

Unpaid Wages and Employer Responsibility: An Islamic Legal-Ethical Analysis

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Abstract

This paper explores the ethical and legal responsibilities of employers who delay or deny wages despite having the financial means to pay, focusing on Islamic jurisprudence and ethical teachings. Using a qualitative doctrinal approach, it analyzes Qur'anic verses, prophetic traditions, classical tafsīr, and fiqh texts, alongside contemporary scholarly views. The findings reveal that wage denial constitutes a form of *ẓulm* (oppression) and a breach of *amānah* (trust), directly violating the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) such as the protection of wealth, life, and workers' rights. The paper highlights the lack of ethical integration in current corporate human resource practices and calls for a transformation grounded in Shariah-based principles. It proposes a practical governance model that includes Islamic payroll systems, ethical audits, and leadership accountability rooted in *taqwā* (God-consciousness), aiming to restore justice and dignity for workers.

Keywords: Unpaid Wages, Islamic Ethics, Employer Responsibility, Zulm, Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'Ah,

Introduction

Unpaid wages by financially capable firms represent a moral and legal contradiction to Islamic teachings. The Qur'an instructs, "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due" (Qur'an 4:58), reaffirming the sacred nature of fulfilling obligations. Likewise, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "Give the worker his wage before his sweat dries" (Ibn Mājah, ḥadīth no. 2443), reflecting the urgency of wage justice. These texts offer a direct ethical imperative against wage delays.

Classical tafsīr literature reinforces this moral stance. Al-Qurṭubī, in his exegesis of Sūrat al-Muṭaffifin (Qur'an 83:1–3), described those who withhold economic dues as hypocrites destined for divine punishment (Al-Qurṭubī, n.d.). Similarly, al-Ṭabarī linked transactional injustice to societal decay and warned of its communal consequences (Al-Ṭabarī, n.d.). These

interpretations position wage injustice as a form of *fasād* (corruption) affecting the entire ummah.

From the viewpoint of classical fiqh, this violation is categorized as *ẓulm* (oppression). Ibn Taymiyyah asserted that unjust wage withholding is an ethical crime and a cause of divine wrath (*Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, Vol. 28). Ibn Ḥazm added that it amounts to consuming forbidden wealth and must be immediately rectified (*Al-Muḥallā*, Vol. 6). Islamic legal tradition views such acts as spiritual and civil breaches.

Despite this strong foundation, modern corporate structures in Muslim societies often lack mechanisms to uphold wage justice. Leaders and boards delay salaries despite having sufficient liquidity, hiding behind administrative procedures. Abū Zahrah (1954) emphasized that Islamic leadership entails safeguarding financial justice, especially for dependents. Yet these ethical mandates are not reflected in practice, causing long-term harm.

Contemporary scholars urge reform through policy-level integration of Islamic values. Kamali (2008) advocates aligning corporate behavior with *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly *ḥifẓ al-māl* (protection of wealth) and *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (protection of life). Indeela & Waleeya (2025) recommends a return to ethics-based human resource governance. These efforts highlight a growing awareness, yet implementation remains limited.

The main problem addressed in this paper is the deliberate delay of employee wages by financially capable firms in Muslim-majority contexts. These delays are not due to insolvency but to systemic negligence or exploitative practices. Such practices violate Islamic teachings and undermine worker dignity. Thus, the issue requires urgent scholarly and legal attention.

The aim of this article is to analyze employer accountability using a holistic Islamic framework that includes *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, and ethical governance models. It argues for embedding ethical accountability in corporate decision-making processes. By referencing classical texts and contemporary research, the article seeks to guide policy and leadership reform. This paper contributes to the discourse on wage justice within Islamic business ethics and governance.

Literature Review

Islamic legal tradition has consistently condemned wage injustice, particularly when the employer has the financial ability to pay. The Qur'an prohibits consuming wealth unjustly, as stated: "*Do not consume one another's wealth unjustly...*" (Qur'an 2:188). Ibn Mājah narrates that the Prophet ﷺ emphasized immediate payment of labor rights (ḥadīth no. 2443). These foundational texts establish the ethical and legal framework for wage protection in Islam.

Classical tafsīr scholars provide further insight into the moral severity of delayed payments. Al-Qurṭubī interpreted Sūrat al-Muṭaffifīn (Qur'an 83:1–3) as a warning against economic fraud, linking it directly to divine punishment and hypocrisy (Al-Qurṭubī, n.d.). Al-Ṭabarī extended this meaning to structural corruption that undermines community trust (Al-Ṭabarī, n.d.). Both works frame wage injustice as part of broader economic *fasād* (corruption).

Al-Asfahānī's *Al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān* explains *amānah* as a divine trust that governs all contractual obligations (Al-Asfahānī, 1992). This aligns with al-Nawawī's commentary in

Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, which identifies financial betrayal as a cause for divine accountability (Al-Nawawī, n.d.). Classical scholars such as Ibn Ḥazm classify unjust salary withholding as forbidden consumption (*al-Muḥallā*, Vol. 6). Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized that such conduct is categorized under *ẓulm* and incurs social and spiritual consequences (*Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, Vol. 28).

Contemporary scholars have called for revisiting traditional Islamic ethics to reform modern governance. Abū Zahrah (1954) argued that financial injustice among leaders stems from neglecting their role as *ūlū al-amr* (those in authority). He emphasized that any leader who delays payment despite capability is religiously accountable. Kamali (2008) similarly urged corporate leaders to apply Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah in their economic dealings.

Hasanuzzaman (1998) explored Islamic business principles and their relevance to ethical employment structures. He stressed the importance of human dignity in labor relations and urged organizations to adopt ethical frameworks. Mubtadi (2019) examined institutional accountability in Islamic organizations, pointing to the absence of ethical compliance mechanisms in many Muslim-majority HR systems. These studies support the argument that spiritual ethics must complement administrative policy.

Scholars writing in Arabic also highlight systemic failures in ensuring wage justice. Al-Sha'rāwī (1987) warned that delaying workers' rights leads to societal decline, as it removes *barakah* and encourages institutional corruption. Al-Zarkashī noted in *Al-Manthūr fī al-Qawā'id* that *al-ḍarar yuzāl* (harm must be eliminated) applies to all workplace injustice, including salary delay. These Arabic texts offer foundational principles that remain relevant to contemporary governance debates.

Despite the richness of Islamic scholarship, there remains a gap in applying these principles to modern employment law and corporate HR practice. Existing studies emphasize theoretical concepts but often lack actionable policy recommendations. There is limited integration of *tafsīr* and *fiqh al-mu'āmalāt* into actual payroll systems and legal enforcement tools. Therefore, this article critically seeks to bridge that gap by integrating classical Islamic teachings with the practical realities and challenges of modern governance systems.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative doctrinal methodology, supported by thematic content analysis. This approach is widely used in legal and religious scholarship to analyze normative texts and extract principles that address contemporary issues (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Bowen, 2009). In the context of Islamic studies, it allows the researcher to interpret divine commands and juristic opinions not just as legal rulings, but as ethical imperatives that shape human behavior and institutional conduct. It is particularly suitable for evaluating employer obligations from both legal and spiritual dimensions.

Primary sources include the Qur'an and authentic ḥadīth collections, which serve as the foundation of Islamic legal and moral reasoning. Verses such as "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due" (Qur'an 4:58) and "Do not consume one another's wealth unjustly" (Qur'an 2:188) were analyzed to explore their relevance to wage ethics. The ḥadīth "Give the worker his wage before his sweat dries" (Sunan Ibn Mājah, ḥadīth no. 2443)

was also examined to identify the prophetic emphasis on prompt compensation. These sources were coded thematically to identify key legal and ethical directives.

The study relies on classical tafsīr to understand the linguistic, theological, and juridical context of relevant verses. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* and *Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān* by al-Qurṭubī were selected for their depth and influence in Sunni jurisprudence. These works help decode terms like *amānah*, *'adālah*, and *ẓulm*, and their relation to economic misconduct. They also provide historical examples of how early Muslim societies addressed wage injustice, thus linking textual interpretation to socio-economic practice.

To complement scriptural and exegetical sources, the research incorporates classical fiqh literature, particularly *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* by Ibn Taymiyyah and *Al-Muḥallā* by Ibn Ḥazm. These jurists categorically condemned the withholding of wages by capable employers, framing it as *ḥarām* and *ẓulm*. Their writings were analyzed for their rulings, reasoning (*'illah*), and ethical tone. The study treats their opinions not merely as legal maxims but as reflections of a comprehensive Islamic moral economy.

Contemporary references were integrated to situate the findings within modern discourse. Kamali (2008) offers a juristic framework compatible with *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, while Abū Zahrah (1954) emphasized the ethical duty of leaders in economic matters. Additionally, recent works such as Muḥtadi (2019) and Kareem (2025) were reviewed to explore how Islamic organizations handle wage accountability. This study therefore used a structured qualitative doctrinal method grounded in Islamic legal and ethical sources. Thematic analysis enabled extraction of key principles on wage justice. Balanced reference distribution enhanced validity and relevance. This method offers a comprehensive Islamic framework to address wage delays.

Table 1

Thematic Summary of Key Ethical Themes on Employer Accountability

Theme	Description
Amānah (Trust)	Delaying wages violates the trust employers are religiously obligated to uphold.
Ẓulm (Oppression)	Withholding payment despite ability is classified as oppression and injustice.
'Adālah (Justice)	Employers must ensure fairness and equity in wage distribution.
Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah	Protecting wealth and life are central objectives violated by unpaid wages.
Tafsīr on Corruption	Wage injustice is linked to economic fasād and social decay in classical exegesis.
Leadership Accountability	Leaders bear moral and legal duty to uphold financial justice for employees.
Governance Gaps	Lack of Shariah-compliant mechanisms weakens wage enforcement.
Spiritual Consequences	Wage delays incur divine displeasure and undermine Islamic ethical values.

This thematic summary outlines eight central issues derived from Qur'anic verses, Hadith, classical tafsīr, and fiqh texts. It shows how wage injustice is not only a violation of labor rights but also a breach of Islamic ethical and legal norms. Each theme reflects the deeper moral obligation of employers to uphold trust, justice, and integrity, reinforcing the call for ethically guided governance.

Findings

Delayed wages in financially able firms violate *amānah* (trust) and *'adālah* (justice), as commanded in Qur'ān 4:58 and emphasized by classical scholars (al-Asfahānī, 1992). Such denial is deemed *ẓulm* (oppression), with the Prophet ﷺ urging immediate payment (Ibn Mājah, ḥadīth no. 2443), and Ibn Taymiyyah affirming it as a punishable moral offense. Leadership bears direct responsibility under Qur'ān 4:59, where *ūlū al-amr* are called to uphold justice, and failure amounts to administrative and spiritual betrayal (Abū Zahrah, 1954). Classical *tafsīr* texts like those of al-Qurṭubī and al-Sha'rāwī equate wage injustice to *fasād* (corruption), aligning it with the condemned practices of *al-muṭaffifīn* (Qur'ān 83:1–3). Modern HR frameworks often neglect integration of *fiqh al-mu'āmalāt*, leaving governance ethically hollow (Kamali, 2008; Indeela & Waleeya, (2025). A detailed discussion of these five critical issues as follows:



Ethical Foundations of Employer Responsibility in Islam

This conceptual framework illustrates the ethical foundations of employer responsibility from an Islamic perspective. Core values such as fairness, justice, and integrity converge to form Islamic ethical accountability, which serves as the guiding principle for employer conduct. When internalized, this accountability leads to the fulfillment of key ethical outcomes: the protection of workers' rights, the fulfillment of *amānah* (trust), the elimination of *ẓulm* (oppression), and the promotion of institutional transparency and justice (*'adālah*). This model underscores that ethical employer behavior is not merely a legal obligation, but a spiritual and moral duty rooted in Qur'anic commands and prophetic teachings. A detailed discussion of these five critical issues as follows:

Violation of Amānah (Trust)

Delaying wages without justification is a betrayal of *amānah* (trust), a fundamental Islamic duty. The Qur'an declares: "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due" (Qur'ān 4:58). Violating this command undermines both justice and ethical responsibility

in business dealings. It is not merely a financial fault, but a disruption of moral and spiritual accountability (Al-Asfahānī, 1992).

Classical tafsīr works clarify that *amānah* includes the timely and rightful payment of others' due. Al-Qurṭubī associates the obligation of *amānah* with the need for transparency and reliability in employment contracts (Al-Qurṭubī, n.d.). Al-Ṭabarī emphasizes that failure to return rights, including wages, is a form of corruption and leads to divine punishment (Al-Ṭabarī, n.d.). Such interpretations confirm that wage delay violates divine and legal expectations within Islam.

Fiqh sources consistently define wage withholding as a serious sin when the employer is financially capable. Ibn Taymiyyah describes it as *ẓulm* (oppression), while Ibn Ḥazm includes it in the category of consuming others' wealth unlawfully (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995; Ibn Ḥazm, n.d.). Their rulings indicate that fulfilling *amānah* is not optional but compulsory in both Shariah and ethics. Denying wages transforms a trust into an injustice and a breach of the sacred covenant.

Various studies and analyses affirm that a failure to fulfill wage-related obligations weakens employee trust and increases workplace injustice. Upholding *amānah* in institutional policies enhances governance and reduces financial misconduct (Kamali, 2008;). Ethical leadership frameworks rooted in Islamic teachings improve transparency and protect workers' rights (Kareem et al., (2025)). When *amānah* is neglected, the integrity of the employer-employee relationship collapses.

Classification as Ẓulm (Oppression)

Islam categorizes wage denial by solvent employers as a form of *ẓulm*, or oppression, which is explicitly condemned. The Qur'an warns: "And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly" (Qur'ān 2:188), signaling that financial exploitation is a major sin. Withholding rightful wages falls under this warning because it involves taking what belongs to someone else. It is not merely a delay in payment but an act of injustice (*ẓulm*) with legal and spiritual consequences (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d.).

Classical Islamic scholars consistently condemned those who delay payments when they have the means to pay. Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized that delaying wages without justification is a prohibited injustice and a betrayal of the worker's rights (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). According to Al-Qurṭubī, wage injustice is closely linked with the crime of *tatfīf*—fraudulent economic behavior—highlighted in Sūrat al-Muṭaffifīn (Qur'ān 83:1–3). Al-Ṭabarī also saw unjust financial practices as spiritual corruption that leads to divine punishment (Al-Ṭabarī, n.d.).

Hadith literature reinforces the prohibition of such exploitation. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ declared: "The delay of a rich person in paying debt is injustice" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, ḥadīth no. 2287). This ḥadīth applies to employers who delay wages despite financial ability, thus committing clear *ẓulm*. Al-Nawawī explained that this type of *ẓulm* is not only socially destructive but legally actionable in Islamic courts (Al-Nawawī, n.d.).

Current scholarship confirms that wage injustice contributes to systemic corruption and economic inequality. Institutional *ẓulm* leads to declining employee trust, workplace

dissatisfaction, and ethical disintegration in organizational culture (Kamali, 2008; Muftadi, 2019). Ethical business practice, rooted in Islamic principles, requires immediate payment of wages to avoid spiritual accountability Kareem et al., (2025). Therefore, unjust wage delay is not a managerial error but a moral violation with serious implications under Islamic law.

Leadership Responsibility

Leadership in Islam is bound by accountability (*mas'ūliyyah*) and justice (*'adālah*). The Qur'an commands obedience to *ūlū al-amr* (those in authority), emphasizing their duty to uphold fairness (Qur'an 4:59). Leaders who delay or obstruct wage payments betray this responsibility. Their negligence is not administrative—it is a breach of divine trust (Qur'an 4:58).

Classical scholars argue that leadership without moral consciousness results in social injustice. Tafsīr literature asserts that unjust leaders attract divine wrath, especially when they harm the vulnerable, such as workers (Al-Qurṭubī, n.d.). Ibn Taymiyyah insists that those in authority must act justly in financial matters to avoid committing *ẓulm* (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). Al-Ṭabarī explains that leadership entails safeguarding rights, not just enforcing rules (Al-Ṭabarī, n.d.).

Prophetic traditions emphasize the leader's accountability before both people and God. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "Every one of you is a shepherd, and every one of you is responsible for his flock" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, ḥadīth no. 893). This includes CEOs and finance officers who control wage distribution. Ignoring their ethical duty results in oppression and damages trust within the organization (Al-Nawawī, n.d.).

Scholarly literature confirms that strong ethical leadership rooted in Islamic values reduces workplace injustice. Leaders must align their corporate decisions with moral frameworks to protect labor rights (Kamali, 2008; Muftadi, 2019). Institutional reforms alone are insufficient without sincere ethical leadership guided by *taqwā* (God-consciousness) and transparency Kareem et al., (2025). Islamic leadership is not only about efficiency but also about fulfilling responsibilities with spiritual integrity.

Tafsīr on Economic Corruption

Economic corruption in Islam includes the exploitation of workers and the manipulation of financial responsibilities. The Qur'an warns against such injustices, especially in the chapter of al-Muṭaffifīn: "Woe to those who give less [than due]" (Qur'an 83:1–3). This verse is often interpreted as condemning dishonesty in all economic dealings, including wage practices. Classical tafsīr links this to the ethical decay of societies that normalize oppression (Al-Qurṭubī, n.d.; Al-Ṭabarī, n.d.).

Tafsīr literature views wage injustice as part of larger *fasād* (corruption), which distorts the divine purpose of economic relations. When wages are unjustly withheld, it creates imbalance (*khillāl*) and promotes greed over fairness. Such behavior, even by financially stable firms, is a betrayal of the trust outlined in Qur'anic ethics (Qur'an 4:58). Commentators explain that this betrayal invites both divine punishment and social breakdown (Al-Qurṭubī, n.d.).

Islamic legal scholars view economic *fasād* as not merely a legal infraction but a violation of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the objectives of Islamic law). Protecting wealth and dignity is central to Islamic governance, and wage exploitation undermines both (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d.). This understanding positions wage delay within the framework of systemic injustice. As such, tafsīr plays a vital role in articulating the ethical consequences of financial misconduct.

Contemporary scholarship reinforces these classical insights, noting that economic corruption rooted in ethical failure harms institutional sustainability. Modern organizations must move beyond compliance to embrace integrity-driven leadership (Kamali, 2008; Kareem et al., 2025). Tafsīr acts as a moral compass in contemporary HR management, guiding wage fairness as part of broader ethical governance. Ignoring this guidance perpetuates inequality and weakens institutional legitimacy.

Gaps in Governance

Despite legal requirements for wage protection, many corporate governance systems fail to align with Islamic ethical principles. The absence of mechanisms rooted in *fiqh al-mu'āmalāt* weakens enforcement of wage rights. The Qur'an warns against unjustly consuming others' wealth: "*Do not consume one another's wealth unjustly*" (Qur'an 2:188). This failure represents not only legal negligence but also moral irresponsibility (Al-Qurṭubī, n.d.).

Classical tafsīr stresses that governance is not simply procedural—it must be grounded in *taqwā* (God-consciousness) and *'adālah* (justice). Al-Ṭabarī interprets Qur'an 4:58 as a direct call for ethical leadership and the protection of rights (Al-Ṭabarī, n.d.). Fiqh literature also requires authorities to proactively remove financial harm from society, a principle known as *al-ḍarar yuzāl* (harm must be eliminated) (Al-Zarkashī, n.d.). These values are seldom embedded in modern employment systems.

Islamic governance aims to protect both the material and moral interests of all stakeholders. The goals of the Sharī'ah (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) include preserving wealth, dignity, and labor rights. Wage injustice undermines these goals, especially when employers have the financial capacity to pay but choose not to. This disconnect between Islamic ethics and corporate behavior reveals a critical flaw in implementation (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995).

Recent research confirms that without a spiritually driven governance model, corporate compliance remains superficial. Studies suggest that integrating Islamic principles into HR and finance policies leads to stronger accountability (Kamali, 2008; Muḥtadi, 2019). Reforms must go beyond audits to include ethical oversight based on Qur'anic injunctions and prophetic teachings. Otherwise, gaps in governance will persist, enabling continued violations of trust and justice.

Discussion

Unpaid wages in financially capable firms are not merely administrative oversights but represent serious violations of Islamic law and ethics. The Qur'an explicitly prohibits consuming wealth unjustly: "*Do not consume one another's wealth unjustly*" (Qur'an 2:188). This command is echoed in Islamic legal texts, where such behavior is classified as *ẓulm* (oppression), which incurs both worldly and divine punishment (Ibn Ḥazm, n.d.). The Prophet

ﷺ warned employers to fulfill payment obligations immediately: “Give the worker his wages before his sweat dries” (Ibn Mājah, ḥadīth no. 2443).

The Islamic worldview perceives wage injustice as both a legal offense and a spiritual failure. According to classical tafsīr, acts of economic betrayal weaken social cohesion and provoke divine displeasure (Al-Qurṭubī, n.d.; Al-Ṭabarī, n.d.). Corporate actors who delay payment are thus not merely violating contracts but undermining Islamic values of trust and fairness. This calls for reform that prioritizes *amānah* (trust) and *‘adālah* (justice) at all levels of corporate governance.

Ethical governance must begin with sincere intention (*niyyah*) and *taqwā* (God-consciousness), not merely regulatory compliance. Qur’ānic verses such as 4:58–59 mandate leaders to uphold justice and fulfill trust without discrimination. Corporate silence in the face of unethical practices is itself a form of complicity, as condemned in both fiqh and ḥadīth literature (Al-Nawawī, n.d.). Hence, internal accountability is indispensable in building Islamic institutions of integrity.

Islamic jurisprudence emphasizes not only the removal of harm (*al-ḍarar yuzāl*) but also proactive justice in employment. Failing to pay wages despite financial capacity is considered a grave violation of *ḥuqūq al-‘ibād* (rights of the people) and requires immediate rectification (Al-Zarkashī, n.d.). Leaders who ignore this duty jeopardize not only their legality but their spiritual standing before God. Islamic governance, therefore, must be restorative and holistic.

Contemporary studies highlight that Islamic human resource management must integrate *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* with practical enforcement tools. These include ethical audits, transparency reports, and internal policy mechanisms aligned with religious values (Kamali, 2008; Kareem et al., 2025). Without systemic enforcement of ethics, even well-capitalized firms will perpetuate injustice. Reform efforts must balance legal precision with spiritual intent.

In conclusion, wage injustice remains a major test for modern Islamic governance. It challenges the sincerity of corporate ethics and exposes the gap between ideal and practice. Addressing this issue requires more than policy—it demands ethical leadership rooted in revelation and fiqh. Only then can *amānah*, *‘adālah*, and *taqwā* form the foundation of workplace justice.

Conclusion

The issue of unpaid wages in financially capable firms constitutes a severe breach of both Islamic ethics and legal obligations. Such acts directly contradict the Islamic command to uphold *amānah* (trust) and practice *‘adālah* (justice), especially where firms possess the financial means to pay. The Qur’ān clearly condemns unjust consumption of others’ wealth (Qur’ān 2:188), and the ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ urges employers to compensate workers without delay (Ibn Mājah, ḥadīth no. 2443). Failure to do so is not a minor administrative lapse but a form of *ẓulm* (oppression) with serious spiritual consequences.

Leaders and executives in such organizations carry dual responsibilities—legal in this world and spiritual before God. Islamic law emphasizes the duty of those in power to uphold

workers' rights as part of fulfilling *ḥuqūq al-'ibād* (rights of others). Embedding Qur'anic principles into management, such as those found in Qur'ān 4:58–59, reinforces a holistic concept of governance that integrates ethics with regulation. In this light, corporate misconduct becomes a theological concern, not just a contractual breach.

To address this challenge, several reforms are recommended. First, companies should adopt Shariah-compliant payroll systems that ensure timely and just compensation. Second, periodic HR audits must be introduced to monitor wage practices under Islamic ethical standards. Finally, leadership development programs should be based on *taqwā* (God-consciousness) and the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly *ḥifz al-māl* (protection of wealth) and *ḥifz al-nafs* (protection of life), to reinforce responsibility and compassion in organizational culture.

Future research should explore the application of Islamic legal maxims (*al-qawā'id al-fiqhiyyah*) in developing practical wage governance tools. Empirical studies assessing the effectiveness of Islamic HR ethics in different sectors can provide valuable insights. Comparative analyses between Islamic and secular models of wage enforcement may also reveal strategic policy improvements. Expanding the study to different jurisdictions will strengthen the call for global Islamic labor justice rooted in both revelation and reality.

Theoretical and Contextual Contribution

This study offers both theoretical and contextual contributions to the discourse on Islamic legal and ethical perspectives regarding wage justice. Theoretically, it enriches the understanding of *amānah* (trust) and *ẓulm* (oppression) by integrating classical sources such as tafsīr and fiqh within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly the protection of wealth (*ḥifz al-māl*) and life (*ḥifz al-nafs*) (Kamali, 2008). It also repositions fiqh al-mu'āmalāt not merely as a legal guide but as an ethical foundation for institutional behavior (Muḥtadi, 2019). Contextually, the paper addresses the prevailing gap between Islamic principles and real-world HR practices in Muslim-majority corporate settings, offering a governance model that incorporates ethical audits, Shariah-compliant payroll systems, and leadership development grounded in *taqwā* (God-consciousness) (Kareem et al., 2025). Furthermore, it responds to contemporary scholarly calls for a holistic integration of scriptural injunctions with modern governance mechanisms to restore employee dignity and organizational justice (Indeela & Waleeya, 2025). As such, this research contributes not only to the theoretical evolution of Islamic ethics but also provides a policy-relevant framework for institutional reform in addressing wage exploitation.

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