Religious Communication and IWE: A Serial Mediation of Self-reflection (*Muhasbah*) and Self-reform (*Tazkiya-e-nafs*)

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ABSTRACT

Despite growing research in Islamic work ethics, there is a dearth of literature on underlying mechanism of how it can be enhanced. Drawing upon the social cognitive theory, this study aims to develop and test the serially mediated model that examines the effect of religious communication on Islamic work ethics through self-reflection and self-reform. Using a multistage sampling technique, data is collected from 174 Muslim employees of the Islamic banking industry in Pakistan in one point in time. Results indicate that the indirect effect of serial mediation of religious communication and IWE through self-reflection and self-reform is significant. This research is among the pioneer efforts to investigate the impact of religious communication on Islamic work ethic through serial mediation. Furthermore, the novelty of this study lies in its exploration of the underlying mechanisms for enhancing Islamic work ethics (IWE), a topic that has been relatively under-researched in the context of Islamic work ethics. The practical significance of this research is evident in its potential to guide organizations in designing and implementing religious communication-based strategies aimed at fostering IWE among their employees, thus contributing to the ethical and productive growth of the Islamic work environment.

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1.0 Introduction

Work ethics were first recognized among academic scholars in the 1970s, after the industrial revolution when workers started demanding their human rights from employers. This subject got even more importance soon after the managerial failure of big companies like Enron, Paramalat, World-Com, etc. (Dibra, 2016). The word ethics is derived from the Greek word '*ethos*' which means norms or traditions embraced by the society. It implies that ethics are relative and their interpretation depends upon community judgment (Gwin, 1985). Therefore, work ethics are inferred as values influenced by organization forming employees' attitude and behaviors in managing work related activities (Husin & Kernain, 2020).

Religion is a major source of ethics. In Islam, ethics is labeled as *akhlaq* and defined as an individual urge from within to do the right things as a spontaneous act without having a thought (Al-Ghazali, 1997). Meanwhile, Ali (1988) defined Islamic Work Ethics (IWEs) as an orientation towards Islamic principles disguising right and wrong. IWEs are extracted from the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, two primary sources of Islamic guidance (Beekun & Badawi, 2005) and a religious obligation for Muslims employees (Beekun, 1997). IWE especially emphasizes an individual's contribution to society and organizational responsibility toward their employees (Abu-Saad, 2003). It gives significant importance to hard work, commitment, creativity, dedication and cooperation (Husein, 2018). As compared with the Protestant Work Ethic (PWE), IWE stresses intensions which was explained by Prophet PBUH, ''*actions are recorded according to intention, and man will be rewarded or punished accordingly*'' (as cited by Yousef, 2001, p. 154).

IWE has started gaining recognition among academic researchers after noting Islamic teachings as a solution to organizational crises and issues (Ali, 1988; Beekun, 1997; Yousef, 2001). This initiated an academic debate of investigating the effect of IWE on different outcome variables like organizational commitment, job satisfaction (Gheitani et al., 2019), turnover intention (Rokhman, 2010), organizational citizenship behavior, knowledge sharing behavior (Murtaza et al., 2016), job performance (Zahrah et al., 2016), and organizational justice (Amilin et al., 2018). To the best knowledge of the researchers, only a few pieces of evidences are found on antecedents of IWE (e.g. organizational culture, individual behavior and organizational commitment) (Attahiru et al., 2016; Husin & Kernain, 2020). Keeping in mind the theoretical gap in existing literature, this study introduced antecedents of IWE.

IWE is based on the divine command theory of ethics which claimed religion as the source of ethics (Adams, 1987; Islam et al., 2020). Islam, being a divine religion, not only directs about right and wrong at work (IWE) but also provides guidance about how to enhance ethical orientation. It is mentioned in the Quran as: "*Only Allah knows what is in their hearts. So turn away from them, caution them, and give them advice that will shake their very souls*" (Al-Quran, 4:63). This has suggested the role of advice and persuasive communication to raise awareness and consciousness about what one is expected to do and not to do i.e. IWE. Thus, a workplace culture constituted as a result of religious communication can enhance employees' orientation towards IWE. Similarly, Ali (1992) found that the underdevelopment of Arab countries is not because of their affiliation

with religion but because of their individualistic culture (Almaney, 1981). Similarly, he further attributed individualism as a foundation of work ethics even in western society which plays a major role in the achievement of their societies. As a result, cultural environmental elements, in addition to religion, are determined to be among the most important determinants influencing one's orientation toward work ethics. (Ali, 1988; Yousef, 2001). Attahiru et al. (2016) argued that culture forms the values of nations, which also applies to IWE and workplace religious communication can serve as an environmental factor to play its role either positive or negative in shaping one's ethical values. The above discussion provides a base for this study to introduce workplace religious communication as an antecedent factor to induce IWE.

On the other hand, an individual's faith in being observed by God would likely result in ethical decision-making (Sulaiman et al., 2022). Similarly, an employees' strong link with his creator will induce positive organizational outcomes (Jaros, 2007). Muhamad et al. (2008) found that one's level of devoutness or religiosity influences the orientation towards IWE. Furthermore, Husin and Kernain (2020) pointed out individual behaviors as an antecedent variable for enhancement of IWE. Just like ethics, individual behaviors are also labeled as *akhlaq* which basically encompasses manners, etiquette and character to build moral stamina and help one put things in their proper places. In this way, personal character ethics is embedded into personality perception, attitude and culture (Attahiru et al., 2016; Husin & Kernain, 2020). These helped researchers to conclude that individual factors, besides environmental factors (religious communication) also influence IWE. Based upon the above evidence, this study introduced self-reflection and self-improvement as personal character based dispositional factors to implement IWE.

Despite growing research in Islamic work ethics (Gheitani et al., 2019; Murtaza et al., 2016; Zahrah et al., 2016), there is a dearth of literature on underlying mechanism of how it can be enhanced. According to the Bandura's (1989) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), human learns through the fine interaction between socialization and cognition. Therefore, based upon SCT, this study is first of its type suggesting a serially mediated mechanism to enhance IWE through workplace religious communication (social factor) with the help of two mediators i.e. self-reflection and self-reform (psychological factors). This research was carried out in full-fledge Islamic banks of Pakistan, where Islamic religious communication is part of their daily activities. Moreover, Islamic business organizations (i.e., Islamic banks) are legally and morally bound to adopt 360-degree compliance of Islamic teachings in their operational activities (Ahmed et al., 2022) and IWE is not an exception to this. In this way, Islamic business organizations can justify their efforts in establishing, developing, and implementing a religious communication-based model to improve IWE.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Religious Communication and IWE

Bisel et al. (2011) described the ways in which communication is complicit in the constraining and enabling of workplace ethics. Jovanovic and Wood (2006) presented how talking about moral values enables an increase in ethical values. Likewise, this study took religious communication at work to call work-related ethics derived from religious teachings such as IWE. Religious communication is an actual engagement in the sharing of religious values and principles (Wrench et al., 2020). Kashif (2015) suggested that a workplace where employees get constant reminders of Islamic religious principles and values, they are more likely to have a greater orientation towards work ethics. In this study, workplace religious communication is presented as a dialogic means to enhance IWEs. An Islamic principle of communication stands on "*bid the fair and forbid the unfair*" (Muchtar & Alam, 2019) which is mentioned in Quran as: "*Help one another in acts of righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and transgression*" (Al-Quran, 5:2). This is not obligatory for individual but also applied to the groups and organizations claiming to be an Islamic. Therefore, these institutions, by virtue of its nature of work, engage in religious communication. Moreover, Islamic religious communication gives immense importance to the individual and social welfare (both in terms of material and spiritual aspect) of all stakeholders through developing ethical values which is also aligned with the mission of Islamic banking organizations. As Islamic business organizations are morally and legally bound to ensure 360 degree compliance of *shari'ah* principles (Ahmed et al., 2022) including workplace communication. In this way, religious communication at work can create an ethical work environment, where calling towards goodness may result in an inclination towards IWE. Based upon the above premises, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: Religious communication has an impact on IWE.

2.2 Serial Mediation of Self-reflection and Self-reform

The significant role of religion in shaping one's inner self development (character) is not a mystery anymore, especially is the case with Islam (Williams & Zinkin, 2010). Islam guides almost every aspect of a Muslim's life (Megdadi, 2021), emphasizing the importance of character building in every sphere of life including workplace (Musa, 2015). The formation of the individual self through the process of socialization (Bandura & Walters, 1977) provides an insight to conclude that a workplace where the sharing of Islamic teachings is embedded into their operations and services (as is the case with Islamic business organizations) can evoke the moral cognitive process of self-reflection to reflect upon oneself with respect to compliance with their religious teachings (IWE) (Silvia & Phillips, 2011). It is a metacognitive trait of monitoring and regulating one's progress to gain consciousness of weaknesses and mistakes and eradicate them (Grant et al., 2002). Self-reflection, when embedded in character can act as self-control that enables employees to overcome shortcomings by applying the power within one's self (Arsad et al., 2018) to be more productive at work. Similarly, Ghazali's theory of soul suggests Islamic teachings as a way of transforming the self from within (Sherif, 1975). The core objective of religious communication is to change one's inner state by reminding Muslims of their obligations. Allah says in the Quran:

"*He is the One who raised amidst the unlettered people a messenger from among themselves who recites to them His verses, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the wisdom, while they were earlier in open error*" (Al-Quran, 62:2). It indicates that Islamic teachings can initiate the process of self-purification or *tazkiya-e-nafs*. Imam Ghazali described self-reflection as a first step towards *tazkiya-e-nafs* (Al-Ghazali, 1997). According to Silvia and Phillips (2011), persistent and purposeful progress towards a specific goal depends upon an individual's capacity to go through the cycle of self-regulation by evaluating and monitoring the progress. Thus, workplace religious communication can initiate a process of self-reflection among Muslim employees.

H2a: Religious communication has an impact on self-reflection.

In order to be productive at work, one is required to have a persistent urge to improve and correct oneself through attaining knowledge (*'ilm*) (Hassi, 2012) and Islamic religious communication as a source of divine knowledge encourages employees to improve themselves (Al-Quraan, 62:2). It is mentioned in the Quran that "*As also We have sent in your midst a messenger from among you, who recites to you Our verses, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and the wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know*" (Al-Quraan, 2:151). It can be inferred that religious sharing can induce people towards the path of constant self-improvement through internalization of character trait of self-reform (Arifin, 2018). Similarly, Zakaria and Mat Akhir (2017) conducted a study on different Islamic counseling techniques, collecting data from 18 informants in Malaysia and concluded that Al-Ghazali's concept of *tazkiya al nafs* or self-*islah* (self-reform), is one of the counseling methods that is incorporated as a *da'wah* strategy (religious communication). Hence, organizations, especially Islamic organizations, can use religion-based communication to direct their employees' effort towards persistent refinement (Kashif et al., 2015). Sharing Islamic teachings as a reminder develops consciousness of Allah as a true guider and reformer, leading one to live a God-conscious life through constantly striving towards self-advancement. In this way, Islamic religious communication, by virtue of its nature, instructs and directs a person towards self-improvement. Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

H2b: Religious communication has an impact on self-reform.

Self-reflection is a metacognitive trait that initiates a thought process for self-criticism through critically examining one's cognition, feelings and behavior (Grant et al., 2002). In Islamic literature, *Taffakur* or *Muhasbah* is a word used for self-reflection and Al-Ghazali suggested it as an element of self-purification (Ahmad Razimi et al., 2017; Sulaiman, 2021). Similarly, an employee when engages in self-reflection evaluates the quality of daily tasks with respect to their adherence with Islamic teachings i.e. IWE. The Quran described it as follows: "*Surely, in that there are signs for those who read signs.*" (Al-Quran, 15:75). Similarly, in another place, it is mentioned as: "*This is a blessed Book We have revealed to you, so that they deliberate in its verses, and so that the men of understanding may heed to advice*" (Al-Quran, 38:29). Contemplation of oneself, life, death and all the signs in this universe enables one to get divine guidance and extract true lessons from all these signs. Kiersch and Gullekson (2021) presented self-reflection as a guide to introduce a character-based leadership approach in management studies to enhance orientation

towards ethical adherence at work. When self-reflection becomes an employee's character trait through habituation, it has become normal for employees to self-criticize their daily work and non-work-related routine in terms of it righteousness. It gives self-consciousness of one's shortcomings and mistakes along with how these faults can be overcome (Xie, 2020; Wang et al., 2019). Thus, a conscious self has a greater concern and orientation towards ethical principles such as IWEs.

H2c: Employees' self-reflection has an impact on IWE.

An Arabic word *Tazkiya-e-nafs* is used for self-reform, which means self-purification and self-cleansing from all evil and bad things. It acts as an inner regulatory mechanism that directs one's efforts to stay away from vices in search of attaining goodness (Akhir, 2006; Sedikides & Hepper, 2009). This inner control system motivates one to have a greater concern about the authenticity of one's conduct in terms of righteousness and adherence to moral principles in every aspect of life (Zakaria & Mat Akhir, 2017). When this virtue of self-reform becomes part of character through habituation, it will result in an employee's persistent urge to be more productive and help one another at work (Harzer & Ruch, 2014) under divine moral guidance (IWEs) (Alobidyeen, 2021). In this way, employees, rather than competing one another, go one step ahead and engage in self-competition. Self-competition enables one to compete with one's older self and try to be better with every passing moment of life. It is mentioned in the Quran: "*and by the soul, and the One who made it well, then inspired it with its (instincts of) evil and piety, success is really attained by him who purifies it*" (Al-Quran, 91:7-9). A man is created by God with the instinct ability to make a clear distinction between bad and good, which is a guiding light for a journey towards self-reform. As self-reform is a continuous process; that is why, it's actually an interplay between one's awareness of ethical principles and the virtue of self-reform. Thus, it can be concluded that employees' persistent try to be better at work can enhance an orientation towards seeking knowledge, which develops an ability to differentiate between right and wrong conduct, particularly at work (IWEs).

H2d: Employees' self-reform has an impact on IWE.

Comprehensively, sharing Islamic religious expectations in the form of workplace religious communication can arouse a cognitive process of self-reflection. It is a key to self-knowledge and provides self-ownership through letting one know about his feelings, thoughts and behaviors (Xie, 2020). It creates an awareness about one's weaknesses and strengths (Kashif et al., 2015). This paves the way for self-reform as true knowledge gives an individual the courage to accept one's shortcomings and eradicate them for future improvements (Sulaiman, 2021). Self-reform is a trait of one's constant urge to pursue self-improvement in the areas where he or she lacks, as recognized during self-reflection (Roccas et al., 2014). Then, one starts getting oneself better from their older version (Hamdi, 2021; Kurpis et al., 2008). Consistent effort towards betterment is an important pillar upon which IWE builds (Ali, 1988; Murtaza et al., 2016). Therefore, a serial mediation is proposed to bridge the relationship religious communication and IWE.

This serial mediated mechanism is supported by Bandura's (1989) SCT of psychological

functioning that highlights the agentic aspect of personality. It emphasizes the roles of symbolic, self-regulatory and vicarious methods for human learning. This agency view recognizes that human learning occurs in social settings; therefore, dynamic interplay between situational and personal factors helps in human learning (Martin & Guerrero, 2020). It is proposed that human learning i.e. orientation towards IWEs can be governed by psychosocial factors (religious communication) and moral reasoning (self-reflection and self-improvement) (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Similarly, Ghazali's theory of soul proposed Islamic teachings as a means of reforming oneself from inside (Sherif, 1975). The primary goal of religious communication is to change one's inner state by reminding Muslims of their responsibilities (Al-Quran, 62:2). Building upon the theory of soul and SCT, this study presented sequential mediation among religious communication, self-reflection and self-improvement and IWE.

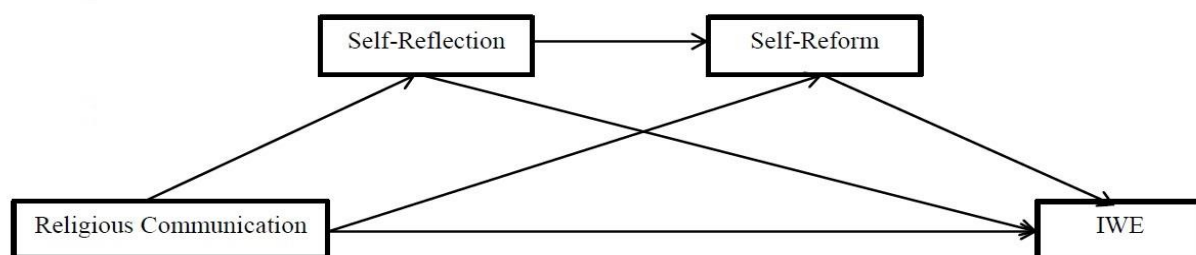*H2e: Religious communication and IWE relationship is serially mediated by self-reflection and self-reform.*

Figure 1: Study Model

3.0 Methodology
3.1 Participants and Procedures
Aligned with the study's purpose, full-fledged Islamic banks in Pakistan were targeted, as these institutions, by virtue of their nature of work, engage in religious communication while delivering their products and services. A cross-sectional research methodology was used, which allows researchers to collect data for each observable variable at the same time (Clark & Creswell, 2015). Pilot testing was conducted to determine the content validity and internal reliability of the scale. After that, the instrument was corrected and refined with respect to its wording, format and scale (Creswell, 2014). In total, 1935 nation-wide branches of five full-fledged Islamic banks were working in Pakistan. Resource constrains limit the researcher's ability to select sample by deploying multistage sampling technique. In the first stage, cities are selected deploying purposive sampling and four large cities, Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad were chosen based on the logic that these four cities represent 63% of the whole Islamic banking network in Pakistan. At the second stage, stratified random sampling is applied to select the branches of Islamic banks and five strata were made containing all branches of each Islamic bank in previously selected cities. Then, proportionate random sampling was applied to select branches from each stratum. At the third stage, employees from each branch were approached using the random sampling technique. A sample size of 380 was determined using the formula given by (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) and

203 responses were received. The response rate was 53.4% because of the busy schedules of banking employees. In total, 174 usable questionnaires were obtained after removing missing values, outliers and unengaged responses.

The research instrument comprises three sections: introduction, study items and demographics. Based upon the data, 93.2% were male because of lower female representation in the economic sector of Pakistan (Gender Gap Report, 2015). The majority of the population is 31-40 years of their age (52.3%), 35.2% of them were below 30 and the remaining were above 40 years of age. The majority of the respondents were married (68.2%) and the remaining was single. The education level of 48.9% of respondents was masters/equivalent, 29.5% held bachelor/equivalent degree, 18.6% had an M. Phil degree and the remaining were Ph.D. doctors. As far as the years in service were concerned, 62.5% of respondents had working experience of more than 5 years, 31.1% had experience between 1-4 years and the remaining had service of less than 1 year.

3.2 Measures

A total of 20 items were adapted based upon already available literature and measured on a 7-point Likert frequency scale ranging from 1-Never to 7-Always for religious communication, self-reflection and self-reform. However, IWE was measured on a 7-Likert scale with the following anchors ranges from 1= strongly disagree to 7= strongly agree. Religious communication was measured based on the conceptualization and operationalization of Wrench et al. (2020). Self-reflection was measured with the help of a 6-item scale of self-reflection by Grant et al. (2002). Self-reform was measured through the adaptation of the scale of commitment to self-improvement by Kurpis et al. (2008). To measure IWE, a short 4-item scale (e.g., *dedication to work is a virtue*) was extracted from the 17-item scale of Ali (1992) which was validated by Murtaza et al. (2016) and Islam et al. (2020) in the Pakistani context. However, to ensure the validity of the measure, few steps were taken. Firstly, all items of the measure were rechecked and reworded according to the context (if necessary) so that respondents could easily grasp them. Secondly, a panel consisting of business research scholars and religious experts had been formed to assess the face and content validity. And lastly, measures were disbursed for pilot testing to ensure the reader's understandability and readability of the items.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out using two data analysis methods, i.e. descriptive analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. To perform descriptive analysis, Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22 was used, whereas Smart PLS Version 4 was used for hypothesis testing because of its multivariate technique to combine factor analysis and regression analysis simultaneously (Hair et al., 2017; Husin & Kernain, 2020). Moreover, the Smart PLS technique provides reliable results for complex models with a small sample size; therefore, it is better than Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) (Henseler et al., 2009). It comprises two processes, i.e. structural modeling and measurement modeling. The measurement model helps to analyze Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. Whereas the structural model was calculated using bootstrapping with 5000 sample size as recommended by (Hair et al., 2019). This model is meant to generate the path

coefficients to validate the relationships among the variables under study.

4.0 Results

Table 1 indicates the convergent and discriminant validity statistics. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of all variables are above 0.5, meeting the standard of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2017). The discriminant validity of all considerable variables is evident as the diagonal values √AVE against each latent variable are greater than their squared correction with any other latent variable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2009). Table 2 shows the results of factor loadings and composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach Alpha statistics. Internal consistency among the items of a construct is measured through the CR and Conbach Alpha value. The cutoff range for a measure to be reliable is 0.7 and more (Ramayah et al., 2013) and calculated values are greater than tabulated values, indicating that all variables under study are reliable. Factor loadings represent the correlation between the item and the factor and a value above 0.7 against an item shows its sufficient extraction power of variance for that variable (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 1: Convergent and discriminant validity analysis

Construct	AVE	IWE	Religious Communication	Self-Reflection	Self-Reform
IWE	**0.578**	**0.760**			
Religious Communication	**0.690**	0.206	**0.831**		
Self-Reflection	**0.712**	0.235	0.401	**0.844**	
Self-Reform	**0.597**	0.578	0.262	0.529	**0.773**

*√AVE shows in diagonal

Table 2: Factor loadings for different constructs and construct reliability

Construct	Number of Item	Factor loadings	Composite reliability	Cronbach alpha
IWE	4	0.720-0.769	0.761	0.757
Religious Communication	5	0.759-0.874	0.899	0.888
Self-Reflection	6	0.728-0.886	0.891	0.865
Self-Reform	5	0.712-0.821	0.837	0.831

Results of hypotheses testing (through the SmartPLS path model) based upon the factors influencing IWE are presented in Table 3. SEM analysis was carried out to test the hypotheses and it is evident that religious communication at work significantly predicts self-reflection with β = 0.401, p value < 0.001. However, IWE and self-reform are predicted through religious communication. Self-reflection predicts self-reform with β = 0.505, p value < 0.001 but does not predict IWE. Self-reform predicts IWE with β = 0.623, p value < 0.001. Thus, H2a, H2d and H2c are supported. Additionally, serial mediation was assessed by linking religious communication

with IWE through self-reflection and self-reform. A bootstrap method with a 95% confidence interval is employed to calculate serial mediation. Results indicate that the indirect effect of serial mediation of religious communication and IWE through self-reflection and self-reform is significant with β = 0.126, p value < 0.001.

Table 3 Smart PLS path model with mediation analysis

	Coefficients	P-value
Direct and Indirect Path effects		
Religious Communication ⟶ IWE (H1)	0.097	Ns
Religious Communication ⟶ Self-Reflection (H2a)	0.401	***
Religious Communication ⟶ Self-Reform (H2b)	0.059	Ns
Self-Reflection ⟶ IWE (H2c)	-0.133	Ns
Self-Reform ⟶ IWE (H2d)	0.623	***
Self-Reflection ⟶ Self-Reform	0.505	***
Indirect Effect		
Religious Communication ⟶ Self-Reflection ⟶ Self-Reform ⟶IWE (H2e)	0.126	***

Notes: *P < 0.05, **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001

5.0 Discussion

Many researchers have proven excellent employee and organizational performance through the implementation of IWE (Amilin et al., 2018; Gheitani et al., 2019; Rokhman, 2010; De Clercq et al., 2019; Murtaza et al., 2016; Zahrah et al., 2016). To the best knowledge of the researcher, few efforts were made to find predictor variables of IWE (Attahiru et al., 2016; Husin & Kernain, 2020) and its underlining mechanisum. This study contributes to literature by establishing the link between religious communication and IWE taking references from Islamic literature and SCT. And it is recognized that cognitive and emotional processes of self-reflection and self-reform act as serial mediators between religious communication and IWE. Findings show that employees who receive a constant reminder of their religious values regulate their cognitive and emotive processes (self-reflection and self-reform). And eventually, these self-regulation processes will enhance their orientation towards religious principles guiding their behaviors at work (IWE). Thus, the serial mediation is proven.

Irrespective of the fact that the tested model has largely been ignored in existing literature, the findings are supported by previous studies. For instance, Bisel et al. (2011) stressed the mechanisms through which communication enables and constrains workplace ethics. However, the role of communication to enhance ethics extracted from religious teachings (IWE) was largely unattended (Husin & Kernain, 2020). Therefore, this study attempted to enrich the literature by introducing a whole mechanism for the enhancement of IWE. Findings reveal that religious communication creates positive feelings about religious values and when communication is based upon Islamic teachings, it can enhance ethics orientation among employees (Kashif, 2015) such as IWE.

However, findings suggest that this relationship will be significant when it flows through

the inner self-regulatory process, as suggested by the SCT of Wood and Bandura (1989). Where environmental factors affect human functioning through the interaction of self-processes rather than their direct effect (Bandura, 1999). Therefore, a workplace environment where ethical values are communicated and encouraged, which is presented as Islamic religious communication can evoke moral beliefs, cognition and emotional processes in the form of character traits of self-reflection and self-reform that can shape their orientation towards ethics extracted from Islamic teachings (IWE). These findings are supported by past literature (Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020). Our findings also follow the suggestions of various researchers (De Colle & Freeman, 2020; Kashif, 2018). Who highlighted the need for empirical testing of workplace Islamic *da'wah* to develop ethical human capital through collaboration among sociology, psychoanalysis and classical moral philosophies? We catered to these needs by presenting religious communication as a social aspect and self-reflection and self-reform as psychological aspects to enhance IWE.

6.0 Implications
6.1 Theoretical Implications
Management academicians have started arguing that religion might help to understand the deeper meanings behind the behaviors in organizations when aligned with management theory and practice (Tracey et al., 2014; Yan, 2020). However, there is a dearth of research on the mechanisms by which employees are affected by religious ethical values (Kavas et al., 2020). Therefore, this study bridged this gap by presenting religious communication as a determinant to shape their orientation towards IWE. Several studies proved the excellent organizational benefits of IWE in terms of organizational citizenship behaviors, adaptive performance, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and so on (Gheitani et al., 2019; Rokhman, 2010; De Clercq et al., 2019; Murtaza et al., 2016; Zahrah et al., 2016). Nevertheless, little effort was made to know the antecedents of IWE (Attahiru et al., 2016) and its underlining mechanisum. Husin and Kernain (2020) suggested that irrespective of sharing the same belief, local environments surrounded by Islamic religious awareness and practices do incur some variations as people are innately bound to act in accordance with their cultural environment (Ali, 1992). This gap is filled by presenting religious communication as an environmental stimulus and self-reflection and self-reform as personal stimulating factors to motivate employees towards IWE. For that, theoractical support was taken from Islamic literature (Quran and Sunnah) and SCT to create a link between religious communication and IWE with a serial mediation mechanism.

6.2 Managerial Implications
Organizations are facing challenges of corruption, bribery, and falsification (*PwC's Global Economic Crime and Fraud Survey*, 2022) which has led to an increasing global concern with ethical compliance. It has initiated a discussion to rethink the existing management theories to call ethics at work. An Islamic religious communication (bid the fair and forbid the unfair) can create awareness about business ethics by breaking the taboo of '*moral muteness*' at work. Moreover, religious communication can act as a tool to develop an employee's emotional attachment with work as a divine call, which in return is reflected in their positive attitude and behaviors at work. Therefore, managers can use Islamic religious communication to raise moral awareness among employees, which may safeguard them from misconducts at work. Marketers and management scholars promulgate employees as brands to create a workplace identity valued by all stakeholders.

Islamic religious communication can endorse the culture of correcting oneself first and then advising others towards goodness to promote belongingness and mutual care. Thus, it brings people together to create an environment where employees can co-create with all stakeholders, such as employees, customers and society. Thus, today's business world, burning with the fire of intolerance and self-centeredness, can find a breath of peace under the shadow of Islamic teachings when implemented appropriately.

7.0 Limitations and Directions for Future Studies

Irrespective of the significant contribution of this study, it is an acknowledged limitation that religious communication has rarely been studied as an antecedent of employee attitudes and behaviors. Hence, these findings are not directly supported by any existing work. The limited sample size makes it difficult to generalize the findings of this study. This study is conducted only at one point in time, which restricts the causal relationships among the studied variables. Thus, longitudinal or lag studies are suggested to be done further. This study is only limited to Islamic banks and future studies can be conducted taking samples from other Islamic business organizations such as Takaful companies, Modarabha companies, Islamic mutual funds etc. Moreover, the findings of different Islamic financial institutions can be compared and contrasted to check the application of the tested model. This study has focused on religious communication in Islamic business organizations, but future studies can be done in conventional business setups with Muslims employees to compare the findings. This study used a general scale to measure religious communication; however, it needs to be conceptualized and operationalized with respect to a specific religious context to get more rigorous results.

Hajira Liaqat: Problem Identification and Model Devolpement
Sheikh Usman Yousaf: Data Collection, Results and Analysis
Ishfaq Ahmad: Literature search, Methodology and final drafting

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

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