



Examining impact of Islamic Work Ethics on Innovative Work Behavior and Psychological Capital and a Moderating Role of Humble Leadership

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Abstract: Ethical misconduct has been increased in the current century, stressing on the importance of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) in the workplace. This aimed to extend the IWE literature by investigating the role of IWE in enhancing Innovative work behavior (IWB) and psychological Capital (PsyCap). Further, this study proposes that humble leadership acts as a boundary condition that supports the positive effect of IWE with IWB and PsyCap. Adopting time lagged, multi sources and survey design data collection approach, data was collected from a large company established in Pakistan (N=245). The obtained results supported the proposed hypotheses and confirmed that humble leadership moderates the link of IWE with IWB and PsyCap. This study offers theoretical implications.

Keywords: Humble leadership, Islamic work Ethics, Innovative Work behavior, Psychological capital.

1. Introduction

Ethical misconduct has gained the attention of scholars globally (Higgs *et al.*, 2020) especially in business research (Blosser, 2019). Work ethics is a fundamental and desirable human behavior even in organization (Ismail & Yuhanis, 2018), and is mostly driven by religion, and all faiths promote strong work ethical behavior (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2021). There are four forms of work ethics: Islamic, Protestant, Buddhist, and Hindu (Parboteeah *et al.*, 2009). Among these constructs, Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) is growing construct (De Clercq *et al.*, 2019). IWE refers to the beliefs, concepts, and practices based on Islamic teachings that guide Muslim behavior in the workplace for both employers and employees (Gürlek, 2022). Teaching of Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhamamd (SAWW) provide base for IWE (Ali & Al-Owaihian, 2008). When compared to other religious work ethics, IWE has been noted as a global construct and is not confined to a specific set of persons, organizations, or occupations (Khan *et al.*, 2015). IWE highlights the significance of obligation, sincerity, dedication, kindness, and fairness, integrity in the workplace which are established in a concept that any job is a kind of virtue and worship, an approach to earning a living and should be executed in a way compatible with Islamic principles and beliefs (Javed *et al.*, 2019). IWE refers to an individual's ethical conduct (Khan *et al.*, 2015). Individuals who act ethically emphasize organizational benefit instead of own-interest and thus contribute enthusiastically to organizational performance and stability (Schwartz, 1992). Thus, in the setting of constant change, when inventive behavior is necessary to adjust with novel developments, workers with high ethical behavior work passionately (Ali & Al-Owaihian, 2008)

and take practical measures by producing, promoting, and executing novel concepts. Moreover, employees who demonstrate ethical behavior exhibit positive behavior, which researchers utilized as an indicator of creative behavior (Arnaud & Sekerka, 2010).

Several studies have found the direct relationship of IWE with various outcomes, like employees organizational citizenship behavior (Raza et al., 2024); knowledge sharing (Chaudhary et al., 2023); ethical decision making (Sulaiman et al., 2022); work engagement (Tufail, 2022); job performance (Tufail et al., 2018). Employees' Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) is regarded as a basis among the different forms and levels of innovation since it is the persons who develop innovations (Masood & Afsar, 2017). Establishing and maintaining workers' IWB has become critical for organization (Al Wali et al., 2023). IWB refers to all individual actions focused on creating, establishing, and executing new ideas for the betterment of the business (Afsar et al., 2021). As a result, the tendency of innovation is due to the employees' engagement (De Jong and Den Hartog, 2007). Innovation is enhanced by individual; consequently, organizations increasingly depend on their employees' IWB to provide new products/services, reform company procedures, and develop innovative working practices (Cangialosi et al., 2021). IWE is lead to favorable job outcomes. It has been resulted that employees following IWE tend to be loyal, creative, and persistence in their jobs (Hassi et al., 2021). Employees who practice IWE at work are more efficient and result in positive outcomes (Qasim *et al.*, 2022). IWE improves employee attitudes for modifications to the organization (Yousef, 2000). Employees with IWE respond to changing situations, leading to effective performance and enhance creativity (Kumar & Che Rose, 2010). Research indicates that employees with IWE exhibit high levels of enthusiasm, persistence, devotion, achievement, and creativity (Kumar & Che Rose, 2012). Research studies have focused on the factors associated with IWB (Kmieciak, 2021), psychological empowerment (Alwali, 2024), psychological processes (Nilasari et al., 2022) and psychological capital (Kumar et al., 2022), trust (Kmieciak, 2021), and knowledge sharing (Sharif, et al., 2024). However, there is need to enrich the literature. Similarly, recently it was called to study the impact of IWE on IWB (Qasim et al., 2022).

It is important to examine the influence of IWE on employees' psychological well-being. In psychological well-being, Psychological Capital (PsyCap) has drawn substantial attention from organizational behavior experts, yet the connection between IWE and PsyCap needs attention (Gulzar et al., 2017). PsyCap refers to an individual's useful psychological growth (Luthans et al., 2007) and comprises of characteristics; optimistic, hopeful, resilient, and self-confident (Ferraro et al., 2018). IWE can enhance psyCap. Quran and Sunnah provide an excellent basis for ethical values (Bhat, 2017). Few studies studied the relationship between IWE and PsyCap (Qayyum et al., 2018) and showed the direct relationship (Sehhat et al., 2015). Religion prevents individuals from despair and provides facts and beliefs regarding after life. Following the religious beliefs, individuals feel assured about after life (De Clercq et al., 2019). Keeping in view that IWE is individual factor and depends on the religious approach; this study investigates the influence of IWE on PsyCap.

IWB may also be influenced by leadership style (Afsar and Masood, 2018). Innovation in IWB involves employees developing, promoting, and implementing new ideas and thus, innovation can be occurred (Janssen, 2000). Humble leadership roles express the acknowledgment of subordinates' abilities and outcomes (Mallen et al., 2019) that enhances self-confidence and boost their creative abilities (Zhang and Zhou, 2014). Humble leadership has significant impact of goal attainment and desired job outcomes (Owens and Hekman, 2016). Humble leadership is a new leadership styles although is reflected as a core trait of participative and servant leadership styles. Humble Leadership encompasses the interpersonal traits of the leaders that determine their behaviors (Wang et al., 2018) and have the tendency to inspire employees for innovation (Yang et al., 2019). Similarly, humble leadership promotes work engagement (Miao et al., 2018); job performance and job autonomy (Cho et al., 2021); well-being (Kang et al., 2023) and creativity (Chen et al., 2021), which are essential factors of organizational success.

When investigating the psychological and behavioral impacts of IWE, the influence of leadership may be considered. The significance of leadership as a moderating variable has been ignored (Javed et al., 2020). Research studies have recommended studying the buffering effect of leadership between IWE and job outcomes (Raja et al., 2020). We believe that IWE has a positive impact on PsyCap. Positive leadership styles improve positive feelings among employees; therefore they have a significant impact on their psychological states (Roberge & Boudrias, 2021). We recommend that IWE creates PsyCap among employees. Assuming that IWE promotes the development of PsyCap, it is expected that humble leadership will strengthen this relationship. Similarly, Qasim et al., (2022) recommended studying the moderating role of leadership styles in a link between IWE and PsyCap. Thus, we assume that humble leadership will strengthen the relationship between IWE, IWB and PsyCap.

2. Literature Review

2.1 IWE and Innovative Work Behavior

IWE play crucial role in shaping individual's behavior (Rawwas et al., 2018). Due to its roots in Qurann and Sunnah, it straight restricts employees from unethical practices and even from personal benefits. In this regard Quraan Clears that "(When) you weigh, weigh completely, and maintain your scales accurately to measure" (Al Quran). IWE describes all facet of life, like ethical, spiritual, useful, and physical (Qasim et al., 2022).

IWE is an emerging variable and researchers have concluded multiple positive job outcomes. These outcomes are both at individual and organizational level. At individual level, IWE enhances Creativity (Usman and Mat, 2017), job satisfaction (Tufail et al., 2017; Abideen et al., 2021), work engagement (Farid et al., 2019), and voice behavior (Akhmadi,et al., 2023). While at the organizational level, IWE promotes innovation (Jalil et al., 2010), organizational performance (Faliza et al., 2024), and unethical pro-organizational behavior (Alqhaiwi et al., 2023). Employees with high levels of IWE have considerable faith, and improves employee overall well-being (Ali, 1992). Employees with strong IWE are mentally satisfied due to religious responsibilities and exhibit extra efforts in obtaining organizational goals (Qasim et al., 2022). Furthermore, IWE maintains that new work is important because it allows employees to adapt to new circumstances. For example, in this regard, Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) stated that "God bless the worker who acquires and grow in his occupation" (Ikhwan-us-Safa, 1999). The process of learning signifies exploring novel concepts, while perfecting means pushing and executing novel concepts resulting IWB. Furthermore, in Islam, employees have an ethical responsibility to accomplish their anticipated goals (Ali, 1988) and Employees are required to involve and present IWB if needed. Therefore, it is anticipated that IWE has positive relationship with IWB. Thus;

H₁: IWE has a significant relationship with IWB.

2.2 IWE and Psychological Capital

The concept of psychological capital was introduced in 2004, and since then, researchers investigating the antecedents and effects and has been emerged as a core construct: person's positive psychological growth and consisting the four elements (a) self-efficacy, (b) hope, (c) Resilience, and (d) optimism (Luthans et al., 2007). Employees with a higher PsyCap interact positively with colleagues. Such employees have the self-belief to manage challenging circumstances and accomplish the targeted goals while encountering difficult challenges (Daraba et al., 2021).

All religions have focus on greater human goal, faith in after life, rewards and punishment are provided based on actions that drive good conduct to obtain benefits in one's life and hereafter (Dahl, 2014). Similarly, hope is a universal phenomenon established in all religions (Baljani et al., 2011). Throughout history, hope has been vital for human life, survival, and prosperity (Alkhatib & Arnout, 2019). Religion provides knowledge, trust, and faith in the present and beyond this life. It provides permanent safety feelings in individual's spirits and fait (Niswaty et al., 2021). We assume that employees who pursue IWE are inclined to cultivate hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism. IWE inspires individuals who strive to improve themselves with complete integrity in the expectation of receiving a reward in this life and the life after death (Hope), extract something positive out of every situation (optimism), self-belief and confidence (Self-efficacy), and lastly ability to recover from adversity (Resilience). IWE is an influential determinant of employees' psychological capital (Qasmi et al., 2022). Thus,

H₂: IWE has significant effect on PsyCap.

2.3 Moderating Role of Humble Leadership

Research indicates that leader humility promotes growth and development among followers (Owens & Hekman, 2012). Humble leadership procedures are promoted through social contagion, resulting in an emerging condition that impacts organizational performance. Research indicates that moral humility in leaders can impact followers' moral self-efficacy and behavior (Owens et al., 2016). Humble leadership is positively correlated with innovation (Zhang and Bartol, 2010). With the cooperation of a leader, IWB of employees can be improved (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Humble leader follows free interaction with employees, allowing them to participate in decision making (Lin et al., 2017) which ultimate result in employees' development, promoting and implementing new and beneficial concepts and designs (Altunoglu & Gurel, 2015) such behavior promotes an inventive environment that encourages workers to explore different solutions before settling on a suitable strategy (Zhang and Bartol, 2010). Humble leaders encourage their followers to embrace uncertainty by teaching them to be willing to receive feedback and allowing them to experiment with novel methods (Mallen et al., 2019) and it ultimate encourages

IWB (De Jong and Hartog, 2008). We believe that employees who follow IWE, combined with humble leadership, will improve IWB. Humble leaders may assist followers cope with the frustration and negative emotions of failure while experimenting with new ideas by fostering a culture of accepting mistakes as a natural part of the learning process (Owens and Hekman, 2012). IWE considers job as virtue and when the leaders is humble the employees will feel relax and no worries of failure would be find and thus IWE would be enhanced.

There is a mutual understanding and development between humble leadership and psychological capital. Though these leaders emphasize personal improvement and believe that their example will inspire their employees (Owens and Hekman, 2012) and Encourage collaborative, challenging growth activities. Therefore, employees having more adjustable attitude toward different tasks, exhibit resilience, as they are emotionally comfortable with dealing with such challenges (Huang and Luthans, 2015). Similarly, employees goal oriented behaviors are also encouraged by such leaders and provide hope to their employees for success. Appreciating employees on their achievement and strengths, sense of self-efficacy is enhanced and they are more likely to be optimistic (Goody et al., 2009). Considering this discussion, we assume a direct relationship between humble leaders. We propose that humble leader will enhance the strength the relationship between IWE and PsyCap. Humble leader actions serve as effective social cues that modify the perspectives of the employees, facilitating the development of PsyCap's strengths. Islamic principles believe that the reward will be given by Allah, which creates hope. Similarly, IWE has focus on dedication and commitment representing self-efficacy. Employee, when follow IWE, have apposite relationship with PsyCap. Therefore, IWE, combined with humble leadership, will enhance this relationship. Thus we propose that:

H₃: Humble leadership moderates the relationship between IWE and IWB such that the relationships will be stronger for higher humble leadership.

H₄: Humble leadership moderates the relationship between IWE and PsyCap such that the relationships will be stronger for higher humble leadership.

3. Methodology

Based on the deductive approach, we tested the hypotheses empirically. We focused on a single organization i.e. Cherat Cement, a leading cement company in Pakistan which comprises of above 1000 employees. Our emphasis on a single organization aims to decrease the impact of unobserved changes in internal procedures like leadership styles (Morinaga et al., 2023) that may impact the employees' behavior. In addition, focusing on a single organization enabled us to minimize biases caused by unobserved variations in the organization's outer market conditions, which might impact the perceived necessity and value of information sharing (Kucharska & Erickson, 2023) and discussion of new ideas and well-being. Effective intra-organizational discussion over ideas and well-being are to be highly regarded. Similar studies of employees' behavioral reactions to unfavorable work situations are not unusual (De Clercq, & Pereira, 2024). Another reason for focusing on a single organization is the consistency approach in primary data collection among various participants (Malhotra, 2010) thus, reduces the biases in survey data collection. First, considering the risk of expectancy bias, we delivered the objectives of the study in a general way to the participants, which avoided their expectancy regarding the proposed relationships. The constructs were not labeled (Burns & Burns, 2008).

Second, the social desirability and acquiescence was also considered. The accompanying statement explicitly stated that individuals' participation was entirely voluntary and conditionality was ensured and in individual information of employees will be shared, and participants can withdraw at any point (Malhotra, 2010). Third, considering the framing bias, it was explained that there is no correct or wrong answer, and the answers can be vary, and the participants may provide an honest opinion regarding the variables (Malhotra, 2010).

The sampling frame included all the employees except blue collar workers. Adopting simple random technique, we selected 400 employees as prospect participants and the survey was managed electronically. Among 400 prospect participants, we received 245 complete responses, having 61% response rate. We followed multi-source and time-lagged data collection approach, and participants were requested to rate their immediate supervisor on the survey in the first phase. In the second phase, conducted after 3 weeks, the respondents were requested to record their responses for IWE, IWB and PsyCap. The final sample comprised 84% men and 16% women and 67% were employed with their organization for over eight years.

3.1 Measures

Measures were adopted from previous studies to record the responses of the respondents. The entire items were on

five-point Likert scale. We utilized 12 items scale to measure IWE which was developed by Badar et al., (2023). IWB was measured by a 6 items scale developed by Janssen (2000) and lastly, PsyCap was assessed through a 24 items scale of Luthans et al., (2007).

4. Data Analysis

To test the study hypotheses we applied SEM analysis. Data was analyzed through SPSS and AMOS. Initial analysis includes descriptive statistics, correlation, model assessment and hypotheses testing.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1.given below displays the descriptive statistics, means and correlation of the study variables. The mean and SD values of IWE were (M=3.58, SD=0.71). For IWB, M=3.31, SD=0.79. Further, mean value of PsyCap was 3.12, SD=0.67 and for humble leadership it was M=3.32, SD= 0.97. Further, Table 1 also displayed that IWE is positively related with IWB ($r = 0.42, p < 0.01$), and PsyCap ($r = 0.48, p < 0.01$). Similarly, humble leader was also positively correlated with IWB ($r = 0.36, p < 0.01$) and PsyCap ($r = 0.31, p < 0.01$). These results provided the initial support for the proposed hypotheses.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Construct	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	IWE	3.58	0.71	1			
2	IWB	3.31	0.79	0.42**	1		
3	PsyCap	3.12	0.67	0.48**	0.23**	1	
4	HL	3.32	0.97	0.41**	0.36**	0.31**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.2 Construct Validity Assessment

CFA was used to assess the model measurement. Results exposed that the hypothetical model was good fit: $\chi^2/df = 1.94$; CFI = 0.97; TLI = 0.96; IFI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.05. Internal consistency through Cronbach alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR), and validity via convergent and discriminant validity were measured. Results have been presented in Table 2 which shows that α and CR values were above the threshold values i.e.0.70 (Hair et al., 2006). Average variance extracted (AVE) values were higher than 0.60 but lesser than CR, confirming the convergent validity (Hair et al., 2006). Further, for discriminant validity, alternatives models were tested. For example, one factor model was tested but did not provide a good fit and the results have been presented in table 3.

Table 2: Reliability, CR and AVE

Construct	α	CR	AVE
IWE	0.73	0.95	0.63
IWB	0.76	0.91	0.72
PsyCap	0.75	0.87	0.61
HL	0.82	0.90	0.65

Table 3: Measurement Model

Model	X2/df	CFI	TLI	IFI	SRMR	RMESA
1 Full model	1.94	0.97	0.96	0.97	0.40	0.05
2 One factor model	4.12	0.73	0.71	0.70	1.21	0.09

4.3 Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses regression analysis was conducted. Table 4 displays that humble leadership has positive association with IWB ($\beta=0.38, p<0.01$) and PsyCap as well ($\beta=0.33, p<0.01$). Thus, both the hypotheses were confirmed. To test the moderation effect Cohen et al., (2003) techniques were followed. Gender and Tenure were taken as control variables. In the following steps, predictor and moderating variables were entered and the interactive term was entered in the last step. Results show that for IWB the ΔR^2 was 0.12 and for PsyCap 0.18

confirming the moderation effect.

Table 4: Moderation Analysis

	IWB			PsyCap		
	β	R ²	ΔR^2	β	R ²	ΔR^2
<i>Step 1</i>						
Gender		0.001**				
Tenure						
<i>Step 2</i>						
IWE	0.42**			0.24**		
HL	0.38**	0.61**		0.33**	0.69**	
<i>Step 3</i>						
IWE x HL	0.19**	0.49**	0.12**	0.22**	0.51**	0.18**

N =245.

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.4 Discussion

IWE significantly predicted IWB. Our results are supported by previous study that suggested that IWE has positive impact on employees' attitude toward new changes and process (Yousaf, 2000) which helps those adopting new ventures (Ali, 1992). The positive relationship between IWE and creative involvement has also been proved (Khan et al., 2015). Research suggests that creative problem-solving might assist employees in adapting to new situations, resulting to improved performance (Jong & De Ruyter, 2004). IWE promotes employee perseverance and adaptability in dynamic work environments (Ali, 1988), therefore IWE enhances IWE in organizations. In the workplace, Islam directs employees' behavior and emphasizes on desired work outcomes (Ali & Al-Owaihian, 2008), this demonstrates new modifications in their work and process (Kumar & Che Rose, 2012), and positively related with IWB.

Our second hypothesis assumed the direct relationship between IWE and PsyCap. Islam encourages teamwork (Murtaza et al., 2016) and it has been proved that employees following IWE have been found loyal and committed with their organizations (Bin Salahudin et al., 2016). IWE is an individual factor, followed by Muslims and increases their satisfaction and confidence (Aldulaimi, 2016). IWE strengthens cognitive abilities that enhance individual's attraction through innovative work habits (Omri & Becuwe, 2014). When faced with uncertainty, the workers' faith in God's power to reward them with effective means is the key motivator Parboteeah et al., 2015).

The impact of leadership styles have been tested on employee wellbeing (Arnold, 2017; Park et al., 2017), however, the moderating role of humble leadership in the hypothesized relationships is rare. The moderating role in a link between IWE and IWB and PsyCap was confirmed. It was concluded that the relationship between IWE and IWB and PsyCap was strengthened in the presence of humble leadership. The results are parallel to the previous suggestions that humble leadership influence IWB (Zhou & Wu, 2018) and psychological empowerment (Chen et al., 2018). Similarly, humble leadership positively influences employee self-efficacy (Owens & Hekman, 2016) which is an individual trait, thus, when paired with IWE, the relationship will be strengthened for PsyCap. Humble leaders recognize their mistakes, appreciate their colleagues' efforts, and learn from and creates environment for creativity them (Zhou & Wu, 2018). Similarly, IWE has focus on dedication and honesty in jobs. Therefore, employees will try to involve in positive behavior i.e. IWB with humble leadership as employees trust would trust their leadership (Ferris et al., 2005) and their skills. Eventually, employees consider humble leaders as a societal

reference to strengthen their humility traits. Eventually, employees turn to humble leaders as a societal reference point for strengthening their humility traits, which nurtures cooperative activities and PsyCap (Bahmannia et al., 2019).

5. Theoretical Implications

This study extends the IWE and leadership literature. First, the findings confirm that IWE has positive influence on IWB and PsyCap. According to Qasim et al., (2022), previous research suggested this possibility, but lacked sufficient empirical data. This study extended the moderating role of humble leadership, a novel study in the field. Our study is based on the suggested on the previous study which indicated that IWE is an individual personality factor of Muslims, where an employee follows the guidelines of Quraan (Javed et al., 2019).

Second the direct link between IWE and PsyCap has already been established (Qasim et al., 2022). However, the moderating role of humble leadership was recommended for investigation. Our study contributes to the literature by testing and confirming the moderating role of humble leadership in a link between IWE, IWB and PsyCap. It is of value that humble leadership may influence employees' IWB and PsyCap when paired with IWE. This study enhances our knowledge of how humble leadership style affect workers' desired behavior.

5.1 Limitation and Recommendations

It could be noted that this study is not free of limitations. First this study focused on a single organization, which does not provide generalizability. Therefore, further studies may focus on data collection from multiple organization or industries to check that the results are homogenous or not. Second, the nature of study was cross sectional, and PsyCap is developed overtime, therefore, longitudinal study would be valuable in tracing or PsyCap over time and the result may be different. Third, this study considered humble leadership style as a moderator. However, future studied may focus on dark side of leadership in enhancing or reducing the IWB or PsyCap among employees.

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