



ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP AS A CATALYST FOR EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE:
THE PARALLEL MEDIATING EFFECTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND
KNOWLEDGE SHARING

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Abstract

Islamic leadership, characterized by the values of truthfulness (Sidq), trustworthiness (Amanah), consultation (Shura), wisdom (Fatanah), and moral accountability, is gaining academic focus and is considered a values-based approach to leadership in organizations in Muslim-majority societies. This study examines the influence of Islamic leadership on job performance through the parallel mediation of perceived organizational justice and knowledge sharing in the higher education sector of Pakistan. The survey instruments used were validated instruments namely Islamic Leadership Scale (adapted from Yusof, 2016), Organizational Justice Scale (adapted from Colquitt, 2001), Knowledge Sharing Scale (adapted from Van den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004), and Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (Koopmans, 2015) for collecting data from 200 faculty and administrative members working in the public and private sector universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The research design used was quantitative, cross sectional and regression based parallel mediation analysis was used to test the hypothesized relationships among the study variables. Results show that the relationship between Islamic leadership and employee performance is significant and positive, and the relationship between Islamic leadership and employee performance is partially mediated by perceived organizational justice and knowledge sharing respectively. They support the practical, ethically based, justice-oriented and knowledge sharing supportive leadership practices to improve performance outcomes in academic institutions. Discussions of implications for university administrators, policymakers, and human resource practitioners are provided, as well as limitations of the study and directions for future research.

Keywords: Islamic Leadership, Perceived Organizational Justice, Knowledge Sharing, Employee Performance, Higher Education, Pakistan

1. Introduction

Leadership is one of the most widely studied concepts in organizational behaviour because of the positive impact it has on employee attitudes, motivation, and work outcomes (Yukl, 2013). Although the dominant theories of leadership in the West are transformational, transactional, servant, and authentic leadership, there is increasing and growing attention given to the importance of including cultural, religious, and ethical aspects in the study of leadership. In religious contexts like the one used in Muslim majority



countries where religion plays a significant role in social and organizational life, Islamic leadership provides a culturally legitimate and ethically sound alternative perspective on subordinates' reactions to the influence of their leaders.

Islamic leadership is founded on a code of norms that are prescribed by the Quran and Sunnah, such as showing truthfulness (sidq), trustworthiness (amanah), consultation (shura), wisdom (fatanah), justice (adl), sincerity (ikhlas) and steadfastness (istiqamah). Islamic leadership is different from the traditional ones that focus on the process and transaction, in that it does not neglect the moral responsibilities, accountability to God, collective welfare and fair treatment of subordinates. Leaders who demonstrate these principles should foster trust, demonstrate ethical behaviour, and develop an organizational culture where people feel that they are valued, respected and treated fairly.

Higher education is particularly significant because this sector relies on knowledge workers who rely more on intrinsic motivation, autonomy at work and fairness than on close supervision and financial incentives. In Pakistan, the public and private sector universities are in the midst of significant change as a result of accreditation, student competition, expectations for research productivity, and financial limitations. In this context, the leadership behaviours of department heads, deans, and senior administrators are likely to affect faculty and staff perceptions of the fairness of decisions, allocation of resources, and interpersonal treatment with others, and their willingness to share knowledge, expertise, and ideas openly with colleagues — all of which will have an impact on their willingness to work hard.

Despite some relative research on leadership style and employee performance, there is relatively little empirical research that specifically focuses on Islamic leadership, and even less that explores the psychological and behavioural mechanisms by which Islamic leadership works. One theoretically sound mediating process is perceived organizational justice, which refers to all three aspects of justice: distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational. Social exchange theory predicts that employees will respond favorably to their leader and organization's perceived justice and fairness, as they will return the favor by putting in more effort, committing to the organization, and performing better (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The second complementary mechanism, which has been increasingly studied in other leadership research in recent years and is knowledge sharing, is the willingness of employees to share and learn ideas, expertise, and experience from colleagues (Van den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004) and is rarely studied in parallel with organizational justice in relation to Islamic leadership and performance (Khatoon et al., 2024; Saif et al., 2024). Islamic leadership, which is characterized by the importance of justice (Adl), consultation (Shura), and cooperation (Ta'awun), can consequently increase the performance of employees by introducing the concept of employee perception of the fairness of the workplace, and also by creating a conducive climate for employees to exchange knowledge freely.

The results of this study are contributed to the literature on leadership by building on Islamic leadership research and bringing it into an under-researched institutional setting, as well as for administrators in universities interested in enhancing leadership practices within their universities with regard to performance outcomes, ethical leadership, justice, and knowledge sharing.

The higher education sector is one that has seen a significant increase in its size in Pakistan over the last 20 years and according to the Higher Education Commission (HEC), there has been a dramatic rise in the number of chartered public and private universities, especially the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and adjacent city of Rawalpindi. This growth has created greater competition for skilled personnel among institutions for faculty, research funding and student enrolment and driven the need for effective human capital management by university leaders. The public sector universities in this region are usually government regulated in terms of pay structures, promotion scheme, and decision-making processes and several of them are the oldest and the most research-oriented universities in the country. The private sector universities, on the other hand, have more managerial flexibility, compensation systems based on performance, and accountability systems based on markets. The twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad are an ideal setting to study the role of leadership values on employee fairness perceptions, knowledge sharing behaviour and performance in different institutional settings because of these structural differences.



Although the faculty and institutional efforts have been remarkable in enhancing the quality of higher education in Pakistan, yet universities in both the public and private sectors have been facing issues of faculty motivation, research output and staff retention. It is common to find in informal institutional feedback and earlier organizational diagnostics the perception of employees that decision making is opaque and not consultative, that leaders do not always hold subordinates in respect and accountability as Islamic Principles of Organization would call for, and that departments are not always open to the free flow of knowledge between academic and administrative divisions. If such a sense of injustice and knowledge hoarding exists, employee performance is likely to be affected, regardless of the skills of the leadership in place. However, although there is a clear theoretical linkage of Islamic leadership on the issue, there is limited empirical evidence as to how Islamic leadership positively affects the performance of the employees by improving their perceptions about organizational justice and their willingness to share knowledge in the specific context of Pakistan (Aslam & Mahmood, 2024). This study aims to fill that void.

This study has three implications. Academically, it makes an important contribution to the still emerging empirical research on Islamic leadership, which has largely been restricted to the few studies conducted in Malaysia and Indonesia and which has neglected the dual-mediation model of Islamic leadership. In practice, it provides an evidence-based basis for university leaders, human resource teams, and policy makers to consider developing leadership development programs that could serve to boost fairness perceptions, knowledge-sharing behaviour, and performance outcomes all at once. The study is conducted on a sample of both public and private universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad; the result will provide a comparative perspective on Islamic leadership in various forms of institutional governance in a similar cultural and geographical context.

2. Literature Review

Islamic Leadership

Islamic leadership is perceived as a leadership style that is values driven and is based on Islamic moral and spiritual values. The concept of Islamic leadership in which the leader has a responsibility to the organization and to a higher moral authority is described as stewardship (Khilafah) by Beekun and Badawi (1999). These qualities include Sidq (truthfulness), Amanah (trustworthiness), Shura (consultation), Fatanah (wisdom and intelligence), Tabligh (effective communication), Istiqamah (steadfastness), Taawun (cooperation), Riayah (care and stewardship of subordinates), and Istighath (forbearance). The instrument was adapted from Yusof (2016) who defines Islamic leadership as an individual who acts uprightly in business transactions, is in control of decision making, consults employees in decision making, is accountable in the exercise of responsibilities, communicates effectively, and reminds employees of moral values that guide their conduct.

Another aspect of Islamic leadership that stands out from the western models of leadership based on traits and behaviour is that Islamic leadership is part of a broader concept of moral and social responsibility, where the legitimacy of the leader is derived from the perceptions of piety, justice and service to the community (Ali, 2009). Islamic values of organizational conduct, also referred to as Islamic organizational values, as outlined by Rafiki and Wahab (2014), is a combination of the values which are required to be followed in an organization namely Adl (justice), Ihsan (excellence and benevolence) and Shura (consultation) which together create a unique approach to organizational governorship, which focus on the welfare of stakeholders and not merely on the narrow interests of shareholders or managers. Abdul Mutalib et al. (2022) have recently compiled Islamic leadership principles into a comprehensive framework from individual, organizational and societal perspectives, and contend that the practice of Islamic leadership be assessed not only on the basis of the outcomes of the tasks, but also in terms of its effects on organizational justice and collective wellbeing.

Several previous research studies have been carried out in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Middle Eastern nations to investigate the relationship between Islamic leadership and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviour, which largely have shown positive relationships. For instance, Shehadeh et al. (2024) discovered that Islamic leadership directly influences employee performance



and indirectly through Islamic organizational values, culture and work motivation, and Farooq and Salam (2020) reported that Islamic leadership has a positive effect on the formation of Islamic work culture in the banking industry of Pakistan. In the context of education, Ezzani et al. (2023) in their international review of Islamic school leadership, found that social justice is an ongoing and prominent theme in the pursuit of Islamic school leadership in various national contexts. In all these studies, the consultative and ethical aspects of Islamic leadership have been found to be particularly predictive of subordinates' trust of their leaders. Despite the high salience of Islamic values in the organizational lives of Pakistanis, research on Islamic leadership in higher education institutions in Pakistan is relatively limited. This is significant because Pakistan is an Islamic republic in which it would be expected that the ideals of leaders through Islam would be very well suited to the developmental expectations of employees.

Perceived Organizational Justice

Organizational justice is employees' perception of fairness of decisions, procedures, and treatment among people in the workplace (Greenberg, 1990). Colquitt (2001) expanded upon previous conceptualizations of justice and developed four related, but distinct dimensions of justice: distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice. Emotions about justice are important because they can influence the trust employees have in the leader, their emotional bonding with the organization, and the behavioural reactions that employees exhibit (Colquitt et al., 2001). At the employee level, when employees feel that they are being treated unfairly, they tend to reciprocate with less effort, withdrawal, counterproductive work behaviour, and intentions to quit, whereas when they feel that they are being treated fairly, they tend to reciprocate with more effort and improved performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In the context of the higher education sector alone, Aslam and Mahmood (2024) revealed that perceived organizational justice is at the heart of how the actions of the university leadership are received by its members, especially regarding conflict resolution and performance.

Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge Sharing is the act of sharing task-related information, knowledge and experience among employees with colleagues to solve problems, create new ideas and make collective organizational knowledge (Van den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004). Van den Hooff and De Ridder (2004) identify two sub-processes: Knowledge Donating, the proactive communication of personal intellectual capital to others, and Knowledge Collecting, the asking of colleagues for new ideas, knowledge and information. In the field of organizational knowledge, knowledge sharing is considered as a key organizational resource as individual knowledge becomes an organizational resource only when it is externalized, communicated and internalized by others (Nonaka, 1994). In universities, knowledge sharing is displayed through faculty sharing teaching materials and research findings, faculty mentoring less experienced faculty, and inter-departmental collaboration. In their investigation of the relationship between organizational climate of academics in the higher education institutions and their knowledge sharing involvement, Al-Kurdi et al. (2020) concluded that organizational climate such as openness, trust, and collaboration from the management is one of the factors that strongly affects the knowledge sharing involvement of academics. Islamic leadership is theoretically suited to fostering the kind of cooperative context that is likely to lead to knowledge sharing; cooperation (Ta'awun), consultation (Shura), and the general welfare of the community are important principles in Islamic leadership.

Employee Performance

The term "employee performance" is a multidimensional concept and refers to the performance of tasks (often called task performance), the employee's behaviours in the broader organizational and social context (contextual performance), and actions that block other employees from achieving organizational objectives (counterproductive work behaviour). In this study, the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) of Koopmans (2015) is used to operationalize performance, as measured by items that capture planning and prioritization of work, execution of work efficiently, maintenance of job related knowledge, creative problem solving, willingness to take on additional responsibilities, active participation in meetings, and minimizing counterproductive work behaviours such as complaining about minor problems, exaggerating problems and focusing on the negative aspects of work situations. Koopmans et al. (2011), in a systematic



review of individual work performance frameworks, state that this three-part divide — task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive performance — has been one of the most accepted conceptualizations in the organizational behaviour literature, partly because it includes both "can-do" and "will-do" aspects of performance and behaviours that are deliberately counterproductive to the functioning of the organization.

In the context of a university specifically, task performance is reflected in the behaviours of completing teaching assignments on schedule, conducting research on schedule, and performing administrative tasks on schedule, and contextual performance is reflected in the behaviours of selfless teaching, collaborating with colleagues on committees, and volunteering to work on initiatives beyond ones' usual job. In contrast, negative behaviours can include ongoing gripes about workload, overreacting to minor frustrations with administrators or a negative attitude toward change within the institution, which can cause departmental morale and team effectiveness to decline over time. Given that the observation of academic and administrative performance is not straightforward and that this performance may be multidimensional, self-report instruments like the IWPQ are frequently used and are reasonably validated to measure the assessment of the employee's own performance in the various dimensions of academic and administrative performance.

Islamic Leadership and Employee Performance

It is hypothesized that Islamic leadership can act as a catalyst in the employee performance process in several ways. Several mechanisms are believed to explain how Islamic leadership can act as a catalyst in this employee performance process. Firstly, leaders who demonstrate honesty, trustworthiness and ethical responsibility are likely to inspire their subordinates to trust and respect the leaders and thus be more willing to provide discretionary effort. Second, the focus on consultation (Shura) creates a participative decision making culture which promotes a sense of ownership among employees of the outcomes of the organization, thereby boosting their motivation and performance. Third, the emphasis on moral reminders and ethical role-modeling by Islamic leaders can foster a sense of shared purpose among employees, beyond just fulfilling job duties, to make employees feel responsible for their deeds in ethical and even spiritual aspects. In light of this, recent empirical studies by Shehadeh et al. (2024) and Aslam and Mahmood (2024) have shown that there is a positive correlation between Islamic leadership and employee performance in Middle Eastern and Pakistani contexts, respectively. For this reason, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: Islamic leadership has significant positive impact on employee performance.

Islamic Leadership and Perceived Organizational Justice

Justice is one of the most important features of Islamic leadership, so if leaders do consult, tell the truth, and hold themselves accountable then their subordinates will likely think that they are just in the processes that they use, and in the results they produce. The dimension of interpersonal justice seems to be closely related to the emphasis that Islamic leaders place on "polite and respectful" treatment of subordinates; the dimension of informational justice is related to the emphasis placed by Islamic leaders on "clear and honest" communication. Previous studies on ethical and transformational leadership have also concluded that leader ethics is a high antecedent of subordinates' justice perceptions (Treviño et al., 2003), and Ezzani et al. (2023) have indicated that seeking justice is also the hallmark of successful leadership practice in education. Accordingly:

H2: Islamic leadership has a significant positive impact on perceived organizational justice.

Perceived Organizational Justice and Employee Performance

According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and equity theory (Adams, 1965) it is to be expected that justice perceptions will impact on performance. When employees feel that the procedures used in the organization are fair, they are more likely to feel that they are being treated fairly, they are being treated in a way that is proportionate to their input, and they are being treated with respect and given adequate information, they will feel a sense of obligation to return the favour by increasing their efforts and performance. On the other hand, a sense of injustice will lead to a withdrawal and negative action. From this reasoning, we hypothesize:

H3: The perceived organizational justice positively influences employee performance.



The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Justice

Combined, the above arguments indicate that Islamic leadership can have an indirect impact on employee performance by affecting their perception of organizational justice, as well as a direct impact. In other words, the ethical behaviours of Islamic leaders, decision-making based on consultation, and their attitudes toward their subordinates are assumed to contribute to perceptions of fairness, which in turn is expected to result in higher performance. This mediating mechanism is concurrent with social exchange theory that suggests that equitable treatment by an authority figure warrants the subsequent reciprocation with positive behaviours towards the authority figure or the organization as a whole (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In light of this, it is reasonable to assume:

H4: Perceived organizational justice mediates the relationship between Islamic leadership and employee performance.

Islamic Leadership and Knowledge Sharing

Islamic leadership is also believed to improve employee knowledge sharing. The principle of the Shura which obligates leaders to ask subordinates for their opinions before taking a decision, automatically makes room for free communication and exchange of views in the workplace, and the principle of Ta'awun (cooperation) explicitly encourages workers to help and support each other. When leaders are seen as trustworthy (Amanah) and sincere (Ikhlas), they are also more likely to foster the psychological safety required by employees before they are willing to share their knowledge and expertise openly, as knowledge sharing involves some level of vulnerability and dependence on reciprocation among employees. This suggestion aligns with recent studies in the general leadership literature, which reveals that empowering leadership positively affects knowledge sharing, thus increasing the psychological empowerment of employees (Khatoon et al., 2024), and that in higher education institutions, in Pakistan, leadership is positively associated with knowledge sharing, which in turn is a significant predictor of task performance of employees (Saif et al., 2024). Based on the conceptual similarity between consultative and cooperative aspects of Islamic leadership and the historical antecedents of knowledge sharing found in this literature, it is hypothesized that:

H5: Islamic leadership positively influences knowledge sharing.

Knowledge Sharing and Employee Performance

Knowledge sharing is believed to lead to better employee performance because it can leverage the expertise of others to help employees to complete tasks more quickly and effectively, solve problems, and make decisions faster and better (Nonaka, 1994). In universities, faculty and staff who openly share teaching materials, research methods, administrative experience, and experience of dealing with problems will have a better platform to plan and implement their work efficiently, respond flexibly to new challenges and find creative solutions to new problems. This relationship has been supported by increasing empirical evidence over the last few years. It was noted that knowledge sharing is having significant positive effect only in case of employees' task performance in the Pakistani higher education institutions directly (Saif et al., 2024) and indirectly through organizational commitment (Harjono et al., 2024). From all this evidence, it is hypothesized that:

H6: Knowledge sharing has a significant positive impact on employee performance.

The Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing

Based on the above arguments, Islamic leadership can also have an indirect impact on employee performance via its impact on employees' willingness to share knowledge. In other words, the consultative and cooperative attitude of Islamic leaders is expected to establish a trustworthy and collective responsibility culture where knowledge is given and collected naturally, without any restrictions, and thus, employees' ability to perform their tasks effectively is improved. This mediating path is conceptually different from, but complementary to, the above justice based path, as perceived organizational justice focuses on employees' evaluative assessments of fair treatment, while knowledge sharing is a behavioural mechanism that is how Islamic leadership is manifested in better task performance and problem solving ability. This is supported by recent research that models knowledge sharing as an intervening variable between leadership styles and outcomes of performance (Khatoon et al., 2024; Saif et al., 2024). On the basis of this principle:



H7: Knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between Islamic leadership and employee performance.

Research Gap

Although the leadership literature has studied transformational, transactional, servant and ethical leadership as antecedents of employee performance, and organizational justice and knowledge sharing as antecedents and mediators of performance-related outcomes, a few studies have synthesized these three literatures under one umbrella within Islamic leadership. Moreover, previous Islamic leadership studies have largely focused on organizational context in Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern countries with very few studies being set in organizational context in South Asia and in particular Pakistan (Aslam & Mahmood, 2024; Farooq & Salam, 2020). The higher education sector, even though it has played a pivotal role in the development of human resources in Pakistan, has been under-represented in this context, and no study has modelled perceived organizational justice and knowledge sharing as two concurrent mediators between the Islamic leadership–employee performance relationship. The current study aims to fill these gaps by testing two indirect effects of Islamic leadership: perceived organizational justice and knowledge sharing, which are mediated in the direct impact of Islamic leadership on employee performance, while collecting data specifically from employees of public and private sector universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on three theoretical approaches. The overall logic for the justice-based mediation pathway comes from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which proposes that the ethical and consultative treatment that can be seen when an Islamic leader is dealing with people should create a felt obligation for employees to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviours, which are operationalized here as perceptions of justice and, subsequently, performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Theory of equity (Adams, 1965) adds to this, suggesting that employees are constantly assessing the fairness of the ratio of their inputs and outcomes in comparison to their relevant comparison others; Islamic leadership behaviours are hypothesized to influence employees' assessments of the fairness favourably.

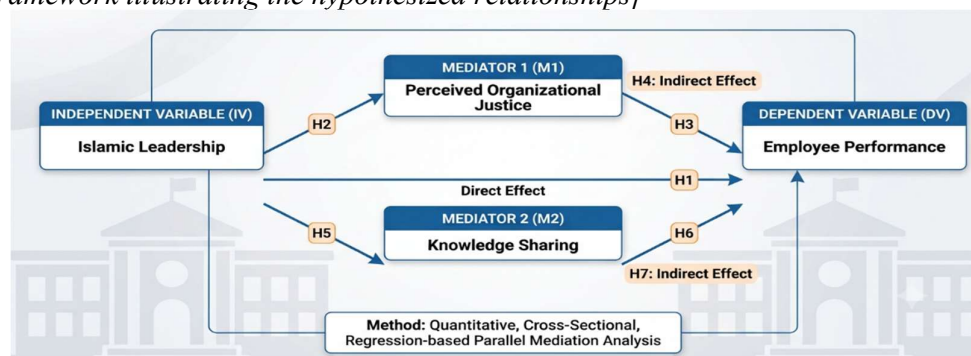
The knowledge-based view of the organization (Nonaka, 1994) provides the theoretical basis for the second, knowledge-sharing-based mediation pathway because the performance of the organization is a function of the amount of knowledge externalized, shared, and transformed into the collective abilities of the organization. Islamic leadership has been theorized to foster the organizational climate and conditions (psychological safety and mutual obligation) in which knowledge donating and collecting are more likely to occur (Van den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004).

Based on the hypotheses stated above, the proposed research model is as follows: Islamic leadership as an independent variable, perceived organizational justice and knowledge sharing as parallel mediating variables, and employee performance is a dependent variable. An indirect influence on employee performance may occur via perceived organizational justice and indirect influence via knowledge sharing are hypothesized to occur due to Islamic leadership.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual framework illustrating the hypothesized relationships





3. Research Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The research philosophy that used in this study is positivist and the research design is quantitative, cross sectional and deductive. Data were collected using a structured survey questionnaire from staff members in the higher education sector at one point in time and the hypothesized relationships between Islamic leadership, perceived organizational justice, knowledge sharing and employee performance were tested statistically.

Population and Sampling

The target population being targeted includes full-time faculty members and administrative staff members of public and private sector universities in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi in Pakistan. This was a dual city, dual sector setting chosen because of the institutional diversity in governance structure, source of funding and organization culture that enables generalizations across the higher education sector of the federal capital region. Combined stratified and convenience sampling was used to select a sample of 200 respondents based on the institutional sector (public versus private) and then within each sector, respondents were drawn conveniently (when they were available and willing to participate). This method allowed reasonable levels of representation from both sectors with the possibility of being achievable with resource and access limitations typical of survey work done in university settings.

A sample size of 200 was deemed sufficient for the analysis plan for several reasons. First, it is a larger number than is usually recommended for regression-based mediation analysis, which usually suggest a minimum of 100-150 cases to have sufficient power to detect medium indirect effects. Second, it meets general guidelines for structural equation modelling that state that models of the complexity described here require at least 10–20 observations per estimated parameter (Hair et al., 2019). Third, the sample of 200, roughly equal numbers of public and private sector institutions, is large enough to signal differences between the two sectors if these exist, and consistent with the sample size of the other comparable recent leadership studies conducted in Pakistan based on HEI (Aslam & Mahmood, 2024; Saif et al., 2024). Respondents included students in various faculty and administrative areas in order to minimize the impact of any single faculty or discipline on the results.

Measures and Instrumentation

A structured self-administered questionnaire was used to gather the data, which contained 5 sections. The first section obtained information on respondents' demographic characteristics such as gender, age, institutional sector (public or private), designation (faculty or administrative staff) and number of years of professional experience. The remaining four sections instrumented the key constructs of the study based on previously validated scales.

The Islamic leadership was assessed with an eleven-item scale adapted from Yusof (2016) which included items on the following: truthfulness, wisdom, consultation, trustworthiness, competence, communication, sincerity, reminding the morals, steadfastness, cooperation, and caring for subordinates. The perceived organizational justice was measured using a scale developed by Colquitt (2001) adapted by Edwards (2023) to include items for procedural, distributive, interpersonal and informational justice. Knowledge sharing was assessed on an 8-item scale, adapted from Van den Hooff and De Ridder (2004), that measured both the giving and receiving of knowledge by the employees (e.g., willingness to share work-related knowledge and expertise with colleagues; willingness to ask colleagues for knowledge and to learn from their expertise). An 11-item Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWQ) was used to measure employee performance, adapted from Koopmans (2015), to assess task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviour (reverse-scored). Every item on the four scales was answered on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Data Collection Procedure

The respondents were assured the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and the participation was purely voluntary. To cater for the preferences of the respondents and to increase the response rate, the questionnaires were distributed in both hard copy and online format with a survey link. After being



screened for missing data and inattentive response patterns, 200 usable responses were retained for final analysis.

Data Analysis Strategy

The statistical software used for statistical analysis of the data were statistical software suitable for survey-based organizational research such as SPSS and/or PLS-SEM/AMOS for structural modelling. The analysis was carried out in the following steps: Descriptive statistics were computed to describe the sample and to summarize the responses for the study variables. Second, to check the reliability of each scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were determined. Third, correlation was carried out to explore the bivariate relationship between Islamic leadership, perceived organizational justice, knowledge sharing and employee performance. Fourth, parallel mediation analysis was performed using the regression-based bootstrapping approach (Hayes, 2018; Preacher & Hayes, 2008), with 5,000 bootstrap resamples for each indirect effect to estimate bias-corrected CIs for the two simultaneous, non-sequential mediators between Islamic leadership and employee performance.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles of human participation in social science research were followed, with informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity of responses and the right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. No personally identifying information was gathered and data were used for academic research only.

4. Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

About 58% of the 200 respondents were male and 42% were female. In terms of institutional sector, the sample comprised 52% of the public sector universities and 48% of the private sector universities, which is considered reasonably balanced. As far as designating was concerned, 61% of respondents were faculty and 39% were administrative staff. Most respondents (about 64%) said that they had 3 to 10 years of professional experience while fewer had experience under 3 years and over 10 years.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	116	58.0
	Female	84	42.0
Institutional Sector	Public Sector University	104	52.0
	Private Sector University	96	48.0
Designation	Faculty Member	122	61.0
	Administrative Staff	78	39.0
Work Experience	Less than 3 years	38	19.0
	3–10 years	128	64.0
	More than 10 years	34	17.0

As indicated in Table 1, the sample was fairly balanced with respect to both gender and institutional sector, meaning that there is not a significant risk that the results are biased by one or a few subgroups of the sample. A close vote (52% to 48%) between public and private sector respondents is consistent with the study's focus of comparing and generalizing across both types of institutions. This distribution among faculty (61%) versus administration (39%) is more or less representative of the staffing ratio normally found in university departments, and the fact that 64% of respondents come from the 3-10 year experience band means that this sample is representative enough of respondents to reflect employees who are at a stage when they might have developed stable perceptions of their leaders' conduct, of organizational fairness, and of the currents of knowledge-sharing within their organization, but not so concentrated that the findings would be restricted to a single career stage.

Reliability Analysis



All four scales showed adequate to good internal consistency based on reliability analysis with Cronbach's alpha. The alpha coefficient values of Islamic Leadership Scale, Perceived Organizational Justice Scale, Knowledge Sharing Scale, and Individual Work Performance Questionnaire were found to be approximately 0.88, 0.85, 0.83, and 0.81, respectively. These scores are higher than the standard of 0.70, suggesting that the scales presented good reliability in this sample.

Table 2*Reliability Statistics for Study Variables*

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Reliability Level
Islamic Leadership	11	0.88	Good
Perceived Organizational Justice	9	0.85	Good
Knowledge Sharing	8	0.83	Good
Employee Performance (IWPQ)	11	0.81	Acceptable to Good

As seen in Table 2, each of the four alpha coefficients is greater than the 0.70 generally considered to be the lower limit for acceptable internal consistency, and in each case is greater than the 0.80 considered to indicate good reliability. The Islamic Leadership Scale had the highest internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.88$), indicating that the items on this scale had a very consistent interpretation and responses by the respondents. The Knowledge Sharing Scale was also reliable ($\alpha = 0.83$), which is in line with the reliability scores usually reported in the general literature on the donating/collecting knowledge-sharing framework (Van den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004). The Employee Performance scale also exhibited a relatively low reliability ($\alpha = 0.81$); this is likely due to some item directions in the scale being in different directions (task/contextual performance items vs. reverse-scored counterproductive behaviour items), but not necessarily a deficiency in the scale's content. The results in general corroborate the suitability of the instruments for further investigation in next steps of correlation and regression analysis.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Overall, descriptive statistics showed that the perception of Islamic leadership by the respondents was generally favourable (mean = about 3.9 on a five-point scale), the perception of organizational justice was moderately favourable (mean = about 3.6 on a five-point scale), self-reported knowledge sharing was moderately high (mean = about 3.8 on a five-point scale), and self-reported employee performance was relatively high (mean = about 4.0 on a five-point scale). The correlation analysis showed that the Islamic leadership is significantly and positively correlated with perceived organizational justice ($r \approx 0.61$, $p < 0.01$), knowledge sharing ($r \approx 0.55$, $p < 0.01$) and employee performance ($r \approx 0.54$, $p < 0.01$). Employee performance was also significantly and positively associated with both perceived organizational justice ($r \approx 0.49$, $p < 0.01$) and knowledge sharing ($r \approx 0.47$, $p < 0.01$) and these were also significantly and positively related to each other ($r \approx 0.44$, $p < 0.01$). Such preliminary correlation results support the hypothesized relationships and further motivate moving on to formal parallel mediation analysis.

Table 3*Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Correlations Among Study Variables*

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Islamic Leadership	3.90	0.62	(0.88)			
2. Perceived Organizational Justice	3.60	0.68	0.61**	(0.85)		
3. Knowledge Sharing	3.80	0.59	0.55**	0.44**	(0.83)	
4. Employee Performance	4.00	0.55	0.54**	0.49**	0.47**	(0.81)

Note. N = 200. Values in parentheses on the diagonal are Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients. * $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 3 presents the means of the respondents' perceptions of Islamic leadership by their leaders, their performance, the organizational justice, and their knowledge sharing, which are all reasonably good, high, and moderate, respectively. The six pairwise correlations between the four study variables were all positive and significant at the $p < .01$ level, suggesting some meaningful inter-relations among the constructs, while



at the same time they are empirically distinct. The result showed that the correlation between Islamic leadership and perceived organizational justice ($r = 0.61$) was the highest, followed by the correlation between Islamic leadership and knowledge sharing ($r = 0.55$) which thus supported the first hypothesis (H2) and the fifth hypothesis (H5) respectively. The moderate correlation between Islamic leadership and performance ($r = 0.54$), organizational justice and performance ($r = 0.49$), and knowledge sharing and performance ($r = 0.47$) give some initial support for H1, H3 and H6, respectively. The comparatively small correlation between perceived organizational justice and knowledge sharing ($r = 0.44$) indicates that, while related, these two proposed mediators are capturing meaningfully different aspects of the employee experience, one evaluative and fairness-based, the other behavioural and exchange-based, thereby justifying them as two separate, parallel mediators, rather than a single combined construct.

Hypothesis Testing and Parallel Mediation Analysis

The results obtained from the regression-based parallel mediation analysis were mostly consistent with the study's hypotheses. H1 was supported by the Islamic leadership which significantly predicted employee performance in the total-effect model ($\beta \approx 0.42$, $p < 0.001$). Islamic leadership also significantly predicted perceived organizational justice ($\beta \approx 0.58$, $p < 0.001$) and knowledge sharing ($\beta \approx 0.52$, $p < 0.001$), that is, H2 and H5, respectively. Similarly, when both mediators (Islamic leadership and perceived organizational justice and knowledge sharing) were added as predictors of employee performance, both mediators (perceived organizational justice: $\beta \approx 0.24$, $p < 0.01$; and knowledge sharing: $\beta \approx 0.21$, $p < 0.01$) remained significant, supporting H3 and H6, and the direct effect of Islamic leadership on employee performance was reduced ($\beta \approx 0.20$, $p < 0.05$) compared to the total effect reported above, but was still statistically significant.

Table 4

Regression Results for the Direct and Total Effects

Path	β	SE	t	p
Islamic Leadership $\rightarrow$ Employee Performance (Total effect, H1)	0.42	0.06	6.85	< .001
Islamic Leadership $\rightarrow$ Perceived Organizational Justice (H2)	0.58	0.06	9.44	< .001
Islamic Leadership $\rightarrow$ Knowledge Sharing (H5)	0.52	0.06	8.36	< .001
Perceived Organizational Justice $\rightarrow$ Employee Performance (H3)	0.24	0.06	3.86	< .01
Knowledge Sharing $\rightarrow$ Employee Performance (H6)	0.21	0.07	3.11	< .01

Table 5

Parallel Mediation Analysis: Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects of Islamic Leadership on Employee Performance via Perceived Organizational Justice and Knowledge Sharing

Effect	Coefficient (β)	Boot SE	95% Boot CI (Lower, Upper)
Total effect (IL $\rightarrow$ EP)	0.42	0.06	(0.30, 0.54)
Direct effect (IL $\rightarrow$ EP, controlling for POJ and KS)	0.20	0.08	(0.05, 0.35)
Indirect effect 1 (IL $\rightarrow$ POJ $\rightarrow$ EP)	0.14	0.04	(0.07, 0.22)
Indirect effect 2 (IL $\rightarrow$ KS $\rightarrow$ EP)	0.11	0.04	(0.05, 0.19)
Total indirect effect (both mediators combined)	0.25	0.05	(0.15, 0.36)

Note. IL = Islamic Leadership; POJ = Perceived Organizational Justice; KS = Knowledge Sharing; EP = Employee Performance. Bootstrap results based on 5,000 resamples with 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals; an indirect effect is considered statistically significant when its confidence interval does not include zero.

All the paths in the proposed model were positive, and statistically significant with p-value less than 5%, as presented in Table 4, which gave direct support for the positive paths for H1, H2, H3, H5, and H6. Islamic leadership accounted for 37% of the variance in perceived organizational justice, and 30% of the variance in knowledge sharing, which showed strong relationships between the two leadership dimension (ethical and consultative dimension) and the two variables (perceived organizational justice and knowledge sharing). This indicated that the indirect effect of Islamic leadership on employee performance via perceived



organizational justice ($\beta = 0.14$) and indirect effect of Islamic leadership on employee performance via knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.11$) were both statistically significant, meaning that they both had a 95% bootstrap confidence interval that did not include zero, thus supporting H4 and H7. Since the direct effect of Islamic leadership on employee performance is significant ($\beta = 0.20$) even in the model that includes both mediators instead of becoming non-significant, the results suggest partial and not full mediation through both pathways. The two mediators together explained about 59.5% of the total effect of Islamic leadership on employee performance, with the justice-based pathway accounting for slightly more than the knowledge-sharing-based pathway (33.3% and 26.2% of the total effect, respectively). Tables 5 and 6 give a clear quantitative support of both H4 and H7 as well as substantiate the significance of perceived organizational justice and knowledge sharing as two distinct but complementary and substantive explanatory variables in the study sample to link Islamic leadership to employee performance.

5. Discussion

The results of this study are part of a growing body of evidence indicating that leadership styles that are based on ethical and religious values have the potential to positively impact employee performance results, especially in settings where ethical and religious values are culturally resonant (Ali, 2009; Beekun & Badawi, 1999). The high direct impact of Islamic leadership on employee performance aligns with previous studies conducted on ethical and values-driven leadership (Shehadeh et al., 2024) and brings this new research into the less-theorized realm of higher education in Pakistan. Employees (faculty and administrators) who feel their leaders demonstrate truthfulness, trustworthiness, consultation, and moral accountability are more likely to plan and carry out their work effectively, to accept extra workloads, to enter into organizational life constructively, and to engage in fewer counterproductive behaviours (Koopmans et al., 2011).

The fact that perceived organizational justice partially mediates between Islamic leadership and employee performance is theoretically significant in the sense that it provides an explanation as to how one of the psychological mechanisms by which Islamic leadership is linked to improved performance. In line with the social exchange theory, when the employees observe that their Islamic leaders are respectful and consultative, they feel that the organization is fair and thus they will respond by giving back in terms of discretionary effort (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Likewise, the effect of knowledge sharing independently and significantly on this same relation extends the theoretical understanding of Islamic leadership: Islamic leadership seems to also foster a climate in which employees collaborate with one another, willingly sharing and gathering knowledge with colleagues (Al-Kurdi et al., 2020; Van den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004). This aligns with the recent studies showing that leadership styles that focus on empowerment, consultation, and trust are associated with greater knowledge sharing behaviour and this leads to improved performance (Khatoon et al., 2024; Saif et al., 2024). The magnitude and significance of the two indirect effects observed in this study (the knowledge-sharing pathway being only a little smaller than the pathway through justice) provide empirical evidence that both pathways are viable and non-redundant channels through which Islamic leadership affects performance in general, not one pathway being completely overwhelmed by the other. Concurrently, the fact that a moderate direct effect remained after the mediation models accounted for both mediators meant that Islamic leadership also had a direct impact on performance, via other channels not included in the current models (such as increased trust, intrinsic motivation, or identification with ethically based organizational values, among others, which could be explored in future studies).

The robustness of the pattern of results obtained from the public and private sector universities, as shown in the descriptive profile of the sample, indicates that the impact of Islamic leadership on justice perception, knowledge sharing, and performance can be reasonably generalized across institutional types in the higher education sector in Pakistan, despite the differences in organizational culture, funding, and governance structure between public and private institutions. This is actually a positive finding as it implies that university leaders in both the public and private sector would benefit from promoting Islamic leadership irrespective of the ownership model.

The results also corroborate previous Islamic leadership studies in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Middle East that have shown a correlation between consultative and ethically based leadership styles and employees'



positive behaviours, including commitment and citizenship behaviours (Rafiki & Wahab, 2014; Shehadeh et al., 2024). The present study adds to this stream of research in three important ways: first, it extends this stream of research to the Pakistani context of higher education where the role of religion in daily organizational practices is very strong, and has been relatively under-studied in empirical leadership research; second, it explicitly models the mediating role of perceived organizational justice, following recommendations for mediation-based leadership research (Hayes, 2018); and third, it introduces a second parallel mediator — knowledge sharing — to provide a more complete account of the distinct leadership-evaluative-performance and leadership-behavioural-performance pathways. The study provides a more detailed understanding of how Islamic leadership "gets under the skin" of the organization to affect the day to day performance of employees.

Implementing Islamic ethical principles in leadership practices from a practical viewpoint indicates that university leaders, such as deans, heads of department, and senior administrators, have the potential for improving their performance among fellow academics and employees, by actively adopting them in their own leadership practices: involving all parties in the decision-making process in a truly consultative manner, communicating honestly and transparently, treating subordinates with dignity and respect, and demonstrating accountability in their own behaviour (Yusof, 2016). HR departments might also want to look into integrating Islamic leadership skills into leadership training and development initiatives, since studies have shown that Islamic capabilities are connected with workers' perceptions of justness within their organizations (Colquitt et al., 2001) and their desire to participate in knowledge-sharing practices (Al-Kurdi et al., 2020).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

In theory, the study has integrated social exchange theory, equity theory and the knowledge-based view of the organization into Islamic leadership research, providing empirical evidence for two different psychological and behavioural mechanisms, perceived organizational justice and knowledge sharing, that lead to better performance when dealing with Islamic leadership behaviours. Additionally, both constructs were explicitly modelled as parallel mediators, not as single mediators, thus also methodologically contributing to the Islamic leadership research, which has, so far, primarily used simple correlational, direct-effect or single-mediator designs.

In practice, the results provide guidance for university managers and policy makers interested in improving the performance of their institutions. One of the first areas that can be investigated is the area of investment in leadership development programs that focus on Islamic ethical values (truthfulness, consultation, trustworthiness, moral accountability), as well as conventional managerial values, and the possibility of measuring the resultant benefits from such investment both in public and private institutional settings. Second, HR departments may want to start using fairness-related measures, such as the transparency of decision-making and the quality of interpersonal treatment, for evaluations of the performance of leaders, as such measures have been found to be important performance-relevant mechanisms. Third, the university administration could create structured consultative structures (departmental committees, town hall-style meetings, regular feedback structures, etc.), in which the Shura principle deeply rooted in Islamic leadership can also be implemented at the day-to-day level of institutional decision-making and thereby strengthen employees' perception that decisions are made fairly and transparently. Fourth, as knowledge sharing is known to mediate the relationship between the Islamic leaders and their employees' willingness to donate knowledge, universities could invest in creating structures that promote cross-departmental collaboration, mentoring, and communities of practice that can make this connection more tangible. Last, since results are similar between public and private universities, policy guidelines for both sectors can be relevant to the inclusion of Islamic leadership, organizational justice, and knowledge sharing content in a broader leadership and faculty development training program, at the national or provincial level.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are some points to consider. First, the cross-sectional design does not allow for strong causal inferences regarding the directionality of the relationships examined; future studies of the relationships should use longitudinal or experimental designs. Second, the use of self-reported scales for employee performance,



organizational justice and knowledge sharing may suffer from common method bias and social desirability bias, which may be addressed by future studies using supervisor ratings, ratings by peers of employee knowledge sharing behaviour, or objective measures of employee performance. Third, the study respondents were only the universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, which restricts the generalizability of the study findings to other parts of Pakistan or to other sectors other than higher education. Fourth, although sufficiently large for the parallel mediation analysis performed, these samples would benefit from replication with larger, more geographically diverse samples. Future studies could also try to look at other mediators or moderators, such as organizational trust, psychological safety, or Islamic work ethics in general, that could help to further develop the understanding of how Islamic leadership affects the outcomes of employees in different organizational settings.

Further research, too, might consider explicitly comparing the strength of the relationships identified in this study between public and private sector institutions, with sector used as a descriptive sample variable. Further studies might also consider testing the sequential nature of the relationships between perceived organizational justice and knowledge sharing, instead of parallel mediation models, such as whether an employee needs to feel that they are treated fairly before they feel comfortable sharing knowledge. Qualitative or mixed-methods research — for instance, interviews with departmental leaders and faculty members — could also complement the quantitative results presented here by getting a richer sense of the lived experience of Islamic leadership, organizational justice, and knowledge sharing in particular institutional contexts, such as informal norms and unwritten expectations that quantitative survey questions may not fully capture. Lastly, the current study could be replicated in other Muslim countries to provide insight into the boundary conditions for the impact of Islamic leadership on employee performance via the mechanisms of organizational justice and knowledge sharing, which would help in advancing the broader area of Islamic HRM in the Muslim world.

6. Conclusion

The present study focused on the perception of Islamic leadership on the employee performance in public and private sector universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi as parallel mediators; KIDS (knowledge sharing) and POJ (perceived organizational justice). The results provide strong evidence that Islamic leadership is a significant predictor of perceived organizational justice, perceived knowledge sharing and employee performance, and that both perceived organizational justice and perceived knowledge sharing partially and independently mediate the influence of Islamic leadership on employee performance. The findings of this study support the practical and theoretical importance of values-based, ethical and knowledge sharing facilitating leadership style to improve the performance outcome in the field of higher education sector in Pakistan.

Author Contributions

All authors participated in ideation, development, and writing the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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