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Impact of Religiosity on Work Engagement and Job Performance: Moderating Role of Islamic Work Ethics

MUHAMMAD TUFAIL
Institute of Business Studies and Leadership
Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan.
Email: tufail@awkum.edu.pk

SHAHZAD KHAN
Department of Management Sciences
University of Haripur, Pakistan.
Email: shahzadkhan@uoh.edu.pk

MUHAMMAD HAROON UR RASHID
Institute of Business Studies and Leadership
Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan
Email: haroon@awkum.edu.pk

Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the relationship of religiosity with work engagement and job performance. Further, based on the conservation resource theory, the study explored the moderating role of Islamic Work Ethics in a relationship of religiosity with employee work engagement and job performance. Responses were recorded from employees working in public sector organizations located in Peshawar. Adopting time-lagged approach and utilizing the purposive sampling technique data was obtained from 342 individuals. Data was collected from officer cadre. The obtained result yielded a direct relationship of religiosity with work engagement and job performance. Further, the moderating role of IWE was also confirmed. Contribution along with limitations and future research avenues have been provided.

Key Words: *Islamic Work Ethics, Job Performance, Religiosity, Work Engagement.*

Introduction

To achieve competitive advantage and desired organizational outcomes, employee engagement is vital. Studies have found many factors accountable for employee work engagement, for example, team and workers' relationship (May et al., 2004), organizational structure, policies and procedures (Schneider et al., 2009), compensation (Saks & Rotman, 2006), Well-being (Rath & Harter, 2010) and leadership (Wallace a& Trinka, 2009). Work engagement is positively related to work attitude and behavior (Christian et al., 2011). Engagement is "clearly embedded within an integrated system of HRM policies, practices and procedures" (Albrecht et al., 2015) and is characterized by devotion and fascination (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Regardless of studies conducted on the phenomenon, Nwachukwu et al., (2016) and Tennakoon and Lasanthika (2018) called for more studies from developing countries. Further, it has been called to study other variables like religiosity (Bakar, 2013) that may affect employees' work engagement. Religiosity is the emotional attachment to religion (Ramlee et al., 2016). Religiosity is the degree an

individual's religious beliefs are established (Vitell and Singhapakdi, 2008). It reflects that an individual may have certain stronger beliefs and values and the difference is being conducted through internalization and pursuit of those principles (Mokhlis, 2009). Religiosity enables employees to have a greater sense of ownership and empowers them to sustain (Delbcq, 2015). Religiosity improves productivity (Bouarif, 2015), positive attitude, and behavior (Hage & Posner, 2015). Religiosity as a personal characteristic has not been gained much attention (Tracey et al., 2014). Religion plays important role in one's personal life (Abu-Alhaija et al., 2019) and similarly, can influence behavior in the workplace (Mathew et al., 2018).

Employees spend more of their time at work or work-related tasks and are left with lesser time for other activities (Klerk, 2015). However, employees want to have meaning in their job (Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Sharabi (2009). Most of the employees have a strong plea to accomplish their spiritual requirements they are not able to perform due to time limitations. As a result, organizations have focused on the working environment which carries a better sense of denotation and determination. Such a trend is being developed and followed by different organizations to have a win-win situation for both employees and the organization (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). Religiosity and performance have been found to be correlated. It encircles the way individuals live, behave in a certain way and perform their duties. Religious beliefs may result in momentous variance in the behavior and performance of employees (Osman-Ghani et al., 2013). Past studies have been found the relation of religiosity with other variables like job stress, sustaining attitude, organizational citizenship behavior (Barhem et al., 2009; Kutcher et al., 2010). There are few studies regarding the same and more empirical contribution has been recommended (see, Gibbons, 2000; Milliman et al., 2003) as the validity is uncertain due to lacked supporting data (Valasek, 2009). Further, Benefiel and Geigle (2014) argued that religiosity needs to be studied in the organizational context.

People follow some kind of religion, as of 2010, 84% of the world's population were found to be allied with religion, and this is expected to be increased (Hackett et al., 2015). In the same vein, it was reported that by 2055-2060, only 9% of the babies would be born to unaffiliated women (Pew Research Center, 2017). Considering the religious factor, the current study has been conducted in Pakistan, an Islamic country where 97% of the population is Muslim who follows religious factors in their normal and professional life (Tufail et al., 2021). Further, Islam is the second-largest religion in the world (Minhat & Dzolkainaini, 2016) and overall 23.5 of the world population follow Islam as a religion and is growing at a rapid frequency of 1.5 times faster than other religions (Johnson & Grim, 2013). It has also been expected that the Muslim young population of the world would be up to 60% by 2030 (Islam & Chandrasekaran, 2020). These statistics persuade researchers to study religious factors in the workplace.

Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) is the set of values derivative from the Holy Qura'an and Hadith (Ahmad & Owoyemi, 2012). IWE has been rooted in the Muslims' Holy Book i.e. Qura'an and Hadith, saying of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) (Khan et al., 2015). Hadith (s) are the collection of teaching Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) and is a core source of direction for Muslims in normal and business life (Bernstein, 2008). Verses from Qura'an highlight the importance of business and its outcomes (Rawwas et al., 2018). Islam always emphasized helping behavior in a working environment. The same has been mentioned in Qura'an and states: "*Help each other in good deeds but not in sin and disobedience"* (Quran 5:2). Similarly, Islam mentions regarding behavior in the workplace and elaborates that: those who performed well and to the best of capability would enter Heaven (Quran as cited in Ali, 1987, p. 7: 42). IWE forbids idle behavior and encourages employees to work hard (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). Work ethics followed by an individual is possible to impact the degree to which they are involved in working behavior (Farid et al., 2018).

Recently, Nwachukwu et al., (2021) called for introducing moderating variables between religiosity and engagement. Thus, considering the recent recommendation, the current study also examines the interplay between religiosity and IWE in expecting job outcomes i.e. job performance and work engagement. It was suggested that the personal factor-like IWE may moderate the job outcomes (Colquitt et al., 2006). Thus, we feel that integrating the IWE would yield more evidences to the existing body of knowledge in this regard. Religion, a spiritual motivator to accomplish the desired goals (Ali, 1992). IWE considers work as a source of personal and social growth (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). It discourages laziness and encourages engagement as an obligation in economic activity (Yousef, 2000). Thus, it is likely to assume that individuals who obey IWE may be more engaged in their duties and would perform better than those who are low on IWE.

Findings of this study would contribute to the understanding of conservation of resources theory (Hobfall, 2001) in Eastern working environment, which has previously been tested in Western working environment and for generalization the same has been suggested to be carried out in eastern working environment (Tsui et al., 2007). Thus, the study is an attempt to fill the gap. the combined effect of IWE would enhance the job outcomes positively. Similarly, the importance has been discussed and the researchers have been obligated to examine the religious and personal factors influencing attitude and behavior (Eastman & Santoro, 2003).

Literature Review

Religiosity and Work Engagement

In Islam, religiosity is to adopt the principles mentioned in the Holy Quraan as it is the core source of knowledge. Religiosity in the working environment cannot be ignored as verses from Quraan has a great impact on business decisions and other operations (Hage, 2013). According to Faris and Parry (2011), leaders are answerable and commended to encounter the compulsion to God and cascade the same to followers and these obligations are equally applied to all employees in the working environment. Religion is a mechanism that provides solutions to problems by interaction and encouraging cooperation (Bloom, 2012). For example, Islam emphasis on positive work outcomes and negate indulging in negative behavior (Javed et al., 2019). Islam Provides principles for all aspects of life (Khan et al., 2015), and thus Muslims consider their jobs as worship (Barhem, Younies & Muhamad, 2009). The employees engage in their duties positively to please Creator (Javed et al., 2019). In this regard, Quraan says: “Muslims is the person who performs good, and he will not be afraid of loss” *(Qur’an, 4:122; 20:112).* In Islam, a job is considered as a cause of happiness (Yousef, 2001) and the “best” is the one who can meet the assigned deadlines (Ali, 1988). Religion is the commanding source of security, ease, and direction (Nwachukwu et al., 2021).

Religiosity can influence work outcomes, especially work engagement (Tennakoon & Lasanthika, 2018; Saleh et al. 2020). Religiosity improves the employees’ attitude and behavior (Kutcher et al., 2010) and provides the opportunity to learn, respect, and value other individuals' religions and faith. Optimistic conviction in religion contributes towards positive effects of individuals in organizations (Huber & Huber, 2012; Zarzycka & Puchalska-Wasyl 2020). Religion cannot be considered as an obstacle to engage in work rather individuals tend to strive for work that accommodates their religious beliefs (Lips-Wierma, 2002). Religiosity can further be characterized as extrinsic and intrinsic (Flere & Lavrič, 2008). The applied motivation describes extrinsic religiosity and is used for personal gain and to accomplish desired targets (Allport and Ross, 1967). While intrinsic religiosity underlines living according to one's religious values. International religiosity fosters ethical judgment (Vitell, 2009) and avoids unethical beliefs (Vitell et al.,

2007). Similarly, Nwachukwu et al., (2021) argued that employees who avoid unethical behavior in organizations would be more engaged in their duties in the workplace.

H1: There is a significant relationship between religiosity and work engagement.

Religiosity and Job Performance

Like IWE, religiosity also discourages unethical behavior like fraud, misuse of organizational resources, and exploitation (Abdi et al., 2014). Employees who follow religious beliefs would behave well in both personal and organizational life. In the current diverse working environment, group conflict may arise due to the religious diversities in organizations (Gebert et al., 2014; Hage, 2013) but employees following Muslim religiosity would negate negative behavior. In this regard, Howe (2013) urged that everything is for ALLAH and He is the final cause, the same has been stated in Quraan that: "*And that to your Lord is the finality*" (Quraan, 53: 42).

The connection between determination and religion has been noted, in this regard, Brotheridge and Lee (2010) expressed the relationship between devotion to work and an individual's religious deity and coined the expression "hands to work, heart to God". Consistent with organizational studies Karakas (2010) found a direct relationship between workplace spirituality and performance and identified that spirituality plays important role in classifying innovative goals, and provides supporting resources and environment that impact employees' performance. Irrespective of the fact of growing credit of religiosity in the workplace, the possibility of misuse of religious beliefs in the workplace has been observed and has been noted that religion should be the last goal and carefulness operating managerial techniques (Karakas, 2008). Studies have found that religiosity reduces work stress, sustains employees' attitude and organization citizenship behavior (Barhem et al., 2009; Kutcher et al., 2010). Similarly, it has been found that religiosity positively affects job satisfaction, mental health, subjective well-being, and involvement (Abu-Alhaija et al., 2019; Tiliouine & Belgoumidi, 2009). In the same vein, empirical studies found that employees with intrinsic religiosity showed a lesser level of job satisfaction while those who were higher on extrinsic religious orientation showed higher stress at the workplace (Kutcher et al., 2010). Other studies have resulted that religiosity is a vital determinant of job performance (Osman-Ghani et al., 2013) and significantly affects employees' performance (Moon et al., 2020). The findings urged that the relationship between religiosity and job performance is a complex phenomenon and needs further exploration, thus;

H2: There is a significant relationship between religiosity and job performance

The Moderating Role of IWE

Over the last twenty years, IWE has gained momentum and emerged as a specific research area for researchers (Yousef, 2000) and has placed a strategic role in organizations (Nasution & Rafiki, 2020). IWE has a positive effect on employees' attitude and work behavior (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008) for example, organizational commitment (Nasution & Rafiki, 2020) knowledge sharing behavior (Murtaza et al., 2016) organization citizenship behavior (Tufail et al., 2020) leadership styles (Javed et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2020) employees' satisfaction (Mohamed et al., 2010) and job performance (Tufail et al., 2018; Saban et al., 2020). It is suggested that personal or contextual factors like IWE can moderate the relationship (Chang et al., 2009). Subsequently, IWE encourages employees to be dedicated, equitable, and fair (Khan et al., 2015). IWE encourages employees to avoid negative behavior (Alam & Talib, 2016) and is assumed to be a vital moderator.

Islam encourages positive rather than negative behavior (Javed et al., 2019). The teaching of Islam and the saying of Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) emphasize hard work and forbade lethargy. In this regard, Quraan states: "*Man will not get anything unless he works hard*" (Qur'an, 53:39). Islamic point of view of hard work is the consistency in struggle, which means that employees abide by IWE would work hard for the accomplishment of targeted goals (Javed et al., 2019. IWE encourages employees to complete their goals with consistency (Hassan et al., 2018). Islam proscribes dishonesty in the working environment and Quraan says: "*So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance*" (Quraan, 55:9). Thus, employees having a stronger on IWE would be indulged in productive behavior. Islam confirms boundaries for individuals' behavior and inspires them to be productive and the reward of the moral and immoral deeds will be awarded in this world and hereafter (Rawwas et al., 2018). Any person who embraces Islam would follow its principles, which encircles daily personal and organizational life. Thus, Muslim workers will accept the Islamic law to accomplish their responsibility towards their religion (Khan, et al., 2015). Islamic teaching necessitates individuals to exercise voluntarism (Pomeranz 2004). Hard work is considered as a virtue in Islam and the employees having stronger IWE would have positive emotions and result in greater productivity. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) cleared that those who are beneficial to others are the best people (Ali & Al-Kazemi, 2007).

Studies have found that moral stress on performing good deeds in this world and its reward or punishment in life hereafter described Muslims' compulsion to work hard (Bouma et al., 2003; Khan et al., 2015). Hard work is the perfection in the accomplishment of any assigned task, as Muslims are entirely surrender to ALLAH (Syed & Ali, 2010). Allah also likes deeds when completed carefully and perfectly (Khan et al., 2015). It has also been found that religion contributes a noteworthy role in a person's work values (Parboteeah et al., 2009). Therefore, individuals having stronger IWE will embrace positive emotions and thus would result in more work engagement and productivity. On the other hand, in the case of lower IWE employees feel stress and would not result in enhanced engagement and productivity. Thus, employees who follow religiosity, when combined with IWE would be more motivated and obliged to exhibit positive behavior and would result in more engagement and productivity. In contrast, employees with weaker IWE would not indulge in positive behavior.

H 3: IWE will moderate the direct relationships between religiosity and employee work engagement such that the relationship will be stronger when IWE is high.
H 4: IWE will moderate the positive relationship between religiosity and jo performance such that the relationship will be stronger when IWE is high.

Methodology

Sampling and Data Collection

The current study adopted a quantitative, cross-section approach to achieve the objectives of the study. A cross-sectional study permits the researcher (s) to gather information at a given time (Vu and Nwachukwu, 2021) and is suitable for hypotheses testing. The target population was the employees of Public sector organizations located in Peshawar. A convenient sampling technique was adopted as it allows the theoretical generalization of the results (Calder et al., 1981). Prior permission was obtained from the officials. White color job holder was approached for data collection. Before approaching the targeted respondents' formal permission was granted from the employees as well, ensuring the conditionality and research purpose. The respondents were visited at their respective offices during office hours. Data were collected at two points. In the first phase responses regarding religiosity and work engagement were recorded. While in the second phase i.e. 25 days apart, responses about IWE and job

performance were recorded. A tricky and attention seeker question was placed among the questions to certify the quality as prescribed by Torres et al., (2017). Respondents who did not answer the said question correctly were removed from the data.

Instruments

To measure the study variables, questionnaires were adopted from previous studies. In this regard, religiosity was measured through 17 items scale developed by Stark and Glock (1968). To assess data regarding IWE a 17 items scale developed by Ali (1992) was utilized. Employee work engagement was measure through 9 items scales developed by Schaufeli et al., (2002). Further, employee job performance was measured through 7 items developed by William and Anderson (1991). The items were on 5 points Likert scale.

Data analysis

In order to analyze data SPSS v. 23 and AMOS v. 25 was used. For missing data and outliers data was screened. Demographic analysis was carried out. For model measurement, CFA was conducted. Further, validity and reliability were also carried out. Lastly, moderating analysis was carried out.

Results

A total of 600 questionnaires were circulated among the respondents. In response to the circulated questionnaires, we got 374 filled questionnaires back. On the first hand tricky question was checked and it was found that 31 respondents did not answer the said question correctly, so were removed from the data set. Further, after checking the missing data, 342 questionnaires were considered fit and were utilized in the analysis.

Demographic analysis resulted that most of the respondents (81%) were male. In case of age distribution, 67% of the respondents were below 35 years of age. further, the qualification of the respondents was yielded that 67% were master Degree holders.

Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory analysis was carried out for maximum likelihood estimator, after checking the normal distribution. The obtained results yielded good model fit (x^2 = 1,892.309, df = 661, x^2/df= 2.799, $p < 0.01$, CFI = 0.941, TLI = 0.9290, RMSEA = 0.051, SRMR = 0.039). the results are shown in table 1.

Table 1 Model Fit

Measures	Value
x^2/df	2.799
p-value	0.01
CFI	0.930
TLI	0.925
RMSEA	0.049
SRMR	0.037

The reliability, composite reliability, and average variance extracted of the model were measured and the values have been presented in table 2. Table 2 plots the values for CR were above the desired level i.e.

0.7 (Field, 2013). Similarly, the AVE values were also above the desired values of 0.5 (Field, 2013). Lastly, the reliability values were also above 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 2 Reliability & Validity

Variable	CR	AVE	α
Religiosity	0.85	0.594	0.84
Engagement	0.909	0.776	0.9
Job Performance	0.937	0.663	0.89
IWE	0.95	0.617	0.91

Regression Analyses

To find out the direct and moderating analysis multiple regression analysis was carried out. The direct relation revealed that religiosity is directly related to job performance (β = 0.20, p<0.000), which supported the proposed hypothesis. Similarly, in the case of the relationship between religiosity and work engagement the relationship was positively correlated where (β = 0.11, p<0.000). it implies that religiosity positively influences work engagement. Furthermore, the direct relation of IWE with job performance (β = 0.36, p<0.000) and work engagement (β = 0.63, p<0.000) was also confirmed.

The current study also hypothesized the moderating role of IWE in the relationship between religiosity and work outcomes i.e. work engagement and job performance. The moderating impact of IWE was tested by following the Cohen et al., (2003) technique. Before conducting the mentioned test tolerance test and variance inflation factor were calculated to measure the mulictoleniarity. The tolerance test (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) value was found above the threshold value of 0.10. further, the VIF (Chatterjee & Price, 1991) was found below the threshold value of 0.50 and thus confirmed no multicoleniarity. In the proceeding analysis, gender was taken as the control variable. In the next step, predictor criterion and moderating variables were entered while in the last step the product term of religiosity and IWE (i.e. REG x IWE) was entered.

Table 3: Moderating Regression Analysis

	Work Engagement			Job Performance		
	B	R^2	Δ R^2	β	R^2	Δ R^2
Step 1						
Gender		0.005**	0		0.005**	0
Step 2						
Religiosity	0.20**			0.11**		
Islamic Work Ethics	0.639**	0.465**		0.567**	0.362**	
Step 3						
REG x IWE	0.435**	0.487**	0.017**	0.469**	0.387**	0.020**

N = 342, ns= not significant
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 displays that the interactive term (REG x IWE) was found significant for religiosity-work engagement relationship where β =0.43 at p <0.05. the change in R square was found at 0.017 supporting

the proposed hypothesis. Similarly, the moderating role of IWE between religiosity and job performance was also confirmed where β =0.46 at p <0.05 and change in R square was 0.020. the R square values were relatively minute still informative.

The graphical representation has been plotted in Figures 1 and 2 for the high and low levels of IWE.

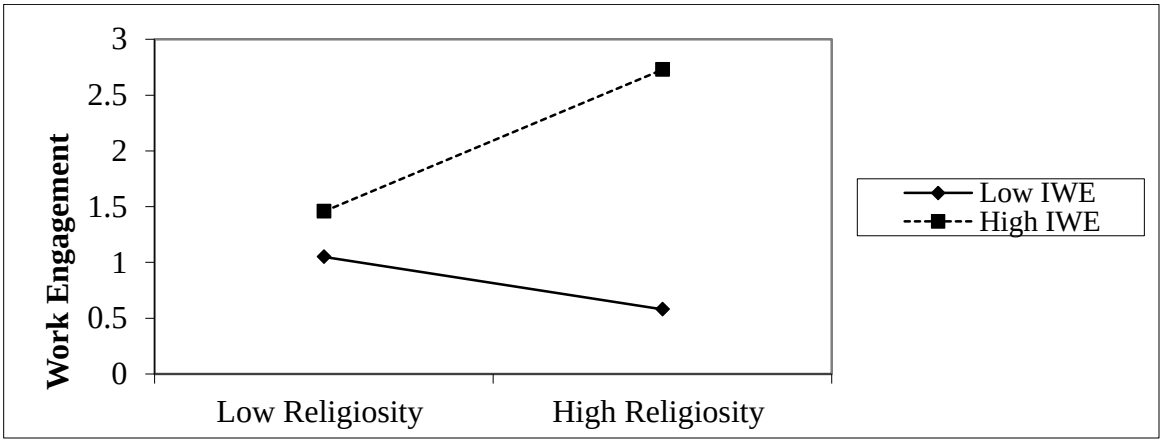

Figure 1

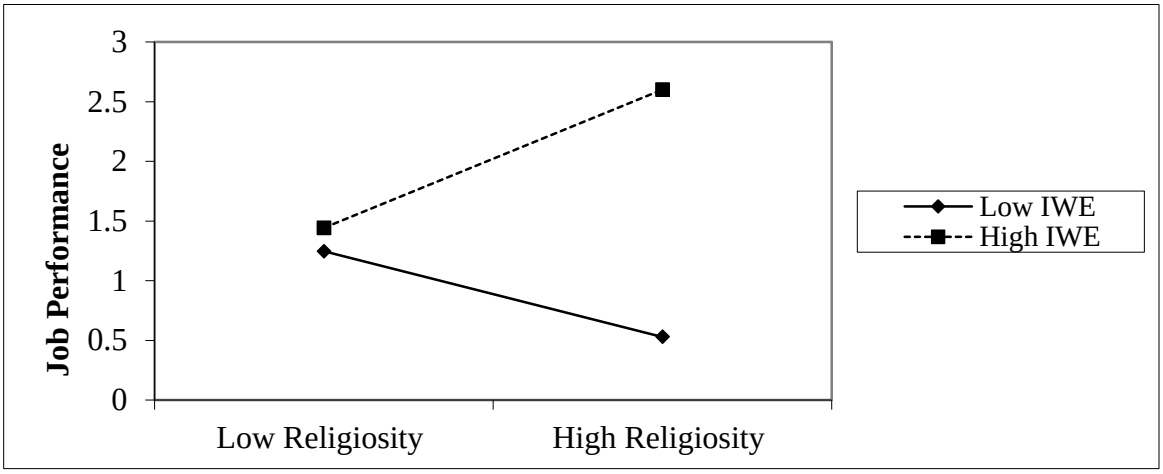

Figure 2

Discussion

The current study confirmed the positive significant relationship of religiosity with employee work engagement and job performance. Certainly, religion emphasis individuals to feel and act morally and should be obligated to put their best efforts to indulge in their duties (Knotts, 2003). Religiosity pushes individuals to shape their perceptions and modify their behavior as per their beliefs. It motivates employees to show positive and cooperative behavior and serves as vigorous stimuli for employees to perform better (Nwachukwu et al., 2021). Religiosity impacts employees' behavior (Oler (2004), while another study found that it influences perceptions and decision-making (Vasconcelos, 2009). The element of decision-making can be explained in such a manner that prayers can be a source of accuracy in decision

making (Cavanagh & Hazen, 2008) as prayers help employees to have mental relaxation and emotional capacity at a higher level (McGee & Delbecq, 2003). Employees experiencing the optimum level of mental comfort would be actively engaged in their jobs and thus performance would be at a better level. Islamic religiosity states that Muslims are more inclined to their duties and the same has been confirmed by (Bakar, 2003). Other studies also confirmed that religious beliefs are strongly correlated with organizational practices (Ali & AlOwaihan 2008; Randaree & El-Faramawy 2011).

IWE underscores the importance of work and employees believe they need to perform better (De Clercq et al., 2018). IWE plays crucial role in Muslims employees' performance and (Mohammad et al., 2018). The obtained results yielded the moderating role of IWE significantly such that the religiosity and work engagement was enhanced when IWE was higher, similarly, for higher IWE the relationship between religiosity and job performance was strengthened. Provided that IWE is based on the teaching of Quraan and Prophet Muhammad (SAWW) (Farid et al., 2019) thus the positive behavior is secure by following IWE in the workplace. The said can be supported with the conservation of resources theory. The insertion of IWE helps in obtaining and sustaining the resources in every situation. COR identifies four categories. These categories are a) Tangible possession, b) supplementary essentials, c) personal qualifications, d) personal accomplishment (cited in Javed et al., 2019). IWE as per COR theory comes under the third category where the individuals would exercise it as a personal factor (qualification). Resources are perishable, yet IWE is not (Javed et al., 2019) IWE is like a spiritual belief and is characterized by personal strength conservation, and availability. Our study encompasses that how religious beliefs are important in the working environment (Eaves et al. 2008; Kutcher et al. 2010). Accordingly, the personal resource of religiosity and IWE may help to overwhelm any barrier by causing personal contentment and making a sense of uniformity between personal values and work behaviors (Haq et al., 2018).

Managerial Implication

The results of the study provide few managerial implications. first, the findings deliver some insights into IWE literature in terms of enhancing the religiosity-work output relationship. Further, managers may play important roles as morality may provide support in the desired behavior at the workplace.

Ethics is one of the key features of an organization's fundamental value (Carroll & Buchholtz 2006; Schwartz & Carroll 2008) but may not be valuable to be implemented across the world (Rice 1999). This can be an issue for managers working in multinationals established in Islamic countries, yet can be overwhelmed by implementing Islamic code of ethics and the employees may follow these principles to meet excellent job outcomes. Managers would find it easier to work with employees who follow IWE as they would show positive and discretionary behavior with loyalty and dedication. Good performance may enhance the reputation of an organization. Islam provides a complete set of principles for life and is more than just a religion. It motivates employees to produce positive results. Studies suggested that ethics may be taught to managers (Jones 2009; Lau 2010).

The study found that employees who follow IWE are self-motivated and enthusiastic to undertake tasks successfully. The Holy Quraan also supports fairness in work and considers apathy and unproductive behavior as a lack of faith. Those employees who are less motivated may be prompted by the features of IWE principles. By finding the higher reward for performance, the employees would be inspired to engage in positive behavior

Limitation and Future Direction

The current study also resulted in few limitations. First, this study underscores religiosity as uni-dimension and did not measure intrinsic-extrinsic religiosity. The dimension-wise study may infer different results as Vitell et al., (2009) mentioned that one dimension may counterbalance the other dimension of religiosity. Thus, intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity may work in opposite direction. Second, the data regarding job performance was collected from immediate supervisors and may produce bias, consequently, data about work engagement may also be collected from colleagues or supervisors in order to get the unbiased data. Third, we test religiosity with positive possible outcomes. Further studies may assess the unfavorable or deviant behavioral aspects like dysfunctional organizational politics, authoritarian leadership styles (Abbas et al. 2014; Li & Sun 2015). Similarly, the moderating role of IWE may be investigated with negative behavior i.e. knowledge hiding. Forth, the study was conducted in a Muslim country where all of the respondents were Muslims and follows belief in God, the more individualistic-oriented and secular countries may yield different results.

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