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Aligning Shariah Principles with Essential Soft Skills in Patient Care: A Systematic Review

Thandar Soe @ Sumaiyah Jamaludin¹, Mohd. Said Nurumal^{2,*}, Che Azunie Che Abdullah¹, Rif'Atunnailah Mat Isa³, Muhammad Kamil Che Hasan¹, Mohd Khairul Zul Hasymi Firdaus¹, Mohd Iman Saiful Suhardi⁴, Suhaiza Mohd Fadzil⁵, Kyu Kyu Win⁶, Heri Ariyanto⁷

- ¹ Department of Medical Surgical Nursing, Kuliyah of Nursing, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuantan Campus, Pahang, Malaysia
² Department of Critical Care Nursing, Kuliyah of Nursing, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuantan Campus, Pahang, Malaysia
³ Department of Professional Nursing Studies, Kuliyah of Nursing, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuantan Campus, Pahang, Malaysia
⁴ Department of Internal Medicine, Kuliyah of Medicine, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuantan Campus, Pahang, Malaysia
⁵ Sultan Ahmad Shah Medical Centre @ IIUM, Kuantan Pahang, Malaysia
⁶ Shah Medical Centre @ IIUM, Kuantan Pahang, Malaysia
⁷ Department of Nursing, STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Soft skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, ethical decision-making, and interpersonal interaction are essential components of quality patient care. In Islamic healthcare settings, these competencies should align with Shariah principles to ensure that healthcare delivery is ethically, culturally, and spiritually appropriate. This systematic review aimed to identify the key Shariah principles that align with essential soft skills in patient care within Islamic healthcare contexts. This review was conducted according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Literature was retrieved from Scopus, PubMed, Web of Science, Al-Manhal, and Index Islamicus databases using predefined keywords related to Shariah-compliant healthcare, Islamic ethics, nursing soft skills, and Maqasid Shariah. The quality of included studies was assessed using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist. A total of 15 studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis. The findings identified five dominant Shariah principles namely *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), *niyyah* (intention), *amanah* (trust), and *karamah* (human dignity), which were closely associated with nine essential soft skills in patient care. *Rahmah* was strongly associated with communication and interpersonal skills, while *'adl* supported ethical decision-making and critical thinking. *Niyyah* reinforced leadership and social responsibility, whereas *amanah* promoted teamwork and collaborative problem-solving. *Karamah* emphasized patient dignity, ethical sensitivity, and accuracy in clinical practice. The integration of Shariah principles with soft skills provides a holistic framework for culturally sensitive and ethically grounded patient care. These findings support the incorporation of Shariah-based soft skill development into nursing education and healthcare practice, particularly in Muslim-majority healthcare settings.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: mohdsaid@iium.edu.my

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1. Introduction

Soft skills are fundamental components of nursing and healthcare practice because they enable healthcare professionals to deliver patient-centered, compassionate, and ethically appropriate care [1,2]. Effective communication, teamwork, critical thinking, leadership, and interpersonal skills contribute significantly to patient safety, quality of care, and patient satisfaction [6,7]. Jamaludin *et al.*, [1] emphasized that communication and interpersonal skills are essential elements in structured clinical nursing assessments, while Jamaludin *et al.*, [7] further highlighted the importance of teamwork and professional collaboration in improving nursing performance and patient outcomes. Communication skills also play an important role in establishing therapeutic relationships, strengthening patient trust, and enhancing emotional support during healthcare delivery [8]. In addition, leadership and social responsibility encourage nurses to advocate for patients and function effectively within multidisciplinary healthcare environments [9]. Critical thinking and problem-solving skills are equally important in supporting sound clinical judgment and safe decision-making in complex healthcare situations [10].

In Muslim-majority healthcare settings, these professional competencies should additionally align with Shariah principles to ensure that healthcare services are culturally sensitive, ethically grounded, and spiritually appropriate [3]. A Shariah-compliant healthcare framework integrates governance, medical ethics, patient care, and spiritual care support into healthcare delivery systems [3]. This framework is guided by four major dimensions namely *rabbaniyyah* (godliness), *akhlaqiyyah* (morality), *waqi'iyah* (reality), and *insaniyyah* (humanity), which collectively influence healthcare quality and patient satisfaction [4]. Furthermore, the framework incorporates the objectives of Maqasid Shariah, which emphasize the preservation of faith (*din*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*aql*), lineage (*nasl*), and wealth (*mal*) within healthcare practice [5].

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of integrating Islamic ethical principles into nursing education and healthcare practice to produce healthcare professionals who are capable of delivering culturally competent and spiritually sensitive care [12,13]. Ghaly [12] discussed compassion and ethical responsibility within Islamic healthcare, particularly in end-of-life care, whereas Qowi *et al.*, [13] highlighted the application of Islamic values in nursing services to strengthen professional conduct and patient-centered care.

Similarly, the integration of Shariah principles with soft skills has been suggested to bridge the gap between technical competence and spiritual responsibility, thereby enhancing healthcare quality and patient satisfaction [14]. Despite increasing attention toward Shariah-compliant healthcare and nursing soft skills, limited studies have systematically examined the alignment between specific Shariah principles and essential soft skills in patient care. Existing literature predominantly discusses Islamic healthcare ethics and professional nursing competencies separately, with minimal synthesis of how these concepts can be integrated within a comprehensive patient care framework. Therefore, this systematic review aims to explore the alignment between essential soft skills and key Shariah principles in patient care. The findings of this review may contribute toward the development of culturally appropriate, ethically robust, and Shariah-compliant healthcare practices, particularly within Islamic healthcare settings.

2. Methodology

2.1 Study Design

This study employed a systematic literature review design to identify and synthesize evidence related to the alignment between Shariah principles and essential soft skills in patient care. The

review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure transparency, methodological rigor, and reproducibility throughout the review process, as illustrated in Figure 1 [15].

2.2 Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using five electronic databases namely Scopus, PubMed, Web of Science, Al-Manhal, and Index Islamicus. These databases were selected because they provide extensive coverage of healthcare, nursing, medical ethics, and Islamic studies literature. The search strategy combined keywords and Boolean operators related to Shariah-compliant healthcare and nursing soft skills. The primary search terms included “Shariah-compliant healthcare,” “Islamic ethics in nursing,” “soft skills in nursing,” “Maqasid Shariah,” “nursing education in Islamic settings,” and “holistic care in Muslim healthcare.”

The search was limited to peer-reviewed articles published in English between 2000 and 2025 to ensure the inclusion of contemporary and relevant studies. In addition, manual screening of reference lists from selected articles was conducted to identify additional relevant literature.

2.3 Selection Criteria

Studies were included in the review if they met the following criteria:

1. Discussed Shariah-compliant healthcare practices or Islamic ethical principles in healthcare;
2. Examined soft skills development in nursing or healthcare education;
3. Addressed the integration of Islamic values within patient care or healthcare delivery;
4. Were published in peer-reviewed journals between 2000 and 2025;
5. Were written in English.

Studies were excluded if they:

1. Focused exclusively on technical or clinical competencies without discussing soft skills;
2. Did not reference Shariah principles or Islamic healthcare ethics;
3. Were non-peer-reviewed publications such as editorials, blogs, conference abstracts, or opinion papers;
4. Provided insufficient methodological information or incomplete findings.

The study selection process involved title screening, abstract screening, full-text assessment, and eligibility verification based on the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

2.4 Quality Assessment

The methodological quality of the selected studies was evaluated using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist [16]. The CASP tool was selected because it provides a systematic framework for assessing research quality, including the clarity of study aims, appropriateness of study design, rigor of data collection procedures, ethical considerations, and validity of findings.

Each study was independently assessed according to the CASP criteria to ensure consistency and credibility of the included evidence. Studies that failed to meet the minimum quality assessment standards were excluded from the final review. Following the screening and appraisal process, 16 studies fulfilled all inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis.

2.5 Data Extraction and Analysis

Data from the selected studies were systematically extracted and analyzed using a narrative synthesis approach based on established systematic review procedures [17]. A standardized data extraction form was developed to collect relevant information from each study, including author details, publication year, study objectives, study design, identified Shariah principles, and corresponding soft skills related to patient care.

The extracted data were subsequently organized into tables to facilitate comparison across studies and identify recurring themes and patterns. Narrative synthesis was then conducted to examine the relationships between Shariah principles and essential soft skills in nursing and healthcare practice. This approach enabled the integration of findings from diverse study designs while maintaining a structured and reproducible analytical process to address the research objective.

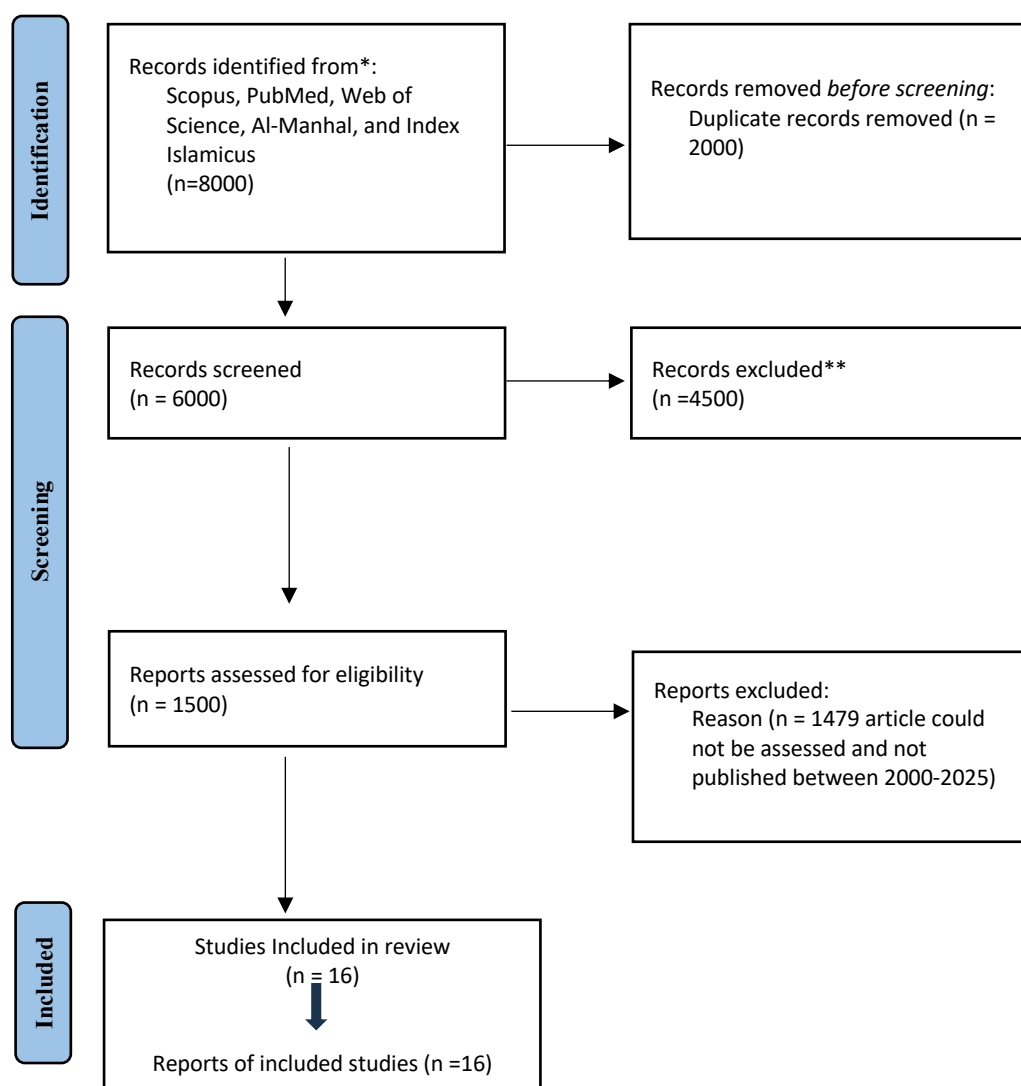


Fig. 1. PRISMA flow diagram illustrating the study selection and review process

3. Results

This systematic review identified five dominant Shariah principles namely *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), *niyyah* (intention), *amanah* (trust), and *karamah* (human dignity), which were

consistently aligned with the essential soft skills required in patient care across the 16 included studies. The findings demonstrate the integration of Islamic ethical values with professional nursing competencies, forming a holistic framework for Shariah-compliant healthcare practice. The thematic relationships between each Shariah principle and its corresponding soft skills are discussed below.

3.1 *Rahmah (Compassion)*

Rahmah, commonly understood as compassion, refers to a deep awareness of human suffering accompanied by a sincere desire to alleviate it [18,19]. Across the reviewed studies, rahmah emerged as one of the most frequently discussed Shariah principles associated with communication and interpersonal skills. Compassion-based communication promotes empathy, active listening, emotional responsiveness, and supportive patient interactions, which are essential components of patient-centered care [1,3].

Several studies reported that compassionate communication enhances patient trust, satisfaction, and psychological well-being [19]. Jamaludin *et al.*, [1] emphasized that communication and interpersonal skills are important elements of structured clinical nursing assessments, while Shaban *et al.*, [19] demonstrated that communication competence mediates the relationship between compassion and patient-centered care. Collectively, these findings suggest that rahmah strengthens therapeutic relationships and contributes to holistic and compassionate healthcare delivery.

3.2 *'Adl (Justice)*

The principle of *'adl* (justice) emphasizes fairness, equity, and the protection of human rights in all aspects of healthcare practice [20]. In this review, *'adl* was closely associated with critical thinking skills and professional ethical decision-making. These competencies enable nurses to evaluate clinical situations objectively, minimize bias, and ensure equitable treatment for all patients [11,21].

The reviewed studies highlighted that ethical decision-making training significantly improves nurses' ability to manage ethical dilemmas and maintain professional integrity in clinical practice [22]. In addition, critical thinking skills support fair clinical judgment and strengthen evidence-based decision-making processes. Together, these findings indicate that *'adl* serves as a foundational ethical principle that promotes justice, fairness, and accountability within patient care.

3.3 *Niyyah (Intention)*

Niyyah refers to sincere intention and the ethical purpose underlying professional actions [23]. In Islamic teachings, actions performed with sincere intention are regarded as acts of virtue and moral responsibility. Within healthcare settings, *niyyah* was strongly linked to leadership skills and social responsibility, emphasizing that healthcare professionals should prioritize patient welfare and ethical service above personal interests [1].

The reviewed literature suggests that leadership in healthcare extends beyond managerial authority to include accountability, sincerity, and ethical commitment toward patients and healthcare teams [24]. Healthcare professionals who demonstrate sincerity and professional responsibility are more likely to inspire teamwork, encourage ethical conduct, and strengthen patient trust [3]. These findings indicate that *niyyah* reinforces intrinsic motivation and promotes morally grounded healthcare practice.

3.4 Amanah (Trust)

Amanah refers to trust, accountability, and the fulfillment of responsibilities entrusted to an individual [25]. In healthcare practice, this principle was consistently associated with teamwork, collaborative problem-solving, and professional accountability. Effective teamwork depends on mutual trust, transparent communication, and shared responsibility among healthcare professionals [27].

Several studies demonstrated that *amanah* significantly influences patient trust and confidence in healthcare services, particularly within Shariah-compliant healthcare settings [26]. Trust-based healthcare practices improve communication, facilitate shared decision-making, and strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration. Furthermore, *amanah* promotes reliability, accountability, and professional integrity, which are essential for maintaining patient safety and continuity of care.

3.5 Karamah (Human Dignity)

Karamah, or human dignity, refers to the inherent honor and worth of every individual [28]. This principle serves as a fundamental ethical foundation for respectful and humane healthcare delivery [29]. Within the reviewed studies, *karamah* was closely associated with numeracy skills and clinical accuracy, particularly in relation to medication administration, dosage calculation, and interpretation of laboratory findings.

Accurate clinical practice is essential for preserving patient safety, dignity, and quality of care [30,31]. Errors in medication calculation or clinical interpretation may compromise patient well-being and violate the ethical responsibility of healthcare professionals. The reviewed evidence further suggests that preserving patient dignity enhances ethical sensitivity, compassionate care, and respect for patient rights. Therefore, *karamah* reinforces the importance of technical precision and ethical responsibility in nursing practice.

A comprehensive synthesis of the alignment between Shariah principles, essential soft skills, applications in patient care, and associated patient outcomes is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: ada table melintang

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the integration of Shariah principles with essential soft skills provides a comprehensive, ethically grounded, and culturally sensitive framework for patient care. This alignment not only enhances professional competency but also strengthens the spiritual and moral dimensions of nursing practice. The convergence of these principles contributes to improved patient trust, patient satisfaction, ethical accountability, and quality of care, particularly within Islamic healthcare settings.

4. Discussion

This systematic review demonstrates that essential soft skills in nursing and healthcare practice are closely aligned with core Islamic ethical principles. Across the reviewed studies, communication,

leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and interpersonal skills consistently emerged as important competencies for delivering safe, compassionate, and patient-centered care [1,11]. The findings further suggest that integrating Shariah principles including *rahmah*, *'adl*, *niyyah*, *amanah*, and *karamah* extends healthcare practice beyond technical competency by incorporating moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions into patient care.

The integration of Maqasid Shariah within healthcare systems further strengthens this alignment by emphasizing the preservation of faith, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth [5]. In addition, Shariah-based dimensions such as *rabbaniyyah*, *akhlaqiyyah*, *waqi'iyah*, and *insaniyyah* contribute to healthcare quality and patient satisfaction through the incorporation of Islamic ethical values into daily clinical practice [4]. These findings indicate that Shariah-compliant healthcare is not solely a religious framework, but also a practical and holistic approach for improving healthcare delivery, patient trust, and professional accountability.

The findings also highlight the importance of integrating Islamic ethical principles within nursing education and professional training. Previous studies emphasized that healthcare professionals who understand cultural and spiritual patient needs are more capable of delivering holistic and culturally sensitive care [12,13]. This is particularly important within Muslim-majority healthcare settings, where patients often expect healthcare services to align with Islamic ethical and spiritual values. Therefore, integrating Shariah principles into nursing education may strengthen both professional competency and ethical sensitivity among future healthcare providers.

Rahmah (compassion) emerged as one of the most influential Shariah principles associated with communication and interpersonal skills. Compassion-centered communication enhances empathy, emotional support, active listening, and therapeutic relationships, all of which contribute to patient trust and satisfaction [19]. While Shaban *et al.*, [19] emphasized the role of communication competence in improving patient-centered care, Ghaly [12] further described compassion as a moral obligation within Islamic healthcare practice. Together, these studies suggest that compassion in Islamic healthcare extends beyond emotional support toward a broader ethical responsibility in patient care.

Similarly, the principle of *'adl* (justice) plays a significant role in supporting ethical decision-making and critical thinking within clinical practice. Fair and unbiased clinical judgment is essential for protecting patient rights and ensuring equitable healthcare delivery [20,21]. The reviewed evidence demonstrated that ethical decision-making training improves nurses' ability to manage ethical dilemmas and complex clinical situations [22]. These findings reinforce the importance of justice as both a professional competency and an Islamic ethical obligation within healthcare settings. *Niyyah* (intention) was also identified as an important principle influencing leadership and social responsibility. Leadership grounded in sincere intention promotes accountability, transparency, and patient-centered decision-making [23]. The reviewed studies suggest that healthcare professionals who demonstrate sincerity and ethical commitment are more likely to foster teamwork, strengthen workplace morale, and prioritize patient welfare [24]. This finding highlights that effective healthcare leadership is not solely dependent on managerial authority but also on moral purpose and professional integrity.

The principle of *amanah* (trust) further strengthens teamwork, accountability, and collaborative problem-solving within healthcare environments. Trust-based professional relationships improve communication, shared decision-making, and continuity of care [26,27]. Previous studies demonstrated that trust significantly influences patient confidence and satisfaction within Shariah-compliant healthcare settings [26]. Furthermore, effective teamwork and professional accountability contribute to safer healthcare environments and improved patient outcomes. These findings indicate

that *amanah* serves as a critical ethical foundation for maintaining professional responsibility and healthcare quality.

Karamah (human dignity) reinforces the ethical obligation to preserve the inherent worth and dignity of every patient. The reviewed evidence demonstrated that numeracy skills and clinical accuracy are essential for maintaining patient safety and preventing clinical errors related to medication administration and interpretation of laboratory findings [30,31]. Respecting patient dignity also promotes compassionate, equitable, and respectful healthcare practices [28,29]. These findings suggest that technical competency should not be viewed independently from ethical responsibility, as accurate clinical practice directly contributes to preserving patient dignity and well-being.

Overall, the findings of this review demonstrate that Shariah principles provide a comprehensive ethical framework that strengthens both the professional and spiritual dimensions of nursing practice. The integration of these principles within healthcare systems and nursing education may contribute to improved patient outcomes, enhanced patient satisfaction, stronger ethical accountability, and higher standards of culturally sensitive care, particularly within Islamic healthcare settings.

5. Strengths and Limitations

This systematic review provides a comprehensive synthesis of the relationship between Shariah principles and essential soft skills in patient care by integrating evidence from nursing, healthcare, and Islamic studies literature. The review contributes to the growing body of knowledge on Shariah-compliant healthcare by proposing a holistic framework that combines professional competencies with Islamic ethical values.

Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, only English-language studies were included, which may have excluded relevant literature published in Arabic or other languages. Second, the limited number of empirical studies specifically examining the integration of Shariah principles with nursing soft skills may affect the generalizability of the findings. Third, variations in study design and conceptual interpretation across included studies may have introduced heterogeneity in the synthesis process. Despite these limitations, the review provides an important conceptual foundation for future research and educational development in Islamic healthcare settings.

6. Conclusion

This systematic review demonstrates that five key Shariah principles namely *rahmah*, *'adl*, *niyyah*, *amanah*, and *karamah* are closely aligned with the essential soft skills required in patient care. The integration of these principles strengthens the ethical, cultural, spiritual, and professional dimensions of healthcare delivery, contributing to improved healthcare quality, patient safety, and patient satisfaction.

The convergence of Shariah principles with professional nursing competencies provides a comprehensive and culturally grounded framework for patient-centered care. This framework is particularly relevant in Muslim-majority healthcare settings, where healthcare practices are expected to align with Islamic ethical values while maintaining high clinical standards. Integrating Shariah principles into nursing education and healthcare practice may further support the development of healthcare professionals who are not only clinically competent but also ethically grounded and spiritually responsive.

Future research should focus on developing and validating practical frameworks for integrating Shariah principles with soft skills training across diverse healthcare environments to strengthen culturally sensitive and ethically grounded healthcare delivery.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this systematic review, nursing education programs should intentionally integrate Shariah principles into soft skills training to support the development of healthcare professionals who are clinically competent, ethically grounded, and spiritually aware. Embedding principles such as *rahmah*, *'adl*, *niyyah*, *amanah*, and *karamah* within teaching and learning activities may strengthen students' communication, critical thinking, leadership, teamwork, and ethical decision-making skills, particularly within Muslim-majority healthcare settings.

In addition, continuous professional development (CPD) programs should incorporate structured training related to Shariah-compliant healthcare practices. Such programs should emphasize compassionate care, ethical leadership, patient dignity, trust-building, teamwork, and professional accountability to support lifelong learning and professional competency among healthcare providers. Healthcare institutions are also encouraged to develop policies and clinical guidelines that explicitly incorporate Shariah principles into healthcare delivery systems. Integrating these principles within institutional frameworks may improve consistency in care practices, strengthen patient trust, and enhance culturally sensitive healthcare delivery.

Future studies should adopt mixed methods approaches to develop and validate comprehensive frameworks integrating Shariah principles with essential soft skills in healthcare practice. Further research exploring both healthcare professionals' perspectives and patients' experiences may provide deeper understanding regarding the feasibility, effectiveness, and impact of Shariah-compliant soft skills frameworks within healthcare institutions, particularly in settings such as Sultan Ahmad Shah Medical Centre @ IIUM (SASMEC @ IIUM).

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Author declaration

All authors contributed meaningfully to the research and preparation of this manuscript. TS@SJ was responsible for writing the manuscript, articles findings, analysis, interpretation of findings and final revision of the manuscript. MSN contributed to the conception and design of the study, analysis, interpretation of findings and critically revising the manuscript. CACA, KKW and RMI also contributed to the conception and design of the study, analysis, interpretation of findings and critically revising the manuscript. MKCH and MKZHF was involved in looking for articles, analysis, interpretation of findings and critically revising the manuscript. MISS, HA and SMF contributed to the conception and design of the study, as well as articles collection and analysis.

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Table 1

Synthesis of the alignment between Shariah principles, essential soft skills, and their associated impact on patient outcomes

Shariah Principle	Definition (Islamic Perspective)	Aligned Soft Skills	Application in Patient Care	Impact on Patient Outcomes	Supporting References
Rahmah (Compassion)	Deep awareness of suffering with a desire to alleviate it	Communication skills, Interpersonal skills	Enhances empathy, active listening, emotional support, and therapeutic relationships	Increased patient trust, improved satisfaction, enhanced emotional well-being, better patient-centered care	[1], [3], [18], [19]
‘Adl (Justice)	Fairness, equity, and protection of rights	Critical thinking skills, Ethical decision-making skills	Supports unbiased clinical judgment, equitable care, and ethical integrity in decision-making	Improved fairness in care delivery, protection of patient rights, strengthened ethical practice, reduced bias in clinical decisions	[11], [20], [21], [22]
Niyyah (Intention)	Sincere intention guiding actions toward good	Leadership skills, Social skills and responsibility	Promotes accountability, ethical leadership, and patient-centered decision-making driven by sincerity	Enhanced professional accountability, improved team morale, strengthened patient trust, better quality of care	[1], [3], [23], [24]
Amanah (Trust)	Fulfilling responsibilities and maintaining trust	Teamwork, Problem-solving skills	Strengthens collaboration, accountability, trust-building, and shared decision-making in healthcare teams	Increased patient confidence, improved continuity of care, enhanced teamwork efficiency, better safety outcomes	[1], [25], [26], [27]
Karamah (Human Dignity)	Inherent dignity and honor of every human being	Numeracy skills	Ensures accurate clinical practice (e.g., medication administration, lab interpretation) while preserving dignity and safety	Improved patient safety, reduced clinical errors, preservation of dignity, enhanced quality and accuracy of care	[1], [28], [29], [30], [31]