Can religiosity foster intrapreneurial behaviors? The mediating role of perceived organizational support

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Abstract

Purpose – Religion is a system of beliefs that plays a vital role in an individual's personal and work life. Surprisingly, management researchers have not studied this area in a meaningful way. To address this gap in the existing literature, the purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of religiosity on intrapreneurial behaviors of employees.

Design/methodology/approach – A quantitative methodology was adopted in this study. A total of 306 responses are collected through a structured questionnaire.

Findings – Results showed a positive association between religiosity and intrapreneurial behaviors of employees and a significant mediating effect of perceived organizational support on religiosity-IB linkages

Originality/value – The study presents several implications for researchers and practitioners.

Keywords Religiosity, Intrapreneurship, Intrapreneurial behaviors, Partial least squares-structural equation model "PLS-SEM"

Paper type Research paper

Abbreviations

POS: Perceived organizational support
IB: Intrapreneurial behavior
PLS-
SEM: Partial least squares-structural equation modeling

Introduction

The role of religiosity in the workplace has become a topic of interest for the theorist, academicians and researchers across disciplines such as sociology, public administration, applied psychology and organizational management (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003; Kinjerski and Berna, 2004; Mitroff *et al.*, 1999). Religion is composed of beliefs, and those beliefs give a sense of direction to the individuals; the increasing interests how religion impacts the work–life is not surprising, what is surprising, despite the importance of religion in organizations, is the lack of studies in current literature (Ghazzawi *et al.*, 2012; Kelly, 1995; Richards and Bergin, 2000).

Woefully, scholars from management and organizational psychology did not heed attention to religiosity and showed reluctance to include this element in organizational management theory. According to Tracey (2012), almost all the individuals perform religious practices in organizations across the globe, and a lack of studies in this stream of research is a dilemma. Moreover, religion is not like a hat which individuals should take off while entering the workplace.

Since religion plays a profound role not only in the individual's life but also impacts employees at the workplace to a greater extent; thus, in this study, we aim to investigate how religiosity affects the intrapreneurial behavior (IB) of employees. Also, we believe that for fostering the IB of employees, organizations should provide a supportive climate. Thus, we also believe that perceived organizational support (POS) will act as a mediator in Religiosity-IB linkage.

By doing so, we add to the literature in two ways. Primarily, no enough studies are in the literature on the relationship between religiosity, POS and IB. Therefore, we investigate the role of POS and religiosity on IBs of employees. Since existing literature has ignored this specific subject, and researchers have not given enough attention to this area of organizational management.

Secondly, the positive association between religiosity and IB provides support to the premise that religion being a set of beliefs not only affect an individual's social life but also work life. Thus, these findings dispel the concerns about the appropriateness of religiosity as an area of research.

The next section discusses literature and hypothesis development. The data collection and methodology follows it. Next, statistical tools and results of the study are presented, and the last section offers discussion and implications of the study.

Theoretical background and hypothesis development

Intrapreneurial behavior

Intrapreneurship is defined as entrepreneurship in the existing organization. In both literature and practice, intrapreneurship is considered as a legitimate means of increasing the performance level of organizations (Hayton *et al.*, 2013). The concept of intrapreneurship received widespread attention in the 1980s, and its significance was championed around the employees who create value for the organization and help to create the differentiation. Intrapreneurship has a prime focus on organizational benefits, and its conceptualization developed over time (Gawke *et al*, 2019). For instance, (Burgelman, 1983) defined intrapreneurship, where firms involve in diversification through internal development such as proactivity, risk-taking and technological innovation.

Intrapreneurship is brought by the strategic renewal and venture creation at the individual level, and it is the source of competitive advantage and differentiation for any organization. Intrapreneurship is also positively related to a firm's financial performance, and it results in profits and returns on sales and assets and nonfinancial performance such as an increase in organizational effectiveness and performance (Gawke *et al*, 2019). A more

comprehensive conceptualization of intrapreneurship emerged in the 1990s, and it is still used most frequently in studies related to intrapreneurship (Gawke *et al*, 2019). According to this conceptualization, intrapreneurship is strategic renewal and corporate venturing activities as a result of employees' IB and effective and efficient use of the human resource management (Blanka, 2019; Guth and Ginsberg, 1990). Corporate venturing is about the creation and integration of a new business or proportion of a new business in the existing business. While strategic renewal behavior is seeking and grabbing opportunities to enhance the organization's capability to compete with its industry rivals. This strategic renewal can be in the form of offering strategic products and services, business models or fundamental differentiation from the industry standards. In other words, to exploit those opportunities that others have not observed yet (Gawke *et al*, 2019).

Literature provides ample evidence that intrapreneurship is rapidly growing in organizations, as more and more organizations are beginning to accept the concept of intrapreneurship to ensure their continued existence (Phan *et al.*, 2009). In the last decade, many research works have been done in the field of intrapreneurship. For instance, for the success of an organization, Seshadri and Tripathy (2006, p. 17) added that the intrapreneurship processes are the first step toward fulfilling the challenges of the global market, and it starts from untying the spirit of entrepreneurship within its workers. The authors consider the intrapreneurship as a main driving force for the reinvention and renewal of organizations. The intrapreneurial path at any organization is a doorway for new ventures, new paths, challenging the status quo and doing something creative that matters.

Researchers studied intrapreneurship at the two levels, i.e. individual and organizational levels. Scholars named it as corporate entrepreneurship or entrepreneurial orientation (Andrade-Valbuena *et al.*, 2019) at the organizational level. All the entrepreneurial activities, such as risk-taking, proactiveness and innovativeness, considered to be the critical elements at the individual level by employees. Innovativeness refers to the behavioral aspect of opportunity recognition, idea generation and idea implementations to bring and implement a radical change (Sahibzada Jawad *et al.*, 2019; Rafiq, 2019). Proactiveness is a self-starting personal initiative to recognize the opportunity to innovate. We believe only intrapreneurs who can take initiatives, be persistent and can find support from within the organization can bring radical change. Risk-taking is about embarking and entering into unknown and challenging situations concerning the organizations, without knowing what would be the outcome (Farrukh *et al.*, 2019b). Although the interest in research related to entrepreneurship is significantly increasing, strategic employees behavior such as proactiveness, risk-taking behavior and innovativeness, is scarce and fragmented (Blanka, 2019). As a result, theoretical advancement in the field of intrapreneurship is hampered.

Religiosity
Osman-Gani *et al.* (2013) defined the concept of religiosity as the belief of an individual in God and participation of an individual in religious activities, i.e. offering prayers and other religious duties. Osman-Gani *et al.* (2013, p. 2), introduced 10 different religious concepts that ultimately impact the individuals' behaviors. These concepts are: "(1) Proselytizing; (2) Church attendance; (3) Amount of prayer; (4) Doctrine or dogma; (5) Authoritarian; (6) Self-righteousness; (7) Belief in the divine; (8) Ritualistic; (9) Integration; and (10) Scripture reading". Individuals with a religious doctrine demonstrate behaviors that may reflect in their personal, social and work life. So, it is plausible to expect that religion impacts the work behavior of employees because of authoritative individual values (Ghazzawi *et al.*, 2012; Ghazzawi and Smith, 2009). For example, Ghazzawi and Smith (2009, p. 300) proposed that "deeply religious employees might be more reliable, more committed to the job, and willing to work harder under adverse circumstances than less committed individuals. Religious employees might tend to avoid self-centeredness and see their job as integrated with their ethics".

Recently religion has been employed in entrepreneurship and has gained a lot of attention from the practitioners and researchers. Religion advances values within society, and as a result, these values shape individual behavior and attitude. Values linked with religion can both encourage and discourage entrepreneurship (Block *et al.*, 2019).

Scholars have investigated the relationship between religiosity and entrepreneurship from the various perspectives, and the research related to religion and entrepreneurship is scattered. For instance, religion can be regarded as a cultural, environmental and contextual factor at the macrolevel. Nevertheless, religion can also be regarded as a critical factor that creates the networks at the microlevel (Henley, 2017). Scholars confirmed the positive relationship between religion and individuals' life, but sparse literature is available on the relationship between religiosity and IB. We attempted to fill this gap in the literature by examining this relationship between religiosity and IB.

Religiosity and intrapreneurial behaviors
While a few prior research studies have investigated the role of religiosity in the workplace, the majority of them state that spiritualty at work creates an environment in which the employee can foster his/her innovative behavior (Ghazzawi *et al.*, 2012; Hawley, 1993; Milliman *et al.*, 2003). Osman-Gani *et al.* (2013) found a positive link between religiosity and employees' performance at the workplace. Empirical studies proposed that religious people are more creative and tend to embark on more risk-taking behavior at the workplace (e.g. Batson *et al.*, 1993). Furthermore, several empirical studies confirm the positive association between religious employees and creativity, by asserting on the fact that more a religious an employee, the more creative he or she will be (e.g. Day, 2005).
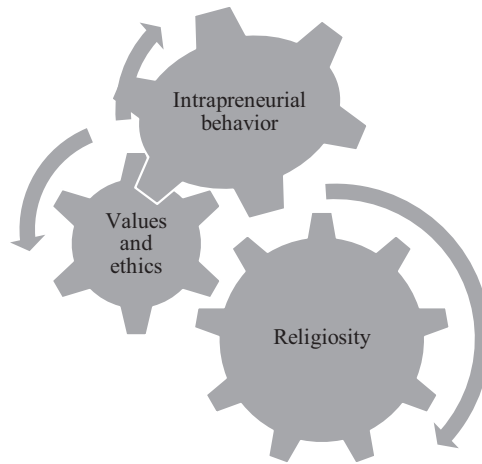
According to Day (2005), "Creative experiences change the cognitive structure to accommodate new ways of looking at things, similar to cognitive restructuring that occurs in existential or religious experiences" (16). Proudfoot *et al.* (1997) conceptualized religious believes as "schemas" that may serve as a way to find a solution to the problems. Religion enables individuals to complete lost details concerning situations and events, which then enhances the depositary of data available for problem-solving (Day, 2005). Likewise, a higher level of motivation relates to an internal locus of control, which was linked to better problem-solving and decision-making (Day, 2005). Therefore, religiosity and innovativeness may be positively related.

Townsend (2000) stated that it is essential to build a work environment that could be conducive to creativity in the workplace. To do so, employees need to have freedom, autonomy and the opportunity to express themselves. Further, the elements of religiosity, such as values and ethics, may also shape the individual attitudes and behaviors oriented to achieve personal development along with organizational performance. Therefore, religiosity plays a pivotal role in the stabilization of the communal system of society (Dodd and Gotsis, 2007). It may also persuade the preference of individuals to perform an entrepreneurial activity (Audretsch *et al.*, 2013; Balasundaram and Uddin, 2009) (refer Figure 1 as an illustration of this relationship).

Spirituality in the workplace has been found to encourage innovativeness among stakeholders (Marques *et al.*, 2007; Steele and Bullock, 2009). Kinjerski and Berna (2004) conducted an exploratory analysis to acquire a better understanding of spirituality in the workplace. Interviews with professionals revealed that spirituality at work encompasses several dimensions. Among them, authenticity was mentioned as an essential determinant for increasing creativeness and innovative solutions (Kumar, 2016).

Hence, this study attempted to examine the link between religiosity and IBs of employees. In pursuing this aim, this study answers the following question, "what is the relationship between religiosity and intrapreneurial behaviors?".

From the above discussion, we can postulate that IB, which is a combination of innovativeness, risk-taking and pro-activeness, is linked to religiosity. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1. There is a significant positive relationship between employees' religiosity and intrapreneurial behaviors.

Organizational support and intrapreneurial behaviors
Building IB requires an environment that is permissive to intrapreneurship, and the importance of such an environment has been previously discussed in the literature. There is a growing body of literature (Kuratko *et al.*, 2004, 2005; Subramanian, 2005), which suggests that innovative performance is the expected positive output of such an encouraging environment.

Antoncic and Hisrich (2001) stated that the intra-organization environment is critical in forming an intrapreneurial tendency. Organizational support was found to be integral to innovation. Kuratko *et al.* (2005) reckoned that administrators, irrespective of their level, have an essential role in developing the employee's desire to innovate. As per Floyd and Lane (2000), it is the responsibility of the upper-level managers to foster an entrepreneurial vision and encourage pro-entrepreneurial tendencies.

On the other hand, middle-level managers are responsible for assisting this process by performing the role of role models through their participation in intrapreneurship actions, and concurrently aiding and developing the ideas of the employees. Additionally, "middle-managers" also play the critical role of handing over those ideas to upper management and getting its approval. In such a context, the lower-level managers can be regarded as the catalytic agent responsible for promoting IBs. They should also be motivated to encourage their subordinates to innovate along the lines of the strategic pans hatched by upper management.

Organizational support for innovation is pivotal for rekindling the entrepreneurial drive found in an organization as it denotes the desire of the managers to accommodate and enhance the entrepreneurial drive built into these systems and processes which would then motivate intrapreneurs to participate in innovative activities (Goodale *et al.*, 2011; Imran and Aldaas, 2020; Kuratko *et al.*, 2016; Kuratko and Montagno, 1989). Consequently, Alpkan *et al.*

(2010) and Goodale *et al.* (2011) stated that organizational support and organizational innovation are positively corelated. Such institutionalized support mechanisms are essential to the formalization as well as the coordination of the unique personal ideas and enhance the efficiency of the innovative efforts of the entire organization. In addition to that, management support will have a positive outcome on a corporation's entrepreneurial behaviors and develop the future intrapreneurs'.

Using the above information and based on social exchange theory (SET), it is safe to say that organizational support results in a positive exchange of employees in the form of innovation and IB. Based on the above, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2. Perceived organizational support will have positive relationships with intrapreneurship.

To explain the mediation role of POS, we fall back on the theoretical underpinning of POS, which states that to encourage employees to show an augmented level of performance, the organization should acquire anthropomorphic traits that care and respect employees well-being and their overall beliefs. Such support will help the employees to nurture their innovative and proactive behaviors (Biswas and Bhatnagar, 2013), in other words, intrapreneurial expressions.

We believe that the perception of organizational support strengthens the emotional and cognitive evaluation of the organization. According to (Biswas and Bhatnagar, 2013), POS is not only the employees' perception regarding the extrinsic support such as financial benefits but it also pledges the organizational acknowledgment and endorsement of faith, religion and cultural norms. Leaning on this, it is posited that a higher level of POS allows employees to exploit their abilities without any threat to their faith, religion and cultural values. Therefore, theoretical underpinnings lead us to the following hypothesis

H3. POS mediates the relationship between religiosity and intrapreneurial behaviors

Methods and measures
This study investigates the impact of religiosity on IB. Furthermore, the authors also examined the mediating role of POS. Respondents voluntarily participated and were assured about their confidentiality concerning the responses.

Constructs and measures
Scaling. Respondents to this study were asked to indicate their opinion. For this purpose, 5-point Likert scale is used: Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4 and Strongly Agree = 5.

Measure. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire survey that was based on the following three scales:

Religiosity. To elicit responses regarding the religiosity of the respondents, we adopted the Religious Commitment Inventory developed by Worthington *et al.* (2003). The said scale has been validated in several studies in Islamic countries (Mokhlis, 2009).

Intrapreneurial behavior: Three dimensions of intrapreneurship were measured by adopting (1) risk-taking and (2) innovativeness measures from Dutta (2013) and (3) proactiveness from Frese *et al.* (1997). The sample items for risk-taking were "In the course of my work, I will take calculated risks despite the possibility of failure; I boldly move ahead with a promising new approach when others might be more cautious." Sample items for innovativeness are "I contribute to the implementation of new ideas at work" *I often try to introduce new structures, technologies, or approaches to improve efficiency.*

Perceived organizational support: Employees' perception of organizational support was adopted (Armeli *et al.*, 1998). The scale of organizational support includes eight items, and sample items for this scale were "Help is available from my organization when I have a problem" and "My organization shows little concern for me".

Results

The population selected for this study is encompassed of the faculty members of the public sector universities located in the capital city of Pakistan. The study of IB at the individual level in Pakistani public sector universities has remained limited. Therefore, the current study bridged the existing gap in the knowledge about IB at individual level. Data were collected through emails. Of the 500 participants solicited from these institutions, 306 individuals completed and returned the survey. Based on that, the response rate was 61%. All surveys came with complete/valid information.

The sample in this survey comprises 173 males (56.5%) and 133 females (43.5%). The reason male participants were higher, is because Pakistan is a male-dominated society wherein the majority of people in the workforce are males (Khilji, 2003).

Respondents' age distributions were as follows: (1) 37.25% ($n = 114$) of the participants were aged 20–30 years; (2) 34.65% ($n = 106$) 30–40 years; (3) 17.65% ($n = 54$) 41–50 years and 10.45% ($n = 32$) aged over 51-years. Additionally, while the majority of the respondents, that is 177 (57.8%) people have a master's degree, 110 (36%) respondents have a PhD degree. Only 3.9% ($n = 5$) have a bachelor's degree and 2.3% ($n = 7$) have a postdoctorate.

When asked about their work experience, 35.6% of the respondents (i.e. $n = 109$ people) have between one and five years of work experience; 23.85% ($n = 73$) have 6–10 years' experience; 15.35% ($n = 47$) have 11–15 years; 10.80% ($n = 33$) have 16–20 years and 14.40% ($n = 44$) have over 20 years of work experience (see Table 1).

We employ partial least squares-structural equation modeling technique (PLS-SEM) with the help of SmartPLS version 3.2 software. PLS-SEM has become a popular technique for management and organizational behavior research and is being widely employed in several empirical studies (Mamun *et al.*, 2019; Anjum *et al.*, 2018; Farrukh *et al.*, 2016b, 2017a, b, 2019a, c; Raza *et al.*, 2020; Shahzad *et al.*, 2018; Ying *et al.*, 2020) PLS-SEM is appropriate when the research objective is to estimate an association that is engrossed in explaining a target construct (Vander Elst *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, PLS is suitable when the objective of the research is prediction. Therefore, we employ PLS as the primary purpose of this study is to predict IB from POS and religiosity.

PLS-SEM involves two stages. First, the outer model is evaluated, in which we try to establish the reliability and validity of the measurement scales by assessing the composite reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the scale. In the next stage, we assess the inner model, which is also called the structural model. In the structural model, we test the hypothesis.

Step 1. Measurement model evaluation

The constructs of this study were reflective. We assess the reflective constructs by investigating the individual item reliability (factor loading), convergent validity (average variance extracted (AVE)), composite reliability (CR) and discriminant validity (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The threshold values for CR are 0.70 or above for AVE are 0.50 or higher, and factor loading should be 0.708 or higher. Nevertheless, the items with lower factor loading can be retained if the other criteria of measurement model are well above the threshold. Table 2 presents the results of the measurement model. Few items having low factor loadings were deleted and are shown in Table 2.

Gender	Number of respondents (*n*)	Percentage (%)
Female	133	43.50
Male	173	56.50
Total	306	100.00
Age	Number of respondents (*n*)	Percentage (%)
20–30	114	37.25
31–40	106	34.65
41–50	54	17.65
Over 51	32	10.45
Total	306	100.00
Education level	Number of respondents (*n*)	Percentage (%)
Bachelor's degree	12	3.90
Master's degree	177	57.80
PhD	110	36.00
Postdoctorate	7	2.30
Total	306	100.00
Work experience	Number of respondents (*n*)	Percentage (%)
1–5 years	109	35.60
6–10 years	73	23.85
11–15 years	47	15.35
16–20 years	33	10.80
Above 20 years	44	14.40
Total	306	100.00

Table 1.
Characteristics of the sample ($N = 306$)

Discriminant validity. Next, the discriminant validity of the measurement model is investigated with the help of the Fornell and Larcker criterion; for this purpose, the square root of AVE was compared with the correlation between latent constructs. Table 3 presents the results of the Fornell and Larcker test.

As presented in Table 3, we compare the relationships of the latent constructs with the square root of the AVE (Chin, 1998, 2010; Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair *et al.*, 2014; Henseler *et al.*, 2009). The table shows that each of the square roots of the AVE exceeded the correlations among latent constructs. Therefore, the authors confirm that latent constructs are different from each other. Thus discriminant validity has been established.

Step 2. Assessment of structural model

To assess the structural model, evaluation of the value of R square is requisite. R square value depicts the change in the dependent variable caused by the independent variable. In this study, the independent variables cause a 52.1% change in the IB of employees.

Hypothesis testing. The next step in structural model assessment is the investigation of the significance of paths between constructs; to achieve this, the bootstrapping function of PLS was used. The results and decisions of hypothesis testing are shown in Table 4.

Mediation analysis. Next, the significance of the indirect effect is tested. For this purpose, mediation analysis is run using the bootstrapping function of Smart PLS, as suggested by Hair *et al.* (2017). Table 5 shows the results of the mediation analysis. As the direct and indirect effects were both significant and point in the same direction, we conclude a complimentary mediation effect of POS on Religiosity-IB linkages.

Discussions and implications

Religious diversity in the workplace made religiosity an attractive area of research for practitioners and academic researchers. During the last decade, it has received both empirical and theoretical attention from organizational researchers. A plethora of research showed

2nd order	1st order	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's α	Items deleted
IB	Risk-taking	Risk-taking 2	0.781	0.598	0.799	0.781	Risk 1
		Risk-taking 3	0.766				
		Risk-taking 5	0.766				
		Risk-taking 4	0.788				
	Innovativeness	Innovativeness 1	0.740	0.614	0.855	0.788	Inno 2
		Innovativeness 3	0.833				
		Innovativeness 4	0.876				
		Innovativeness 5	0.812				
		Innovativeness 6	0.734				
	Proactiveness	Pro1	0.739	0.606	0.803	0.675	Pro2
		Pro4	0.689				
		Pro5	0.767				
		Pro3	0.644				
	Perceived organizational support			0.634	0.812	0.696	POS8
		POS1	0.766				
		POS2	0.834				
		POS3	0.828				
		POS4	0.719				
		POS5	0.804				
		POS6	0.792				
		POS7	0.841				
	Religiosity			0.665	0.785	0.851	Rel7, Rel8
		Religiosity 1	0.858				
		Religiosity 2	0.704				
		Religiosity 3	0.790				
		Religiosity 4	0.757				
		Religiosity 5	0.876				
		Religiosity 6	0.810				

Table 2.
Measurement model
evaluation

Measure	Innovativeness	Proactiveness	Religiosity	Risk-taking	POS
Innovativeness	0.784				
Proactiveness	0.525	0.779			
Religiosity	0.416	0.321	0.815		
Risk-taking	0.387	0.447	0.375	0.7103	
POS	0.367	0.077	0.313	0.166	0.796

Table 3.
Discriminant validity

Note(s): Diagonals represent the square root of the AVE while the other entries represent the squared correlations

Hypothesis	Beta	*T* statistics	Decision
Rel - > IB	0.456	6.086	Supported
POS - > IB	0.291	4.211	Supported

Table 4.
Hypothesis testing

Note(s): Rel: Religiosity, IB: Intrapreneurial behavior, POS: Perceived organizational support

religion as an essential factor for increased organizational performance and spiritually sounded workforce as having better behavior and attitude (Naughton and VanderVeen, 2010). Keeping this critical role of religion in the workplace in view, this study investigated the mechanism through which religiosity impacts the IB of employees.

	Direct effect	95% confidence interval of the direct effect	T value of a direct effect	Significance?	Indirect effect	95% confidence interval of the direct effect	T value of the indirect effect	Significance?
Religiosity - > POS- > IB	0.456	[0.323–0.243]	6.086	Yes	0.536	[0.262–0.348]	7.681	Yes

Table 5.
Mediation results

A positive association between religiosity and IB was hypothesized in the first hypothesis. The results of the statistical analysis endorsed this relationship. These findings are in line with many past studies, such as Oler (2004). Both of these studies found that religion and its tenets affect employee's perception, behavior attitude and decision-making abilities. Similarly, Osman-Gani et al. (2013) also found a positive relationship between religiosity and employee performance in Malaysia. According to the literature on religious psychology, religion produces formal and informal norms and provides certain prescribed behaviors for followers (Allport, 1953). Similarly, the findings of this study are also aligned with the study of (Henley, 2017), who confirmed that religion has an impact on corporate entrepreneurship through pluralism and regulation. Similarly, research conducted by Deller et al. (2018) confirmed that communities with the orientation of religion have higher levels of business activity.

Some systematic studies of the potential dynamics of religious beliefs in organizational behaviors have found a link between religious beliefs and workplace behaviors. There is a strong positive correlation between people's religious beliefs and work attitudes. Greater religiosity is associated with higher job satisfaction and is an essential predictor of organizational commitment (Farrukh et al., 2016a; Sikorska-Simmons, 2005). Fernando and Jackson (2006) argue that the traditions of the world's major religions have stood the test of time and pointed out that the values inherent in these religions may be related to the management of modern organizations. Therefore, the results of this particular study support the previous concept of research on the impact of religion on employee behaviors.

As the second hypothesis of the study was relevant to social exchange theory, a significant relationship is found between POS and IB. Accordingly, it was theorized that organizational support would increase the IB of employees. This hypothesis is accepted, which specifies that organizational support is very vital in enhancing IB. Conceptualizing based on the SET, employees' relationship with their organization goes beyond the economic return when employees perceive organizational support. Consequently, employees then contribute beyond what is required and expected by organizations. Organizational support theory proposes that organizations should support the employees, and providing them a conducive environment and appreciating their efforts will result in a positive belief among the employees (Jeung et al., 2017; Yariv and Galit, 2017). This belief, POS, will then produce a sense of obligation among employees, and then they will reciprocate the favorable treatment given by the organization. These findings are in line with previous studies (Yariv and Galit, 2017). The results of the study are aligned with Deller et al. (2018), which also concede that organizational support results in the innovative performance of the employee. And innovation is one of the critical components of IB. Likewise, a very recent study conducted by Badoiu et al. (2020) also confirmed that top management support leads to corporate entrepreneurship and IB of the employees.

The third and the last hypothesis of our study assumed that POS would mediate the relationship between religiosity and IB, bootstrap analysis of PLS-SEM endorsed this assertion. These results are in line with some previous research studies (Afsar and Badir, 2017). The results endorsed the social exchange phenomenon. It is plausible that once employees feel the transactions between them and organizations are based on mutual care and organization respect employees' believes and values, such support will help employees to perform extra-role behaviors and nurture innovative and proactive behaviors.

It is imperative to note that most of the previous studies have focused on overall organizational behaviors (Gyekye and Haybatollahi, 2012; Ramlee et al., 2016), organizational citizenship (Kutcher et al., 2010) and organizational commitment (Farrukh et al., 2016a, b), according to the best of authors' knowledge there is no study which investigated the association between IBs and religiosity. Therefore, this study is a unique contribution to the knowledge concerning religiosity and organization management theory.

The current study has been conducted in Pakistan, where 96% of its population are adherent to the Islamic faith. According to a survey conducted by Pew researchers (Theodorou, 2015), 93% of the Pakistani population believes religion is an essential factor in their lives. Based on that, if the managers and practitioners want to bring change in employees' behaviors, they should postulate the strategies which could help employees to bring their whole self to the workplace. Accordingly, the study results attest to the importance of religiosity at work, and its findings also attest to the notion "religion is no more a hat" that could be taken off before entering the workplace.

Conclusion

"Religion is a system of beliefs which affect this attitude and behaviors of the individual not only in society at large but also at the workplace. Keeping the religion and employees separate in the workplace is similar to keeping the mind away from the body. We believe that man is a triune creature; thus, organizations must encourage the people to bring their self in the workplace" (Farrukh *et al.*, 2016a). However, according to Karakas (2010), whether enabling, applying or incorporating the religious and spiritual practices enhances profitability and productivity, is a very crucial and controversial issue; therefore, we suggest practitioners must accommodate the religious and spiritual requests of the employees irrespective of their religious beliefs. This means that as long as the religious requests of some employees do not limit the freedoms of others, managers should respond to them (Cavanagh, 1999).

Theoretical and practical contributions

This study contributes to the literature by comprehending the individual-level factors that support the IB of the employees in several ways. First, this study investigated the personal factors of the employees, such as religiosity, and confirmed that religiosity could be one of the antecedents of IB of the employees. This study provided a broader view of religiosity and explained the process of the development of IB among the employees.

This study expands the role of religion by investigating the mediating role of organizational support between religiosity and IB of the employees. This study expands the literature and theory by stressing the significant role of the organization for nurturing the IB among the employees. Organizations should promote a supportive work environment for the employees by giving them empowerment and autonomy in making their decisions, and this will result in the flourishment of the IB of the employees.

Practical implications

The results of this study provide profound insights concerning religiosity influence on the IB of the employees. Organizations and their managers should try to incorporate various spiritual and religious attributes in their cultures to enhance and engage their employees in IB, and it will attract prospective employees as well. Individuals are not only considered as rational but also emotional, spiritual and religious. So, managers of organizations should understand that there might be several positive outcomes of religiosity at the workplace. Organizations should conduct open forum discussions, workshops and seminars on the concept of religiosity at the workplace and also should attempt to align personal and organizational goals with increasing, the out-of-the-box thinking of employees, their innovativeness and proactive behavior.

Organizations should provide their support by providing employees with an environment of trust, respect and absence of fear. Employees will be likely to participate in IB such as product or service innovation, process innovation, proactive and somehow risk-taking behavior.

Limitations

Despite rigorous efforts in conducting this research, there left several limitations in this study. First and foremost, limitation of the study is the selection of the population, as the study has been conducted in Muslim majority culture; therefore, the generalizability of its findings is limited. The study suggests that future researchers should be conducted in a multicultural and multireligious environment to enhance the generalizability of its results.

A second limitation of the study is concerned with its empirical investigation and variable selection. As the study directly investigated the association between religiosity and IBs, it ignored other dispositional characteristics, such as personality and demographic factors (e.g. age, gender and education). Therefore, we suggest that future research studies should be conducted by incorporating other dispositional factors.

A third limitation of the study is linked to the measuring instrument, the instrument used for religiosity does not use any dimension of religiosity such as intrinsic and extrinsic; a future study, using a detailed instrument, should be conducted to harvest more in-depth and comprehensive results.

This study also implies several future research directions . Future studies should collect data from the multiple industries which will allow scholars for the investigation of validity across different contexts. Second this study used cross-sectional data, so it is suggested that future studies should collect data longitudinally. Third, this study only employed religiosity, POS and IB. So, to enhance the explanatory power of the model future studies should add other mediating variables like leader–member exchange, organizational identification, etc. should also add other moderating variables such empathy or different leadership styles.

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