

THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AND GOVERNANCE IN CONTEMPORARY PAKISTAN

Dr. Shakir Ullah¹, Kaneez E Zainab², Dr. Nazia Begum³

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, University of Peshawar

²Student, Department of RT and ICU, University of KMU IHS Hazara

³Assistant Professor (Visiting), Department of Islamic Culture and Thought, National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Karachi Campus

¹shakir.ullah@uop.edu.pk, ²zainab007zahid@gmail.com, ³naziabegum80@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19813872>

Keywords

Islamic ethical principles, social justice, governance, Maqasid al-Shariah, accountability, Pakistan

Article History

Received: 28 February 2026

Accepted: 10 April 2026

Published: 27 April 2026

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Corresponding Author: *

Dr. Shakir Ullah

Abstract

This study examined the role of Islamic ethical principles in promoting social justice and enhancing governance in contemporary Pakistan. Grounded in the framework of Maqasid al-Shariah, the research focused on key ethical constructs, including *adl* (justice), *amanah* (accountability), *shura* (consultation), and *maslahah* (public welfare). A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was employed, and data were collected from 300 respondents drawn from the public sector, academia, and policy-related institutions. Using statistical techniques including correlation, regression, and structural equation modeling (SEM), the study found that Islamic ethical principles have a significant and positive impact on both social justice and governance. Furthermore, social justice was identified as a partial mediator, strengthening the relationship between ethical principles and governance outcomes. The findings highlight that effective governance is closely linked to the extent to which ethical values are institutionalized within public systems. Despite constitutional alignment with Islamic principles, practical implementation remains constrained by structural and institutional challenges. The study concludes that integrating Islamic ethical values into governance frameworks can significantly enhance transparency, accountability, and social equity. It offers important theoretical, practical, and policy implications for advancing ethical governance and sustainable development in Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic ethical principles constitute a comprehensive and value-oriented framework that governs both individual conduct and collective societal organization. Rooted in divine revelation, these principles transcend conventional secular ethics by integrating moral, legal, and socio-political dimensions into a unified system aimed at achieving justice, human dignity, and societal well-being. Central to this ethical paradigm are concepts such as *adl* (justice), *amanah* (trust/accountability), *shura* (consultation), and

maslahah (public welfare), which collectively form the normative foundation of governance in Islam. Contemporary scholarship increasingly emphasizes that these principles are not merely theological ideals but practical instruments for guiding modern governance systems toward equity and accountability (Ghafran & Yasmin, 2020; Hussain & Ahmed, 2025).

In the modern context, the relevance of Islamic ethics has gained renewed attention due to persistent governance challenges, including

corruption, inequality, and institutional inefficiencies, particularly in developing Muslim-majority states such as Pakistan. Despite its constitutional identity as an Islamic republic, Pakistan continues to grapple with disparities in wealth distribution, weak rule of law, and governance deficits. This paradox highlights a critical disconnect between the normative ideals of Islamic ethics and their practical implementation within state institutions. Scholars argue that the failure to operationalize ethical principles within governance structures has limited the transformative potential of Islamic values in achieving social justice (Rizvi et al., 2023; Din & Alam, 2024).

A significant theoretical lens through which Islamic ethics can be understood is the framework of *Maqasid al-Shariah* (objectives of Islamic law), which prioritizes the protection of fundamental human interests, including life, intellect, wealth, faith, and lineage. This framework provides a dynamic and adaptable approach to governance, emphasizing not only legal compliance but also the broader objectives of justice, welfare, and human flourishing. Recent studies suggest that a *Maqasid*-based approach offers a viable alternative to rigid legalistic interpretations by promoting a holistic model of governance centered on ethical outcomes and societal well-being (Ahmad et al., 2024; Hussain & Ahmed, 2025).

Furthermore, Islamic governance is inherently ethical in nature, as it links authority with moral responsibility and accountability before both society and God. Unlike purely procedural governance models, Islamic ethics demand that leaders embody integrity, transparency, and compassion in decision-making processes. This ethical orientation is particularly relevant in addressing contemporary governance crises, where technocratic solutions often fail to resolve deeply rooted moral and institutional issues. Emerging research highlights that embedding ethical values within governance frameworks can significantly enhance institutional trust, social cohesion, and policy effectiveness (Miftahussurur et al., 2025; Azim & Awang, 2024).

In the context of Pakistan, the integration of Islamic ethical principles into governance is both

a constitutional mandate and a socio-political necessity. Institutions such as Islamic finance systems and zakat governance mechanisms demonstrate partial alignment with ethical objectives; however, their performance often reflects inconsistencies in fully realizing the broader goals of social justice and equitable development. Recent empirical evidence indicates that while Islamic ethical frameworks are acknowledged at the policy level, their operationalization remains fragmented due to political, institutional, and socio-economic constraints (Rizvi et al., 2023; MDPI, 2026).

Against this backdrop, this study explores the role of Islamic ethical principles in promoting social justice and strengthening governance in contemporary Pakistan. It seeks to bridge the gap between normative Islamic teachings and practical governance challenges by examining how ethical values can be effectively institutionalized to achieve sustainable and inclusive development.

Problem Statement

Despite being constitutionally established as an Islamic republic, Pakistan continues to face persistent challenges in achieving equitable social justice and effective governance. Issues such as systemic corruption, weak institutional accountability, socio-economic inequality, and limited public trust in state institutions highlight a significant gap between the normative ideals of Islamic ethical principles and their practical implementation. Islamic ethics, grounded in concepts such as *adl* (justice), *amanah* (accountability), *shura* (consultation), and *maslahah* (public welfare), provide a comprehensive framework designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and collective welfare. However, in contemporary Pakistan, these principles are often acknowledged at the rhetorical and constitutional levels but remain inadequately institutionalized within governance structures.

This disconnect raises critical concerns regarding the effectiveness of governance systems in translating ethical values into actionable policies and practices. The persistence of governance deficits suggests that the integration of Islamic ethical principles has been either superficial or

constrained by political, institutional, and socio-economic barriers. Moreover, the lack of a coherent framework for embedding these ethical values into public administration, policy formulation, and institutional accountability mechanisms further exacerbates the problem.

Additionally, rapid socio-economic transformations, globalization, and political instability have complicated the application of traditional ethical frameworks in modern governance contexts. As a result, there is a pressing need to critically examine how Islamic ethical principles can be operationalized in a structured and contextually relevant manner to promote social justice and strengthen governance in Pakistan. Addressing this gap is essential not only for enhancing institutional performance but also for restoring public trust and ensuring sustainable and inclusive development.

Research Questions

1. What are the core Islamic ethical principles relevant to social justice and governance?
2. To what extent are these principles reflected in the governance framework of contemporary Pakistan?
3. What structural, political, and institutional challenges hinder their effective implementation?
4. How can Islamic ethical principles be operationalized to enhance social justice and governance outcomes in Pakistan?

Research Objectives

- To analyze the fundamental Islamic ethical principles that underpin social justice and governance.
- To examine the extent to which these principles are incorporated into Pakistan's governance and institutional frameworks.
- To identify the key barriers limiting the effective implementation of Islamic ethical values in practice.
- To develop a context-specific framework for integrating Islamic ethical principles into governance mechanisms.

- To propose practical and policy-oriented recommendations for strengthening social justice and governance through Islamic ethics in Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

This study holds substantial theoretical, practical, and policy relevance by advancing the understanding of how Islamic ethical principles can be systematically integrated into contemporary governance frameworks to promote social justice in Pakistan.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on Islamic governance by linking classical ethical concepts—such as *adl* (justice), *amanah* (accountability), *shura* (consultation), and *maslahah* (public welfare)—with modern governance paradigms. It extends the application of *Maqasid al-Shariah* as a comprehensive analytical framework, offering a nuanced perspective that bridges normative Islamic teachings with contemporary socio-political realities. In doing so, the study enriches interdisciplinary discourse across public administration, political science, and Islamic studies.

From a practical standpoint, the research provides a structured understanding of the gaps between ethical ideals and governance practices in Pakistan. By identifying key implementation challenges, it offers actionable insights for policymakers, public administrators, and institutional leaders to embed ethical values into governance processes. This is particularly significant in addressing issues such as corruption, weak accountability, and social inequality, thereby enhancing institutional effectiveness and public trust.

At the policy level, the study serves as a valuable reference for designing governance reforms aligned with Islamic ethical principles. It highlights the potential for integrating value-based approaches into legislative frameworks, public sector management, and social welfare policies. Such alignment can support the development of inclusive and equitable governance systems that

resonate with the socio-cultural and religious context of Pakistan.

Moreover, the study has broader societal implications, as it emphasizes the role of ethical leadership and collective responsibility in fostering social cohesion and justice. By promoting awareness and application of Islamic ethical values, the research contributes to building a more accountable, transparent, and welfare-oriented society.

Finally, this study provides a foundation for future empirical research, encouraging scholars to further investigate the operationalization of Islamic ethics in governance through quantitative and mixed-method approaches.

Literature Review

The discourse on Islamic ethical principles and their role in promoting social justice and governance has gained increasing scholarly attention, particularly in the context of Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan. This body of literature spans classical Islamic thought, contemporary governance theories, and applied studies examining institutional practices.

Islamic Ethical Foundations of Social Justice

Islamic ethics are fundamentally rooted in divine guidance derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, emphasizing justice (*adl*) as a central organizing principle of society. Classical scholars argue that justice in Islam is multidimensional, encompassing legal fairness, economic equity, and social welfare. Contemporary studies reaffirm that Islamic social justice is not limited to distributive equality but also includes procedural justice and moral accountability (Din & Alam, 2024; Kamali, 2019). Mechanisms such as *zakat*, *sadaqah*, and prohibition of exploitation are designed to reduce socio-economic disparities and ensure equitable resource distribution.

Recent literature highlights that Islamic social justice integrates both rights-based and duty-based frameworks, balancing individual freedoms with collective responsibilities. This dual orientation distinguishes Islamic ethics from purely secular models by embedding moral obligations within governance systems (Ahmad et al., 2024).

Islamic Principles of Governance

Governance in Islam is inherently ethical and value-driven, with leadership viewed as a trust (*amanah*) that requires accountability to both society and God. The principle of *shura* (consultation) promotes participatory decision-making, while *hisbah* emphasizes institutional oversight and accountability. Scholars argue that these principles collectively form a governance model that prioritizes transparency, justice, and public welfare (Ghafran & Yasmin, 2020; Chapra, 2022).

Modern research suggests that Islamic governance frameworks align closely with contemporary good governance indicators, including rule of law, accountability, and inclusiveness. However, Islamic governance extends beyond procedural mechanisms by incorporating moral and spiritual dimensions, which are often absent in secular governance models (Hassan & Ali, 2023).

Maqasid al-Shariah as a Governance Framework

The concept of Maqasid al-Shariah (objectives of Islamic law) has emerged as a central theoretical lens in contemporary Islamic governance literature. It emphasizes the protection of essential human interests—faith, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth—thereby providing a holistic framework for policy formulation and governance (Kamali, 2019; Auda, 2021).

Recent studies argue that a Maqasid-based approach offers flexibility and adaptability, enabling policymakers to address modern socio-economic challenges while remaining aligned with Islamic principles. This framework has been increasingly applied in areas such as public policy, economic development, and institutional reform, highlighting its relevance in contemporary governance contexts (Hussain & Ahmed, 2025).

Islamic Ethics and Governance in Pakistan

Pakistan's governance framework is constitutionally grounded in Islamic principles, with institutions such as the Council of Islamic Ideology and the Federal Shariat Court tasked with ensuring compliance. However, empirical and conceptual studies indicate a persistent gap between constitutional ideals and governance

practices. Issues such as corruption, political instability, and weak institutional capacity undermine the effective implementation of Islamic ethical principles (Rizvi et al., 2023; Khan & Bibi, 2022).

Scholars have observed that while Islamic values are often invoked in political discourse, their translation into concrete policies and institutional mechanisms remains limited. This has resulted in a fragmented approach to governance, where ethical principles are not systematically integrated into decision-making processes (Ali & Noor, 2024).

Challenges in Operationalizing Islamic Ethics

The literature identifies several barriers to the effective implementation of Islamic ethical principles in governance. These include structural weaknesses in institutions, lack of political will, inadequate accountability mechanisms, and limited public awareness of ethical frameworks. Additionally, globalization and the adoption of Western governance models have sometimes created tensions with traditional Islamic values, leading to inconsistencies in policy application (Hassan & Ali, 2023; Chapra, 2022).

Another critical challenge is the absence of a standardized framework for translating ethical principles into measurable governance indicators. Without such frameworks, the practical application of Islamic ethics remains largely theoretical and difficult to assess empirically.

Recent scholarship has begun to explore the integration of Islamic ethics with modern governance tools, including digital governance, transparency systems, and institutional reforms. However, there remains a significant gap in empirical research, particularly in the context of Pakistan, where most studies are conceptual in nature.

Furthermore, limited attention has been given to developing context-specific models that operationalize Islamic ethical principles within existing governance structures. This highlights the need for interdisciplinary research that combines Islamic jurisprudence, public administration, and policy analysis to develop practical and scalable solutions.

In summary, while existing literature provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding Islamic ethical principles and their relevance to governance, there is a clear gap in their practical application, particularly in Pakistan. The lack of empirical evidence, context-specific frameworks, and measurable indicators underscores the need for further research aimed at bridging the gap between ethical ideals and governance realities.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative, explanatory research design to examine the role of Islamic ethical principles in promoting social justice and governance in contemporary Pakistan. A cross-sectional survey approach was employed to collect data from respondents at a single point in time. This design was considered appropriate for testing relationships among variables and generating generalizable findings within the selected context.

Population of the Study

The target population comprised public sector employees, policymakers, and academic professionals working in governance-related institutions across Pakistan. These respondents were selected because of their direct or indirect involvement in governance processes and their familiarity with ethical frameworks and public administration practices.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 300 respondents was determined based on statistical adequacy for multivariate analysis and structural equation modeling. The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation from different sectors, including government departments, universities, and policy institutions. Each stratum was proportionally represented to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings.

Data Collection Method

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed both physically and electronically. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from

“strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” It measured key constructs, including:

- Islamic ethical principles (*adl, amanah, shura, maslahah*)
- Social justice
- Governance effectiveness

The instrument items were adapted from previously validated scales and modified to suit the Pakistani context.

Measurement of Variables

- **Independent Variable:** Islamic Ethical Principles
- **Dependent Variables:** Social Justice and Governance
- **Control Variables:** Age, education, professional experience

Each construct was measured using multiple indicators to ensure internal consistency and construct validity.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques. The analysis was conducted in several stages:

1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 300)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	198	66.0%
	Female	102	34.0%
Age	21-30 years	96	32.0%
	31-40 years	114	38.0%
	41-50 years	60	20.0%
	Above 50	30	10.0%
	Education	Bachelor’s	84
	Master’s	150	50.0%
	PhD	66	22.0%
Sector	Public Sector	168	56.0%
	Academia	90	30.0%
	Policy/NGO	42	14.0%

The sample was dominated by male respondents (66%), with the majority aged between 31-40

- Descriptive statistics to summarize respondent characteristics
- Reliability analysis (Cronbach’s alpha) to assess internal consistency
- Correlation analysis to examine relationships among variables
- Regression and SEM analysis to test hypotheses and determine causal relationships

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical standards. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, and data were used solely for academic purposes.

Data Analysis

This section presents the empirical findings of the study based on the data collected from 300 respondents. The analysis was conducted using SPSS and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques to examine the relationships between Islamic ethical principles, social justice, and governance.

years, indicating a mature and professionally active group. A significant proportion (72%) held

postgraduate qualifications, suggesting that respondents possessed adequate knowledge to evaluate governance and ethical principles.

Representation across public, academic, and policy sectors enhances the credibility and generalizability of the findings.

Reliability Analysis

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Islamic Ethical Principles	10	0.91
Social Justice	8	0.88
Governance	9	0.90

All constructs demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70.

This indicates that the measurement scales were reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

Variables	1	2	3
1. Islamic Ethical Principles	1.000		
2. Social Justice	0.72**	1.000	
3. Governance	0.68**	0.75**	1.000

Note: p < 0.01

The correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships among all variables. Islamic ethical principles showed a strong correlation with social justice (r = 0.72) and governance (r = 0.68), indicating that higher adherence to ethical principles is associated with improved justice and

governance outcomes. The strongest relationship was observed between social justice and governance (r = 0.75), suggesting that equitable social systems significantly enhance governance effectiveness.

Regression Analysis

Table 4: Regression Results

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig. (p)
Islamic Ethical Principles	Social Justice	0.64	12.85	0.000
Islamic Ethical Principles	Governance	0.59	11.72	0.000

The regression results indicate that Islamic ethical principles have a significant and positive impact on both social justice and governance. Specifically:

- A unit increase in Islamic ethical principles leads to a 64% increase in social justice outcomes.

- Similarly, governance improves by 59% with stronger adherence to ethical principles. The high t-values and statistically significant p-values (p < 0.001) confirm the robustness of these relationships.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Table 5: SEM Path Analysis

Path Relationship	Standardized Estimate	p-value
Islamic Ethics → Social Justice	0.67	0.000
Islamic Ethics → Governance	0.61	0.000
Social Justice → Governance	0.70	0.000

Model Fit Indices

Index	Value	Recommended Threshold
CFI	0.95	> 0.90
RMSEA	0.05	< 0.08
Chi-square/df	2.10	< 3.00

The SEM results confirm that the model demonstrates a good fit, as all indices meet recommended thresholds. Islamic ethical principles significantly influence both social justice and governance, while social justice also acts as a strong predictor of governance. This suggests a partial mediating effect, where ethical principles enhance governance both directly and indirectly through social justice.

The empirical findings strongly support the argument that Islamic ethical principles play a critical role in promoting social justice and improving governance in Pakistan. The results indicate that ethical values such as justice, accountability, and public welfare are not merely theoretical constructs but have measurable and significant impacts on institutional outcomes.

The strong mediating role of social justice suggests that governance improvements are largely driven by equitable systems and fair resource distribution. This aligns with the theoretical framework of Maqasid al-Shariah, which prioritizes human welfare and societal balance.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide strong empirical support for the argument that Islamic ethical principles significantly contribute to promoting social justice and enhancing governance in contemporary Pakistan. The positive and statistically significant relationships identified between Islamic ethics, social justice, and governance indicate that values such as *adl*

(justice), *amanah* (accountability), *shura* (consultation), and *maslahah* (public welfare) are not merely normative ideals but function as practical drivers of institutional effectiveness. The results suggest that when governance systems are guided by ethical considerations, they are more likely to ensure fairness, transparency, and inclusiveness.

A key insight emerging from the analysis is the mediating role of social justice in strengthening governance outcomes. This implies that ethical principles influence governance both directly and indirectly by fostering equitable systems and reducing disparities. In line with the Maqasid al-Shariah framework, the promotion of human welfare and protection of fundamental rights appears to be central to achieving sustainable governance. The strong association between social justice and governance highlights that governance reforms cannot be effective without addressing underlying inequalities and ensuring fair distribution of resources.

However, the findings also reflect an implicit tension between theoretical alignment and practical implementation. While respondents acknowledged the importance of Islamic ethical principles, the persistence of governance challenges such as corruption and weak accountability suggests that these principles are not fully institutionalized. This gap underscores the need for transforming ethical awareness into structured policies and enforceable institutional mechanisms. The study thus reinforces the

argument that ethical governance requires not only value-based orientation but also systemic integration within administrative and legal frameworks.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Islamic ethical principles provide a comprehensive and effective framework for promoting social justice and improving governance in Pakistan. The empirical evidence demonstrates that adherence to ethical values significantly enhances both social equity and institutional performance. Moreover, the mediating role of social justice indicates that governance outcomes are substantially influenced by the extent to which fairness and inclusivity are embedded within societal structures.

Despite Pakistan's constitutional commitment to Islamic principles, the practical application of these values remains limited. Bridging this gap requires a deliberate effort to integrate ethical principles into governance systems through institutional reforms, policy alignment, and ethical leadership. Overall, the study affirms that Islamic ethics have the potential to serve as a transformative tool for achieving sustainable and inclusive governance.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature by empirically validating the relevance of Islamic ethical principles within modern governance frameworks. It extends the application of **Maqasid al-Shariah** as a theoretical model, demonstrating its utility in explaining the relationship between ethics, social justice, and governance.

Practical Implications

The findings provide actionable insights for public administrators and institutional leaders by emphasizing the importance of embedding ethical values into governance practices. Strengthening accountability, transparency, and participatory decision-making can significantly improve institutional performance.

Policy Implications

For policymakers, the study highlights the need to align governance reforms with Islamic ethical principles. This includes designing policies that prioritize public welfare, reduce inequality, and enhance institutional accountability, thereby fostering a more just and inclusive society.

Future Directions

Future research should focus on conducting longitudinal and empirical studies to examine the long-term impact of Islamic ethical principles on governance outcomes. Comparative studies across different Muslim-majority countries can provide deeper insights into best practices and contextual variations. Additionally, integrating mixed-method approaches would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of both quantitative relationships and qualitative dimensions of ethical governance. Further research is also needed to develop measurable indicators and frameworks for operationalizing Islamic ethics within modern public administration systems.

Recommendations

The study proposes several recommendations to enhance the role of Islamic ethical principles in governance:

- **Institutional Strengthening:** Develop robust accountability mechanisms to ensure transparency and reduce corruption.
- **Policy Integration:** Align public policies with the principles of *maslahah* (public welfare) and *adl* (justice).
- **Ethical Leadership Development:** Promote leadership training programs focused on Islamic ethical values.
- **Public Awareness:** Increase awareness and education regarding Islamic governance principles among citizens and public officials.
- **Participatory Governance:** Encourage the implementation of *shura*-based decision-making processes to enhance inclusiveness.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design

restricts the ability to establish causal relationships over time. Second, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias. Third, the study is limited to the context of Pakistan, which may affect the generalizability of findings to other regions. Finally, although the study provides empirical insights, it does not fully capture the qualitative dimensions of ethical governance, which could offer deeper contextual understanding.

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