Islamic Work Ethics and Employee Social Responsibility of Service Sector in Saudi Arabia Mediating Role of Organizational Identification

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Abstract

This paper aims to establish how Islamic Work Ethics relates to Employee Social Responsibility Saudi Arabia's service sector, focusing on the mediating effect of Organizational Identification. Islamic Work Ethics, encompassing fairness, honesty, and responsibility, is crucial for individual and organizational success through commitment and accountability. The study hypothesizes that Islamic Work Ethics positively affects Employee Social Responsibility, actions that support the social objectives of companies and society. Quantitative data were obtained via cross-sectional survey questionnaires from 349 professionals in the Saudi service sector. The results indicate a significant correlation between Islamic Work Ethics (independent variable) and Employee Social Responsibility (dependent variable), suggesting that employees adhering to Islamic Work Ethics are more likely to exhibit socially responsible behaviors. Additionally, Organizational Identification, which measures employees' psychological attachment to their organization, plays a key mediating role in this relationship. Employees with strong Organizational Identification are more likely to align their self-promotion with organizational goals, including social responsibility. This research highlights the importance of integrating Islamic ethical values to enhance social responsibility in organizations and provides valuable insights into management practices in regions where Islamic culture is predominant.

Keywords: *Islamic Work Ethics, Socially Responsible Behavior, Organizational Identification, Service Sector, Saudi Arabia.*

Introduction

Over the years, philosophers and researchers have been fascinated with the idea of focusing on employee perceptions and characterizing the organizations and work domains in ethical principles defined by teachings of Islam. We can define Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) as a set of precepts that deals with moral values and ethical standards in the work place, as provided in the Islamic teachings. IWE is a form of philosophy that tends to focus on such aspects as fairness, honesty, and responsibility, which play the role of the main cornerstones of success at the personal and organizational level (Nasution & Rafiki, 2020). Organizations performance and workers satisfaction are some of the major components that are included in IWE majoring on commitment, dedication to work and accountability (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). These ethics have a major influence on shaping employees' attitudes and behaviors in the workplace.. Researchers have paid a lot of attention on relationship of IWE, with various workplace attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (bin Salahudin et al., 2016; Nasution & Rafiki, 2020) and behaviors such as task performance (Aflah et al., 2021) and voice behaviors (Akhmadi et al., 2023), the specific influence on Employee Social Responsibility (ESR) remains relatively unexplored.

ESR is another concept that has gained attention of researchers for the organizations wanting to increase their organizational social responsiveness and effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). ESR relates to the activities of the employees as well as their conduct at work which is aimed at achieving organizational and societal objectives. Previous research has established that ESR goes further to supplement the organizational endeavor in promoting CSR while amplifying the impact of these efforts in a way that helps drive sustainable and ethical organizational solutions (Veetikazhi, 2021). The significant of ESR based on the premise that it influences the reputation of the organization, satisfaction of the employees and the trust of the stakeholders. The socially responsible actions conducted by the employees also have an influence on improving the corporate image of companies which translates into increased organizational legitimacy within modern socially oriented market (Carroll & Shabana, 2010).

In addition, ESR initiatives are positively associated with organizational employee morale and organizational loyalty due to the reasons that these programs are related to the personal values of employees, thus, the job satisfaction and organization commitment of employees is likely to augment (Glavas & Kelley, 2014).

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Embedding ESR into an organization's culture can substantially advance global sustainability and well-being objectives. This strategic alignment not only helps organizations meet their CSR goals but also ensures that they are perceived as responsible citizens in the global marketplace, which is increasingly important in attracting and retaining talent and consumers who prioritize ethical standards in business practices (Schmitz & Schrader, 2015).

Research has shown that the principles that are linked with IWE, such as fairness, trustworthiness, and the promotion of social welfare, aligns closely with the goals of Employee Social Responsibility, which include enhancing organizational reputation and contributing to societal well-being (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008). However, empirical studies directly connecting IWE with ESR are sparse. Addressing this gap could provide valuable insights into how the ethical frameworks provided by Islam can be leveraged to enhance social responsibility at an individual level within organizations. Exploring this relationship could also offer practical implications for management practices in those cultures and organizations where Islamic values are predominant, thereby enriching the broader discourse on ethics and social responsibility in global business practices (Beekun & Badawi, 2005).

To better understand how IWE is linked with ESR, the current study have also explored the mediating role of Organizational Identification (Papachroni & Heracleous). Previous research suggests that when employees identify strongly with their organizations, they are more likely to adopt organization goals, including social responsibility goals (Ashforth et al., 2016) which is in line with the tenets of social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). By embodying the values instilled through IWE, employees who identify with their organizations are likely to extend these ethical standards into actions that benefit society, thus operationalizing the principles of IWE in the broader context of ESR (Rupp & Mallory, 2015). Therefore, exploring Organizational Identification as a mediator enriches our understanding of the mechanisms through which these ethical orientations can enhance organizational social initiatives.

Literature Review

Islamic Perspective on Work Ethics and Social Responsibility

In Islamic perspective on work ethics, work is considered a means of worship when performed with sincerity and a way to achieve spiritual growth (Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 21, Number 288). Earning through permissible (halal) means is emphasized in teachings of Islam, with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stressing the importance of accountability in how one earns and spends (Bukhari, Volume 2, Book 21, Number 292). This concept is further emphasized by underscoring individual responsibility and accountability for one's actions, including professional task (Quran 17:13-15). According to Beekun and Badawi (2005), these principles foster a comprehensive ethical framework within which employees are expected to operate, aligning personal faith with professional integrity. IWE, which has economic, social and moral dimensions, provides individuals with a sense of worthiness, strengthening their commitment and continuity at work, viewing work as a mean for personal and social development (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008).

Similarly, Islamic principles extends into a much broader concept of social responsibility, emphasizing fairness, equity and welfare of the society as well. Islam teaching does not withhold business or economic activities or disallow profits. In fact one can find various references that Holy Prophet encourage individuals to actively indulge in business and become self-employed. However, the Quran commands Muslims to uphold justice in all dealings, a principle that is crucial in fostering fair and ethical business practices (Quran 4:135) and aligns closely with contemporary principles of corporate social responsibility. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also encourage diligence and excellence in professional roles, advocating that Allah loves those who master their work (Tirmidhi, Volume 2, Book 12, Number 1421). Koleva et al. (2023) conducted an exploratory study and concluded that implementing Islamic principles if implemented within the organization guides ethical decision making at both individual and organizational level, leading to ideal CSR practices. Veetikazhi (2021) has conceptualized ESR in such a manner that it closely resembles the Islamic perspective as it extends beyond the corporate focus on corporate social

responsibility to voluntary commitments of employees towards ethical perspectives and contributions to societal well-being. According to this perspective, ESR ranges from activities such as environmental sustainability to community activities as well as ethical work practices.

IWE promotes principles such as fairness, trustworthiness, and the promotion of social welfare which can significantly influence ESR under the framework of Islamic principles of ethical conduct and societal well-being. Although there is lack of study which has investigated this relationship, research by Murtaza et al. (2016) and Abbasi and Rana (2012) demonstrated that Islamic principles leads to increased organizational citizenship behaviors, which are key components of Employee Social Responsibility. The relationship between IWE and ESR can be understood through the lens of social identity theory which suggests that employee identify more strongly with organizations whose values match their own particularly those values which are related to ethical and religious beliefs (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

H1: There is a positive relationship between Islamic Work Ethics and Employee Social Responsibility

Organizational Identification as a Mediator

Organizational identification (Papachroni & Heracleous, 2020) refers to how deeply employees identify with their organization, encompassing a sense of unity with its values, brand, and methodologies. When employees see themselves as integral parts of their organization, they internalize its values and culture, leading to a stronger commitment and alignment with its goals. This sense of belonging fosters a cohesive work environment where employees are motivated to contribute to the organization's success, advocate for its mission, and embody its principles in their daily actions. Ashforth and Mael (1989) introduced the concept of Organizational Identification within the framework of social identity theory to emphasize the sense of oneness and belongingness to the organization.

In a study which explored how IWE influence prosocial voice behaviour of employees, Organizational Identification was found to act as a mediator (Akhmadi et al., 2023). The concepts of work as a religious activity causes employee to strongly identify with their organizations and they are more likely to engage in socially responsible activities. IWE instills values such as fairness, sincerity and community welfare, which fosters a sense of shared identity and commitment within the organizations. When employees identify with their organization whose values resonate with Islamic ethical principles, they are more likely to engage in socially responsible behaviors, as these actions might be considered an extension of their own ethical commitment to their religion.

Therefore, I propose the following hypothesis.

H2a: There is a positive relationship between Islamic Work Ethics and Organizational Identification

H2b: There is a positive relationship between Organizational Identification and Employee Social Responsibility

H2c: Organizational Identification acts as a mediator in the relationship between Islamic Work Ethics and Employee Social Responsibility.
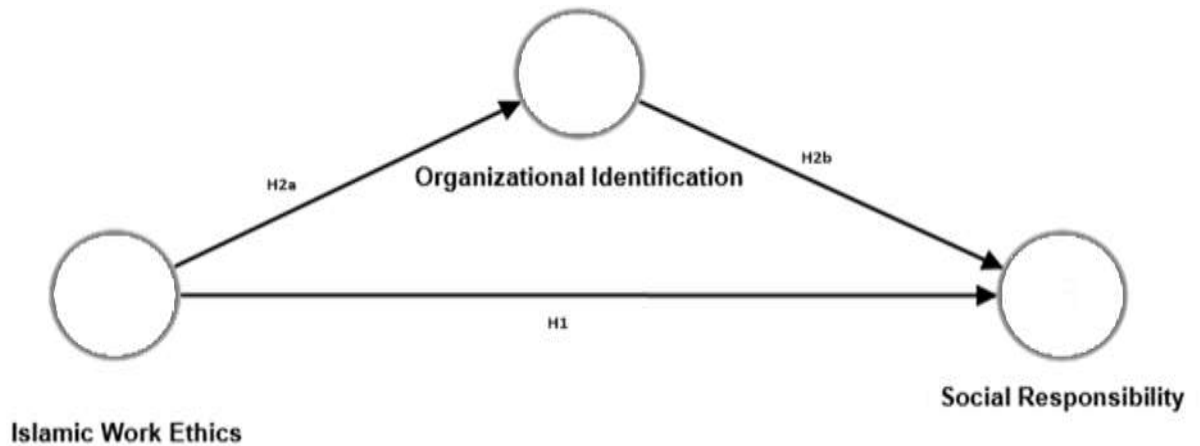
Figure 1depicts the proposed hypothesis in a diagram.

Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of Theoretical Framework

Methods

Participants and Procedure

This study is based upon data collected from service sector companies in Saudi Arabia. In order to generate the set of questions, an online Google Form Questionnaire was developed for flexibility of distribution and response collection. To address issues of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural validity issues, the questionnaires were translated to Arabic employing the back-translation technique. Thereby, the above-stated content validity was assessed and approved by three Ph.D. faculty members being native Arabic speakers who are specialized in various aspects of social and management sciences.

In Saudi Arabia, the religion of Islam thrives in every corner as it is the holy land and birth place of Islam, therefore considering social justice in the workplace and maintaining work family and hours balance IWE is very essential. Closely tied to Saudi context, religious values have a substantial impact on the behaviors and attitudes at work; thus, IWE is an ongoing phenomenon of organizational culture (Beekun & Badawi, 2005). The target population included insurance professional service providers employed in Saudi Arabia. Presently, the service industry is gradually taking a new face and has contributed to narrow the base of the country's economy on the oil (Moshashai et al., 2020). Some of the industries in this sector include retail industry, health sector, educational sector, tourism industries, and the financial sector, which are among the many industries in the country that have been taken through revolutionary operational changes as part of implementing the national development framework. Moreover, there are many measures that the government of Saudi Arabia has taken over recent years in various fields, such as CSR procedures, community engagement procedures, and progressing toward the implementation of SDGs as the part of Saudi Vision 2030 (Alghamdi, 2022). The governments focus on CSR initiatives and strong Islamic culture within the Saudi Arabia makes it pertinent to study the relationship of IWE and Employee Social Responsibility.

The data was collected online by sending the link of the questionnaire via emails and WhatsApp to the HR departments representatives of the various service based companies. A total of 382 forms were filled by the cutoff date. After analyzing for relevancy, missing values and consistency of responses a total of 349 questionnaire were retained. Demographic and employment-related information are as follows. With 307 men (88.0%) and 42 women (12.0%), the group is predominately male. If we look at age, 34.4% of people are between the ages of 31 and 40, and 35.0% are between the ages of 41 and 50. The percentage of people who are married is 79.4%. 31.2% of them have a master's degree, while almost half (47.6%) have a bachelor's

degree. In terms of employment history, 20.1% of workers have fewer than five years' experience, with 11–15 years (22.3%) being the most prevalent range. A look at work duration reveals that 30.1% of people have held their current position for fewer than five years. 34.4 percent of workers are employed by companies with 500 or more employees, whilst 17.2 percent are employed by smaller companies with less than 50 workers. Information Technology accounts for 26.4% of the industry, followed by Hotel and Tourism (24.6%) and Financial Services (21.5%), with lesser shares in Education and other sectors.

Measures

To measure IWE, six items were adopted from Ali (1988). The scale uses Likert items (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree) to measure response. A sample item is "I am fair and just in my work". Similarly ESR was measured with a scale developed by Veetikazhi (2021). This scale uses 16 items to measure four dimensions of ESR on Likert Scale (Strongly disagree to Strongly agree). Finally, Organizational Identification was measured with a scale adopted from Ashforth and Mael (1989). This scale uses 5 items measured on Likert scale ("Strongly disagree to Strongly agree"). Sample item is: "When someone criticizes my organization, it feels personal insult".

Results

The data was analyzed using PLS based SEM. The software used was SMART-PLS 4 (Ringle et al., 2022). In PLS-SEM the protocol is to use a two step method for analysis. In the first step the measurement model (or outer model) testing, the reliability and validity of data is checked. The second step is structural (or inner model) testing. In this testing the collinearity, path coefficients, predictive and explanatory power of the model is tested (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

Measurement Model

Every latent variable was reflective in nature. Using Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (α), I evaluated the internal consistency of our constructs. The Cronbach alphas and CR values, as shown in Table 1, ranged from 0.89 to 0.95 and 0.92 to 0.96, respectively, suggesting good reliability of the constructs since they were more than 0.7 (Hair Jr et al., 2021). The average variance extracted (AVE) needs to be more than 0.5 in order to demonstrate convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair Jr et al., 2021). The AVEs varied from 0.58 to 0.80 for every latent component. Consequently, convergent validity was proven.

We looked at discriminant validity in two ways. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion was first used, which states that each construct's square root of the AVE (bolded on the diagonal) must be greater than its highest correlation with any other construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Given that the correlation values in the top diagonal of our data were all less than the corresponding square roots of the AVEs, this was the case. Furthermore, in accordance with the recommendations by Henseler et al. (2015), I employed the more precise Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) and discovered that all values were below the cautious cut off of 0.90, indicating separate constructions.

Table 1: Assessment of Measurement Model (Reliability, Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity)

		α	CR	AVE	1	2	3
1	Islamic Work Ethics	0.952	0.962	0.807	0.899	0.552	0.873
2	Organizational Identification	0.893	0.921	0.701	0.535	0.837	0.620
3	Social Responsibility	0.962	0.966	0.586	0.838	0.591	0.766

Structural Model

First, I tested for collinearity between the latent variables. All the VIF values were less then 3 showing there is no issue of multicollinearity with the structural model. The collinearity test also verified that there is no issue of common method bias in our data (Kock, 2015). Based on the results of bootstrapping (5000), noteworthy significant relationship was established among the latent variables. There is a strong positive

association of IWE on Employee Social Responsibility, B= 0.731, p <0.05. Therefore, H1 is accepted. Similarly, the relationship between IWE and Organizational Identification (b = 0.535, P<0.05) and between Organizational Identification and ESR (B = 0.2, P<0.05) was significant. Therefore, H2a and H2b were accepted.

The F-square values depicts that effect size range from high to low as shown in the Table 2. According to (Cohen, 1988) the f^2 value of 0.02 represents low effect, 0.15 represents medium effect and greater than 0.35 represents high effect. The f2 values of 1.402 between IWE and ESR there indicate an exceptionally large effect size. The f^2 value of 0.402 for the relationship between IWE and Organizational Identification signifies a large effect size. Finally, the f^2 value of 0.106 for the relationship between Organizational Identification and ESR represents a medium effect size. The R-Square (R^2) value for Organizational Identification is 0.286, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.284, indicating that 28.6% of the variance in Organizational Identification is explained by IWE. This suggests a moderate explanatory power, highlighting the significant role of IWE in shaping Organizational Identification. For Employee Social Responsibility, the R^2 value is 0.731, and the adjusted R^2 is 0.730, meaning that 73.1% of the variance in ESR is accounted for by the combined effects of IWE and Organizational Identification. This high explanatory power demonstrates the robust influence of these predictors on Employee Social Responsibility.

Table 2: Path coefficients, variance inflation factor, effect sizes and coefficient of determination

Paths	β	P-values	VIF	F^2
Islamic Work Ethics -> Organizational Identification	0.535	0.00	1.000	0.402
Islamic Work Ethics -> Social Responsibility	0.731	0.00	1.402	1.420
Organizational Identification -> Social Responsibility	0.200	0.00	1.402	0.106
Endogenous variables	R^2	R^2_{adj}		
Organizational Identification	0.286	0.284		
Employee Social Responsibility	0.731	0.730		

The PLS-Predict (Hair Jr et al., 2021) was used to determine prediction power of Social Responsibility Behaviors (SRB), the main endogenous variable. The Q^2 predict as shown in table 3 benchmark values for all indicators being greater than zero confirm that the model has predictive relevance for Organizational Identification and SRB. Comparing the predictive relevancy statistics of RMSE and MAE between the PLS model and Linear model revealed that in all of the cases, the PLS model yield lower values. This indicate that model has high predictive power as PLS model proved to be more robust when compared to the linear model estimates.

Table 3: MV prediction summary

	Q^2predict	PLS-SEM_RMSE	PLS-SEM_MAE	LM_RMSE	LM_MAE
SRB_CO1	0.460	0.471	0.343	0.497	0.348
SRB_CO2	0.431	0.492	0.344	0.517	0.357
SRB_CO3	0.277	0.648	0.479	0.657	0.489
SRB_CO4	0.489	0.514	0.337	0.539	0.321
SRB_CO5	0.302	0.641	0.483	0.674	0.504
SRB_EC1	0.440	0.564	0.390	0.581	0.406
SRB_EC2	0.466	0.565	0.398	0.585	0.414
SRB_EC3	0.399	0.585	0.432	0.606	0.434
SRB_EC4	0.405	0.590	0.442	0.635	0.473
SRB_LTV1	0.400	0.596	0.403	0.622	0.415
SRB_LTV2	0.299	0.724	0.517	0.733	0.525
SRB_LTV3	0.268	0.675	0.482	0.692	0.488

SRB_NAO1	0.548	0.448	0.306	0.459	0.302
SRB_NAO2	0.442	0.519	0.380	0.519	0.369
SRB_NAO3	0.556	0.450	0.300	0.458	0.292
SRB_NAO4	0.229	0.743	0.594	0.770	0.607
SRB_NAO5	0.385	0.549	0.395	0.571	0.407

Discussion

Theoretical Contributions

IWE are principles of work ethics derived from the Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (May Peace be Upon Him), emphasizing hard work, honesty, fairness and social justice. This study makes several important theoretical contributions to the literature on IWE and Employee Social Responsibility. Firstly, it extends the existing understanding of IWE by linking it directly with Employee Social Responsibility, a relatively unexplored area. The study highlights that Islamic Work Ethic, which encompasses fairness, honesty, and responsibility, significantly influences employees' socially responsible behaviors. This finding supports previous literature that suggests ethical frameworks rooted in religious teachings can enhance ethical behaviors in the workplace (Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008; Nasution & Rafiki, 2020). The profound effect size between IWE and ESR reveals that employee's adoption of Islamic way of doing job has a profound influence on how they would behave towards social betterment of the society. Another contribution of the current study is to introduce Organizational Identification (Papachroni & Heracleous) as the mediator. Based upon social identity theory, the study found that Islamic ethical values transform into positive social action when employee identity more with their organization (Ashforth et al., 2016). This mediating role of Organizational Identification underscores the importance of aligning personal and organizational values to foster SRB (Rupp & Mallory, 2015). However, it is noteworthy that direct effect of IWE on ESR is greater than indirect effect. Yet the indirect effect indicates that one-way IWE influence social responsibility is when employee internalize their organizational identity.

Managerial Implications

The findings of this study have significant implications for managers, especially in organizations operating within Islamic cultural contexts. Managers can leverage IWE to promote ESR among employees, thereby enhancing the organization's social impact and reputation. IWE are grounded in Islamic principles and emphasize the importance of work as a means of serving society and fulfilling religious obligations. By embedding IWE into organizational culture, managers can ensure that ethical values such as fairness and responsibility become integral to the employees' professional conduct. This effectively means that managers need to align the organizational culture in light with several principals laid out by the Quran and Sunnah of Prophet (May Peace be Upon Him). This includes a workplace which fosters honesty, trustworthiness, hard work, commitment, fairness and justice, and responsibility towards humanity. This alignment not only boosts ESR but also enhances employee morale and loyalty, which are crucial for organizational success (Glavas & Kelley, 2014).

Additionally, the study suggests that fostering a strong sense of Organizational Identification can further encourage employees to engage in socially responsible behaviors. Therefore, managers should focus on establishing an environment in which employees feel a sense of belonging and identification with the organization's values and mission. This alignment is strategic and can help to attract and retain talent and consumers who rank ethical standards high in their choice of businesses (Schmitz & Schrader, 2015). In addition, enhancing sense of organizational identification also helped in increased job satisfaction, enhanced commitment and improved performance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant impact of IWE on ESR within Saudi Arabia's service sector, emphasizing the mediating role of Organizational Identification. The research demonstrates that employees who embrace IWE principles, including fairness, honesty, and responsibility, are more likely to engage in socially responsible behaviors. This relationship underscores the alignment of individual ethical values with organizational practices, promoting a culture of accountability and social welfare. The findings show that Organizational Identification significantly enhances the influence of IWE on Employee Social Responsibility. Employees who strongly identify with their organization are more inclined to apply Islamic ethical standards to their professional actions, thus supporting organizational goals related to social responsibility. This study makes a crucial theoretical contribution by establishing a direct link between IWE and ESR and introducing Organizational Identification as a key mediator in this relationship. From a managerial perspective, integrating IWE into organizational culture can significantly enhance Employee Social Responsibility, improve employee morale, and foster loyalty. Managers in Islamic cultural contexts can use these insights to boost their organization's social impact and reputation by embedding ethical values into everyday business practices. The study's limitations, such as its cross-sectional design and focus on the service sector, suggest future research should explore longitudinal impacts and broader industry applications. Overall, this research provides valuable insights for both academics and practitioners, emphasizing the role of ethical frameworks in driving socially responsible behaviors and offering practical strategies for enhancing organizational social initiatives within Islamic contexts.

Limitations

Having so many contributions, the study comes with few limitations. The cross-sectional design on one hand limits the ability where one can draw causal inferences. It is hereby suggested that to better understand the causality future research should adopt longitudinal design to draw inferences between IWE, Organizational Identification and Employee Social Responsibility. At the same time, the study solely focuses on service sector, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. To confirm and expand on the findings, further study might examine similar links in various different industries and cultural situations. The study's representativeness is impacted by the absence of a female sample, which may lead to results that are biased more toward one gender than the other. At the same time, bias may be introduced by the dependence on self-reported measures. Because women are underrepresented, the results could not fairly represent their circumstances or experiences.

To strengthen the findings' robustness, future research should consider longitudinal studies that monitor changes and causal links over time. It would be possible to compare different cultures and increase generalizability by broadening the geographical reach to include more nations. In order to comprehend trends and consequences that are distinctive to a given gender, efforts should also be made to guarantee a more balanced gender representation. Future research can offer a more thorough and inclusive understanding of the research issue by overcoming these constraints.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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