

Islamic Work Ethic, Employee Engagement, and Organizational Citizenship Behavior among Public Servants: A Review Paper

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ABSTRACT

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In addition to carrying out numerous national economic transformation initiatives, public sector workers must also meet the growing demands and expectations of the Malaysian people. To improve the effectiveness of government service delivery to the public, public sector employees with organisational citizenship behaviours that voluntarily go above and beyond their job performance expectations are greatly sought after. Despite not being formally established as a code of conduct for government organisations in Malaysia, the majority of the country's public workers have embraced the Islamic Work Ethic (IWE), which has a substantial impact on a range of workplace habits. The indirect relationship between Islamic work ethic and OCB via employee engagement suggests that when employees with strong intrinsic values encounter a favourable attitude such as employee engagement, their OCB improves.

Contribution/Originality: This study contribute to the body of knowledge such as understanding the source and consequences of Islamic work ethics among employees and how it affects their organizational citizenship behavior.

1. Introduction

The Malaysian public service was the largest employer, with 1.4 million people employed, including strategic military, naval, and police officers. The federal government employs 1.03 million people, while states employ 181,287 people and statutory bodies employ 173,459 people (Cheah, 2021). Malaysia's public service is heavily impacted by its colonial heritage, as the country was colonized by several countries, one of which was the British. The Public Service Department is the main central agency in Malaysian public service (PSD). With a very high number of employees, the work implementation process might turn out to be very tedious and therefore it seems requiring a total collaboration and support from the top management involved. Thus, job performance is deemed as an imperative factor in increasing work productivity within the government organization.

Employee job performance is significant in the public sector since it indicates the quality of service as well as the government's performance. As a result, it is concerned that the most important emphasis of administrators and academicians is job performance, which would diminish if employees' skill level declines. As a result, the government has devised a method of measuring public employee performance, as well as performance standards, to ensure that public employees perform admirably in carrying out their obligations in serving the country.

Furthermore, the public servants involved must do the appropriate responsibilities while simultaneously engaging in OCB to meet the demands of the clients. This is because their job performance is critical because it reflects the entire performance of the organization. Furthermore, as claimed by Farid et al. (2019), because the public sector is service-oriented, there is a great desire for higher levels of job performance among government employees.

It is critical to recognize that the job performance of public officials may be intimately tied to other elements such as their employment and the departments and agencies that revolve around them. As a result, there appears to be a need to explore the relationship between IWE and employee job performance in the Malaysian environment. According to Sentoso and Putra (2021), Malaysian public officials are evaluated based on numerous factors, including task performance and OCB. This implies that OCB is critical for Malaysian public workers to practice and that all of them are indirectly evaluated based on their OCB elements.

Some behavioral researchers have focused on dispositional aspects in identifying motives and comprehending OCB. Dispositional elements are those that are "internal to the individual and which individuals bring with them from situation to circumstance and from one organization to another" (Scholl, 2008). Individual dispositional factors such as work values (Suryani et al., 2022), personality traits (Tufail et al., 2022), attitudes, and cognitive style that are relatively consistent over time and situations and are difficult to change have a large influence on organizations outcomes (Zia et al., 2022). Work ethics has attracted a lot of attention from behavioral scientists. Prior to studying IWE, Blood's (1969) protestant work ethic was one of the most talked and researched labor values in the social sciences (Rahmawaty et al., 2022). In line with Suryani et al. (2022) and Marfuatun and Muafi (2021) believe that IWE is a dispositional trait that differs among individuals. Furthermore, Mohammed et al. (2022) believes that the IWE is worthy of debate since it plays an important part in the realization of Muslims all over the world. As

a country with a Malay Muslim majority who practice Islam, religion has become the most prominent component in shaping Malaysian work value systems. Previous research in the Malaysian public sector indicates that Malaysian public sector employees strictly adhere to IWE at their workplace (Qasim et al., 2022). Based on previous research, the researcher believes that IWE will have an impact on improving (Romi et al., 2020).

While the majority of studies have proposed employee engagement as a predictor of various positive behavioral outcomes at work, this study positioned employee engagement as an enabler or process variable that explains the underlying mechanism that occurred as the effects of IWE on OCB. Several studies have been conducted to investigate the role of employee engagement in mediating various organizational outcomes (Qasim et al., 2022). Furthermore, previous research has indicated that OCB was mediated by employee involvement (Thani et al., 2021). However, the researchers recognized that little study has been undertaken to explore the role of employee engagement as a mediating variable in the association between IWE and OCB among federal servants. Furthermore, according to Farid et al. (2019), research on employee engagement as a mediator in the relationship between multiple antecedents and effects is still in its early stages.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Concept of Organizational Citizenship Behavior

OCB was originally introduced by Bateman and Organ (1983) in the early 1980s which highlighted extra-role behavior. OCB includes the positive behavioral aspects which are not even stated in the job description and besides, it is also not enforced in the contract of employment. Apart from the contextual performance, based on Sentoso and Putra (2021), OCB has also been regarded as the extra-role behaviors or the discretionary behaviors. It was characterized into another aspect which is general compliance basically when it was first introduced by Bateman and Organ (1983), where it deals which the actions that should be taken by the employees and the compassion, they possessed which includes their willingness to help others (Organ, 1988). Organ (1988) then expanded OCB into five (5) different dimensions as explained below.

2.1.1. Altruism

Altruism refers to helping the workers on the task assigned or problems faced in a way that provides relevant information for the employees besides assisting and helping them to solve the problems they faced and giving a helping hand in handling the equipment as well as the machinery (Organ, 1988; Ibrahim et al., 2020).

2.1.2. Civic Virtue

Civic virtue refers to participation in the events conducted in the organization and it also has to do with the decision-making. In other words, it specifically has contributions in terms of organizational governance (Organ, 1988). It occurs when the employees take part in events in the organization that reflect the unity and the relationship among members and create a good intention as well as a positive image to be viewed by the public (Ibrahim et al., 2020).

2.1.3. Conscientiousness

As employees started to perform their responsibilities and job which are above the minimum level of requirement, this is called conscientiousness (Organ, 1988). Among the behaviours are arriving early and leaving the office or workplace late, giving sincere beneficial suggestions, and not doing things that are considered a waste of time such as chit-chatting, gossiping, or having breaks very frequently (Ibrahim et al., 2020).

2.1.4. Courtesy

Courtesy refers to the act of the employees in informing and notifying others of threats that may impact them or their careers (Organ, 1988). This is good behavior as it will help in preventing or at least notifying others of the harm that might have an impact on them. For example, the company may notify the employees that they have been frequently arriving late to work before appropriating any actions on them (Ibrahim et al., 2020).

2.1.5. Sportsmanship

Sportsmanship concerns withholding from complaining on small issues encountered at the workplace (Organ, 1988). Tolerating situations that are unpleasant or inconvenient at the workplace instead of keep complaining about it (Ibrahim et al., 2020).

2.2. Islamic Work Ethics (IWE)

IWE is founded on the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah (P.B.U.H). "*Oh you who believe, persevere and outlast all others in endurance, be ready, and do your responsibility to Allah so that you may succeed*". According to the Quran, all workers must behave themselves properly and with excellent behaviour. IWE influences employees and causes them to perform appropriately in the workplace, according to Qasim et al. (2020). According to Romi et al. (2020), IWE is a set of moral principles that distinguishes between what is truly acceptable and what is bad in an Islamic context. Ali and Tahir (2018) divided IWE into four categories in their conceptual framework: effort, competition, transparency, and morally acceptable behaviour. Yet, according to a poll of banking professionals, the new elements of IWE include effort, teamwork, honesty, and accountability (Khadijah et al., 2015). According to Ali and Tahir (2018), the importance of work in IWE is derived from the accompanying goal rather than the outcomes of labor. Everyone's ultimate goal in Islam should be Allah. IWE believes that an individual's job should be done to the best of their ability for the pleasure of Allah, according to Akbari et al. (2020). Udin et al. (2022) discovered that IWE substantially affected job satisfaction in the context of a four-star hotel in South Sulawesi, where self-competence allows employees to display their knowledge, experience, abilities, and positive attitudes, leading to self-enhancement and pleasure.

2.3. IWE and OCB

According to Akbari et al. (2020), OCB has a positive association with IWE in Indonesia's public sector hospitals and banks. This finding is consistent with a previous study by Romi et al. (2020), which claimed that university workers from public sector educational institutions demonstrate stronger citizenship behaviour than those with low IWE.

Religiosity: Religiosity is a natural religious inclination that gives a person a clear perspective on life and focuses on spirituality rather than the ego. According to [Salman and Ali \(2020\)](#), one's spirituality at work is more likely to boost honesty and trust, as well as improved compassion and justice, and such people are more likely to display other positive employee behaviours. [Farid et al. \(2019\)](#) investigated the impact of religion on OCB in undergraduate students and discovered that internal religiosity was a significant predictor of OCB, but extrinsic religiosity was a significant predictor of OCB. In a study of employees at an Indonesian public institution. [Udin et al. \(2022\)](#) discovered that religion and job attitude were both related to OCB.

Effort: [Brown and Leigh \(1996\)](#) identified effort as a degree of commitment, work intensity committed to obtaining performance, and the process by which motivation might be sustained till the job was done. 'More effort leads to extra-favourable employee behaviour,' according to [Brown and Leigh \(1996\)](#).

Collectivism: Collectivists are those who see themselves as an entire group ([Maham et al., 2021](#)). Collectivism, according to [De Clercq et al. \(2022\)](#), denotes an individual who is willing to tighten the way individuals are emotionally tied to an organizational. From an Islamic perspective, collectivism originates from Islam's origins as a communal religion (Islamic ummah). Individualistic employees will demonstrate higher OCB than collectivistic employees ([Maham et al., 2021](#)).

Work obligation: According to [Udin et al. \(2022\)](#), work responsibility is a legal, social, and moral requirement. A vow, for example, that demands a person to either obey or reject a severe path of action. Work commitment is critical to organizational performance. According to [Farid et al. \(2019\)](#), work obligation contains components of accountability, integrity, honesty, discipline, and much more. A highly motivated employee may demonstrate in a variety of settings that no ethical decisions were made throughout the firm and always finish the task assigned above and above the minimal observance. Historically, investigations have found that IWE play a key role in altering a range of required job conclusions. IWE originated from the Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W) sayings ("Ahadees"), which supplied the parameters for the establishment of Islamic ideology-based work ethics ([Akbari et al., 2020](#)). The IWE stresses co-worker assistance and support ([Mubarak et al., 2022](#)). Work ethics is one of the dispositional aspects that is highly valued in the Islamic culture ([Raza et al., 2022](#)). According to [Ali \(1988\)](#), who translated Islamic work recommendations into a scale form by introducing phrases linked to IWE, hard effort can be measured as a virtue. [Khurram et al. \(2020\)](#) did a study on the Pakistani telecom sector and discovered that IWE had a significant impact on the growth of business volumes in the telecom sector. Thus, the IWE can be applied to gain greater yield in business. This is supported by studies such as [Srimulyani and Hermanto \(2022\)](#). it is also anticipated in this study that IWE is positively associated with citizenship behaviours in organizational contexts. The first hypothesis of the study is formulated as follows to confirm the notion inspired by social exchange theory and metaethics/normative ethics theorises as well as build organizational citizenship behaviour ([Solichin, 2020](#)). Thus, the following hypothesis is hypothesized:

2.4. Employee Engagement

Many definitions of employee involvement have emerged from both practical and academic viewpoints ([Sugianingrat et al., 2019](#)). Yet, there has been no widespread agreement on its definition since its inception ([Hermawan et al., 2020](#)). Employee

engagement is typically characterized as a positive emotional and intellectual environment that motivates workers and employees to perform hard for their roles in any organization. On the other side, constructive employee engagement can be defined as the result of a positive mental state among employees, which leads to their conduct or outcome, which eventually results in profits for the organization. Engagement has mostly been researched in four contexts: individual engagement, job engagement, burnout engagement, and employee engagement (Sattar et al., 2021). Afendi et al. (2020) argued that the concept of work engagement has been originated by the advent of the burn out research as an attempt to analyze not only employees' grievances but also their well-being and ecstasy as well. The current paper is focused on work engagement from the psychological perspective of employees (individual) and addresses the emotional and social dimensions of the variable. The impact of engaged personnel brings forth great results for both the single person and the full business (Simamora et al., 2019). Highly engaged personnel are devoted to their effort and organization (Sattar et al., 2021). Regardless of what is intended, research has found that work engagement has various good impacts, including job fulfilment, organizational obligation, and OCB (Hermawan et al. 2020). As a result, organizations must develop strategies for engaging and inspiring people in such a new economic and dynamic environment.

2.5. Relationship between Islamic work ethics (IWE) and Employee Engagement

IWE is a belief system based on the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him) that motivates people to work with a sense of duty and responsibility (Siddiq & Hadjiah, 2019). Work ethics have intrinsic value in Islam, which means that God will deal with the reward for doing the right thing and the penalty for doing the wrong thing in life after death (Hariani & Muafi, 2021). In other words, it is a mindset that impacts and forms workplace participation and involvement and reflects that labour is a virtue considering a person's need (Al-Shamali et al., 2021). A recent study, done by Ahmed et al. (2019), studied an association between IWE and employee engagement. The researchers used the cluster random sampling technique to analyze a sample of Khosf County teachers in Iran. According to the findings of the investigation, IWE had a favorable and significant effect on employee engagement and three characteristics of job engagement, which comprised devotion, absorption, and vigour. Future research should focus on researching the same subject in different communities at the national and regional levels, according to the researchers, in order to have a deeper understanding of this association. Based on the knowledge of previous studies, the current study is focused on determining the relationship between IWE and employee engagement in Pakistani culture.

2.6. Relationship between Employee Engagement with Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCB)

Workplace engagement is characterized as a good attitude supported by self-reliance, internal satisfaction, and a sense of success (Hermawan et al., 2020). Positive attitudes lead to positive discretionary behaviors, such as helping others and being kind to them at work. According to research, highly engaged employees are more likely to exhibit citizenship behaviors at work (Sahoo & Mohanty, 2019). For a better understanding, engaged employees are satisfied and happy with their work, which makes them more interested in an organization's future (Na-Nan et al., 2021). Because they are active and proactive in maintaining an organization's image through connecting with colleagues and consumers, such devoted and caring employees are of significant value to their

organization. [Hai et al. \(2020\)](#) studied the relationship between employee engagement and OCBs in Thai culture and discovered a positive and significant relationship. It was suggested that this relationship be investigated in a different cultural environment. As a result, the association between employee engagement and OCB was tested in Pakistan. Therefore, the following hypothesis is hypothesized:

2.7. Mediation Role of Employee Engagement in the Relationship between IWE and OCBs

Several research has been conducted to study the vital role that IWE plays in positive job outcomes such as satisfaction, commitment, loyalty, and OCB ([Hai et al., 2020](#)). The positive relationship between IWE and OCB suggested that individuals respect their faith at work and extend cooperation and support to other colleagues, but this support and assistance is purely voluntary and informal. Yet, one of the study's fundamental assumptions is that the relationship between IWE and OCB may not be straightforward. That is, while IWE influences OCB, it does not necessarily follow that employees who hold strong beliefs in Islamic values will conduct themselves in a good manner to help the organization. Individual differences, on the other hand, are likely to operate as a regulative component of behavior, influencing the extent to which they choose to show OCB. According to [Al-Shamali et al. \(2021\)](#), because OCB is not formally stated in roles by the organization, they are typically implicit and indirect forces within and surrounding the organization. The purpose of this study is to see if IWE has an indirect effect on OCB through employee engagement. Employee engagement refers to the simultaneous induction of personal energies in the performance of work. It is a reasonably good state of mind ([Hermawan et al. 2020](#)). One of the most important psychological states is regarded as bone ([Sattar et al. 2021](#)). Here, employee engagement is the only issue being addressed because it is based on individual employee work experiences and serves as a behavioral expression of inputs and outputs ([Sattar et al. 2021](#)). So, it is possible to think of employee engagement as a proximal concept that captures how people feel about their jobs. This could thus serve as a link between Islamic job norms and admirable conduct (i.e. OCBs).

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, employees who are highly intrinsically motivated, have a strong sense of Islamic work ethics, and are working in an ethical setting will inevitably reciprocate by showing kindness and doing a good job at their jobs. Additionally, highly engaged workers exhibit vitality that produces excellent job outcomes and stronger civic conduct. Employees that are highly engaged are more committed to their employers. Additionally, highly engaged workers exhibit vitality that produces excellent job outcomes and stronger civic conduct. Employees that are highly engaged are more committed to their employers. As a consequence, they are more inclined to assist other workers and go above and beyond their job responsibilities, resulting in excellent civic behavior. Values demonstrated include group responsibility and working hard towards the same goals, demonstrating steadfast devotion and tenacity at work, ensuring that products and services fulfil client requests, and being inventive in carrying out duties entrusted to them. As a result, workers' attitudes and behaviors at work are more positive when they adhere to Islamic ideals. In summary, individuals who are perceived to have strong Islamic principles are more likely to engage in purposeful and proactive activity that benefits the overall organization.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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