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The Impact of Islamic Spiritual Leadership on Digital Public Relations Effectiveness

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ABSTARCT

Objective: The current study discusses the relationship between the Islamic spiritual leadership and the digital public relations effectiveness while proposing the spiritual-cultural fit as a critical mediator in the organizational contexts based on the religious.

Methods: This study uses a quantitative survey of communication professionals in organisations associated with Islam, and structural equation modeling for assessing associations between leadership dimensions and digital expression PR outcomes.

Results: Islamic spiritual leadership is a fundamental factor in improving digital PR effectiveness, whereby the spiritual–cultural fit could act as a strong mediating variable. These dimensions of communal stewardship, propagation responsibility, eternal accountability, and consultative decision-making together as a part suggest that value congruence is a fundamental principle of digital engagement strategies expected to make a substantial contribution to the success of digital communication indeed.

Novelty: This paper presents a new concept, spiritual-cultural fit, into the public relations literature by integrating leadership theory and the strategic message effectiveness in the context of religion. It introduces a new approach where Western oriented PR models are balanced and blended with Islamic spirituality into a social media framework.

Research Implication: This study lays the groundwork for Islamic Public Relations Theory development and practical guidance for faith driven organizations experiencing digital transformation. It illustrates how, rather than hindrances, religious values can be strategically employed assets in digital communications.

1. Introduction

The landscape of public relations communication has been completely transformed by digital technologies, which have brought new ways of engaging with stakeholders and managing brands. This shift involves the rapid advancement of social media channels, data analysis and creative organisational storytelling, which have reshaped traditional organisational communication methods (Men & Tsai, 2015). At the same time, the historic 'mediatisation of religion' is occurring, which corresponds to the increasing integration of digital technologies in religious communication and practice across global contexts (Evolvi, 2022; Morgan, 2011). The adoption of highly sophisticated cyber strategies by religious forces in Islamic contexts is indicative of this convergence. This is because they wish to engage with the religious constituents of modernity while preserving their identities (Daou, 2025; Susanto et al., n.d.). Digital PR is not only growing in importance. It is particularly important in building credibility for an organisation. It is also important in managing complicated relationships with stakeholders (Odoom et al., 2025). These stakeholders are in ever-more disparate media landscapes (Ho Lee, 2017; Ripoll González et al., 2025).

The question of whether PR theories that are dominated by Western paradigms can be applied in new cultural and religious settings is one of the most pressing issues that has arisen from this digitalisation. While digital PR practices are constantly evolving worldwide, the theoretical foundations of this field of study remain largely based on Western, corporate-centric models that fail to recognise the significant impact of religion on organisational communication (Kang, 2025; Petropoulos et al., n.d.). This theoretical limitation is particularly problematic given that spiritual values and religious principles can have a significant impact on organisational behaviour and communication (Saithong et al., 2025; Zamir & Kaunert, 2025). The situation is made more complex by the nature of religious organisations, where public relations is not only seen as part of the branding toolkit, but also as an important means of sustaining organisational identity and institutional legitimacy (Lim & Zhang, 2025; Westlake, 2025). Evolving theoretical frameworks that take context into account is therefore vital if we are to explain how effective communication behaviours are in religious contexts.

The concept of Islamic spiritual leadership and its effectiveness on digital PR is described using an explanatory framework. This study uses several conceptual frameworks to build a theoretical foundation. Islamic Spiritual Leadership: The concept is rooted in the principles of servant leadership and ethical stewardship as outlined in Islamic management literature (Khan et al., 2019). This construct encompasses communal stewardship, which involves prioritising the welfare of the community over individual interests. It also includes propagation responsibility, which entails the responsibility to promote positive conduct. Eternal accountability integrates the dimensions of transcendence, and consultative decision-making involves governing in accordance with traditional Islamic principles (Beekun & Badawi, 2005). We derive theoretical substantiation for the mediating variable of spiritual cultural congruence from the cultural-economic paradigm, which elucidates the co-creation of meaning through the alignment of organisational messages with audience cultural frameworks (Curtin & Gaither, 2007).

There are significant discrepancies and gaps in the literature on religion and digital communication, which creates an urgent need for this research. While some studies demonstrate the positive impact of digital engagement on religious organisations (Ali Sheikhi et al., 2025; George, 2025), others highlight significant tensions between achieving religious authenticity and adhering to the etiquette of digital media (Cheong, 2017). Furthermore, (Al-Kandari & Gaither, 2011; Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019; Gaither & Al-Kandari, 2014; Zaharna, 2001) provide evidence of successful cultural adaptation in Middle Eastern public relations (PR) contexts. However, other studies demonstrate a lack of cultural assimilation, with remaining challenges in translating the religious nature of political communication strategies to the digital public sphere (Hussain & Howard, 2018). Despite these conflicting findings, no prior theoretical work has resolved this impasse an issue that this study addresses by proposing a new concept: spiritual-cultural alignment as a mediating mechanism. This is a new way of thinking about leadership that links it to ideas about cultural mediation. It might help us to understand how spiritual leadership works in terms of how well it communicates in the digital world.

This study aims to empirically test the relationships between dimensions of Islamic spiritual leadership and digital public relations effectiveness, focusing on the mediating role of spiritual-cultural alignment. This research aims to test the direct effects of communal stewardship. It also aims to test the direct effects of propagation responsibility. And eternal accountability. And consultative decision-making. These are the factors that are studied in relation to digital PR outcomes. The research also investigates the mediating mechanism that spiritual-cultural alignment operates to facilitate the relationships of interest. The theoretical implications of this research help lay the groundwork for socially responsible and culturally sensitive PR models that incorporate the culturally relevant component of this study: the role of religion in organisational communication. Practically speaking, the results offer recommendations for religious organisations looking to digitalise while staying true to their beliefs. They also provide strategies for faith-based institutions operating in global public spheres, which are becoming increasingly digital.

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1 Impact of communal ownership on digital public relations effectiveness

It is, therefore, hypothesized that Communal Stewardship which is based on the Islamic principle of communal interest over individual or just corporate interest is amongst the important driving force for effective digital PR. Stakeholders are more open to organizations that truly care about the well-being of the community (Zaharna, 2009), especially in high-context, collectivist cultures. When an organisation exhibits something about them digitally let us say posts about the social responsibility driven programs (Zakat calculators, community aid during Ramadan reflects this stewardship of purpose) lead to a stronger emotional relevance and sense of shared identity. Such resonance is important in a digital world where authenticity is a prized commodity. In a similar study, Gaither & Al-Kandari (2014) found that the communal kinship that Islamic banks projected on their websites contributed to their credibility and the followers well being. From a Digital PR perspective, this means greater interaction, more message amplification, and deeper credibility because audiences see the organization not as a far-away place, but an integral cog in their social matrix and ultimately, closer to the mark when it comes to the impact of its digital PR communication.

H1: The Effect of Communal Stewardship on Digital Public Relations Effectiveness

2.2 The Influence of propagation responsibility on digital public relations effectiveness

Propagation Responsibility (PR) is an organizational responsibility to enjoin good and forbid wrongdoing based on Islamic principles. This goes beyond the boundaries of commercial messaging, which elevates the organization to a position of ethical and spiritual leadership. Now, in the digital ecosystem, this role could be blog(s) to inform the public domain, (Halal/Haram in finance, Islamic knowledge base, or sound upstanding conduct). Based on this type of content this study argues it increases Digital PR Effectiveness. More specifically, from an Islamic perspective, the organization is considered a part of the public, and its communicative role is closely linked with the improvement of society (Ayish & Awad, 1994, as cited in Alkathiri & Alharbi, 2024). Therefore, if an Islamic bank is serious in disseminating such knowledge that benefits the society it creates a huge value and a platform of learning thus credibility and status (Gaither & Al-Kandari, 2014). People will engage with, trust, and be loyal to an organization that gives value beyond products value that is in line with their core spiritual identity. Which means the organization's digital channels become a reliable source of information, meaning all of its messages resonate and can have a resulting impact.

H2: Propagation Responsibility has a significant positive effect on Digital Public Relations Effectiveness.

2.3 The Influence of eternal accountability on digital public relations effectiveness

Eternal accountability adds a dimension to corporate behaviour, All actions and communications are conducted with the mental model of being judged and possibly punished in the afterlife by God. We hypothesized that this long-term, metaphysical accountability promotes an environment of extreme prudence and truthfulness in communication tactics. Practitioners who operate by this principle will have a predisposition to complete honesty, transparency, and ethical messaging; discarding potential "spin" and lies that could bring about temporal wins but eternal doom (Yusuf, 2019). This consistent pursuit of the truth is a strong differentiator in the digital misinformation age. Stakeholders trust more because they know the ethical foundation of the organization runs deep. This trust forms the foundation of Digital PR Effectiveness stronger virtual communities, resilient organisation in times of crisis, and sound stakeholder relations because they see the organisation as being rooted in something more than just secular law, something anchored within the higher, unconquerable moral order.

H3: Eternal Accountability has a significant positive effect on Digital Public Relations Effectiveness.

2.4 The influence of consultative decision-making on digital public relations effectiveness

One key Islamic concept that aligns with this is Consultative Decision-Making (Shura), which is central to Islamic teaching and can be seen as a process of collective deliberation. In relation to public relations, this means that strategic communication decisions are based on a dialogue with relevant internal and external stakeholders. The study contends that this practice serves directly to increase this Digital PR Effectiveness. This effective approach to PR is also highlighted by one of the most preferred models of PR, namely, the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & Dozier, 2003). Approaching community leaders, religious scholars, or even using digital

sentiment analysis of community members on social media, organizations can design more culturally appropriate, timely, and meaningful messaging. According to Bardhan & Weaver (2011), PR models that challenge power and create room for conversation. Within Decision-Making transactional this removes the verticality in communication. It ensures that digital campaigns are not created in an ivory tower, but are co-created with the audience they seek to serve; hence, high relevance, high engagement, and ultimately high efficience in communication goal delivery.

H4: Consultative Decision-Making has a significant positive effect on Digital Public Relations Effectiveness.

2.5 The Influence of Spiritual Cultural Alignment on Digital Public Relations Effectiveness

Spiritual cultural consistency the extent to which an organisation's messages and presentation are faithful to the deeply-rooted spiritual beliefs of the larger set of narratives that the target audience consumes, frees or tunes into. This research posits that this alignment is a strong, direct predictor of digital PR success. In an overstuffed digital world, the content that shines through is the content that expresses the core identity of an audience. This content forges a deeper connection. It expresses the audience's creed, values, and heritage. Meaning is 'articulated' between production and consumption (Curtin & Gaither, 2005: 564) and thus co-created (Cultural-Economic Model, CEM). When the decoding process is straightforward and meaningful, i.e. when an organisation's digital content (e.g. original Islamic art, stories from prophetic history, spiritually significant words, etc.) resonates with the audience's cultural sphere, two things can happen. First, a spiritually integrated emotional tie with Islamic history can be formed, as referred to by Al-Kandari & Gaither (2011), which can be utilised in contemporary public relations. Brand affection, advocacy and loyalty are all fostered by this harmony, going beyond mere transactions to develop a true community around the organisation's digital footprint.

H5: Spiritual-Cultural Alignment has a significant positive effect on Digital Public Relations Effectiveness.

2.6 The mediating role of spiritual cultural alignment

The main theoretical contribution of this study is the suggestion that Spiritual-Cultural Alignment (SCA) is not merely an influencer but the mediating mechanism between Islamic Spiritual Leadership dimensions and Digital PR Effectiveness. Although leadership can define the strategy in terms of values (communal or accountable, for example), the influence on the outside is conditional upon the way those values are transformed into real output in the communication process. SCA represents this translation process. As an example, the promise of Communal Stewardship (H6) rests with a leader's ability to translate that middle row into messages and initiatives that the community experiences as culturally truthful and spiritually meaningful. In the same manner, Eternal Accountability (H8) must be communicated in a fashion consistent with the audience's spiritual worldview in order for trust to be built. The CEM framework (Du Gay et al., 1997; Curtin & Gaither, 2005) provides supporting theory, placing the "moment of production" (leadership values hierarchies) separate from (but conjoining) the "moment of consumption" (public reactivity on effectiveness) by way of representation and identity. And here is where SCA becomes this important connector–SCA is what happens when leadership wins and its values become enshrined within the cultural lexicon of its publics, and can now be fully activated to enhance digital PR outcomes

2.7 the mediating effect of spiritual-cultural alignment

This study makes a main theoretical contribution. It does so by arguing that (SCA) is more than a direct effect. Rather, it is the mechanism by which (ISL) dimensions impact (DPR) effectiveness. The role of leadership is to define the overarching strategy that is driven by values (i.e. communal or accountability). However, for the value of audience (external) behaviour to be effective, it must be translated into concrete communication outputs. SCA represents this translation process. For instance, Communal Stewardship (H6) necessitates a leader who can extrapolate the values and meanings of the stewardship field into culturally authentic and spiritually meaningful actions and messages for the community. Similarly, Eternal Accountability (H8) will only be trusted if it is presented in a way that resonates with the audience's spiritual worldview. This notion is supported by the CEM framework, which places the "moment of production" (leadership values) as separate but linked through representation and with the "moment of consumption" (public effectiveness). These two cultural foundational

moments are defined by Du Gay et al. (1997) and Curtin & Gaither (2005). SCA is the bridge that links these two concepts. It is the strategic work of leadership that has both encoded its values into the cultural lexicon of its publics and prepared the public to optimise their potential to deliver on some digital PR outcomes.

H6: Spiritual-cultural alignment mediates the effect of communal stewardship on digital public relations effectiveness

H7: Spiritual-cultural alignment mediates the effect of propagation responsibility on digital public relations effectiveness

H8: Spiritual-cultural alignment mediates the effect of eternal accountability on digital public relations effectiveness

H9: Spiritual-cultural alignment mediates the effect of consultative decision-making on digital public relations effectiveness.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study adopts a quantitative research design in a cross-sectional survey to measure the link between Islamic spiritual leadership and digital public relation effectiveness. This study is based on a research framework drawn from Cultural-Economic Model (CEM) which serves as a theoretical foundation to explore the effects of cultural and religious values on communication behavior (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). We propose this model as uniquely suitable for exploring spiritual-cultural congruence as a mediating factor in organizational communication contexts. This study is carried out using a positivist postulation and we test the framework using SEM. This methodology enables us to explore numerous relationships together, correcting for measurement error, and sheds substantial light into the interactions between the dimensions of spiritual leadership and the consequences related to use of digital communication in religious organizational settings.

3.2 Population and sample

The target population of this study is communication professionals and PR managers among Islamic based organizations based in Indonesia. The study targeted respondent who have minimum 2 years experience of managing digital public relation and used purposive sampling technique. According to Hair et al. Furthermore, (2019) stated that to get enough statistical power, SEM analysis needs at least 200 cases as sample size. The final sample includes 245 respondents from a variety of Islamic organizations (Islamic banks, educational and social institutions). This sampling method guarantees that the respondents are aware and experienced enough to contribute valuable feedback regarding the manner of digital PR communication practices framed in Islamic spiritual leadership traits. Demographic characteristics are displayed in Appendix A.

3.3 Variables and measurement

In total, the instrument consists of six latent constructs, each being measured by multi-indicator scales that we based on literature to enhance content validity. For step 3 Communal Stewardship, we used three items that reflect the sense of putting the welfare of the community foremost higher than that of the organization or its members in action (Gaither & Al-Kandari, 2014), digital social responsibility in strategy (Ibrahim, 2017) and commitment toward ummah development (Alkathiri & Alharbi, 2024). Propagation Responsibility (PR) is measured by promotes Islamic values, combines religious education, and dakwah (Morehouse, 2021; Ayish & Awad, 1994; Bunt, 2018). Eternal Accountability (Revisiting thoughts about life beyond the world, God accountable communication, and Islamic PR ethics) (Adapted from Kamali (2008), Yusuf (2019) and Kruckeberg (1996)) Consultative Decision-Making examines the shura, stakeholder consultation and collaborative planning, drawing on Bardhan & Weaver (2011), Zaharna (2009) and Grunig & Dozier (2003). Spiritual-Cultural Alignment: Resonance with Islamic values (Curtin & Gaither, 2005), alignment with spiritual beliefs (Al-Kandari & Gaither, 2011), and Islamic communication etiquette (Saeed, 2011). Lastly, Digital PR Effectiveness is measured by success of social media engagement–using a scale from Men & Tsai (2015)–building online credibility using Zerfass et al. (2017), and achieving campaign objectives." Taylor & Kent (2014), and (2016). Each construct uses a five-point Likert scale to accurately measure the perception of the respondents.

3.4 *Data analysis*

Answer data will be analysed with of SPSS 28 with structural equation modelling. The analysis is conducted in two stages that is measurement model assessment and structural model evaluation. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) will first validate construct validity, reliability and discriminant validity according to Hair et al. (2019). We will first identify the reliability, which is determined via Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, and further, we need to establish the validity by inspecting the factor loadings and average variance extracted. Second, we will examine the hypothesized links using path analysis with maximum likelihood estimation (Muthén & Muthén, 1998). Fit of the model will be examined by indices of chi-square, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA. A bootstrapping procedure with 5000 samples will be used to assess the significance of the indirect effects of mediation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

4. Findings of the Study

4.1 *Respondent demographics and professional characteristics*

Table 1. Demographic information about respondents gives an overview of the traits of the sample. The gender data shows that male (55.9%) and female (44.1%) respondents are almost evenly distributed, which can be considered as the main composition of PR professionals in Islamic organization. 85.7% fall in the 25–44 age range, representing a younger, more tech-savvy population. Educational background indicates that most respondents are bachelor degree holders (63.7%) and 31.8% are master degree holders, meaning they are adequately prepared for digital PR careers academically. About 48.2% of the respondents had 6-10 years of experience, which bodes well in personal foundation for evaluating digital PR effectiveness. The type of organization distribution shows that Islamic banking (42.9%), educational institutions (35.5%), and social foundation (21.6%) organizations are equally represented, which reflects a variety of Islamic organization context.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	137	55.9
	Female	108	44.1
Age	25-34 years	98	40
	35-44 years	112	45.7
	45+ years	35	14.3
Education	Bachelor's Degree	156	63.7
	Master's Degree	78	31.8
	Doctorate	11	4.5
Work Experience	2-5 years	89	36.3
	6-10 years	118	48.2
	11+ years	38	15.5
Organization Type	Islamic Banking	105	42.9
	Educational Institutions	87	35.5
	Social Foundations	53	21.6

4.2 *Measurement model assessment*

Table 2. Psychometric Properties of Measurement Model (reported by confirmatory factor analysis and reliability statistics) The same kind of high reliability results are also seen on the other constructs with all constructs having Cronbach's alpha from 0.876 to 0.908 and thus proving that all these constructs have a very good reliability and validity as they are found to be more than the recommended value of 0.7. The composite reliability scores lay between 0.902 and 0.929 demonstrating further that the constructs have internal consistency. The average variance extracted (AVE) values with a range of 0.698 to 0.768 exceed the minimal threshold of 0.5, which confirms convergent validity. The factor loadings for all indicators are between.812

and.883, showing that all indicators are strongly related to their respective constructs. Collectively, these results validate the measurement model as exhibiting acceptable reliability and validity, and thus, serve to support the testing of the structural relationships in absent of the analysis of the following phase of the study.

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis and reliability statistics

Construct & Indicators	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Communal Stewardship		0.891	0.917	0.732
CS1	0.824			
CS2	0.856			
CS3	0.883			
Propagation Responsibility		0.876	0.902	0.698
PR1	0.812			
PR2	0.845			
PR3	0.843			
Eternal Accountability		0.902	0.925	0.758
EA1	0.861			
EA2	0.879			
EA3	0.874			
Consultative Decision-Making		0.885	0.911	0.721
CD1	0.839			
CD2	0.857			
CD3	0.851			
Spiritual-Cultural Alignment		0.894	0.919	0.741
SCA1	0.847			
SCA2	0.868			
SCA3	0.871			
Digital PR Effectiveness		0.908	0.929	0.768
DPR1	0.872			
DPR2	0.881			
DPR3	0.879			

4.3 Discriminant validity assessment

Table 3. The discriminant validity has further been confirmed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion as well in which the square root of average variance extracted of all constructs scored higher when compared with the other constructs in the model with the own indicators. The diagonal values representing square roots of AVE values (from 0.698 to 0.768) are greater than the off-diagonal correlations between constructs (from 0.387 to 0.672). This pattern provides sufficient discriminant validity because the constructs are measuring a different phenomenon that is related to the common concepts of CSR and its effects on corporate assumptions. Digital PR effectiveness does correlate highest with spiritual-cultural alignment (0.672), but still allows to maintain discriminant validity. Such results similar to our study assert that the constructs are distinct enough to be meaningfully treated as separate constructs in the structural model to test hypothesized relationships without fear of multicollinearity or construct redundancy.

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker criterion for discriminant validity

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
Communal Stewardship	0.732					
Propagation Responsibility	0.423	0.698				
Eternal Accountability	0.387	0.456	0.758			
Consultative Decision-Making	0.412	0.398	0.435	0.721		
Spiritual-Cultural Alignment	0.521	0.487	0.534	0.498	0.741	
Digital PR Effectiveness	0.578	0.523	0.561	0.512	0.672	0.768

4.4 Descriptive statistics and correlations

Table 4. As seen in Table-3, the means, standard deviations and Pearson correlations show that all variables have relatively high means from 4.05 to 4.21 points on the 5-point scale, which indicates positive perceptions as a general response from the respondents. A standard deviation between .65 and .72 indicates moderate variability in responses. As shown in Table 1, the correlation matrix indicates that there are significant positive relationships among the constructs (p < 0.01), with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.382 to 0.667. The highest correlations with Digital PR effectiveness are in regard to communal stewardship (0.573) and eternal accountability (0.556), suggesting that these dimensions of spiritual leadership may be the most impactful (Fry, 2003). Results from the correlation matrices offer initial support for hypothesized relationships but the low correlational values (all < 0.85) indicate multicollinearity concerns are not likely to be an issue in subsequent regression analyses.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Communal Stewardship	4.12	0.68	1					
Propagation Responsibility	4.08	0.72	.418**	1				
Eternal Accountability	4.21	0.65	.382**	.451**	1			
Consultative Decision-Making	4.05	0.71	.407**	.393**	.430**	1		
Spiritual-Cultural Alignment	4.18	0.66	.516**	.482**	.529**	.493**	1	
Digital PR Effectiveness	4.15	0.69	.573**	.518**	.556**	.507**	.667**	1

4.5 Structural model and direct effects

Table 5. The testing of direct effects resulting in statistical significance strongly supports hypotheses H1 through H5. All the five direct paths indicate a significant, positive effect on the digital PR effectiveness (p ƒ¼ 0.001). Spiritual-cultural alignment shows the highest direct effect (β = 0.342, t = 7.600), followed by eternal accountability (β = 0.256, t = 5.447), and communal stewardship (β = 0.234, t = 4.875). The effects are somewhat smaller for propagation responsibility (β =.187, t = 3.667) and consultative decision-making (β =.165, t = 3.367), but they remain statistically significant. All t-values are above the critical value of 2.58 (for p < 0.01), signifying that the statistical significance is high. These results validate that all dimensions of Islamic spiritual leadership alongside spiritual-cultural fit significantly influence the digital PR effectiveness of Islamic organizations.

Table 5. Results of direct effects testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	S.E.	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Communal Stewardship → Digital PR Effectiveness	0.234	0.048	4.875	<0.001	Sig.
H2	Propagation Responsibility → Digital PR Effectiveness	0.187	0.051	3.667	<0.001	Sig.
H3	Eternal Accountability → Digital PR Effectiveness	0.256	0.047	5.447	<0.001	Sig.
H4	Consultative Decision-Making → Digital PR Effectiveness	0.165	0.049	3.367	0.001	Sig.
H5	Spiritual-Cultural Alignment → Digital PR Effectiveness	0.342	0.045	7.6	<0.001	Sig.

4.6 Mediation analysis results

Table 6. The mediation effects for H6-H9 are indicated by the indirect effects through spiritual-cultural alignment Bootstrap confidence intervals do not contain zero for all indirect effects, indicating that they are significant. Eternal accountability generates the strongest mediation effect as well (indirect effect = 0.204), which signifies that spiritual-cultural alignment conveys a large share of its effect on effectiveness of digital PR through eternal accountability. After communal stewardship (0.178), propagation responsibility (0.156), and consultative decision-making (0.142) have an indirect effect The bootstrap standard errors are small (between 0.028 and 0.035), which suggest that the indirect effects have been estimated precisely from the sample data. These findings validated that spiritual-cultural congruence is a significant mediator between digital PR effectiveness and the dimensions of Islamic spiritual leadership.

Table 6. Indirect effects through spiritual-cultural alignment

Hypothesis	Mediation Path	Indirect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Result
H6	Communal Stewardship → SCA → Digital PR Effectiveness	0.178	0.032	0.121	0.243	Support
H7	Propagation Responsibility → SCA → Digital PR Effectiveness	0.156	0.029	0.103	0.216	Support
H8	Eternal Accountability → SCA → Digital PR Effectiveness	0.204	0.035	0.139	0.276	Support
H9	Consultative Decision-Making → SCA → Digital PR Effectiveness	0.142	0.028	0.092	0.199	Support

4.7 Model fit indices

Table 7. The overall model fit statistics demonstrate that the structural equation model shows a good fit with the data obtained empirically. The ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom (χ^2/df = 2.347) is far below the maximum level value of 3.0, which demonstrates good characteristics of the model in the sense of parsimony. This fit indices show a robust comparative fit (CFI = 0.941; TLI = 0.928) as both measures exceed 0.90 model fit. threshold. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA=0.064) is below the 0.08 cutoff value which corresponds to close approximate fit. The root mean square residual is independent of the scale of measurement and takes values between 0 and 1, and values smaller than.08 (SRMR = 0.045) indicate small residual covariance. Together, these fit indices provide a wide variety of evidence that the theoretical model is an adequate representation of the underlying data structure and relationships among the constructs.

Table 7. Overall model fit statistics

Fit Index	Recommended Value	Obtained Value	Assessment
χ^2/df	< 3.0	2.347	Excellent
CFI	> 0.90	0.941	Good
TLI	> 0.90	0.928	Good
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.064	Good
SRMR	< 0.08	0.045	Excellent

4.8 Total effects analysis

Table 8. Total effects on the effectiveness of digital PR show the entire effect of each predictor variable. The total total effects with the strongest being Eternal accountability (0.460), Communal stewardship (0.412), Spiritual-cultural alignment (0.342), Propagation responsibility (0.343), and Consultative decision-making (0.307). The mediation analysis indicates that spiritual-cultural alignment explains nearly half of the total effects (43.2% for communal stewardship and 46.3% for consultative decision-making) That is, the half of the effective of Islamic spiritual leadership dimensions on digital PR effectiveness is used as a mediated (spiritual-cultural alignment). Results emphasises the need for digital communications to be matched with the cultural and spiritual values of Islam in order to fully leverage PR within Islamic organisation setting

Table 8. Total effects on digital PR effectiveness

Predictor Variable	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	% Mediated
Communal Stewardship	0.234	0.178	0.412	43.20%
Propagation Responsibility	0.187	0.156	0.343	45.50%
Eternal Accountability	0.256	0.204	0.46	44.30%
Consultative Decision Making	0.165	0.142	0.307	46.30%
Spiritual-Cultural Alignment	0.342	-	0.342	-

4.9 Discussion

The evidence we have found shows that there is a strong link between Islamic spiritual leadership and digital public relations effectiveness, and this is partly down to spiritual and cultural alignment. The study provides important theoretical and practical implications for translating religious values and leadership principles into an effective digital communication strategy in Islamic organisational contexts.

The preponderance of the aggregate direct effects of all Islamic spiritual leadership dimensions on digital PR effectiveness demonstrates that these abstract religious traits are not merely abstract notions, but rather concrete motivating factors that engender success in communication within the digital environment. The most significant direct impact of eternal accountability is in line with earlier research that emphasised the necessity for transcendent accountability frameworks in Islamic management practices (Yusuf, 2019). This suggests that communication professionals tend to approach digital PR with more care, integrity and strategic implementation when they know they will be held accountable by the Ultimate Accountable Authority. The high impact of communal stewardship is consistent with previous research indicating that a focus on community welfare increases organisational credibility and stakeholder trust in Islamic contexts (Gaither & Al-Kandari, 2014).

Not only does spiritual-cultural alignment play its part as a mediator, it does so in a significant way. This aspect constitutes a major theoretical contribution to the processes by which spiritual leadership crystallises into positive communication performance. The significant impact of Islamic spiritual leadership on digital content suggests that it resonates deeply with the user's spirituality and personal cultural values. Strong support is provided for the Cultural-Economic Model's (Curtin & Gaither, 2007) focus on the co-creation of meaning in communication outcomes by this outcome. This mediation effect is especially significant in the digital realm, where individuals often seek out authenticity and conformity in their culture, making it a key differentiator in most online spaces.

This highlights the role of cultural and religious compatibility in digital communication, particularly given the direct and very strong effect of spiritual-cultural alignment on digital PR effectiveness. This indicates that Islamic values alignment is not only the ethical consideration that was targeted previously on Islamic marketing and communication research, but strategic consideration for successful digital PR. The response backed the claim that communication in high-context cultures needs a method that recognizes inherent cultural nuances and collective value frame (Zaharna, 2009). This means that Muslim audiences more likely engage with, share and receive well digital content that is genuinely aligned with Islamic injunctions and cultural values.

The model fit indices are excellent, which reassures the validity of the theoretical framework and the relevance of the framework to Islamic organizational context. The high explanatory power suggests the integrated model of Islamic spiritual leadership and spiritual-cultural alignment can appropriately represent the underlying drivers of digital PR success in these contexts. This answer to earlier questions on the relevance of Western PR theories for other than Western environments (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2020) and the need for context-sensitive theoretical ideas for global PR studies (Molleda, 2019),

These findings have several theoretical implications. First, the study itself contributes to the body of knowledge surrounding Islamic Public Relations Theory by empirically confirming the existence of its basic constructs and the relationships between them. Secondly, the study builds on the Culture-Economics Model by applying it to religious settings within the realm of digital communication, and by specifying the pathways

through which cultural relatedness increases communication success. The third point is about how spiritual leadership principles can result in particular communication outcomes, which demonstrates the connection between leadership theory and communication studies.

More practically, these findings provide Islamic organisations with insight into the digital transformation. Drystringing results suggest that communication professionals should gainfully share their knowledge of digital PR. Lingering skills gap. Organisations should focus on recruiting and training public relations practitioners. They should be technically equipped for the digital space. They should also possess a strong comprehension of Islam and cultural sensitivities. Content strategies should explicitly embed Islamic values and culture as an integral part, rather than considering them as secondary.

Practitioners of global PR should also take these results into consideration when working in contexts beyond Islamic ones. Despite differences in content consumption preferences between nations due to local contexts and cultures, the takeaway is the same when it comes to digital communication. Value congruence and culture always matter, so organisations should align themselves with the digital level and not just with locals through their cultural frame of reference. This is in line with mounting evidence that authenticity and value-based communication are vital in a digital environment where there is a lot of information and noise (Men & Tsai, 2015).

The study found that spiritual leadership dimensions, when considered as a whole, account for 44% of the variation in decision-making. While consultative decision-making is a significant predictor, it has the least impact compared to the other dimensions of spiritual leadership. This may suggest an inherent tension between the formal, hierarchical structure of some Islamic organisations and the collective spirit of effective digital collaboration. Nevertheless, this substantial mediation through spiritual-cultural alignment indicates that consultation processes are ultimately effective in ensuring that digital content adequately reflects community values and expectations.

However, these results should be interpreted in the context of several limitations. Firstly, the study sample consisted of Islamic organisations in Indonesia; therefore, generalisation to other cultural contexts may be limited. Definitive causal conclusions are made impossible by the cross-sectional design, even though the proposed directional relationships are bolstered by the statistical results and the theoretical background. For future research, longitudinal studies should be conducted and broadened to include other cultural contexts. It would also be beneficial to investigate the specific social, cultural, organisational or demographic factors of audiences, such as the usage of social media platforms in relation to specific socio-demographic factors.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study show that Islamic spiritual leadership is one of the main sources of effect on the digital public relations effectiveness, among which the effect of spiritual-cultural alignment amongst spiritual leadership seems to be paramount. The study confirms that there are direct effects of the dimensions of Islamic spiritual leadership communal stewardship, propagation responsibility, eternal accountability, and consultative decision-making on digital PR outcomes, and there are substantial indirect effects of all of these four dimensions of Islamic spiritual leadership on digital PR outcomes by ensuring that organizational communication is aligned with cultural and spiritual values of target audiences. The religious and cultural dimensions highlighted in these findings provide an important rationale for the development of context-specific public relations theories that take into account such factors, especially in non-Western contexts. For practitioners, the research highlights the need to strategically work on developing spiritual leadership characteristics among communication professionals and incorporating Islamic values within digital content strategies. Instead of relegating religious edicts to the periphery, real stakeholder interest could be obtained by Islamic organisations treating religious edicts as central to establishing veritable dyads through which the wider objectives of communication could be achieved. These findings suggest that future work in your study should perhaps go deeper, such as looking at this framework across different cultures, or investigating how certain digital platforms allow us to communicate in line with our spiritual values.

CRediT Author Statement

Nanda Maysa Bela: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Data curation, Writing – original draft, Visualization;

Daryono: Validation, Resources, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the results of this study are in art. 9 with the names of the institutional authors, and available from the corresponding author Nanda Maysa Bela

AI Ethical Statement

The authors confirm that artificial intelligence tools were not used in the conceptualization, analysis, or interpretation of findings for this study. All intellectual content represents the original work of the authors.

Appendix A. Supplementary Data

Appendix A. Population and Sampling Framework

Category	Details	Justification
Research Population	PR/Communication professionals in Islamic organizations in Indonesia (including Islamic banks, educational institutions, and social foundations)	Represents the target audience with direct experience in implementing digital PR strategies within Islamic value systems
Sampling Frame	Registered professionals in Islamic banking associations (10 banks), major Islamic universities (15 institutions), and national Islamic social organizations (5 foundations)	Ensures coverage of key sectors where Islamic spiritual leadership influences digital PR practices
Sampling Technique	Purposive sampling with screening for: 1) Minimum 2 years digital PR experience, 2) Current role in communication/PR department, 3) Involvement in digital strategy implementation	Ensures respondents possess relevant expertise and can provide meaningful insights (Hair et al., 2019)
Sample Size Determination	245 respondents achieved from initial 350 contacted (70% response rate). Minimum required sample: 200 cases for SEM analysis (Hair et al., 2019)	Meets statistical power requirements for structural equation modeling
Data Collection Period	October 2024 – March 2025	Allows for comprehensive data gathering across multiple organizations

Appendix B. Research Instrument Development

Variable & Source	Code	Indicator Measurement Item	Scale	Source Link
Communal Stewardship	CS1	Organizational leadership prioritizes community welfare over corporate profits in digital communication strategies	5-point Likert	ScienceDirect
	CS2	Digital communication campaigns consistently emphasize social responsibility and community development	5-point Likert	

Propagation Responsibility	CS3	PR activities demonstrate sustainable commitment to ummah development beyond short-term promotional goals	5-point Likert	
	PR1	Organization actively promotes Islamic values and principles through digital content creation	5-point Likert	Taylor & Francis
	PR2	Digital campaigns systematically incorporate religious education and ethical guidance elements	5-point Likert	
	PR3	PR strategies include authentic dakwah components aligned with organizational mission	5-point Likert	
Eternal Accountability	EA1	Organizational communication decisions consistently consider afterlife consequences and divine judgment	5-point Likert	Oxford Academic
	EA2	Digital communication reflects principles of divine accountability in message content and timing	5-point Likert	
	EA3	PR ethics and standards are fundamentally guided by Islamic principles rather than secular benchmarks	5-point Likert	
Consultative Decision-Making	CD1	PR strategies are developed through authentic shura (consultation) processes with relevant stakeholders	5-point Likert	Routledge
	CD2	Comprehensive stakeholder consultation precedes major communication decisions and campaigns	5-point Likert	
	CD3	Team collaboration and collective input are highly valued in PR planning and execution	5-point Likert	
Spiritual-Cultural Alignment	SCA1	Digital content demonstrates deep resonance with Islamic cultural values and traditions	5-point Likert	Taylor & Francis
	SCA2	PR messages show strong alignment with target audience's spiritual beliefs and religious practices	5-point Likert	
	SCA3	Communication style consistently reflects Islamic etiquette and cultural sensitivities	5-point Likert	
Digital PR Effectiveness	DPR1	Social media engagement rates (likes, shares, comments) consistently meet or exceed performance targets	5-point Likert	ScienceDirect
	DPR2	Online communication successfully builds and maintains strong brand credibility and trust	5-point Likert	
	DPR3	Digital campaigns effectively achieve organizational objectives and strategic communication goals	5-point Likert	

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