

Values, accountability and trust among Muslim staff in Islamic organisations



Authors:

Hasnah Nasution¹ 
 Saman Ahmed Shihab² 
 Sulieman Ibraheem Shelash Al-Hawary³ 
 Harikumar Pallathadka⁴ 
 Ammar Abdel Amir Al-Salami⁵ 
 Le Van⁶ 
 Forqan Ali Hussein Al-Khafaji⁷ 
 Tatiana Victorovna Morozova⁸ 
 Iskandar Muda⁹ 

Affiliations:

¹Faculty of Usuluddin and Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan, Medan, Indonesia

²Department of Law, Al-Maarif University College, Al-Anbar, Ramadi, Iraq

³Department of Business Administration, Al al-Bayt University, Mafraq, Jordan

⁴Management Department, Manipur International University, Imphal, India

⁵Department of Qur'anic Studies, College of Islamic Science, The Islamic University, Najaf, Iraq

⁶Faculty of Business Administration, Van Lang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

⁷Department of Media, Al-Mustaqbal University College, Babylon, Iraq

⁸Department of Financial Control, Analysis and Audit of the Main Control, Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Moscow, Russian Federation

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While humans are the best of creations and God's caliphs on Earth, such a status is always hard to achieve and necessitates many efforts and too much practice. This world also has a two-way path, one terminating in the lowest of the low and the other culminating in the highest of the high. It means that one way leads to misfortune and misery and the other to happiness and perfection. To attain happiness, accountability can be of utmost importance. Besides, the purpose of human creation is closeness to God by preferring the right path, which is not often possible unless they speak the truth and make the best use of the enlightening teachings of the revelation to spot the bad and good, becoming aware of their own duties and responsibilities and ultimately putting them into effect. This research aimed to investigate the mediating role of values in the relationship between accountability and trust among Muslim managers and employees in Islamic organisations, using a descriptive method through a field study. The statistical population included 2500 senior Muslim managers and employees of Iraqi government organisations, selected via simple random sampling. In this research, structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis was recruited for data analysis in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Analysis of a Moment Structures (AMOS). The study results demonstrated that accountability in Muslim managers and employees has a significant positive effect on trust ($p = 0.45$) and values ($p = 0.81$). Moreover, the findings revealed that values have a positive effect on reinforcing trust in Islamic organisations ($p = 0.54$), and above all bolster the relationship between accountability in managers and employees and organisational trust ($p = 0.43$).

Contribution: The accountability of managers and employees can have a positive effect on individuals' performance in organisations. In general, psychological pressures in organisations result in organisational transformation and then maintain values through trust-building. Such changes can be subsequently operationalized and have a profound impact on people's behaviour by affecting work order and keeping them always growing, agile and diligent, in order to reach a new level of performance.

Keywords: Islamic organisations; accountability; Muslim staff; organisational trust; organisational values.

Introduction

Accountability seems essential, having been defined as commitment and acceptance of responsibilities in many interpretations of the divine *amanah* or trust. The reason that such huge *amanah* was entrusted to humans was their capabilities to give a positive response to the divine *velayat* or guardianship, which means to keep walking on the path of servitude and perfection toward God, as stated in the Holy Qur'an:

Truly, We did offer the *amanah* to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it, but human bore it. Verily, he was unjust and ignorant. (The Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Ahzab, Ayat 72).

In Islamic systems, accountability in the workplace includes some democratic aspects and is often closely associated with Islamic ethics and knowledge. Aside from bureaucratic and political aspects, it is simply a kind of action based on Islamic principles and beliefs. One of the central

⁹Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Corresponding author: Le Van, VAN.L@vlu.edu.vn

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components of policymaking in democratic societies is the accountability of government managers and employees. In this sense, accountability is one form of democratic politics. It also has philosophical and intellectual foundations as a very serious issue, because of the importance of the work that the executive employees in a country feel responsible for. In this way, the destiny of a country depends on its decisions, actions, and words, so obedience is unavoidable. The principle of human accountability, attributed to their self-awareness and free will, is a type of moral behaviour accompanied by obligation and binding, which do not conflict with one's independence and decision-making power. Ethical responsibilities are sometimes in the form of individual ethics, wherein everyone, regardless of their position and work, is responsible for their behaviour toward themselves, family and society and must be accountable (Beekun & Badawi 2005). Striving to acquire merits and virtues, fulfilling the needs of others, obeying the right and working with it, paying the rights of others, making the optimal use of God's blessings, respecting the rights of friends and father-children relationships, as well as paying attention to the problems facing society and lending people a hand are among the cases of individual responsibilities mentioned in Nahj al-Balagha. One of the prominent characteristics and important duties of the government is to observe the principle of human accountability for the rights of others, and the government's responsibility is the same as its accountability to the people in Alavi's thought and conduct. In terms of the responsibility of government employees, obedience and responding to the requests of others are brought up at the forefront of the duties that are the responsibility of the employees, and the main element of responsibility is accountability, which means giving authenticity to the rights of others, in the sense that 'you have the right and I have the duty'.

On the other hand, the decline of trust in government organisations can lead to the emergence of a generation of unmotivated and indifferent employees, as well as the slow implementation of programmes. In addition, many studies in organisations have accordingly found a significant gap between employees and management and their demands. Thus, decisions face numerous implementation problems (Zhu, May & Avolio 2004). By definition, trust is generally understood as expectations or beliefs that people like to show to others in a predictable manner and not just for their personal benefit. In line with this definition, one of the problems in today's organisations is the lack of trust between employees and managers. In Iraqi organisations, especially the government ones, there is also a significant gap between employees and management and their demands. As a result, decisions usually encounter many implementation problems because employees show stubbornness in implementing decisions and managers do not trust employees and fail to involve them in the decision-making process, which creates an atmosphere of mistrust in organisations. The results of mistrust can be the emergence of behaviours, such as spreading rumours, having conflicts, as well as politicking and underproduction in organisations, which take much energy and add to the costs (Norman 2006). In this regard,

managers' responsibility and accountability are crucial because sometimes the atmosphere of mistrust comes from the lack of accountability and the evasion of responsibility among them.

Today, the ever-increasing complexity of organisations and the growth in the volume of unethical and illegal activities in the workplace have made it necessary for managers and employees to pay much attention to the development and maintenance of professional ethics, responsibility and social accountability in all organisations (Widyarini & Muafi 2021). Ethics, responsibility and accountability, defined as philosophical values and dos and don'ts, and the criteria for measuring the correctness and wrongness of behaviour towards oneself, others and society, are thus among the topics that have drawn the attention of scholars and experts over the last decades. Responsible behaviour is accordingly one of the indicators of a healthy person in any society. Based on this, addressing accountable and responsible managers is an essential reality for realising the goals of government organisations as an organisational priority and providing the grounds for such basic behaviours in the organisation and among managers and employees. On the other hand, values are one of the main factors shaping employees' accountability and trust, as the basis of all the activities in organisations. Values accordingly help to establish and maintain standards that can influence people to take desirable actions in organisations. In particular, organisational success, accountability and trust are fostered when values are widely shared among members (Parboteeah, Paik & Cullen 2009). From this perspective, this study aimed to investigate the mediating role of values in the relationship between accountability and trust among Muslim managers and employees in Islamic organisations in Iraq in 2022.

Accountability of Muslim managers and employees

In Alavi's thought and behaviour, the government's responsibility is the same as accountability to the people. From the viewpoint of Imam Ali (AS), the responsibility of government managers in responding to the people is a very important task and a difficult trial. In this respect, someone can be more successful and surpass others in the field of service delivery, if they perform their duties and do not cheat on their obligations towards society and people and do things in a good way. The responsibility of government managers and employees is also the same as their accountability because accountability is a kind of obedience, that is complying with the orders and responding to the requests of others and the duties they are responsible for, which create obligations. In fact, the main element of responsibility is accountability, which is, giving priority to the rights of others, in the sense that 'you have the right and I have the duty', and this principle is based on the harmony of the individual with the right and their nonpriority over God and the Prophet. It is for this reason that management in Islamic systems should be entrusted to those who have accepted Islam in thought and action and are subject to God's

commands, as well as the Prophet's tradition and the 14 infallibles (AS), from the point of view of Imam Ali (AS) (Nahj al-Balagha Letter 38). Accountability includes the set of rules necessary for governance. This principle is often synonymous with issues such as responsibility, responsiveness, criticism and commitment. As an aspect of governance, accountability is at the centre of discussions related to the problems of the public sector, nonprofit companies and the private world. In leadership roles, accountability consists of accepting activities, products, decisions and policies. In addition, it takes account of supervision, governance and enforcement in roles or job positions and showing commitment to the reported cases and responding to the resulting consequences. Executive accountability accordingly considers internal norms and rules. Some independent commissions also have developed mechanisms to keep government employees in the executive sphere accountable. In a department or ministry, functions are thus limited by laws and regulations, and government employees are subject to hierarchy and accountable to their supervisors (Beekun & Badawi 2005). The dimensions of accountability are:

- *Individual ethics*, that is, the principles that express a person's moral values regardless of their social dignity, so seriousness and effort in the way of God is a value for a human being.
- *Business ethics*, which includes the principles, duties, and standards of individual and organisational behaviour expected from professionals in various jobs. People working in professional positions accordingly use their skills and knowledge to do work. Besides, these people are able to judge, apply skills and knowledge and make decisions based on their knowledge in a situation where the public is not able to do this because of the lack of this knowledge and skills. How to exploit this knowledge and skills when providing services to society is a moral issue and a matter of professional ethics.
- *Organisational ethics*, representing the ethics in an organisation and how that organisation responds to internal and external stimuli. Organisational ethics are also independent of organisational culture and rely on it, expressing the values of that organisation for its employees or others, independent of rules and regulations (Izadi Fard & Kaviar 2010).

Trust in Islamic organisations

As stated by many researchers, trust generally refers to certainty and optimism about the occurrence of events or having confidence in others without compelling reasons. In fact, trust represents employees' beliefs that others do the same work that is expected from them, without being monitored (Eftekhari & Rahimi 2019). In short, trust means the convictions that people have about the future behaviour of the opposite group. In this respect, the more Group A believes that Group B fulfils its obligations in a relationship (which indicates the goodwill and competence of Group B), the more Group A trusts Group B (Yazdan-Shanas & Aghaei 2019). There are three broad concepts in the literature of trust:

firstly, intra-organisational trust, as a phenomenon within the organisation, such as trust between employees and supervisors or managers or between coworkers; secondly, trust between organisations, namely an interorganisational phenomenon; and thirdly, trust between organisations and their customers, presented as a marketing concept.

Moreover, the dimensions of trust proposed by Robbins (2003) are, firstly, honesty, implying correctness and honour, which seems to be more significant when evaluating the level of trustworthiness of others (here, the dimensions of trust will no longer be meaningful without understanding the moral character and primary honesty of others); competence, which includes interpersonal and technical knowledge and skills. Does a person know what they are talking about? The strange possibility is that when we do not respect someone's abilities, we do not listen to their words. We must thus believe that the person in question has the necessary skills and abilities to carry out what they promise to do. Secondly, another dimension of trust is stability, denoting reliability, predictability and appropriate judgement in dealing with situations. Lack of consistency in speech and action accordingly reduces trust. This dimension is very suitable for managers. Nothing is more noticeable than a mismatch between what executives preach and what they expect their coworkers to practice. Thirdly, another dimension of trust is loyalty, which is a type of emotional and psychological connection with an organisation in which a person recognises the organisation and its components and identifies with it, feels aligned with the goals and values of the organisation and manages without effort to realize them. Fourthly, a dimension of trust is openness, as a feature existing in organisations where honesty is one of the characteristics of employees; people in the organisation are frank in expressing their weaknesses, and managers are also so in their behaviour and speech, not pretending and showing off but sticking to their promises (Robbins 2003).

Values in Islamic settings

Values denote what guides the behaviour, actions and thoughts of employees and managers of organisations and, above all, influences them. The main values in organisations, which are widely noticed by everyone, represent the culture of that organisation. The formulation of such values can thus bring benefits to organisations, which are continuing, basic principles and reliable and long-term guides for decisions and behaviours. They further show the survival and harmonious life of organisations, with a central role in the integration of employees. Such values follow the agreement of organisational units. They are the basis of trust and growth of people and specify the dos and don'ts of organisations (Mohsen Vand 2007). Values, as the basic principles governing organisations, have intrinsic meanings for people and express general beliefs that influence their behaviour in all situations. The core values of organisations are also called the ethical rules, as the guiding principles in organisations that are effective in decision-making and behaviours. In organisations, good ethics are prerequisites for good management. In other words, good values and moral

principles mean good organisations. Values should thus give morale to employees in difficult situations; otherwise, they are not worth it.

Moreover, values are everyday slogans that make employees feel good; the moral aspect of organisational resources is considered, and even personal dimensions are of importance, alongside the universal. If an organisation intends to progress, it must backtrack and rediscover the values in the past which depend on moral foundations and are controlled by personal sentiments. Progressively, the belief that promoting moral principles and strengthening spiritual culture can help create strategic advantages for organisations is growing deeper (Aldulaimi 2016). The values of an organisation are actually what it is based on, what is important or what the organisation relies on to implement its mission and activities in line with its vision.

Values are thus a set of views that distinguish between good and bad, desirable and undesirable, contributing to choosing and achieving goals, developing strategies and evaluating positive and negative results. On the one hand, values can be moral standards, ideals and duties that are effective in every social group and formed by the strengths and weaknesses in the behaviour of groups and their members, that is, what they have done or abandoned, to create internal unity (Ali & Al-Kazemi 2007).

Conceptual model and research hypotheses

The conceptual model of this study, established on the related literature and the research background, is illustrated in Figure 1. Here, accountability in Muslim managers and employees is the independent variable, trust is the dependent variable and values are the mediating ones.

- H_1 : Accountability in Muslim managers and employees has a significant effect on trust.
- H_2 : Accountability in Muslim managers and employees has a significant effect on values.
- H_3 : Values have a significant effect on organisational trust.
- H_4 : Accountability in Muslim managers and officials has a significant effect on trust through the mediating role of values.

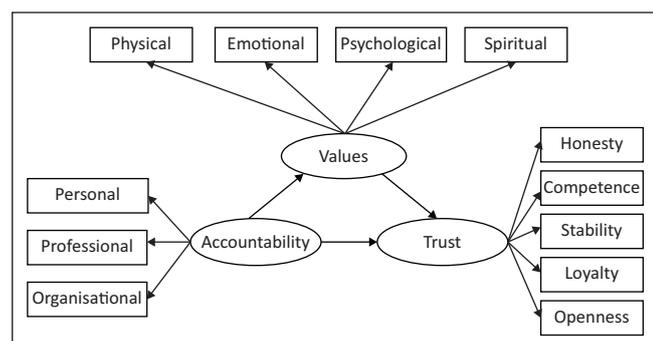


FIGURE 1: Conceptual model of research.

Research methods

This applied research was carried out using a descriptive method (viz. field study and survey). The statistical population included 2500 senior government managers and employees of 50 service organisations (including education, restaurant, hotel, insurance, and banking and finance) in Baghdad, Iraq, in 2022. In this study, library and field methods were utilised to collect the data. For this purpose, the library method was recruited to review the related literature and the background, while the data were collected by referring to Iraqi government organisations and distributing questionnaires among senior managers and employees in the field method. The research instruments consisted of the nine-item questionnaire developed by Izadi Fard and Kaviar (2010) to measure accountability in three dimensions, namely individual, professional and organisational ethics; Robbins' questionnaire (2003) to measure trust in five dimensions (namely honesty, competence, stability, loyalty, and openness), containing 15 items; and the 12-item questionnaire validated by Suppiah and Sandhu (2011) to determine values in four dimensions (i.e. spiritual, psychological, emotional and physical), based on the Likert-type scale, ranging from completely disagree to completely agree. Among the numerous methods to settle the validity of the measurement instruments, face validity and content validity were utilised in this study. The research instruments were further presented to some university professors, and they confirmed its validity and relevance. In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability (CR) were also exercised to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, whose results are given in Table 1.

The values obtained above 0.7 had been thus considered favourable. Composite reliability was also used as a measure by which, compared with the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the research constructs were calculated not in absolute terms but according to their correlation with each other. The CR rates with a standard value of 0.7 consequently showed the appropriateness of this criterion. The average variance extracted (AVE) further represented the average variance shared between each construct and its indices. The AVE rates with the standard value of 0.5 also revealed the appropriateness of this measure. According to Table 1, the research indices had good reliability.

Findings

Upon collecting the data through the questionnaire, they were analysed using consequently. To test the normality of the scores of the obtained factors, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (K–S) test was employed. When checking the normality of

TABLE 1: Cronbach's alpha coefficient and reliability or validity of study variables.

Variables	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	CR	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Accountability	0.852	0.902	0.786
Trust	0.843	0.874	0.768
Values	0.795	0.794	0.724

CR, composite reliability.

the data, the null hypothesis that the distribution of the data was normal at the 5% error level was tested; therefore, if the test statistic was greater than 0.05, then there was no reason to reject the null hypothesis because the data were normal. In other words, the data distribution was normal, and these results are provided in Table 2.

The significance level of the research indices was over 0.05, so parametric statistics were used to test the hypotheses, as the K-S test results confirmed the normality of the data. Descriptive findings related to mean, standard deviation (SD) and correlation coefficients between the research variables are shown in Table 3.

In order to evaluate the proposed model, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used. To determine the adequacy of the proposed model's fit with the data, a combination of fit indices, including the chi-square value (X^2), normalised chi-square index (X^2/df), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), normalised fit index (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI), incremental goodness-of-fit index (IFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were employed. The fit of the proposed model was accordingly analysed via these data. The general fit indices of the proposed model are provided in Table 4.

To test the significance of the research hypotheses, two indices, CR and p -value, were utilised. Based on the significance level of 0.05, it needed to be greater than 1.96, so the value of the parameter lower than this was not considered of great magnitude in the model, and the values smaller than 0.05 for the p -value indicated a significant difference between that calculated for the regression weights and the zero value at the level of 0.95. The SEM and the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Analysis of a Moment Structures (AMOS) software package was used to test the research hypotheses, whose output is depicted in Table 5.

TABLE 2: Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results.

Variables	K-S test results	Significance level
Accountability	0.145	1.024
Trust	0.178	1.168
Values	0.238	1.018

K-S, Kolmogorov-Smirnov.

TABLE 3: Mean, Standard Deviation, and correlation coefficients of the study variables.

No.	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1	Accountability	3.6875	0.854	-	-	-
2	Trust	3.8591	0.764	0.774	-	-
3	Values	3.6245	0.873	0.578	0.566	-

SD, standard deviation.

All correlation coefficients were significant at the level of $p > 0.0001$.

TABLE 4: Conceptual model fit.

X^2/df	P	GFI	NFI	CFI	RFI	IFI	RMSEA
2.8280	0.000	0.92	0.90	0.92	0.92	0.91	0.075

GFI, goodness of fit index; NFI, normalized fit index; CFI, comparative fit index; RFI, Relative Fit Index; IFI, incremental goodness of fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation.

As addressed in the fourth research hypotheses, accountability in Muslim managers and employees has a significant effect on trust through the mediating role of values. According to Table 5, the main research hypotheses were confirmed at the 95% CI (confidence interval). With reference to the CR, valued more than 1.96 for all hypotheses and the p -value, less than the error level of 0.05, the main research hypotheses were accepted at the CI of 95%. Therefore, accountability in Muslim managers and employees had a significant positive effect on trust through the mediating role of values at the CI of 95% in Iraqi government organisations. In addition, the data analysis results showed that values had a significant positive effect on trust. In addition, the bootstrap method was used to test the fourth hypothesis, whose results are shown in Table 6.

In Table 6, the path demonstrated that the lower limit has a value of -0.12435 and the upper one has a value of -11346 . The results of the bootstrap method also indicated the significance of the indirect path, and as a result, the fourth research hypothesis was confirmed. Therefore, accountability in Muslim managers and employees had a significant positive effect on trust through the mediating role of values at the CI of 95% in Iraqi government organisations.

Discussion

The need to respect humans and their existential dimensions along with the issue of management in organisations has thus far expanded research on human relations, particularly trust, ever more and opened new doors for social thinkers. Today, this concept has taken an important place in the related literature, referring to the strong belief of the person in an organisation and acceptance of its goals and efforts to achieve them. On the other hand, an organisation is a social institution that has a purpose and a system that performs certain activities because of having a conscious structure. To meet the goals in any organisation, human resources play a leading role. Fulfilling the tasks in an organisation is thus the responsibility of the human resources working there, which can affect their performance. No commitment among managers and employees in an organisation is thus caused by various factors in the workplace, such as the lack of trust and irrelevance of roles, role conflicts and role ambiguity. The

TABLE 5: Regression coefficient and partial index values related to the research hypotheses.

Hypotheses	Regression coefficient	Critical ratio (CR)	p	Results
Accountability → Trust	0.45	3.3452	0.000	Accept
Accountability → Values	0.81	8.1242	0.000	Accept
Values → Trust	0.54	4.78564	0.000	Accept

TABLE 6: Bootstrap method results for the mediating path of the proposed research model.

Path	Bootstrap method	Bias	Standard error	Lower limit	Upper limit
Accountability → Values → Trust	0.43	0.0002	0.0148	-0.12435	-0.11346

present study accordingly aimed to investigate the mediating role of values in the relationship between accountability among Iraqi government managers and employees and trust in Islamic settings. In this study, all four hypotheses were confirmed at the 95% CI. In addressing these hypotheses, particularly in relation to the government organisations with their own sensitivities, it meant that the accountability of Muslim managers and employees had a significant effect on trust and values.

Conclusion

The important thing was that the accountability of managers and employees could have a positive effect on the performance of people in organisations. In general, psychological pressure in organisations could lead to organisational transformation and maintain values through trust-building. Such changes could then be operationalised and have a profound impact on people's behaviour by affecting work ethics and growth, flexibility and diligence, in order to reach a new level of performance. Therefore, the existence of the mediating variable of values could reinforce the relationship between the accountability of managers and employees and trust. According to the study results, among the mentioned levels of accountability, the professional one played the most significant role in the accountability of managers and employees; therefore, it was concluded that it was important to pay attention to the accountability and expectations that managers have from their organisation as they assume the heavy responsibility of guiding people in order to achieve their goals. This issue also provides a good opportunity to check the performance of people in an organisation, caused by the differences in the organisational levels. As most decisions in an organisation are related to managers, some hierarchies can be used to retain and attract the most competent individuals and then institutionalise internal motivation in managers.

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Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

H.N. and F.A.H.A.-K. were responsible for conceptualisation; S.I.S.A.-H. and H.P. contributed to investigation; T.V.M. and I.M. contributed to validation; S.A.S. was responsible for project administration; A.A.A.A.-S. contributed resources; L.V. was responsible for writing the original draft.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

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