



AL-SHAJARAH

ISTAC Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization

Published by IIUM Press
Special Issue 2024

AL-SHAJARAH

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The journal is published twice a year, June-July and November-December. Manuscripts and all correspondence should be sent to the Editor-in-Chief, *Al-Shajarah*, F4 Building, Research and Publication Unit, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), No. 24, Persiaran Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, Taman Duta, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. All enquiries on publications may also be e-mailed to alshajarah@iium.edu.my. For subscriptions, please address all queries to the postal or email address above.

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ISLAMIC AND CHRISTIAN WORK ETHICS: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

Various scholars have been inspired by ethics and value systems across the centuries. However, conversations on such topics – especially in academia – have been conducted from a Judeo-Christian perspective, without giving much attention to other systems of thought. Thus, we argue that the Islamic view of ethical consideration and work needs to be explored more. This article explores the notion of Islamic work ethics, and its dimensions in contrast to Christian work ethics. This study contributes towards removing any misconceptions of Islamic work ethics and to clearly understand the Islamic view of work ethics and its implementation. Findings revealed that the notion of work ethics, as generally understood, is specifically related to work only. However, work ethics in Islam is an essential constituent of a typical Muslim's life, which is part of the Islamic tradition. Islamic work ethics is not only related to work but is equally applicable in all fields of life, irrespective of religious beliefs.

Keywords: Islamic Work Ethics, Protestant work ethics, work values, Catholic work ethics

Introduction

Islamic work ethics (IWE) is a concept that is deeply and firmly rooted in the Qur'ān and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Work ethics appeared in contemporary literature after the Western

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Industrial Revolution and post-World War II. Islamic work ethics (IWE) received little recognition in literature until the early eighties when Muslim scholars started working on Islamic work ethics.⁴

Islam is a complete code of conduct, a system of belief and law governing material and spiritual conditions.⁵ Islam has no distinction between religious and secular aspects of life. There are detailed guidelines on how to conduct professional affairs and how to manage such matters. Work is considered a form of worship in Islam, and an obligatory activity for each Muslim. Work leads to satisfaction, self-respect, and happiness. It provides a feeling of fulfilment while providing for the less privileged who cannot participate at this level.⁶

The Prophet asserted four aspects of work.⁷ The Prophet declared work as worship, and stressed two essential facets of work: quality and qualification. The Prophet said, "God blesses a man who perfects his job/work and God loves a person who learns precisely how to perform his work and does it right". The third aspect of work is that the Prophet declared 'work as a social dimension' as it must be beneficial to others.⁸ Lastly, the Prophet described merchants as "the couriers of the horizons and God's trusted servants of the earth", for it is through trade and business that society reaches prosperity and a reasonable living standard. Honesty, integrity, fairness, and accountability are some of the teachings of Islam that pertain to work and work ethics.

⁴ Hussain, Sajjad, Khurram Shahzad, Khurram Khan, and Ifzal Ahmad. "Moderating role of Islamic work ethics and mediating role of organizational identification on leader-member exchange and citizenship behavior relationship: A test of moderated mediation model." *Journal of Islamic Business and Management* 8, no. 1 (2018).

⁵ Munna, Afzal Sayed. "Instructional leadership and role of module leaders." *International Journal of Educational Reform* 32, no. 1 (2023): 38-54.

⁶ ElKaleh, Eman, and Eugenie A. Samier. "The ethics of Islamic leadership: A cross-cultural approach for public administration." *Administrative Culture* 14, no. 2 (2013): 188-211.

⁷ Aldulaimi, Saeed Hameed. "Fundamental Islamic perspective of work ethics." *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 7, no. 1 (2016): 59-76.

⁸ Aldulaimi, Saeed Hameed. "Fundamental Islamic perspective of work ethics." *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 7, no. 1 (2016): 77

Therefore, this paper aims to thoroughly review the literature to determine the definition and dimensions of Islamic work ethics compared to Christian work ethics and the implications within.

Methodology

The methodology used for this study is qualitative, literature analysis. Literature collected from academic search engines (JSTOR, Elsevier, ProQuest, Academia and SAGE) are reviewed in detail to get a complete insight into the topic. For this purpose, the aforesaid literature was analysed at great length, and the interpretation of the Holy Qur'ān and Holy Bible was also consulted to understand the concepts with greater clarity.

Work In Islam

Work is central in Islam, an integral part of life and the centre of faith. The Qur'ān and *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) are intrinsic parts of ideological and cultural discussions in Muslim societies. Islam emphasises work. It has been mentioned in the Qur'ān in several places not to waste time. Through the Qur'ān, Muslims are made to ponder on the Creator, through the creation that He has created. It is the Muslim belief that they should use Allah's creation for their benefit by working. Allah says, "*And that there is not for a man except that [good] for which he strives*".⁹ Also, another verse in the Qur'ān states "*It is He who made the earth tame for you so walk among its slopes and eat of His provisions and to Him is the resurrection*".¹⁰ Similarly, in another verse, Allah says, "*To all are ranks according to their deeds*".¹¹

Work In Christianity

In the Bible, work is implicitly described as an activity to earn a living, "*There is profit in hard work, but mere talk leads to poverty*".¹² According to the Church and Gospel, a proverb should be

⁹ Qur'an, *Surat al-Najm* :39

¹⁰ Qur'an, *Surat al-Mulk* :15

¹¹ Qur'an, *Surat al An'am* :132

¹² Common English Bible *Proverbs*:23

understood as a general principle rather than a promise. Instead, it is a general principle formulated from the observation of wise believers with regards to God's divine perspective, e.g., "*All hard work brings a profit*"¹³.

The Bible

The Bible is the holy book of Christianity. It is worth mentioning that many versions of the Bible have been written and interpreted in different eras. However, three versions of the Bible are more popular and available worldwide: the New American Standard Bible, the King James Version, and the Common English Bible.

- i. **The New American Standard Bible** is a literal translation from the original texts, and it is well suited to study because of its accurate rendering of the source text. It follows the style of the King James Version but uses modern English for words that have fallen out of use or changed their meanings. It uses capital letters for pronouns relating to divinity, e.g., 'there He sat down with His disciples'.
- ii. **The King James Version** is the world's most widely known Bible translation, using early seventeenth-century English. Its powerful, majestic style has made it a literary classic, with many phrases and expressions embedded in the English language. Earlier generations were brought up with this translation and learnt many of its verses by heart.
- iii. **The Common English Bible (CEB)** is more than a revision or update of an existing translation. It is an ambitious new translation designed to read smoothly and naturally without compromising the accuracy of the Bible text.

Work in Bible

To know a theme regarding Christianity, we need to consult the Bible, the sacred book of Christians. Ethics and work have been described in the Bible. In the Bible, some verses describe the importance of work and sharing, which means cooperation and collaboration among workers. As described in the following verse, "*I*

¹³ Common English Bible *Proverbs:24*

have sent you to harvest what you did not work hard for; others work hard, and you will share in their hard work".¹⁴ It also mentions that the benefit of hard work is achieved through profit, while a person will suffer from poverty if he does not work. "There is profit in hard work, but mere talk leads to poverty".¹⁵ Work is considered reward-worthy as it gives profit in the form of earnings. Therefore, it is rightly said in the Bible that "If I continue to live in this world, I get results from my work."¹⁶ Work is a more respectable way of living than sitting idle or begging. By referring to history, it is said that it is much better to work and prefer working for even opponents or enemies than dying in hunger in the desert. As quoted in Exodus, "Didn't we tell you the same thing in Egypt? Leave us alone! Let us work for Egyptians than to die in the desert"¹⁷.

Therefore, in Christian/Western contexts, a mental or physical effort to achieve a purpose or produce a thing of value, often in exchange for financial compensation, is considered 'work'. It encompasses various activities, including employment, job responsibilities, and professional tasks. The Western work perspective can be influenced by cultural, economic, and social factors within a specific region or country.

Ethics /*Khulq* in Islam

In Islam, *Akhlaq* refers to ethics, morals, attitudes, behaviour, and habits. *Akhlaq* is derived from *Khulq*, which guides the human soul in its actions without thoughts or deliberations. Ethics are hidden provisions and blessings for those who wear them.¹⁸

Akhlaq Mahmūdah are good deeds, while the evil deeds are called *Akhlaq Madhmūma*. Three underlying concepts of belief are pillars of the concept of *Akhlaq*. That is Allah, the One and Only *Khāliq* (creator) of human beings, the heavens and earth. Allah is

¹⁴ Common English Bible *John* 4:38

¹⁵ Common English Bible *Proverbs* 14:22

¹⁶ Common English Bible *Philippians* 1:22

¹⁷ Common English Bible Exodus 14:12

¹⁸ Ibrahim, Azharsyah, and Nor Azzah Kamri. "Measuring the Islamic work ethics: An alternative approach." *Islamic Perspective on Management: Contemporary Issue*, Kuala Lumpur: YaPEIM Management Academy (2013): 135-16.

aware of them and firmly believes in resurrection and the life hereafter.

Ethics In Christianity

Christianity, a religion sent by God, also has guidelines regarding human ethics. Before going into deeper details, it is worth mentioning that regarding commentary of the Bible, it is believed that the Bible should be understood by its wordings as its writing is straightforward. Interpreting scripture is personally discovering what God, through his human authors, intended the biblical text to mean. One assesses, synthesises, and applies God's inerrant Word through exegesis and theology.¹⁹ This may be the reason behind the availability of several versions of the Bible.²⁰

If we go through the Bible, we find enlightenment. For example, "those who look for good find favour, but those who seek evil-it will come to them".²¹, and "*Generous person will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed*".²² In these verses, man is advised and guided to be good and generous with others.

Ethics is not well defined in the Bible; instead, certain acts are forbidden for followers, and some moral values are advised. For example, Proverb states, "*Those who look for good find favour, but those who seek evil – it will come to them*"²³ and "*Generous people will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed*"²⁴. As mentioned earlier, the Bible is to be understood by what the words say. Therefore, it can be perceived that those who are kind and helpful towards others will be rewarded more because of their ethics. One important ethics explained in the Bible is to avoid all foul matters and evilness. James states, "*With humility, set aside all filths*

¹⁹ Garrett, Duane A., and Jason S. DeRouchie. *A modern grammar for Biblical Hebrew*. B&H Publishing Group, 2019.

²⁰ Common English Bible, You version, presented by *Bible gateway*

²¹ Common English Bible *Proverbs* 11:27

²² Common English Bible *Proverbs* 11:25

²³ Common English Bible *Proverbs* 11:27

²⁴ Common English Bible *Proverbs* 11:25

and the growth of wickedness".²⁵ Regarding general life, Christ taught peaceful values, such as building a good character, loving each other, helping the poor and needy, etc.²⁶

Ethics – Modern Concept

In the modern era, ethics is a person's moral principle.²⁷ Ethics is also considered a normative science and stands in contrast to art, technology, and religion. Some scholars define ethics as "the science of conduct". Ethics can also be defined as "something good or considered proper as per moral standards or code of conduct and opposite to something wrong as per code of ethics, law, and procedures."²⁸

Dimensions of Islamic Work Ethics

Islamic work ethics include the simple tasks that believers must perform as a religious obligation, or to meet religious demands. The Qur'ān and Sunnah, the traditions set by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), are the primary sources for its implementation. One's faith towards Allah is the guiding light that directly instils noble virtues exhibited in one's social relations, cooperation, responsibility, creativity, efforts, and dedication. It is this concept of worship that assures the success of the Muslims' economic activity.²⁹

Islamic work ethics are deeply rooted in the noble Qur'ān, and Sunnah accentuates expectations rather than outcomes. Work is considered an encouragement to improve social affairs. In Islam,

²⁵ Common English Bible James 1:21

²⁶ Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *The Prophet of Peace: Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad*. Penguin UK, 2009.

²⁷ Ahmad, Shukri, and Musa Yusuf Owoyemi. "The concept of Islamic work ethic: An analysis of some salient points in the prophetic tradition." *International journal of business and social science* 3, no. 20 (2012): 116-123.

²⁸ Rokhman, Wahibur, Harif Amali Rivai, and Abideen Adewale. "An examination of the mediating effect of Islamic work ethic on the relationships between transformational leadership and work outcomes." *Gadjah Mada International Journal of Business* 13, no. 2 (2011): 125-142.

²⁹ Khadijah, A. S., N. Kamaluddin, and A. S. A. P. Salin. "Islamic work ethics (IWE) practice among employees of banking sectors." *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 23, no. 5 (2015): 924-931.

sluggishness is forbidden and unappreciated; instead, Islam inspires believers to work passionately and pursue lawful means of wealth.³⁰ The concept of Islamic work ethics was enacted to save Muslims from being involved in sinful activities such as corruption, and the exploitation of others.

The following are examples of the Qur'ānic verses and the *Sunnah* regarding IWE: Allah says: "*O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed)*".³¹

- a. Allah says: "Allah commands justice, the doing of good".³²
- b. Allah says: "Say, verily I am commanded to serve Allah with sincere devotion".³³
- c. Prophet (pbuh) has preached: "The honest, trustworthy merchant will be with the Prophets, Siddīqs and martyrs".³⁴

Islamic Work Ethics

The literature review thus far has revealed that work in Islam is a source of earnings and a dignified life. Work must be significantly advantageous and relevant to the community. The term IWE refers to a set of moral principles which distinguishes what is right from what is wrong in the Islamic context. In other words, the teaching of Islam emphasises that it is Islamic values that dominate the behaviour (work ethics) of an individual and not the other way around.

Islam emphasises the importance of ethical behaviour, honesty, respect, responsibility, hard work, and fairness in all aspects of life, including the workplace. In Islam, one must be truthful and transparent in all dealings with colleagues, clients, and customers. Honesty builds trust and strengthens the relationship, a mandatory component of success. Treating others with respect regardless of race, religion, position, background, or colour is a significant value

³⁰ Mehmood, Nasir, Muhammad Munir, and Noshaba Batool. "*Investigating the moderating role of Islamic work ethics on relationship between interpersonal justice and employee turnover intentions.*" (2020).

³¹ Qur'an, *Surat al-Tawbah* :119

³² Qur'an, *Surat al-Nahl* :90

³³ Qur'an, *Surat al-Zumar* :14

³⁴ Jami' al-Tirmidhi, *The Book on Business* 14, hadith 7, English translation vol.1.Book 12, Hadith 1209

that applies to the workplace. Similarly, justice and fairness are also emphasised in Islam regarding dealing with others in everyday life and business. It means all employees are equal, without discrimination or favouritism and are provided with fair benefits and compensation. Hard work, compassion, and responsibility are also critical values in the social system of Islam and apply not only to individuals but to the collective level as well. Collaboration, cooperation, and teamwork are as important as excellence and diligence. Muslims are advised to struggle for excellence, to work conscientiously, and to establish a healthy, positive, and fruitful work environment which will benefit everyone. Islam emphasises harmony to avoid disputes and conflicts and encourages cooperation and compassion with balanced responsibility.

Based on the previous discussion, eight dimensions of IWE can be easily identified from the literature, namely: (1) *advantage*, (2) *work obligation*, (3) *quality/improvement*, (4) *equality*, (5) *collectivity* (6) *competition*, and (7) *effort*.³⁵

Dimensions of Christian/Western Work Ethics

The concept of work in the Bible is like the meaning in which work is taken today. In the Bible, work is implicit and is meant to be physical work. The Christian / Western concept of work and work ethics in the Bible can be understood as follows. According to John, *"I have sent you to harvest what you did not work hard for; those worked hard, and you will share in their hard work"*.³⁶ Also, the followers are advised to work hard by telling them that *"there is profit in hard work, but mere talk leads to poverty"*.³⁷

In the passage of history, a division in Christianity resulted in two categories or groups within Christians. The orthodox Christians are called Catholics, and the second group are known as Protestants (coming from the act; to protest). Regarding work ethics in the West, two main concepts have prevailed for a long time: Catholic work

³⁵ Ibrahim, Azharsyah, and Nor Azzah Kamri. "Measuring the Islamic work ethics: An alternative approach." *Islamic Perspective on Management: Contemporary Issue, Kuala Lumpur: YAPEIM Management Academy* (2013): 135-16

³⁶ Common English Bible John 4:38

³⁷ Common English Bible Proverbs 14:23

ethics (CWE) and Protestant work ethics (PWE). These concepts are explained in the coming paragraphs.

A. Catholic Work Ethics

The first time the Catholic church paid some attention to work ethics was in 1891 when Pope Leo XIII emphasised the dignity of labour and the right to just wages in *Rerum Novarum*.³⁸ Later, in an encyclical, Pope Pius XI maintained and reasserted the principles of *Rerum Novarum* and introduced the idea of the subsidiary in economics and social matters. *Laborem Exercens*, published on 14th Sep 1981, emphasised work to earn daily bread for man, provisions of the basis of family life as a source of transformation of nature and contributing to the common good. In this encyclical, Pope John Paul II focused on the dignity of human work and workers' rights. He also suggested addressing issues like workplace conditions, justified wages and unions of workers and their roles.³⁹

The Catholic work ethic mainly emphasised honesty, responsibility, and diligence. Other principles explained in this encyclical were fair treatment of employees and respect for human dignity. Ethical decision-making is one of the critical aspects of Catholic work ethics.⁴⁰

B. Protestant Work Ethics (PWE)

The concept of Protestant ethics was devised to explain the historical causes of capitalism's development. Weber studied Protestants' work ethics in 1958 and assumed that the gathering and collecting wealth is morally justified according to these work ethics. Weber asserted that credit for such development goes to the Christians only. He claimed that the Christians should be credited for such development

³⁸ Pope Leo, X. I. I. I. "*Rerum Novarum: Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor.*" *Libreria Editrice Vaticana* (1891).

³⁹ Misner, Paul. "Catholic Labor and Catholic Action: The Italian Context of" *Quadragesimo Anno*." *The Catholic Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (2004): 650-674.

⁴⁰ Kelly, Joseph. "Vincent McNabb, Agrarian Utopia and The Theology of Work: An exploration of the theology of the Catholic Land Association in relation to the social encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Laborem Exercens*." *New blackfriars* 91, no. 1033 (2010): 286-303.

because none of the Eastern religions, even Islam, accelerated and boosted the economy; instead, only Christians contributed to wealth accumulation and economic progress. A vital attribute of the work is the value assigned to it by people.⁴¹ The work has dual benefits; firstly, it is a source of earnings, meaning getting rewards, and secondly, it is rewarding itself.⁴²

Hard work was confined only to faith and beliefs. However, mental, and physical hard work during the "Protestant Reformation" became vital to everyone in the community.⁴³ The 'Protestant Work Ethic' was primarily coined as a religious construct. However, later, it only remained confined to a general work ethic; thus, the term "Protestant work ethic" maintained the name and refers to the era in which it was coined. In a broader sense, this term now recognises and appreciates characteristics like fulfilling the duties, responsibilities, and obligations inflicted due to designation, the productive use of time, and overcoming worldly pleasures. The current concept of PWE is a determinant of work-related behaviour.⁴⁴

Simply put, PWE is characterised by an emphasis on work value. The Protestants' work ethic has seven aspects that guide a person to understand the vitality of work, the importance of free time, and morality. These aspects of PWE are the centrality of work, morality/ethics, wasted time, delay of gratification, leisure, hard work, and self-reliance. Adapting a high work ethic enables workers

⁴¹ Ibrahim, Azharsyah, and Nor Azzah Kamri. "Measuring the Islamic work ethics: An alternative approach." *Islamic Perspective on Management: Contemporary Issue, Kuala Lumpur: YaPEIM Management Academy* (2013): 135-16.

⁴² Zúñiga, Carolina, David Aguado, and Patricio Cabrera-Tenecela. "Values that work: Exploring the moderator role of protestant work ethics in the relationship between human resources practices and work engagement and organizational citizenship behavior." *Administrative Sciences* 12, no.1 (2022): 11.

⁴³ Candra, Wilson, Naelati Tubastuvi, Suryo Budi Santoso, and Eko Haryanto. "Analysis of the Islamic leadership, Islamic work ethics and intellectual intelligence on employee performance with Islamic organization culture as moderated variables." *Journal of Islamic Economic and Business Research* 2, no. 1 (2022): 1-14.

⁴⁴ Jakhongir, S. "Scientific Horizon in the Context of Social Crises 68 the Difference Between Educational Management and Educational Leadership and the Importance of Educational Responsibility." (2021): 68-88.

to do their jobs or face challenges easily.⁴⁵ The Protestant ethics cover a wide range of work and studies.⁴⁶

Comparative Critical Analysis of Islamic and Christian Work Ethics

There are many books in the world which are believed to be sacred. Other than the Qur'ān, we do not find any religious book that projects itself as the word of God. This kind of statement, appearing uniquely in the Qur'ān, gives a point of departure to the reader. He then studies it as an exceptional book rather than a standard one by humans.⁴⁷

However, the holy Bible talks about the word of God, but does not claim to be the word of God; instead, Christian scholars state that human authors of God wrote it. Interpreting scripture is the process of personally discovering what God – through his human authors – intended the biblical text to mean.⁴⁸

The Qur'ān is a book of guidance for its followers. It is also a book of warnings and admonitions.⁴⁹ There is guidance about every aspect of life in the Qur'ān, and believers are taught to lead their lives ethically and morally to be successful in this worldly life and the Hereafter. To reiterate, this paper intends to explore the dimensions of Islamic work ethics and to compare it with those found in the Christian faith. Therefore, in the coming paragraphs, each dimension will be compared critically in the light of two religions.

To understand work ethics within a religious framework, we must first come to terms with what 'religiosity' implies. Religiosity

⁴⁵ Sarmad, Muhammad, Rimsha Iqbal, Muhammad Anwar Ali, and Ayaz ul Haq. "Unlocking spirituality at workplace through islamic work ethics: Analyzing employees' performance in islamic banks." *Journal of Islamic Business and Management* 8, no. 2 (2018).

⁴⁶ Kirby, Benjamin. "Pentecostalism, economics, capitalism: putting the Protestant Ethic to work." *Religion* 49, no. 4 (2019): 571-591.

⁴⁷ Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *The Prophet of Peace: Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad*. Penguin UK, 2009.

⁴⁸ DeRouchie, Jason S. "The Mystery Revealed: A Biblical Case for Christ-Centered Old Testament Interpretation." *Themelios* 44 (2019): 226-48.

⁴⁹ Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *The Prophet of Peace: Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad*. Penguin UK, 2009.

or religiousness means intrinsic religious orientation, which guides the individual and equips him with an understanding of life. It also means the spirituality of an individual. Mukherjee defined religiousness as devotional religious behaviour in personal and social life. Therefore, people range broadly in faith and devotion.⁵⁰ This definition tells the standard of faith of an individual; however, the closeness of man to Allah in disposing faith concerning what Allah has inculcated in man also contributes to it. Therefore, a religious person behaves following human nature instilled by Allah, contrary to an irreligious individual who behaves otherwise. Salih Ibrahim al-Sani describes religiousness as the degree to which a person or a believer adheres to the beliefs and practical teachings of the faith.⁵¹

In the Bible, believers are advised to have faith in God. According to Romans, "Scripture says, all those who have faith in him will not be put to shame".⁵² It means that a person having faith in God will follow the commandments or instructions of religion, and thus, he will not face shame because religion is meant to improve the character of its followers. As stated in 2 Timothy, "*Every Scripture is inspired by God and is valid for teaching, showing mistakes, correcting, and training character*".⁵³ As far as religiousness is concerned, the Christian view of religiosity is in line with Islam. Both Islam and Christianity advise their followers to follow the religion in their daily lives and behave morally and ethically.

1. Work Obligation

In Islam, work is *indispensable*, so Allah has instructed believers to commit to their work rather than long for prosperity. Believers must determine their goals, which hard work can only achieve. It is stated in the Qur'ān, "*that there is not for man except that (good) for which*

⁵⁰ Mukherjee, Asha. "Religion as a separate area of study in India." In *Issues in Religion and Education*, pp. 83-103. Brill, 2015.

⁵¹ Ibrahim, Azharsyah, and Nor Azzah Kamri. "*Measuring the Islamic work ethics: An alternative approach.*" *Islamic Perspective on Management: Contemporary Issue, Kuala Lumpur: YaPEIM Management Academy* (2013): 135-16.

⁵² Common English Bible Romans 10:11

⁵³ Common English Bible 2 Timothy 3:16

he strives".⁵⁴ The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) informed his ummah that work is a source of abolition of sins. According to Al-Bukhari "*No one eats better food than what he earns out of his work*".⁵⁵ Therefore, economic activities or work, being the highest form of worship, is not simply a source of sustaining a prosperous and healthy society but religious work as well.

Abdallāh ibn Mas'ūd reported God's Messenger as saying, "*Trying to earn a lawful livelihood is an obligatory duty in addition to the duties which are obligatory*".⁵⁶ The Prophet said, "*Nobody has ever eaten a better meal than that which one has earned by working with one's own hands. The Prophet of Allah, David, used to eat from the earnings of his manual labour.*"⁵⁷

Work is also given preference over laziness in Christianity and the Bible. The concept of work in the Bible is similar to the meaning in which work is taken today. Work is meant to be physical and demanding; sincerity, devotion, righteousness, trustworthiness, and collaboration are asserted in the Bible. It is stated in the Bible that "*there is profit in hard work, but mere laziness leads to poverty*".⁵⁸ In this verse, followers are advised to work hard as hard work bears a fruit. On the other hand, if someone does not work, they will become poor because of low earnings, so it is better to work and earn for the provision of life.

Similarly, in another verse, it says, "*If I continue to live in this world, I get results from my work*".⁵⁹ There is a reminder for work saying "*Didn't we tell you the same thing in Egypt? Leave us alone! Let us work for the Egyptians! It would have been better for us to work for the Egyptians than to die in the desert*".⁶⁰ Here working for Egyptians is preferred to dying in the desert helplessly. Therefore, as far as work obligation is concerned, the Bible is in line with the instructions of the Qur'ān.

⁵⁴ Qur'an, Surat *al-Najm* :39

⁵⁵ Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Sahih Bukhari*. Peace Vision, 1986.

⁵⁶ *Mishkat al-Masabih* 2781, Book 11 Business Transactions, Hadith 23

⁵⁷ Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Sahih Bukhari*. Peace Vision, 1986.

⁵⁸ Common English Bible Proverbs 14:23

⁵⁹ Common English Bible *Philippians* 1:22

⁶⁰ Common English Bible *Exodus* 14:12

2. Effort

Another important constituent of Islamic work ethics is effort. Effort is essential for serving oneself and the community. Islam highly regards effort because if the involvement is positive and fruitful, it will help reduce financial and social problems. It allows a person to earn a reasonable living. Being busy earning positively is suitable for one's own life. The fourth Caliph, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, said, "*Do not be one of those who hope for a better world without working for it*". Moreover, he also advised Muslims to excel in their work, saying, "*He who does not perfect his/her work will bring confusion to self*". Moreover, Allah says, "*And his effort is going to be seen. Then he will be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense*".⁶¹

No verse could be found in the Common English Bible regarding the exertion of effort in work. Instead, some verses explain the hard work of authors, saying, "*You remember, brothers and sisters, our efforts and hard work. We preached God's good news to you, while we worked night and day so we would not be a burden on any of you*".⁶² The word effort is used in the Bible to describe some previous work already done, such as in 2 Thessalonian, "*We did not eat anyone's food without paying for it. Instead, we worked night and day with effort and hard work so that we would not impose on you*".⁶³

However, in the chapter 'Preparing for Christ coming in judgement', 2 Peter, "*Therefore, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to be found by him in peace—pure and faultless*"⁶⁴ and "*This is why you must make every effort to add moral excellence to your faith; and to moral excellence, knowledge*".⁶⁵ In these verses, followers are advised to achieve excellence in knowledge and morals so that when Christ comes he finds them in a better situation.

⁶¹ Qur'an, *Surat al-Najm* :40-41

⁶² Common English Bible 1 *Thessalonians* 2:9

⁶³ Common English Bible 2 *Thessalonians* 2:9

⁶⁴ Common English Bible 2 *Peter* 3:14

⁶⁵ Common English Bible 2 *Peter* 1:5

3. Quality

The calibre or standard of a thing is called quality. It shows the features or characteristics of someone or something; in other words, quality is observed as a part of someone or something. The value of excellence at its best is also called quality. Quality standards vary from person to person because the perception of quality differs among different persons; that is why participants get different grades from different judges in a competition. Likewise, it applies to the workplace where training contributes to achieving and maximising quality. Islam does not lag in setting the basis for the quality of work as it is a complete code of conduct.⁶⁶ Beautiful work, justice, discipline, order, accuracy, and good planning are components of Islamic work, and performance constitutes quality. Allah commands believers to commit sincerely to their work or task through the Qur'ān. Therefore, Muslim professionals can use a practical problem-solving approach, good planning, and examination before undertaking a task if they follow and adhere to the Islamic teachings of *Itqān* (mastery). This enables them to deal with problems in a disciplined and orderly manner.

The word quality is used in the Bible but only to describe the standard of different things and materials such as stones (*At the king's command, they quarried huge stones of the finest quality in order to lay the temple's foundation with carefully cut stone*,⁶⁷ flour, (*Take unleavened bread, unleavened flatbread made with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil. Make them out of high-quality wheat flour and spices.*⁶⁸

However, regarding the ethic of quality, in Jeremiah, it is stated, "*Yet it was I who planted you, a precious vine of fine quality; how could you turn into a wild vine and become good for nothing?*"⁶⁹ This means that God made humans with good qualities, and how they turn themselves into bad ones. Similarly, followers are advised to be

⁶⁶ Ibrahim, Azharsyah, and Nor Azzah Kamri. "Measuring the Islamic work ethics: An alternative approach." *Islamic Perspective on Management: Contemporary Issue, Kuala Lumpur: YaPEIM Management Academy* (2013): 135-16

⁶⁷ Common English Bible 1 King 5:17

⁶⁸ Common English Bible Exodus 29:2

⁶⁹ Common English Bible Jeremiah 2:21

good quality humans, "*instead, make yourselves beautiful on the inside, in your hearts, with the enduring quality of a gentle, peaceful spirit. This type of beauty is very precious in God's eyes*".⁷⁰ Therefore, from this explanation, it can be concluded that in the Bible there are no clear instructions about the qualities of human beings or work to achieve quality in character in society.

4. Collectivity

The togetherness of individuals as one whole is called collectivity. Islam, being a collective religion, declares all Muslims as being part of the *Ummah*. Collectivity is deeply rooted in cooperation and collaboration in all aspects of life, and economic activities are no exception. Work or economic involvement is also a religious activity. Islam values cooperation and collaboration among workers because only through cooperation and collaboration among them can they instil harmony within an organisation or workplace.

In Islam, there is no separation between the sacred and the profane – or what is understood as ‘daily life’. Therefore, economic activities cannot be separated from what Allah said in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. Islam, therefore, emphasises implementing and following cooperation to improve job quality, particularly in times of conflict and issues. Islam does not ignore the welfare of workers or the accumulation of wealth by rich people. Abu Hurayra said, “Help the worker in his work. The one who works for Allah will not be disappointed,” i.e., the servant.⁷¹ Therefore, Islam inculcates these virtues in believers so that a problem or conflict can be resolved collaboratively, and the work streamlined. Regarding the collectivity, unfortunately, no verse could be found in the Coon English Bible, Christian Standard Bible, American Standard Bible, and King James Version of the Bible.

5. Equality

Equality can be defined as a general state of uniform behaviour or treatment that affects others by those who possess authority or

⁷⁰ Common English Bible 1 Peter 3:4

⁷¹ *Sahih al-Albani al-Adab al-Mufrad* Book 9, Hadith 191

position. It can also be defined as the state of being equal. Islam equals men and women in their fundamental human rights and are assigned duties and responsibilities according to their physical and mental capabilities. Equality in Islam means that men and women are equal in all the restrictions, prohibitions, and obligations despite differences in their natures. Whatever differentiates a person in the sight of Allah is the piety and righteousness of the person and observance of the Commands of Allah Almighty. Similarly, Islam declares that both genders are equal before Islamic law. All penalties, judgements, and legal sentences would be the same for all men and women without any distinction or discrimination on race, religion, or class.

All humans are equal in Islam regarding human values, yet they differ in terms of the work and the benefits drawn from work. Every individual gets rewarded based on the service offered to society and the community.⁷² A diligent worker and an inactive or sluggish person cannot have equal pay and finances. A crucial part of equality is justice, which involves balance. Justice means a person is paid or rewarded what he deserves, not depriving others of their rights. Therefore, at the workplace, all individuals have the right to be treated equally no matter whether they belong to which religion, social status, gender, or race.

Regarding equality, some differences are seen in the Bible. Firstly, age is differentiated. The age limit to work is 30 to 50, as stated in Numbers, "*those 30 to 50 years old who were eligible for work in the meeting tent*".⁷³ Secondly, standards of payment are established based on age and profession. Those who are seniors will be paid more, and those who talk for preaching religion. In verse 17 of chapter one of 1 Timothy, it is stated that "*elders who lead well should be paid double, especially those who work with public speaking and teaching*".⁷⁴ Equality and justice are the main

⁷² Ibrahim, Azharsyah, and Nor Azzah Kamri. "Measuring the Islamic work ethics: An alternative approach." *Islamic Perspective on Management: Contemporary Issue, Kuala Lumpur: YaPEIM Management Academy* (2013): 135-16

⁷³ Common English Bible Numbers 4:39

⁷⁴ Common English Bible 1 Timothy 1:17

properties or features of a social system that cannot be found in the Bible.

In Islam, there is no preference for anyone on any base. In the last sermon of the Prophet, Muhammad (PBUH) clearly stated on *Hujjat al-Widā* that no one is preferred on anyone, white is not preferred over black, nor Arab is preferred over non-Arab. Preference would be given to a person based on his piety and fear of Allah. It seems clear that Christianity or the Bible does not favour equality and justice too. The researcher could not find these ethics of social life in the Bible.

6. Advantage

Advantage can be explained as something that makes someone more privileged and successful than others.⁷⁵ Islam emphasises that each business or work must benefit the Islamic ummah. Therefore, the most essential dimension of IWE is the work that benefits the Islamic *ummah*. Islam intends to establish a society wherein every single individual works and behaves responsibly and honestly and does not demand an unjust and undeserved extra share of something, ignoring other individuals.

Islam grants permission to its followers to own wealth and earnings with the condition that they do not interfere with or halt the freedom of work, earnings, and speech of someone else unless it is not against the greater good of society. Therefore, *Zakāh* is implemented to limit the gap between society's well-earned and deprived sections. To avoid an accumulation of wealth in a few and to help unprivileged and deprived people in society, every Muslim must pay a fixed proportion of *Zakāh*, from what is excessive to what is needed for the needy and poor. Thus, sharing extra wealth is an advantageous and powerful virtue to the Islamic *Ummah*.

Like Islam, Christianity also forbids taking advantage of other fellow beings, as stated in the chapter on payment of workers, "*Do not take advantage of poor or needy workers, whether they are fellow*

⁷⁵ Ibrahim, Azharsyah, and Nor Azzah Kamri. "Measuring the Islamic work ethics: An alternative approach." *Islamic Perspective on Management: Contemporary Issue*, Kuala Lumpur: YaPEIM Management Academy (2013): 135-16

*Israelites or immigrants who live in your land or your cities".*⁷⁶ Like Islam, followers are advised to take care of each other and not take unnecessary advantage of others. No one should look out for their advantage, but they should look out for each other.⁷⁷ However, the merchants are described as cheaters because they tend to cheat the customers in business. In Hosea, it is stated, "He is a merchant; the means to cheat are in his hands; he loves to take advantage of others".⁷⁸ Therefore, in 1 Corinthians, followers are given the example of not taking advantage, "*This is the same thing that I do. I please everyone in everything I do. I do not look out for my advantage, but I look out for many people so that they can be saved*".⁷⁹

7. Competition

When organisations or individuals strive for the same objectives or limited goals, this phenomenon is called competition. It can be cooperative and adversarial because participants try hard to outperform others. The competition between Muslim individuals or groups of individuals or organisations must be fair and with good intentions at work and in the workplace.⁸⁰ The business is highly valued and appreciated when conducted ethically. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) not only altered the then-existing business culture but also emphasised the moral conduction of business so that it not only benefits here in this world but may also become helpful in salvation in life hereafter. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "*Religion is found in the way of dealing with other people*".⁸¹ An abusive environment and unethical behaviour cannot support any

⁷⁶ Common English Bible *Deuteronomy* 24:14

⁷⁷ Common English Bible 1 *Colossians* 10:24

⁷⁸ Common English Bible *Hosea* 12:7

⁷⁹ Common English Bible 1 *Colossians* 10:33

⁸⁰ Ibrahim, Azharsyah, and Nor Azzah Kamri. "Measuring the Islamic work ethics: An alternative approach." *Islamic Perspective on Management: Contemporary Issue, Kuala Lumpur: YaPEIM Management Academy* (2013): 135-16

⁸¹ Zin, Razali Mat. "Some Philosophical And Practical Principles Of Islamic Human Resource Management: Applications For Contemporary Organizations." *Asian journal of Management Sciences & education* 8, no. 1 (2019): 106-123.

business to flourish. Therefore, the Prophet said, "He who cheated us is not from us".⁸² Honesty and transparency are essential Islamic ethics, constituting fair and legitimate competition in the business environment.

In Christianity, competition is fairly allowed, as stated in 2 Timothy, "Also in the same way, athletes do not win unless they follow the rules".⁸³ Also, in 4 Maccabees, competition among followers is declared legal and divine,⁸⁴ saying the competition in which they were engaged was truly divine. In this ethics, the two under-discussed religions oppose each other because Islam emphasises moral conduction in every walk of life, including business. At the same time, Christianity goes the other way around.

Significance of Islamic Work Ethics

If any institution or organisation adopts and implements IWE, it can promote knowledge sharing and fortify Islamic values among its workforce.⁸⁵ It also impacts work performance.⁸⁶ and consequently helps improve the workforce's efficiency and the ethics of leaders.⁸⁷ The context and concept of IWE are broad and guide dedication, effort, diligence, patience, tolerance, ability, personal sacrifice, devotion, support to coworkers, liveness, character and status, and subordinates' trust.⁸⁸ Thus, ethics and moral values such as justice,

⁸² Collections of Forty » Forty Hadith of Shah Waliullah Dehlawi - الله ولي شاه أربعون - الدهلوي Hadith 12.

⁸³ Common English Bible 2 Timothy 2:5

⁸⁴ Common English Bible 4 Mathew 17:11

⁸⁵ Suryani, Suryani, Budi Sudrajat, Hendryadi Hendryadi, Amelia Oktrivina, Hafifuddin Hafifuddin, and Zulfikar Ali Buto. "Can Islamic work ethics encourage knowledge-sharing behaviors? The role of job embeddedness and organizational identification." *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 12, no. 8 (2021): 1181-1199.

⁸⁶ Benedicto, Helen R., and Merlita V. Caelian. "The influence of work ethics on job performance of government employees." *Philippine Social Science Journal* 4, no. 1 (2021): 71-82.

⁸⁷ Qasim, Muhammad, Tahir Hussain Rizvi, and Muhammad Irshad. "Impact of ethical leadership on task performance and organizational citizenship behavior: moderating role of islamic work ethics." *Journal of Management and Research* 7, no. 2 (2020): 166-193.

⁸⁸ Muhammad Qasim, Tahir Hussain Rizvi, and Muhammad Irshad. "Impact of

honesty, consultation, empathy, patience, and compassion are crucial components of leadership.⁸⁹ A study⁹⁰ also found a direct effect of IWE on psychological ownership, workers, efficiency, and organisational justice.

Implications of Islamic Work Ethics

For the Gospel, many versions and editions of the Bible are available; however, for the current study, only the Common English Bible is used because it is the most popular and common. The link is attached wherever the Bible is cited. The link to access the Common English Bible is in the end notes. Mohd. Kamal Hassan accredited Islamic Work Ethic as follows:

1. *Job obligation to seek the pleasure of Allah.*
2. *Trustworthiness being vicegerent of Allah.*
3. *A Muslim must perform his duty as a religious obligation and implement all ritual obligations. Motivational reward is not only linked with earthly reward but also awarded in the life hereafter.*
4. *Diligence and efficiency, as well as fairness in preserving public interest.*
5. *Employer-employee relationships are based on human value, which is beyond race, colour, language, and inheritance.*⁹¹

ethical leadership on task performance and organizational citizenship behavior: moderating role of Islamic work ethics." Journal of Management and Research 7, no. 2 (2020): 194.

⁸⁹ Elkaleh, Eman, and Eugenie A. Samier. "The ethics of Islamic leadership: A cross-cultural approach for public administration." *Administrative Culture* 14, no. 2 (2013): 188-211.

⁹⁰ Mohammad, Jihad, Farzana Quoquab, Fazli Idris, Mohammed Al-Jabari, Nazimah Hussin, and Raed Wishah. "The relationship between Islamic work ethic and workplace outcome: A partial least squares approach." *Personnel Review* 47, no. 7 (2018): 1286-1308.

⁹¹ Udin, Udin, Radian Dananjoyo, Mohsin Shaikh, and Densy Vio Linarta. "Islamic work ethics, affective commitment, and employee's performance in family business: Testing their relationships." *Sage Open* 12, no. 1 (2022): 21582440221085263.

Conclusion

After discussing the work done regarding Islamic work ethics, it can be safely concluded that actions accepted as norms, not contrary to Islamic rules, can be called 'Ethics'. Islamic work ethics include honesty, justice, and responsibility, and ought to be modelled by leaders and managers in the workplace for workers. Incorporation of these Islamic values into work ethics can contribute to the creation of a positive and ethical work environment, build strong relationships with colleagues and clients, and contribute to the success and growth of their organisations. Islam admits excellence as a virtue and encourages its adherents to excel in everything they do. The Prophet (pbuh) advised: "Allah loves that when anyone does a job, he does it perfectly".⁹² Islamic work ethics are so natural and woven in human psychology that can be employed anywhere, in any period of time and in any environment.

⁹² Ali, Ali Ahmed Ateeq, and Naser Habtoor. "Islamic work ethics and its impact on enhancing organizational commitment in Bahraini private educational universities." *International Journal of Intellectual Human Resource Management (IJHRM)* 3, no. 02 (2022): 33-42.

AL-SHAJARAH

Special Issue 2024

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WoS-Indexed under Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Current Contents/Arts and Humanities and Scopus

ISSN 1394-6870



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