the Muslims.

In this hadith, Abū Maryam al-Azdī (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that he entered upon Mu‘āwiyah (may Allah be pleased with him) while Mu‘āwiyah was serving as ruler. Mu‘āwiyah welcomed him warmly using a common Arabic expression of hospitality and honour. Abū Maryam then informed him of a Prophetic tradition concerning leadership responsibility, in which the Prophet ﷺ warned that any ruler who neglects the needs of the people, especially the poor and vulnerable, risks divine withholding of assistance and mercy.

According to al-‘Azīm Ābādī (1995) in *‘Awn al-Ma‘būd Sharḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, this Hadith establishes that public leadership is fundamentally a form of responsibility rather than privilege, and rulers are obligated to remain accessible to their subjects and attentive to their welfare. Similarly, al-Munāwī (2001) explains that leadership isolation from public needs represents a serious moral failure because authority in Islam is rooted in service (khidmah) and accountability (mas’ūliyyah), not personal status or political distance. After hearing this Hadith, Mu‘āwiyah reportedly appointed a specific officer to manage public complaints and needs, reflecting the practical implementation of Prophetic governance principles in early Islamic administration.

Prophetic leadership, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, is fundamentally grounded in the ethic of service rather than privilege or domination. The Prophet consistently rejected ostentation, authoritarianism, and hierarchical distance from the community. Instead, he embodied humility, empathy, and moral proximity, positioning leadership as a form of responsibility (*amānah*) rather than entitlement. His leadership style emphasized *leading by example*, where ethical conduct preceded instruction, thereby establishing moral credibility as the foundation of authority. This service-oriented model reframes leadership as an obligation to uplift others, not a mechanism for personal status or power accumulation.

The research question is strongly supported by multiple independent studies that examine Prophetic leadership through servant-leadership, character-centered leadership, and Islamic ethical frameworks. The evidence base is both substantial and conceptually consistent. Seven scholarly studies directly affirm the core propositions advanced in this research. Fauziah et al. (2025) explicitly conceptualize leadership as *amānah* (trust), grounded in responsibility and service to the public. Similarly, Gonaim et al. (2016), Kamaluddin et al. (2023), and Santoso et al. (2024) corroborate the servant-leadership orientation of Prophetic leadership, emphasizing the prioritization of communal needs over personal status or authority. Beekun et al. (2012) further establish character-centered moral leadership as the primary source of legitimate authority, while Mirela et al. (2021) identify *amānah* (trustworthiness) and *ṣidq* (truthfulness) as defining attributes of Prophetic leadership. Complementing these findings, Hakim et al. (2024) highlight ethical conduct, justice, and compassion as foundational principles underpinning Prophetic governance. Notwithstanding this strong conceptual convergence, the available evidence remains largely qualitative and literature-based rather than empirically quantified. The reviewed studies do not provide direct measurement of constructs such as hierarchical distance or ostentatious leadership behavior, nor do they offer experimental or statistical validation of these dimensions. Nevertheless, the consistency of findings across diverse theoretical lenses lends robust support to the normative claim that Prophetic leadership is fundamentally service-oriented, morally grounded, and ethically constrained.

6.2 Anti-Corruption Governance

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الرَّاشِي وَالْمُرْتَشِي "

Meaning: It was narrated from 'Abdullah bin 'Amr that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:
 "The curse of Allah is upon the one who offers a bribe and the one who takes it."

[Imam Ibn Majah, Sunan Ibn Majah, Kitāb al-Aḥkām, Bāb al-Taghlīz fī al-Ḥayf wa al-Rishwah (no. 2313), graded ḥasan]

'Abdullah bin 'Amr reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

The Messenger of Allah cursed the one who gives a bribe and the one who takes a bribe in judgment.

The phrase “cursed” means that the Prophet ﷺ invoked that such people be expelled from the mercy of Allah, which indicates that bribery is considered among the major sins (kabā'ir). Another narration also includes al-rā'ish, which refers to the intermediary who acts as a mediator between the giver and the receiver of the bribe. This prohibition is general and indicates the severe condemnation of bribery in Islam. However, some scholars stated that the curse does not apply to someone who gives a bribe in order to obtain a legitimate right that has been unjustly withheld from him, if he is compelled to do so. In such a case, the sin remains upon the person who accepts the bribe because he takes something to which he has no right (Al-Shawkani, n.d.). The hadith therefore contains a strong warning against both giving and receiving bribes (Al-Shawkani, n.d.; Al-Tirmidhi, n.d.).

A central pillar of Prophetic governance was the uncompromising rejection of corruption in all its forms. The Prophet ﷺ enforced strict ethical boundaries in public administration, including the explicit rejection of bribes, the punishment of misuse of public resources, and the prohibition of conflating private interests with public office. Public authority was treated as a sacred trust, and any violation of this trust was regarded as a serious moral and legal offense. These principles established an early framework of integrity-based governance, where accountability and transparency were inseparable from leadership legitimacy. The reviewed sources provide substantial conceptual support for Prophetic anti-corruption governance principles, with emerging empirical validation in contemporary contexts. A broad range of scholarship affirms that Islamic governance is fundamentally anchored in the rejection of corruption and the promotion of integrity-based leadership. Azram et al. (2012) document the Prophet Muhammad's establishment of a just socio-moral order through institutional reforms and ethical governance practices. Similarly, Batchelor et al. (2014) identify accountability, trustworthiness (*amānah*), and transparency as core governance principles derived from Qur'anic injunctions and Prophetic precedent.

Empirical support for these principles is provided by Albab et al. (2025), who conducted a mixed-methods study involving 378 public officials across five Muslim-majority countries. Their findings reveal a strong and statistically significant negative correlation between knowledge of Islamic ethical principles and tolerance toward corruption ($r = -0.63$, $p < 0.001$). The study further identifies three key dimensions which is *amānah* (trustworthiness), *adālah* (justice), and transparency which together explain 68% of the variance in administrative integrity scores. These results suggest that Prophetic ethical principles possess measurable relevance for contemporary governance outcomes. Nevertheless, the literature consistently highlights a critical implementation gap. Syarif et al. (2024) observe that corruption remains prevalent in many Muslim-majority contexts largely due to the disconnection between professed religious values and actual administrative practice. Accordingly, while the theoretical and historical foundations of Prophetic anti-corruption governance are well established across more than seven scholarly sources, their effective operationalization within modern governance systems remains limited and uneven.

6.3 Justice Without Bias

الْقُضَاةُ ثَلَاثَةٌ وَاحِدٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَاثْنَانِ فِي النَّارِ فَأَمَّا الَّذِي فِي الْجَنَّةِ فَرَجُلٌ عَرَفَ الْحَقَّ فَقَضَى بِهِ
 وَرَجُلٌ عَرَفَ الْحَقَّ فَجَارَ فِي الْحُكْمِ فَهُوَ فِي النَّارِ وَرَجُلٌ قَضَى لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى جَهْلٍ فَهُوَ فِي النَّارِ

[Imam Abi Dawud, Sunan Abi Dawud, Kitāb al-Aqdiyyah, Bāb fī al-Qāḍī Yukhta'i, (no. 3573), Sahih (Imam al-Albani) graded ṣaḥīḥ]

Meaning: Narrated Buraydah ibn al-Hasib: The Prophet (ﷺ) said: *Judges are of three types, one of whom will go to Paradise and two to Hell. The one who will go to Paradise is a man who knows what is right and gives judgment accordingly; but a man who knows what is right and acts tyrannically in his judgment will go to Hell; and a man who gives judgment for people when he is ignorant will go to Hell.*

Judgment among people should be based on knowledge, and only scholars who are well-versed in the rules and principles of judgment should assume the role of a judge. The Prophet ﷺ warned against judging without knowledge or according to personal desire (hawā), while emphasizing the virtue of judging with justice based on knowledge.

In this hadith, narrated by Ibn Buraydah from his father, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ states that judges are of three categories: one who will enter Paradise and two who will enter Hell. The first is a judge who possesses knowledge of the truth and judges accordingly; the second is one who knows the truth but deliberately acts unjustly; and the third is one who judges people without sufficient knowledge.

According to al-‘Azīm Ābādī (1995) in *‘Awn al-Ma‘būd Sharh Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, this Hadith establishes that judicial authority in Islam is inseparable from knowledge (‘ilm) and justice (‘adl). A person who assumes judicial responsibility without proper legal knowledge commits a serious ethical violation because judgment directly affects people’s rights, dignity, and social order.

Similarly, al-Mubārakfūrī (2001) explains that the second category refers to those who knowingly distort justice due to personal interest, bias, or political pressure, while the judge who enters Paradise is the one who combines knowledge with fairness and sincere implementation of divine law. This demonstrates that justice in Islamic governance is not merely procedural legality, but moral responsibility grounded in competence and ethical integrity.

The hadith therefore emphasizes that leadership and judicial authority must be exercised through qualified knowledge, impartiality, and accountability, rather than personal desire or social influence. Abu Hashim al-Rumani clarified that without this hadith, one might assume that a judge who exerts effort (ijtihad) might enter Paradise even without knowledge, if he reaches a correct ruling. However, entry into Paradise applies only to those who are knowledgeable in the principles of rulings and judiciary and strive to reach the correct judgment.

In the Ṣaḥīḥayn (al-Bukhari and Muslim), from ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ, it is narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: “If a ruler judges and exerts effort, and he is correct, he will receive two rewards; if he judges and exerts effort, but errs, he will still receive one reward.”

This demonstrates that the judge must first be qualified by knowledge, and that exertion in seeking the truth is rewarded. The hadith also highlights the seriousness of judging without knowledge, whose outcome may lead to the Fire, and that only a judge knowledgeable in judicial rulings should adjudicate, with great reward for doing so correctly.

The Prophet’s commitment to justice was absolute and non-negotiable, transcending social status, tribal affiliation, or lineage. This principle is most clearly illustrated in the incident involving a woman from the noble Banū Makhzūm clan who committed theft. Despite attempts by influential figures to seek leniency on the basis of her social standing, the Prophet ﷺ firmly insisted that legal accountability must be applied equally to all members of society. He famously declared that even if his own daughter were to commit the same offense, the law would be enforced upon her. This episode established the foundational principle that justice in Islam is impartial and indivisible, serving as a decisive rejection of elitism and selective enforcement of law. The reviewed sources strongly support the normative principle that Islamic justice transcends social status and unequivocally rejects elitism, although they do not specifically substantiate the Banū Makhzūm theft incident referenced in the research narrative.

Across the literature, there is consistent affirmation of impartial justice as a foundational tenet of Islamic governance. Abdul Quddus et al. (2024) explicitly assert that Islam prohibits bias or discrimination based on religion, caste, lineage, fear, or personal attachment. Similarly, Açikel et al. (2019) emphasize that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ did not permit exemptions or concessions in the application of law, thereby institutionalizing justice as a universal and non-negotiable principle. Al-Khatib et al. (2023) further reinforce this position by arguing that discrimination is a human construct, whereas divine justice provides the normative benchmark for equitable social and legal systems. However, the sources reviewed do not document the specific historical episode involving the Banū Makhzūm woman who committed theft, nor the associated anecdote concerning the Prophet's daughter. As such, while the principle of impartial justice is robustly supported across multiple independent studies, the particular illustrative incident cannot be verified or critically evaluated based on the available materials. The evidence therefore substantiates the validity of the ethical principle itself, but not the empirical or historiographical accuracy of the specific example cited.

6.4 Institutional Ethics in the Prophetic State

أَلَا كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ، وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، فَالْإِمَامُ الَّذِي عَلَى النَّاسِ رَاعٍ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَوَلَدِهِ وَهِيَ مَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْهُمْ، وَعَبْدُ الرَّجُلِ رَاعٍ عَلَى مَالِ سَيِّدِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُ، أَلَا فَكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

[Imam al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitāb al-Aḥkām, Bāb Qawl Allāh Ta‘ālā: {Aṭī‘u Allāh wa Aṭī‘u al-Rasūl wa Ulī al-Amr minkum} (no. 7138), ṣaḥīḥ]

Meaning: Everyone of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges: The Imam (ruler) of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects; a man is the guardian of his family (household) and is responsible for his subjects; a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and of his children and is responsible for them; and the slave of a man is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it. Surely, everyone of you is a guardian and responsible for his charges."

In Islam, every individual is entrusted with responsibilities according to their capacity, as Allah does not burden a soul beyond what it can bear. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized that no one should assume a duty for which they are unqualified; however, once responsibility is assigned, its fulfillment becomes both a moral and religious obligation. This principle is clearly reflected in the well-known Hadith:

"Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock."

[Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Aḥkām, Hadith no. 7138, and by Muslim in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Kitāb al-Imārah, Hadith no. 1829. The narration is classified as ṣaḥīḥ and is regarded as muttafaqun ‘alayh.]

According to al-Nawawī (1972) in *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, this Hadith establishes a universal principle of accountability in Islam, where every position of authority is inseparable from responsibility and answerability before Allah. Leadership is therefore not a privilege, but an ethical trust that requires justice, competence, and sincere service. Similarly, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (1997) in *Fath al-Bārī* explains that the concept of *al-rā‘ī* refers to one who is entrusted with the care, supervision, and welfare of others, while *al-ri‘āyah* signifies the

protection, management, and fulfillment of those entrusted responsibilities. This indicates that authority in Islam is fundamentally service-oriented and grounded in moral stewardship rather than domination or status. Thus, political leadership in Islam requires both competence and accountability, where rulers are judged not only by their authority, but by how faithfully they protect the rights and welfare of those under their care.

The Prophet ﷺ elaborated that rulers are shepherds over their subjects, responsible for protecting their adherence to Shariah, safeguarding their rights, and defending them from injustice. Likewise, a man is a shepherd over his family, ensuring their maintenance, welfare, and proper upbringing; a woman is a shepherd in her household, managing domestic affairs and raising children responsibly; a servant or worker is accountable for the wealth and tasks entrusted to him; and a son overseeing his father's property bears responsibility for its proper management. The Prophet ﷺ first stated this general principle and then specified it according to roles, ultimately reaffirming that ethical stewardship and accountability apply universally. Proper fulfillment of these duties leads to reward, while neglect incurs accountability, highlighting the comprehensive system of institutional and personal ethics established in the Prophetic State (Al-Bukhari & Muslim, n.d.; Al-Tirmidhi, n.d.).

Beyond individual leadership conduct, the Prophetic model institutionalized ethics within the governance structure of the early Islamic state. Decision-making was guided by *shūrā* (consultation), reinforcing participatory governance and collective responsibility. Financial transparency was strictly maintained to prevent abuse of public funds, while the rights and protection of non-Muslim citizens were formally upheld, reflecting the inclusive moral framework of Islamic governance. Above all, public trust (*amānah* 'ammah) was treated as sacred, with leadership accountability extending beyond legal compliance to moral and spiritual responsibility before God. These institutional ethics demonstrate that Prophetic leadership was not merely personal virtue-based but structurally embedded within governance mechanisms.

The reviewed sources provide strong conceptual and theoretical support for the existence of institutional ethics in the Prophetic state, although the evidence base remains predominantly analytical rather than empirical. Multiple studies consistently affirm the core ethical principles underpinning Prophetic governance. Fauziah et al. (2025) conceptualize leadership in Islam as both a religious and rational imperative, framing it as an *amānah* (trust) in which every individual is accountable for those under their care. Ruhullah et al. (2024) further demonstrate that *shūrā* (consultation) and *amānah* are critical mechanisms for sustaining public trust, inclusivity, and ethical accountability, with *shūrā* functioning as a key driver of participatory governance. Abbas et al. (2025) document how the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ institutionalized justice and moral-economic governance through the Charter of Medina, describing it as one of the earliest constitutional models of pluralistic and ethically grounded governance.

Nevertheless, the existing evidence is largely derived from conceptual and historiographical analyses grounded in classical Islamic texts, rather than from empirical studies employing quantified institutional outcomes. Although Luhuringbudi et al. (2025) examine the caliphate of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb as a historical case study, the institutional mechanisms discussed remain primarily descriptive and lack systematic measurement or comparative evaluation. Accordingly, while the normative and structural foundations of institutional ethics in the Prophetic state are well established in the literature, further empirical research is required to operationalize and assess these principles within contemporary governance contexts.

7. Findings

The thematic analysis of selected Qur'anic verses and authentic Prophetic traditions reveals a coherent Qur'anic–Prophetic Model of Political Integrity structured around five interrelated and mutually reinforcing ethical pillars: *amānah* (trust), *ʿadl* (justice), *mas'ūliyyah* (accountability), *ṣidq* (truthfulness), and *iḥsān* (moral excellence). Together, these five principles constitute a normative framework for ethical governance grounded in Islamic epistemology. Figure 1 illustrates this integrated model of political integrity based on the Qur'an and Sunnah.

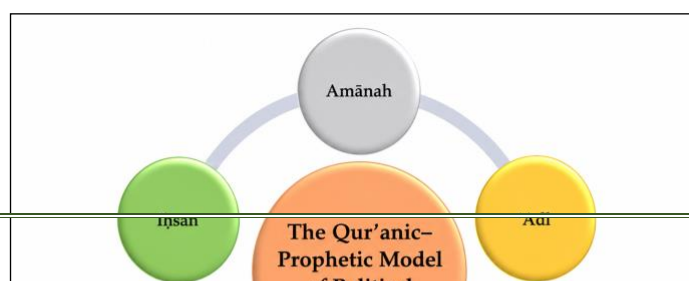


Figure 1: The Qur'anic–Prophetic Model of Political Integrity

Pillar 1: *Amānah*

Amānah emerges as the foundational pillar of Islamic leadership and governance. Political authority is conceptualized not as a personal entitlement, but as a sacred trust conferred by Allah and the community. The analysis indicates that without *amānah*, governance loses its moral legitimacy and institutional credibility, leading to systemic failure and abuse of power. All other ethical obligations in leadership presuppose the existence of trustworthiness; when *amānah* is compromised, governance collapses both ethically and functionally.

Pillar 2: *‘Adl*

‘Adl operationalizes the moral responsibilities embedded in leadership. It functions as the mechanism through which trust is translated into fair governance, impartial decision-making, and protection of rights. The findings demonstrate that *‘adl* requires leaders to transcend personal interest, social status, and political pressure, ensuring equality before the law and safeguarding vulnerable populations. Justice thus serves as the structural expression of ethical leadership within the political sphere.

Pillar 3: *Ṣidq*

Ṣidq represents the ethical commitment to truthfulness, transparency, and integrity in governance. The analysis shows that truth functions as a safeguard against deception, corruption, and moral decay within political institutions. Leaders who embody *ṣidq* maintain credibility, foster public confidence, and prevent the erosion of institutional trust. Transparency, as an extension of truthfulness, ensures accountability and reinforces the moral contract between leaders and society.

Pillar 4: *Ihsān*

The fourth pillar, *ihsān*, elevates political integrity beyond procedural compliance to moral and spiritual excellence. Rooted in God-consciousness (*taqwā*), *ihsān* motivates leaders to act ethically even in the absence of external enforcement. The findings indicate that *ihsān* transforms governance from rule-based administration into value-driven leadership, where ethical conduct is pursued not merely to satisfy legal requirements, but as an act of worship and moral responsibility before Allah.

Pillar 5: *Mas’ūliyyah*

Mas’ūliyyah functions as the regulatory mechanism of political integrity by linking authority with continuous accountability before both Allah and society. It prevents the concentration of unchecked power and ensures that leadership remains transparent, answerable, and ethically disciplined.

8. Discussion

Islamic political integrity is fundamentally grounded in the inner moral character of leaders rather than in institutional structures alone, a position consistently supported across the literature on Islamic governance. The existing evidence base is predominantly conceptual and literature-driven rather than empirically extensive. Iqbal et al. (2002) explicitly contrast Islamic and Western governance paradigms, arguing that Islamic political ethics emphasize internal moral renovation and character formation rooted in transcendent accountability, whereas Western models tend to prioritize external institutional checks and constraints. Similarly, Naqvi et al. (2011) observe that Islamic governance frameworks place significant weight on the leader's personal character, moral authority, and leadership capacity, often assigning greater importance to these qualities than to institutional infrastructure marking a key divergence from conventional governance theory. This perspective is further reinforced by et al. (2025), who characterize Islamic political ethics as fundamentally *akhlāq*-centric, and by studies such as Karimullah et al. (2023) and Chanifah et al. (2024), which demonstrate the central role of character education in cultivating ethical leadership. Nonetheless, these contributions remain limited in terms of empirical scope, as they do not report quantified effect sizes or rely on large-scale datasets. Taken together, the literature reflects a strong normative and theoretical consensus regarding the primacy of moral character in Islamic political integrity, while also revealing a clear need for future empirical research to operationalize and measure these claims systematically.

The reviewed sources provide substantial support for the conception of governance as *'ibādah*, with multiple studies affirming that Islamic political thought frames leadership as a spiritual and moral undertaking grounded in accountability to Allah SWT. The evidence is consistent across recent scholarship. Wulan et al. (2025) affirm that, within Islam, politics is understood as a form of worship that must be exercised in accordance with the principles of *tawhīd*, *'adl*, *shūrā*, and social responsibility. Similarly, Yusof et al. (2024) explicitly argue that effective moral governance necessitates leadership rooted in *'ibādah*, alongside complementary virtues such as *taqwā* and *tawakkul*. The dimension of accountability is further reinforced by Mira Fauziah et al. (2025), who conceptualize leadership as an *amānah* in which every individual is answerable for those under their care. Abdallah et al. (2019) likewise emphasize accountability as a central pillar of Islamic leadership, underscoring that leaders bear moral and spiritual responsibility for their subjects beyond mere administrative performance. Nevertheless, the literature remains predominantly theoretical and normative in orientation. While these studies offer a coherent ethical and theological framework for understanding governance as *'ibādah*, they provide limited empirical evidence on how such internal moral regulation operates in practice across diverse political and institutional contexts. This highlights an important avenue for future research to examine how spiritual accountability translates into observable governance outcomes.

Qur'anic ethical principles are substantively linked to governance legitimacy in Muslim societies, with recent scholarship providing both empirical and theoretical support for reintegrating these values into contemporary governance structures. The evidence base is robust and multidimensional. Ahmed et al. (2020) identify corruption and persistent poverty in Muslim societies as stemming primarily from ethical deficiencies rather than inadequacies in legal or institutional frameworks alone. This diagnosis is empirically reinforced by Syarif et al. (2024), who examine the application of five Qur'anic governance principles such as *al-amānah*, *al-'adl*, *al-shūrā*, *al-shajā'ah*, and *al-hikmah* in Malaysia and Indonesia, concluding that governance failures persist largely due to the neglect of religious-ethical norms. Complementing this, Abdurrahman et al. (2025) propose an integrated anti-corruption model grounded in *'adl*, *amānah*, and *shūrā*, while Ruhullah et al. (2024) demonstrate that the institutionalization of *amānah* and *shūrā* significantly enhances public trust and accountability mechanisms. Earlier foundational work by Batchelor et al. (2014) further identifies a comprehensive set of Islamic governance principles adaptable to modern institutional contexts, underscoring their normative relevance beyond historical settings. Nevertheless, Zuhdi et al. (2025) caution that the operationalization of Qur'anic ethical values varies considerably across political and cultural contexts, indicating that ethical reintegration cannot be uniform or purely symbolic. Instead, effective implementation requires contextual sensitivity, institutional translation, and sustained political will. Collectively, the literature supports the conclusion that reconnecting governance with Qur'anic ethical foundations is essential for restoring legitimacy and public trust in Muslim societies, while also highlighting the need for context-specific strategies in translating ethical principles into institutional practice.

7. Conclusion

Political integrity in Islam is anchored in a holistic moral vision in which faith, ethics, and governance are inseparably intertwined. This study advances an Islamic Integrity Model grounded in four interdependent principles; *amānah*, *‘adl*, *ṣidq*, and *ihsān*. Together, these principles constitute a value-driven paradigm that offers a coherent ethical response to contemporary political challenges confronting Muslim societies. The findings reaffirm that Islamic political integrity extends beyond procedural compliance or legal conformity. Rather, it represents a form of spiritual and moral responsibility rooted in dual accountability: answerability to Allah SWT and responsibility toward society. When leadership is framed within this ethical horizon, governance is elevated from a technical exercise to a morally purposeful endeavor. Revitalizing these Qur’anic–Prophetic principles has the potential to reorient modern governance toward systems that are not only administratively efficient, but also ethically inspiring, socially just, and publicly legitimate. As such, the Islamic Integrity Model provides both a normative foundation and a practical ethical compass for reimagining political leadership and governance in Muslim contexts.

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Vol. 16, No. 1 (JUNE 2026)

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