



Research article

Perceptions of politics and knowledge sharing: Moderating role of Islamic work ethic in the Islamic banking industry of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge is the most critical source for sustainable competitive advantage in an organization. Organizations must therefore focus on creating a culture for Knowledge Sharing. However, politics or political work environment is an inevitable outcome where people interact and communicate on a daily basis. Politics discourage Knowledge Sharing and its related efforts in the organization. However, Islamic Work Ethic can remove negativity and strengthen Knowledge Sharing behaviors in the organization. This research focused on the moderating role of Islamic Work Ethic between Perceptions of Politics and Knowledge Sharing behaviors.

The data was gathered using a structured questionnaire from the Banking Industry in Karachi, Pakistan using unrestricted non-probability convenience sampling technique. Hypotheses was tested using Structural Equation Modelling in SMART-PLS software. It was found that Perceptions of Politics reduces Knowledge Sharing Behaviors while Islamic Work Ethic Increase Knowledge Sharing Behaviors. Islamic Work Ethic moderates the relationship between Perceptions of Politics and Knowledge Sharing Behaviors. Employees religious orientations affect their work-related outcomes and behaviors. Islamic Banks have been mostly neglected as they have recently emerged as an important part of the economy therefore this study contributes to the literature by collaborating Islamic Work Ethic, Perceptions of Politics and Knowledge Sharing.

1. Introduction

Knowledge is an important tool to compete and survive in 21st century. Knowledge is now used as a factor of production, which cannot be imitated and becomes an intangible asset. Staffing and training no longer serves as a replacement for knowledge management. Organizations must therefore focus on knowledge creation and sharing activities and must exploit knowledge-based resources [54]. Knowledge Sharing (KS) has become an important activity because it is challenging issue in knowledge management. Knowledge sharing is fundamental means through which individuals can be innovative. Knowledge Sharing (KS) improves business performance and sustainability. It's a two-way process which involves sharing and learning of ideas to accomplish organizational goals [33]. Knowledge sharing is a team effort in which team members share job related ideas suggest different improvements in the tasks and share work related information [60,61].

Knowledge sharing is getting an avid attention by researchers and practitioners due to its aforementioned benefits to both individuals and organizations. Thus, it is necessary to identify the underlying behaviors associated with sharing knowledge [25]. Much of the literature has examined extant factors which impact Knowledge Sharing. However, many studies focused on individual and organizational factors but seldom has yet to gauge any barriers which limit Knowledge Sharing. Studies linked with positive leadership

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on Knowledge Sharing have been conducted, yet, only few focused on destructive leadership [25]. With regard to impeding factors, there are many that prevent knowledge sharing and politics is one such factor. Consistent with early theorists, it is not actual politics that impacts organizational outcomes but the subjective perceptions of the same because employees respond their perceptions of reality not the reality per se. Therefore, we define the perceptions of politics as individual attribution towards self-serving behaviors. The greater the individual perceives that its work environment involving coworkers demonstrating such behaviors, the greater amount of politics exists. Perceptions of Politics (POP) can be negatively reciprocated by withholding knowledge or refraining from sharing knowledge. It is a prevalent problem in contemporary organizations [62]. Specifically, this paper examines the role of Islamic Work Ethic (IWE), which explains that individuals are generally motivated to acquire knowledge and cooperate with their co-workers. Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) is based on Islamic values and a divine command theory. It uses the ethical perspective of Islam in decision-making. IWE has its roots from the revealed Holy Book “Quran” and it is strongly aligned with the concept of Meaningful Work in 21st Century. The Quran promotes justice in dealings and emphasizes knowledge sharing.

Holy Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H) said, “*the most generous people after me will be those who will acquire knowledge and then share/distribute it. They will come on the Day of Judgment singly, like a ruler*” [31].

Dedication to work is a virtue and IWE emphasizes cooperation and teamwork. Developing good social interactions with colleagues and other members in the organization is seen as a positive approach for creating harmony. IWE encourages worker responsibility which enhances Knowledge Sharing [20]. It is notable to distinguish between Islamic Work Ethic and Islamic Work Ethics; the former refers to the religious view on work orientation or attitude, such as hard work, while the latter encompasses the expected ethics related to work, such as avoiding cheating and stealing.

Workforce diversity is a part and parcel of globalization and is embraced more so now than previously. Scholars and practitioners are focusing on understanding the important role of different religious factors that impact organizations and employee performance [21]. There is also an increasing evidence that religious factors affect economic outcomes through individual actions. Employees religious orientations affect their work-related outcomes and behaviors. Employees religious role expectations are internalized as self-identity, which impact their ethical behavior. Islam accounts for over 1.8 billion followers, reflecting a quarter of the total world population [21]. The Muslim population constitutes about 24 % of world population and is growing 1.5 times faster. Also, increasing diversity due to globalization places pressure on researchers and practitioners to explore religious factors such as IWE which affect the organizational behavior and performance. Organizations are therefore interested in knowing this phenomenon as it becomes more prominent when the world has become one flat place with blurring boundaries.

This study contributes to the literature by collaborating Islamic Work Ethic, Perceptions of Politics and Knowledge Sharing of the Banking employees of Pakistan. Studying Islamic Work Ethic will generate knowledge regarding optimizing knowledge sharing behaviors which impact employee performance in the Islamic banking sectors [44,46]. Previous studies in Pakistan have largely overlooked the Islamic banking sector. This paper contributes by testing the framework within Islamic banking, which is a significant addition. Islamic banks claim to be Shariah-compliant and Islamic, making it interesting to explore the patterns within these organizations.

Employees in the East are more susceptible to the gaps between classes and the hierarchical difference in the society as compared to their Western counterparts. Their behaviors are more influenced by the responses of higher management [58]. Thus, it will give interesting insights on the role of Islamic Work Ethic and whether it reduces the impact of politics. Investigations in this area are mostly conducted in western cultures and there is a need to lead more researches in Eastern Societies to get guide Policymakers, HR Consultants, Practitioners and Managers, to destroy the negative environment from the organizations. Although IWE has been studied in various contexts and organizations, but IWE being the interaction variable between Politics and Knowledge Sharing has not been studied widely in Pakistan.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical underpinning

Ethic comes from a Greek word called “Ethos”. Ethos means character and spirit [37]. It’s an attitude of a person. Ethic is a system of moral principles whereby individuals differentiate between right and wrong; good and bad. Ethic are rules of conduct or set of moral principles [48]. Ethic arises when a person faces a dilemma relating to moral principles [12]. Ethic is concerned with governing good human behavior and interaction [16]. Ethic guide the actions of a person and it helps a person distinguish the right from wrong [45].

As per Islam, Ethic involves terms like “Maa’ruf” which means approved; “Khayr” which refers to as goodness; “Haqq” which means truth; “Birr” which means righteousness; “Qist” which refers to equity, “Adl” which means justice; and lastly “Taqla” which means piety. Saliha and Sayyi’ are the terms used for good and bad actions in Islam. However, “Akhlaq” is the term closely related to Ethic taken from Quran [3]. The most critical issue is how to understand the difference between good and bad; right and wrong. Ethical theories help to understand this difference. Whether an action is ethical or not; organizations use ethical theories. There are various ethical theories such as Utilitarianism; Egoism; Relativism and the Divine Command Theory. These help in the decision-making process for every individual and organization [3]. This study has used the Divine Command Theory and Social Exchange Theory to explain the theoretical framework and ethical phenomenon.

The concept of Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) is ingrained in the divine command theory which is based on religious principles and beliefs. Divine command theory applies to divine religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In each of these religions, “Ethical” means that the action has been commanded by God while “Unethical” means that the action is forbidden by God. Religion defines Ethic and they both go hand in hand. As per the divine command theory, God is the ultimate lawgiver [48]. He has created the world and the

people in it for a specific reason [3]. This theory has been criticized by Non-believers and Believers. Non-believers of this theory have criticized it because they do not believe in God such as atheists. On the other hand, believers have criticized this theory because it is not clear why humans exist and why a conduct is commanded [3]. As compared to other divine religions, Islam has clearly mentioned the purpose of human existence in Quran [41]. Mankind is created for the purpose of worshipping One God. Allah says in Quran “*I did not create jinn and humans except to worship me*” (51:56). Further, it is mentioned in Quran that “*We have revealed to you the Book as an explanation of all things, a guide, a mercy and good news for those who fully submit*” (16:89). Hence, for Muslims, what is right and wrong is clearly guided by Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Islamic Work Ethic have been created on the basis of Quran and Teaching of Prophet (P.B.U.H). Whereas knowledge sharing is a social process involving two or more units exchanging knowledge. KS is a voluntary action not written in job description per se but it’s a form of social exchange inevitable amongst organizational members [63]. Social Exchange Theory helps to gauge the underlying behavior of employees and employers in the organization. Also, it describes the mechanism of behavior which is occurred due to the exchange of relationships. These behaviors ultimately affect their performance. This theory proposes that the behavior is an outcome of the social interaction amongst people. This interaction is the exchange between two people and the purpose is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. This theory suggests that people abandon the relationship or interaction if the costs are higher than benefits [23]. People evaluate the worth of the relationship and subsequent interaction is based on this cost and benefit analysis. If people believe that the same is not reciprocated in the relationship, then the relationship is abandoned. This theory involves economic as well as social relationships such as professional, friendships, or short-term encounters [23]. In several studies, social exchange was used to explain the dynamics of knowledge sharing behavior [63]. Thus, this theory helped to identify how social interactions can create politics and deteriorates Knowledge Sharing and how Islamic Work Ethic moderates this relationship.

2.2. Knowledge sharing (KS)

Knowledge is a combination of experiences, expertise, values, and information [17]. It is not only found in the system of organizations but also embedded in individuals’ minds. Knowledge management combined with Information technology allows the businesses to respond proactively in the dynamic environment where chaos has become a norm. Thus, knowledge management has gained much attention in the past decade. Knowledge management is a process which involves broad activities such as knowledge identification, creation, storage, usage, sharing and maintenance. Knowledge sharing is quick way for knowledge deployment.

Knowledge sharing is when knowledge is shared from individual to organizational level to give the firm a competitive advantage [55]. Various mechanisms are there for knowledge sharing; some emphasize on technology or systems of communications while others have focused on personal interaction. Later, it was highlighted that effective knowledge sharing involves creating an environment where individuals are willing to share knowledge. It involves interaction to enhance each other’s capacity to solve a problem in a creative way. Trust and understanding constitutes the success of knowledge sharing [17]. Knowledge sharing allows individuals to exploit and capitalize on intangible resources. Knowledge sharing is positively related to reduced production costs, new product developments, innovation, team creativity, high team performance and high firm performance like sales growth and revenue [25,28, 54].

The process of knowledge sharing in Islamic banking is special for the Islamic banking. “Banks use knowledge sharing to build new capabilities to initiate marketing activity and adopt various strategies to enhance profitability. Based on past literature, it is revealed that most of the workforce in Islamic banks lacks an understanding of Shariah rules, and this is due to the fact that the majority of the workforce has come from conventional banks. The strategies and practices of Islamic banks are typically creating problems for the Islamic banking system, as well as for customers who are seeking to use the products and services of these Islamic banks. For this purpose, knowledge sharing related to the core products and services of Islamic banks such are Wadiah, Mudharabah, Murabahah, Musharakah, and Ijarah have become more important. Significant differences between Islamic and non-Islamic products and services characterizes and differentiates Islamic banking from the Conventional banking system, which affects the equity-participation procedure. Islamic banking products offer returns and profits, which are not fixed, and not guaranteed. Conventional banking is based upon both debt and equity systems, which offer fixed interest rates and profit. Another problem is the implementation of Islamic banking principles. The inefficient and ineffective knowledge sharing concerning the rules of Islamic banking, procedures and practices between the employees and the customers raise problematic concerns in Pakistan” [65]. Therefore, knowledge sharing related to Islamic Products between employees become more relevant and noteworthy.

2.3. Perceptions of politics (POP)

Politics is a behavior exhibited in order to maximize self-interest at the cost of others. It is inevitable and an unpleasant fact. Especially when individuals have to compete with each other to accomplish departmental goals. Distribution of resources creates conflicts among team members. The perception of politics (POP) refers to the use of negative tactics through power and authority to gain self-interest by organizational members [49].

Politics is an intangible phenomenon that presents some facets of culture and climate. It is common for organizational members to involve in such behaviors. Power is viewed as a distorting force which feeds politics and self-motives. Motives such as, power to control others, power to access resources, power to take decisions leads to politicking behaviors. Therefore, politics is often viewed as negative and dysfunctional because it disrupts efficiency and effectiveness. Politics leads to dysfunctional outcomes and creates a competitive disadvantage hampering company performance. It effects the morale of employees, creates fear and insecurity. Not giving credit to your co-worker for his work, not sharing important information, advancing favors to boss to attain appraisal are all categorized as

political behaviors. It is an intentional social process which involves illicit and divisive behaviors to attain self-interests. These actions are not part of job-description but they are attempted to gain advantage, maintain the status and survive in the organization [17].

Politics has been measured in two ways; the first approach measures the aggregate of political tactics and the second approach is the perceptual measure where cognitive and affective perceptions of politics are aggregated. Political behavior amongst individuals is usually characterized by ulterior motives and based on perceived reality. It is conceived as a situational indicator based on individual interpretations of the work environment.

Politics is an unacceptable organizational behavior and may result in various work outcomes, such as job anxiety, job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, turnover, stress, and reduced job performance. Also, moderators such as age, sector, and cultural differences, have contingent effects on perceived politics and work outcomes [17].

2.4. Perceptions of politics (POP) and knowledge sharing (KS)

Politics restricts knowledge sharing, and increases communication barriers. Political environments are perceived as inequitable, violating the psychological contract between employee and employer. This contract is a combination of economic and social exchanges, and perceptions of politics affect these exchanges. Individuals view the outcome of politics as unfair. They do not trust the political actor and the person rewarding that actor [17]. Knowledge sharing behavior is viewed less favorably and recipients are less likely to exhibit them if it is linked with impression management or politics. In highly political work environments, individuals shy away from sharing knowledge. They do not help others and instead engage in activities which promote self-interests. They reduce their interaction and their self-motives override the general organizational objectives. This hampers organizational communication and ultimately organizational performance. They hide critical information, increasing the communication gap and encouraging inequality and unfairness in the organization [49]. In such political organizations, knowledge sharing behaviors will be limited.

The job demands and resources model, was used to study the perceptions of politics (POP) and its effect on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) [15]. They also investigated the moderating role of transformational leadership, knowledge sharing, and resilience. Their study was conducted on Mexican manufacturing organizations and they found that reveal that POP reduces OCB, but with the moderators; transformational leadership, knowledge sharing, and resilience, this relationship is weak. They suggest that organizations with strong political environments increase stress for employees [15]. While, it was also found that Knowledge sharing increases the likelihood of employees to be involved in unethical behavior when moderated by political environment [54]. Their study highlighted how knowledge sharing had the greatest impact in the organization for both good and evil. Thus, negative relationship exists between Perceptions of Politics and Knowledge Sharing behaviors [17]. This leads to the formulation of the first hypothesis that.

H1. There is a negative relationship between Perceptions of Politics and Knowledge Sharing

2.5. Islamic perspective on ethic

Ethic in Islam is based on the Islamic sources such as Quran and Sunnah. Islamic worships are part of Ethic. Engaging in good deeds whilst refraining from bad deeds is ordered by Allah [3]. Ethic comes from faith (Iman) and Iman is following the commands of Allah and doing good deeds [4]. A strong Iman comes from a good character while a weak Iman faith results from lack of morality [3]. Honesty and Fairness is important for conducting Business in Islam. A businessman must be a person of high ethical and moral principles. Free market should prevail without manipulation with fairness in trade and commerce while trading stolen goods is forbidden [3].

From an Islamic point of view, Ethic is not related to only religious morality but covers all aspects of life, collectively. Islam has a comprehensive view to Ethic. It includes three types of Ethic: Ethic related to individuals, family, and society. Individual Ethic include; honesty, integrity, purity, truth, trust and modesty [41]. The virtues of cooperation and brotherhood; prohibition of robbery, fraud and injustice, protecting privacy of others, abstaining from gossip are ethical values related to society [41]. Prophet (P.B.U.H) is the role model to understand Ethic in Islam. He is the embodiment of ethical values. He was sent only to perfect the moral excellence of human beings [4]. Through his Sunnah, Muslims understand the behavior and actions required to be ethical and moral beings [3].

2.6. Islamic Work Ethic (IWE)

Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) refers to value system related to work derived from the religion Islam and prescribed by the Shariah in Islam [2]. The business practices prescribed in the light of the Quran (The Holy book of Muslims) and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) known as Hadith are part of Islamic Work Ethic. Hadith is a source of guidance and supplements Quran with detailed guidance on the acceptable behaviors of workers, businessmen and traders. IWE contributes to social welfare system and has an economic value. The two central tenants of IWE include; hard work clears sins and the greatest sustenance is gained through hard work. IWE is different from Protestant Work Ethic (PWE), as it focuses on intention rather than on results. As per Islam, actions are first judged by intentions rather than the outcome [42]. One will not be punished based on bad intentions but will be rewarded for good intentions. The intention of doing something is as significant as the deed. The Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) was a trader therefore his practices and principles support the notion of IWE as they are comprehensive [49].

There are five characteristics of Islamic Work Ethic; 1. Righteousness, Trustworthiness, Honesty and Hard Work; 2. Devotion; 3. Conviction; 4. Social responsibility; 5. Equality and diversity. Economic theory of motivation advocates salary increase to induce performance, but Islamic Work Ethic surpasses motivation theory to include these 5 characteristics to motivate workers. It focuses for

hard worker and Ethic not only in this world but also in the afterlife (paradise) [49].

IWE becomes more important especially when it is highlighted that an employee may avoid his or her work and involve in unethical acts during work even with economic motivation. He or She might take advantage of an unethical or dishonest opportunity if it provides greater Marginal Benefit than Marginal Cost. However, with IWE, employees believe that the Creator is present everywhere and He watches all our actions. Employees believe that their actions are all counted by angels and one must refrain from unethical acts in order to enter paradise which is the permanent place for every being [29]. Thus, that employee weighs the pros and cons of entering into hell fire due to unethical acts versus entering into paradise due to ethical ones [49]. Several studies have been conducted on IWE recently; such as the mediating relationship of IWE between Islamic Spirituality, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment [10] and IWE positively influence job performance [21].

With the passage of time, there has been an increase in Islamic banking. Consumers have become more interested in Islamic banking products and services such as *Mudarba*, *Murhabaha*, *Musharaka* and *Ijarah*. One of the growing concerns of Islamic banks is the compliance to *Shariah* [43]. Islamic banks are *Shariah Compliant* and *Shariah Compliance* means guided by Islamic principles and standards. As Islamic banks implement *Shariah Laws* in their banking transactions, employees should also understand their moral obligation which must be in accordance with Islamic Work Ethic. In order to accurately implement *Shariah Law* in banking, employees must also be aware about the regulations and policies of *Shariah*. Thus, implementing *Shariah* means that employees are aware about Islamic Work Ethic in their work life. Therefore, Islamic banks must implement IWE as taught by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and guided in the Quran. Islamic Work Ethic reflects *Akhlaqul Karimah*, being obligated by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and Muslims are expected to follow them in their daily business life besides the religious rituals. Therefore, understanding IWE is critical for the performance of Islamic banks [43].

2.7. Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) and knowledge sharing (KS)

Knowledge sharing involves sharing ideas and exchanging experiences that leads to innovation. Knowledge sharing increases the organizational capacity to provide solutions for its stakeholders. This in turn helps in gaining competitive advantage. New knowledge always begins with an individual which is considered as a stepping stone for creating new products and services. This knowledge is shared between the members through informal communication [42]. Willingness to share knowledge is noteworthy and also critical for the organization, hence, knowledge sharing requires an understanding of its antecedents. Currently, there is a lag in empirical research regarding knowledge sharing behaviors [34].

Work values are the standard expectations of what is right relating to the work. Work ethic is the manifestation of values. Values drive individual to share knowledge. Knowledge resides in an individual and values help him/her to move beyond the interest of the self and focus on the interest of the organization. Values help in the manifestation of knowledge sharing [34].

Knowledge sharing is grounded in many religions, ideologies and cultures. One's religious conviction is related to Ethic and willingness to share knowledge. Islam prescribes ethical values to Muslims and therefore Ethic must be reflected in all aspects of life. Ethical practices at workplace is one of the basic tenets of Islam. It is a way of showing gratitude to Almighty Allah and a sacred duty of the highest order by a Muslim [34]. Quran emphasizes work Ethic and says, "Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful" (25:70).

"Learned people, knowledge, and work are blessed" [9]. This indicates the importance of knowledge sharing in Islam. The emphasis on knowledge is also clear in Quran "And among humans and beasts and cattle, there are those having different colors as well. Only those of His slaves' fear Allah who are knowledgeable. Surely Allah is Mighty, Forgiving" (35:28). Quran and Sunnah have set the premise for Muslims to encourage them to share knowledge which helps in the development and welfare of society at large [19,42].

Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) emphasized to share knowledge and said, "Allah is the most Generous, then I am the most generous to mankind, and then most generous people after me will be who acquire knowledge and share it. They will come on the Day of Judgment separately, like a ruler" [19,42]. Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) encouraged healthy discussions to promote knowledge sharing. P.B.U.H said; "The best testament and legacies which a man leaves behind him are an obedient son, incessant charity, knowledge, and wisdom which are benefited by the people after him" [19,42].

Islamic Work Ethic gives great emphasis on productive work. Knowledge sharing is promoted in Islamic Work Ethic and Quran has revealed the righteous behavior at work. Many Islamic values like, equality, kindness, accountability, trust, justice, truth, commitment,

Table 1
Quranic references of Islamic work ethic.

Ethic	Al-Qur'an verses
Promises	Ar-Rad 13:25, Al-Qasas 28:28, Yunus 10:71
Cooperation	Al-Hujraat 49:9, Maryam 19:96
Equality	Al-Isra' 17:35
Fairness	Al-Anaam 6:152, Al-Mumtahina 60:8, An-Najm 53:32, Al-Maida 5:8
Hard work	Al-Baqara 2:62; 82, Al-Anaam 6:135
Honesty and Justice	Al-Baqara 2:177, Az-Zumar 39:2; 3
Humble and Patience	Hud 11:23, Hud 11:11
Righteous	Al-Baqara 2:25; 225, Al-Baqara 2:62, At-Taubah 9:105, As-Saff 61:8, Al-Qasas 28:19
Truth	Al-Anfal 8:27, Yunus 10:61, An-Nur 24:8

Source: Adapted from Nasution, & Rafiki, (2020).

sincerity, hard work, humility, cooperation, persistence, and self-discipline to achieve success have been highlighted in Quran and Prophet Mohammad (P.B.U.H) practices [6]. IWE stresses the duty to work hard which leads to the terminal goal of happiness. The IWE is focused towards life fulfillment as well as life in the Hereafter [6,34]. Table 1 shows the Quranic references of Islamic Work Ethic. IWE encourages both knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing. Employees who follow ethical principles prescribed by Quran and Sunnah also engage in knowledge sharing behaviors. Individuals with high IWE share knowledge as an obligation. Hence, Individuals with high IWE will exhibit more knowledge sharing behaviors as compared to the ones with low IWE [42]. Several studies have been conducted on IWE and Knowledge Sharing or Hiding behaviors which state that there is a positive relationship between abusive supervision and knowledge hiding behavior and IWE and future orientation tend to weaken this relationship [24,25]. Also, abusive supervision has a damaging effect on knowledge sharing, but IWE and learning goal orientation helps in reducing this detrimental impact on knowledge sharing [25]. Psychological capital mediates the relationship between IWE and task performance and Ethical Leadership moderates the relationship between IWE and psychological capital [47]. Hence, the second hypothesis is.

H2. There is a positive relationship between Islamic Work Ethic and Knowledge Sharing

2.8. Perceptions of politics (POP), Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) and knowledge sharing (KS)

The IWE discourages negative actions and encourages challenging tasks. IWE lessens negative behaviors in the organization [29]. Also, it has been found that subordinates with Islamic Work Ethic share knowledge even when their supervisor is abusive [31]. IWE encourages workers to be just and fair will share knowledge irrespective of high perceptions of politics in the work environment. Studies have found that politics reduces satisfaction, increases turnover and negligent behavior but it has been found that workers with high IWE will ignore politics and focus on work with dedication and cooperation as they are motivated by rewards promised in hereafter in Islam [32]. It has been discovered that IWE buffers perceptions of politics and various job outcomes. It is because, Muslims usually pursue good deeds for the rewards promised in hereafter and refrain from bad deeds such as hiding knowledge. A person who adopts Islam in his day to day work and personal life abides by the Islamic Jurisprudence and law. It effects their ethical obligation to carry out all the tasks with honesty and dedication as Allah likes actions with complete diligence and conscientiousness [32,49]. It has been found that even with the presence of politics, IWE prevents employees from engaging in unproductive behaviors [49]. Prior studies on perceived politics have examined outcomes related to job satisfaction, turnover intention, and negligent behavior with IWE as a moderating factor [49], and job Satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment with IWE as a moderating factor [67]. This study's focus on the impacts on knowledge sharing with IWE as a moderating factor is novel (See Fig. 1). This leads to the formulation of the second hypothesis that.

H3. Islamic Work Ethic moderates the relationship between Perceptions of Politics and Knowledge Sharing behaviors

3. Methodology

This study was a cross sectional quantitative research. It was a causal study which analyzed the relationship between Independent Variable, Perception of Politics and Dependent variable Knowledge Sharing. It also tested the effect of Islamic Work Ethic moderating between Perception of Politics and Knowledge Sharing. Survey method was used to collect the data where participants provided their responses. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument to gather the data from the participants. The target population in this study was banking employees from Pakistan. Pakistan is a Muslim country which implements the Shariah Law in accordance with a secular constitution, therefore selecting Islamic banking employees is significant. As Pakistan is Muslim majority therefore religion is embedded in the behavioral system of individuals. Therefore, work Ethic derived from Islamic principles must be high in this study as instead of the studies conducted on employee's sample drawn from countries where Islam is in minority or is limited to only symbolic meanings [10].

Islamic Banks have been mostly neglected as they have recently emerged as an important part of the economy. This study has taken Islamic banks as a sample as Islamic banks are *Shariah Compliant*. Shariah Compliant means guided by Islamic principles and standards. *Shariah Compliance* is aligned with the principles of Islamic Work Ethic. Studies conducted by Refs. [14,62] indicated that recently Islamic banks have been taking initiatives on revealing information on their products and services. As Islamic banks implement *Shariah Laws* in their banking transactions, employees should also understand their moral obligation which must be in accordance with Islamic Work Ethic. In various corporate organizations and conventional banks, the concept of Islamic Work Ethic may not be given importance but with the growth of Islamic banking, the Islamic Work Ethic is an inevitable factor which contributes to better performance

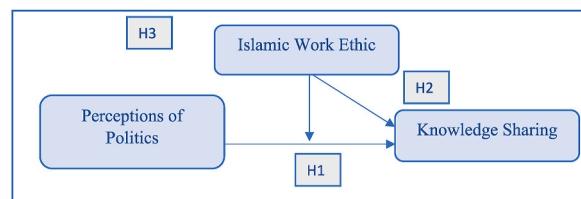


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

[43].

There are total 22 Islamic banking institutions in Pakistan, out of which 5 are full-fledged Islamic banks having 2499 Rs. In billion in assets and 17 Conventional banks having standalone Islamic Banking Branches (IBBs) having 1770 Rs. In billion in assets. There are total 3456 branches spread across 124 districts of the country as of 2020. The 5 full-fledged Islamic Banks include Al Baraka Bank Pakistan Limited, Bank Islami Pakistan Limited, Dubai Islamic Bank Pakistan, Meezan bank Limited and MCB Islamic Bank Limited [26].

Non-probability Convenience-based sampling was used to gather the data. Approximately 140 sample size was gathered from different commercial banks of Karachi. Out of 140, useable questionnaires were 125, therefore response rate was 90 %. The sample size is appropriate especially if we take 10 samples per variable. As we have taken Smart PLS, the software does not have any limitation with respect to the sample size [18,59].

The unit of analysis was individual. Data was gathered from Habib Metropolitan Bank, Dubai Islamic Bank, Meezan Islamic Bank, MCB Islamic Bank, Faysal Bank, AL Baraka Bank and Bank Islami through both hard and soft copies. A five-point Likert scale was used to test all the variables in the study. The identities of all participants remained anonymous. The questionnaire consisted of two sections; one with information on demographics of the respondents and second with the items of all three constructs used in the study. Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities and Correlations were tested for all the constructs used in the study. Both Measurement Model and Structural Model were used to test the data. Partial Least Square method in Structural Equation Modelling was used to test the hypotheses. SMART-PLS Software was used to analyze and run the tests.

3.1. Measures

3.1.1. Islamic Work Ethic (IWE)

A 17-item scale (short version) was used to measure Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) [5]. Sample item included "Dedication to work is a virtue". The reliability of this measure was 0.74 [49], 0.73 in Ref. [32], 0.89 [42] and ranging from 0.76 to 0.89 [5,7,56,57].

3.1.2. Perceptions of politics (POP)

A 12-item scale was used to measure Perceptions of Politics (POP) scale which measured general political behavior statements [30]. Sample item was "People build themselves up by tearing others down". The reliability of this measure was 0.76 [49] and 0.73 [1].

3.1.3. Knowledge sharing (KS)

A 10-item scale was used to measure Knowledge Sharing (KS) [53]. This scale was previously validated in Pakistan [27]. Scale item include "I share my skills with colleagues within my organization". The reliability of this measure was 0.84 [27].

4. Data analysis

First SPSS software 21 version was used for cleaning the data and analyzing the demographics of the data. Table 2 represents the demographics of 125 participants. It shows that 90 were Male and 35 were Female. 78 belonged to the age group of 21–30, 40 belonged to the age group of 31–40 and 7 belonged to the age group of 41–50. 19 had a banking experience of less than 1 year, 18 had a banking experience between 1 and 2 years, 23 had a 3–4 years of banking experience, 17 had a 4–5 years of banking experience and 48 had

Table 2
Demographics.

Variables		Frequency	Percent
GENDER	Male	90	72.0
	Female	35	28.0
AGE	21–30	78	62.6
	31–40	40	32.0
	41–50	7	5.6
EXPERIENCE	Less than 1 Year	19	15.2
	1–2 Years	18	14.4
	3–4 Years	23	18.4
	4–5 Years	17	13.6
	More Than 5 Years	48	38.4
EDUCATION	Undergraduate	27	22.0
	Graduate	92	74.0
	Doctorate	6	4.0
BANKNAME	Habib Metropolitan Bank	26	20.8
	Dubai Islamic Bank	9	7.2
	Meezan Islamic Bank	52	41.6
	MCB Islamic Bank	10	8.0
	Faysal Bank	8	6.4
	AL Baraka Bank	9	7.2
	Bank Islami	11	8.8

N = 125.

more than 5 years of banking experience. 27 had undergraduate degrees, 92 had graduate degrees and 6 had doctorate degrees, respectively. Lastly, 26 participants belonged from Habib Metropolitan Bank, 9 belonged from Dubai Islamic Bank, 52 belonged from Meezan Islamic Bank, 10 belonged from MCB Islamic Bank, 8 belonged from Faysal Bank, 9 belonged from AL Baraka Bank and 11 belonged from Bank Islami. Habib Metropolitan Bank has been taken as a window Islamic bank because it has both conventional and Islamic products while the rest are full-fledged Islamic banks.

I used the second-generation analytical software of Smart PLS version 3.3.3 due to its robustness [50]. I tested the model using the 2-step approach by first assessing the measurement model for item reliability and validity before testing the hypothesis developed using the structural model via a bootstrapping procedure.

4.1. Measurement model

I assessed the convergent validity via average variance extracted (AVE) and loadings with an AVE >0.5 as a standard guideline although lower loadings are acceptable if AVE is already more than 0.5 [18]. As shown in Table 3 all the AVEs are higher than 0.5. Thus, convergent validity was acceptable. For reliability, I have shown the composite reliability, rho_A and also the Cronbach's alpha values in Table 3. All the values were higher than the recommended value of 0.7, thus confirming good reliability.

4.2. Discriminant validity

For assessing discriminant validity, I have used the criterion of heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio [22]. Table 4 shows the HTMT ratios and all of them are lower than the stricter 0.85 cut-off value which confirms that the constructs are distinct.

4.3. Structural model

To test the structural model, I ran a bootstrapping with 5000 resamples [18]. The results are shown in Table 5. The R² was 0.508 (Q² = 0.121) Organization Politics, Islamic Work Ethic and the interaction effect can explain 40.2 % of the variance in Knowledge Sharing Behavior.

Hypothesis 1 is supported at 10 % confidence interval ($p = 0.053$) with a negative beta value of $\beta = -0.105$ showing significant negative relationship between POP and KS. Hypothesis 2 is also supported at 1 % confidence interval ($p \leq 0.000$) and positive beta value of $\beta = 0.612$ showing a significant positive relationship between IWE and KS. To test Hypothesis 3, I used the 2-stage approach [40] and the results of the interaction effect, are supported at 5 % confidence interval ($p = 0.017$) thus Hypothesis 3 is also accepted.

Next to visualize the interaction effect I used an interaction plot. The interaction plot presented in Fig. 2 shows an interesting finding. When Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) was low there was a negative relationship between Politics and Knowledge Sharing but surprisingly when Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) was high it was shown that there was a positive relationship between Politics and Knowledge Sharing. It means that the negative relationship between politics and knowledge sharing can be curtailed with the involvement of Islamic Work Ethic. This surprising finding can be attributable to the strong beliefs in the Islamic religion. There seems to be a higher calling that guides knowledge sharing among employees even at the presence of politics. When the politics is low, knowledge sharing is high and IWE is also low but when IWE is high, Knowledge sharing is high even with the presence of politics.

Further to that as suggested by Ref. [66] this study used the predictive power using the PLS-Predict with a 5-folds. If all the item differences (PLS-LM) were lower than there is strong predictive power [66] and based on Table 6, all the errors of the PLS model were lower than the LM model thus I can conclude that our model has a strong predictive power.

5. Discussion

Organizations are created to achieve certain goals and objectives. Similarly, employees also have certain personal and professional goals; they may include rewards, promotion, status etc. Employees might engage in politics in order to achieve these goals. They will inadvertently protect their own interests in the name of competition and scarce resources. The political work environment will influence the actions and behaviors of jobs employees perform and affect how they interact with their co-workers.

Power is seen as a disruptive force and explicit politicking behavior is attempted to gain power. Politics is considered a negative process. It creates competitive disadvantage and reduces organizational performance. It also reduces employee morale and employees feel threatened to work in political environment. Political behaviors may involve discrediting, not sharing information, doing favors to get increments etc.

Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) encourages positive behaviors such as organizational citizenship and discourages negligent behaviors. IWE discourages workers to waste time by being idle or involving in aimless activities. Few studies found that politics lead to job

Table 3
Measurement quality.

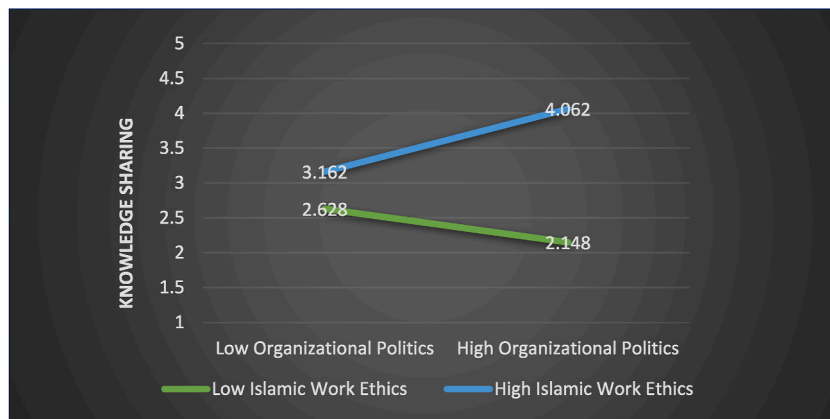
Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Kurtosis	Skewness	Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
IWE	4.157	0.666	3.356	-1.452	0.713	0.714	0.839	0.635
Knowledge Sharing	3.856	0.686	2.208	-1.261	0.780	0.799	0.860	0.608
Perception of Politics	3.045	0.707	-0.55	-0.041	0.842	0.864	0.877	0.429

Table 4
Discriminant validity (HTMT).

Variables	1	2	3
1. Islamic Work Ethic	-	-	-
2. Knowledge Sharing	0.806	-	-
3. Perception of Politics	0.187	0.208	-

Table 5
Hypothesis testing.

Relationship	Std. β	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value	BCI LL	BCI UL	f^2
H1 Perception of Politics (POP) \rightarrow Knowledge Sharing (KS)	-0.105	0.065	1.622	0.053	-0.212	0.002	0.022
H2 Islamic Work Ethic \rightarrow Knowledge Sharing	0.612	0.077	7.932	0.000	0.438	0.709	0.747
H3 POP*IWE \rightarrow Knowledge Sharing	0.347	0.163	2.134	0.017	0.028	0.666	0.230

**Fig. 2.** Moderating effect of IWE on the Politics and Knowledge Sharing relationship.**Table 6**
PLS-Predict.

	PLS		LM		PLS-LM	
	RMSE	MAE	RMSE	MAE	RMSE	MAE
KS1	0.773	0.559	0.883	0.654	-0.110	-0.095
KS3	0.808	0.576	0.856	0.618	-0.048	-0.042
KS2	0.776	0.588	0.847	0.671	-0.071	-0.083
KS7	0.774	0.590	0.810	0.611	-0.036	-0.021
KS4	0.929	0.761	0.982	0.783	-0.053	-0.022
KS5	0.985	0.831	1.034	0.847	-0.049	-0.016
KS6	0.963	0.801	1.062	0.847	-0.099	-0.046
KS8	0.772	0.599	0.841	0.640	-0.069	-0.041
KS9	0.844	0.689	0.903	0.728	-0.059	-0.039

dissatisfaction, turnover intention, and negligent behavior [32,39]. However, if employees who exhibit IWE pay little or no attention to politics, instead they focus on hard work, cooperation and dedication because they believed that they would be rewarded in this world as well in hereafter [32]. Thus, IWE could buffer the negative effect of POP on employee's knowledge sharing behaviors.

Research has been conducted on knowledge sharing and work ethic in the West [61–63]. Despite the magnitude of knowledge sharing and Islamic Work Ethic, little attention has been paid in the literature of management and organization studies in the East [6,8,34,51,52]. Thus, there is a need to examine the effects of knowledge sharing and Work Ethic in the East [34]. Pakistan is an Islamic Country and Islamic Work Ethic mostly prevail in Islamic banks, hence it becomes more important to understand the banking practices in the light of Quran and Sunnah.

Hence, this study identified the relationship between Perception of Politics and Knowledge Sharing behavior moderated by Islamic Work Ethic. In this study, it was found that Perceptions of Politics decreases Knowledge Sharing behavior even though it was found that Knowledge Sharing is not influenced by perception of politics in Indian organizations [17,62]. Perceived politics increases knowledge hiding and decreases creativity [38]. There was a positive relationship between Perception of Politics and counterproductive work

behaviors in a meta analytic study [11]. In a political organization, employees hide knowledge due to few reasons [38]. Firstly, employees hide knowledge to guard their self-interest and do not want to be taken advantage by untrustworthy people [13]. Secondly, knowledge is a source of power and employees hide knowledge to attain political advantage. Thirdly, employees hide knowledge to portray a defensive behavior [38].

Also, in this study it was found that Islamic Work Ethic increases Knowledge Sharing Behavior and Islamic Work Ethic moderates the relationship between Perception of Politics and Knowledge Sharing Behaviors. The results of this study are similar with another study which revealed that Perception of Politics decreased job satisfaction, and increased turnover intention and negligent behavior while Islamic Work Ethic increased job satisfaction, decreased turnover intention and negligent behavior [49]. Further, Islamic Work Ethic moderated the relationship between Perception of Politics and job satisfaction turnover intention and negligent behavior.

5.1. Limitations and future research

There were few limitations in this research. Firstly, the scope of this study is not the implementation of Shariah Compliance at an operational level or at the board of directors' level. The scope of this study is to understand the role of how Islamic Work Ethic and how it moderates the politics and knowledge sharing behaviors of employees in Islamic banks. Future studies may study the interaction of Shariah Compliance and Ethic at an operational level as well as the top management level. Secondly, sample size was not large enough therefore more studies need to be conducted on larger sample of employees. Thirdly, this research collected cross sectional data not longitudinal data. The sustainability of knowledge sharing requires a longitudinal design to determine the long-term interaction between Politics, IWE and knowledge sharing. Fourthly, this study has used self-report measures for both independent and dependent variables. The self-report measures inflate the results due to common method bias. Fifthly, a qualitative approach to this study may complement the vast quantitative research literature to enhance our understanding. Thus, interviews may be carried out to investigate a deeper interpretation that will enhance our understanding of the dynamics of Perceptions of Politics, Islamic Ethic and Knowledge Sharing in the workplace. Lastly, the sample employed for this study was the Islamic Banks in Pakistan. These findings are not valid in other industries and sectors of the Pakistani economy. Future research can focus on education, petroleum, health and hospitality sectors of the economy. Future studies may assess the comparison between higher and lower levels of employees. This study can be compared to countries with large minority Muslim populations like India and small minority Muslim populations like Germany [10]. Future studies can test the role of IWE as a mediator between the perception of politics and Knowledge sharing or gender, tenure, personality variables such as moral identity or locus of control in the model.

5.2. Practical implications

The results of this study enhance the understanding of Islamic Ethic in a non-western context. This study can be considered novel as is no previous research has examined the effect of such moderation among these variables in Pakistan. Managers who are considering doing business in Islamic Banking Industry or have some affiliation with them can get greater understanding about how Islamic Work Ethic impact the politics and dynamics of knowledge sharing [10]. As the divine theory suggests that the religious doctrine is not only for the Muslims of Pakistan, but for all Muslims across different countries of the world, this can benefit in helping Non-Muslims also, about how Muslims work Ethic differ and how they work and practice Islamic principles in their business life. Employees with Islamic Work Ethic will exhibit good working behavior and will not insult, humiliate nor offend fellow coworkers, regardless of their nationality, color, religion. Non-Muslims can also get lessons and appreciate the workings of Islamic Principles and norms [10].

Knowledge sharing is an essential intangible asset to remain competitive in a dynamic environment. The knowledge shared helps in achieving goals. Compensation linked with knowledge sharing behaviors may fail due to political environments. Organizations must pay attention to managers and how they motivate their subordinates. Managers must act as coaches and mediators in highly political environments. Managers must create a knowledge sharing culture and practices. Top management must streamline communication channels, encourage employee participation in decision-making and link rewards with performance, using fair procedures. Delegating authority downwards to employees can increase their self-esteem and eventually knowledge sharing efforts. IWE can act as a catalyst variable and play a major role in mitigating the negative impacts of politics on knowledge sharing behavior which can create more loyal and committed employees.

Past researches focused on knowledge sharing predictors such as personality, culture, management support and incentive systems [35,36], but this research focused on Islamic Work Ethic of individuals as a moderator between Perceptions of Politics and Knowledge Sharing. Islamic Work Ethic is Islamic values manifested in individuals helps in reducing politics among workers and increase knowledge sharing behaviors of employees.

Ethic statement

The questionnaire was approved by the Institute of Business Management "Research Ethic Review Committee", Karachi, Pakistan, with the reference number 4159. Also, an informed consent was taken from the respondents who participated in this study mentioned on the questionnaire. The respondents were kept anonymous to be published in this article. This was an exploratory study not an experiment so statement of human rights was not applicable.

Data availability statement

The data is deposited into a publicly available repository. The data set has also been made available on the Mendeley website publicly by the corresponding author [64].

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Sania Usmani: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Software, Methodology, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e37032>.

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