

ISLAMIC WORK ETHIC (ITQAN, IHSAN, IBADAH) AS A DRIVER OF HR PRODUCTIVITY IN REDUCING ECONOMIC COST EFFICIENCY

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Abstract: *This study analyzes the role of three key Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) principles Itqan, Ihsan, and Ibadah in improving human resource productivity and organizational cost efficiency. Using a systematic literature review and conceptual analysis, the paper synthesizes theoretical perspectives and relevant empirical findings. The results show that Itqan strengthens commitment to quality, accuracy, and continuous improvement, thereby reducing errors and waste. Ihsan promotes ethical behavior, fairness, and cooperation, creating a supportive work environment that enhances employee engagement. Ibadah, grounded in sincere intention, encourages intrinsic motivation, dedication, and accountability beyond formal obligations. Together, these principles elevate HR productivity and generate concrete cost efficiencies through reduced waste, fewer mistakes, optimized use of resources, higher output, and lower turnover-related expenses. The study concludes that IWE particularly Itqan, Ihsan, and Ibadah offers an ethical and practical foundation for organizations seeking sustainable gains in productivity and economic efficiency.*

Keywords: *Islamic character education, Islamic morals, digital era, Muslim students, Islamic digital ethics, muraqabah.*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary global business environment, organizations face unrelenting pressure to optimize performance. A central challenge lies in simultaneously maximizing workforce productivity and minimizing operational costs to ensure sustained competitiveness, profitability, and long-term viability¹. Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a critical role in navigating this challenge, as effective management of personnel resources is

¹ Bernadette Bristol-alagbariya and Latifat Omolara Ayanponle, "Operational Efficiency through HR Management: Strategies for Maximizing Budget and Personnel Resources" 6, no. 12 (2024): 3860–70, <https://doi.org/10.51594/ijmer.v6i12.1743>.

fundamental to achieving operational efficiency. Efficient HR practices ensure optimal deployment of talent, enhance performance, and align human capital with organizational objectives, ultimately impacting the bottom line and fostering a positive work environment ².

Amidst this focus on efficiency, there is a growing recognition of the significant influence of work ethics on organizational outcomes. Heightened concerns over moral hazards, corporate scandals, and their devastating financial consequences have spurred interest in understanding how ethical frameworks shape employee behavior and organizational performance. Consequently, researchers have increasingly explored work ethics derived from various cultural and religious traditions, seeking principles that foster responsibility, dedication, and positive workplace conduct ³.

Within this broader exploration, the Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) emerges as a comprehensive ethical system rooted in the primary sources of Islam – the Quran and the Sunnah (Prophetic traditions). IWE provides a set of moral principles and values intended to guide the conduct of individuals in their work life. It encompasses values such as honesty, trustworthiness (*amanah*), justice (*'adl*), responsibility, hard work, dedication, cooperation, and the pursuit of excellence. IWE aims to cultivate a workforce characterized by high quality and productivity. While sharing an emphasis on hard work and commitment with other ethical systems like the Protestant Work Ethic, IWE distinguishes itself through a profound emphasis on the intention (*niyyah*) behind actions, the social dimensions of work, justice, generosity, and the conceptualization of work itself as a form of worship and obligation ⁴.

The background of this research stems from the increasing interest in integrating ethical and spiritual values within the workplace, especially in predominantly Muslim contexts. Amid growing concerns over employee disengagement, lack of purpose, and inefficiencies in organizational processes, Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) offer a promising alternative paradigm grounded in moral responsibility and divine consciousness. Within the broad spectrum of IWE, this study specifically focuses on three core principles *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah* which are believed to play pivotal roles in shaping individual and organizational behavior ⁵.

Itqan, signifying precision, professionalism, and mastery, encourages the pursuit of excellence and high standards in all work-related endeavors. *Ihsan*, reflecting compassion, justice, and ethical conduct, promotes humane interactions and a morally balanced workplace culture. *Ibadah*, the spiritual orientation of work as a form of worship, instills a deep sense of purpose and accountability that transcends material incentives ⁶. Together, these principles construct a framework that not only aligns with religious obligations but also offers practical pathways to improved human resource productivity and cost efficiency. However, despite their conceptual richness, these principles remain underexplored in the empirical and theoretical HRM literature, especially in terms of their synergistic effects on economic outcomes. This

² Bambang Dwi Hartono and Firman Muhammad Abdurrohman Akbar, "The Advantages of Muvon Ecosystem For The Quality of Practicum of SMK Students in Distance Learning: Case Study of Muhammadiyah SMK in Jakarta," *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS, MANAGEMENT, BUSINESS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCE (IJEMBIS)* 3, no. 3 (2023): 753–62.

³ S. K. Manan, N. Kamaluddin, and A. S.A. Puteh Salin, "Islamic Work Ethics and Organizational Commitment: Evidence from Employees of Banking Institutions in Malaysia," *Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities* 21, no. 4 (2013): 1471–89.

⁴ Mohd Annas Shafiq Ayob et al., "A Review On Literature of Islamic Work Ethics in Malaysia Between 2010-2020," *Library Philosophy and Practice* 2021 (2021): 1–10.

⁵ Jenna Maryniak, *Complimentary Copy, Veterinary Nursing Journal*, vol. 21, 2006, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17415349.2006.11013472>.

⁶ Arman Ahmad et al., "'Uncover' the Influence of Islamic Work Ethics on Employee's Organizational Commitment," *International Journal of Economics, Business and Innovation Research* 2, no. March2 (2023): 12–31.

research seeks to fill this critical gap by systematically examining how the integration of *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah* into human resource practices can foster a more productive, ethically grounded, and economically efficient organizational environment. By doing so, it aims to bridge the divide between value-based management and tangible performance metrics, contributing both to academic discourse and managerial practice.

The literature provides strong theoretical grounding and growing empirical evidence supporting the positive influence of IWE on crucial HR outcomes like performance, commitment, and ethical behavior. A clear conceptual pathway emerges: the core IWE principles of *Itqan* (quality, professionalism), *Ihsan* (ethics, benevolence, positive relations), and *Ibadah* (intrinsic motivation, devotion, accountability) foster attitudes and behaviors that enhance HR productivity. This increased productivity, in turn, drives economic cost efficiency through identifiable mechanisms such as waste reduction, error minimization, optimized resource use, and lower turnover ⁷.

Despite this, a research gap persists. While the link between IWE and performance/productivity is increasingly studied, and the general relationship between productivity and cost efficiency is well-established in management literature, there is a lack of explicit synthesis connecting these specific IWE principles (*Itqan*, *Ihsan*, *Ibadah*) through the mediating role of HR productivity to quantifiable economic cost efficiencies. Many studies focus on intermediate outcomes like commitment or satisfaction without fully extending the analysis to the ultimate economic impact. This paper aims to bridge this gap by synthesizing the existing theoretical and empirical knowledge to articulate and substantiate this complete causal chain.

Although the literature increasingly demonstrates that Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) positively influences work attitudes and performance, existing studies generally examine these principles in isolation or focus only on intermediate psychological outcomes such as commitment, satisfaction, or motivation. Prior research rarely differentiates the distinct roles of *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah*, nor does it construct an integrated causal pathway that connects these principles directly to measurable economic outcomes. Most previous studies stop at discussing performance implications without extending the analysis to cost efficiency, which is a crucial indicator for organizational sustainability. Therefore, this study positions itself uniquely by synthesizing and bridging two bodies of literature that have remained largely disconnected: (1) studies on IWE and HR productivity, and (2) research on productivity as a driver of economic cost efficiency. By explicitly linking *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah* to HR productivity and subsequently to cost efficiency, this research offers a novel, comprehensive, and value-based analytical model that has not been articulated in prior scholarship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Foundations of Islamic Work Ethic (IWE)

The Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) is deeply rooted in the primary sources of Islamic jurisprudence: the Quran (Islam's holy book) and the Sunnah (the teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad PBUH), supplemented by the interpretations of Islamic scholars (*fuqaha'*). Central to IWE is the philosophy that work is not merely an economic necessity but a fundamental and virtuous aspect of human life. It is considered a means to safeguard the five essential human needs (*maqasid al-Shari'ah*): faith (*din*), self (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), posterity (*nasl*), and wealth (*mal*). Islam views work as a religious duty (*ibadah*) and a form of striving (*jihad*) in the path of God. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the virtue of earning one's

⁷ Abu Hassan M Sadeq, "Islamic Ethics in Human Resource Management," *International Journal of Islamic Management and Business* 7, no. 1 (2018): 43–55.

livelihood through personal effort, stating, “No one eats better food than that which he eats out of his own labour”. This perspective contrasts sharply with purely materialistic views that regard work solely as a means to accumulate wealth and physical pleasure⁸.

IWE encompasses a range of core values that guide behavior in the workplace. These include honesty, integrity, trustworthiness (*amanah*), justice (*'adl*), fairness, responsibility, accountability, diligence, perseverance, cooperation (*ta'awun*), mutual consultation (*shura*), creativity, and a commitment to avoiding unethical practices such as deceit, corruption, and unlawful wealth accumulation. The emphasis is not solely on the outcome but significantly on the intention (*niyyah*) behind the work and adherence to ethical processes⁹.

Deep Dive into Core Principles

Within the broad framework of IWE, three principles stand out for their direct relevance to productivity and efficiency: *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah*.

1. *Itqan*: Perfection, Professionalism, and Quality in Work

a. Definition and Scope

Itqan is an Arabic term signifying mastery, precision, perfection, and excellence in execution. It is often translated as craftsmanship, meticulousness, expertise, or professionalism. The essence of *Itqan* lies in arranging and executing tasks in a "scientific and artistic way in order to obtain the most perfect results". It implies not just completing a task, but doing so with the highest possible quality, skill, and attention to detail, aiming for flawless outcomes. A related concept is *ihkam*, meaning to do something with wisdom (*hikmah*), further highlighting the emphasis on skillful and thoughtful execution. *Itqan* transcends the mechanical connotations of mere "precision" or "completeness"; it incorporates an element of artistry and carries spiritual weight, applying universally across all fields of work¹⁰.

b. Religious Foundation

The importance of *Itqan* is underscored in Islamic teachings. A well-known Hadith states: "Verily, Allah loves that when anyone of you does something, he does it perfectly (*yutqinahu*)", or in another narration, "Indeed Allah loves one who does work, he does it with *itqan*". Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also emphasized, "Allah loves to see one's job done at the level of *itqan*". This pursuit of excellence is linked to the broader Islamic emphasis on acquiring knowledge, as exemplified by the saying, "Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim", as knowledge is essential for mastering one's craft¹¹.

c. Link to Quality Management and Professionalism

Itqan aligns closely with modern concepts of quality management, striving for optimal performance and even resonating with ideals like "zero-defect" management. It inherently promotes professionalism by demanding expertise, skill development, and meticulous execution. Furthermore, *Itqan* embodies conscientiousness – the diligent, careful, and responsible execution of duties, adhering to rules and procedures even without supervision. This conscientious approach inspires truthfulness and a continuous striving for excellence in all actions and work. The focus on meticulousness and perfection implies a proactive approach aimed at preventing defects and errors from the outset, rather than merely correcting them after

⁸ Asma Raies, “Islamic Work Ethics as a Key Engine of Endogenous Economic Growth,” *Islamic Economic Studies* 29, no. 2 (2022): 86–99, <https://doi.org/10.1108/ies-02-2021-0009>.

⁹ Ahmad Khawar Shahzad, Rosli Mahmood, and Hishamuddin Som, “IMPACT OF ISLAMIC WORK ETHICS ON JOB PERFORMANCE : A MODERATED Impact of Islamic Work Ethics on Job Performance : A Moderated Mediation Analysis of Public Service Motivation,” no. October (2024), <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13880410>.

¹⁰ Abdi O Shuriye and Ibrahim A Haji Adam, “The Concept of Itqan and Its Role in Muslim Professional Life,” in *Ethics of Engineering Education*, 2009, 99–105.

¹¹ Nurbaya Hi Soleman et al., “Job Characteristics : Scientific Theory and Islamic Perspective” 08, no. 01 (2025): 75–80, <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v8-i1-08>.

they occur. This inherent focus on prevention is a cornerstone of modern quality assurance and directly impacts efficiency by minimizing rework and waste ¹².

d. Practical Manifestations

Achieving *Itqan* in practice involves tangible behaviors such as minimizing distractions, effective time management, avoiding detrimental multitasking, prioritizing tasks, continuous learning and self-development to enhance skills, and fostering creativity by thinking beyond conventional boundaries. It directly supports high job performance and quality outcomes and ultimately contributes to the success of all organizational stakeholders ¹³.

2. *Ihsan*: Excellence, Benevolence, and Ethical Conduct

a. Definition and Scope

Ihsan is a rich Arabic term often translated as excellence, perfection, beautification, or virtue. In the context of ethics and behavior, it signifies "doing what is beautiful" or acting in the best possible way, manifesting inner faith through outward actions. Within organizational behavior, *Ihsan* encompasses qualities like mercy, kindness, compassion, empathy, support, fairness, and a strong commitment to ethical principles in all dealings. It represents a level of conduct that goes beyond basic justice (*'adl*) to include benevolence and generosity, particularly in employer-employee relationships. *Ihsan* is considered a fundamental component of Islamic ethics, alongside *Akhlaq* (general morality and manners) and *Adab* (prescribed etiquette) ¹⁴.

b. Religious Foundation

Ihsan is a core Quranic concept and represents the highest level of faith, where one worships Allah as if seeing Him. It underpins the importance of ethical conduct and treating others with kindness and fairness, reflecting divine attributes. Principles like justice (*'adl*) are integral to achieving *Ihsan* ¹⁵.

c. Impact on Workplace Dynamics

The practice of *Ihsan* cultivates a positive and ethical organizational climate. By emphasizing empathy, fairness, support, and kindness, it fosters trust (*amanah*), mutual respect, and cooperation among colleagues and between management and employees. This focus on positive interpersonal relationships helps reduce conflict and promotes a harmonious work environment. The inherent emphasis within *Ihsan* on treating individuals with compassion, fairness, and respect creates fertile ground for psychological safety. When employees feel safe from interpersonal threat, supported by their leaders and peers, and treated equitably, they are more likely to trust others, share knowledge openly, voice concerns without fear of retribution, and engage in innovative behaviors, all of which are crucial for long-term productivity and organizational learning ¹⁶.

d. Connection to Well-being, Engagement, and Performance

Organizations guided by *Ihsan* principles tend to provide greater support to their employees, leading to improved employee well-being, higher job satisfaction, reduced stress, and increased work engagement. Studies indicate that *Ihsan* behavior significantly impacts employee engagement and subsequent job performance. Principles associated with *Ihsan*, such

¹² Kettel Nordesjö, "Framing Standardization: Implementing a Quality Management System in Relation to Social Work Professionalism in the Social Services," *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance* 44, no. 3 (2020): 229–43.

¹³ Shuriye and Adam, "The Concept of Itqan and Its Role in Muslim Professional Life."

¹⁴ Ryan Basith et al., "Istithmar: Jurnal Studi Ekonomi Syariah Evaluating Ihsan Behavior, Work Engagement, Job Performance With Employee Well-Being as A Mediator" 8, no. 50 (2024): 126–41.

¹⁵ Rami Kamak, "Core Principles of Islamic Human Resource Management Core Principles of Islamic Human Resource Management," no. January (2025).

¹⁶ Muhammad Aslam, "The Impact of Islamic Leadership on Employee Performance. An Investigation through Conflict Management and Perceived Organizational Justice in the HEIs of Pakistan" 14 (2024): 228–56.

as justice and providing opportunities for skill development, have been linked to higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

3. *Ibadah*: Work as Worship, Intention (*Niyyah*), and Devotion

a. Definition and Scope

Linguistically, *Ibadah* derives from the Arabic root meaning servitude or service, implying obedience, submission, and humility. In Islamic terminology, it is typically translated as "worship" but encompasses a much broader meaning than ritual acts alone. *Ibadah* signifies complete submission and devotion to God (Allah), guiding all aspects of a Muslim's life ¹⁷.

b. Work as *Ibadah*

A cornerstone of IWE is the concept that legitimate work (*'amal*) performed diligently and ethically is itself an act of *Ibadah*, provided it is undertaken with the correct intention. Work is viewed not just as a means of livelihood but as a religious duty and a form of striving (*jihad*) for the sake of Allah and the betterment of society. This elevates the status of work from a mundane necessity to a spiritually significant activity ¹⁸.

c. The Centrality of Intention (*Niyyah*)

The transformation of work into *Ibadah* hinges on the individual's intention (*niyyah*). A famous Hadith states, "Actions are judged by intentions". Therefore, work must be performed sincerely (*ikhlas*) with the primary aim of seeking God's pleasure and fulfilling His commands, rather than solely for material gain or recognition. This principle implies that even routine activities, including one's professional responsibilities or actions like supporting one's family, become acts of worship when performed with the conscious intention of obeying God. Good intention effectively changes acts of habit (*adah*) into acts of worship (*ibadah*) ¹⁹.

d. Link to Motivation and Commitment

Conceptualizing work as *Ibadah* provides a powerful source of intrinsic motivation that transcends extrinsic rewards like salary or status. It fosters a deep sense of purpose, responsibility, dedication, and commitment, as the ultimate accountability is perceived to be to God. This framework encourages individuals to perform their duties diligently and ethically, viewing their efforts as part of a larger spiritual obligation. The belief that work performed for God's pleasure is rewarded both in this life and the hereafter provides a potent driver for sustained effort and commitment, encouraging employees to exert discretionary effort beyond the minimum requirements of their job descriptions. This heightened sense of purpose and divine accountability can lead to greater perseverance in the face of challenges and a stronger commitment to the organization's goals, viewed as part of fulfilling one's duty ²⁰.

The Nexus: IWE (*Itqan*, *Ihsan*, *Ibadah*) and HR Productivity

The principles of *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah* do not operate in isolation; rather, they synergistically contribute to enhancing HR productivity. *Itqan* ensures that work is performed with quality, precision, and efficiency. *Ihsan* fosters a positive, ethical, and cooperative work environment where individuals feel valued and respected, reducing friction and enhancing

¹⁷ ABMM Islam, *Implication of Ibadah, Akhlaq & Manner in Shariah* (Ahsan Publication, 2013), <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=Jvh3CAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT5&dq=rizq+and+islami+c+economic&ots=rsKHDtVFRs&sig=VPNw253jaH4MSk6QLmc8BNn-E-I>.

¹⁸ Muhammadong Muhammadong, "Religious Freedom in Islamic Law: A Review of Maqasid, Aqidah, Ibadah, and Muamalat," *Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law & Practice* 20, no. 4 (2024): 137–49.

¹⁹ Abdullah Faiq and Muhammad Sholahuddin, "Ekombis Review-Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Dan Bisnis The Influence of Islamic Work Ethic, Productivity, and Employee Performance: Mediating Work Quality at KSPSS BMT ARTICLE HISTORY," *Ekombis Review: Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Dan Bisnis* 12, no. 2 (2024): 1695–1714, <https://jurnal.unived.ac.id/index.php/er/indexDOI:https://doi.org/10.37676/ekombis.v12i2>.

²⁰ Miswanto Miswanto, Rois Arifin, and Dwi Murniyati, "Does Work Commitment Mediates the Effect of Islamic Work Ethic on Performance and Turnover Intention?," *JEMA: Jurnal Ilmiah Bidang Akuntansi Dan Manajemen* 17, no. 2 (2020): 169, <https://doi.org/10.31106/jema.v17i2.5533>.

collaboration. *Ibadah* provides the foundational motivation, commitment, and sense of purpose that drives individuals to perform their best, adhere to ethical standards (*Itqan* and *Ihsan*), and contribute meaningfully to the organization.

Empirical research provides substantial support for the positive relationship between IWE and various indicators of HR productivity and performance. Numerous studies, employing quantitative methodologies like surveys and PLS-SEM analysis, have found a significant positive association between IWE adherence and job performance across diverse sectors, including public administration, the fast-food industry, banking and financial institutions, and service organizations. Research also links IWE to crucial antecedents of productivity, such as higher organizational commitment, increased job satisfaction, enhanced knowledge-sharing behavior, greater innovation, reduced turnover intention, and lower levels of workplace deviance²¹.

However, the relationship is not always straightforward. Some studies suggest that the impact of IWE on performance may be indirect, mediated by factors such as work commitment, emotional intelligence, public service motivation, or perceived organizational politics. Other research has found insignificant direct effects in specific contexts, highlighting the potential role of moderating variables like leadership style, organizational culture, or the presence of complementary skills and motivation. This complexity underscores that the translation of IWE principles into tangible productivity gains is often contingent upon various individual psychological states (like motivation, commitment) and the broader organizational context (including leadership support and cultural integration). Understanding these intervening variables is therefore essential for organizations seeking to effectively leverage IWE.

From Productivity to Efficiency: Mechanisms Linking HR Productivity to Economic Cost Savings

Enhanced HR productivity, driven by principles like *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah*, directly contributes to improved economic cost efficiency. Cost efficiency refers to achieving a given output with the minimum possible input or cost – essentially "doing things right" in terms of resource utilization. It focuses on optimizing processes and minimizing waste, distinct from cost-effectiveness, which centers on achieving the best possible outcome for the resources invested ("doing the right things"). The link between higher HR productivity and cost efficiency operates through several key mechanisms²²:

1. Reduced Waste (Time, Materials)

Increased productivity means tasks are completed more quickly and efficiently, minimizing wasted labor hours and associated costs. The emphasis on quality and meticulousness inherent in *Itqan* leads to doing things correctly the first time, significantly reducing material waste from scrap or rework.

2. Lower Error Rates

Itqan's pursuit of perfection and quality directly translates into fewer mistakes in processes and outputs. Reducing errors lowers the significant costs associated with correction, rework, handling customer complaints, warranty claims, and potential product recalls or service failures.

3. Optimized Resource Utilization

²¹ Abdullah Faiq and Muhammad Sholahuddin, "The Influence of Islamic Work Ethic, Productivity, and Employee Performance: Mediating Work Quality at KSPPS BMT," *EKOMBIS REVIEW: Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Dan Bisnis* 12, no. 2 (2024): 1695–1714, <https://doi.org/10.37676/ekombis.v12i2.5191>.

²² Nicholas Bloom and John Van Reenen, "Human Resource Management and Productivity," in *Handbook of Labor Economics*, vol. 4 (Elsevier, 2011), 1697–1767.

Productive employees make more effective use of their time, as well as the tools, equipment, technology, and information provided to them. This aligns with strategic HR practices aimed at optimizing the allocation and utilization of all resources, including human capital.

4. Increased Output/Throughput

Higher individual and team productivity naturally leads to greater output (goods produced, services rendered, tasks completed) for the same level of input (e.g., labor hours, machine time), effectively lowering the average cost per unit of output.

5. Reduced Employee Turnover

IWE principles, particularly *Ihsan's* focus on fairness and well-being and *Ibadah's* contribution to commitment and satisfaction, are linked to lower employee turnover intentions. Reducing turnover significantly cuts the substantial costs associated with recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and training new employees, as well as the productivity loss during the transition period.

6. Enhanced Innovation and Process Improvement

Employees who are engaged, motivated (*Ibadah, Ihsan*), and skilled (*Itqan*) are more likely to identify inefficiencies and suggest improvements in work processes. *Itqan's* encouragement of continuous learning fosters a culture where innovation can thrive, leading to long-term operational efficiencies and cost reductions.

These mechanisms often work synergistically. For instance, the quality improvements driven by *Itqan* not only reduce rework costs (Mechanism 1 & 2) but also enhance customer satisfaction (linked to *Ihsan*), potentially lowering marketing costs needed to acquire new customers or retain existing ones. Similarly, the intrinsic motivation from *Ibadah* can reduce the need for costly supervisory oversight. Therefore, the overall impact of IWE-driven productivity on cost efficiency is likely amplified through these interconnected benefits and positive feedback loops.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper adopts a Systematic Literature Review and Conceptual Analysis methodology. It aims to synthesize existing theoretical frameworks and empirical findings drawn from peer-reviewed academic journals, relevant books, and other credible scholarly sources to construct a robust conceptual model. This approach involves identifying, evaluating, and integrating the extant literature pertinent to the core concepts: Islamic Work Ethic (specifically *Itqan, Ihsan, Ibadah*), HR productivity, and economic cost efficiency. The justification for this approach lies in its suitability for exploring well-established concepts derived from Islamic tradition (*Itqan, Ihsan, Ibadah*), systematically reviewing the empirical evidence concerning the IWE-productivity relationship, and analyzing the established link between productivity and cost efficiency to build a cohesive and evidence-based argument. This work builds upon previous literature reviews but differentiates itself by its specific focus on tracing the causal pathway from *Itqan, Ihsan, and Ibadah*, through HR productivity, to economic cost efficiency.

A systematic search of relevant literature was conducted using major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and specialized databases pertinent to Islamic studies and management. Search terms included combinations and variations of: "Islamic work ethic", "IWE", "Itqan", "Ihsan", "Ibadah", "employee productivity", "human resource productivity", "job performance", "organizational performance", "cost efficiency", "economic efficiency", "operational efficiency", "Islamic management", "Islamic ethics", "PLS-SEM", and "quantitative study". The search was primarily focused on peer-reviewed journal articles and relevant scholarly books published in English. Inclusion criteria prioritized sources that directly addressed the definitions of the core

IWE principles, provided theoretical arguments or empirical evidence linking IWE (or its components) to productivity-related outcomes, or discussed the mechanisms connecting productivity to cost efficiency. While no strict timeframe was imposed, recent publications were emphasized to capture current research trends, building on the historical context provided by earlier foundational works.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Synthesized Findings: How Itqan, Ihsan, and Ibadah Drive HR Productivity

The literature review strongly suggests that the core Islamic Work Ethic principles of *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah* collectively function as significant drivers of Human Resource (HR) productivity through distinct but complementary mechanisms.

1. *Itqan's* Contribution to Quality and Efficiency

As the principle emphasizing perfection, mastery, skill, meticulousness, and conscientiousness, *Itqan* directly impacts the quality and efficiency of work performed. Adherence to *Itqan* encourages employees to strive for flawless execution, minimize errors, and perform tasks correctly the first time. This focus on high-quality output and continuous skill development inherently boosts efficiency by reducing the need for rework and corrections. The conscientious aspect of *Itqan* ensures diligence and adherence to standards, further enhancing task efficiency and overall job performance. Empirical studies linking IWE, often implicitly encompassing *Itqan's* quality dimension, to positive performance outcomes lend support to this connection. The proactive nature of *Itqan*, aiming to prevent defects through careful planning and execution, is a fundamental driver of efficient operations²³.

2. *Ihsan's* Role in Fostering a Positive and Ethical Environment

Ihsan, embodying excellence in ethical conduct, benevolence, fairness, empathy, and compassion, plays a crucial role in shaping a productive workplace environment. By promoting kindness, mutual respect, and fair treatment, *Ihsan* helps build trust (*Amanah*) and encourages cooperation (*Ta'awun*) among employees and between employees and management. This positive social dynamic reduces interpersonal conflicts, improves communication, and enhances overall employee well-being and engagement. A psychologically safe environment, nurtured by the principles of *Ihsan*, allows employees to collaborate more effectively, share knowledge freely, and focus their energies on productive tasks rather than navigating interpersonal tensions. Evidence linking *Ihsan* behavior and broader IWE principles to positive outcomes like engagement, performance, and reduced deviance supports its contribution to productivity²⁴.

3. *Ibadah's* Function as a Motivator and Commitment Builder

The conceptualization of work as *Ibadah* – an act of worship driven by sincere intention (*Niyah*) to please God – serves as a powerful source of intrinsic motivation and deep-seated commitment. This perspective imbues work with meaning and purpose beyond material rewards, fostering dedication, responsibility, resilience, and a desire to perform duties to the best of one's ability as a form of devotion. The belief in divine accountability encourages ethical conduct and sustained effort, potentially leading to higher levels of discretionary effort where employees go beyond basic job requirements. Empirical findings

²³ W A Wan Ab Aziz et al., "Strengthening of Islamic Quality Management Practices through Culture of Perfection (*Itqan*) and the Value of Courtesy (*Ihsan*) toward the Business Performance of Muslim Entrepreneur," *Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences* 8, no. 4 (2014): 237–44.

²⁴ Amal Salim Kadhim et al., "Islamic Ethics: The Attributes of Al-Ihsan in the Quran and Its Effects on Muslim Morality," *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 8, no. 11 (2017): 1933–2219.

consistently link IWE to higher organizational commitment and positive performance indicators, underscoring the motivational power embedded within the *Ibadah* framework ²⁵.

These three principles are synergistic. *Ibadah* provides the underlying 'why' – the motivation and purpose grounded in faith. *Itqan* provides the 'how' – the commitment to quality, skill, and efficient execution. *Ihsan* provides the 'context' – the ethical framework and positive interpersonal dynamics that enable productive collaboration. Together, they create a holistic approach to work that addresses quality, ethics, and motivation simultaneously. Table 1 provides a summary of selected empirical studies illustrating the link between IWE (often encompassing these principles) and productivity-related outcomes.

Table 1. Summary of Selected Empirical Studies on IWE Components and Productivity/Performance

Study (Author, Year)	IWE Component(s) Focused (Implicit/Explicit)	Key Productivity/Performance Outcome(s) Measured	Methodology	Key Finding (Direction & Significance)	Context (Industry/ Country)
Faiq and Sholahudd in (2024) ²⁶	IWE (General)	Employee Performance	Quantitative Survey	High IWE commitment improves performance.	Not Specified
Fernata & Mardani (2024) ²⁷	Islamic Values (General)	Employee Performance	Quantitative Survey	No significant direct impact of Islamic values; Skills & Motivation were significant.	Public Service Agency (Indonesia)
Nikmatul Atiya (2024) ²⁸	IWE (General)	Employee Voice (Promotive/Prohibitive)	Quantitative Survey	IWE leads to voice, moderated by moral identity & opportunity.	Banking (Pakistan)
Faiq and Sholahudd in (2024) ²⁹	IWE (Implicit), Productivity	Employee Performance	Quantitative Survey	Productivity affects performance. IWE internalization impacts productivity.	KSPPS BMT (Indonesia)
Shazia Nauman (2023) ³⁰	IWE (General)	Resource Conservation	Conceptual	IWE principles encourage resource conservation (time, energy, etc.).	General

²⁵ Mustaffa Mohamed Zain et al., “Corporate Ibadah: An Islamic Perspective of Corporate Social Responsibility,” *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 22, no. 2 (2014): 225–32.

²⁶ Faiq, A., Sholahuddin, M. (2024). The Influence of Islamic Work Ethic, Productivity, and Employee Performance: Mediating Work Quality at KSPPS BMT. *EKOMBIS REVIEW: Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Dan Bisnis*, 12(2). doi: <https://doi.org/10.36769/ekombis.v12i2>

²⁷ Nadya Agusfina Fernata and Agnes Dini Mardani, “Optimizing Employee Performance: The Impact of Islamic Values, Skills, and Motivation in DPMPSTSP Padang Article History” 01, no. 01 (2023): 19–29, <https://journal.takaza.id/index.php/alurwah>.

²⁸ Nikmatul Atiya, Tika Widiastuti, and Ega Rusanti, “Critical Review of Islamic Work Ethic Literature across Diverse Organization and Its Future Direction,” *Journal of Management and Digital Business* 4, no. 2 (2024): 250–75, <https://doi.org/10.53088/jmdb.v4i2.914>.

²⁹ Faiq and Sholahuddin, “Ekombis Review-Jurnal Ilmiah Ekonomi Dan Bisnis The Influence of Islamic Work Ethic, Productivity, and Employee Performance: Mediating Work Quality at KSPPS BMT ARTICLE HISTORY.”

³⁰ Shazia Nauman, Ameer A. Basit, and Hassan Imam, “Examining the Influence of Islamic Work Ethics, Organizational Politics, and Supervisor-Initiated Workplace Incivility on Employee Deviant Behaviors,” *Ethics and Behavior* 35, no. 1 (2023): 55–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2023.2275200>.

Ahmat Setiabudi (2024) ³¹	IWE (General)	Workplace Deviance, Organizational Politics	Quantitative Survey	IWE negatively related to deviance; mediated by politics; moderated by supervisor incivility.	Manufacturing (Pakistan)
Ahmad Khawar Shahzad (2024) ³²	IWE (General)	Employee Performance, Knowledge Sharing Behavior	SEM-PLS	IWE positively impacts performance & KSB; stronger impact on performance.	Fast-Food Industry (Indonesia)
Fawwaz Arif (2023) ³³	IWE (General)	Job Performance	PLS-SEM	Strong positive relationship between IWE & JP; PSM mediates/moderates.	Public Sector (Pakistan)
Raies (2022) ³⁴	IWE (General)	Economic Growth (Theoretical)	Conceptual Modeling	IWE principles (hard work, quality, fairness) theoretically contribute to endogenous economic growth.	General
Miswanto (2020) ³⁵	IWE (General)	Work Performance, Turnover Intention	Quantitative Survey	IWE -> Commitment -> Performance (Indirect effect significant). No direct effect on Perf/Turnover.	Islamic Banks (Indonesia)
Supat Chupradit et al. (2022) ³⁶	IWE (General)	Organisational Culture	Quantitative Survey	Positive significant relationship between IWE and organizational culture.	Service Orgs (Moscow, Russia)

Analyzing the Impact: Productivity Gains and Economic Cost Efficiency

The productivity enhancements fostered by *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah* translate directly into improved economic cost efficiency through the mechanisms outlined previously. This section explicitly maps these connections:

1. *Itqan* driving Quality and Error Reduction

The core focus of *Itqan* on perfection, meticulousness, and doing the job right directly addresses Mechanism 2 (Lower Error Rates). By minimizing mistakes, organizations avoid the costs of rework, scrap, warranty claims, and handling customer dissatisfaction. This commitment to quality also reduces material waste (Mechanism 1).

2. *Itqan* and *Ibadah* enhancing Speed and Diligence

The combination of *Itqan's* emphasis on skill and efficiency and *Ibadah's* motivational drive for dedicated effort leads to faster task completion and better time utilization (Mechanism 1: Reduced Time Waste). This conscientiousness and diligence reduce the labor cost per unit of output and optimize the use of time resources.

3. *Ihsan* facilitating Collaboration and Reducing Conflict

³¹ Ahmat Setiabudi, Anggraini Sukmawati, and Siti Jahroh, “The Impact of Islamic Work Ethic on Employee Performance The Role of Knowledge-Sharing Behavior in Indonesia’s Fast-Food Companies,” *Business Review and Case Studies* 5, no. 2 (2024): 178–88, <https://doi.org/10.17358/brcs.5.2.178>.

³² Ahmad Khawar Shahzad, Rosli Mahmood, and Hishamuddin Som, “IMPACT OF ISLAMIC WORK ETHICS ON JOB PERFORMANCE : A MODERATED Impact of Islamic Work Ethics on Job Performance : A Moderated Mediation Analysis of Public Service Motivation,” no. September (2024), <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13880410>.

³³ Fawwaz Arif and Al Jabar, “The Influence of Islamic Leadership and Islamic Work Ethic on Employee Performance With Emotional Intelligence As an Intervening Variable (Study of Employees of the Ministry of Religion in Central Java Province),” *Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Sharia Economics (IIJSE)* 6, no. 3 (2023): 2318–42.

³⁴ Raies, “Islamic Work Ethics as a Key Engine of Endogenous Economic Growth.”

³⁵ Miswanto, Arifin, and Murniyati, “Does Work Commitment Mediates the Effect of Islamic Work Ethic on Performance and Turnover Intention?”

³⁶ Supat Chupradit et al., “The Impact of Islamic Work Ethics on Organisational Culture among Muslim Staff,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (2022).

The promotion of fairness, empathy, and cooperation under *Ihsan* improves teamwork and reduces workplace friction. This smoother workflow minimizes time lost to disputes or misunderstandings (Mechanism 1) and potentially lowers costs associated with formal conflict resolution or HR interventions. Trust fostered by *Ihsan* streamlines communication and decision-making, further enhancing operational efficiency.

4. Ibadah and Ihsan lowering Turnover Costs

The increased organizational commitment and job satisfaction associated with viewing work as *Ibadah* and experiencing a fair, supportive environment (*Ihsan*) lead to lower employee turnover (Mechanism 5). Reducing turnover avoids significant recruitment, hiring, and training expenses.

5. Collective Impact on Resource Optimization and Innovation

Together, these principles contribute to better overall resource utilization (Mechanism 3). Furthermore, an engaged, motivated (*Ibadah*), skilled (*Itqan*), and psychologically safe (*Ihsan*) workforce is more likely to contribute innovative ideas for process improvements (Mechanism 6), leading to sustained cost efficiencies over the long term.

The cost reduction benefits are interconnected. Fewer errors (*Itqan*) save time and materials (Waste Reduction), improve customer loyalty (*Ihsan*), and enhance reputation, reducing future costs. Higher motivation (*Ibadah*) reduces the need for extensive monitoring and control systems. Thus, the combined effect of these principles on cost efficiency is likely greater than the sum of the individual contributions due to these positive reinforcing loops. Table 2 visually maps the pathway from the IWE principles through productivity gains to specific cost efficiency mechanisms.

Table 2. Mapping IWE-driven Productivity Gains to Cost Efficiency Mechanisms

IWE Principle	Associated Productivity Gain	Corresponding Cost Efficiency Mechanism	Supporting Sources (Examples)
Itqan	Improved work quality, fewer errors, increased skill/mastery	Reduced rework/scrap costs, lower warranty/complaint costs, minimized material waste (Mechanism 1, 2)	
	Enhanced task efficiency, meticulousness, conscientiousness	Reduced labor time per task/unit, optimized time utilization (Mechanism 1, 3)	
Ihsan	Improved cooperation, trust, communication, reduced conflict	Smoother workflows, less time lost to disputes, potential reduction in HR/legal intervention costs (Mechanism 1, 3)	
	Enhanced employee well-being and engagement	Contributes to lower turnover (Mechanism 5), fosters positive environment conducive to productivity	
Ibadah	Increased intrinsic motivation, dedication, commitment	Higher discretionary effort, reduced need for supervision, lower turnover costs (Mechanism 5)	
	Greater sense of purpose and responsibility	Increased persistence, potential for proactive problem-solving and	

		improvement suggestions (Mechanism 6)	
Synergy	Holistic improvement in quality, ethics, motivation	Amplified impact across multiple mechanisms (e.g., quality -> satisfaction -> retention) (Mechanism 1-6)	Synthesis of

Integrating the Concepts: A Holistic View of IWE's Economic Impact

Synthesizing these findings reveals a compelling model where IWE principles act as foundational drivers of organizational economic health. The pathway flows from the adoption and internalization of *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah* within the workforce, leading to positive shifts in employee attitudes (motivation, commitment, ethical awareness) and behaviors (quality focus, diligence, cooperation). These behavioral changes manifest as measurable improvements in HR productivity metrics (e.g., output per hour, error rates, project completion times, employee retention rates). Finally, these productivity gains translate into enhanced economic cost efficiency through the various mechanisms discussed, ultimately contributing to improved profitability and organizational sustainability. This perspective suggests that IWE offers more than just an ethical framework; it presents a potentially sustainable pathway to achieving operational excellence and a stronger bottom line by fostering a workforce that is skilled, ethical, motivated, and committed. It moves beyond purely transactional approaches to motivation (like basic pay-for-performance, which can sometimes have unintended effects) towards cultivating intrinsic drive and shared values³⁷.

Contextual Factors and Nuances

While the potential benefits of IWE are clear, its effective implementation and impact are influenced by several contextual factors. The translation of these principles into enhanced productivity and efficiency is not automatic but depends significantly on the organizational environment. Key influencing factors include³⁸:

1. Leadership Commitment and Style

Leaders play a crucial role in championing and modeling IWE principles. Islamic leadership concepts, emphasizing justice, consultation (*shura*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), and serving followers, are critical for fostering an environment where IWE can flourish. Lack of leadership support can undermine implementation efforts.

2. Organizational Culture

The prevailing organizational culture must align with and support IWE values. A culture that prioritizes ethics, fairness, quality, and mutual respect will reinforce the principles of *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah*. Conversely, a culture driven solely by short-term profits or characterized by political maneuvering may impede the positive effects of IWE.

3. Alignment with HR Practices

HR practices related to recruitment, selection, training, performance management, and compensation need to be consistent with IWE principles. For example, recruitment should prioritize competence and trustworthiness (*amanah*), performance appraisals should be fair (*'adl*), and training should support skill development (*Itqan*).

³⁷ Zaneb Omer Salem and Syed Omar Syed Agil, "The Effects of Islamic Management Ethics on Organizational Commitment of Employees in Libyan Public Banks," *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences* 6, no. 7 (2012): 260–70.

³⁸ Nadia A Abdelmegeed Abdelwahed et al., "Unleashing Potential: Islamic Leadership's Influence on Employee Performance via Islamic Organizational Values, Organizational Culture and Work Motivation," *International Journal of Law and Management* 67, no. 2 (January 1, 2025): 165–90, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJLMA-01-2024-0019>.

4. Authenticity of Implementation

For IWE to be genuinely effective, its adoption must be authentic and deeply embedded within the organization's fabric, rather than a superficial or merely symbolic gesture. Cases where Islamic values or leadership did not significantly impact performance might suggest issues with the depth or sincerity of implementation. The core emphasis on *niyyah* (intention) in *Ibadah* inherently requires genuine belief and commitment. A superficial application, lacking true leadership buy-in and integration into daily practices, is unlikely to yield the anticipated benefits in productivity and cost efficiency.

5. Mediating and Moderating Variables

As noted earlier, individual factors (like emotional intelligence or motivation) and organizational factors (like perceived politics or conflict management styles) can mediate or moderate the relationship between IWE and outcomes.

Acknowledging these nuances is crucial for understanding why the impact of IWE might vary across different organizations and contexts.

The synthesized findings reveal that the core IWE principles *Itqan*, *Ihsan*, and *Ibadah* act as significant antecedents of HR productivity. However, when positioned within the broader theoretical discourse on work ethics, productivity, and organizational efficiency, several critical points of debate emerge.

First, the centrality of **Itqan** in driving quality and error reduction aligns with established quality management theories emphasizing precision and skill mastery. Yet, the present analysis challenges the traditional assumption that productivity gains arise predominantly from structural interventions or incentive-based mechanisms. Instead, the data suggest that *Itqan* operates as an *internalized ethical–spiritual regulator*, reducing error rates even in minimally supervised environments. This extends the ongoing debate in HRM literature by proposing that ethical internalization may substitute, at least partially, for formal monitoring systems an argument insufficiently developed in prior empirical work.

Second, while **Ihsan** resonates with organizational behavior theories on fairness, trust, and positive relational climates, this study advances the theoretical conversation by linking *Ihsan* explicitly to *economic cost efficiency*. Previous studies largely emphasize its socio-emotional benefits (e.g., trust-building, reduced conflict), but rarely articulate how these relational dynamics translate into operational savings. The present findings demonstrate that *Ihsan*-driven cooperation reduces coordination failures, minimizes time lost to conflict, and increases workflow smoothness indicating that ethical benevolence may yield quantifiable economic advantages.

Third, although **Ibadah** has been widely discussed as a driver of intrinsic motivation, existing motivation theories (Self-Determination Theory, Public Service Motivation, Islamic Motivation models) do not fully explain how spiritual intention translates into measurable performance. This study contributes to the debate by arguing that *Ibadah* introduces a *divine accountability mechanism* a form of supra-material motivation that increases persistence, effort intensity, and compliance with work standards. This refines existing motivation theory by incorporating spirituality-driven obligation, which has been under-theorized in mainstream HR literature.

Moreover, the study provides a critical theoretical integration absent in prior research. While the relationships between (a) IWE and productivity, and (b) productivity and cost efficiency are well-documented separately, the literature rarely connects them into a unified causal chain. By empirically and conceptually mapping **IWE** → **HR productivity** → **cost efficiency**, this research bridges an important gap and situates ethical principles as strategic economic drivers. This challenges dominant economic management assumptions that efficiency improvements stem mainly from technological upgrades or process redesigns,

suggesting instead that *value-based behavioral mechanisms* can produce comparable or even superior efficiency gains.

Collectively, these contributions advance the scholarly debate by reframing IWE as: (1) an internal behavioral control system (challenging monitoring-based HRM models), (2) a source of relational efficiency with measurable economic effects (extending organizational behavior theory), and (3) a spiritual–motivational driver that enhances productivity through non-material mechanisms (augmenting motivation theory).

Thus, the discussion positions IWE not merely as a moral framework but as a theoretically grounded and economically significant construct, offering a holistic model that integrates ethical values, productivity mechanisms, and economic outcomes an approach that previous studies have not articulated with equivalent conceptual clarity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights how the Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) principles Itqan (professionalism), Ihsan (ethical excellence), and Ibadah (work as worship) serve as key drivers of HR productivity and cost efficiency. Itqan improves task quality and reduces errors; Ihsan fosters a collaborative, ethical work environment; and Ibadah instills deep motivation and commitment. Together, these values lead to more efficient use of resources, reduced turnover, and stronger organizational performance. Theoretically, this research offers a unique framework linking IWE to economic outcomes through HR productivity. It contributes to both Islamic ethics and HRM literature by showing how values-based systems can impact performance beyond traditional metrics. Practically, the findings suggest that organizations especially in Muslim-majority contexts should authentically integrate IWE principles into leadership, HR policies, and workplace culture. This includes ethical hiring, fair evaluations, and supportive environments that reflect Islamic values.

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