Divine Guidance in The Face of Toxicity: How Islamic Leadership Navigates Workplace Stress and Mental Wellbeing in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: Concerns about mental health are currently in the workplace on the rise. This research endeavors to uncover how psychological distress mediates, and how perceived organizational support (POS) moderates, the effects of Islamic leadership and a toxic environment on mental health.

Methodology: Participants are selected from among educators in three universities and a sample of 327. SEM-PLS aims to analyze the developed model.

Finding: The evidence from the study supports the conclusion that Islamic leadership directly has a negative but significant impact on mental health, Islamic leadership can also indirectly benefit mental health by reducing psychological distress. Toxic environments significantly increase psychological distress. Toxic workplaces and mental health are positively mediated by psychological stress, which suggests that toxic workplace conditions exacerbate psychological distress in workers.

Conclusion: The results demonstrated a relationship among the independent variable and Mental Health was significantly moderated by Perceived Organizational Support (POS). This investigation emphasizes importance of company support in fostering positive relationships and reducing negative effects on employees' mental health, highlighting the need to maintain a positive work atmosphere, use Islamic leadership principles.

Keywords: Islamic Leadership; Toxic Environment; Psychological Distress; Perceived Organizational Support

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, mental health is an increasing concern, particularly in the workplace, which can be a cause of stress and psychological suffering for employees (Read et al., 2023). Staff mental health is integral to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), underscoring its significance within organizations (Endang, 2024). Proper maintenance of employees' mental health can optimize their contributions to organizational success (UNTAR, 2024). Achieving equilibrium between job needs and individual well-being necessitates an optimal work environment and effective leadership (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023). Numerous studies connecting mental health to Islamic leadership, workplace environment, psychological discomfort, and organizational support remain scarce, revealing significant research gaps (Omar & Ahmad, 2020; Reuben et al., 2022).

Various investigations have shown that mental health is related to leadership (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023; Zada et al., 2022) nevertheless, association with Islamic Leadership remains unexplored, despite studies incorporating aspects of religion (Humam et al., 2023). Islamic leadership, founded on Islamic principles, is considered a viable approach to surmount these numerous challenges (Bagis, F., Adawiyah, W., 2024). Islamic leadership prioritizes the concepts of fairness, compassion, responsibility for the well-being of subordinates (Profile, 2020). Despite extensive research on how leadership affects mental health, there remains a scarcity of research about Islamic leadership in perilous contexts, especially within the educational sector (Javid et al., 2024; Uzma Qatrunnada et al., 2021).

The issue of toxic workplaces has gained significant attention in recent decades. A poisonous workplace is a common problem for educational institutions, which are meant to be centres of moral and intellectual growth (Uzma Qatrunnada et al., 2021). Bullying, office politics, an overwhelming workload, and a lack of respect for teachers and administrative personnel are all examples of this phenomena. The organization as a whole suffers from the detrimental effects of this toxic atmosphere, which include higher absenteeism and lower productivity (Pariyanti et al., 2022). According to other studies, a toxic workplace can cause a spectrum of mental health disorders, including anxiety (Z. Wang et al., 2020) and depression (Tobah, 2018) which cause harm on workers' well-being (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023). Therefore, understanding of association toxic work setting, psychological distress and organizational support is an emerging issue (Edwards et al., 2020; Z. Wang et al., 2020; Yildirim et al., 2024; Zada et al., 2022). Education institutions need the ability to improve the mental health of workers in toxic workplaces in tallying to being pertinent to enhancing organizational performance (Hamzah et al., 2021).

Mental health is also associated with a nonlinear link with toxic environment, and Islamic leadership (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023). A typical mediating factor for the influence of a hazardous workplace on an individual's mental health is psychological discomfort (Radiani & Tarumanagara, 2024). Emotional tiredness, despair, and anxiety are examples of psychological distress brought on by extended work-related stress (Matthieu & Ivanoff, 2006). Consequently, it is crucial to investigate how psychological distress functions as a mediator in this relationship. Numerous employees who experience psychological distress as a result of unfavourable interactions with co-worker's, an overwhelming workload, and a lack of organizational support contribute to the phenomenon of elevated stress and mental health concerns among educational institution employees as a result of an unfavourable work environment. This issue is even more concerning in the realm of Islamic education, where moral and ethical standards are greatly valued, as it may go against the tenets of Islamic leadership (Rosid et al., 2024).

The clout of hazardous workplaces on mental health have been extensively studied (Ferschmann et al., 2022), as has the function of leadership in fostering a healthy work environment (Meran & Mason, 2019; Sadaf & Yasmin, 2021). Islamic leadership, mental health, and toxic workplaces have all been covered in several independent research. Nevertheless, no thorough study that combines these three components with an emphasis on staff members at educational institutions has been conducted. Additionally, under the impact of Islamic leadership, it is necessary to investigate the role that psychological distress plays as a mediator in the interaction among hazardous work settings along with employee mental health. Within context of Islamic leadership, further research is required to determine how organizational support might mitigate the detrimental effects of a toxic workplace on employee mental health.

In order to solve this problem, organizational assistance is also crucial. According to earlier studies, the bearing among work stress and mental health can be mitigated by social support from co-worker's and employers (Z. Wang et al., 2020). However, context of a toxic workplace, no research has explicitly examined how organizational support may impact the liaison of Islamic leadership and employee mental health. In this situation, organizational support could be a very important moderating element. Strong organizational support can lessen the detrimental effects of toxic settings on psychological distress and mental health. Examples of this support include sufficient resources, acknowledgment of employee efforts, and the presence of well-being policies (Omar & Ahmad, 2020). Therefore, testing organizational support's function as a moderating variable in the suggested model is another goal of this study.

Employee mental health is one of the most prominent factors influencing the prosperity of any organization, come under educational institutions (Urbina-Garcia, 2020). Most previous research has been conducted in the private sector or the general public (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023; Radiani & Tarumanagara, 2024; Sahama et al., 2019; Z. Wang et al., 2020). This research will add new insights with a focus on educational institutions, where social and professional dynamics may differ significantly. Understanding how these elements impact employees' mental health is crucial in educational institutions, as staff members frequently deal with intense academic and administrative pressure (Sahu, 2020).

In addition, there is a new theoretical approach in this study, namely using Psychological Well-being Theory (Ajzen, 2011) which will expand the understanding of the complex relationship between Islamic leadership, toxic environment, psychological distress, and mental health, which has not been found to be used in previous studies. Practically, this research will provide recommendations to managers of educational institutions to adopt leadership strategies based on Islamic values and increase organizational support to create a healthy and productive work environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological Well-being Theory

The theory, The idea, which was formed by Carol Ryff, focuses on six interconnected aspects Components of psychological well-being include self-acceptance, positive physical contact, environmental competence, personal growth, independence, and a sense of life purpose (van Dierendonck, 2004). This theory offers a strong foundation for examining the mental health of workers impacted by toxic workplaces and Islamic leadership, while accounting for the mediation and moderation of organizational support by societal pressure. In order to explain how hazardous work environments and leadership styles impact employees' mental health, social

pressure serves as a mediator (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023). An imbalance amid the demands pertaining to the job and the individual's ability to handle them leads to psychological distresses such as worry, stress, sadness, and burnout (Bagis, F., Adawiyah, W., 2024). Organizational support plays a moderation factor that can help reduce the adverse implication of a toxic environment on the psychological well-being of workers (Omar & Ahmad, 2020). This support can be as policies that favor employee welfare, stress management training, providing positive feedback, or increasing social engagement in the organization.

Islamic leadership and psychological distress

Psychological distress is a negative emotional response that arises as a result of excessive pressure or stress (Matthieu & Ivanoff, 2006). In the context of work, this distress can be in the form of symptoms such as anxiety, emotional exhaustion, or feeling bad. Psychological stress, which often arises due to overwork, interpersonal conflicts, or uncertainty, can be minimized through leadership practices that care about employee well-being holistically (Nnaebue et al., 2022). Islamic leadership is a leadership approach that is rooted in Islamic values and principles, such as justice, compassion, integrity, and responsibility to Allah and society (Gonaim, 2022). Islamic leaders who have a positive attitude towards the mental well-being of employees will prioritize efforts to reduce psychological distress. Islamic values embraced by leaders and organizations become collective norms that encourage cooperation, mutual respect, and a supportive work culture. Previous research sheds light on the role of leaders in lowering psychological stress (Majeed & Fatima, 2020; Radiani & Tarumanagara, 2024; Yang & Fry, 2018; Zada et al., 2022). Previous research linking Islamic leadership and psychological distress is still very limited, even though Islamic leadership creates an environment where employees feel in control of their work. From the theoretical explanation and relevant articles, the hypothesis detailed as bellow:

H1: Islamic leadership has a negative effect on psychological distress

Toxic work environment to psychological distress

A toxic work environment refers to a setting where as an environment with systematic refusal behaviors, including a lack of trust, manipulative behavior, injustice, interpersonal conflicts, and a poor of social support (Amaro et al., 2021). A toxic work environment refers to workplace conditions that are dominated by negative behaviors such as injustice, manipulation, lack of social support, bullying, and interpersonal conflicts (Rasool et al., 2019). In educational institutions, toxic work environments can occur through over workload, poor communication, and lack of appreciation for employee performance and these conditions can trigger psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and burnout (Rasool et al., 2021). In the context of a toxic work environment, negative attitudes towards work can be formed as a result of constantly unpleasant experiences, such as a lack of support from colleagues or superiors, which triggers psychological stress. Norms that favor negative behaviors, such as tolerance for bullying or injustice, can exacerbate psychological distress because individuals feel there is no social support to cope with the situation (Radiani & Tarumanagara, 2024; Z. Wang et al., 2020). Perception of behavioral control denotes a person's confidence in their ability to manage or direct what happens to them. This low perception of control is directly related to increased psychological distress (Radiani & Tarumanagara, 2024; Rasool et al., 2021; Z. Wang et al., 2020). The hypothesis can be described as:

H2: Toxic work environment has a positive effect on psychological distress

Islamic leadership and mental health

Islamic Leadership is a leadership approach grounded in Islamic values, such as justice, honesty, and empathy (Rizaldy & Hidayatullah, 2021). This method is considered to be able to create a better work environment, which in turn improves the mental health of employees (Profile, 2020). Thus, Islamic beliefs lead to favorable outcomes on employees' mental health. Islamic leadership has spiritual and ethical benefits that can support better mental health among employees. Islamic leadership can aid in improving mental health among employees in educational institutions (Syed et al., 2020). Leaders who adhere to Islamic values show a positive attitude towards employee welfare, encourage caring behavior, and support employee mental health (Sahama et al., 2019). These Islamic values also form norms that encourage mutual respect and empathy, which results in a positive work culture (Dasti & Sitwat, 2014). With honest and honest Islamic leaders, employees feel more in control in their workplace, which can reduce stress and improve their mental health (Koenig & Shohaib, 2014; Syed et al., 2020), a hypothesis may be derived as follows:

H3: Islamic leadership has a positive effect on employee mental health

Toxic work environment to employee mental health

A toxic work environment can be interpreted as a condition in the workplace characterized by conflict, negative behavior, insufficient social support and overwhelming demands (Omar & Ahmad, 2020). In the context of educational institutions, this toxic work environment can affect the mental health of employees, which includes stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression (Beemer et al., 2019). In a toxic work environment, employees may develop a negative attitude towards their job due to bad experiences such as verbal abuse or unrealistic pressure (Humam et al., 2023). Pressure from coworkers or superiors to adjust to an unhealthy work culture can worsen the mental state of employees so that employees who feel they have no control over toxic situations in the workplace (e.g., inability to report negative behavior without consequences) tend to experience higher stress (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023). Built upon the explanation and supporting articles, the hypothesis is:

H4: Toxic work environment negatively affects mental health

Psychological stress and mental health

Psychological stress represents a condition of a state of emotional or mental stress that arises as a result of perceived job demands that exceed a person's capacity to manage (Matthieu & Ivanoff, 2006). Psychological distress in the work environment of educational institutions may lead to a significant impact on the mental health of employees. Some of the factors that contribute to this stress include high workloads, interpersonal conflicts, administrative demands, and excessive expectations (Muntean et al., 2022). Employees may view high demands or conflicts in the workplace as a threat to professional stability or life balance. Psychological distress that is not managed properly can lead to a variety of mental health disorders, like as stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout (Chan & Weich, 2020; Fauzi & Suminar, 2023). So the hypothesis proposed is:

H5: Psychological stress has a negative effect on mental health

Psychological distress as a mediator of the influence between Islamic leadership and toxic work environments on mental health

The mental health of employees of educational institutions is shaped by multiple elements, encompassing leadership patterns and environmental factors at work (Sahu, 2020). Islamic leadership based on moral and ethical values has the potential to create a positive work atmosphere, while toxic work environments tend to exacerbate psychological distress (Javid et al., 2024; Tobah, 2018). Islamic leadership directly reduces the psychological distress of employees by creating a supportive work environment (Majeed & Fatima, 2020). This lower psychological distress ultimately improves the mental health of employees (Humam et al., 2023). The toxic environment increases psychological distress, which directly worsens the mental health of employees. Psychological distress can also reduce the positive impact of Islamic leadership if negative social norms are more dominant (Muntean et al., 2022). Psychological Well-being Theory states that psychological distress functions as an intermediary that links the influence of Islamic leadership and toxic work environments to mental health (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023). Islamic leadership can reduce psychological distress and indirectly improve mental health. Toxic work environment increases psychological distress and worsens employees' mental health (AlHashmi et al., 2019; Qasim et al., 2022; Zada et al., 2022). From the explanation and relevance between the variables, hypotheses can be proposed:

H6: Psychological distress can mediate the influence between Islamic leadership and mental health

H7: Psychological distress can mediate the influence between toxic environment and mental health

Perceived organizational support as a moderator of the influence between Islamic leadership and the toxic environment on mental health

Perceived rganizational support is the employee's view of how much the organization values them about their well-being and appreciates their contribution and support can come from the organization's policies, positive work culture, training, or mental health facilities (Lee et al., 2021). Within educational institutions, organizational support serves as a crucial factor that may strengthen or mitigate the effects of Islamic leadership and a toxic work environment, and psychological distress on employees' mental health. Islamic leadership, which is based on values such as justice, empathy, and responsibility, has a positive impact on the mental health of employees (Uzma Qatrunnada et al., 2021). However, the effectiveness of this leadership can be strengthened with organizational support. Conflict, injustice, and bad behaviour are all hallmarks of a toxic workplace, which can exacerbate psychological distress and harm mental health (Beemer et al., 2019). These elements and mental health are linked by psychological stress, which results from a toxic workplace or poor leadership (Humam et al., 2023). Even when workers encounter difficulties due to a toxic workplace or psychological anguish, organizational support fosters a good attitude toward work (Q. Wang & Wang, 2020). Support from the organization fosters positive work cultures where mental health is valued. Employees feel more in control of their work environment when the organization supports them, which lessens exerts a detrimental influence on of psychological stress on mental health (Omar & Ahmad, 2020). Positive relationships and environmental mastery can be strengthened with organizational assistance, making people more adaptable to environmental stresses (Lambert & Pasha-Zaidi, 2019). This moderation is consistent with the idea that constructive social and environmental

interventions might enhance or preserve psychological well-being (Lee et al., 2021; Omar & Ahmad, 2020; Z. Wang et al., 2020).

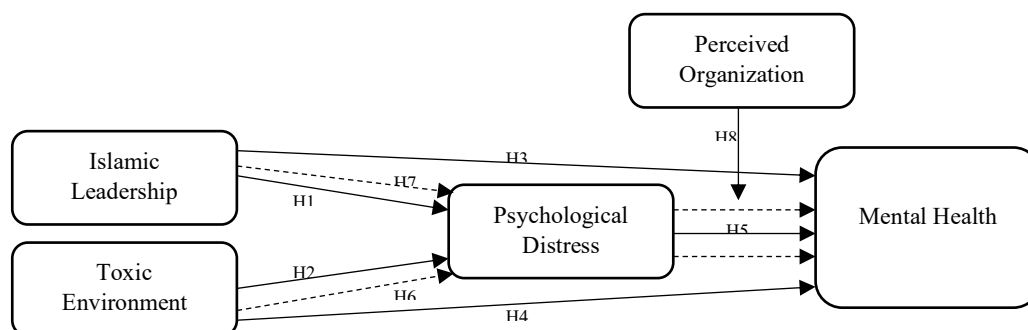**H8:** POS can moderate among Islamic leadership and toxic environment on mental health

Figure 1 Conceptual framework

RESEARCH METHODS

Using a quantitative methodology, this study investigates whether there is a statistically relevant relationship between Islamic leadership and toxic environments on mental health, with psychological distress as mediation and organizational support perceived as moderation. The participants in this study consist of employees who are education personnel in one of the Islamic Educational Institutions in Purwokerto with a population of 1793 and a sample of 327. This study will use a non-probabilistic sampling method combined with convenience sampling techniques (Sugiyono, 2018). Non-probabilistic sampling with convenience sampling was chosen due to practical constraints such as time, budget, and accessibility to the target population. While this limits generalizability, it ensures that the sample is relevant to the study's specific context and objectives, making the research feasible within its limitations.

The answers of each respondent were given a score or weight and discussed in several stages using a Likert scale (Sugiyono, 2018:152).This study uses the Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis program version 3.0 and the Structural Equation Model (SEM) analysis tool. The research conducted, Islamic leadership and toxic environment are exogenous variables that will affect mental health as endogenous variables, followed by distress psychology as a mediation variable and organizational support which is perceived as a moderation variable. Islamic leadership is measured by five items (Islam & Miajee, 2017), which consists of loving the truth and fearing only Allah, Holding the mandate and fulfilling the mandate of others, Easily getting along with others, Having a passion for progress and being highly dedicated and Responsible in making decisions. Toxic Environment is measured by seven items (Anjum et al., 2018) including, My boss/co-workers/subordinates often compliment my physical appearance, My boss/co-workers/subordinates speak Disrespectfully towards me in public, My boss/co-workers/subordinates often try to be honest with me and share dirty jokes with me, My boss/co-workers/subordinates assign me jobs that do not match my level of competence, The boss/coworkers/subordinates often try to talk about my personal and sexual life., My boss/coworkers/subordinates try to keep their distance from me at work, My boss/coworkers/subordinates don't answer my greetings.

Perceived organizational support (POS) is measured using six items (Eisenberger et al., 1986) which consist of My organization is proud of my achievements, My organization cares about my well-being, My organization values my contribution, My organization considers my goals, My organization cares deeply about me, My organization is willing to help me. For Mental Health it is measured by four items (Ahmadi et al., 2012) which consist of I feel incapable of evaluating concerning my personal performance and skills at work, stress often causes me to act in an uncontrolled manner, I am less interested or happy to do something, I am worried about doing something that makes me look stupid in front of other coworkers. The Kessler Psychological Distress-10 (K-10) scale developed by Kessler RC et al., (2002) as quoted by Azzahra & Paramita (2019) is one of the measuring tools used to measure psychological distress or a person's physical, mental, and emotional symptoms over a certain period of time. The K-10 scale is a multidimensional scale with 10 items, including 4 dimensions of sadness and 6 dimensions of anxiety. The following are examples of the items that exist, including: (1) "At least four months later, you still occasionally feel nervous or anxious, so is it possible that it won't be able to make you laugh?" related to the depression dimension; and (2) "In the last four months later, how many times have you felt hopeless?" Regarding the worry dimension, the Likert scale has five points: 1 indicates that something is not happening as often as it should and 5 indicates that everything is happening to you.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

In this study, SEM PLS is used to process data to understand the interaction between factors and the influence of additional variables on this link. In this study, respondents completed 327 questionnaires distributed online through google from. From the survey results, descriptive data of respondents was obtained that showed various professional and demographic characteristics. The majority of respondents have worked for 3 to 5 years, are in the productive age range of 25 to 35 years, and work in a fixed position. The significance value > 0.05 which indicates that the distribution of data in the analysis is normal. Furthermore, there were no outliers or collinearity issues in this study.

Table 1 Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Islamic Leadership	0.801	0.802	0.883	0.716
Mental Health	0.877	0.877	0.915	0.730
Moderating Effect 1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Moderating Effect 2	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Moderating Effect 3	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
POS	0.924	0.927	0.941	0.728
Psychological Distress	0.915	0.917	0.932	0.663
Toxic Environment	0.917	0.918	0.936	0.708

PLS analysis was carried out twice. In the second round, a reanalysis was carried out because the value of the loading factor or external in the first round produced a value of less than 0.5. Each variable is considered valid and reliable from the analysis results shown in Table 1which shows the AVE value > 0.5, this is consistent with the standards that have been set by Fornell & Larcker (1981) and Anderson & Gerbing (1988). As for the validity and reliability of each questionnaire item, it was also confirmed by the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values which exceeded the criterion of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 2 R Square

	R Square	**R Square Adjusted**
Mental Health	0.682	0.675
Psychological Distress	0.697	0.695

Based on the results of the analysis in table 2, the R Square Adjusted value is 0.675 which shows that independent factors in the model such as Islamic leadership, toxic environment and perceived organizational support can include as much as 67.5% variation in mental health. In other words, the model is quite good at describing the variables that affect mental health, while the remaining 32.5% are Swayed by additional variables not part of the model. In addition, the R Square Adjusted value on psychological distress shows 0.695 which is 69.5% which can be explained by the independent variables in the model. That is, the factors included in the model have a great contribution in influencing the level of psychological distress of individuals. While the rest are determined another influencing factor by 30.5%.

Table 3 Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	**Sample Mean (M)**	**Standard Deviation (STDEV)**	**T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)**	**P Values**
Islamic Leadership -> Mental Health	-0.038	0.042	0.034	3.143	0.003
Islamic Leadership -> Psychological Distress	-0.104	0.104	0.036	2.879	0.004
Moderating Effect 1 -> Mental Health	0.015	0.015	0.044	4.333	0.002
Moderating Effect 2 -> Mental Health	0.036	0.053	0.086	2.425	0.001
Moderating Effect 3 -> Mental Health	0.049	0.059	0.084	3.585	0.002
POS -> Mental Health	0.815	0.815	0.025	32.096	0.000
Psychological Distress -> Mental Health	0.107	0.104	0.075	2.432	0.001
Toxic Environment -> Mental Health	0.127	0.127	0.074	2.729	0.004
Toxic Environment -> Psychological Distress	0.784	0.785	0.034	23.394	0.000

Based on the findings from the analysis in table 3, it shows that the Islamic leadership variable has a small negative coefficient (-0.038) indicating that Islamic leaders have a very high negative coefficient on mental health, but this relationship is significant seen from the p-value of $0.003 < 0.05$. Furthermore, there is a negative coefficient (-0.104) which shows that Islamic leadership reduces psychological distress with a significant relationship seen from a p-value of $0.004 < 0.05$. For all moderation effects (moderation effects 1.2, and 3) on mental health levels, there was a significant relationship with a p-value < 0.05, with small coefficient values (0.015, 0.036, and 0.049), which means that the role of moderation effects exists but the effect is not large.

POS has a very strong positive influence with a coefficient value of 0.815 and a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$, which states that the perceived organizational support is very important to improve mental health. In addition, psychological distress also has a positive relationship with mental health as seen from a coefficient value of 0.107 and a p-value of $0.001 < 0.05$, but the impact is relatively small as shown by an increase in psychological distress which leads to a slight change in mental health. Meanwhile, toxic environments have a positive influence on mental health of 0.127 with a p-value of $0.004 < 0.05$, so this shows that toxic environments can significantly increase mental health problems. In contrast to toxic environments that have an influence on psychological distress, it shows a high coefficient value (0.784) which states that toxic environments can significantly increase psychological distress by being shown by p-values of $0.000 < 0.05$.

Table 4 Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Islamic Leadership -> Psychological Distress -> Mental Health	-0.011	0.011	0.009	3.242	0.002
Toxic Environment -> Psychological Distress -> Mental Health	0.084	0.081	0.058	2.444	0.001

The analysis outcomes are in table 4. It shows that there is a total relationship through the mediation pathway which is negative with a coefficient value of (-0.011) which shows that Islamic leadership through psychological distress can slightly reduce mental health. In addition, there was a significant influence with a statistical t-value of 3.242 and a p-value of $0.002 < 0.05$. In contrast to the influence of mediation between toxic environments through psychological distress, it has a positive influence on mental health with a pathway coefficient of 0.084. However, this effect can seem counterintuitive, since usually psychological distress has negative effects. This may be due to other complex factors. However, this relationship had a significant influence with a statistical t-value of 2.444 and a p-value of $0.001 < 0.005$.

Discussion

The Effect of an Islamic Leadership on Psychological Distress

The findings of the analysis show that, although the negative effects are relatively small, Islamic leadership can significantly reduce psychological distress. Individuals experience less psychological stress in the workplace when Islamic leadership is applied more successfully (Javid et al., 2024; Sodiq et al., 2024). This is due to the existence of a negative relationship where psychological distress is prevented by the Islamic leadership. Nonetheless, there is a clear pattern on the relationship between psychological distress and Islamic leadership, it does not just happen. Islamic leadership, defined by the notions of justice, empathy, and moral obligation, makes workers feel more secure and psychologically calm, which reduces the psychological suffering caused by a challenging work environment (Kohrt et al., 2020)

The positive influence of Islamic leadership on pressure can be defeated by negative impacts in the workplace if it is toxic (Aldjufri et al., 2024; Sodiq et al., 2024). Only certain groups of employees who tend to react positively to Islamic-based leadership feel the benefits of pressure reduction (Javid et al., 2024; Udin, 2024). Psychological stress is also strongly influenced by other circumstances, such as external challenges (including family or financial problems) or personal stress, which can reduce the impact of Islamic leadership (Fteiha &

Awwad, 2020; Riaz et al., 2023). The results of this investigation are congruent with past research which showed a positive influence between Islamic leadership and psychological distress (Majeed & Fatima, 2020; Radiani & Tarumanagara, 2024; Yang & Fry, 2018; Zada et al., 2022).

The Effect of Toxic Environment on Psychological Distress

The findings of the analysis show that psychological distress increases significantly, along with increasing levels of toxicity in the workplace environment (Rasool et al., 2021). This association is positive, which indicates that individuals experience more psychological distress when working in a more toxic environment. Bullying, lack of social support, and aggressive behavior are common signs of a toxic workplace (Rossiter & Aochos, 2018; Z. Wang et al., 2020). Excessive stress and fatigue can occur as a result of this, and these factors can exacerbate mental health problems including depression and anxiety.

Many studies show that an unhealthy environment, both in the workplace and in a social environment, can lead to increased stress and mental health problems (Al-Somaidaee et al., 2023). Individuals living in toxic environments often have problems such as erratic anxiety, drastic mood swings, and decreased motivation in previously challenging activities (Radiani & Tarumanagara, 2024; Z. Wang et al., 2020). This creates a negative cycle that worsens their mental health. The findings of this study are in line with previous research that has highlighted the role of toxic environments on the level of psychological distress (Radiani & Tarumanagara, 2024; Rasool et al., 2021; Z. Wang et al., 2020).

The Effect of an Islamic Leadership on Mental Health

Based on the results of the analysis, it shows that Islamic leadership does not directly improve mental health, but still has a significant relationship. This means that there is a tendency that the direct application of Islamic leadership does not necessarily improve mental health directly, and may even decrease it slightly (Manchia et al., 2022). In addition, leadership in Islamic contexts does not always have a positive impact on an individual's mental health, and these results can be considered in the development of more effective leadership models in the context of spiritual and psychological well-being (Javid et al., 2024).

Some factors that can cause this negative impact include the pressure to meet high social and religious expectations, as well as the potential conflict between Islamic leadership values and the psychological needs of individuals (Abdelwahed et al., 2024). In these situations, individuals may feel depressed or unable to meet those expectations, which has the potential to cause mental health disorders such as anxiety cum depression. In other words, employees may have high expectations for leaders based on Islamic values. If these expectations are not fully met, this can lead to frustration that affects mental health (Javid et al., 2024).

The importance of achieving a balance between spiritual and psychological aspects is emphasized in the Islamic psychology literature. According to the preaching of the Qur'an and Hadith, mental health should be achieved by deepening one's faith and spiritual practice (Saranjam, 2024). However, an individual's mental health can suffer if leadership fails to alleviate or even exacerbate emotional distress. Therefore, Islamic leadership should adopt a more comprehensive strategy that emphasizes the mental health and emotional support of community members. These findings are comparable to those reported in earlier investigations (alHarbi et al., 2023; Soukieh, 2025) which highlights the role of Islamic leadership in influencing mental health in the work environment.

The effect of toxic work environment on mental health

The study shows that an unpleasant, unsupportive, and often detrimental work environment exacerbates mental health disorders through high work pressure and unfavorable interpersonal interactions in the workplace (Rasool et al., 2021). This implies that stress, anxiety, and depression are among the major mental health problems that people living in toxic environments often face (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023). An atmosphere full of disputes, harassment, and unpleasant comments can make people feel more stressed. If this ongoing stress is not managed properly, it can lead to more severe mental illness (Omar & Ahmad, 2020). Employee stress is the result of a very heavy workload or unresolved interpersonal issues.

Employee engagement and motivation decline in an unsupportive workplace, which ultimately impacts their mental health (Rasool et al., 2021). Employees are more susceptible to mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression when they feel insecure, unappreciated, or regularly subjected to unpleasant behaviors (such as bullying or discrimination) (Monteiro & Joseph, 2023). Furthermore, a toxic work environment that causes injustice, interpersonal conflicts, or unreasonable demands on employees keeps them constantly stressed, which negatively impacts their mental health. Employees are more prone to mental illnesses such as anxiety or depression when they feel trapped in a bad workplace with no clear way out. This research is in line with the findings of previous research (Rasool et al., 2021) which discussed the toxic environment to mental health.

The effect of psychological stress on mental health

The findings of the analysis showed that there was a positive influence, but this influence was related to the direction of the relationship, not its quality or positive value in terms of welfare (Zhenjing et al., 2022). Since "positive influences" in this situation refer to a direct relationship between the two variables, not positive impacts, they should be interpreted in a broader perspective. The present investigation the quality of mental health decreases along with increasing psychological distress (Xiong et al., 2020). Emotional states known as psychological distress include stress, worry, or sadness caused by challenging circumstances. Emotional illnesses including hopelessness, inability to control emotions, and negative moods are caused by psychological distress and impact mental health in general (Kupferberg & Hasler, 2023).

Psychological distress can lead to physical problems including difficulty sleeping, fatigue, and difficulty focusing in addition to its impact on mental health (Muntean et al., 2022). These symptoms have the potential to worsen a person's mental health. Several things, such as socioeconomic circumstances, interpersonal problems, and academic pressure, can cause psychological distress (Chan & Weich, 2020). Depressed individuals often feel helpless in difficult circumstances and do not have the right connections. Individuals who experience psychological distress are more likely to suffer from other mental illnesses. Research shows that the more stress a person experiences, the higher the prevalence of mental illness (Fauzi & Suminar, 2023). This study is consistent with earlier studies (Abdelhadi, 2023; Dadandı & Çıtak, 2023; Franzen et al., 2021; Nogueira & Sequeira, 2024) which also discusses psychological distress that has an influence on a person's mental health.

Psychological distress can mediate the influence between Islamic leadership and mental health

The findings of the analysis suggest that psychological distress acts as a negative mediator in the relationship between Islamic leadership and mental health. This shows an indirect relationship between Islamic leadership and mental health because psychological distress is

reduced (Javid et al., 2024). Islamic leadership has bad consequences in the form of a decrease in psychological distress, which ultimately leads to improved mental health. This shows that when Islamic leadership is well implemented, it helps to reduce psychological suffering in people, which ultimately improves their mental health (Lucchetti et al., 2021). In other words, effective Islamic leadership serves as a veiled defense against mental health problems.

When a supportive atmosphere is encouraged, Islamic leadership based on the values of justice, compassion, and moral responsibility improves mental health (Abdelwahed et al., 2024). However, that very small direct effect indicates a more common indirect (mediation) mechanism. Islamic leaders typically encourage individual contributions and foster a fair and compassionate workplace. This reduces psychological discomfort including stress, worry, and stress-related symptoms during work (Lamb & Cogan, 2016). Employees are generally more resilient to difficult events and experience lower levels of psychological distress when they feel that their boss values and supports them (Obrenovic et al., 2020). Enables individuals to better regulate themselves their emotions, think clearly, and overcome everyday obstacles when psychological stress is reduced. It improves psychological well-being, including a reduced thereby lowering the likelihood of experiencing depression and anxiety (Smith & Merwin, 2021).

Psychological distress can mediate the influence between toxic environment and mental health

The data suggest that analysis suggest that psychological distress acts as a positive a pathway through which mental health influences or is influenced by toxic environments. The positive influence in this situation suggests that toxic environments lower mental health standards. Burnout, excessive stress, and emotional disturbances are all consequences of an unsupportive, unfair, or conflict-ridden work environment, and they all lower mental health standards (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023). People who work in hazardous environments have more psychological stress, which has a huge impact on their mental health (Kirkbride et al., 2024) This shows how important it is to manage psychological discomfort to reverse the detrimental effects of toxic environments on mental health (Selem et al., 2023).

Stressful psychological states such as worry, uncertainty, and insecurity are caused by a toxic work environment (Rasool et al., 2021). The constant stress response caused by injustice, bullying, or confrontation in the workplace exacerbates a person's psychological distress. A person's capacity to control emotions, think logically, and face everyday problems decreases as psychological distress increases (Alsomaidaee et al., 2023). This negatively impacts mental health by increasing the likelihood of psychological illnesses such as anxiety and depression (Colizzi et al., 2020). A toxic environment exacerbates psychological distress, which in turn affects a person's mental health. Reducing toxic factors in the workplace and offering psychological help to affected individuals is essential for improving mental health.

The impact of Islamic leadership and Toxic Environment on mental health is moderated by Organizational support

Three important moderation leverage on mental health were identified to the findings of the moderation analysis, with perceived organizational support (POS) as the main moderation component. The association between independent variables such as Islamic Leadership or Toxic Environment and Mental Health was strengthened by organizational support, according to the first moderation effect (Javid et al., 2024). Basic defenses against the detrimental effects of psychological or toxic environmental distress on mental health can be provided with minimal organizational assistance, such as open communication or conflict resolution procedures (Pollock

et al., 2020). Although the impact is still small, it serves as the first step to creating a good work atmosphere.

Organizational support plays a bigger role than the first moderation, as seen from the effects of the second moderation. This element was more successful in strengthening the clout between independent factors and mental health (Zhang et al., 2024). More organized and focused company policies, including stress management training, employee contribution awards, or mental health initiatives, can be reflected in these moderation factors (Gubler et al., 2018). Greater support allows people to better manage the adverse effects of toxic environments or psychological distress, which improves mental health.

Of the three moderations evaluated, the third moderation had the greatest beneficial impact on mental health. The link between independent variables and mental health is significantly strengthened by this moderation. High-level organizational support, such as extensive employee wellbeing programs, Islamic-oriented leadership training, or a very friendly and supportive work atmosphere, is reflected in this moderation. Almost all the detrimental effects of psychological distress and toxic environments can be mitigated by this high level of help, which fosters an environment in the workplace that supports the development of mental health (Rasool et al., 2021).

The intercourse between the independent variable (Islamic Leadership and Toxic Environment) and the endogenous variable (Mental Health) was amplified by perceived organizational support (POS), according to three moderation effects. Stress management, fair policies, open communication, and staff wellbeing initiatives are some examples of this support (Acoba, 2024). The influence on improving employee mental health increases along with support levels.

CONCLUSION

Using a structural approach with mediation and moderation variables, this study investigates the impact of psychological distress, Islamic leadership, toxic environments, and perceived organizational support (POS) on mental health. According to the study, psychological stress and mental health are greatly influenced by the toxic environment and Islamic leadership. Perceived organizational support is an important moderator that can amplify positive impacts and reduce negative impacts, while psychological distress serves as a mediator that clarifies the mechanism of influence.

This research offers a theoretical contribution by reinforcing the Psychological Well-being theory through the integration of Islamic leadership as a value-driven approach to mitigating toxic workplace dynamics in higher education institutions. From a practical standpoint, the study provides strategic insights for academic leaders in cultivating psychologically supportive work environments by embedding constructive spiritual principles into organizational practices. The study complements the literature by offering empirical support for the idea that psychological distress plays an important role in understanding how Islamic leadership and toxic environments affect mental health. The importance of perceived organizational support as a moderation mechanism to improve employee mental health is also emphasized by this study. Employers must develop a comprehensive plan to improve worker well-being, which includes strong leadership and a positive work atmosphere.

This study has limitations, including its focus on Islamic higher education institutions, which may limit the generalizability to other cultural or organizational settings. The use of a

quantitative approach also restricts a deeper understanding of the personal dynamics of spirituality and leadership. Future research could employ a mixed-methods approach and explore diverse organizational contexts to enhance generalizability and enrich the findings.

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