

A normative conceptual framework of Islamic work ethics and social capital in shaping work outcomes

Rosmah Mat Isa^{*1} , Khairul Akmaliah Adham² , Zizah Che Senik¹ , Rosnia Masruki² 

¹Centre of Value Creation and Human Well-being Studies, Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

²Islamic Finance and Wealth Management Institute (IFWMI), Faculty of Economics and Muamalat, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 71800 Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

* Corresponding author: rosmah@ukm.edu.my

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Abstract

Although social capital is generally regarded as a valuable organisational resource that enhances work outcomes, increasing evidence suggests that it may also lead to undesirable workplace behaviours. As a value-based system, Islamic work ethics offer a normative framework for guiding the development and utilisation of social capital in ways that promote positive outcomes while mitigating potential adverse effects. Nevertheless, limited attention has been given to the role of Islamic work ethics in shaping the relationship between social capital and work outcomes. Addressing this gap, this study proposes a normative conceptual framework that integrates Islamic work ethics, social capital, and work outcomes. The framework was developed through a scoping review of the literature, complemented by a textual analysis of selected Qur'anic verses and Hadith. The analysis highlights the dual nature of social capital, demonstrating that while it can generate positive employee and organisational outcomes, it may also induce undesirable workplace behaviours. In this context, Islamic work ethics emerge as a normative mechanism that not only fosters the development of social capital but also guides its application towards desirable outcomes. Accordingly, the proposed framework positions Islamic work ethics as both an antecedent to social capital and mitigating mechanism that helps channel their effects in constructive directions. By integrating normative ethics grounded in divine guidance, the framework provides a robust theoretical basis for understanding the connection between social capital and work outcomes. The study contributes to the growing literature on Islamic work ethics by offering a novel conceptualisation of their role in organisational settings. In practical terms, the framework provides managers with insights into developing organisational strategies that cultivate ethically grounded social relationships, thereby enhancing positive work outcomes while mitigating the potential risks associated with social capital.

Keywords: Islamic work ethics, social capital, work outcomes, deviant behaviour, normative framework, Islamic management

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Social dimensions, which are shaped by peer influences, life experiences, and situational factors, may induce diverse workplace values (Rizk, 2008). Social capital has been observed as a social dimension in management and organisational studies (e.g., Arnett and Wittmann, 2013; Hau et al., 2016). Considered a job resource (Clausen et al., 2019), social capital significantly contributes to enhancing positive work

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outcomes (Rashid and Amin, 2023; Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2011), increasing job satisfaction (Mittal et al., 2025; Flap and Volker, 2001), strengthening organisational commitment (Alomran et al., 2024; Watson and Papamarcos, 2002), and improving employee happiness (Taştan et al., 2020). Additionally, it helps mitigate negative work outcomes such as depression (Oksanen et al., 2010; Cohen-Cline et al., 2018) and turnover intention (Dess and Shaw, 2001; Zhang et al., 2022). These findings collectively suggest that social capital directly benefits work outcomes while reducing the adverse effects.

However, social capital has also been characterised as a phenomenon of duality (Gargiulo and Benassi, 1999; Villalonga-Olives and Kawachi, 2017). Despite being a valuable resource, its dynamic nature can render it a liability, hindering individual action (Gargiulo and Benassi, 1999). In particular, strong social capital can act as a constraining and restrictive force (Pillai et al., 2017). For example, internal group obligations and commitments may foster conformity and adherence to group expectations, potentially resulting in groupthink. Recently, Baycan and Öner (2023) highlighted the potential adverse effects of social capital on individual well-being and performance. Moreover, Portes (1998) argued that its negative consequences include not only restrictions on freedom but also excessive demands on group members. For instance, membership of certain groups may entail a compulsion to engage in unethical behaviour such as corruption or free-riding.

Despite the acknowledged importance of addressing these issues, research aimed at countering such actions remain limited (Abdullah et al., 2019). According to Rendtorff (2023), normative ethics or divine guidance on ethical conduct are fundamental to improving workplace motivation and well-being. In fact, due to their profound influence on staff well-being and performance, the topic of work ethics has garnered considerable attention among organisational and management scholars, as well as practitioners (e.g., Vitell and Davis, 1990; Murtaza et al., 2016; Zia et al., 2022). Generally, the term “work ethics” describes the moral principles and values that guide an individual’s behaviour in the workplace and completion of work-related tasks. These values typically include responsibility, discipline, punctuality, honesty, diligence, and commitment (Schwartz, 2016). However, general work ethics do not necessarily have a religious or spiritual foundation (Ali and Weir, 2005). Islamic work ethics also emphasise these universal values; however, they are based on divine command theory (Sulphey, 2023), which is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings derived from the Qur’an, Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence. This concept is viewed as an act of worship, and all work practices are guided by Islamic principles and, ultimately, oriented to the hereafter. Building on this distinction, Islamic work ethics have a strong foundational basis that begins with the intention to perform work for the sake of Allah. This serves as a fundamental pillar of ethical conduct in Islam, in both daily life and the workplace (Irfan et al., 2024). Therefore, embedding normative ethics into the conceptualisation of behaviour within the organisation is essential for addressing the disadvantages of social capital and achieving a comprehensive understanding of workplace dynamics.

The topic of Islamic work ethics warrants serious scholarly inquiry (Nasr, 1984), particularly regarding how ethics can either weaken or augment work outcomes (Mohammad Saeed et al., 2001). Neglecting this aspect may diminish one’s understanding of the practice of Islam, which can have adverse moral, psychological, and social consequences (Ali and Al-Owaidan, 2008). Elements of social capital include network ties, trust, cooperation, collaboration, communication, and shared frames of reference, which stem from the relationships between actors (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Meanwhile, Islamic work ethics emphasise the values of harmony, trust, cooperation, forgiveness, and kindness; these are cultivated in the spirit of brotherhood and ultimately directed towards obedience to Allah (Rizk, 2008; Suryani et al., 2021) and solely for seeking Allah’s pleasure (Khalil and Abu-Saad, 2009). While both constructs emphasise interpersonal relationships (*Habluminannas*), Islamic work ethics contain the additional dimension of the individual’s relationship with Allah (*Habluminallah*). Extending these insights, Islamic work ethics can be integrated as a valuable lens with which to enhance understanding of the relationship between social capital and work outcomes. Therefore, this study aimed to establish a normative conceptual framework that would explain how work outcomes are shaped by social capital within the moral and ethical principles of Islamic work ethics.

This framework is normative, meaning it outlines ‘ideal’ or prescribed behaviours and relationships

based on principles derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, as well as being supported by recent literature. Rather than predicting specific outcomes, normative frameworks serve as guides or prescriptions for what is considered morally right. Therefore, the model does not fall into the category of predictive frameworks and should not be used to forecast particular results. Consequently, collecting empirical data was not necessary when creating this framework.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Methodology for Developing the Normative Conceptual Framework

In developing the normative framework, the relevant current literature was examined through a scoping review, complemented by reference to the Qur'an and Hadith. Qur'anic verses and Hadith were selected for their relevance to the themes explored in this study and then subjected to textual analysis. This engagement and analysis with Islamic sources involved authoritative compilations (e.g. Al-Bukhari, Al-Baihaqi, Al-Tarmidhi) and interpretations by contemporary scholars (e.g. Al-Qardawi, Al-Qudsy). The analysis involved analysing the textual content, contextual significance, and thematic relevancy to the study objectives. This approach ensured that the ethical principles extracted were firmly grounded in authentic Islamic teachings. By combining a literature review with this interpretive process, a conceptual framework was developed that is both academically rigorous and faithful to Islamic values.

The scoping review of the current literature involved selecting a pool of articles, followed by a screening process to exclude specified dimensions, duplicate records, and irrelevant articles. The steps are shown in Appendix I. The searching and screening strategy followed the Reporting Standards for Systematic Evidence Syntheses (ROSES) (Haddaway et al., 2018; Shaffril et al., 2021; refer to Appendix II). Specifically, the literature review focused on three bodies of knowledge: Islamic work ethics, social capital, and work outcomes. The scoping review involved a three-stage systematic search strategy: identification, screening, and inclusion (Shaffril et al., 2021; Zakaria et al., 2021). This approach was chosen for its structured methodology and capacity for clarifying key concepts relevant to the objectives (Munn et al., 2018). The relevant identified and selected sources included journal articles, books, and book chapters.

The identification stage involved using the keywords "Islamic work ethics", "social capital", and "work outcomes" in the search functions of the Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), Google Scholar, and other databases, as well as manual selection. This process helped determine a dataset of relevant sources. The total number of articles generated at this stage is listed in the identification stage of Appendix II. Next, the systematic searching proceeded to the screening stage, which involved selecting articles based on the following inclusion criteria: a) journals as a source type; b) published as an article or a review; c) items published in English; and d) articles in the business or management disciplines. The exclusion criteria involved removing irrelevant articles based on their titles, abstracts, or keywords (Shaffril et al., 2021; Zakaria et al., 2021). Appendix II lists the inclusion and exclusion criteria, as well as the number of articles generated from the screening stage. The last stage of screening involved removing articles that were duplicated across the databases. Finally, in the third stage of eligibility screening, the full-text articles were reviewed, with any irrelevant items removed from the dataset. This three-stage systematic searching strategy was applied across all three bodies of knowledge, underpinning the foundation of the proposed conceptual framework. The final number of articles, 123, constituted the dataset of relevant sources. The review outcomes are presented in the next three sections.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Islamic Work Ethics

An organisation that adopts an ethical model is generally more organised, effective, and efficient in its operation (Abeng, 1997), which could contribute to the overall success of both the company and its employees (Ibrahim and Yunus, 2022). Similarly, staff who adhere to strong work ethics tend to work diligently (Tang and Baumeister, 1984) and exhibit consistently positive workplace behaviours (Aman-

Ullah and Mehmood, 2023). In Islam, work is considered a divine duty and an act of worship to seek Allah’s pleasure, ultimately intended to enhance both personal and societal well-being.

Islamic work ethics are defined as “an orientation that shapes and influences the involvement and participation of believers in the workplace” derives from Islamic teachings that differentiate right from wrong in business conduct while emphasising hard work, commitment, and perseverance (Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008, p.10). The concept of Islamic work ethics is firmly grounded in the principles of equity and justice derived from the Holy Qur’an, Hadith (the sayings and practices of Prophet Muhammad SAW), and Sunnah (the deeds of Prophet Muhammad SAW), as well as the legacy of the immediate successors of the Prophet SAW (the four Caliphs).

Building upon this foundation, the concept of Islamic work ethics is exclusively linked to human activity, as every such action is considered a form of worship (*Ibadah*). Hence, work is shaped and guided by Islamic principles, whereby all individuals are responsible and accountable to Allah (Muhammad et al., 2008). Therefore, in Islamic teachings, temporal and spiritual dimensions are inseparable because humans are created to serve Allah and obey His commands in all aspects of life (Nadwi, 1978), including work. Moreover, Islamic work ethics emphasise maintaining a balance in worldly life, so work is viewed as a virtue and business-related pursuits are highly regarded (Ali, 2005; Rizk, 2008).

Aligned with this, from an Islamic perspective, ethics embody virtuous deeds such as ‘*adl* (equilibrium and justice), *birr* (righteousness), *qist* (equity), *haqq* (truth and right), *khayr* (goodness), *ma’ruf* (known and approved), and *taqwa* (piety) (Beekun, 1997, p. 2). Such virtues promote social relationships, cooperation, a spirit of consultation, and dedication to work, as well as work values that foster personal growth, self-respect, satisfaction, and self-fulfilment (Yousef, 2000). These elements help build social capital within organisations.

3.1.1 Elements of Islamic Work Ethics

A review of the literature revealed that the concept of Islamic work ethics encompasses elements of the values of effort, healthy competition, transparency, morally responsible conduct, honesty and accountability, the belief that wealth must be earned, teamwork, work quality, good deeds and intentions, self-reliance, and generosity; meanwhile, bribery and greed are considered immoral (e.g., Ali, 2005; Ali and Al-Owaihan, 2008; Kamaluddin and Manan, 2010). The Islamic work ethics framework developed by Kamaluddin and Manan (2010) was referenced in this study as it offers a holistic approach to enhancing work outcomes due to its emphasis on the economic, moral, and social dimensions. The selected elements of Islamic work ethics can be classified into three major themes—effort, teamwork, and morally responsible conduct—as these align better with the constructs of social capital and work outcomes (see Figure 1). These dimensions are discussed below.

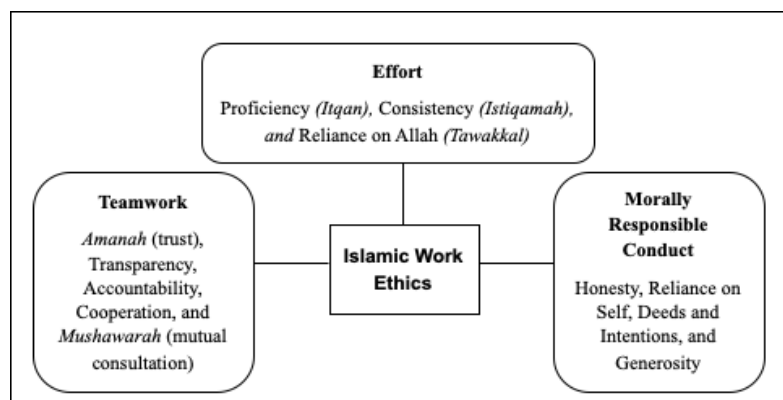


Figure 1: Islamic Work Ethics Elements in Relation to Social Capital and Work Outcomes
Source: Author’s own work

Effort is defined as the amount of physical, cognitive, and emotional energy that an individual utilises when performing employment-related tasks (Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). Effort is highly esteemed in Islam: as stated in the Qur'an, Allah SWT highly praises those who strive (make an effort) to earn a living: "*Whoever does good, whether male or female and is a believer, We will most certainly make them live a happy life, and We will most certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did*" (Qur'an, 16:97). Islam strongly emphasises the ethical pursuit of one's livelihood, as Prophet Muhammad SAW is reported to have encouraged striving for honest and diligent work, which is deemed pleasing to Allah.

Obviously, such effort must be embodied with the values of *itqan*, *istiqamah*, and *tawakkal* (Kamaluddin and Manan, 2010). Defined as being knowledgeable and conscientious in all endeavours (Alhabshi and Ghazali, 1994), *itqan* is expected to produce work of superior quality (Ali and Al-Owaihian, 2008). As the Prophet Muhammad SAW stated, "*Allah loves to see one's job done at the level of itqan*" (Imam At-Tabrânî, in *al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*, No. 897, cited in Al-Qudsy, 2008). *Istiqamah* reflects consistency and passion for excellence, while *tawakkal* signifies completely surrendering oneself to and trusting solely in Allah SWT (Alhabshi et al., 1998). For instance, after a Muslim has given their best effort (*itqan*) and demonstrated consistency in their work (*istiqamah*), they practise *tawakkal* (trust in Allah). The combination these values fosters perseverance, promotes knowledge sharing (Murtaza et al., 2016; Udin, 2024), and ultimately leads to high-quality work. In this setting, efforts influenced by these values may strengthen social capital by fostering trust and cooperation among employees, which will produce optimal work outcomes. Conversely, putting in minimal effort is considered undesirable and may even result in failure in life (Ali, 1998).

Teamwork is defined as the cooperative effort of individuals who collaborate in a coordinated manner to attain common goals (Merriam-Webster, 2026). The concept embodies the values of cooperation and fostering trust through mutual consultation. Islamic teachings emphasise the importance of teamwork through practising transparency and accountability to prevent misconduct when performing one's responsibilities in organisations. To ensure the successful execution of work tasks, team members are encouraged to engage in mutual consultation (*mushawarah*) and cooperation in order to achieve consensual decisions (Aliyu, 2016). *Mushawarah* refers to discussions intended to reach a collective decision on selecting an optimum solution while overcoming obstacles and avoiding mistakes (Karman, 2004; Kumar and Che Rose, 2010). In the Quran, Allah SWT highlights the importance of consultation: "*And those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and their rule is to take counsel among themselves, and spend out of what We have given them*" (Qur'an, 42:38).

Besides mutual consultation, effective teamwork necessitates *amanah* (trust) among a team. As used in this study, the definition of trust encompasses three aspects: i) organisational trust, such as fairness, justice, and integrity; ii) workplace trust, such as honesty and integrity; and iii) personal trust in the form of the values of integrity and responsibility. In Islamic ethics, *amanah* refers to humans serving as God's trustees on Earth (Beekun and Badawi, 2005). Thus, for teamwork to thrive, trusting relationships must first be established, allowing the team members to uphold their responsibilities and demonstrate accountability for their actions. Trust is fundamental to business practices, where the pursuit of improved work outcomes and the strengthening of relationships among all members should be consistently embedded. Allah SWT commands His servants to uphold trust as an essential principle of moral conduct, as stated in the Qur'an: "*Allah doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when ye judge between people that ye judge with justice*" (Qur'an, 4:58). The Prophet SAW further reinforced this principle: "*Fulfil the trust for the one who entrusted, and do not cheat the one who cheated you.*" (At-Tirmidhi, No. 1264). From this perspective, ensuring good teamwork strengthens social capital by promoting trust, effective communication, and mutual support among employees. This improves work outcomes in terms of productivity, performance, and effective organisation. These directives emphasise the significance of creating trustworthiness and nurturing social relationships in the workplace.

Morally responsible conduct refers to acting with moral responsibility, which involves aligning the individual's actions with ethical values (Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2023). This form of

ethical practice can strengthen social capital within an organisation by encouraging internal accountability, which is essential for enhancing work outcomes. Within the framework of Islamic work ethics, values like honesty, self-reliance, good intentions and deeds, and generosity are regarded as exemplary forms of conduct. When consistently practised, these values can foster positive behaviour among employees in organisations. Among these values, honesty is regarded as one of the most highly esteemed moral virtues in Islam. In a business context, it reflects transparency and the ethical obligation not to withhold information that ought to be disclosed, whether to superiors or customers (Kamaluddin and Manan, 2010). In Islam, this quality is viewed as reflecting sincerity towards Allah SWT. The Prophet SAW stated, “*Honesty leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise...*”. In business dealings, “*Honesty and clarity are blessed for both parties to a sale, while concealment and deceit destroy the blessings of their sale*” (Al-Bukhari, No. 1937). A critical element shaping moral conduct is intention (*niat*). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), intention acts as a proxy for behaviour and may influence attitude. In Islam, intention is a criterion that Allah SWT evaluates, rather than focusing solely on outcomes (Ali and Owaihan, 2008). Therefore, an employee's good intention to work hard is viewed as *ibadah*. However, Islam also stresses that such intentions alone do not justify impermissible actions. In other words, if the means are forbidden (*haram*), an action remains unacceptable, even if it originates from good intentions, because in Islam, the end does not justify the means (Al-Qaradawi, 1980).

3.2 Social Capital

Social capital can be defined as a value derived from social networks that supports individuals and organisations to achieve their goals through collaboration, trust, and mutual understanding (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital can be understood from two main perspectives, namely Social Network Theory and Resource-Based Theory. The former focuses on the structure and configuration of social networks, arguing that a structure's sources lie in the social structure connecting various actors (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Meanwhile, Resource-Based Theory emphasises the nature and characteristics of network linkages, suggesting that the dimensions of social capital extend beyond network actors to include the relational and cognitive capital embedded in these ties (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998).

In discussing social capital, the framework proposed by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) was adopted in this study as it was considered the most appropriate for capturing the key dimensions of the constructs. This framework encompasses the networks between actors (structural), as well as the embedded nature of networking in their thinking (cognitive) and deeds (relational). The literature indicates that this model has often been employed in research (e.g., Chiu et al., 2006; El Abboubi, 2021; Ganguly et al., 2019; Inkpen and Tsang, 2005; Setini et al., 2020; Wasko and Faraj, 2005), underscoring its extensive acceptance and relevance. Thus, these three dimensions were selected for use in the current study and are discussed accordingly.

Structural capital, as suggested by Bourdieu (1986), refers to institutionalised relationships that enable individuals to mobilise social capital. Such relationships enhance both individual and firm performance in two ways: firstly, by facilitating access to information and resources, and, secondly, by helping coordinate task interdependencies (Gargiulo and Benassi, 2000). In addition, Leana and Pil (2006, p. 353) referred to structural capital as “the connections among actors” that explain the social relationships between these actors and their frequency of interaction which is the pillar of social capital and the foundation for relationship-building between individuals (Hazleton and Kenna, 2000).

Relational capital constitutes the personal ties of an individual (Leana and Van Buren III, 1999; Moran, 2005). Essentially, these are embedded assets, encompassing norms, values, trust, and obligations, which create potential opportunities for collaboration among team members (Yli-Renko et al., 2001). Of these elements, trust is widely recognised as the most critical component of this form of capital (Beugelsdijk, 2006; Zak and Knack, 2001) because it can lead to cooperative behaviour among individuals, groups, and organisations (Gambetta, 1988; Cummings and Bromiley, 1996). Close interpersonal relationships between organisation members enhance trust, which subsequently has a

significant positive impact on work outcomes like job satisfaction, organisational commitment (Lambert et al., 2021), and knowledge sharing (Radaelli et al., 2024).

Cognitive capital refers to “resources that make possible shared interpretations and meanings within a collective” (Wasko and Faraj, 2005, p.41). Inkpen and Tsang (2005) further explained that network members who share common goals or objectives are more likely to exchange resources effectively. This form of capital reflects the collective aspirations of organisation members (Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998), and it is developed through shared visions, goals, norms, narratives, and language (Daghar et al., 2023; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). This shared cognitive dimension provides individuals with a common frame of reference, facilitating smoother interactions and reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings (Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998; Wasko and Faraj, 2005). Furthermore, shared goals encourage meaningful communication among actors, ultimately enabling the achievement of mutual benefits (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998).

3.3 Work Outcomes

Work outcomes are typically defined as the results of an employee’s attitude and actions that indicate the extent to which they perform and contribute to organisational goals (Judge et al., 2001). Work outcomes like job satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, turnover intentions, and knowledge sharing have been extensively explored in relation to both social capital and work ethics (e.g., Abbas et al., 2014; Hsu et al., 2011; Lambert et al., 2021; Murtaza et al., 2016; Ocampo et al., 2018; Peng, 2024; Read and Laschinger, 2015; Suryani et al., 2021; Yamaguchi, 2013; Zia et al., 2022). Despite this volume of studies, academic interest in this topic remains due to its profound effects on organisational effectiveness and performance.

Job satisfaction, described as a collection of emotions that an individual feels towards his or her job (Robbins, 2005), has been widely explored as a work outcome. People feel more satisfied and have less intention to quit their organisation when they work in a socially supportive environment. Such work settings assist career advancement and contribute to the generation of effective outcomes (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2017; Cai et al., 2015; Read and Laschinger, 2015). Other positive work outcomes that have attracted scholarly attention are organisational commitment and organisational citizenship. The former refers to an employee’s psychological attachment to their organisation, as reflected in their desire, need, and obligation to remain employed (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Meanwhile, organisational citizenship behaviour refers to positive actions beyond routine work duties, which contribute to effective and efficient organisational functioning and performance (Ocampo et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, work outcomes may also have negative consequences, like turnover intention and deviant behaviour, which are detrimental to an organisation’s effectiveness (Abdullah et al., 2019; Rawwas et al., 2018; Rokhman, 2016). Turnover intention describes the process of staff thinking about leaving, considering alternative employment, and intending to leave their organisation (Miller et al., 1979). This intention decreases when employees have strong social interconnections (Karatepe and Olugbade, 2016; Tripathi, 2024) and uphold high values regarding work ethics (Rokhman, 2016). Although staff may be socially connected, the quality of their inter-relationships can influence their helping behaviours (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). As such, a relationship of mistrust might encourage the deviant workplace behaviour of knowledge hiding (Hernaus et al., 2019), whereby an employee might intentionally conceal knowledge from someone requesting it (Connelly et al., 2012).

In fact, deviant workplace behaviour can have serious psychological, social, and tangible consequences for organisations and their staff (Kalemci et al., 2019), including reduced productivity and heightened fear among employees (Nurmaya and Arshad, 2020). According to Peterson (2002), the prevalence of such behaviour can be influenced by the ethical climate within an organisation. Deviant workplace behaviour is typically classified into two dimensions, organisational and interpersonal (Peterson, 2002). The former targets an organisation and may involve, for example, vandalising office equipment. Meanwhile, the latter targets organisation members and may involve, for example, cyberbullying (Ismail et al., 2023).

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Relating Social Capital and Islamic Work Ethics to Work Outcomes

The discussion on social capital and Islamic work ethics reveals the significance of these two constructs in enhancing work outcomes. Islamic work ethics necessitate a balance between societal dynamics and social collaboration that is deeply rooted in spiritual destiny (Rice, 1999). This equilibrium is reflected in the interplay between the fundamental tenets of Islamic work ethics and the dimensions of social capital. Just as ethical behaviour can positively influence workplace outcomes (Weeks *et al.*, 2004), social relations comprising the structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions of social capital also affect these outcomes (Flap and Volker, 2001; Vigoda-Gadot *et al.*, 2011; Watson and Papamarcos, 2002). The relationship between Islamic work ethics, social capital dimensions, and work outcomes is discussed in the following section.

4.1.1 Social Capital and Work Outcomes

Extensive research has demonstrated how the different dimensions of social capital — structural, relational, and cognitive — can significantly influence various work outcomes. For example, Flap and Volker (2001) suggested that structural capital can impact job satisfaction. Positive social relationships in the workplace can enhance the sense of connection and support among staff, potentially enabling greater job satisfaction and stronger commitment to their roles (Mittal *et al.*, 2025). Read and Laschinger (2015) found a significant positive relationship between the relational dimension and job satisfaction. Meanwhile, regarding the cognitive dimension, Javed *et al.* (2004) discovered that communication significantly enhanced job satisfaction, with the clarity of information provided by project managers contributing positively to this feeling. These findings suggest that a shared understanding and the ability to convey clear messages, which are aspects of cognitive social capital, are important drivers of employee satisfaction.

Moreover, McCallum *et al.* (2014) posited that when employees engage in internal networking behaviour, this could foster an emotional attachment to the organisation because this interaction with colleagues brings them closer. Consequently, this influences their attitudes and enables access to greater emotional support. Conducted among managers and professionals, their study revealed a positive relationship between internal networking and affective commitment. Meanwhile, trust, an element of the relational dimension, was positively related to organisational commitment (Alomran *et al.*, 2024; Watson and Papamarcos, 2002). Studies have also demonstrated that a shared understanding, as an important element of the cognitive dimension, is positively related to this form of commitment (Lambert *et al.* 2021; Watson and Papamarcos, 2002).

Furthermore, social capital plays a crucial role in promoting organisational citizenship behaviour. Jun (2017) revealed a positive relationship between these two factors, concluding that enhancing social relationships among hospital workers could increase their organisational citizenship behaviour. He also confirmed that social capital mediated the relationship between the behaviours of transformational leadership and organisational citizenship. Yildiz (2019) identified a positive relationship between organisational trust and organisational citizenship behaviour. Similarly, Renani *et al.* (2017) found that social capital and all its dimensions were significantly positively related to organisational citizenship behaviour.

Social capital might also assist in mitigating counterproductive behaviours like turnover intention and deviant behaviour. Concerning the structural dimension of social capital, individuals connected to many others tend to feel more embedded within the organisation (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001), suggesting that network size may influence turnover intention. Furthermore, elements of the relational dimension have been linked to various consequences. For instance, when an individual identifies closely with their colleagues, their intention to leave the organisation tends to decrease (Omanwar and Agrawal, 2022;

Ramadani et al., 2013; Riketta and Van Dick, 2005). Trust, another key component of the relational dimension, also aids in shaping employees' willingness to remain in the organisation (Jiang and Shen, 2018). In terms of the cognitive dimension, a shared frame of reference fosters a sense of comfort and attachment among individuals, thereby reducing their likelihood of leaving the organisation (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998).

Social capital can also mitigate deviant employee behaviour, such as knowledge hiding. Ghasemzadeh et al. (2015) found social capital to be a negative predictor of such workplace behaviour. The relationship between the respondents promoted norms and trust, resulting in shared objectives and goals, as well as fewer displays of deviant behaviour. Abdullah et al. (2019) found that relational capital mitigated the relationship between ethical leadership and knowledge hiding. Meanwhile, Nadeem et al. (2021) identified a negative and significant effect of shared goals, which was an indicator of cognitive capital and knowledge-hiding behaviour.

In contrast, social capital has also been associated with detrimental effects on individual behaviour. Also known as 'bad' (Putnam, 2000) or negative social capital (Portes, 1998), this may negatively affect individuals, leading to the display of unhealthy norms and behaviours (Christakis and Fowler, 2007), or even criminality (Putnam, 2000). For example, Harris (2007) found a significant positive relationship between bonding social capital and corruption in over 20 countries. Corruption and organised crime typically occur where networks or trust are strong (Baycan and Öner, 2023). Moreover, employees with weak social capital usually lack support from other organisational members, contributing to negative outcomes (Baycan and Öner, 2023).

4.1.2 Islamic Work Ethics and Work Outcomes

This section explores the significant role of Islamic work ethics, which are rooted in the principles and teachings of Islam, in shaping various work outcomes. Ahmad (2011) found that workers possessing and acting with a high level of work ethics are more likely to experience job satisfaction. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing a strong relationship between these ethics and job satisfaction (e.g., Jones, 1984; Morrow and McElory, 1987; Saks et al., 1996; Viswesvaran and Deshpande, 1996; Vitell and Davis, 1990; Zia et al., 2024) and specifically between Islamic work ethics and job satisfaction (e.g., Ahmad 2011; Yousef, 2000; Rokhman, 2010; Rokhman et al., 2011; Gheitani et al., 2019). Gheitani et al. (2019), who studied 23 branches of Maskan Bank in northern Khuzestan, concluded that employees who had practised Islamic teachings tended to experience greater job satisfaction and organisational commitment. This suggests that Muslim employees understand that work is part of worship and feel satisfied when they believe their jobs are done for the sake of Allah SWT. They will then strive more (*itqan*) in their work and be more engaged in their jobs (Tarab, 2024). Moreover, they will feel happy when they have perfected their job as they know they will receive blessings from Allah SWT, as mentioned by the Prophet SAW: "*God blesses a person who perfects his craft (performs the task properly)*" (Al-Baihaqi, Hadith No. 551).

In addition, an empirical study on Islamic work ethics found that managers in the UAE have higher work commitment, which rose as their level of responsibility grew (Ali 1989). Subsequent studies support these findings, consistently showing that individuals with a high level of Islamic work ethics tend to exhibit strong organisational commitment (e.g., Manan et al., 2013; Rahman et al., 2006; Rokhman, 2010, 2016; Udin, 2024; Yousef, 2001). This behavioural pattern aligns with the command of Allah SWT in the Qur'an: "*And fulfil the covenant of Allah when you have taken it, (O believers), and do not break oaths after their confirmation while you have made Allah, over you, a witness. Indeed, Allah knows what you do*" (Qur'an, 16:91). Muslim employees regard accepting a job offer as a moral and spiritual covenant, reinforcing their sense of responsibility and accountability. As work in Islam is considered an act of worship, they are more likely to approach tasks with care and dedication, thereby demonstrating greater commitment to their roles.

Moreover, Islamic work ethics affect the organisational citizenship behaviour of employees (Mohammad et al., 2016; Romi et al., 2020). To inculcate this type of behaviour, organisations should

observe justice and fairness when dealing with staff. The concept of the need for justice and fairness is obvious among Muslims who adhere to Islamic teachings, so employers must practise both aspects in their relationship with their employees. In the Qur'an, Allah SWT mentioned, *"Be just, that is nearer to righteousness (taqwa); and be conscious of Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do"* (Qur'an, 5:8). Once employees believe their employers are acting justly towards them, they often surpass their defined work roles, such as by assisting colleagues even after office hours.

While the effects of work ethics can be identified in positive work outcomes, they may also reduce the effects of negative work outcomes like turnover intention and deviant behaviour. Research on Islamic work ethics and turnover intention demonstrates the negative effects of the former on the latter (eg., Khan Marri et al., 2013; Rokhman, 2010). For instance, in their study of 395 employees from 36 public-sector institutions in Pakistan, Khan Marri et al. (2013) discovered that those who supported Islamic work ethics in their work generally displayed a reduced intention to leave their organisation.

More importantly, employees possessing higher Islamic work ethics tend to exhibit lower levels of work deviant behaviour (Syed and Azam, 2019; Zia et al., 2022). According to the principle of Islamic work ethics, Muslim employers and employees must not engage in counterproductive behaviour in any business operations. For example, knowledge hiding is strictly forbidden in Islam: the Prophet SAW warned Muslims regarding this behaviour, saying *"Whoever is asked about knowledge and he conceals it, Allah will clothe him with a bridle of fire on the Day of Resurrection"* (At-Tirmidhi, Hadith No. 2649). Indeed, Muslims are encouraged to share their knowledge and will be rewarded accordingly if they impart it to others. The Prophet SAW said, *"Whoever teaches some knowledge will have the reward of the one who acts upon it, without that detracting from his reward in the slightest"* (Sunan Ibn Mājah, Hadith No. 240).

Similarly, Islam prohibits its believers from involvement in any form of bribery or corruption due to the serious damage these actions cause to the community and the economy, such as reduced economic growth (Bougatef, 2015). In the Qur'an, Allah SWT explicitly forbids His servants from wrongfully taking the property of others: *"And eat up not one another's property unjustly, nor approach and influence the judge that you may knowingly eat up a part of the property of others sinfully"* (Qur'an, 2:188). Accordingly, Muslim employees are expected to uphold high standards of responsibility and transparency when performing their duties (Ali and Al - Owaihan, 2008).

In summary, Islamic teachings encourage Muslims to uphold the highest standards in their duties and undertakings, emphasising the pursuit of quality and perfection. According to the Prophet SAW, *"Allah loves to see one's job done at the level of itqan"* (Imam At-Tabrānī, in Al-Mu'jam Al-Awsat, No. 897, cited in Al-Qudsy, 2008). Moreover, work is regarded as *ibadah* (worship) in Islam. It is widely acknowledged that Prophet Muhammad SAW emphasised the virtue of striving to earn a lawful and honest livelihood as an act that is pleasing to Allah. In line with Islamic teachings, Muslims are encouraged to work diligently to earn a livelihood while upholding their dignity (Suprayogo, 2012). Therefore, all work-related behaviours must adhere to the principles outlined by Allah SWT and the Sunnah of the Prophet SAW.

4.1.3 Islamic Work Ethics and Social Capital

Relationships grounded in trust and mutual affection enhance employees' responsiveness to one another (Uzzi, 1996) and foster cooperative norms, as well as a commitment to reciprocate supportive behaviours (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1995). However, the full benefits of social capital cannot be realised without a balance between obligations and relational inertia (Gargiulo and Bennasi, 1999). Indeed, social capital is fragile and can be diminished because it depends on ongoing interpersonal relationships and consistent actions (Putnam, 2000), hence the need to explore factors that may enhance the positive forces of reciprocity while managing the potential inertia within these relationships (Gargiulo and Bennasi, 1999).

The teachings of Islam encourage brotherhood and solidarity for unity. Allah SWT commands His servants to stay united and forbids them from becoming divided: “*And hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited, and remember the favour of Allah on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favour you became brethren; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire.*” (Qur’an, 3:103). This verse reminds Muslims to strive collectively for worship and faith. Work is considered worship, so Muslims must help each other to cooperate for the good of humanity. Allah SWT commands mankind to help others, to treat others as one wishes to be treated, and engage in acts of goodness: “*Do good as Allah has done good to you*” (Qur’an, 28:77).

Muslims who adhere to Islamic teachings are expected to maintain good relationships with others by preserving social connections. Such links require both parties to help each other and reciprocate this help. Allah SWT orders His servants to strive to fulfil one another’s needs. As Allah says, “*Help one another in acts of piety and righteousness. And do not assist each other in acts of sinfulness and transgression. And be aware of Allah. Verily, Allah is severe in punishment*” (Qur’an, 5:2). This verse underscores that social capital, from an Islamic perspective, must be rooted in virtuous actions and produce positive outcomes. In Islam, the concept of ‘bad’ social capital does not exist, since harmful relationships contradict Islamic values. Allah SWT not only commands Muslims to help others but also, most importantly, warns them against hurting others. Mutual help is inherently a noble form of worship. Known as *akhlaq*, these good manners stem from practising virtue and morality, and they are fundamental to the Islamic way of life.

Additionally, ethical behaviour such as being sincere, working hard, and helping others could change people’s attitudes and strengthen their relationships, consequently improving employee performance (Pardiman et al., 2017). Furthermore, an individual is not only encouraged to prevent misconduct when performing their responsibilities and distributing resources but also advised to consult others when making decisions in order to achieve specific tasks. The Prophet SAW himself consulted his companions and other Muslims when making crucial decisions during the holy war. For example, during the Battle of the Trench, he exercised mutual consultation, or *mushawarah*, and cooperation, thus achieving a consensus on accepting Salman al-Farisi’s idea to entrench the city as a defensive strategy. This reinforces the pertinence of the practice of *shura* to Islamic work ethics.

Arguably, social capital will decline or lose its efficacy if not actively maintained (Adler and Kwon, 2002), whereas Islamic work ethics will endure provided that individuals continue to adhere to Islamic teachings and uphold faith in Allah SWT. Accordingly, it is proposed that social capital should be developed and harnessed appropriately, while ethical values should simultaneously be incorporated to achieve positive work outcomes. In line with this view, Vigoda-Gadot et al. (2011) highlighted that social capital affects work outcomes through both direct and indirect pathways.

4.1.4 Proposed Normative Framework

The discussion above enables an in-depth understanding of the substantial potential of Islamic work ethics to shape good social capital among employees. It also proves that high-quality relationships among coworkers can produce favourable work outcomes while simultaneously preventing and even reducing deviant behaviour. Employees embodying strong Islamic work ethics are more likely to engage in positive interactions with their colleagues and contribute constructively to the organisation. As such, Islamic work ethics should be recognised as a guiding framework that can promote ethical conduct and help mitigate the potential negative impacts of social capital on work outcomes.

Based on this discussion, the authors propose a normative conceptual framework for the role of Islamic work ethics in influencing the relationship between social capital and work outcomes. The framework drew upon Islamic principles and beliefs whereby adherents are expected to comply with the principles and directives ordained by Allah (SWT), considering all aspects of human activity as worship (*Ibadah*). Consequently, Muslim employees are expected to demonstrate positive workplace behaviour while strictly avoiding negative conduct, which is considered sinful. Meanwhile, the relationship between social capital and work outcomes can be understood through the lens of Social Capital Theory. This suggests that social resources empower an organisation’s employees to leverage existing resources effectively in

their work environments (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Read and Laschinger, 2015). The theory posits that when socially connected, employees of an organisation tend to experience greater job satisfaction (Birmingham et al., 2024). Thus, cultivating social capital in the workplace among network members correlates with improved work outcomes (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Given that social capital can yield both negative and positive work outcomes, Islamic work ethics may serve as a guiding framework, acting as both as an antecedent to social capital and a mitigating mechanism that channels its influence towards constructive workplace outcomes.

Shown in Figure 2, the framework illustrates the direct relationship between social capital and work outcomes, as well as between Islamic work ethics and work outcomes. It positions Islamic work ethics as an antecedent to both social capital and work outcomes (shown in straight lines). Notably, given that social capital is a construct with both positive and negative implications (double-edged sword), Islamic work ethics were positioned as a guiding principle that helps shape the relationship between this capital and these outcomes (see note). As a mitigating mechanism, Islamic work ethics are expected to channel the effects of social capital towards constructive outcomes by curbing its dark-side consequences while enhancing its beneficial aspects.

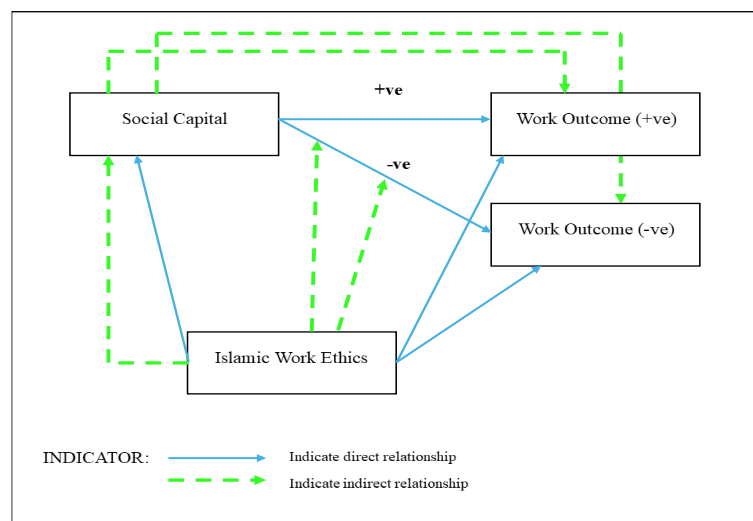


Figure 2: Proposed Normative Conceptual Framework Linking Islamic Work Ethics, Social Capital, and Work Outcomes

Source: Author's own work

Note: The link between social capital and work outcomes is shown in the perforated lines from the Islamic work ethics box to the social capital box and in the straight lines linking social capital with work outcomes.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Overall Conclusion and Theoretical Contributions

This study proposes a normative framework that conceptually integrates the three knowledge disciplines of social capital, work outcomes, and Islamic work ethics. The framework highlights the direct relationship between these disciplines, positioning Islamic work ethics as a foundational factor that influences both social capital and its impact on work outcomes. By highlighting the roles these ethics play as both an antecedent to social capital and mitigating mechanism that help channel the effect of social capital towards constructive work outcomes, this study extends the existing knowledge concerning how social capital shapes work outcomes while addressing its potential dark-side consequences. This novel conceptualisation significantly enhances the understanding of the link between social capital and work ethics. The integration of Islamic work ethics with social capital and work outcomes provides a robust theoretical foundation for guiding both future research and practical applications.

5.2 Implications for Managerial Practice and Policymaking

The proposed framework offers valuable insights for managerial practices and policymaking, both of which contribute to enhancing societal well-being. First, Islamic work ethics are crucial in influencing social interaction within organisations. These ethics guide employee behaviour and help managers to build social capital aligned with ethical and organisational values. Second, understanding the relationship between social capital and work outcomes contributes to the effective management of team dynamics. Specifically, the collective spirit embedded in Islamic work ethics promotes a stronger team dynamic in the workplace. Third, Islamic work ethics have notable implications for employee well-being, extending beyond the recognition of individual achievements to emphasise workplace justice. Overall, understanding Islamic work ethics enables organisations to appreciate the values, motivations, and behaviours of Muslim employees and managers. It fosters respect for religious and ethical norms, thus supporting the creation of inclusive workplace cultures.

Although the current study is rooted in Islamic work ethics, these principles embody universal values like moral conduct (*akhlaq*), which are applicable across diverse workplace settings and cultures. However, when applying these principles, managers must consider the criticisms of Islamic work ethics and their relationship with social capital and work outcomes. These criticisms primarily derive from non-Muslims, who do not share the same foundational beliefs (Qur'an and Sunnah), so they do not regard Islamic work ethics as applicable to them. Additionally, non-Muslims may not embrace key concepts of Islamic work ethics, such as viewing work as an act of worship and seeking Allah's pleasure, leading them to perceive Islamic work ethics as irrelevant. Understanding these criticisms and their underlying principles will help managers instil a sound understanding of Islamic work ethics and implement its values effectively across diverse organisational contexts. This effort can be strengthened through the integration of Islamic work ethics in cross-cultural training, which would help non-Muslim colleagues and leaders interact more effectively with their Muslim counterparts.

Moreover, Islamic work ethics presents both a faith-based and practical foundation that can inform and enhance policymaking across diverse sectors. Incorporating Islamic work ethics into policymaking offers a culturally and morally grounded framework for guiding the governance of institutions and industry stakeholders. It enables the alignment of public policies with ethical conduct in both organisations and society by promoting universally relevant values such as integrity, justice, and social responsibility.

5.3 Implications for Future Research

This article proposes a normative framework grounded in Islamic principles and teachings that connects Islamic work ethics, social capital, and work outcomes. Given its normative nature, generating hypotheses for empirical testing was not the primary objective. Instead, this framework could represent a benchmark to which Muslims should aspire in their workplace practices. Since this is a normative framework, empirical testing is not feasible. Instead, future researchers could explore case studies on normative practices of Islamic work ethics, which would illustrate their industrial application and highlight normative managerial practices. Additionally, such case studies could serve as benchmarks for Islamic work ethics implementation and further refine the dimensions and components of Islamic work ethics, social capital, and work outcomes.

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Appendix I

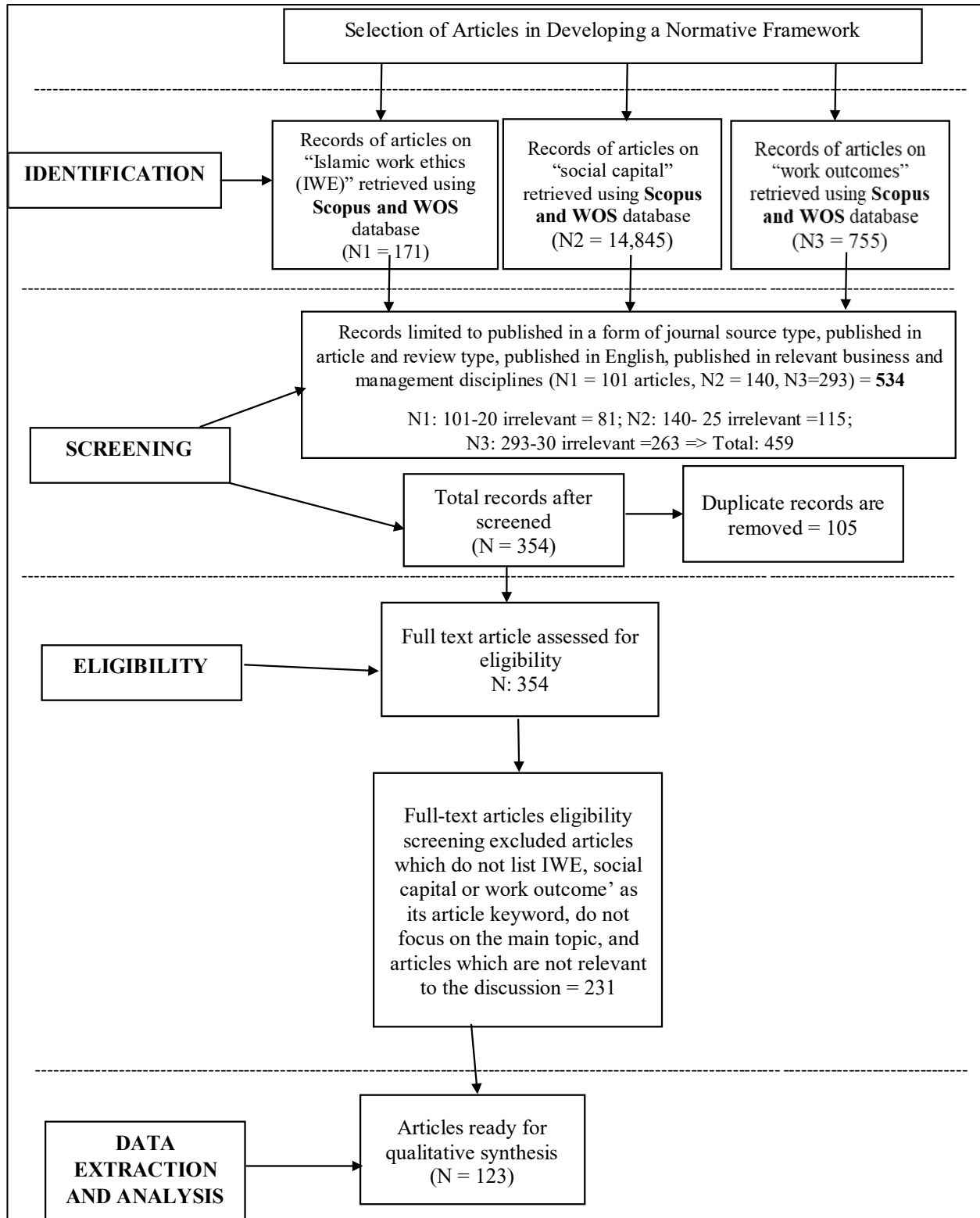
Steps for Selecting Articles to Develop the Normative Framework

Steps	Activities and purpose	Search string
Step 1	Selection of a pool of articles on Islamic work ethics, social capital, and work outcomes	1) TITLE ("Islamic work ethics"), N = 171 2) TITLE ("social capital"), N = 14,845 3) TITLE ("work outcomes"), N = 755
Step 2	Screening of relevant articles	For Islamic work ethics: TITLE ("islamic work ethics") AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "re")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) = 101 For social capital TITLE (("social capital") AND (organisation OR work OR workplace)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "re")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) = 140 For work outcomes TITLE ("work outcomes") AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "re")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI")) = 293
Step 3	Removal of duplicate records	N1: 101-20 irrelevant = 81; N2: 140- 25 irrelevant =115; N3: 293-30 irrelevant =263 => Total = 459 -105 (duplicate records) = 354
Step 4	Exclusion of irrelevant articles, based on a full-text review	354-231(excluded articles), Total retained articles = 123

Source: Author's own work

Appendix II

ROSES Flow Diagram for the Selection of Articles in the Scoping Review



Source: Author's own work