# Islamic Management Principles for School Disaster Governance in Oman: A Conceptual Analysis of Leadership, Shura and Accountability

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## ABSTRACT

Written emergency plans matter, but school disaster governance ultimately depends on how leaders interpret uncertain information, consult, decide, coordinate, communicate, and account for action under pressure. Existing crisis-leadership frameworks describe these functions well, yet they rarely examine the normative frameworks through which leaders in Muslim-majority education systems understand authority and responsibility. This conceptual paper adapts the five strategic tasks of crisis leadership identified by Boin et al. (2016)—sense making, decision making and coordination, meaning making, accounting, and learning—through an Islamic management lens. Using a theory-adaptation approach, the analysis draws on Qur'anic and Prophetic sources, classical Islamic governance, contemporary Islamic leadership scholarship, and crisis and school leadership literature. Each task is paired with a governing principle: *tabayyun* (verification); *shura* followed by *'azm* and supported by *ta'awun* (consultation, resolve, and cooperation); truthful and calming communication; *amanah* and *mas'uliyyah* (trust and answerability); and *muhasabah* with *itqan* (self-accountability and excellence). The resulting framework distributes these responsibilities across four levels of Oman's disaster governance, from national, governorate and *wilayah* structures to school leadership and the school community. The framework is accompanied by observable indicators, implementation procedures, and mechanisms for evaluating leadership effectiveness, and it is examined critically in relation to time-critical decision making, inclusive communication, and multi-agency coordination. The paper contributes a culturally grounded, normatively explicit model of school crisis leadership and develops propositions for empirical testing in Oman and comparable Muslim-majority contexts.

**Keywords:** Islamic management; crisis leadership; shura; accountability; school disaster governance

## INTRODUCTION

Buildings, equipment, and emergency plans are essential to school safety, but a crisis also exposes the quality of governance behind those arrangements. When a flash flood, fire, or cyclone affects a school, leaders must judge whether a warning is credible, whether to evacuate or shelter in place, whom to contact, what to tell anxious families, and, afterwards, how to explain what happened and what must change. These decisions are made with incomplete information and under severe time pressure. School disaster preparedness is therefore not only a technical or infrastructural matter; it is also a problem of leadership, coordination, communication, and accountability.

Crisis leadership research provides a useful vocabulary for these demands. Boin et al. (2016) identify five strategic tasks: sense making, decision making and coordination, meaning making, accounting, and learning. In schools, Smith and Riley (2012) similarly show that crisis leadership differs from routine leadership because decisions must be made in the immediate present while leaders manage uncertainty, emotion, and the risk of personal and organisational harm. These frameworks clarify what leaders need to accomplish. They are less explicit, however, about the normative principles that should govern how authority is exercised, whose

knowledge should be consulted, how information should be verified, and to whom leaders are answerable. This question is particularly important where professional practice is interpreted through religious as well as administrative values.

The issue is particularly relevant in the Sultanate of Oman, where schools face weather-related hazards and operate within a multi-level emergency system. Cyclone Shaheen affected the northern coast in October 2021, disrupted schooling in North and South Al Batinah, and led to the use of public buildings, including schools, as shelters (Directorate General of Meteorology, n.d.; Gulf News, 2021; Guy Carpenter, 2021). In April 2024, floods claimed at least 19 lives, including 12 children from Samad Al Shan in Wilayat Al Mudhaibi, and the Ministry of Education extended the suspension of classes across most governorates (Times of Oman, 2024). Omani research also points to leadership and preparedness as practical concerns. Al-Farsi et al. (2022) reported low principal ratings for crisis planning and media and communication readiness, while Al-Buraiki and Belaid (2025) found a positive relationship between transformational leadership and risk and emergency management in government schools. More recently, Al-Shabibi's (2026) qualitative case study of a weather emergency highlighted rapid response, flexible decision making, coordination with official agencies, and communication with the local community. Oman's emergency management structure spans national, governorate, and *wilayah* levels and includes sectoral arrangements for functions such as relief and shelter (Oman Observer, 2024). School leaders therefore work at the intersection of administrative coordination, community expectations, and time-critical decision making.

Against this background, the paper asks: How can Islamic management principles normatively guide the strategic tasks of crisis leadership in Omani schools? It pursues four objectives: (a) to identify Islamic management principles with direct relevance to crisis leadership; (b) to adapt the five strategic crisis-leadership tasks by specifying the governing Islamic principle for each task; (c) to propose a multi-level model that locates these responsibilities within Oman's school disaster-governance system; and (d) to translate the model into observable indicators, implementation procedures, and evaluation mechanisms that can guide empirical validation. The paper therefore differs from phase-based approaches to disaster management. Its unit of analysis is the leadership task and the governance relationship through which that task is performed, rather than the disaster phase itself.

## METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts theory adaptation as its conceptual design (Jaakkola, 2020). The domain theory is the strategic crisis-leadership framework of Boin et al. (2016), supplemented by school crisis-leadership research (Smith & Riley, 2012). The method theory is Islamic management and governance, drawing on Qur'anic and Prophetic sources, classical works on public governance—particularly al-Mawardi's *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah* and Ibn Taymiyyah's *al-Siyasah al-Shar'iyyah* (al-Mawardi, 1996; Ibn Taymiyyah, 2019)—and contemporary scholarship on Islamic leadership (Beekun & Badawi, 1999; Arar et al., 2022). This pairing is analytically useful because the crisis-leadership framework specifies the functions that must be performed, whereas the Islamic lens provides normative criteria for how information, authority, consultation, responsibility, and learning should be handled.

Three considerations justify the selection of Boin et al.'s (2016) framework as the domain theory. First, it is task-based rather than phase-based, so normative principles can be attached to identifiable leadership actions rather than to the broad stages of a disaster cycle. Second, it treats crisis leadership as a set of functions that can be distributed across individuals, organisations, and levels of government, which matches the multi-level structure of Oman's emergency system. Third, its tasks recur in recent empirical syntheses of school crisis leadership, which identify sense making, decision making, communication, collaboration, and post-crisis reflection as core practices (Bellibaş & Karafeye, 2025; Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023). The framework therefore provides an established functional vocabulary to which Islamic principles can be connected without forcing them into an unrelated structure.

**Literature selection.** Sources were selected purposively in three streams. The first stream comprised Islamic normative sources. Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions were identified through the key concepts *tabayyun*, *shura*, *'azm*, *ta'awun*, *sidq*, *amanah*, *mas'uliyyah*, *muhasabah*, and *itqan*, and were retained only where

recognised works of exegesis or governance apply them to the conduct of public office or the management of collective affairs. Classical governance texts were limited to al-Mawardi (1996) and Ibn Taymiyyah (2019) because both treat the duties of office-holders towards the public interest systematically. The second stream comprised crisis- and school-leadership research. Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar were searched using combinations of the terms "crisis leadership", "school leader" or "principal", "disaster preparedness", "emergency management", "crisis decision making", and "culturally responsive leadership". Priority was given to peer-reviewed empirical studies and systematic or scoping reviews published from 2012 onwards, supplemented by foundational works. The third stream concerned the Omani context and included Arabic- and English-language studies of school crisis management in Oman, official information on the National Committee for Emergency Management and the Ministry of Education, and press reports of recent weather emergencies. A source was included if it addressed at least one of the five crisis-leadership tasks, an Islamic principle relevant to the exercise of authority, or the distribution of emergency responsibilities in Oman; commentary without an evidential or normative basis was excluded.

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, Islamic management principles were identified from the selected primary and secondary sources and screened for direct relevance to decisions that school leaders face during emergencies. Second, each crisis-leadership task was treated as an analytical problem and matched with the principle that most clearly governs how the task ought to be performed. Third, each pairing was examined against three questions: Does the principle specify a duty relevant to the task? Does it constrain or improve the way the task is performed? Can it be translated into observable governance practices? Fourth, the resulting task-principle pairs were distributed across actors in Oman's disaster-governance structure and examined through an illustrative scenario. Throughout these stages, analytic memos recorded the textual warrant, the functional rationale, and the competing interpretations considered for each pairing, and the draft pairings were reviewed by the co-authors, whose expertise spans Islamic management and educational leadership, until agreement was reached. The contextual description of Oman draws on publicly available official, scholarly, and press sources. This is an interpretive theory-building exercise rather than a systematic literature review; it does not claim exhaustive coverage of either Islamic management scholarship or disaster studies. The proposed model is therefore a framework for empirical validation, not a tested theory.

**Pairing rule.** Several principles are relevant to more than one task; *amanah*, for example, underlies every task, and *shura* also improves sense making. The analysis therefore designates a *governing* principle for each task rather than an exclusive one. A principle was designated as governing when it met three criteria more strongly than the alternatives: (a) textual warrant, meaning that the primary sources link the principle directly to the activity the task involves (for example, al-Hujurat 49:6 concerns acting on received news); (b) functional correspondence, meaning that the principle addresses the core leadership problem of the task, whether uncertain information, choice under pressure, public interpretation, answerability, or improvement; and (c) operationalisability, meaning that the principle can be expressed as observable practice. Because *amanah* meets the first criterion for all five tasks, it is treated as the foundation of the model rather than as the principle of a single task.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 3.1 Crisis leadership and school leadership in crisis

Boin et al. (2016) define five strategic tasks of crisis leadership. Sense making involves detecting an emerging crisis and understanding its significance from incomplete and often contradictory information. Decision making and coordination involves making critical calls on strategic dilemmas and orchestrating a coherent response across organisations. Meaning making involves offering a credible and helpful account of the situation to those affected. Accounting involves explaining in a public forum what was done and why. Learning involves determining causes, assessing the response, and taking remedial action. The framework's strength is that it treats leadership as a set of functions that can be distributed across people and levels, rather than as the heroic qualities of an individual.

Research on schools confirms that these tasks fall heavily on principals, who must protect students, reassure families, cooperate with external agencies, and restore normal routines, often without specialised training. Smith

and Riley (2012) identify the difficulty of preparing school leaders for crises that are by nature unpredictable, and argue that crisis leadership capability must be developed deliberately, not assumed to follow from ordinary leadership competence.

### 3.2 Islamic perspectives on leadership and governance

In Islamic thought, leadership is a trust (*amanah*) held on behalf of God and of the people, not a privilege. Beekun and Badawi (1999) describe the Muslim leader as both a servant of followers and a guardian of their welfare, bound by the same moral law as those led. The Qur'an commands that trusts be rendered to those entitled to them and that judgement be exercised with justice (al-Nisa' 4:58), and the Prophetic tradition states that each person is a shepherd responsible for his flock (al-Bukhari, 1997, Hadith 893). Classical works on public governance, such as al-Mawardi's *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah* and Ibn Taymiyyah's *al-Siyasah al-Shar'iyyah*, frame the authority of office-holders in terms of the public interest (*maslahah*) and the appointment of the most competent and trustworthy person to each role (al-Mawardi, 1996; Ibn Taymiyyah, 2019).

Consultation (*shura*) is the second pillar. The Qur'an describes believers as those “whose affairs are by consultation among them” (al-Shura 42:38) and instructs the Prophet himself to consult, and then, having resolved, to act with reliance on God (Al 'Imran 3:159). The Prophetic biography records consultation in moments of danger, such as the adoption of Salman al-Farisi's proposal to dig a defensive trench before the Battle of the Trench (Ibn Hisham, 1955). The third pillar is accountability, which operates internally through self-accountability (*muhasabah*) and externally through institutions of oversight such as *hisbah*, the classical office responsible for supervising public conduct and standards.

Contemporary scholarship has broadened the study of Islamic educational leadership, but crisis governance remains peripheral. Arar et al. (2022), for example, identify policy and reform, leadership models and styles, and gender and social justice among the main themes in the international literature; disaster governance is not a central theme. In Oman, Islamic accountability has also been examined in relation to teacher performance (Al-Abri et al., 2024), demonstrating the local relevance of accountability as an educational value without integrating it with emergency leadership. Meanwhile, research on religion and disaster has focused largely on beliefs and the role of religious institutions in relief and recovery (Cheema et al., 2014). The unresolved conceptual question is therefore how Islamic governance principles can be translated into the functional tasks of school crisis leadership.

### 3.3 Recent empirical evidence on school disaster preparedness, crisis decision making, and culturally responsive leadership

Recent syntheses have expanded the empirical basis of school crisis leadership. In a systematic review of 42 empirical studies published between 2019 and 2022, Chatzipanagiotou and Katsarou (2023) found that school leaders faced logistical, academic, and organisational challenges and responded through pre-crisis sense making, communication, collaboration, networking, emotional support, and post-crisis reflection; distributed and collaborative leadership styles predominated. A meta-synthesis of 64 qualitative studies covering health, natural, human-made, and social crises identified crisis-response leadership, well-being support, community engagement, instructional adaptation, and adaptive leadership as recurrent themes, and reported that early detection was often weak and communication with authorities difficult (Bellibaş & Karafeye, 2025). A scoping review of 35 studies similarly found that leadership practices shift across crisis phases, from agile and mobilising practices during the response to more systematic practices during recovery and renewal (Charteris et al., 2026). These reviews also caution that much of the evidence derives from the COVID-19 pandemic, relies on leaders' self-reports, and comes predominantly from English-speaking contexts.

Evidence specific to natural hazards points in the same direction. Mutch's (2015) study of principals following the Canterbury earthquakes in New Zealand showed that their actions were shaped by dispositional, relational, and contextual factors, including prior relationships with their communities and the clarity of external direction. Evaluations of disaster education programmes for children indicate that preparedness interventions can improve knowledge and risk awareness, but evaluation designs are often weak and rarely measure behaviour during actual emergencies (Johnson et al., 2014). The Comprehensive School Safety Framework 2022–2030 positions school

disaster management, including standard operating procedures, drills, and continuity planning, alongside safe learning facilities and risk-reduction education as a pillar of a system-wide approach (GADRRRES, 2022). Research on children with disabilities further shows that they are frequently overlooked in school preparedness and that their needs must be planned for explicitly (Ronoh et al., 2015).

Research on crisis decision making highlights a related tension. Under time pressure and threat, managers tend to rely on intuitive, experience-based judgement, which can be effective when relevant expertise is available but is vulnerable to the effects of stress and emotion (Sayegh et al., 2004). The loss of life at Okawa Elementary School during the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, where staff deliberated at length before beginning an evacuation that came too late, is a widely cited illustration of the cost of delayed decisions in schools (Parry, 2017). Such evidence bears directly on the relationship between consultation and resolve examined in this paper.

A further strand concerns the cultural grounding of leadership. Culturally responsive school leadership emphasises critical self-reflection, inclusive school environments, and engagement with students' communities and local knowledge (Khalifa et al., 2016). Reviews of educational leadership research in Arab societies, however, note heavy reliance on imported Western models and limited development of conceptual frameworks grounded in local cultural and religious values (Hallinger & Hammad, 2019). Taken together, this evidence suggests that crisis leadership in Omani schools should be examined through a framework that is both functionally specific and culturally grounded.

### 3.4 The Omani emergency-governance context for schools

Oman's emergency arrangements were reorganised under Royal Decree 5/2020, which established the National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM) and the National Emergency Management Centre as the command-and-control hub for response and recovery (NCEM, 2024). The national system operates through sectors with designated lead agencies, including search and rescue (Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority), medical response and public health (Ministry of Health), early warning (Civil Aviation Authority), shelter and relief (Ministry of Social Development), and media and public awareness (Ministry of Information). Governorate sub-committees, led by the governorate police commander and supported by sector representatives, coordinate the response in each of the eleven governorates, with *wilayah*-level arrangements operating beneath them (NCEM, 2024; Oman Observer, 2024). During the Al Masarrat weather system in 2026, for example, the relief and shelter sector identified 215 shelter centres across the governorates expected to be affected (Oman Observer, 2026).

For schools, the most consequential decisions are taken above school level. National guidelines issued in September 2024 link the suspension of in-person classes, or a move to distance learning, to governorate-specific rainfall thresholds, state that schools in flooded areas are closed automatically, and assign the announcement of suspension decisions to the national emergency committee (Gulf News, 2024). During the April 2024 floods, the Ministry of Education extended the suspension of classes across most governorates and permitted online instruction where schools had the capacity to provide it (Times of Oman, 2024). Decision-making authority is therefore layered. National and governorate bodies decide on warnings, the suspension of classes, and the designation of schools as shelters; the Ministry of Education and its governorate directorates translate these decisions into directives and resources; and school leaders typically retain authority over on-site protective action, such as sheltering in place, internal evacuation, supervision, and the release of students to guardians. School crisis leadership in Oman is thus exercised largely within, rather than above, decisions made elsewhere, and any normative framework must take this distribution of authority into account.

## ADAPTING THE CRISIS LEADERSHIP TASKS THROUGH ISLAMIC MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Figure 1 presents the central analytical move of the paper. Each strategic crisis-leadership task is paired with an Islamic principle that governs how the task should be enacted, while all five rest on the foundational idea of leadership as *amanah*. The revised figure also adds a third row of observable practices, which form the basis of the indicators in Table 2, shows the four governance levels across which the tasks are distributed, and indicates that learning feeds back into preparedness and sense making. The purpose is not to replace technical crisis-

management procedures with religious language. Rather, the model makes explicit the ethical obligations that accompany those procedures and shows how they can be translated into leadership practice.

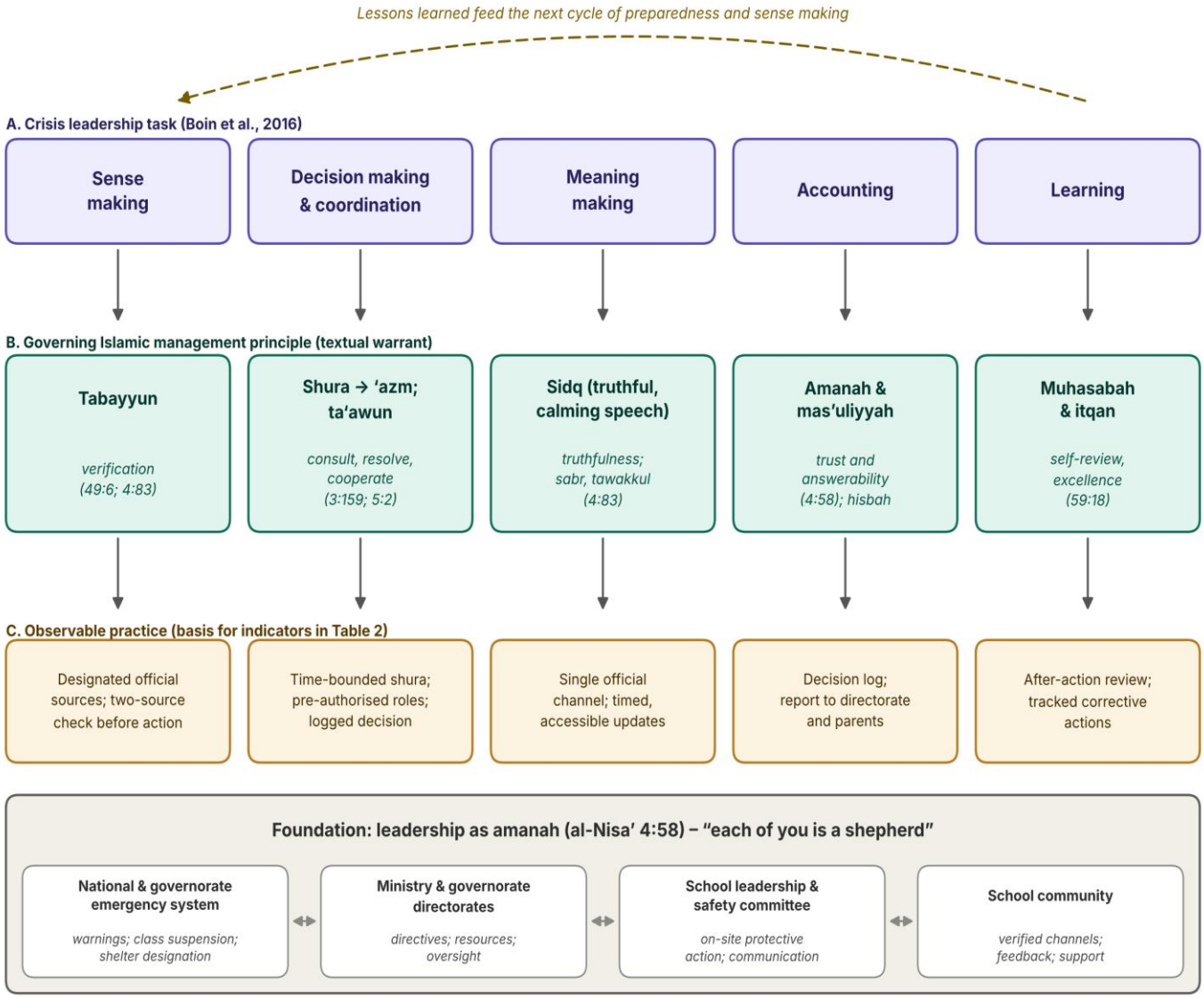



**Figure 1. Crisis leadership tasks adapted through Islamic management principles, observable practices, and levels of school disaster governance in Oman**

### 4.1 Sense making and verification (tabayyun)

In the first hours of a crisis, leaders work with fragmentary information: a weather warning, a message in a parents' group, or a report from a teacher in an affected part of the school. The Qur'anic instruction to verify news before acting on it (al-Hujurat 49:6) establishes *tabayyun* as an ethical duty, while al-Nisa' 4:83 directs matters of security and fear towards those able to draw sound conclusions. Applied to school leadership, this implies designated official information sources, rapid cross-checking of high-consequence claims, and a small situational team capable of distinguishing verified information from rumour. Decisions should not be driven by an unverified social-media post simply because it is circulating quickly. The distinctive contribution of *tabayyun* is therefore not another communication protocol, but an ethical constraint on sense making: leaders are responsible for the quality of the information on which they act.

### 4.2 Decision making and coordination: shura, resolve and cooperation

Al 'Imran 3:159 suggests a sequence that is highly relevant to crisis leadership: consult, resolve, and then act with reliance on God. Shura widens the information base and allows those with relevant knowledge to contribute,

but the verse also places a boundary around consultation through *'azm*, or resolve. In an emergency, consultation cannot become an excuse for indecision. The practical implication is a two-stage process: structured consultation with the safety committee and relevant staff while time permits, followed by a clear decision for which the designated leader accepts responsibility. The Prophetic warning against entrusting matters to those unfit for them (al-Bukhari, 1997, Hadith 59), together with the Qur'anic description of the ideal worker as strong and trustworthy (al-Qasas 28:26), further supports assigning emergency roles according to competence rather than status or seniority alone. At the same time, because decisions on the suspension of classes and the designation of shelters are taken at national or governorate level (Gulf News, 2024), the principal's *'azm* applies chiefly to protective decisions within the school's authority. Pre-authorised protocols should therefore specify which actions a principal may take immediately, without prior consultation, when life safety is at stake.

Coordination beyond the school is framed by the command to "cooperate in righteousness and piety" (al-Ma'idah 5:2). In Oman's system, a school's emergency response must align with the education directorate and the governorate and *wilayah* emergency committees, and schools may be requested by the relief and shelter sector to serve as shelters. Cooperation (*ta'awun*) supports treating these requests not as external impositions but as part of the school's contribution to public welfare.

### 4.3 Meaning making: truthful and calming communication

Meaning making concerns how leaders interpret the situation for others and communicate what should happen next. Families need concise answers to three questions: Are students safe? What is the school doing? What should families do now? Islamic ethics place truthfulness (*sidq*) and restraint at the centre of this task; al-Nisa' 4:83 cautions against broadcasting information about fear or security before it has been properly assessed. School communication should therefore be accurate, timely, consistent with official sources, and explicit about what is known and what remains uncertain. Values such as *sabr* and *tawakkul* may provide culturally meaningful reassurance, but they should accompany—not replace—practical instructions. Used in this way, religious language can support calm and solidarity without encouraging passivity or fatalism. Because school communities in Oman include families who do not read Arabic, guardians with limited digital access, and students with disabilities, truthful communication also requires that messages be accessible in language, format, and channel (Ronoh et al., 2015).

### 4.4 Accounting: trust and answerability (amanah and mas'uliyyah)

Accounting asks leaders to explain what was done, why it was done, and what evidence informed the decision. In Islamic governance, this answerability follows from *amanah*: authority is a trust rather than a personal possession, and the Prophetic image of each person as a shepherd responsible for those in their care (al-Bukhari, 1997, Hadith 893) gives that trust a clear relational form. In a school crisis, accountability therefore extends to students and families as well as to the education directorate and, within the religious frame, to God. The classical institution of *hisbah* also provides a precedent for oversight of public standards (al-Mawardi, 1996). Contemporary practice may translate these ideas into decision logs, transparent post-event reports, accessible explanations to parents, and external review of safety standards. The key shift is from accountability as post-crisis blame to accountability as a continuing obligation to make decisions traceable and explainable.

### 4.5 Learning: self-accountability and excellence (muhasabah and itqan)

Learning closes the governance cycle by turning experience into correction. The Qur'anic call to consider what one has sent forward for tomorrow (al-Hashr 59:18) provides a basis for *muhasabah*, or deliberate self-review, while *itqan* frames improvement as a commitment to careful, high-quality performance; this emphasis is consistent with al-Mawardi's discussion of oversight over the quality and deficiency of professional work (al-Mawardi, 1996). In practice, this supports a structured after-action review that asks what was expected, what actually happened, why gaps occurred, and which corrective actions will be assigned, documented, and followed up. Teachers, support staff, student representatives, and parents can contribute different perspectives to this review. The emphasis is developmental rather than punitive: *muhasabah* requires honest scrutiny, but the purpose is to improve plans, training, communication, and facilities before the next emergency.

# A MULTI-LEVEL MODEL OF SCHOOL DISASTER GOVERNANCE IN OMAN

Crisis leadership tasks are distributed across levels of governance. Table 1 allocates the five task–principle pairs to four levels in the Omani context: the national, governorate, and *wilayah* emergency management system; the Ministry of Education and its governorate directorates; the school leadership and safety committee; and the school community, including parents, students, and local institutions such as the mosque. The final row of the table summarises the formal decision authority held at each level, as described in Section 3.4.

Three features of the model deserve emphasis. First, *shura* operates within and across governance levels. Within the school, it connects the principal with the safety committee and staff; across levels, it connects the school with the directorate and the governorate or *wilayah* emergency committee when decisions require coordination beyond the principal's authority. Second, accountability is reciprocal rather than purely hierarchical. Schools account upward for their decisions and use of resources, while authorities are responsible for timely warnings, clear directives, and the support needed for schools to act. Third, the school community is treated as a governance partner rather than a passive audience. Evidence on the role of mosques in disaster relief and recovery (Cheema et al., 2014) suggests that trusted local institutions may support communication, relief coordination, and community recovery when their role is clearly aligned with official emergency arrangements.

**Table 1. Allocation of crisis leadership tasks and Islamic principles across levels of school disaster governance in Oman**

| Task (principle) | National and governorate emergency system (NCEM) | Ministry and governorate directorate | School leadership and safety committee | School community |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sense making (*tabayyun*) | Issue official warnings and situation updates | Relay verified information to schools promptly | Verify reports; designate official sources; situational team | Rely on official channels; avoid spreading unverified reports |
| Decision making and coordination (*shura*, *'azm*, *ta'awun*) | Decide closures and shelter use; coordinate sectors | Consult schools; issue clear directives; allocate resources | Consult committee, then decide; assign roles by competence | Cooperate with instructions; support shelter operations |
| Meaning making (*sidq*; truthful communication) | Consistent public messaging | Consistent messaging to all schools | Single official channel; timely, truthful, calming messages | Mosque and community leaders reinforce official messages in accessible languages and formats |
| Accounting (*amanah*, *mas'uliyyah*) | Account to the public for warnings and support | Oversee and inspect school safety standards (*hisbah*-type oversight) | Keep decision logs; report to directorate and parents | Ask questions; take part in review meetings |
| Learning (*muhasabah*, *itqan*) | Incorporate lessons into national plans | Share lessons across schools | Conduct after-action review; revise plans and training | Contribute experience and feedback to the review |
| **Formal decision authority** | Warnings; suspension of classes (rainfall thresholds); designation of shelters; multi-sector coordination | Directives to schools; distance-learning arrangements; resource allocation; inspection | On-site protective action (shelter in place, internal evacuation); supervision and release of students; school communication | No formal authority; follows official instructions; participates in review |

Note. The allocation is a conceptual proposal based on the general structure of Oman's emergency management system (Gulf News, 2024; NCEM, 2024; Oman Observer, 2024). The final row summarises formal decision authority as described in publicly available sources; detailed arrangements may vary between governorates.

### 5.1 Implementation procedures

The model can be implemented through six procedures that convert the task–principle pairs into routine school practice. They are designed to operate within, rather than in place of, the Ministry of Education's existing safety requirements.

- **Step 1 – Establish the governance structure.** Form a standing school safety committee with defined roles, a deputy for each role, and a competence matrix that assigns emergency responsibilities on the basis of training and capability (*amanah*; al-Qasas 28:26).
- **Step 2 – Specify verification procedures.** Designate official information sources (the national early-warning service, the education directorate, and the governorate emergency committee) and require that high-consequence reports be confirmed by a second independent source before action, except where immediate life safety is at stake (*tabayyun*).
- **Step 3 – Pre-authorise decisions.** Prepare a decision protocol, aligned with national thresholds for the suspension of classes, that distinguishes actions the principal may take immediately (for example, sheltering in place or internal evacuation) from those requiring consultation with the directorate (*shura* bounded by *'azm*).
- **Step 4 – Prepare communication.** Establish a single official channel known to all families, pre-approved message templates in Arabic and English, accessible formats for students and parents with disabilities, and a fixed schedule for updates (*sidq*).
- **Step 5 – Document decisions.** Maintain a contemporaneous decision log recording the time, available information, options considered, persons consulted, and rationale for each major decision (*amanah* and *mas'uliyyah*).
- **Step 6 – Rehearse and review.** Conduct at least one tabletop exercise and one functional drill each term, each followed by a structured after-action review whose corrective actions are assigned, time-bound, and reported to the directorate (*muhasabah* and *itqan*).

### 5.2 Indicators and evaluation of leadership effectiveness

Table 2 proposes measurable indicators for each task–principle pair. The indicators are intended to make the framework observable and comparable across schools; the benchmarks are illustrative and should be calibrated by the Ministry of Education and its directorates in light of local hazards and school capacity.

**Table 2. Indicators, data sources, and illustrative benchmarks for evaluating crisis leadership**

| Task (principle) | Indicator | Data source | Illustrative benchmark |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sense making (*tabayyun*) | (a) Time from official warning to school situational assessment; (b) proportion of high-consequence reports verified before action | Decision log; drill observation | (a) ≤ 15 minutes; (b) 100% where time permits |
| Decision making and coordination (*shura*, *'azm*, *ta'awun*) | (a) Time from alert to logged decision; (b) proportion of decisions with documented consultation; (c) proportion of emergency roles filled by trained staff with deputies | Decision log; competence matrix; simulation records | (a) Within protocol time limit; (b) ≥ 80%; (c) 100% |
| Meaning making (*sidq*; truthful communication) | (a) Time from decision to first message to families; (b) adherence to the update schedule; (c) parents' rating of clarity and trust; (d) availability of messages | Message records; parent survey | (a) ≤ 30 minutes; (b) all scheduled updates sent; (c) mean ≥ 4 on a 5-point scale; (d) 100% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | in required languages and formats | | |
| Accounting (*amanah*, *mas'uliyyah*) | (a) Submission of a post-event report; (b) proportion of major decisions with recorded rationale; (c) briefing for parents held | Directorate records; decision log | (a) Within 7 days; (b) 100%; (c) within 14 days |
| Learning (*muhasabah*, *itqan*) | (a) After-action review completed; (b) proportion of corrective actions completed by deadline; (c) improvement between successive drills (e.g., time to account for all students) | Review reports; drill records | (a) Within 14 days; (b) ≥ 90%; (c) measurable improvement |

Note. Benchmarks are illustrative and should be set by the Ministry of Education and its directorates according to local hazards and school capacity.

Leadership effectiveness can be evaluated through three complementary mechanisms that mirror the internal and external dimensions of accountability. The first is structured self-assessment (*muhasabah*), in which the safety committee rates the school against the indicators after every drill or event. The second is external review (*hisbah*-type oversight), in which the directorate observes simulations, audits decision logs, and verifies the completion of corrective actions. The third is stakeholder feedback, in which teachers, parents, and, where appropriate, students rate the clarity, timeliness, and fairness of the school's response. Triangulating these sources reduces reliance on self-report, which recent reviews identify as a weakness of the school crisis-leadership literature (Charteris et al., 2026), and allows effectiveness to be judged by both the quality of the process and its outcomes.

## ILLUSTRATIVE APPLICATION

The following hypothetical scenario illustrates the model; it is not an empirical case. During a school day in Sohar, heavy rain following a cyclone warning causes flash flooding around a government school. A video circulates on a parents' messaging group claiming that the school building is collapsing, and parents begin driving towards the school through flooded roads.

*Sense making (tabayyun).* The principal's situational team checks the claim against a direct inspection by the caretaker and the civil defence liaison, and confirms that water has entered the ground floor but that the structure is sound. The official weather bulletin indicates further rain within hours.

*Decision making (shura, then 'azm).* In a ten-minute meeting, the principal consults the safety committee and the directorate by telephone. The options are early dismissal into flooded roads or sheltering students on the upper floor until the roads are declared safe. The committee's knowledge of local roads and the directorate's information from the *wilayah* emergency committee inform the decision. The principal then decides, clearly and without further delay, to shelter in place and to hand students over only to guardians once the authorities confirm that the roads are passable. Because the decision on suspending classes rests with the national authorities, the principal's resolve concerns what lies within the school's authority: keeping students safe on site and controlling their release.

*Meaning making (truthful communication).* The school issues a short message through its official channel, directly correcting the rumour: students are safe on the upper floor, the building is sound, parents should not travel until the authorities advise, and updates will follow at set intervals. The message draws on a calming vocabulary of patience and trust, alongside clear practical instructions, and is issued in both Arabic and English.

*Accounting (amanah).* After the event, the principal submits a report to the directorate documenting the timeline, decisions, and reasons, and holds a meeting with parents to explain what happened and to answer questions.

*Learning (muhasabah and itqan).* An after-action review identifies two weaknesses: the absence of a verified official communication channel known to all parents, and the storage of records on the ground floor. Both are addressed in the revised plan, and the review's findings are shared with other schools through the directorate.

The scenario illustrates that the framework is intended to shape the conduct of crisis leadership rather than prescribe a different set of technical decisions. A leader operating under another ethical framework might reach the same decision to shelter students in place. The Islamic management lens adds a normative rationale for how information is verified, how consultation is bounded by decisive responsibility, how families are addressed, and how decisions are later reviewed. Its value therefore lies in connecting operational crisis tasks with an ethical vocabulary that is culturally meaningful in the Omani context.

# DISCUSSION

### 7.1 Theoretical implications

The framework offers three theoretical contributions. First, it recasts the strategic tasks of crisis leadership as normatively governed practices: verification is not merely an information-management technique, consultation is bounded by decisive responsibility, communication is governed by truthfulness, accounting follows from entrusted authority, and learning requires disciplined self-review. Second, the adaptation clarifies that Islamic management principles do not substitute for technical crisis procedures; they constrain, justify, and give ethical direction to how those procedures are enacted. Third, the model places school crisis leadership within a distributed governance system rather than treating the principal as an isolated decision maker. This creates a conceptual bridge between Islamic educational leadership, crisis-leadership theory, and multi-level disaster governance, and it generates relationships that can be examined empirically rather than remaining at the level of general values.

### 7.2 Practical implications

For the Ministry of Education and its directorates, the framework could inform crisis-leadership development that combines technical preparedness with explicit ethical reasoning. Scenario-based training can be organised around the five tasks, requiring principals to identify verified information, conduct time-bounded *shura*, make and justify a decision, communicate to families, and complete an after-action review. At school level, the model points to concrete governance practices: designated verification procedures, a standing safety committee with defined roles, a recognised official communication channel, contemporaneous decision logs, and routine after-action reviews with assigned follow-up actions. At system level, it highlights the need for clear protocols between schools, directorates, and *wilayah* emergency committees, especially when closure, evacuation, shelter use, or resource allocation requires authority beyond the school.

### 7.3 Propositions for future research

The following propositions are offered for empirical testing:

- P1: In emergency scenarios, structured *shura* involving a standing safety committee will be positively associated with perceived decision quality without materially increasing decision time, compared with principal-only decision making.
- P2: Schools with formal *tabayyun* procedures and a recognised official communication channel will report lower levels of rumour-driven disruption during emergencies than schools without these arrangements.
- P3: Crisis messages that combine clear practical instructions with culturally resonant Islamic values such as *sabr* and *tawakkul* will be associated with greater parental trust and stated compliance than messages containing technical instructions alone.
- P4: Schools that conduct structured *muhasabah*-based after-action reviews and document corrective actions will show greater improvement between successive emergency drills than schools that do not.

These propositions can be examined using complementary designs. Scenario-based experiments could test the effects of consultation and message framing; surveys could measure the presence of verification, communication, and review practices across schools; incident reports could be used to reconstruct decision

sequences; and comparative case studies could examine how governance arrangements operate during actual weather events. Future studies should define measurable indicators for each Islamic principle and distinguish between symbolic endorsement of a value and its observable use in emergency practice.

Validation should proceed in stages. First, a Delphi study or expert panel involving Islamic management scholars, Ministry of Education officials, and emergency managers could assess the content validity of the task–principle pairings and of the indicators in Table 2. Second, semi-structured interviews with principals, safety-committee members, and directorate officials could examine how the principles are understood and applied in practice. Third, retrospective case studies of schools affected by Cyclone Shaheen (2021), the April 2024 floods, and subsequent weather events could reconstruct decision sequences from logs, messages, and interviews. Fourth, a survey instrument derived from the indicators could be developed and tested using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis across a representative sample of Omani schools. Finally, tabletop and functional emergency simulations, observed with a structured rubric, could test P1 and P3 under controlled time pressure while avoiding the ethical and practical difficulties of studying real emergencies.

### 7.4 Critical tensions in applying the framework

Three tensions qualify the application of the framework. The first concerns emergency decision making. Consultation takes time, and when a threat is imminent even a brief meeting may be too long. The framework should therefore not be read as requiring *shura* before every protective action. Under imminent threat, the consultative function shifts largely to the preparedness phase, when protocols are agreed and authority is delegated in advance, and to the post-event review, when decisions are examined; the immediate decision is taken by the designated leader under the pre-authorised protocol. Conversely, the emphasis on *'azm* must not encourage unilateral decisions that exceed a principal's formal authority, given that the most consequential decisions in Oman are taken at national or governorate level. There is also a risk of moral overload: framing every decision as an *amanah* may intensify the personal burden and blame experienced by principals unless the reciprocal accountability of higher authorities is taken seriously.

The second tension concerns inclusive communication. School communities in Oman are linguistically and culturally diverse, particularly in private and international schools, and include families with limited Arabic or limited digital access and students with disabilities (Ronoh et al., 2015). Religious vocabulary such as *sabr* and *tawakkul* may reassure many families but may be less meaningful to non-Muslim families and, if used without practical instruction, may be perceived as fatalistic. Reliance on parents' messaging groups may also privilege some guardians over others. Truthful communication in the sense intended here therefore requires attention to who receives a message, in what language and format, and through which channel, consistent with the inclusive orientation of culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016).

The third tension concerns coordination among stakeholders. Reciprocal accountability is easier to state than to enforce, because schools have limited means of holding higher authorities to account for delayed warnings or unclear directives. Information may reach parents through informal channels before it reaches schools, which undermines *tabayyun* at school level. When schools are designated as shelters, the authority of the principal relative to the relief and shelter sector may be unclear. Community institutions such as mosques can strengthen communication but, without explicit alignment with official arrangements, may create parallel lines of instruction. These tensions indicate that the effectiveness of the framework depends on clear inter-agency protocols and not only on the conduct of individual leaders.

### 7.5 Limitations

The model is conceptual and has not yet been empirically validated. Its account of Oman's emergency-management structure is based on publicly available sources, so the detailed procedures linking schools, directorates, and emergency committees may differ across governorates or may change over time. The theory-adaptation process is interpretive and selective rather than systematic; alternative Islamic principles or different pairings with the five crisis tasks are therefore possible. The Islamic concepts used here are widely recognised, but their interpretation, emphasis, and institutional expression may vary across scholarly traditions and

communities. Finally, the framework is designed primarily for government schools and should not be assumed to transfer unchanged to private schools, higher education, or other national contexts.

## CONCLUSION

Effective school disaster governance requires more than a written emergency plan. It requires leaders who can verify uncertain information, consult without losing the capacity to decide, communicate truthfully, explain their actions, and learn systematically from experience. By adapting the five strategic tasks of crisis leadership through Islamic management principles, this paper develops a framework in which *tabayyun*, *shura* and *'azm*, *sidq*, *amanah* and *mas'uliyyah*, and *muhasabah* with *itqan* operate as practical standards for leadership conduct. Distributing these responsibilities across Oman's emergency system, education authorities, school leadership, and the school community also shifts attention from the individual principal to the governance relationships that make crisis response possible. The proposed indicators, implementation procedures, and evaluation mechanisms translate these principles into observable practice, while the tensions identified, namely time-critical decisions, inclusive communication, and multi-agency coordination, mark the boundaries within which the framework should be applied. The next step is empirical: the proposed relationships should be tested, refined, and, where necessary, challenged through evidence from Omani schools and comparable Muslim-majority education systems.

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