

# **Islamic Work Ethic and Public Sector Innovation: Challenges and Solutions**

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## **Abstract**

In a fast-moving modern era with many moral problems, Islamic work ethic (IWE) has been a pivotal concept in the success of innovation in the public sector. The perfection of “Akhlaq” is a major priority of the IWE. Its principles contain virtues derived from the Qur’an and Hadith. Practising these values will provide benefits for both individuals as well as society. Thus, Muslim who embed the values of IWE directly in their work will have more innovative behaviour. However, the value of IWE is not easy to be implemented to support innovation in the public sector. The concept of IWE is not easily accepted and applied by Islamic workers, even though they understand and know that these values are derived from the Qur’an. This situation is further worsened in a problematic public sector environment and culture. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to clarify the significant relationship between IWE and innovation in the public sector by identifying factors or aspects to solve the challenge in the public sector. This concept paper found that there are still inconsistent findings on the impact of IWE on innovation. Specifically, a comprehensive concept of IWE is absolutely needed to ensure that innovation will be more easily achieved in anticipating challenges in the public sector. Thus, this study contributes by providing a model of the relationship between IWE and innovation in the public sector.

## **Keywords:**

Islamic Work Ethic, Public Sector Innovation, Challenges, Solutions

## **INTRODUCTION**

The record of crime in the economic sector has increased rapidly in recent decades. Unethical behaviour has been a serious symptom. This negative behaviour can occur anytime and anywhere. Unethical behaviour is no exception in the public sector that a particular person has executed for his own benefits or personal gains such as abusive supervision, knowledge hiding behaviour, uncertainty, inconsistency in decision making, power cruelty, lack of trust, dishonesty, favouritism, pressure, misuse of information and assets, collusive offers, despotic leadership, and more. This condition is very dangerous as it has been performed by workers who have a major role to serve society (Islam et al., 2020; Khalid et al., 2018; De Clercq et al., 2018; Al-Qudsy, 2007; Aldulaimi, 2016; Rizk, 2008).

Islam is a way of life that commands its Ummah to live by referring to the Qur’an and Hadith. Qur’an contains the values of doctrine demanding the path of kindness and encouraging every Muslim to avoid unethical behaviour or irresponsible attitude in the

workplace because it can damage morale or Akhlaq and further harm society (Rizk, 2008). Thus, the concept of Islamic work ethic emphasised the value of goodness contained in the Qur'an and Hadith. In other words, Muslims should pay attention to the IWE to prevent unethical behaviour in carrying out the work. Rafiki and Wahab (2014) asserted that “*Akhlaqulkarimah*” (good manner) is a noble Akhlaq according to Islamic teaching. It is the most important aspect of implementing IWE. Therefore, the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) was sent by Allah S.W.T to perfect the good manner of mankind.

In the same vein, unethical behaviour is a threat in creating innovation in the public sector that prevents the public sector from providing the best service to society. There are many complaints from society about the irresponsible attitude of civil servants. Thereby, innovation as an embodiment of innovative behaviour cannot be achieved without workers' support to avoid unethical behaviour and consciously apply the principles in IWE. Siddiqui et al. (2019) and Hamed et al. (2020) stated that workers with a high tendency towards the IWE in their daily life are professional workers. A study by Mushtaq et al. (2020) found a positive relationship between IWE and organisational citizenship behaviour. Thus, workers who have high IWE will guard against unethical behaviour (Khalid et al., 2018). Therefore, workers will not create various innovations when they still have negative behaviour or unethical behaviour in the workplace. Thereby, immoral or unethical behaviour becomes an obstacle to the successful innovation of the public sector. On the other hand, the values of IWE will strengthen workers to avoid irresponsible attitude in the workplace.

Further, Rafiki (2019) and Ghias et al. (2020) asserted that employee commitment plays an important role that influences innovation and organisational stability because commitment will increase when business operations are carried out fairly and honestly or avoid unethical action. Workers tend to have a high commitment by engaging in IWE. They will be better individuals by adopting IWE and lead them to perform better in the workplace that enhances productivity and workplace outcome (Hamed et al., 2020; De Clercq et al., 2019; Nasution & Rafiki, 2019; Ahmad et al., 2020; Rawas et al., 2018; Mohammad et al., 2018). Previous studies by Ghias et al. (2020) and Nasution and Rafiki (2019) revealed that by adopting the principles of IWE, workers would contribute to the culture of honesty, trust, generosity, and truthfulness that improves motivation and appreciation and also lead toward peace in society.

Therefore, Javed et al. (2020) argued that IWE is the solution for dilemmas of contemporary management to prevent workers from unethical behaviour. Yaseen et al. (2015) asserted that IWE would prevent workers from unethical behaviour as workers with IWE perceive work as worship, effort, teamwork, or cooperation. They have a high moral responsibility to serve society better through many new ideas for innovation.

Furthermore, the significant effect of IWE values on innovation has been revealed by scholars (e.g. Abbasi et al., 2012; Kumar & Rose, 2010, 2012; Awan & Akram, 2012; Farrukh et al., 2015; Yesil et al., 2012). They found that IWE yields an advantage, particularly on innovation. Yet, this study indicates that IWE values are not rooted in the attitude of every Muslim. Many researchers (Javed et al., 2020; Raja et al., 2020; Uygur, 2009; Meybodi & Dehghani, 2016; Jufrizen et al., 2017; Alhyasat, 2012; Farahizade & Belaghat, 2013; Amilin et al., 2018) found inconsistent findings of the relationship of IWE on the individual or organisational behaviour. It is clear that IWE and innovation in the public sector are not easily practised, as there are many challenges in applying this concept, such as problematic culture and environment. Some scholars (e.g. Al-Qudsy, 2007; Quddus et

al., 2009; Aldulaimi, 2016; Rizk, 2008) suggested that an appropriate solution should be generated for this issue.

This study recognises that researchers still found inconsistent results on the impact of IWE on innovation. It is important to identify components or factors influencing the implementation of IWE to support innovation. There is a need to conduct more studies to create a solution to the challenge of innovation in the public sector. Therefore, this study develops a new model of IWE and innovation in the public sector by including values of IWE such as quality, productivity, innovativeness, discipline, integration, accountability, and professionalism as a crucial factor to create innovation in the public sector.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Concept of Islamic work ethic**

Religion is the most powerful social foundation related to an individual's attitude, principle, and behaviour (Rafiki & Wahab, 2014). The concept of work ethic was initiated by Weber in 1905. This concept was adopted from the idea of the Protestant Work Ethic (Chanzanagh & Akbarnejad, 2011; Murtaza et al., 2016; Yousef, 2000). It is a well-known fact that Islam is a comprehensive religion that guides Ummah in all aspects of life (Aldulaimi, 2016).

Since the beginning period of Islam, Muslims have had a particular perspective on work that has been specially conceptualised in work ethic (Chanzanagh & Akbarnejad, 2011; Ali & Al-Owaihian, 2008). From earlier on, and until now, scholars such as Ali (1988), Ali (1992), Ali and Al-Kazemi (2007), Ali and Al-Owaihian (2008), Aldulaimi (2016), Chanzanagh & Akbarnejad (2011), Yaseen et al. (2015) have formulated values and principles of work ethic from an Islamic perspective.

IWE is a unique concept based on the Qur'an and Hadith that confirm Ummah to avoid unethical behaviours (Ali, 1992; Al-Qudsy, 2007). Islamic work ethics are values, principles, beliefs, attitudes, norms on hard work and dedication that emphasises virtues and a balance in the relationship between individuals and society (Ali, 1992; Mohammad et al., 2015; Kumar & Rose, 2012; Yousef, 2001; Rizk, 2008; Ahmad & Owoyemi, 2012; Yousef, 2000; Ali & Al-Kazemi, 2007; Ali & Al-Owaihian, 2008). Generally, ethics is a moral or principle of a person's behaviour in daily activity. However, from an Islamic perspective, good intentions are also considered ethics (Al-Qudsy, 2007).

Yassen et al. (2015) asserted that IWE values involve perceived worship, effort, cooperation, and moral responsibility. Specifically, the values of the virtue of IWE mentioned in the Qur'an can be seen in Table 1, as proposed by Ali (1988).

**Table 1: Value of Islamic work ethic referring to the Qur'an**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Qur'an Verses</b>
Agreements and promises	Ar-Rad 13:25, Al-Qasas 28:28, Yunus 10:71
Consideration for others	An-Nisaa' 4:36, Al-Mumtahina 60:9
Consultation	Ash-Shura 42:38, Taha 20:103, Al-Kahf 18:22
Continuous improvement	Al-Araf 7:42
Cooperation	Al-Hujraat 49:9, Maryam 19:96

Equality and unity	Al-Isra' 17:35
Fairness in dealings	Al-Anaam 6:152, Al-Mumtahina 60:8, An-Najm 53:32, Al-Maida 5:8
Fairness in wages	Al-Imran 3:57, Saba' 34:37
Hard work	Al-Baqara 2:62; 82, Al-Anaam 6:135
Helping others	As-Saff 61:14, An-Nahl 16:97, Yunus 10:41
Honesty and justice	Al-Baqara 2:177, Az-Zumar 39:2;3
Humble	Hud 11:23
Patience	Hud 11:11
Righteous/Intention	Al-Baqara 2:25; 225, Al-Baqara 2:62, At-Taubah 9:105, As-Saff 61:8, Al-Qasas 28:19
Social order	Al-Imran 3:110, Al-Baqara 2:273
Truth	Al-Anfal 8:27, Yunus 10:61, An-Nur 24:8

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Source: Ali (1988)

It can be identified that IWE is a reflection of Akhlaqulkarimah (Aldulaimi, 2016; Mahfoudh et al., 2016; Rafiki & Wahab, 2014). However, Ahmad (2012) asserted that there is a difference between ethics and Akhlaq. From the western perspective, ethics depends on the individual's perspective in determining the good and the bad. However, based on the Islamic perspective, the source of Akhlaq is the Qur'an and Hadith. Thus, the behaviour and character of goodness that exist in the Akhlaq are coming from the Qur'an, the words, and practices of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), which has been presented as the best model of behaviour for all Ummah. Thus, IWE is a concept of work regarding the Qur'an and Hadith that guides to the good character (Ahmad, 2012). Finding by previous studies such as Mohammad et al. (2018), Islam et al. (2020), De Clercq et al. (2020), Mushtaq et al. (2020) found that IWE has direct and indirect impacts on individual attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, Muslim who applies the concept of IWE surely has "Akhlaqulkarimah".

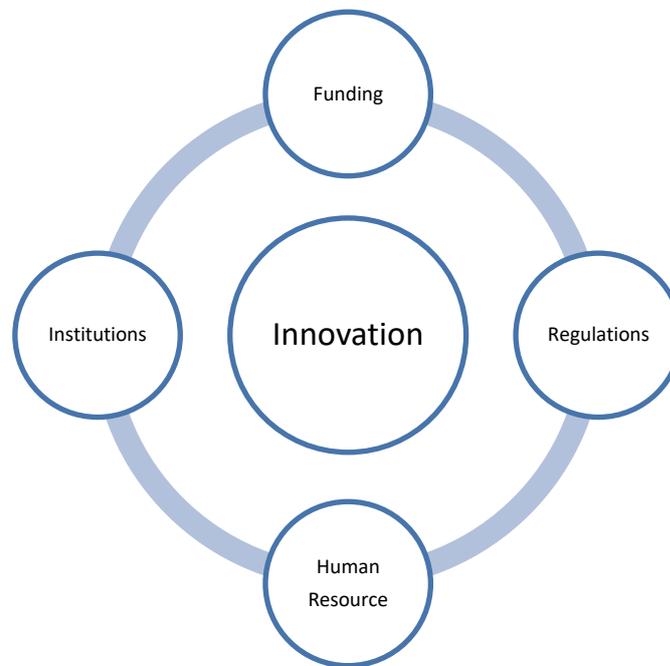
### **Issues of innovation in the public sector**

The main issue faced by the public sector in almost all countries is how to provide better services to society. The public sector must improve and adapt to current global changes, such as increased technological advances and social change. This organisation has to be more innovative in facing globalisation (Ahonala et al., 2015). Public expectations of what public organisation has to serve are rising sharply. Trends of the private sector have affected society behaviour on the services of the public sector. Public sectors were required to have greater adaptability in responding to increasing the demands and lifestyles of society (Lekhi, 2007). The number of complaints on public sector services indicates that this institution does not provide the best services to society (De Vries et al., 2014; Bloch, 2011; Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2008; Cankar & Petkovsek, 2013; Mulgan, 2014). Therefore, innovation in the public sector is presumed to determine the best level of service to society (Bloch, 2011). Many scholars (Cankar & Petkovsek, 2013; Bloch, 2011; Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2008; Lekhi, 2007; Mulgan & Albury, 2003; McFarlene, 2007) asserted that innovation in the public sector is absolutely necessary to accommodate all the needs and demands of society.

Innovation in the public sector becomes very crucial due to many factors such as the need to become more responsible on expectations of citizens (Demircioglu & Audretsch, 2017; Mulgan & Albury, 2003), changing environment or globalisation that involving social,

economic, information and technology (Lekhi, 2007; Demircioglu & Audretsch, 2017; Akenroye, 2012; McFarlene, 2007), efficiency in terms of reducing cost (Lekhi, 2007; Cankar & Petkovšek, 2013; Demircioglu & Audretsch, 2017), effectiveness in improving the quality of services and satisfy the need of society (Mulgan & Albury, 2003; Demircioglu & Audretsch, 2017).

However, the public sector is an organisation engaged in providing service. Therefore, the concept of innovation in the public sector is different from the private or business sector that is identic to producing novelty products. Innovation in the public sector is defined as a significant change in terms of service improvement that is to be more effective in order to meet the aspirations and needs of society (Hartley, 2005; Bloch, 2011). Thereby, innovation in terms of service in the public sector is imperative. Innovation in the public sector is also linked to many factors. Ahonala et al. (2015) claimed that understanding a potential factor for innovation is the most effective way of creating conducive conditions to flourish innovation. It is also necessary to assess the relationship capabilities and performance of the public sector. Therefore, it is needed to identify the processes and structures that support and expedite the innovation activities, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Key components for successful public sector innovation**

Source: Ahonala et al. (2015)

Figure 1 shows that key factors such as institution, human resource, funding, and regulation influence innovation in the public sector. The institution refers to the public sector's ability to innovate, which highly depends on the quality and effectiveness of institutions in regulating the support for innovations. Institution contributes to coping obstacles so that innovation can become a culture of the public sector. Therefore, institutions hold an important key in creating innovation teams to support public sector innovation. Meanwhile, human resource pertains to civil servants as the core in implementing innovation in the public sector. They bring ideas for new services. Innovation can be achieved through skill, knowledge, professionalism, and individual behaviours attached to innovations that are useful for strengthening innovation. Therefore, it is very important to pay attention to three

important elements in motivating the workforce to innovate, i.e. ability (in terms of skill and knowledge), motivation (willingness to perform good work or duties), and opportunity (concern on development of organisation). On the other hands, funding is also important as an organisation needs to realise how funding impacts innovation. Therefore it is necessary to strengthen flexible and innovative resources in the public sector in order to manage a budget to support the need for flexibility and management. Regarding the regulation, the government needs to consider rule, law and, the process of bureaucracy or procedure in the public sector to promote innovation. It is crucial to review systematic regulations and processes to be more efficient and more effective to promote innovative behaviour so that various rules and regulations do not limit workers. Updating rules and regulations are important for the government as a more realistic new approach. Indeed, these problems have urged the public sector to regenerate methods and ways of providing services.

### **Islamic work ethic and innovation**

IWE has been postulated as a potential concept that contributes to organisational innovation. Emphasising the value of IWE will generate a positive effect on innovation. The result of some empirical study such as Javed et al. (2017), Awan and Akram (2012), Farrukh et al. (2015), Yesil et al. (2012), Abbasi et al. (2012), Kumar and Rose (2010; 2012) supported that IWE has a significant effect on innovation. Implementing IWE will influence the creation of innovation. Mohammed et al. (2015) argued that an individual who has good behaviour in the workplace could help the organisation achieve success. Similarly, Javed et al. (2017) asserted that values of IWE yield an effect on innovative work behaviour that increases the implementation of new ideas. It implies that an individual who applies the values and behaviour of IWE will contribute to the organisation through innovation.

IWE is a teaching of Islam that shows the difference between goodness and evil. The value of IWE will broaden the inspiration and commitment of life on organisation and work (Shafique et al., 2015; Yousef, 2001; Ahmad & Owoyemi, 2012). Therefore, IWE is very beneficial for individuals and organisations for sustainability and future development (De Clercq et al., 2018; Awan & Akram, 2012; Kemenade & Al-Salmani, 2019). A recent study by Javed et al. (2017) revealed that the values of IWE enhance innovation through innovative work behaviour. Kumar and Rose (2012) also found that IWE is a key factor in creating individual behaviour in the public sector. The government must emphasise the values of IWE to build a noble character. These values need to be implemented continuously to support innovation. By having employees who practice IWE, organisations will have an advantage as ethical behaviour will lead to the creation of innovations that will ultimately improve the performance of the organisation.

Mahfoudh et al. (2016) confirmed that organisational propensity to improve innovation performance could be achieved through the values embedded in IWE that involve the truth, harmony, flexibility, confidence, and sincerity. These values show the relationship between IWE and the organisational ability to innovate. The organisation takes benefit from the strong implementation of IWE that ensure the successful innovation of the organisation. By practising values of IWE, it leads organisations to develop right and the best decision for innovation such as for production process, performance, finance, human resource, etc. For instance, IWE recommends working hard innovatively in the production process. Indeed, it will have a positive impact on the organisation innovation by reducing and keeping operational costs. Method of working hard innovatively clearly stated in Qur'an Surah Az-

Zumar [39]: “Work according to your circumstances, I will work (also), then one day you will know.” Furthermore, it also asserted in Qur’an Surah An-Nazm (39-40) “And that a man gets nothing but what he has worked for. And that the effort will be seen (to him)”. Hence, the values of IWE increase organisational productivity (Aldulaimi, 2016). In this case, an organisation can improve innovation as a result of IWE. This statement was supported by De Clercq et al. (2019), who proved that IWE supports the realisation of relevant work ethics that increase worker productivity.

Individuals who follow IWE’s principles are expected to have good behaviour or Akhlaq following Prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) that mentioned the best person not only beneficial for himself but also for humanity (De Clercq et al., 2018; Rafiki & Wahab, 2014; Mahfoudh et al., 2016). Thereby, IWE influences the success of innovation. Its values prevent unethical behaviour and guide the establishment of innovative behaviour.

However, this study found inconsistency findings on the effect of IWE on individual and organisational behaviour. Javed et al. (2020) revealed no mediation effect of IWE on the association between transformational leadership and managerial effectiveness of workers of Saudi Information and Communications Technology Companies in Jeddah and Madina. Raja et al. (2020) found a negative relationship between IWE and employee job satisfaction in various organisations in Lahore, Pakistan. Also, Uygur (2009) revealed no significant effect of IWE on people in Turki to be devout in conducting business. Furthermore, Meybodi and Dehghani (2016) found that IWE has no significant effect on the job satisfaction of nurses of a public hospital in Yazd Province, Iran. Similarly, Farahizade and Belaghat (2013) proved that IWE has no significant effect on distributional justice in an organisation. Therefore, this study emphasises solutions to innovation issues in the public sector by identifying real challenge in implementing IWE.

### **Challenges of Islamic work ethic and innovation in the public sector**

In a fast-moving modern era, organisations faced many moral problems (Mohammed, 2014). These immoral values or unethical behaviours challenge Islamic teaching and managerial integrity (Al-Qudsy, 2007). Muslim believes in Allah S.W.T and the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). They devote life to the creator of the universe. A Muslim who obeys Allah S.W.T will perform all the command and stay away from Islamic teaching prohibition (Aldulaimi, 2016). Even though Muslim knows and understands the teachings of Islam, Akhlaqulkarimah is not easy to be applied. Aldulaimi (2016) mentioned that a strong foundation of faith is crucial for practising all the values of IWE. The number of unethical behaviour in the workplace indicates that the values of IWE cannot influence their behaviour to be better in Akhlaq (Aldulaimi, 2016). However, it should be noted that individual come with different values at work. Many factors can stimulate an individual to practice the values of IWE, such as a person’s ethical behaviour, level of moral, personal development, family influences, peers, life experiences, and situational factors. Indeed, these factors have an impact on their attitude in applying IWE (Rizk, 2008).

Therefore, building awareness of civil servant in implementing IWE is a challenge for the public sector. Many crucial aspects should be considered. Civil servant must prioritise the public interest (Caron & Giauque, 2006). However, environment and culture influence workers’ productivity and motivation in the public sector (Vigoda-Gadot, et al., 2008; Amayah, 2013). Frank and Lewis (2004) mentioned that an indisciplined civil servant was

perceived as “lazy” and has negatively affected innovation in the public sector. Ahonala et al. (2015) asserted that financial is one of the most important aspects that can impact workers’ motivation in the public sector. Indeed, the public and private sector are different in terms of rewards offered. The private sector provides better rewards to motivate workers. Contrary to the private sector, the government does not provide a high reward to stimulate civil servants’ motivation. As a result, this condition drives them to neglect obligations and further practise unethical behaviours. Aldulaimi (2016) asserted that even though workers understand and know the values in IWE, they cannot apply IWE simply due to uncondusive condition such as in the public sector.

Thus, culture and environment are key issues of innovation in the public sector. The public sector needs to consider its culture since it is a bureaucratic organisation that equates with the old tradition. Bureaucracy causes service to be ineffective in terms of time, cost and quality (Cankar & Petkovšek, 2013; Demircioglu & Audretsch, 2017; Mulgan & Albury, 2003). Culture and environment in the public sector impede the implementation of IWE and innovation. The procedure prevents worker to be innovative in behaviour. When civil servants are still fixated on bureaucracy, it will not lead them to IWE and innovation. Thus, bureaucracy affects workers’ behaviour in the public sector to embrace IWE and innovation.

### **Solutions of Islamic work ethic and innovation in the public sector**

The rising trend of unethical behaviour in business activities has called scholars to develop a solution for this issue. Several researchers (Aldulaimi, 2016; Rizk, 2008; Ali & Al-Kazemi, 2007; Al-Qudsy, 2007; Quddus et al., 2009) asserted that an appropriate approach was needed in implementing IWE. Key components for innovation in the public sector should be managed effectively to support IWE. As suggested by Ahonala et al. (2015), there are four important components to implement innovation in the public sector, i.e. institution, human resource, funding, and regulation. The institution is directed at driving individuals to embrace an innovation culture, so they are inclined to have innovative behaviour. Human resources are directed to emphasise civil servants as a central resource that is instrumental in mobilising innovation. Funding is in term of how rewards are given to spur the spirit of innovation. Meanwhile, bureaucracy is considered as the factor that hampers the achievement of the public sector for innovations.

This study considers that the government has a major role in the success of IWE and innovation in the public sector. For example, Al-Qudsy (2007) clarified that Islamic values and ethics had been promoted and applied among civil servants in Malaysia since its independence. The government is seriously strengthening civil servants’ integrity and eradicating bribery as an implementation of IWE values. Robillard (2000) asserted that the public sector needs to develop a statement on ethical value. Therefore, the values of IWE should be instilled in the public sector. The worker is a key component in implementing IWE and innovation. An approach that can be applied is by encouraging workers to be more familiar with IWE. Employees and employers should have a strong understanding of executing duties and responsibilities (Aldulaimi, 2016). Rizk (2008) proposed a comprehensive ethics program as a solution to the issue of IWE. This program must be integrated from the top level of the organisational structure. However, it is not sufficient from the top level. Management should promote ethics to all level, from the top, middle and bottom levels. All levels of management must be involved in controlling every unethical behaviour by the worker. Robillard (2000) stated that emphasising ethical behaviour from the top leadership and cascading to the down has a vital role in the success of promoting ethical

behaviour in the public sector. This opinion was supported by Javed et al. (2017) that confirmed low supervision from the leader will decrease the relationship between IWE and innovative work behaviour of worker. Similarly, a study by Javed et al. (2020) revealed that IWE mediates the relationship between transactional leadership and managerial effectiveness. Thus, IWE and innovation can be more easily achieved with government supports, given that culture and the environment in the public sector are serious problems that greatly affect the attitude and behavior of civil servants.

In addition, Robillard (2000) suggested the importance frequency of communication and feedback for the success of IWE and innovation. Another solution is by emphasising on the commitment of workers since implementations of IWE is correlated with loyalty. Fulfilling this loyalty is indispensable in building the success of an organisation. The commitment of an individual to IWE is a business and social role of a Muslim. IWE puts extraordinary pressure on social aspects in the workplace, such as working hard, prioritising service to society, and creating moral sanctity. Enforcing this allegiance will lead to an individual commitment to the organisation while controlling unethical behaviour (Ali & Al-Kazemi, 2007; Ahmad et al., 2020). The results of the study by Zin and Ashari (2020) suggested that organisations must emphasise Islamic work practices to employees by building a positive culture based on trust and commitment. Rawas et al. (2018) found a significant relationship between IWE and job satisfaction, and IWE negatively related to turnover intention.

In the same vein, Al-Qudsy (2007) proposed seven fundamental values on the successful principles of work ethic: quality, productivity, innovativeness, discipline, integration, accountability, and professionalism. Meanwhile, Al Maududi (1967) outlined five concepts of work ethic in Islam. First, organisations are responsible for educating employee and employer to be aware of the obligations in carrying out duty with full courtesy. Second, it is important to classify professions or activities that are categorised as legal and illegal. Third, it needs to instil awareness that work ethic is universal so all communities can accept it. Fourth, work ethic must be assimilated into human nature because Islam emphasises peace and also harmony. Fifth, ensure all work is performed politely by hindering actions such as cheating, bribing, pressing, and manipulating (Aldulaimi, 2016).

Furthermore, Caron and Giauque (2006), Robillard (2000) asserted that the public sector could promote ethical awareness through education, training, and education on ethical values. A civil servant should introduce professionalism in performing work that prioritises public interest. Training on values and ethical behaviour is essential for the development of professional civil servant. They must be responsible for keeping good behaviour. Training will improve the awareness of civil servants on ethical behaviour. Continuous development of civil servants will emphasise individual readiness in making decisions following ethical values. Furthermore, there is a need to emphasise that the consequences of being flexible in serving public interest must be supported by ethics and good behaviour (Bailey, 1964). Ghias et al. (2020) found a need to train individuals in the workplace in practising IWE. As a result, innovation in the public sector can be generated through the implementation of IWE.

However, the methods above will not run if the government does not pay attention to the most important key component for driving civil servant to embrace IWE and innovative behaviour. Workers in the public sector should be given incentives for implementing IWE and innovation. As stated by Hilgers and Ihl (2010), Bloch and Bugge (2013), innovation in

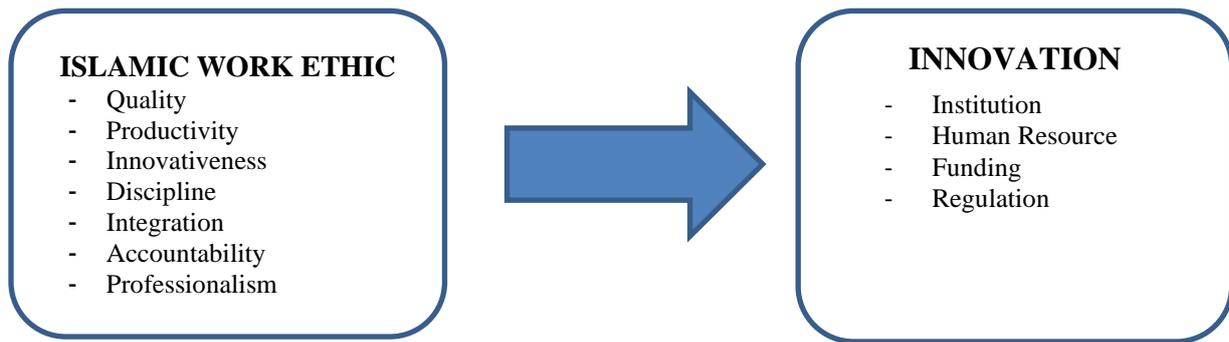
the public sector is difficult and problematic. Culture and environment influence the motivation of civil servant in implementing IWE and innovation. Rizk (2008) and Robillard (2000) asserted that an ethics program also should be consolidated with an organisational system. It needs to align policies and procedures on inappropriate punishment and reward. Thus, when an appropriate reward has been given, workers in the public sector must also be prepared to accept the consequences if they neglect their duties, namely by punishment. They are required to have high discipline and responsibilities in serving society. Thus, reward and punishment will boost civil servant to implement IWE and innovation.

Furthermore, bureaucracy is the main issue in the public sector as it is a barrier to achieving innovation (Kumar & Rose, 2010; Sandhu et al., 2011; Vigoda-Gadot et al., 2008). A solution can be applied by making bureaucracy more flexible to boost civil servant to be more productive through values of IWE and innovative behaviour. As Bailey (1964) confirmed, workers in the public sector must be free from the procedure that rejects the implementation of a new idea. Thus, civil servants should be more flexible in the procedure. IWE requires Muslims to prioritise the public interest in the best way possible. There is a need to update rules and regulations in the public sector that do not restrict individual movement on IWE and innovation.

This study observes that scholars have similar opinions on the method applied to support the relationship between IWE and innovation in the public sector. However, solution proposed by Ahonala et al. (2015) accommodates ideas proposed i.e. (a) Institutions: Emphasise culture and environment for innovation, build awareness of workers and develop communication to support IWE and innovation (Aldulaimi, 2016; Robillard, 2000), implement a comprehensive ethics program (Rizk, 2008), establish commitment of worker to prevent unethical behavior to support innovative behavior (Ali & Al-Kazemi, 2007; Ahmad et al., 2020), enhance supervision to improve relationship of IWE and innovative behavior (Javed et al., 2017) (b) Human Resources: Human resource is capital resource to generate new ideas (Caron and Giaouque, 2006; Robillard, 2000) (c) Funding: Need to support the ability of organisations on financial in establishing innovation through IWE by aligning policies and procedures on inappropriate punishment and reward (Rizk (2008) and Robillard (2000) (d) Regulations: Manage rules, laws and bureaucratic processes on the success of IWE on innovation (Kumar & Rose, 2010). Therefore it is important to integrate all aspects in order to foster an IWE so that innovative behaviour can run effectively in the public sector.

## **A MODEL OF ISLAMIC WORK ETHIC AND INNOVATION**

This study develops a model to support the relationship between IWE and innovation based on previous studies by identifying key factors to solve public sector challenges. In practising IWE, it is urgent to identify seven fundamental factors: quality, productivity, innovativeness, discipline, integration, accountability, and professionalism, as proposed by Al-Qudsy (2007). Further, innovation in the public sector will run as planned to support the public sector in providing excellent service to society by considering the key factors, i.e. institution, human resource, funding, and regulation (Ahonala et al., 2015) as appeared in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Model of the relationship between Islamic work ethic and innovation**

## CONCLUSION

In this modern era, organisations will not survive without innovation. The public sector is a service provider highly needed by society. The dissatisfaction of the public with the public sector services is an indicator that this institution needs innovation. Meanwhile, individual behaviour is one of the most important aspects of successful innovation in the public sector. It has been revealed by some researchers that IWE becomes an excellent concept in creating and improving innovation in the public sector. IWE is a concept of work that is resulted from Islamic teachings. It contains values sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith that advocates Muslim to prioritise society through the values of goodness by avoiding unethical behaviour. Muslim who practices IWE has a noble Akhlaq. Thus, IWE is a solution for preventing unethical behaviour. Individuals instilled with IWE will yield high productivity as it will help to improve innovation. Therefore, IWE determines the success of an organisation in achieving innovation.

The major challenge of IWE in the public sector is building awareness of civil servant on the importance of IWE values to instil innovation. Thus, support from the government has a crucial role in the implementation of IWE and innovation. IWE should be promoted to all level of management in the public sector. Particularly, a comprehensive ethic program through the implementation of values of IWE should be the appropriate solution. However, a comprehensive ethics program should be strengthened by providing appropriate reward and punishment to motivate the spirit of work civil servant. Furthermore, it is also crucial to reform culture and bureaucracy to be flexible to mobilise IWE and innovation.

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