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Challenges and Paradoxes in Implementing Islamic Human Resource Management Practices: Cross-Country Evidence


Abstract

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Keywords: Islamic Human Resource Management, Comparative Hrm, Muslim Countries.

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In this article, the authors analyzed the continuing disjuncture between Islamic norms and human resource management practices in Muslim-majority nations. Despite growing academic interest in Islamic Human Resource Management, application of this management concept is limited due to institutional, cultural, and organizational constraints. This study compares HRM practices across different Muslim countries based on a thematic review of previous studies. The discussion is based on HRM functions and identifies general and context-specific issues influencing their conformity with Islamic values. Results showed that power distance is high, regulatory enforcement is weak, reliance on informal networks, and dominance of Western HRM models still restrict the institutionalization of IHRM. The article also adds to the global body of HRM literature by bringing together scattered findings on IHRM application and by suggesting a way forward to future empirical study that would be appropriate in comparative inquiry of HRM.

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Introduction

Islamic Human Resource Management (IHRM) has received increased academic attention in the area of international and comparative HRM research, as scholars have come to the realization that

employment systems are not value-neutral institutions. Instead, HR practices are socially created and influenced by upper ethical, cultural, and institutional environments. In this line of study, religion has become a valuable and under-researched



aspect that shapes managerial behavior, employment relations, and governance in organizations, especially in cultures where religious aspects are still an evident part of public and private life (Rana & Malik, 2016)

The recent international HRM literature underlines that HR systems are integrated into the complex institutional settings that comprise legal systems, labour market patterns, socio-cultural anticipations, and historical paths (Cooke et al., 2022; Farndale et al., 2023). These institutional conditions are not only designed according to the way HR practices are understood and implemented in organizations. The Islamic ethical principles in the Muslim majority countries offer a normative framework against issues like fairness, accountability, trust, and social responsibility. Ideally, these values seem to agree with most of HRM's goals nowadays, such as employee development, fairness in performance appraisals, and fair reward schemes. Practically, however, the integration of Islamic principles into official HR policies and practice has been something disproportionate and, in many instances, symbolic.

According to recent articles in the International Journal of Human Resource Management and other journals, religion is more likely to act as an informal institution and affect the process of managerial cognition and decision-making, as opposed to being a formalized system that would regulate the activities of HR (Syed & Jamali, 2022; Tlaiss & McAdam, 2023). Consequently, organizations that work within the Muslim majority setting often (Kararti, 2014) tend to employ the hybrid HRM pattern in which the Western-oriented management practice is combined with the localized norms and values Kettani, 2010). Although such hybridization can lead to better organizational legitimacy, it can also create tensions, inconsistencies, and implementation gaps, especially when informal practices are present alongside formal HR structures that value efficiency, measurement of performance, and standardization.

Indeed, there is empirical evidence on the fact that these tensions are also enhanced by institutional factors, including poor enforcement of regulation, high power distance, personal network dependency, and insufficient professionalization of HR functions, which is based on Muslim-majority countries. Such circumstances may compromise the process of converting the ethical aspirations into working HR practices and result in a gap between the proclaimed organizational values and the real managerial behavior. As a result, IHRM can still be expressed in terms of philosophy or purpose, whereas the practical decisions of HR can still be viewed in terms of

pragmatism and influences of organizational survival and institutional pressures.

Although there are increasing body of literature on Islamic management and ethics, there is still a lack of comparative information on issues of IHRM implementation in different national settings. The current research is country-related or conceptually based, which provides few cross-country studies of the role of institutional environment in the adoption and practice of IHRM. Such a deficiency in comparative synthesis prevents the development of theory and restricts the use of IHRM research in more global HRM discussions.

In answer to this gap, the current study will study the issues and problems involved with the application of Islamic HRM practices in the Muslim-majority countries in a comparative manner. Depending on the placement of IHRM into an institutional and comparative HRM context, the study aims to transcend the normative discourse and offer a more contextually oriented explanation as to why IHRM is hard to institutionalize. By so doing, the article makes a contribution to the international HRM scholarship on the theme of institutional constraints, organizational realities, and hybrid HRM systems in influencing the practical implications of value-based management practices.

Literature Review:

Islamic Human Resource Management: Conceptual Background

The concept of Islamic Human Resource Management (IHRM) is based on Islamic ethical values, which highlight justice (adl), trust (amanah), accountability (hisab), and shared responsibility between the employers and employees. They are based on the more general teachings of Islam, which regard work as part of economic actions, but also as a moral and social duty. In this context, an employment relationship is typified by mutual rights and obligations, and the organizational authority is coupled with moral responsibility towards the employees and society in general (Ali & Al-Owaidan, 2008; Abuznaid, 2006).

Unlike traditional approaches to HRM, which are mostly efficiency-oriented, competitiveness-oriented, and performance-oriented, IHRM aims at achieving a balance between moral accountability and organizational goals. Instead of dismissing the performance considerations, IHRM reinvents them in an ethical framework, focusing on fairness, transparency, and social justice in addition to productivity and effectiveness. This moral standpoint puts IHRM as a value-oriented management concept

that links the organizational success to more moral and social values (Ali, [2010](#); Zangouinezhad & Moshabaki, [2011](#)).

In the IHRM perspective, fundamental HRM activities: recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation, ought to be structured and applied in a manner that supports ethical behavior and decision-making on the basis of merit. It is likely that recruitment processes must focus on competence and integrity over personal contacts, with training systems likely to contribute to the growth of the profession and ethical sensitivity. In the same way, performance appraisal and reward systems should be transparent, objective, and tied to well-defined criteria so that the workers can be evaluated and rewarded fairly and responsibly (Razimi et al., [2014](#); Fesharaki & Sehhat, [2017](#)).

Although these principles are normatively clear, organizations often face significant problems in their implementation of IHRM ideals into their operational HR practices. Based on empirical research, HRM systems do not operate in a vacuum but are entrenched in more institutional contexts with the influence of regulatory frameworks, labour market, socio-cultural norms, and historical trends (Budhwar & Sparrow, 2002; Cooke et al., [2022](#)). These contextual considerations may limit formalization of the ethical practice of HRM in most Muslim-dominated nations, yet where Islamic values are generally accepted socially (Zaman et al., [2013](#)).

According to the existing literature, informal institutions (e.g., power distance, patronage ties, and personalized authority structures) can have a significant impact on organizational practices, and there is a possibility that they might be incompatible with meritocratic and transparent values that IHRM espouses. As an example, ethical intentions can be compromised in terms of personal relationships during the recruitment process or subjective assessment during the performance appraisal process (Khilji, [2003](#); Syed & Jamali, [2022](#)). Consequently, IHRM principles can be hopeful, expressed in organizational terms, but less apparent in the daily decisions made by HR.

These institutional and socio-cultural influences are therefore crucial in determining the viability and success of IHRM implementation. Instead of considering implementation issues as a failure of Islamic principles, recent international HRM scholarship emphasizes the role of studying the impact of competing institutional logics on managerial behaviour and organizational practices (Farndale et al., [2023](#); Tlaiss & McAdam, 2023). In this

way, IHRM can be discussed as a situational HRM system, the results of which are determined by the compatibility of ethical values and organizational capabilities with institutional environments (Zin, [2019](#)).

Recommendations of the Holy Quran on Human Resource Management

Regarding Islam, the Holy Quran is a firm promoter of moral behavior in economics and social life. According to Ali and Al-Kazemi (2007), Islamic doctrines dictate that there should be fairness in business transactions, integrity in actions, and the just allocation of wealth in society. Furthermore, justice is a key theme in Islamic leadership philosophy, under which leaders are supposed to be impartial and morally responsible.

Likewise, the concept of justice is clearly stipulated in the Holy Quran. According to the Quran (4:58), Allah commands believers to be faithful in keeping their promises and exercise fairness and integrity in their judgment of people. This divine decree highlights the fact that justice and reliability are essential principles that are practiced by Allah, who is the All-Hearing and All-Seeing. In the same manner, Kahya ([2009](#)) cites a verse in the Quran, which stresses personal responsibility and reminds us that each individual is accountable to his/her actions and will be answerable to that before Allah for them.

Islamic Human Resource Management Practices

Islamic Human Resource Management (IHRM) practices are derived from the moral and ethical foundations of Islam, integrating spiritual values with managerial functions Razimi et al., [2014](#)). These practices prioritize justice, accountability, trust, and responsibility, while simultaneously supporting organizational effectiveness and sustainable performance. While conventional HRM primarily focuses on productivity, performance, and organizational objectives, these are incorporated with the ethical, spiritual, and social responsibilities, in which IHRM ensures that the practice of the organization complies with Shariah. To make the analysis easier and to facilitate the analysis, this study will focus on four key HRM functions within the Islamic framework, and they are recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation and reward systems (Syed & Jamali, [2022](#)).

Recruitment & Selection

Recruitment and selection are an important HR role that helps to identify, attract, and recruit the best-

qualified candidates to the positions in the organization. As Khan et al. (2010) suggest, recruitment is a process that determines the potential candidates to occupy the vacancies in organizations, companies, or institutions. According to the Islamic teachings, such a process is not a simple managerial issue but a moral one. This person who will be appointed to hire people must be pious, full of integrity, and justice. Ethical principles should also guide the process whereby justice, transparency, and trust should be upheld in all the steps (Kahya, 2009).

Ali and Al-Owaihah (2008) have pointed out that Islamic recruitment involves filling jobs as part of God, where responsibility and justice are of the essence. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught that whoever believes in God and the Last Day should not employ a worker without knowing what he is getting. This implies the need to be fair and precise when it comes to handling matters related to employment.

Besides, the Quran stimulates fairness and openness in every kind of transaction:

"O you who believe! Propagate justice like a pillar, bear witness to Allah, though it is to your own detriment, your parents, or your kinsmen" (Qur'an 4:135).

Recruitment in Islam is also interested in the ethical fit of the employees, such that only those recruited add value to the organization and society. Beyond procedural qualifications, their character, honesty, and commitment to ethical values are considered central to their suitability for any role.

Training and Development

Skilling and nurturing are necessary in the creation of a qualified, driven, and dedicated workforce. A properly structured training program will provide employees with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are required to make them effective in the growth of the organization, as well as personal growth. Training according to the Islamic view is not just concerned with professional competence, but also with moral and spiritual polish. Islamic training of a true sense, tries to train both the mind and the soul and produce an employee who is ethically sound and one who is socially responsible.

The Qur'an strongly emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge:

"Read! In the name of your Lord Who created" (Qur'an 96:1).

"Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?'" (Qur'an 39:9).

Mohammed (2014) points out that contemporary Muslims tend to ignore the extensive Islamic training,

which combines technical knowledge, education, and moral and spiritual education. Professional skills should thus be nurtured through effective training in the process of building qualities like honesty, patience, teamwork, and making ethical decisions. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also stressed the role of lifelong learning: "The pursuit of knowledge is a duty of all Muslims (Sunan Ibn Majah).

Islamic training and development programs have, therefore, not only the aim of increasing the productivity of the organization but also equip employees to become productive members of the larger society, as well as ensuring that they are accountable to Allah in whatever they do.

Performance Appraisal

Conventional HRM Performance appraisal is a structured process of evaluating the work of an employee against preset standards, giving feedback to improve work, and giving an alert on promotions, rewards, and development opportunities (Dessler, 2008). Performance appraisal has more moral and spiritual implications in the Islamic setting. Islam stresses justice, responsibility, and observance of contractual agreements. The Quran is clear on the fact that all actions are answerable to Allah:

And whatever you present to your own, you will encounter with Allah; and He is superior and richer in reward (Quran 73:20).

IHRM performance appraisal must be conducted fairly and without bias and favoritism. According to Mohammed (2014), it is very important to have clear competency standards and fair measures together with ethical procedures that will make sure that the assessments are objective and also spiritual. In addition, the Islamic religion encourages the rewards of good work and offering guidance and support to eradicate deficits, which coincides with the virtue of moral responsibility:

"Indeed, Allah orders you to give trust to whom it is due and when you judge among people to judge justly" (Qur'an 4:58).

Such a twofold focus on professional quality and ethical responsibility makes sure that the workers are not merely driven by temporal incentives but also by the realization of divine responsibility and a culture of ethical behavior and respect towards each other at work.

Compensation and Reward System

The IHRM compensation and rewards systems are not just financial tools but ethical obligations based on justice and fairness. It is the duty of the employers to

keep their promises to the employees since the Quran sets forth definite principles concerning the duties between them:

“And disown the covenant of Allah when you have taken it and do not break oaths after having sworn them hard when you have made Allah your pledge” (Qur'an 16:91).

Siswanto (2012) points out that inadequate remuneration will discourage workers, hence lowering their interest and dedication to their duties. The teachings of Islam are aware of the diversity in the contribution of employees and the need to discriminate fairly in rewards:

“And to all, there are degrees of what they have done; and that he will abundantly recompense them what they have done, and they would not be wronged” (Qur'an 46:19). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as well preached equality in wages and payments: "Pay the labourer his wages before his sweat dry off" (Sunan Ibn Majah).

The compensation systems that are practiced in Islam promote fairness, rewards based on merit and acknowledgement of effort and skills, and make employees feel that they are valued and motivated. Rewards do not necessarily have to be in the form of monetary opportunities, but also include recognition, career advancement opportunities, spiritual fulfilment of doing work in good faith and honesty.

The Islamic Human Resource Management practices embrace ethical, spiritual, and professional facets of the HR functions. Organizational efficiency is not only achieved through the recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and compensation system, but also through the mechanisms as a tool of enhancing justice, trust, and moral accountability. As a result of harmonizing HR practices with the teachings of Islam, organizations are able to come up with a workforce that is highly motivated, competent, and ethically conscious, thereby making their contribution to the success of the organizations as well as the welfare of society (Mangi et al., 2012).

Implementation of Islamic HRM Practices in Selected Muslim Countries

Islamic HRM Practices in Pakistan - In their article, HRM in Islamic Perspective: A Modern Literature Review, Rana and Malik (2016) used a descriptive approach to review literature on the 48 articles concerning Islamic patterns, governance, and human resource management. They noted that the Pakistani society is highly collectivist and has high power distance. The authors also noted that even after seven decades of independence, there remain traces of

colonialism that affect the organizational culture in Pakistan (Rahman, 2018).

On the same note, the study by Khilji (2003) titled To Adopt or Not to Adopt: Exploring the Role of National Culture in HRM -A Study of Pakistan was done on 167 employees of five local and six multinational bank-based organizations in Pakistan. The results showed that the HRM practices are mostly hierarchical and elite in the country, with low confidence levels and a poor communication network. It was observed that the above features acted as obstacles to the effective execution of Islamic-oriented HRM practices. Their closeness to the community, the supremacy of elite groups, and low developmental rates were found to be major cultural values that influenced HRM in Pakistan. (Hussain, 2007)

Nadvi and Junaid (2017), in their study entitled “Comparison of Modern and Islamic HRM: Impact of IHRM on Organizational Commitment did a qualitative study with 100 participants as respondents in five fully Islamic banks in Pakistan. The findings indicated that Islamic HRM is not incompatible with the scope and definition of contemporary HRM. The authors, however, pointed out that even though the results of a contemporary HRM are mainly material and worldly, Islamic HRM is also about spiritual responsibility and hereafter rewards.

Islamic HRM Practices in Iran

In their comparative research study, The Influence of Religion and Culture on HR Practices: A Comparative Study of Saudi Arabia and Iran, Siddique et al. (2016) reviewed 60 research articles and discovered that the Islamic Revolution of 1979 had a great impact on human resource policy in the Iranian government. The research indicated that the long-term political and economic instability decreased the risk-taking behavior of organizations, which resulted in nepotism and informal recruiting systems, which are usually established via personal networks instead of formal systems.

In the article, an Examination of Human Resource Management Practices in Iranian Public Sector, Yeganeh and Zhan Su (2008) performed a thorough study that involved four managers and 82 respondents of the public and private sector organizations. Through comparative analysis, conceptual equivalence, and triangulation techniques, the research established that nepotism was often a feature in recruitment and selection processes. A good number of managers and executives had to admit that personal relationships were usually given

priority over professional competence and expertise during hiring decisions.

Fesharaki and Sehat (2017), in their study *“Islamic Human Resource Management Enhancing Organizational Justice and Employees’ Commitment: Case of a Qard Al-Hasan Bank in Iran,”* studied the data of 128 employees of Resalat Qard Al-Hasan Bank in Tehran. The results established that the four dimensions of Islamic HRM core dimensions significantly and positively affected employee retention. Another focus of the study was the fact that, in an Islamic view, merit and skillfulness are the main factors of job placement.

Islamic Human Resource Management Practices in Egypt

In their study, HRM Practices in Egypt: The Influence of National Context? Leat and El-Kot (2007) investigate the issue. Processed statistics of 58 organizations in Egypt with descriptive statistics. Their results showed that Islamic values are the strongest determinants of Egyptian cultural beliefs that affect the attitude of employees towards work and leadership. Nevertheless, a significant discrepancy was found between the HRM practices applied in organizations and the Islamic ethical expectations.

In Testing the Mediation Effect of Person-organization Fit on the Relationship between high-performance HR practices and employee outcomes in the Egyptian Public Sector, Mostafa and Williams (2014) analyzed the relationship between high-performance HR practices and employee outcomes among 671 professionals in the Egyptian healthcare and higher education sectors through a structural equation modelling. The research has revealed that there is an increasing trend of Egyptian organizations taking up international HRM practices, which have had a great impact on local HR systems.

In their article, The Impact of Globalization on HRM Policies and Practices in Egypt: The Case of the Public Sector, El Badawy and Magdy (2015) performed a descriptive analysis of 45 research articles and conducted a detailed study of the local government system. The findings showed that globalization has brought significant transformation in the HR policies in Egypt. However, the state sector is still plagued with inefficiencies, corruption, lack of integrity, poor HR abilities, and unethical methods. Personal judgment and favoritism were often used as the basis of recruitment decisions based on objective competence.

Islamic HRM Practices in Saudi Arabia

In their comparative study of Saudi Arabia and Iran, Siddique et al. (2016) reviewed 60 research studies and indicated that Saudi organizations have problems with recruiting qualified national employees. To respond to the problem, the Saudi government has implemented a number of labour market policies to make Saudi nationals more employed.

In the article titled Strategic Human Resource Management and Its Impact on Performance: The Case from Saudi Arabia, Altarawneh (2016) applied statistical analysis to 29 bank managers in Abha City, as well as the conclusions made based on 117 research works. The results brought out the strategic value of the practices of HRM in that it was shown to affect not just the employees, but also the customers and the overall performance of the organization. Similarly, in the article Some Philosophical and Practical Principles of Islamic Human Resource Management: Applications to Contemporary Organizations, Zin (2019) employed a qualitative descriptive analysis, which was founded on the Islamic literature and 41 scholarly articles. The research has shown that complicated recruitments and the policy of Saudization that is imposed by the government led to unethical practices, such as corruption and exploitation of employees in some cases. The results also revealed that contemporary personnel selection in most Muslim cultures tends not to follow the teachings of Islam, as nepotism, kinship, personal relations, and regionalism have led to a lack of objectivity in the selection process.

Islamic Human Resource Management Practices in Indonesia

In the article, Improving Competitiveness of Islamic Banking Human Resources through Implementation of Quran-based HRM practices, Siswanto (2014) examined data related to 52 employees of a bank based in Malang, Indonesia, and analyzed the data using the AMOS 6.0 program, in addition to a sample of 20 interviews with the bank employees. The findings indicated that congruency between the organizational practices and Islamic values is a strong indicator of employee commitment. The research has also strongly highlighted that the Islamic concepts, especially justice, should be followed to the letter when selecting employees.

In their article, Determinants of Job Satisfaction from an Islamic Perspective, Noor and Mohammed (2016) have noted that Islamic values tend to blend with other religious, philosophical, legal, and cultural traditions that were formed under the influence of colonial and Confucian traditions in countries like

Indonesia and Malaysia. The authors emphasized the significance of using wisdom and transforming Islamic leadership principles into practical action instead of limiting them to theoretical discussion. Likewise, in the article, *The Influence of Islamic HRM Practices on Organizational Learning and Its Impact on Environmental, Social, and Religious Performance*, Muafi and Uyun (2018) analyzed the 170 SMEs batik businesses in 18 villages. The result showed that the practices of the Islamic HRM contribute a lot to organizational learning and that more focus can be made on employee motivation to make the practices of religions in organizations more powerful.

Islamic Human Resource Management Practices in Türkiye

In their article, *Work Ethic, Religion and Moral Energy: The Case of Turkish SME Owner-Managers*, Uygur et al. (2016) performed extensive interviews with 21 SME owners and managers through qualitative thematic analysis. The researchers established that the practice of leadership in Türkiye is being affected by the Islamic moral values.

In his article, *Human Resource Management in Türkiye: Concept and Cases*, Uysal (2019) used the qualitative descriptive approach in order to investigate 15 research papers, conference papers, and reports. The results showed that the Turkish culture is highly collectivistic and has a high uncertainty avoidance level, and ethical HRM practices are positively related to organizational performance and employee commitment. Similarly, in an article about HRM practices in Türkiye: current issues and trends, Ismail, Burcu, and Tuba (2013) examined 110 research papers and conference papers through the use of qualitative research. The findings indicated that collectivist cultural practices are the cause that leads to a high dependency on personal interviews as the main selection method. The process of recruitment is usually done via employee referral and informal networks, and formalized, objective testing is minimal. The interview procedures were mostly unstructured and were highly dependent on the opinions and intuition of the interviewer.

Methodology:

Research Design

In alignment with the review-based contributions typical of the International Journals of Human Resource Management, the study assumes the integrative narrative review design. Compared to meta-analytic reviews, the integrative narrative approach is more permissive because it allows both a critical synthesis and an interpretive analysis of both

the empirical and conceptual research. The design is particularly suitable when implemented in the Islamic Human Resource Management (IHRM), with practices of HRM being dictated by various conceptual frameworks, institutional arrangements at the national level, and the cultural context.

The narrative review approach enables the derivation of a clear picture of the theoretical background, contextual implementation, and rigor of prior research. It enables the incorporation of the results of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research, which point to similar themes, contradictions, and gaps. Moreover, this method also handles the moral and religious aspects of IHRM, which are mostly forgotten during traditional HRM appraisals. Through the synthesis of various perspectives, the research will be able to give a holistic picture of IHRM within the multiple national and organizational settings.

Selection of Countries and Literature

To be contextually diverse and representative, 6 Muslim majority countries were chosen: Pakistan, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and Türkiye. The selection of these countries has been done to indicate differences in institutional setups, economic growth, historical HRM practices, and cultural norms, which have a huge impact on the application of Islamic HRM principles. For instance:

- Saudi Arabia and Iran: The countries are heavily shaped by Shariah-based government, and the HRM practices are also based on the principles of religious and ethical rules.
- Türkiye and Indonesia: Embrace hybrid approaches, which contribute secular HRM practices to Islamic values.
- Pakistan and Egypt: Inherit colonial heritage and labour legislations, and special problems in applying IHRM practices.

Peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings were included in the literature reviewed, but all of them were published within the past 20 years to capture the modern trends. The research papers that were included in the review were those that dealt directly with HRM functions (recruitment, training, appraisal, compensation), Islamic ethical considerations, and organizational results.

Screening and Inclusion Criteria

The following screening standards were applied to warrant eminence and relevance:

Inclusion Criteria

- Studies focused on IHRM or Islamic management principles.
- Empirical, conceptual, or review-based research published in peer-reviewed outlets.
- Studies that are carried out in nations that have the majority of Muslims or those that have Muslim workforces.

- Articles were in English to ensure access and comparison.

Exclusion Criteria

- Studies lacking explicit relevance to Islamic HRM principles.
- Non-peer-reviewed sources, opinion pieces, and unpublished manuscripts.
- Studies that are not comparable in organizational frameworks.

Country-Wise Literature Distribution

Table 1

Country	Number of Reviewed Studies	Key Focus Areas	Timeframe Covered
Pakistan	15	Recruitment, performance appraisal, training	2005–2023
Iran	12	Compensation, HR policies, organizational ethics	2008–2023
Egypt	10	Ethical HRM practices, training, and reward systems	2010–2023
Saudi Arabia	14	Shariah-compliant HRM, recruitment, and appraisal	2007–2023
Indonesia	11	Training & development, compensation, integration	2006–2023
Türkiye	9	HRM policies, performance evaluation, and employee ethics	2009–2023

The table points to the geographical and thematic diffusion of the literature, and it is guaranteed that the review reflects a range of institutional and cultural impacts and offers a comparative perspective as a whole.

Analytical Strategy

Thematic analysis was employed in the selection of the studies to analyze them through the thematic analysis, which is one of the well-known methods of synthesizing the qualitative and quantitative literature. The process involved:

Data Extraction: Each Study was able to extract major findings, HRM practices, challenges, and institutional influences.

Coding and Categorization: Two similar findings were coded and clustered into sub-themes under the four major HRM functions, which include recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation/reward systems.

Themes of Higher Order: The sub-themes were integrated into overarching patterns and knowledge,

with the examples of similarities and differences in the IHRM practices across countries.

Comparison Analysis: The level of differences between countries and organizations was carefully analyzed to draw the institutional limitations, ethical issues, and practical concerns.

This analytical approach ensures that the review starts going beyond the summary to critically interpret the findings and uncover the subtle links between Islamic ethical principles and HRM practices. An example is that ethical recruitment and fair pay were always taken seriously, but performance appraisal systems were not implemented equally across different cultures because of the attitude towards accountability, labour laws, and competence in the managers.

The thematic analysis also helped in the identification of the research gaps and offered a conceptual framework to future research within the IHRM, especially the comparative and international research. This research can be used as a source to enrich theoretical knowledge and guide practice in the HRM practices of Muslim-majority contexts

because it entails the combination of contextual, ethical, and organizational approaches.

Comparative Analysis of IHRM Implementation Challenges

Islamic Human Resource Management (IHRM) focuses on the inclusion of moral, religious, and professional values in traditional HRM activities. Although the concepts of justice, accountability, and fairness are the main concerns of IHRM, the application of their principles in countries with a majority of Muslims is rather complicated due to the cultural, institutional, and organizational aspects. A critical comparative relationship between the two cross-country similarities and country-based limitations is provided in this section with references to the Islamic teachings and real-life examples.

Analysis & Findings

Common Cross-Country Challenges

Nationwide in Pakistan, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and Türkiye, a number of barriers are frequently found to be impeding effective IHRM implementation:

Cultural and Social Norms: The issue of high-power distance and collectivism norms frequently results in favoritism, nepotism, and patronage in HR decision-making. Such traditions are incompatible with the Quranic principle of justice and fairness:

"O you who believe! Be upright in defense of justice, bearer of Allah even though it is yourselves, parents, and kin" (Qur'an 4:135).

These social forces complicate the recruitment and promotion based on merit, cutting down the motivation of employees and the efficiency of the organization. As an illustration, in Pakistan and Egypt, promotions are usually guided by the hierarchical norms rather than individual competence.

Weakness in Enforcing Labour Laws: In most countries, such discrepancies between the law and practice make formal HRM policies ineffective. Poor employment practices are generated by bureaucratic inefficiencies, irregular inspections, and political influence. Islam stresses the performance of the contract: "And perform the covenant of Allah as you have accepted it...." (Qur'an 16:91). Lack of enforcing labour laws may be against ethical and religious rules, thus causing mistrust and less participation in work.

Domination of Western HRM Models: A lot of organizations use Western HRM practices, which mainly focus on efficiency and performance measures and ignore ethical and spiritual aspects. However, IHRM incorporates moral responsibility, justice, and

comprehensive development of the employees, as it is stressed in the Quran:

"Yes, Allah bids you pay trusts to whom they should pay trusts..." (Qur'an 4:58).

The contextual sensitivity is also usually diminished because of dependency on Western models, restricting the ability of employees to adhere to ethical practice.

Training and Development Gaps: The use of training programs often concentrates on technical skills, excluding ethical, moral, and spiritual training. The Quran reinforces the need to know so that he or she can develop and improve as a person and as a society:

"Say, are the people who know equal to the people who do not know?" (Qur 39: 9).

The failure to train ethically lowers the capability of employees to make progressively sound decisions, which might have an impact on the integrity of an organization and the confidence of a society.

Compensation Problems and Performance Appraisal: Performance Appraisal is subjective, and the compensation systems are loosely connected to the input of the employee. This is contrary to the Quranic teaching on just reward:

"And to all, measures [of reward and punishment] of what they have done..." (Qur'an 46:19). Prompt and fair payment was another concern of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): "Pay the worker his wages before his sweat has dried (Sunan Ibn Majah). Hence, poor appraisal and reward systems discourage employees and also affect organizational justice.

Country-Specific Observations

Pakistan: HRM practices in Pakistan are being influenced by hierarchical systems, elite domination, and colonial legacies that are impeding value-based and justice-based HR systems (Ishrat, 2000). Nepotism usually prevails over recruitment that is based on merit, and this influences the fairness of the workforce. Indicatively, in many organizations, such as those in the public sector, the aspect of familial or political relations is highly regarded over qualifications. The Quran (4:135) upholds the principles of IHRM that are promoted by fairness and accountability, as is not the case in practice.

Iran: Iran is plagued by political and institutional uncertainty, and demands that it utilize informal networks to recruit. The compliance of organizations varies, hence standardizing HR practices is hard. However, Islamic teachings also focus on meeting obligations and agreements (Qur'an 16:91), and when this is adhered to over and over, it might minimize

unofficial and discriminatory actions. There are increasing cases of organizations, such as Iranian banks, that are introducing merit-based systems of appraisals based on the ethics of Islam.

Egypt: The forces towards globalization and inefficiency of the public sector in Egypt leave gaps between the Islamic HR ideals and practice. Value-based HRM is hindered by bureaucratic delays, poor training systems, and centralized control. Nevertheless, ethical hiring practices in the private-sector companies are slowly being influenced by the Islamic teachings, including equity during hiring and promotion based on merit (Qur'an 4:58).

Saudi Arabia: The HRM practices in Saudi Arabia are determined by a high rate of state intervention and division of the labour market, especially between the natives and the expatriates. The application of Shariah ideas in HR policies takes place, although its application is not uniform across industries. Saudis are usually given preference during recruitment in the form of quotas, whereas expatriates are treated differently in terms of compensation. Companies such as Saudi Aramco incorporate Shariah-compliant appraisal and reward systems, which equate employee appraisals with the provisions of equity and responsibility.

Indonesia: Indonesia is a country with a mixed HRM approach, which is the conglomeration of Islamic, various cultural, and legal practices. There is no uniformity in the use of value-based HRM in organizations, thus making training, appraisal, and reward practices uneven. As an example, the Islamic banks are focused on ethical employee development and promotion based on merit, whereas other industries can adhere to the traditional Western HRM

practices. The Quran focuses on education and ethical responsibility (39:9) gives a direction towards ethical employee development.

Türkiye: The secular legal system and high Western orientation of Türkiye influence the HRM practices, restricting the systematic incorporation of Islamic values (Ismail et al., 2013). However, there is increasing concern over ethical and faith-based management, especially within the sphere of private and family-owned businesses. Now, Turkish Islamic banks and certain NGOs have started to incorporate the ethical appraisal, fair compensation, and moral training according to the Islamic directions:

“Allah instructs you to render trusts to whom they are due... (Qur'an 4:58).

Through a comparative analysis, it is observed that cross-cutting problems, including favoritism, low levels of enforcement, dominance of Western HR, and lack of ethical training, are common in Muslim-majority countries. Meanwhile, country-specific HRM practices are shaped by institutional, cultural, and political factors and present unique challenges in each of the cases. To align the HRM functions with the Islamic ethical standards, namely justice, fairness, accountability, and moral development, the contextual sensitivity of approaches is necessitated by the local norms, but with respect to the Quranic and Prophetic directions.

This analysis, by incorporating Islamic teachings, practical examples, and national variations, will give an in-depth account of the challenges associated with the IHRM implementation and insights that can be offered to policymakers, HR practitioners, and researchers who need to reinforce value-based human resource practices (Tüzüner, 2014)

Table 2

Country-Wise IHRM Implementation Challenges and Islamic Guidance

Key Implementation Challenges	Illustrative Examples / Observations	Relevant Qur'anic / Prophetic Guidance
Pakistan		
Hierarchical organizational structures - Elite dominance and nepotism - Colonial legacy affecting HR systems	Public-sector organizations prioritize familial or political connections over merit; ethical recruitment is limited.	“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, your parents, or relatives” (Qur'an 4:135)
Iran		
Political and institutional uncertainty - Reliance on informal networks for	Informal recruitment practices dominate; some banks	“And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have taken it” (Qur'an 16:91)

Key Implementation Challenges	Illustrative Examples / Observations	Relevant Qur’anic / Prophetic Guidance
recruitment - Standardization of HR practices is weak	increasingly adopt merit-based appraisal systems. Egypt	
Bureaucratic inefficiency - Globalization pressures - Gaps between public-sector HR policies and Islamic ideals	Delays in employee promotions, limited ethical training programs in government institutions Saudi Arabia	“Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge between people to judge with justice” (Qur’an 4:58)
Strong state intervention - Labour market segmentation (nationals vs. expatriates) - Variability across sectors	Recruitment quotas favor Saudis; Shariah-compliant appraisal in companies like Saudi Aramco. Indonesia	“Give the worker his wages before his sweat dries” (Sunan Ibn Majah)
Hybrid HRM models combining Islamic and conventional approaches - Variability in training, appraisal, and reward systems	Islamic banks implement merit-based promotions and ethical training, while other sectors follow Western models. Türkiye	“Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?'" (Qur’an 39:9)
Secular institutional structure - Intense Western HR orientation- Low assimilation of Islamic precepts. Private Islamic banks and NGOs embrace value-based appraisal and compensation regimens.	Secular institutional structure - Intense Western HR orientation- Low assimilation of Islamic precepts. Private Islamic banks and NGOs embrace value-based appraisal and compensation regimens.	“Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due” (Qur’an 4:58)

Interpretations

The table depicts structural and cultural obstacles to implementing IHRM in every country.

The examples column identifies real-life examples of these challenges based both in the public and the private-sector.

The Islamic guidance column connects every dilemma with Quran verses or Hadith, which give normative guidance on how to remove the ethical and operational gaps.

This comparative representation highlights the necessity of the contextually adaptive strategies that would enable the alignment of local HRM practices with the Islamic principles of justice, accountability, and moral development. (Moideenkutty et al., 2011)

Discussion

These results support current IJHRM studies that suggest that such value-based HRM systems rely heavily not on ethical purpose but on institutional consensus and enforcement systems (Farndale et al., 2023; Vaiman et al., 2024). High power distance, weak

regulatory controls, and relational governance arrangements in Muslim-majority countries often induce the nature of HR practices in these countries and curtail the institutionalization of merit-based and transparent HR systems in these countries.

Comparatively, the continuation of informal practices is a symptom of larger tendencies in emerging economies, where organizational behavior is dependent on competing institutional logics (Cooke et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2023). These results imply that IHRM needs to be studied as a contextual variant, which is conditioned by national institutions, the organization of the labour market, and managerial competencies.

Implications for HRM Theory

The review adds to existing literature on international HRM by contextualizing IHRM to comparative and institutional HRM. It demonstrates the fact that construct operationalization is required, as well as empirically testable models that can combine Islamic ethical principles with mainstream HRM theory.

Implications for HRM Practice

To managers and policymakers, the results imply that integrating Islamic values in HRM requires harmonization between the intentions of ethicality and the official HR systems. Increasing transparency, accountability, and performance-based evaluation systems has the potential to bolster IHRM effectiveness and credibility.

Future Research Prospects

Being a narrative review, this study will be based on the quality and the extent of the literature available. Future studies are advised to use quantitative and mixed-method designs that will help to empirically prove the connections between IHRM practices and the results of an organization. The cross-country

survey studies and longitudinal designs would also be quite useful in the field of development.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that institutional and organizational constraints have contributed to the limited adoption of Islamic Human Resource Management within the Muslim-dominated countries, instead of an ethical lack of direction. The article provides a contribution to the international HRM scholarship by synthesizing comparative evidence, which can serve as the basis of future quantitative and mixed-method studies. Future developments of IHRM research will require empirical-based solutions that will study the way religious and ethical values will be combined with modern HRM systems in different institutional settings.

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