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Islamic Work Ethic as a Personal Resource in Relation to Work Engagement: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: This study examines Islamic work ethic (IWE) as a potential personal resource that promotes work engagement (WE). It examines whether IWE works for both Muslims and non-Muslims and how existing WE models consider this. By analysing the limitations of the current research, the study aims to identify areas for future research to consolidate the role of IWE in understanding WE. A systematic literature review was conducted for the study using the approach described by Denyer and Tranfield (2009). This method aims to objectively analyse the existing research. We analysed 21 existing studies on the relationship between IWE and WE. To find relevant studies, we conducted a keyword search in Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar data bases. This study shows that IWE is an important factor in employee engagement. It is a personal resource that directly influences engagement and moderates its relationship with external factors. This research focussed on Asian countries, suggesting that a more comprehensive study across cultures and regions is needed. No studies have examined the mediating role of IWE, and theoretical frameworks have been inconsistent. The exclusive use of quantitative methods emphasises the need for qualitative approaches. Only research published in English was included in the study. This excludes potentially valuable research on IWE and work engagement conducted in other languages. It focuses on IWE as a potential factor in WE, a new perspective for regions with Muslim populations. The systematic review approach helps to identify gaps and new insights.

Keywords: Islamic Work Ethic, personal resource, work engagement, JD-R theory

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Öz: Bu çalışma, İslami İş Ahlakını (İİA) işe bağlılığı artıran potansiyel bir kişisel kaynak olarak incelemektedir. Çalışmada, İİA'nın hem Müslüman hem de Müslüman olmayan çalışanlar için işe bağlılık üzerinde etkili olup olmadığı ve mevcut işe bağlılık modellerinde nasıl ele alındığı araştırılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, mevcut literatürün sınırlılıklarını analiz ederek, İİA'nın işe bağlılığı anlama konusundaki rolünü güçlendirmek için gelecekte yapılması gereken araştırma alanlarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu kapsamda, Denyer ve Tranfield (2009) tarafından önerilen yönteme dayalı sistematik bir literatür taraması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu yöntem mevcut çalışmaları nesnel biçimde değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. İİA ile işe bağlılık arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyen 21 çalışma analiz edilmiştir. İlgili çalışmalara ulaşmak için Scopus, Web of Science ve Google Scholar veri tabanlarında anahtar kelime taraması yapılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, İİA'nın çalışanların işe bağlılığı açısından önemli bir unsur olduğunu göstermektedir. İİA, işe bağlılığı doğrudan etkileyen ve dışsal faktörlerle ilişkisini düzenleyen bir kişisel kaynak olarak rol oynamaktadır. Mevcut çalışmaların çoğunun Asya ülkelerine odaklanması, farklı kültürlerde ve bölgelerde daha kapsamlı araştırmalara ihtiyaç duyulduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Literatürde İİA'nın aracılık rolünü inceleyen herhangi bir çalışmaya rastlanmamış ve kullanılan teorik çerçevelerde tutarsızlıklar görülmüştür. Ayrıca, yalnızca nicel yöntemlerin tercih edilmesi, nitel yaklaşımlara olan ihtiyacı vurgulamaktadır. İncelemeye yalnızca İngilizce yayınların dahil edilmesi, başka dillerde yapılmış potansiyel olarak değerli araştırmaların dışarıda kalmasına neden olmuş olabilir. Bu çalışma, İİA'yı işe bağlılığı etkileyen önemli bir kişisel kaynak olarak ele alarak, özellikle Müslüman nüfusun yoğun olduğu bölgelerde yeni bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır. Sistematik literatür incelemesi yaklaşımı, alandaki boşlukların ve yeni araştırma fırsatlarının belirlenmesine katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İslami İş Ahlakı, Kişisel Kaynak, İşe Bağlılık, İş Talepleri ve Kaynakları Teorisi

Introduction

In today's business world, achieving sustainable employee engagement is critical, yet increasingly challenged by factors such as the major focus on profit maximisation and intense market competition. This connection is emphasised by global reports showing that only 21% of employees are engaged, while the rest are not engaged or disengaged (Gallup, 2022, 2023). This statistic highlights a significant issue, particularly when considering that the definition and experience of work engagement can vary widely across different cultural contexts and economic conditions (Banihani and Syed, 2017; Weeratunga et al., 2024). Different regions of the world may experience varying influences on employee engagement; in some areas, factors such as job security, cultural values, and economic conditions may be more significant, while in others, career advancement opportunities and autonomy might play a more crucial role in shaping engagement levels (Gallup, 2022, 2023; Weeratunga et al., 2024).

Despite numerous efforts to enhance employee engagement, this low level of engagement highlights the complexity of the issue. Many factors, including personal resources, significantly influence employee engagement (Kelesoglu et al., 2024; Mazzetti and Schaufeli, 2022; Truong et al., 2021; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Meta-analysis research indicates that personal resources are more strongly correlated with work engagement (WE) than job demands and job resources (Mazzetti et al., 2023). While some constructs are well represented in the literature, such as self-efficacy and resilience (Bakker et al., 2023; Mazzetti et al., 2023), there is a lack

of studies in the literature on some other potentially significant constructs that influence work engagement, such as Islamic work ethic (IWE).

IWE emphasises moral principles in the workplace, providing a valuable tool for understanding employee engagement across cultures (Farid et al., 2019; Muthuswami & Umarani, 2023; Tufail et al., 2021). Although established organisational design theories focus on job demands and resources, they often ignore the potential of IWE as a culturally embedded personal resource. This study is novel in two keyways. First, while personal resources such as self-efficacy and resilience are well-studied in work engagement models (Mazzetti et al., 2023; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), the IWE remains underexplored. By systematically reviewing the integration of IWE into the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework, this study addresses a significant theoretical and empirical gap in how personal values influence work engagement outcomes. Second, existing studies often adopt Western-centric approach of work engagement, potentially overlooking cultural differences. By analysing IWE's role, this study provides a culturally inclusive lens to address work engagement challenges in contexts where Islamic values are prevalent, such as the Middle East and Southeast Asia. This approach fills a gap by integrating IWE into workplace design, offering a more comprehensive understanding of employee engagement through the inclusion of cultural values.

WE is defined as a positive and fulfilling emotional and cognitive state characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Bakker et al., 2023; Bakker and Demerouti, 2014; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Engaged employees are characterised by high energy, enthusiasm, and effective dedication to their work, have higher levels of personal development, and they see it as a meaningful task for which they are prepared to make a considerable effort both in the professional environment and beyond (Bakker et al., 2014; Lu et al., 2023; Tummers and Bakker, 2021). Disengaged employees, on the other hand, show low levels of energy and motivation, lack enthusiasm and commitment to their tasks, disproportionately low emotional and cognitive engagement, hold back their physical, cognitive, and emotional energies, display passive, robotic and detached work behaviour (Gillet et al., 2020), have difficulty maintaining their well-being and performance under stress (Lu et al., 2023), and face negative consequences such as absenteeism and burnout (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Llorens-Gumbau and Salanova-Soria, 2014). Given the characteristics of WE and the dichotomy between engaged and disengaged employees, it is important to emphasise the underlying factors.

In addition to job demands and resources, personal resources have also been shown to be a very important correlate of WE (Mazzetti et al., 2023). Personal resources are defined as psychological or cognitive aspects related to the ability to successfully influence one's environment (Bakker et al., 2023; Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). The JD-R model highlights the critical role of personal resources, alongside job resources and job demands, in influencing employee well-being and work engagement (Bakker et al., 2014; Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Kelesoglu et al., 2024; Tummers and Bakker, 2021). This study raises questions about the IWE as a potential personal resource, its role in WE and well-being, and the need for further research to strengthen its theoretical foundation and address the gaps identified in current studies. Three key questions will be explored in this study: First, is the IWE truly a personal resource for Muslims and non-Muslims alike? Second, according to the literature, what role does the IWE play in models of WE? Third, what additional studies are needed to effectively theorise the place of IWE in these models and address the methodological weaknesses of the existing literature?

The introduction outlines the article's components and study objectives. The following section focuses on the literature review, exploring the IWE and its definition, relevance, and impact on WE in various theoretical contexts. The systematic review techniques are then explained in detail, including search strategies and selection criteria. The review critically analyses the impact of IWE on WE, considering various moderating and mediating factors. Practical strategies for organisations to improve WE through IWE are discussed, while avenues for future research are highlighted. The conclusion summarises the main findings of the study and emphasises the important role of IWE in enhancing WE.

Literature Review

Work Engagement

Building on Kahn's (1990) initial exploration of work engagement, scholars subsequently refined the concept, highlighting its core elements of vigour, dedication, and absorption, and defined WE as a "positive attitude towards work characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption" (Bakker and Demerouti, 2014; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004, 2010). Vigour is about the energy one feels when they think about their work as if they wake up and go about their work with energy (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Dedication is about finding meaning, relevance and value in the work and is defined as a sense of importance, excitement, pride, and a sense of

challenge (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Absorption is about being able to concentrate fully on the work and not being aware of how time passes while working. When one is fully focussed on the work and enjoying it, time passes quickly and it is difficult to disengage from the work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010).

Researchers have developed the JD-R theory to explain work engagement and its importance for the workplace (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). In this highly accepted theory of explaining work engagement, as antecedents of work engagement, job resources, personal resources, and job demands interact with each other in various ways to determine whether one is engaged (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). Job resources are characteristics of the workplace that help to achieve work-related goals, reduce job demands and associated costs, and promote personal growth and development, such as autonomy, feedback, and social support (Demerouti et al., 2001). Job demands are physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (i.e., cognitive or emotional) effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs such as high workload, long working hours (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Personal resources as a psychological state define how much one can successfully control and influence one's environment such as resiliency and self-efficacy (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). They help to deal with job demands successfully or to get most of the benefits of job resources and it also leads to work engagement (da Silva et al., 2021; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

As work engagement is a very important concept, there have been numerous studies to understand its antecedents and outcomes (Heyns et al., 2022; Kooij et al., 2020; Nandini et al., 2022; Pap et al., 2022; Sharma and Nambudiri, 2020). Some meta-analyses found that outcomes include job satisfaction, commitment, performance and turnover intention, and antecedents include supervisor support, co-worker support, leadership, role clarity, and learning opportunities (Mazzetti et al., 2023). They found that personal resources correlate more strongly with work engagement than job resources and job demands (Mazzetti et al., 2023). As personal resources are an important element in work engagement models and many constructs have been studied in the literature as personal resources, such as self-efficacy, resilience, organisational based self-esteem, intrinsic motivation and low neuroticism, however, only self-efficacy, optimism, resilience and proactivity have been theorised as they have been investigated in many empirical studies and meta-analyses successfully show that they are strong personal resources (Mazzetti et

al., 2023). Other potential personal resources also need to be explored in depth and could be included in this model, such as the IWE.

Islamic Work Ethic

Ethics, a foundational aspect of human societies, has evolved differently across cultures and religions for centuries, with each developing its own ethical standards (Khorshid, 2016). Business research has traditionally focused on Western perspectives, notably the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE), which Max Weber highlighted in 1930 as emphasising individual achievement and hard work (Weber, 2001). In contrast, the increasing acknowledgment of spirituality's role in the workplace has opened the way for exploring the IWE, a concept that draws from the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) work behaviour (Ali, 1992; Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008).

Introduced by Ali (1988), IWE has been investigated for its impact on workplace and organisational outcomes, with significant contributions from scholars such as Azman et al. (2022), Farid et al. (2017), and Ridwansyah et al. (2023). These studies have underscored IWE's emphasis on honesty, diligence, and social responsibility, distinguishing it from the more individualistic and material-focused Western ethics (Ali, 1988; Ali, 1992).

IWE is not just a set of principles but a reflection of deeply ingrained Islamic teachings that advocate for a balanced life, integrating professional obligations with spiritual and moral commitments (Ali, 1988; Ali, 1992). This approach contrasts sharply with the PWE, as Weber (2001) described, where success is often measured by personal achievements and wealth. In comparison, IWE places a stronger emphasis on community welfare and spiritual growth, offering a holistic view of success that encompasses both earthly responsibilities and the pursuit of rewards in the afterlife (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008).

The unique perspective of IWE on motivation, emphasising not only earthly rewards but also the promise of the hereafter, aligns work with deeper religious beliefs, setting it apart from other work ethics (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). It highlights the importance of social responsibility and the welfare of the community over personal achievement and wealth accumulation, a stance further explored by scholars such as Ali & Al-Kazemi (2007) and contrasted with the focus of PWE on individualism (Leong et al., 2014; Lim & Lay, 2003).

Among the scales for measuring the Islamic work ethic, Ali's (1992) scale stands out, which is widely used, validated, and has a high reliability in various samp-

les. This 17-item Likert scale examines key aspects of IWE, including dedication, moral conduct, the role of work in societal well-being and personal growth (e.g. "work gives one the chance to be independent"). While the items are theoretically consistent with dimensions such as morally responsible conduct, transparency, competition, and effort, the development of the scale lacked the statistical rigour to definitively assign the questions to these dimensions (Khorshid, 2016). Nonetheless, it remains a valuable tool for researchers studying IWE. The questions are listed in the table below.

Table 1

Islamic Work Ethic Scale, Ali (1992)

1. Laziness is a vice.
2. Dedication to work is a virtue
3. Good work benefits both one's self and others.
4. Justice and generosity in the workplace are necessary conditions for society's welfare.
5. Producing more than enough to meet one's personal needs contributes to the prosperity of society as a whole.
6. One should carry work out to the best of one's ability.
7. Work is not an end in itself but a means to foster personal growth and social relations.
8. Life has no meaning with- out work.
9. More leisure time is good for society. (R)
10. Human relations in organizations should be emphasized and encouraged.
11. Work enables man to control nature.
12. Creative work is a source of happiness and accomplishment.
13. Any man who works is more likely to get ahead in life.
14. Work gives one the chance to be independent.
15. A successful man is the one who meets deadlines at work.
16. One should constantly work hard to meet responsibilities.
17. The value of work is derived from the accompanying intention rather than its results. (R): To (R): To be reverse coded

Relationship Between Islamic Work Ethic and Work Engagement

Islamic teachings emphasise principles such as cooperation, loyalty, diligence, and respect for human dignity, which not only guide individual behaviour but also extend to the workplace, promoting personal development and fostering social relationships (Ali, 1992; Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). The Islamic Work Ethic is deeply rooted in these teachings and draws on the Quran and the practises of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to emphasise the importance of ethical behaviour in both personal life and the workplace (Azman et al., 2022). This ethic emphasises the intrinsic value of work and suggests that the products of one's labour are most rewarding when they result from personal effort, as expressed in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): "No meal that one of you eats is better than the meal that he eats from the labour of his own hands" (Al-Bukhari, 1966). This ethos not only advocates the pursuit of excellence, but also sees work as a sacred duty that benefits both the individual and society and promotes positive behaviours in the workplace (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008; Farid et al., 2017; Yousef, 2000).

Empirical research also demonstrates the positive impact of the IWE on various workplace outcomes, including motivation, job satisfaction, performance, attitudes towards organisational change, innovativeness, and work engagement (Caniago and Mustoko, 2020; Din et al., 2019; Gheitani et al., 2019; Hayati and Caniago, 2012). The relevance of IWE becomes particularly clear when considered in the context of JD-R theory, which emphasises the crucial role of personal resources in managing the complexity of modern business environments (Bakker et al., 2010, 2023; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). As a significant personal resource, IWE increases WE by aligning it with the values and principles of Islam, as shown by studies in various settings, from public hospitals in Pakistan to companies in Malaysia and Indonesia (Azman et al., 2022; Farid et al., 2017; Siddiq and Hadjiah, 2019). These studies confirm the positive correlation between adherence to IWE and higher WE and show that IWE plays an important role in fostering a motivated, satisfied, and productive workforce in today's dynamic business landscape.

While JD-R theory provides a useful framework for understanding the role of IWE as a personal resource influencing work engagement, other theoretical perspectives have also been used in the literature to examine the relationship between IWE and work outcomes. For instance, social exchange theory (SET) (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005) has been used to explain how adherence to IWE fosters reciprocal relationships between employees and their organisations, leading to positive attitudes such as increased WE (Farid et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2019). Similarly,

the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) was used to highlight how IWE enables employees to build, protect and utilise resources such as psychological wellbeing and social support that contribute to higher WE. This perspective aligns with the view that IWE, rooted in religious beliefs, acts as a personal resource that enables individuals to overcome challenges, maintain their well-being and enhance their performance by aligning their personal values with their work behaviours. Employees who demonstrate IWE principles, such as diligence, honesty, and accountability, are likely to gain both internal rewards including a sense of accomplishment, and external benefits such as recognition and trust from colleagues, ultimately leading to higher WE (Tufail, 2022; Tufail et al., 2021).

However, a critical examination of these theoretical applications reveals certain limitations. While social exchange theory effectively emphasises the role of reciprocal relations, it does not fully capture the intrinsic spiritual motivations emphasised by IWE. Furthermore, while JD-R theory is useful in explaining how personal resources such as IWE contribute to WE, it tends to focus primarily on work-related job demands and resources, often overlooking the deeper spiritual aspects that underpin IWE. The JD-R model assumes that personal resources play an important role in mitigating job demands. However, it does not fully address how these resources, particularly those based on religious or ethical frameworks such as IWE, can contribute to a more holistic approach to employee well-being and engagement. In this sense, there is a risk that the complex interplay between personal, social and spiritual resources is reduced to a purely functional relationship and the wider ethical and spiritual integration that IWE embodies is not adequately considered. Also, in the application of COR theory, the broader spiritual and ethical dimensions of Islamic teachings are often overlooked as the focus is on gaining material and psychological resources rather than the holistic integration of ethics and spirituality in the workplace. These gaps suggest that integrating multiple theoretical perspectives could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between IWE and WE. Furthermore, most studies focus on the positive outcomes of IWE and neglect the potential challenges, such as the possibility of work-life imbalance, when IWE is overemphasised. Future research should address these nuances to provide a balanced view of how IWE impacts WE.

Methodology

A detailed systematic literature review was conducted to examine the empirical studies between Islamic work ethic and work engagement. This research follows the method described and summarised by Denyer and Tranfield (2009) as it is an unbiased systematic review method that has been studied and accepted in the field of organisational studies and is expected to yield similar results when replicated. During this process, specific keywords were used to search specific academic databases. The results were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, then categorised after analysing their content and finally presented according to relevant themes.

Search Strategy

For the analysis, an electronic search based on an abstract search was conducted to find empirical studies investigating the relationship between IWE and WE. This search was conducted in three major databases: Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar. Google Scholar was intentionally included to ensure coverage of regionally relevant studies from Muslim-majority countries (e.g., Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia), where research on IWE is often published in local/regional journals, theses, or conference proceedings not yet indexed in Scopus/WoS but still peer-reviewed or methodologically rigorous. The concept of 'work engagement' (WE) was expanded to include other commonly used terms such as 'employee engagement' (Amponsah-Tawiah et al., 2023; Ghosh et al., 2020; Nehra, 2023), and 'job engagement'(Ojo et al., 2021), which we also included in the search. The search was designed to include the keywords: "Islamic work ethic" AND "work engagement" OR "employee engagement" OR "job engagement".

Selection Criteria

Studies had to meet the following five requirements to be included in the review: (1) they had to be published in English, (2) published in peer-reviewed journals, thesis repositories, or reputable conference proceedings, (3) the relationship between IWE and WE had to be investigated, and (4) they had to be an empirical paper. One thesis and one conference paper were included as they met all criteria and demonstrated methodological rigour comparable to journal articles (see Quality Assessment in Table 2).

There were no exclusions based on the type of research method, so studies were included regardless of whether they were quantitative, qualitative, or mixed met-

hods as long as they covered the inclusion criteria. They can include different designs such as case studies, cross-sectional analyses, and quasi-experimental approaches. However, literature reviews, book reviews, and studies of a purely theoretical nature were excluded as they did not fulfil the above criteria.

Data Abstraction and Synthesis

The researcher narrowed down the search within the selected online databases by applying certain selection criteria: 1 (language) and 2 (peer-reviewed scientific journals). The initial search yielded 5 entries in Scopus, 3 in Web of Science and 50 in Google Scholar. The researcher then reviewed the abstracts to remove duplicate articles, refining the set of articles for a more thorough examination of their full text. The researcher used the desktop application Mendeley to manage, organise and categorise these articles. After applying the remaining criteria - 3 (sample), 4 (subject area) and 5 (empirical study) - the researcher included a total of 21 studies in the review. The search and selection process followed PRISMA guidelines and is illustrated in Figure 1 below. The figure outlines the number of records identified, duplicates removed, and the final studies included after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The PRISMA framework was adopted to enhance the transparency and reproducibility of the review process. The final 21 studies (including 1 thesis and 1 conference paper) underwent a rigorous quality assessment using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) checklist (Moola et al., 2020). The JBI appraisal confirmed that all 21 studies met baseline quality standards, such as clear inclusion criteria, valid outcome measures, and appropriate statistical analysis (see Table 2).

Results and Discussion on the Findings

After a thorough review, 21 studies were selected for review. After reading, analysing, and synthesising these studies in detail, four main themes emerged for this review. The following four themes are summarised in the findings section: 1) study characteristics, 2) theoretical framework, 3) research methods used, 4) the relationship between IWE and WE.

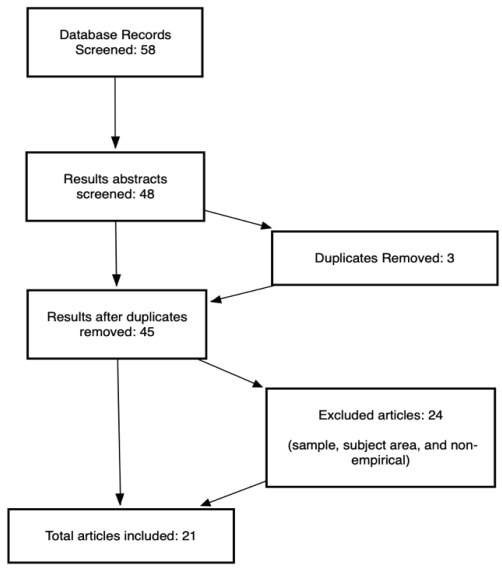


Figure 1: PRISMA Flowchart

Table 2

JBI Critical Appraisal Tools Results

No	Critical appraisal checklist	Yes	No	Unclear	Not applicable
1	Were the criteria for inclusion in the sample clearly defined?	√(21)			
2	Were the study subject and the setting described in detail?	√(21)			
3	Was the exposure measure in valid and reliable way?	√(19)		√(2)	
4	Were objective, standard criteria used for measurement of the condition?	√(18)		√(3)	
5	Were confounding factors identified?	√(2)	√(4)	√(15)	
6	Were strategies to deal with confounding factor stated?	√(2)	√(5)	√(6)	√(8)

7	Was the outcome measured in a valid and reliable way?	√(21)
8	Was appropriate statistical analysis used?	√(21)

Theme 1: Study Characteristics

Our analysis shows that Pakistani researchers were particularly active, accounting for half of the studies analysed, followed by Indonesia with six studies (see Figure 2 below). The remaining studies came from Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Crucially, non-Muslim populations and regions outside of Asia are not represented in the current research landscape. In terms of sectors, the focus is on education (7 studies), healthcare (4) and the public sector (3), while other industries are only represented to a limited extent.

This geographical and sectoral concentration emphasises the need for broader research into IWE and WE dynamics. Extending the research to Europe, America and Africa would – in addition to including non-Muslim population groups – provide valuable cross-cultural insights. Similarly, exploring these concepts across a wider range of sectors could reveal unique interactions between IWE, WE and different work environments. An expansion of research is essential to avoid hasty generalisations and to realise the full potential of understanding the IWE-WE relationship across cultures and sectors.

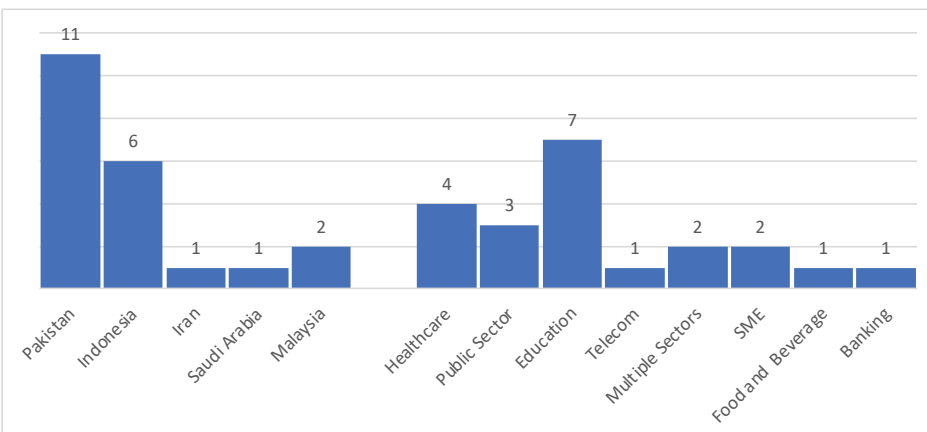


Figure 2: Studies by Country/Sector

Table 3

Summary of the Studies

	Authors (Citation)	Country of the Study	Sector	Role of Islamic Work Ethic	Unit of Analysis	Theory Used	Method and Analysis	Questionnaire Used	Sample	Study Design
1	Shaheen et al. (2020)	Pakistan	Healthcare	Moderating Variable in the relationship between org. cronyism and work engagement	Individual	Conservation of resources theory	Quantitative-Survey- - SEM	Ali (1992) - 17-item	267 healthcare professionals such doctors, nurses	Survey - two-wave time-lagged design
2	Farid et al. (2019)	Pakistan	Healthcare	Moderating variable in the relationship between interactional justice and work engagement	Individual	Social Exchange Theory	Quantitative-Survey- - SEM	Ali (1992) - 17-item	354 nurses	Survey - two-wave time-lagged design
3	Sahabuddin et al. (2024)	Indonesia	Public Sector (Civil Servant)	Independent Variable	Individual	Islamic Management Theory	Quantitative-Survey- - PLS-SEM	Wahab et al (2016)-8-item	150 civil servants	Survey- Cross Sectional
4	Salmabadi et al. (2015)	Iran	Education	Independent Variable	Individual	-	Quantitative-Survey- Regression	Ali (1992) - 17-item	120 teachers	Survey- Cross Sectional
5	Rahmawaty et al. (2022)	Indonesia	SME	Independent Variable	Individual	-	Quantitative-Survey- SEM	Ali (1992) - 17-item	194 SME employees	Survey- Cross Sectional
6	Tufail et al. (2017)	Pakistan	Education	Independent Variable	Individual	Theory of Planned Behaviour	Quantitative-Survey- Regression	Ali (1992) - 17-item	218 female academic staff	Survey- Cross Sectional
7	Azman et al. (2022)	Malaysia	Multiple Sectors	Independent Variable	Individual	Social Exchange Theory	Quantitative-Survey- - PLS-SEM	No info	214 Gen Y and Gen Z employees	Survey- Cross Sectional
8	Aprianita & Nurhayati (2021)	Indonesia	Banking	Independent Variable	Individual	-	Quantitative-Survey- - PLS-SEM	Darodjat (2015)	186 banking employees	Survey- Cross Sectional
9	Khan et al. (2019)	Pakistan	Telecom	Independent Variable	Individual	Social Exchange Theory	Quantitative-Survey- Regression	Ali (1992) - 17-item	250 employees	Survey- Cross Sectional
10	Farid et al. (2017)	Pakistan	Healthcare	Independent Variable	Individual	-	Quantitative-Survey- Regression	Ali (1992) - 17-item	189 nurses	Survey- Cross Sectional
11	Nurendra & Wimbarti (2014)	Indonesia	Education	Moderating variable in the relationship between job demands, resources, and work engagement	Individual	JD-R Theory	Quantitative-Survey- LISREL SEM	Ali (1992) - 17-item	165 (academics and academic staff)	Survey- Cross Sectional

12	Tufail et al. (2021)	Pakistan	Public Sector	Moderating Variable in the relationship between religiosity and work engagement	Individual	Conservation of resources theory	Quantitative- Survey- Regression	Ali (1992) - 17-item	342 officers	Survey - two-wave time-lagged design
13	Zahrah (2015)	Malaysia	Education	Independent Variable	Individual	Theory of Planned Behaviour	Quantitative- Survey- - PLS-SEM	Ali (1992) - 17-item	150 university staff	Survey- Cross Sectional
14	Mut-huswami & Umarani (2023)	Saudi Arabia	SME	Independent Variable	Individual	-	Quantitative- Survey- Two Stage Regression Model	6-item no info of source	300 SME employees	Survey- Cross Sectional
15	Siddiq & Hadjiah (2019)	Indonesia	Food	Independent Variable	Individual	-	Quantitative- Survey- Regression	No info	210 employees	Survey- Cross Sectional
16	Shafi et al. (2021)	Pakistan	Education	Moderating variable in the relationship between paternalistic leadership and work engagement	Individual	LMX Theory	Quantitative- Survey- Regression	Ali (1992) - 17-item	253 university staff	Survey- Cross Sectional
17	Riaz et al. (2021)	Pakistan	Healthcare	Moderating variable in the relationship between job stressors, including workload, work-life conflict, and work engagement	Individual	JD-R Theory	Quantitative- Survey- Regression	Ali (1992) - 17-item	319 medical practitioners	Survey - two-wave time-lagged design
18	Khan et al. (2021)	Pakistan	Education	Moderating variable in the relationship between Despotic leadership and work engagement (only vigour dimension)	Individual	-	Quantitative- Survey- Regression	Ali (1992) - 17-item	201 university employees	Survey - two-wave time-lagged design
19	Tufail, (2022)	Pakistan	Public Sector	Moderating variable in the relationship between perceived organisational politics (POP) and work engagement	Individual	Conservation of resources theory	Quantitative- Survey- Linear Regression	Ali (1992) - 17-item	239 employees	Survey - two-wave time-lagged design
20	Hamzah et al. (2021)	Indonesia	Multiple Sectors	Independent Variable	Individual	Islamic Management Theory	Quantitative- Survey- - PLS-SEM	Wahab and Masron (2020) 8-item	283 employees	Survey- Cross Sectional
21	Uddin et al. (2016)	Pakistan	Education	Independent Variable	Individual	Organizational Justice theory	Quantitative- Survey- Regression	Ali (1992) - 17-item	201 teachers	Survey- Cross Sectional

Theme 2: Theoretical Framework

The analysis shows that the theoretical foundations underlying the research on the relationship between IWE and WE are inconsistent. While 14 of the 21 studies utilised a theoretical framework, 7 studies lacked such a foundation. Of the 14 studies that did use a theory, we found considerable variation, including Conservation of Resources Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Job Demands-Resources Theory, Islamic Management Theory, and Organisational Justice Theory. One possibility is that the nature of IWE itself contributes to the lack of a dominant theoretical framework. Whilst IWE has its own unique characteristics, it may also encompass elements of different established theories, making it difficult to find a single, perfectly fitting theory. Furthermore, some researchers may consider IWE itself as a theoretical framework.

The lack of theoretical modelling in some studies could also be due to other factors. For example, researchers from different cultural backgrounds may have different understandings of work engagement and the relevance of certain theoretical frameworks. In addition, the development of theoretical frameworks within a field may be influenced by established research traditions and dominant paradigms within particular disciplines or geographical regions. There may also be only a limited number of theoretical frameworks that explicitly address the unique aspects of IWE. Finally, there are studies that are highly exploratory in nature and whose primary aim is to gain initial insights and hypothesise rather than test specific theoretical models.

To meaningfully advance knowledge in this area, there is an urgent need for studies that consistently integrate recognised models of work engagement. A particularly promising avenue is to explore the role of IWE as a potential personal resource within the JD-R framework, which provides an opportunity to clarify how IWE interacts with job demands and resources to influence work engagement outcomes.

Theme 3: Research Methods Used

The studies analysed show methodological similarities, especially the exclusive use of quantitative methods and the focus on the individual level. This pattern suggests that the focus is on replicating previous studies, which is beneficial for establishing a solid foundation. However, to further advance theoretical contributions, methodological approaches need to be expanded. Future research would benefit from qualitative and mixed methods to capture subjective experiences and contex-

tual factors that influence the relationship between IWE and WE. Furthermore, extending the analysis to the team and organisational level could reveal the broader implications of IWE and provide insights for practical applications.

Fifteen studies utilised a cross-sectional design, while six used a more robust, time-shifted, two-wave survey approach. Sample sizes varied, with the largest study including 354 participants (Farid et al., 2019), and the smallest consisting of 120 participants (Salmabadi et al., 2015), resulting in a mean sample size of approximately 227.55 (SD = 62.93).

About instruments used, 15 studies utilised Ali's (1992) Islamic work ethic questionnaire, but a lack of standardisation is evident. Two studies used Wahab & Masron's (2020) questionnaire, one used Darodjat's (2015) instrument, and three studies did not report the questionnaire. This focus on replication of previous measurements contributes to consistency within the field. However, exploring new theoretical perspectives may require the development of new measurement instruments specifically tailored to these theoretical contributions.

12 Studies predominantly conducted regression analyses, followed by structural equation modelling (SEM) in nine studies. While this methodological diversity is positive, the inclusion of a wider range of analytical techniques could strengthen the robustness of the results and provide new theoretical insights.

Theme 4: Relationship Between IWE and WE

The literature describes three potential roles of personal resources in its relationship with WE: 1) as an independent variable that influences WE, 2) as a moderator that affects relationships between other variables and WE, and 3) as a mediator through which other variables impact WE. Of the 21 studies, as IWE is a personal resource, 13 studies identified IWE as an independent variable influencing WE, while 8 highlighted its role as a moderator in relationships involving specific job demands, resources and personal characteristics such as despotic leadership, organisational nepotism, religiosity, work stressors, interactional justice and paternalistic leadership. It is noteworthy that none of the studies examined the potential mediating role of IWE. Although all hypotheses were confirmed, the research landscape seems to be primarily limited to examining the independent and moderating functions of IWE.

The lack of studies examining IWE as a mediator represents a significant gap in the literature. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complicated dynamics, future research should investigate the potential of IWE to mediate

relationships between different antecedents and WE. This will shed light on the specific mechanisms through which IWE mediates the effects of other factors on work engagement outcomes.

Conclusion

To conclude, this systematic review examines the relationship between IWE and WE in today's corporate landscape. The findings from 21 empirical studies, conducted predominantly in Asian countries, shed light on the central role that IWE plays in influencing employee engagement. The research emphasises the importance of understanding IWE as a potential personal resource capable of independently influencing WE and moderating relationships with external factors.

Practical Implications

This systematic review offers practical insights for practitioners, policymakers, and academics seeking to enhance work engagement through the use of IWE. Organisations can apply IWE principles to workplace practices by integrating ethics-oriented training programmes, strengthening value-based leadership development, and aligning HR policies with fairness, trustworthiness, and purpose-driven work. These practices can increase work engagement by enhancing employees' sense of meaning, responsibility, and moral alignment with organisational goals.

Leaders can implement IWE-informed motivational strategies, such as modelling ethical decision-making, articulating meaningful organisational purposes, and promoting benevolent leadership behaviours. These approaches can improve employee resilience, particularly during organisational challenges, and support wellbeing by reinforcing trust, justice, and ethical conduct in daily management.

Additionally, organisations operating in culturally diverse or predominantly Muslim contexts may gain further benefits by embedding IWE values into performance management systems, mentoring programmes, and employee development initiatives designed to strengthen internal motivation and job satisfaction.

For policymakers, these findings highlight the need to develop ethically grounded labour policies that recognise and respect cultural and religious values in workforce development. Integrating IWE-based ethical standards into professional regulations and leadership frameworks can contribute greater organisational transparency, improved employee wellbeing, and increased public trust in institutions. Governments can also encourage organisations to adopt ethical leadership certifications and value-based organisational guidelines.

Future Research Directions

Future research on IWE and WE would benefit from several conceptual, methodological, and contextual advancements. First, the geographical scope of existing studies should be broadened. The current literature is heavily concentrated in Asian and predominantly Muslim contexts, which limits the generalisability of the findings. Studies in non-Muslim and culturally diverse regions would help determine whether the effects of IWE on WE are universal or context-dependent.

Second, future research should examine the mediating and multi-level mechanisms through which IWE influences WE. While previous studies have explored IWE mainly as a direct predictor, little is known about its interactions with psychological resources, job demands, leadership styles, or organisational climates. Including mediators such as meaningfulness and psychological safety may provide deeper insights into the pathways linking IWE and engagement.

Third, the theoretical landscape would benefit from greater coherence. Existing research employs a wide range of unrelated theoretical frameworks, resulting in conceptual fragmentation. Future studies should develop a more unified model that situates IWE within established motivational and engagement theories, such as the JD-R model, COR theory, or SET. Such integration would enable more consistent hypothesis development and clearer interpretation of results. Methodologically, the dominance of quantitative, cross-sectional studies limits causal inference. Longitudinal, experimental, and mixed-methods approaches would provide more strong evidence regarding the temporal and experiential nature of IWE. Team-level and organisational-level analyses are also clearly absent from current research. Examining how IWE manifests in collective cultures, leadership teams, or organisational ethical climates could broaden understanding of its systemic effects.

Finally, from a contextual perspective, researchers should investigate the role of IWE in modern work contexts such as remote work, AI-mediated environments, and gig economy settings. As workplace structures evolve, it is important to determine whether traditional ethical frameworks like IWE continue to shape engagement, and if so, how they interact with emerging stressors, technological demands, and shifting expectations of work.

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