IMPROVING EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE THROUGH ISLAMIC SPIRTUALITY AND ISLAMIC SOCIAL RESPONSIBLITY

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Purpose – The present research aims to study the relationship between Islamic spirituality (IS),
Islamic social responsibility (ISR) and employee performance (EP).

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from 390 Muslim employees from Industry and services industry of Turkey. The structure equation modeling (SEM) wasapplied to test the recommended hypotheses, and the proposed model was assessed through notable model fit indices.

Findings – The findings revealed that IS and ISR can considerably increase and improve EP. The study also provides empiricalsupport to the hypotheses that employees with high levels of IS and ISR will showcase an improved and value-added performance at workplace.

Originality/value – This study proposed IS and ISR as two possible stimuli that can help increase employee performance at workplace. The findings of the present study affirmed that IS, as well as ISR, is positively related to EP. The current results augmented the existing body of knowledge by further enriching the understanding of employee performance by offering new empirical relationships from an Islamic perspective.

Keywords – Islam, Social responsibility, Spirituality, Employee performance, Structure equation modeling (SEM)

INTRODUCTION:

The success of an organization in the dynamic business world of today is contingent to a large extent upon improving employee performance. Leaders, directors and senior managers are focusing on creating an environment which can refine and enhance employee performance (Khan *et al*, 2011) as increased employee performance enhances employee motivation and satisfaction as well as the overall performance of the organization (Karakas, 2010; De Vries, 2011; Benefiel*et al*., 2014). Past studies (for instance; Hassan, 1995; Ahmad, 2008; Ahmad and Fontaine, 2011; Amin, 2011; Kamil et al., 2011a; Sulaiman et al., 2015; Bhatti et al., 2015; Bhatti et al., 2016a,b) lay great emphasis on improving performance of employees and have also recognized that it is exceedingly important to study the antecedents of the given phenomena. Some of the key elements of employee performance are; culture, work environment, leadership, employee's spirituality,

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and so forth (Toban et al., 2014; Tierney et al, 2002; Van Dolen et al, 2004; Ahmad and Fontaine, 2011).

Conventional literature (like; Tracey et al., 1995; Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Miller and Thoresen, 2003; Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004;Naimon et al., 2013; Ahmad and Omar, 2014) dealing with employee performance takes into account, culture, work environment, leadership and so forth, and also advocates that spirituality, belief, faith and religion can play an important role in improving the performance of employees. Lynn et al. (2009) noted that the integration of spirituality in a workplace brings an encouraging change in an organization. Indeed, spirituality and religiosity can make a significant difference in the overall behavior and performance of an individual (Fry et al, 2005; Suliman et al, 2013; Bhatti et al., 2016 a, b). Spirituality can inspire and encourage uprightness, creativity, commitment, personal fulfillment and performance of individuals as well as employees (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Fry et al, 2005; Bhatti et al., 2016a). Particularly, workplace spirituality programs in organizations can result in positive outcomes such as increased happiness, serenity, job satisfaction, commitment and better employee performance (Reave, 2005; Bhatti et al., 2016a, b). Moreover, organizations that endorse spiritual work environments observe an increase in the overall performance, commitment, productivity, adaptability and innovation of their employees (Eisler and Montouori, 2003; Mat and Naser, 2012; Benefiel*et al*., 2014; Bhatti et al., 2016a, b).

Kazmi (2004) and Bhatti et al (2016a) asserted that the field of management is developing progressively by displaying more interest in faith, religion and spirituality. Islamic spirituality (IS) can provide a significant solution to manage the challenge of improving employee performance faced by organizations (Kamil*et al.*, 2011b; Sulaiman et al., 2013; Bhatti *et al.*, 2015). However, research on the role of IS and its impact on employees and organizations is sparse (Kamil*et al.*, 2011a, b;Sulaiman et al, 2015; Bhatti et al, 2016a, b). Similarly, the concept of social responsibility has generally been studied at the corporate level, where an organization is regarded as a social citizen (Adams, 2008; Kolodinsky*et al.*, 2010; Benefiel*et al*., 2014). Since an organization is a part of society, the behavior of its members will affect not only the organization but also society as a whole. Hence,

the current study looks at social responsibility from an individual perspective and recommends Islamic Spirituality and Islamic social responsibility as two tenable motivators that can assist in improving employee performance. In short, it examines the relationship between predictors: Islamic Spirituality and Islamic social responsibility, and criterion: employee performance in the industry and services industry in Turkey.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Employee Performance:

Employee performance (EP) can be defined as the collective worth of the set of responsibilities and behaviors that employees contribute directly as well as indirectly to the overall aims and objectives of an organization (Borman&Motowidlo, 1993; Crawford et al., 2010; Hadisi, 2012; Toban et al., 2014; Benefiel*et al.*, 2014). According to Liao and Chuang (2004), EP is the general behavior of employees guided by their skills and abilities through which an organization's goals can be achieved. Over the years, EP has mainly been studied in three facets viz. productivity, efficiency and quality (Crawford et al., 2010). Particularly, Carter and McMahan (2005) assert that rewards, job satisfaction, recognition and work relations are key drivers for improving employee performance, efficiency and quality. Simultaneously, religion and spirituality also tend to influence employee behavior, perceptions and decisions. McCarty (2007) maintains that spirituality increases employee morale, productivity and most importantly, EP. Similarly, Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) affirm that spirituality inspires employees to be honest, creative, committed and satisfied. Organizations supporting and encouraging a spiritual work environment not only benefit from employees who are more principled than others, but also see an increase in their overall performance (Eisler&Montouori, 2003; Mat &Naser, 2012). Indeed, previous studies (like; Khanifar et al., 2010; McGhee and Grant, 2008; East, 2005; Komala and Ganesh, 2007; Nur, 2003; Osman-Gani, et al., 2013) affirm that there is a positive relationship between spirituality in the workplace and professional commitment, ethical behavior, job satisfaction and EP. Yet, a more profound understanding of the phenomenon of EP is needed (Gibbons, 2000; Milliman et al., 2003; Valasek Jr, 2009) as there is a dearth of research on the role of spiritual and moral factors in the

performance of employees, particularly from an Islamic perspective (Kamil et al., 2011b, Bhatti et al., 2016 a, b).

Islamic spirituality

 "The Arabic word for spirituality is *rawahaniyah*. It is derived from the word "*ruh*" which means *spirit*" (Bhatti, 2015 p.86). IS refers to belief, deeds and actions which are consistent with Islamic philosophy and principles (Bhatti et al., 2016b). IS is embedded in the believers faith (Iman) and is exhibited in all activities of life for achieving success, love, help and forgiveness of Allah. In the Quran, Allah states: "O you who believe! Fear God, and be with those who are true in word and deeds" (Quran 9:119); "Say: He is Allah the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him" (Quran 112: 1-4). The believers who submit themselves to Allah are in a state of absolute worship, hence their faith strengthens them spiritually (Saleem, 2009). Mohsen (2007, p. 55) asserts that "spirituality is a vital component of human nature" for living a steady, balanced and satisfied life. The beauty of IS is that it brings believers close to Allah and also contributes in making them valuable members of society (Hawa, 2004).

Spirituality, moreover, lends strength, conviction and self-confidence to a believer, hence, encouraging him/her to showcase the best of his/her abilities and performance (Osman-Gani et al., 2013; Mohsen, 2007). In fact, believers who are spiritually strong are likely to be honest, loyal, hardworking, principled and more efficient for the reason that they take work as a form of worship (Kamil et al, 2011a, b;Sulaiman*et al.*, 2015; Bhatti et al, 2016b). In addition, they are likely to be more devoted, keen and committed towards achieving excellence (Sulaiman*et al.*, 2013). Given the fact that IS can effectively address the phenomena of EP (Fry et al., 2005; Mat and Naser, 2012; Bhatti *et al.*, 2015) and Islam ascribes great significance to spirituality, it can offer meaningful answers to such organizational enquiries (Mohsen, 2007). Hence, it was hypothesized that:

H1: Islamic spirituality has a positive impact on employee performance

Islamic Social Responsibility:

Mohsen (2007) asserts that ISR is the obligation to one's self, to fellow human beings as well as nature at large. "ISR is defined as actions and behaviors that a believer espouses in daily life which

results in respect, harmony, justice, integrity and development of people and society with the realization of achieving the forgiveness and pleasure of Allah (SWT)" (Bhatti, 2015 p.96). Topbas (2009) explains that Allah (SWT) has set precise guidelines and responsibilities for believers that he/she must perform with oneself and others. Indeed, it is maintained that individuals with high ISR in general are meticulous, committed and demonstrate ever higher performances over time (Bhatti et al., 2015; Osman-Gani et al., 2013). In Quran Allah states: "…..And fulfil the covenant; verily the covenant shall be asked about" (Quran 17:34); "Fulfil the covenant of Allah when ye have entered into it, and break not your oaths after ye have confirmed them; indeed ye have made Allah your surety; for Allah knoweth all that ye do" (Quran 16:91). Allah also says: "Woe to those that deal in fraud. Those who, when they have to receive by measure from men, exact full measure, but when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due. Do they not think that they will be called to account? On a Mighty Day, A Day when (all) mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds?" (Quran 83:1-6).

Importantly, ISR prompts ethical behavior, self-confidence and strength to face the challenges of life, hence improving the overall faith of a believer. In addition, ISR also strengthens reliance on Allah and prompts a believer to showcase the best of his/her performance in all his/her actions (Bhatti, 2015; Mohsen, 2007; Sulaiman et al, 2013). Notably, Islamic social responsibility such as; truthfulness, trust, sincerity, brotherhood and justice can benefit employees to grow into more socially responsible individuals and progressively augmenting their overall performance (Osman-Gani et al., 2013). Thus, it was hypothesized that,

H2: Islamic social responsibility has a positive impact on employee performance.

METHODOLOGY:

Study design:

This research is devised to test the hypotheses proposed, in which the relationship between the predictors IS and ISR and the criterion EP is investigated in the industry as well as services sector of Turkey. The study examined a second-order model that analyzed two-directional hypotheses, i.e. *H1* and *H2*. The two hypotheses were tested using SEM (structural equation modeling), and the latent structure was measured using the standard model fit indices.

Sample and data collection procedure:

For this research, primary data was collected from Muslim employees working in the services and industry sector of Turkey. Data was collected in a cross-sectional manner through self-administered questionnaires. A total of 1000 questionnaires were distributed; 760 were returned and after data screening, 390 were found usable. Demographic analysis showcased that a total of 56.6% of the respondents were male and 43.4% of the respondents were female. 50.2% of the respondents were from the industry whereas 49.8 % belonged to the services sector. As per the Turkish Statistical Institute (2016), the industry and services sector in the last five years has realized an overwhelming growth in the total employment rate. Specifically the services sector has witnessed a rise in the overall female employment.Additionally, as stated earlier, all of the respondents were Muslim, of whom 32% held the positions of managers and senior managers and 86% belonged to the age group 22 - 44, while 72 % of the respondents had work experience of 1-15 years.

Measures

All the constructs were measured and assessed via self-reports and by using five-point Likert scale. (i.e. 1= never, 5 = always). To measure employee performance 6 items were adopted from Şehitoğlu and Zehir (2010). Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, with a value of 0.76. Islamic spirituality (IS) and Islamic social responsibility (ISR) were measured using 15 and 28 items respectively (Mohsen, 2007). The reliability of the scale was measured using Cronbach's alpha that came out to be 0.79 and 0.85 respectively. The discriminant and convergent for the present research were investigated. Notably, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to evaluate the factor loadings of each construct. All the factor loadings (standardized) conceded the required threshold, and were between the acceptable range (i.e., above 0.5 and ≤ 0.8) with $p \leq 0.05$ as shown in Table I. The values achieved established acceptable convergent validity (Hair et al, 2010). Discriminant validity was also assessed to prove and show the individuality and uniqueness of the constructs capturing the specific phenomenon. The results confirmed the discriminant validity ($X^2 = 902.153$; $p \leq 0.001$; $df = 260$; $X^2/df = 3.209$).

Table 1.

a	e	l		t	v	l			

| Variables	Mean	Alpha		Items	Average loadings			
EP	1.96	.76			.61**	.65		
IS	4.67	.79		5	.58**	.69	.67**	
ISR	8.04	.85		8	.54**	.70	.65**	.71**

Note: ** p ≤ 0.001

RESULTS:

Table 1. showcases the mean, standard deviation, reliability and correlation values for the present study. As discussed earlier the results confirmed the discriminant and convergent validities. The correlation values exhibited a strong positive relation among the variables of study at all levels of significance. There is a strong positive correlation between the predictors IS and ISR and criterion EP ($\gamma = 0.67$ and $\gamma = 0.65$; $\rho < 0.01$) respectively. Similarly, a strong correlation exists among the predictors i.e. $\gamma = 0.71$; $\rho < 0.01$.

The measurement model was evaluated on the basis of fit indices measures, i.e. Chi-square (X^2), normed Chi square (X^2/df), root men square error of approximation (RMSEA) and the comparative fit index (CFI). Based on the values obtained, i.e. $X^2_{(260, N = 390)} = 900.198$, $p < 0.001$; $X^2/df = 3.206$; RMSEA = 0.067 and CFI = 0.900, the overall data presented a sound good fit (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2011).

With measurement model exhibiting a good fit, the second stage of analysis i.e., hypothesis testing was performed. The value for Normed Chi-square was calculated and was found to be in the range of 1-5 i.e. 3.209, CFI value = 0.932 (i.e. > 0.9 and closer to 0.95) and RMSEA value was less than 0.08 i.e. 0.067. Hence, the results noticeably indicated that the model encompasses all the necessary thresholds (Hair et al., 2010; Kline, 2011). Lastly, figure 1, illustrates the parameter estimates calculated. The beta values for IS ($\beta = 0.68$, $\rho < 0.05$) and ISR ($\beta = 0.72$, $\rho < 0.05$) specified a

significant positive relation with EP. The results of the present study supplied the empirical evidence, which supported the hypotheses' devised framework.

Figure 1

Chi-Square = 902.153	
df	= 261
P-value	= 0.000
Chi-square/df = 3.209	
CFI	= 0.932
RMSEA	= 0.067
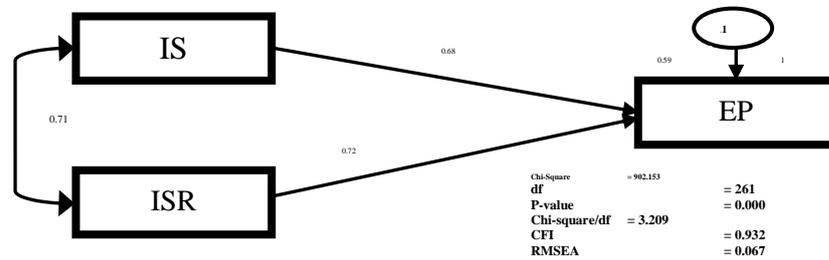
DISCUSSION

As stated earlier, the present study examined the relationship between IS, ISR and EP. Overall, the results affirmed that IS and ISR are positively related to EP and can assist in improving the performance of employees at the workplace.

Islamic Spirituality: is a key facet of human nature as it furnishes one with dignity and ease in life (Mohsen, 2007; Choudhury, 2008; Bhatti et al., 2016a). Spirituality, from an Islamic viewpoint, is avowed by "believing in the oneness of Allah (Iman), prayer (Ibadah), repentance (Tawbah) and remembrance of Allah (Dhikrullah) with complete realization and no compulsions, hence, bringing believers closer to Allah" (Bhatti et al., 2016a p.412). Islam is a comprehensive religion, providing a comprehensive system of life; system whereby a believer devotion worships and conforms to the commands of Allah with complete commitment and also cares for his fellow human beings as directed by Him in the Holy Quran. In the Holy Quran, Allah says:

The believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoy what is just and forbid what is evil (Quran 9:71).

Indeed, individuals who are spiritually strong would showcase exemplary behavior, be truthful, trustworthy, hardworking and righteous (Mohsen, 2007; Kamil et al, 2011a; Bhatti, 2015). Past studies (for example;Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003; Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Burack, 1999; Dent et al., 2005; Fernando, 2005; Mohsen, 2007) have indicated that spirituality induces trust in the workplace, which augments employee commitment and ultimately improving their overall performance. Moreover, Islamic

spirituality embraces self-consciousness, which permits an individual to feel responsible for all his/her deeds and actions (Saleem, 2009). Osman-Gani, et al. (2013) affirms that employees who experience spirituality in the workplace feel more attached to their organization since they take work as a part of worship. Findings of this study support that by introducing spirituality at work, organizational commitment and individual performance can be promoted. These promotions are likely to occur because people react reciprocally towards an organization that satisfies their spiritual needs and makes them feel valued as human beings. Employees who know their own values and purpose are parallel to values and mission of the organization perceive the environment and atmosphere of the organization positively and are inclined to perform their duties better and improve the atmosphere of the organization (Mohsen, 2007; Osman-Gani, et al., 2013). Hence, it is evident from the literature and the empirical support drawn from the results that Islamic spirituality has far reaching effects on humanity. Organizations, particularly, can benefit from IS as it has a strong impact on employees. Importantly, the present study validates the results in favor of Islamic spirituality as the potential antecedent for improving employee performance.

*Islamic social responsibility:*is of grave importance in Islam. It is one's obligation to oneself, to other human beings, as well as nature at large (Mohsen, 2007). ISR results in creating respect, harmony, justice, integrity and development of people and society with the motive of achieving forgiveness and pleasure of Allah (Bhatti et al., 2016b). It is evident that Islam places equal emphasis upon spirituality and social responsibility. So much so, that a believer is only considered spiritual if he fulfills not only the Islamic rituals of prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and zakah but also is he acts socially responsible towards himself and others (Bhatti, 2015; Mohsen, 2007; Sulaiman et al, 2015).

ISR is the social dimension of Islam and it is termed as the behavior expected of the believers (Mohsen, 2007; Bhatti et al., 2016a, b). Islamic literature affirms that performing or shirking social obligations is of greater consequence than any individual obligation. Thus, abstaining from anything which has been forbidden is compulsory. Allah (SWT) states that "… fear that Allah in Whose name you demand your rights from one another, and abstain from violating relations between kinsfolk; note it well

that Allah is watching you very closely" (Quran, 4:1). Notably, the sense of responsibility towards others is one of the basic principles, repeatedly mentioned in the Holy Quran, as the scales by which mankind will be judged by Allah Almighty (Saleem, 2009).

In Quran, Allah (SWT) asserts that;

"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but truly righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and spends his money for love of Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask for charity, and for ransoming the captives; and who observes Prayer and pays the Zakat; and those who fulfill their promise when they have made one, and the patient in poverty and afflictions and the steadfast in time of war; it is these who have proved truthful and it is these who are the God-fearing (Quran 2:178).

Being good, fair, kind and generous to others is foremost of all the principles ascribed by Islam. This applies in all walks of life and the workplace is no exception. Following these principles, employees have to care for others at work and maintain a good rapport with them (Sulaiman& Bhatti, 2013). Practicing ISR at the workplace boosts the morale of employees and keeps them motivated to perform well at their jobs. The findings of this study are also in line with the literature discussed previously (Mohsen 2007; Kamil et al. 2011a, b; Sulaiman& Bhatti, 2013, Sulaiman et al., 2015, Bhatti et al., 2016 a, b). Hence, socially responsible employees will not only abstain from workplace deviance but also be spiritually aware of the importance of hard work and maximizing output.As Allah (SWT) avows; "that man can have nothing but what he strives for; that (the fruit of) his striving will soon come in sight: Then will he be rewarded with a reward complete"(Quran 53:39-41).

Therefore based on the results of the current study it can further be presented that people who possess spirituality and social responsibility would perform better and would continuously try to improve their performance. They do this to gain Allah's favor, which is the ultimate objective(Saleem, 2009; Bhatti et al., 2016b). Employee productivity and efficiency are among the most important issues of organizational management, and generally, a significant subject in socio-economic life of the countries and spiritual values at work are the valuable and effective factors that

can escalate this commitment (Osman-Gani, et al., 2013). Spiritual values at work means that the individuals and organizations consider working in a spiritual path, in an opportunity to grow and contribute to society in a meaningful way, attempting to live their values more fully in the work they do. Linked with ISR, it is also about care, compassion and support for others (Kolodinsky*et al.*, 2010).

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study are significant for the Muslim community, however, the implications of Islamic spirituality and Islamic social responsibility are universal and generalizable. Muslim and non- Muslim organizations can take the empirical findings of this study into account to inculcate Islamic spirituality and Islamic social responsibly in their Muslim employees so that employee performance can be improved.

Notably, due to spirituality and Islamic social responsibility, employees will try to live according to the standards prescribed in the Holy Quran. This will urge them to strive even harder to improve their performance to become worthy of Allah (swt)'s generosity and goodwill. They will have greater self-control, which will likely translate into better performance. This will also benefit organizations as employees with high level of IS and ISR will not indulge in negative work behavior (Bhatti et al., 2016).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE INSIGHTS

The dimensions of IS and ISR should be studied and researched further since the literature on Islamic Management Systems is not very rich. Therefore, there are quite a few possibilities of undertaking research in future, through which the dynamic dimensions of the factors involved in this study can be studies in context of employee performance, motivation, commitment and ethical behavior.

Furthermore, the role of moderators and mediators is lacking in this study. The demographic variables and the variables derived from esteem needs can be employed as the moderators and mediators to get an in depth view of the criterion as well as the predictors.

Moreover, the cross sectional data was collected may be considered insufficient for the causal study while making deductions about the causality and reverse causality. Hence, a

longitudinal research design is recommended for additional support and better understanding of the phenomena.

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