Article

HRM Strategies and Islamic Cultural Integration in Building Team Cohesion

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Abstract: This study investigates mechanisms through which human resource management (HRM) strategies and Islamic cultural integration contribute to building team cohesion in multicultural organizational environments. The research employed a cross-sectional survey design yielding 108 valid responses from six organizations with 63% Muslim and 37% non-Muslim employees. Statistical analyses utilized structural equation modeling, bootstrap mediation procedures, and multi-group analysis. Results revealed significant positive relationships among all constructs, with HRM strategies demonstrating strong effects on Islamic cultural integration ($\beta = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$) and Islamic cultural integration showing substantial influence on team cohesion ($\beta = 0.58$, $p < 0.001$). Bootstrap mediation analysis indicated that Islamic cultural integration accounts for 56% of the total effect of HRM strategies on team cohesion. Multi-group analysis revealed different patterns between Muslim and non-Muslim employees. The findings contribute to cross-cultural management theory and provide practical implications for organizations in diverse international markets.

Keywords: Human resource management; Islamic cultural integration; Team cohesion; Cross-cultural management; Mediation analysis

1. Introduction

In the modern globalized business environment, Human Resource Management (HRM) effectiveness increasingly determines organizational performance and employee satisfaction. Modern businesses face unprecedented challenges managing culturally diverse teams, requiring paradigm shifts in HRM practices to incorporate varied cultural backgrounds and value systems. Organizational culture's impact on team unity, employee motivation, and overall performance cannot be overstated (Gede & Huluka, 2024).

Islamic culture, with its distinctive work ethics and value systems, represents a major cultural paradigm shaping workplace behavior and organizational relationships. Islamic ethical principles encourage values such as honesty, integrity, diligence, and social responsibility, significantly influencing work attitudes and teamwork dynamics (Toumi & Su, 2023). Culturally congruent values are important predictors of employee engagement and commitment, as well as organizational success (Tarab, 2024). Research demonstrates strong positive relationships between Islamic work ethics and positive voice behavior, organizational identification, and job performance (Akhmadi et al., 2023; Shahzad et al., 2024).

Team cohesion, a primary organizational behavior concept, refers to the degree to which team members collaborate and strive towards shared goals (Oh, 2023; Zamecnik et al., 2024). While cultural diversity tends to reduce team cohesion short-term, effective management practices and cultural integration interventions can overcome this challenge (Ali et al., 2024; Samadi & Nixon, 2024).

Although existing literature contains considerable research in HRM, Islamic work ethics, and team cohesion, comprehensive studies organically combining these areas remain relatively scarce (Haj Ali & Abu-Saad, 2024). This study aims to fill this research gap by empirically analyzing mechanisms through which HRM strategies and Islamic cultural integration contribute to building team cohesion.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Research Design and Data Collection

This study employs a cross-sectional survey design to explore how HRM strategies influence team cohesion via Islamic cultural integration. The research targets organizations with substantial Muslim employee populations, utilizing a multi-stage sampling approach as shown in **Figure 1**. The final sample consisted of 118 employees from 6 organizations, with Muslim employees comprising 63% and non-Muslim employees 37%. Data collection employed structured questionnaires with four sections: demographics, HRM strategy perceptions, Islamic cultural integration levels, and team cohesion assessments. All scales utilized five-point Likert scales (Kusmaryono et al., 2022). Questionnaire distribution combined online and offline methods, achieving a 91.2% response rate. After removing 10 invalid responses, 108 valid questionnaires were analyzed.

Figure 1

Research Process Flow
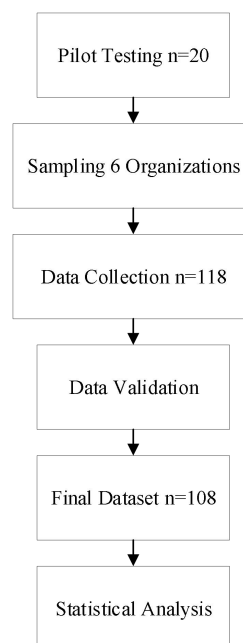
2.2. Variable Measurement

HRM strategies were assessed using a 15-item scale adapted from established literature (Demo et al., 2024), encompassing recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and reward mechanisms. Islamic cultural integration was measured using a 12-item scale across three dimensions: religious practice acceptance, cultural value recognition, and workplace identity expression. Team cohesion was evaluated using a

validated 10-item scale measuring task and social cohesion dimensions (Lieb et al., 2024). Control variables included demographic characteristics, organizational factors, and religious affiliation status. All measurement instruments utilized five-point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Reliability analysis demonstrated acceptable internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.82 to 0.91 across all constructs.

2.3. Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 28.0 and AMOS 24.0. Descriptive statistics examined variable distributions, means, and correlations, while normality assumptions were assessed through skewness and kurtosis values. Confirmatory factor analysis validated the measurement model, examining factor loadings and reliability. Structural equation modeling tested hypothesized relationships among constructs. Mediation testing was conducted using bootstrap procedures with 5,000 resamples to generate bias-corrected confidence intervals (Hayes & Scharkow, 2013). Common method variance was assessed using Harman's single-factor test, and multi-group analysis examined differences between Muslim and non-Muslim participants (Putnick & Bornstein, 2016). Control variables were included in all analyses to account for demographic and organizational influences.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The final sample consisted of 108 participants from six organizations. The sample was balanced with 54% male and 46% female participants. Religious affiliation indicated 63% Muslim and 37% non-Muslim participants.

All study variables exhibited acceptable normality levels, as shown in **Table 1**. Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships among all three main study variables, as presented in **Table 2**. The correlation matrix indicated no multicollinearity issues.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's α
HRM Strategies	108	3.78	0.65	2.13	5.00	-0.21	-0.45	0.89
Islamic Cultural Integration	108	3.42	0.71	1.83	4.92	0.15	-0.32	0.86
Team Cohesion	108	3.91	0.58	2.50	5.00	-0.43	0.28	0.91
Age	108	32.4	8.7	22	55	0.51	-0.67	-
Organizational Tenure	108	4.2	3.1	0.5	15.0	0.89	0.73	-

Table 2

Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. HRM Strategies	(0.89)				
2. Islamic Cultural Integration	0.58**	(0.86)			
3. Team Cohesion	0.52**	0.61**	(0.91)		
4. Age	0.12	0.08	0.15	-	
5. Organizational Tenure	0.23*	0.19	0.14	0.67**	-

Note. Values in parentheses on the diagonal represent Cronbach's alpha coefficients. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

3.2. Measurement Model Assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the measurement properties of the three-factor model comprising HRM strategies, Islamic cultural integration, and team cohesion. The measurement model demonstrated acceptable fit with χ^2/df = 1.64, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.92, and RMSEA = 0.076 [0.054, 0.098]. All factor loadings exceeded 0.50 and were statistically significant (p < 0.001), as shown in **Table 3**. Composite reliability values exceeded 0.70, while average variance extracted (AVE) values surpassed 0.50, supporting convergent validity. Discriminant validity was established by comparing the square root of AVE with inter-construct correlations. The three-factor structure adequately represents the theoretical constructs.

Table 3

Factor Loadings and Reliability Assessment

Construct	Items	Factor Loading	t-value	CR	AVE	√AVE
HRM Strategies	HRM1	0.71	8.94***	0.91	0.62	0.79
	HRM2	0.78	9.87***			
	HRM3	0.82	10.45***			
	HRM4	0.86	11.23***			

	HRM5	0.75	9.51***			
	ICI1	0.67	7.89***			
	ICI2	0.73	8.67***			
Islamic Cultural Integration	ICI3	0.79	9.34***	0.88	0.58	0.76
	ICI4	0.84	9.87***			
	ICI5	0.72	8.45***			
	TC1	0.75	9.23***			
	TC2	0.81	10.15***			
Team Cohesion	TC3	0.85	10.89***	0.93	0.68	0.82
	TC4	0.89	11.47***			
	TC5	0.82	10.34***			

Note. ***p < 0.01.

3.3. Structural Model Testing

Following the satisfactory measurement model assessment, structural equation modeling was conducted to test the hypothesized relationships. The structural model demonstrated good fit with χ^2/df = 1.74, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.91, and RMSEA = 0.081 [0.061, 0.102]. All hypothesized relationships were significant, as shown in **Table 4**. The structural model explained substantial variance in the dependent variables, with R^2 values of 0.41 for Islamic cultural integration and 0.52 for team cohesion. Control variables showed minimal effects, with only organizational tenure demonstrating a weak but significant relationship with team cohesion. The results provide strong empirical support for the theoretical framework, as illustrated in **Figure 2**.

Table 4

Structural Model Results

Hypothesized Path	β	t-value	p-value	R^2
HRM Strategies → Islamic Cultural Integration	0.64	7.23***	< 0.001	0.41
Islamic Cultural Integration → Team Cohesion	0.58	6.87***	< 0.001	
HRM Strategies → Team Cohesion	0.29	3.45***	< 0.001	0.52
Organizational Tenure → Team Cohesion	0.15	2.12*	< 0.05	

Note. β = standardized path coefficient. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.001.

Figure 2

Structural Model with Path Coefficients
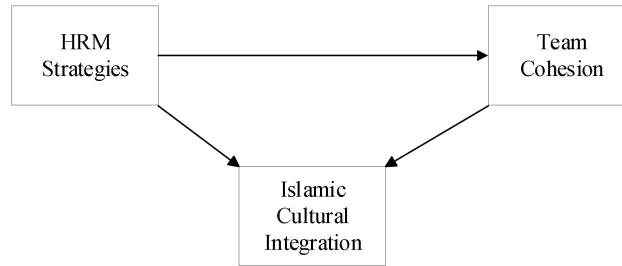
3.4. Mediation Analysis

Bootstrap mediation analysis with 5,000 resamples was conducted to examine the indirect effect of HRM strategies on team cohesion through Islamic cultural integration. The analysis revealed a significant indirect effect with bias-corrected confidence intervals not including zero, as shown in **Table 5**. The mediation analysis indicates that Islamic cultural integration accounts for approximately 56% of the total effect of HRM strategies on team cohesion. The Sobel test provided additional confirmation of the mediation effect. The results demonstrate that Islamic cultural integration functions as a partial mediator, providing empirical support for the theoretical proposition that cultural integration mechanisms are crucial pathways through which human resource practices contribute to team building, as illustrated in **Figure 3**.

Table 5

Mediation Analysis Results

Effect Type	Path	β	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value
Direct Effect	HRM → Team Cohesion	0.29	0.084	0.125	0.455	< 0.001
Indirect Effect	HRM → ICI → Team Cohesion	0.37	0.071	0.240	0.520	< 0.001
Total Effect	HRM → Team Cohesion	0.66	0.091	0.482	0.838	< 0.001
Mediation Statistics						
Variance Accounted For (VAF)		56.1%				
Sobel Test (z-value)		5.47***				
Bootstrap Samples		5,000				

Note. ***p < 0.001.

Figure 3

Mediation Effect Decomposition
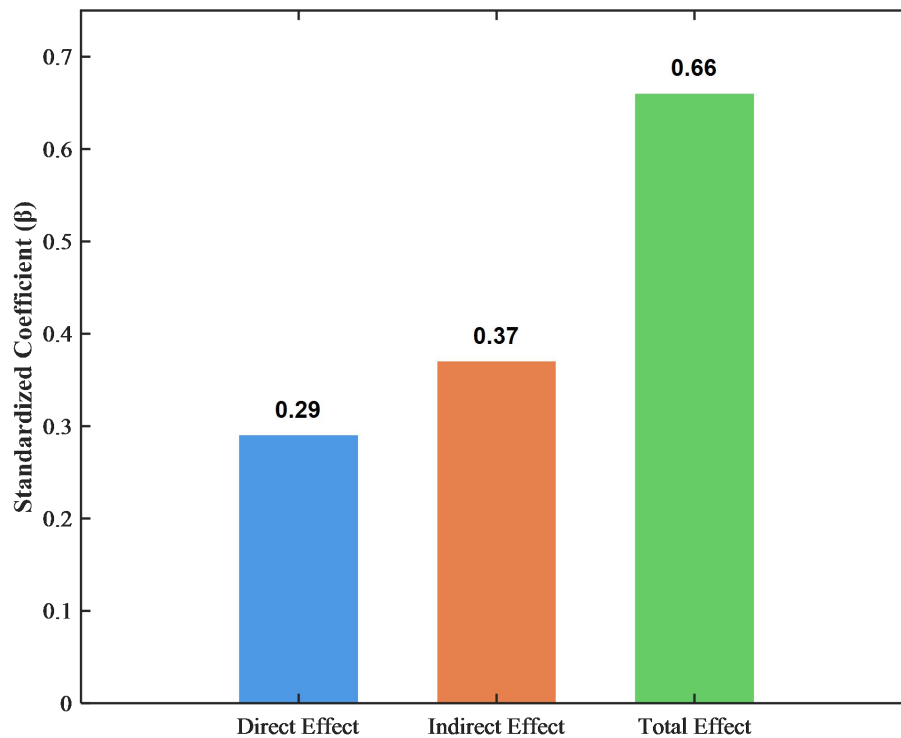
3.5. Multi-group Analysis

To examine potential differences in structural relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim employees, multi-group structural equation modeling was conducted. This analysis is particularly important given the cultural nature of the study variables and theoretical expectations that Islamic cultural values may have differential impacts across religious affiliations. The sample was divided into Muslim employees (n = 68, 63%) and non-Muslim employees (n = 40, 37%).

Prior to examining structural differences, measurement invariance was tested across groups to ensure constructs were measured equivalently. A sequential approach employed configural, metric, and scalar invariance testing. The measurement model achieved partial scalar invariance, enabling meaningful group comparisons, as shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6

Measurement Invariance Testing Results

Model	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	p-value	Decision
Configural	298.45	174	0.91	0.89	0.082	-	-	-	Accept

Metric	317.12	186	0.90	0.88	0.084	18.67	12	0.096	Accept
Scalar	347.89	198	0.88	0.86	0.089	30.77	12	0.002	Reject
Partial Scalar	334.21	195	0.89	0.87	0.086	17.09	9	0.047	Accept

Following measurement invariance establishment, the structural model was examined separately for both groups. Results revealed significant differences in structural relationships between groups, as presented in **Table 7**. Muslim employees showed greater responsiveness to inclusive HRM practices regarding cultural integration experiences, while non-Muslim employees demonstrated that cultural integration has more pronounced impact on team cohesion formation.

Table 7

Multi-group Structural Model Results

Path	Muslim Group (n=68)	Non-Muslim Group (n=40)	Group Difference
	β	t-value	p
HRM → ICI	0.71	6.89***	<0.001
ICI → TC	0.52	4.78***	<0.001
HRM → TC	0.28	2.87**	0.004
R² Values			
ICI	0.50		
TC	0.48		

Bootstrap mediation analysis was conducted separately for each group to examine differences in indirect effects. The analysis reveals distinct mediation patterns across religious affiliations, as shown in **Table 8**. Muslim employees showed stronger mediation effects while non-Muslim employees demonstrated more balanced direct and indirect influences. These findings indicate that while HRM strategies effectively promote team cohesion in both groups, underlying mechanisms differ significantly based on religious affiliation, as visualized in **Figure 4**.

Table 8

Multi-group Mediation Analysis

Group	Effect Type	β	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	VAF (%)
	Direct Effect	0.28	0.098	0.088	0.472	43.1%
Muslim (n=68)	Indirect Effect	0.37	0.089	0.210	0.560	56.9%
	Total Effect	0.65	0.112	0.431	0.869	100%
	Direct Effect	0.31	0.126	0.063	0.557	49.2%
Non-Muslim (n=40)	Indirect Effect	0.32	0.092	0.150	0.510	50.8%
	Total Effect	0.63	0.134	0.367	0.893	100%

Figure 4

Multi-group Analysis Results
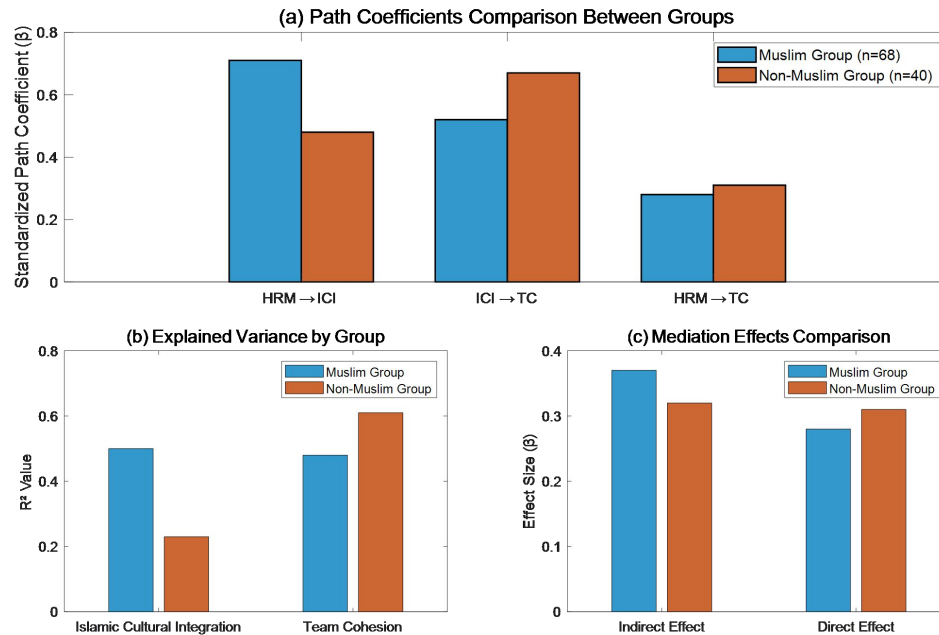
4. Discussion

The findings provide substantial evidence that HRM strategies enhance team cohesion through Islamic cultural integration in multicultural organizational environments. The strong relationship between HRM practices and Islamic cultural integration ($\beta = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$) supports recent studies on inclusive human resource management practices for workforce diversity management (Liu et al., 2023). This research depicts how organizational practices can systematically foster workplace spaces where Islamic values are deliberately integrated.

The mediation framework accounts for 56% of the total effect that HRM practices have on team solidarity, marking significant development in cross-cultural management research. Cultural integration is an essential mechanism through which HRM practices translate to team capability improvements. Recent studies of multicultural teams support the mediation model (Stahl & Maznevski, 2021). Studies of Islamic work ethics have established that values-based management practices bring positive outcomes such as improved job performance and organizational citizenship behavior (Caniago et al., 2023).

Multi-group analysis reveals distinct patterns between Muslim and non-Muslim employees. Muslim employees revealed enhanced responsiveness towards inclusive

HRM practices regarding cultural integration, while non-Muslim employees showed that cultural integration contributes more towards team consolidation. This signifies that effective management requires sophisticated appreciation of how different cultural groups perceive organizational initiatives (Eshete & Birbirssa, 2024). Recent research validates the relevance of effective HRM towards facilitating inclusive workplace cultures (Fujimoto et al., 2023; Tadesse Bogale & Debela, 2024). The high variance explained ($R^2 = 0.52$) highlights predictive validity and organizational management relevance (Fernandes et al., 2023; Stahl et al., 2010). These findings offer empirical justification for strategic investment in inclusive diversity programs.

5. Conclusion

This empirical study demonstrates that HRM strategies enhance team cohesion through Islamic cultural integration in multicultural organizational environments. The significant mediating effect identifies cultural integration as a key mechanism for organizations to transform diversity into competitive advantage. Multi-group analysis revealed differences between Muslim and non-Muslim respondents, illustrating complexity in cultural integration dynamics. These findings enhance cross-cultural management theory by showing how religious and cultural frameworks can be integrated into organizational systems. From a practical perspective, this research offers value to organizations in global markets by recommending inclusive HRM systems integrating Islamic cultural elements. While the cross-sectional design has limitations, the solid methodological rigor provides a strong basis for future longitudinal studies extending to different cultures.

Conflict of interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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