



Islamic Public Relations: Cultivating Unity in Diversity in Islamic Banks of Bangladesh

Md. Shahidul Haque* Jamilah Ahmad**

**Corresponding Author, Dept. of Communication and Journalism, University of Chittagong, Chittagong-4331, Bangladesh.
Email: shahidulhaque@cu.ac.bd*

***School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang-11800, Malaysia.
Email: jahmad@usm.my*

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ABSTRACT

Unity in diversity is crucial in any multi-cultural society. Public Relations Department of different organizations should practice it to maintain peace and harmony among the people of different culture, race and religion. Islamic banks of Bangladesh are very popular among the mass people of Bangladesh as they maintain it professionally. It plays a vital role to get their acceptance and popularity. This paper tries to understand the techniques of Islamic banks of Bangladesh used to uphold it in their public relations activities. The objective of the study was to identify how the Public relations professionals practice unity in diversity in Islamic Banks of Bangladesh. Qualitative in-depth interview was applied as a method of data collection for this study. It maintained the purposeful sampling procedure and used criterion sampling to select the appropriate interviewees on the basis of criteria relevant to the study. The Heads of Public Relations Department of eight full-fledged Islamic banks of Bangladesh were interviewed. The study found that one of the main strategies of public relations in Islamic banks of Bangladesh is to attract customers by unity in diversity. The employees from different races and religions work together, maintain harmonious co-existence, team spirit, equality, and human dignity. As a result, unity in diversity brings a great success to Islamic banks of Bangladesh.

Keywords: *Unity in Diversity, Public Relations, Islamic Bank, Islamic Public Relations*

INTRODUCTION

The practice of public relations involves a multitude of communication strategies and tactics designed to influence the attitudes and behaviours of targeted audiences, generally for the good of the “sponsoring” organization and sometimes for the good of both the organization and others (Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2001). Unity in diversity is one of the key strategies of public relations to convince the internal and external publics to build and maintain very good relationships with the organizations, particularly by using two-way symmetrical communication (Li, 2023; Ridzuan, Jamil, & Syed Johan, 2021)). Islamic banks can increase trust, decrease misunderstandings among various stakeholder groups, and promote long-term social cohesion by engaging in genuine two-way symmetrical dialogue. This is particularly true when CSR and media relations are utilized as platforms for mutual adjustment and listening (Lane, 2020; Vrabcová *et al.*, 2024). Islamic banks of Bangladesh use this strategy and practice unity in diversity with all their publics, especially, in public relations/media relations and CSR activities (Khan & Alzubeir Diab, 2022). Because of limited empirical studies and growing diversity in Bangladesh’s financial sector, Islamic banks’ public relations with unity in diversity deserves academic attention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Principles of Islamic Public Relations: Focus on Unity in Diversity

Wang & Ma (2013) mentioned the principles of public relations in Islam as cognition of human dignity endowed by Allah, reciprocal respect, equality of human beings, and peaceful coexistence. Human dignity was ensured in Islamic society of Medina under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and had successively been practiced by virtuous caliphates. Islam encouraged mutual respect among the members of the community. The Prophet (PBUH) affirmed the equality of humans: “there is no advantage for a black man over a red one and no advantage for a red over a black except in devotion to Allah” (Sunan Ahmad: 1313). Islam as a religion of peace teaches the Muslims to coexist with non-Muslims with peace and cooperation in righteousness and goodness of the society. Islam invites both the Muslims and non-Muslims to support the weak and the oppressed people, and resist oppression and aggression (Wang & Ma, 2013).

Human dignity is an inherent, inalienable and inviolable right of every human being (Haque & Ahmad, 2017). Allah has honoured all the Children of Adam (all human beings). He says in the Holy Quran: “And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference” (Al-Isra: 70). So, all human beings must be treated with honour, respect and regard, without distinction of any kind, such as the colour of their skin, their race, descent, social background, national origin, gender, age, language, religion, political or

other affiliation and opinion, education, occupation, job, wealth, property or any other status (Hussain, 2013). To ensure human dignity, there is no alternative to unity in diversity. "We should stress not the differences between the sects but rather the common things that they believe in or practice. We should not try to convert each other but we should try to know each other better. We must therefore never allow our differences of interpretations of Islam to exclude big segments of the Ummah" (Mahathir, 2009 cited in Haque, 2014).

The paradigm of Islamic public relations is advanced by different studies. Adnan (2015) mentioned three major components of Islamic public relations: *shura* (public consultation), unity in diversity, and moderation. Unity in diversity is crucial to accepting individuals from diverse backgrounds. Islamic public relations can help build and maintain positive relationships with people of various religions and cultures by emphasizing unity in diversity since Islamic values transcend cultural, religious, and ethnic barriers (Idid, 1989). Muhammad (PBUH), the final Prophet of Islam, was sent as a mercy to the world to benefit everyone, not only Muslims. He taught how to conduct proper public relations with individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, and cultures.

According to Ahmad Shogar's (2020) analysis, the Prophet's Farewell Address promotes togetherness in the face of cultural diversity, highlighting the fundamental Islamic concept of unity. Ridzuan, Kamri, and Yusoff (2021) described Islamic public relations tactics in the context of modern public relations, emphasizing inclusivity, cooperation, respect, and ethical communication as ways to create a peaceful civil society. Islamic public relations concepts that emphasize inclusivity, ethical communication, cooperation, and mutual welfare are outlined by Ridzuan, Kamri, and Yusoff (2021). They contend that Islamic public relations is a comprehensive ethical framework based on societal harmony and moral responsibility rather than just a collection of communication strategies. This is consistent with the larger Islamic ethical framework, which emphasizes *ihsan* (excellence), *ukhuwwah* (brotherhood), *amanah* (trust), and *adl* (justice).

Public Relations with Unity in Diversity in Islamic Banks of Bangladesh

People from different religious and cultural backgrounds are accepting Islamic banking products and services very positively around the world (Abdullah., Sidek, & Adnan, 2012). As the customers are diverse in their race, culture and religion, public relations strategies and activities should be diversified to attract and satisfy them (Qiu & Muturi, 2016). When "diversity is embodied in all roles" along with other generic principles of Excellence Theory, public relations is likely to be excellent (Grunig, 2001; Grunig, 2013; Nurnisya, Saad & Md Noor (2022). Ali (2018) mentioned that Islam's vision of diversity was defined in distinct messages and instructions throughout its early days. Islam teaches its followers to perform any jobs in excellent way.

According to recent research by Jabari & Muhamad (2022), risk management, ethical responsiveness, and stakeholder engagement are all positively impacted by diversity in Islamic banks' leadership structures. This result bolsters the claim that an organization's capacity to practice unity in diversity on the outside is strengthened by internal diversity. Additionally, these banks' CSR activities mirror this unity strategy. CSR initiatives frequently focus on various societal groups, fostering social cohesiveness (Bhuiyan *et al.*, 2022; Hanif & Haron, 2025). The current literature shows that Islamic banks make significant contributions to social welfare, education, food security, poverty alleviation, and disaster assistance that benefit both Muslim and non-Muslim societies (Islam, 2025; Harun, Zulkefli, & Mohamed Rosli, 2022). Islamic banks of Bangladesh try to perform their best as guided by Islam and modern scientific knowledge and they apply all the techniques of promotion, including unity in diversity in their public relations activities in Islamic way (Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC, 2025).

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study applied the qualitative approach and data were collected through in-depth interviews. The sampling procedure was purposeful. Among the different types of purposeful sampling, the researchers used criterion sampling to select the appropriate interviewees on the basis of criteria relevant to the study. There are total 56 banks in Bangladesh. This study is limited to only the banks who have Islamic banking. So, the population of this study is 25 banks of Bangladesh including eight full-fledged Islamic banks, nine conventional banks having Islamic banking branches and eight conventional banks with Islamic banking window (unit or division of a conventional financial institution whose operations comply with shari'ah). The units of analysis are the individuals who work for building and maintaining relationships with the internal and external customers of Islamic banks of Bangladesh. The Heads of Public Relations Department of eight full-fledged Islamic banks of Bangladesh were interviewed.

Table 1: List of Participants: Heads of Public Relations of Islamic Banks of Bangladesh

Name of the Banks	Position	Code
Islamic Banks Bangladesh Limited	Head, Public Relations	IBBL PR
Al-Arafah Islami Bank Limited	Head, Public Relations	AIBL PR
First Security Islami Bank	Head, Public Affairs and Brand Communication	FSIB PR
Export Import Bank of Bangladesh Limited	Head, Corporate Affairs and Branding & Head, Marketing and Development	EXIM PR
ICB Islamic Bank Limited	Head, Public Relations	ICB PR
Union Bank Limited	Head, Public Relations	UBL PR
Shahjalal Islami Bank Limited	Head, Public Relations	SJIBL PR
Social Islami Bank Limited	Head, Marketing, Branding and Communication Division	SIBL PR

The data were collected from the participants using semi-structured interview questionnaire. The researchers took necessary notes and tap-recorded the interviews with the permission of the interviewees. The data were transcribed properly and translated from Bengali into English as the most of the interviewees discussed in Bengali. The duration of an interview session was between ten to fifteen minutes. The code saturation of qualitative data was properly maintained as the researchers interviewed all the selected samples. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The researchers used different codes and themes and discussed the ideas of the interviewees. Later, the data were analyzed based on the research question.

RQ : How do the Public Relations Professionals practice unity in diversity in Islamic Banks of Bangladesh?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study shows that Islamic banks of Bangladesh practice public relations with unity in diversity in almost all the cases. There is no discrimination among the staff and customers based on their gender, race, religion or culture. It found the male dominance as all the Heads of Public Relations of the selected banks were male. There are some female public relations officers work in Islamic banks, but not as the Head. The educational background is also diverse.

Table 2: Background of Heads of Public Relations of Islamic Banks of Bangladesh

Positions	Religious Background	Educational Background
Head, IBBL PR	Islam	MBA, Jagannath University, Bangladesh
Head, AIBL PR	Islam	BSS & MSS, Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
Head, FSIB PR	Islam	MBA, Marketing
Head, EXIM PR	Hindu	BSS & MSS, Mass Communication and Journalism, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
Head, ICB PR	Islam	BBA (Marketing and Communication) State University of Bangladesh MBA (HRM), Independent University of Bangladesh
Head, UBL PR	Islam	BSS and MSS, Public Administration University of Chittagong, Bangladesh
Head, SJIBL PR	Islam	BA, National University of Bangladesh
Head, SIBL PR	Islam	BSc and MSc, Department of Statistics, Jahangir Nagar University, Bangladesh.

The interviewees are mainly from the Islamic religious background. Hindu is around 9% of the total population of Bangladesh. Out of the 8 interviewees who are the Heads of public relations department in Islamic banks of Bangladesh, we found a

Head of Public Relations from Hindu background. The percentage shows the satisfactory level of unity in diversity. The percentage is not the only one way to understand the diversity of religious background. As Islamic banks are specialized banks with Islamic ideologies and values, and public relations is an integral part of it, Muslim dominated bank management could avoid recruiting anyone from other religious background. When they are accepting the people from different race, culture and religion, it shows that they do not practice any discriminatory policies.

The customers may have also different backgrounds, but banks can create a common ground by promoting unity in diversity. People from different races, religions, cultures, and education can come together because of this strategy. The informants mentioned various issues related to unity in diversity practised in Islamic banks of Bangladesh to enhance Islamic public relations, such as unity in religious diversity, unity in educational diversity, unity in diversity for team-spirit, unity in diversity by human dignity, *taqwa*, and justice.

The Heads of Public Relations Department shared their opinions and experiences about how they practice public relations with unity in diversity in Islamic banks of Bangladesh. The main themes of their opinions are presented as following:

Table 3 **Unity in Diversity in Islamic Public Relations**

Theme	Categories	Codes
Unity in Diversity in Islamic Public Relations	Unity with Religious Diversity	Recruitment of Non-Muslims in Islamic Banks Advertisement in Hindu Magazines during Puja Focus on Non-Muslims in Rural Development Projects
	Unity with Educational Diversity	Hiring Graduates from Public Institutions Hiring Graduates from Private Institutions Hiring Graduates from Madrasah (Alia and Qawmi)
	Unity in Diversity without Discrimination	Recruitment is Open to All Fellow Feeling
	Unity in Diversity with Comfort for Everyone	Holding Key Positions with Comfort by Non-Muslims No Problems in Directorship for Non-Muslims
	Unity in Diversity with Equality and Justice	Equality and Justice for Internal Public Equality and Justice for External Public
	Unity in Diversity with Human Dignity	Maintaining Dignity of All as Allah's Servants Maintaining Dignity of All as Customers
	Unity in Diversity with Focus on Team Spirit	Strong Relationship among Colleagues Peaceful Work Environment
	Unity in Diversity with Harmonious Co-existence of All Communities	Reflection of Co-existence in the Society Establishing Peace and Harmony

Unity with Religious Diversity

The head of public relations in Islamic Bank Bangladesh Limited (IBBL) opined that they surely follow unity in diversity in this bank. The first investment client of IBBL was a Hindu. From the very beginning, it is for everyone: Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or Christian. Not only clients, but it also has staff from all these religious backgrounds. It recruits them and all work together unitedly. It also publishes advertisements in Hindu magazines during their Puja festivals. In its rural development projects, the ratio of Hindu people is more than the ratio of Muslims in total population. Also, it has diversity in Muslim customers. This bank has customers from different sects of Muslim population. It's not for a particular group or party. It indicates that unity in diversity is practiced without any discrimination. This practice brings huge benefits to Islamic banks and the current literature supports this statement. It is time to take advantage of workplace religious diversity since it is acknowledged that the benefits of integrating religion into the workplace outweigh the drawbacks (Singh & Babbar, 2021).

Unity with Educational Diversity

The Head of public relations of Al-Arafah Islami Bank (AIBL) mentioned unity in diversity as fundamental policy of any organization. If it is not universal, no organization will survive. This type of organization cannot be for a particular group. Since this bank is a commercial bank, it provides all kinds of necessary services to its customers. As it is open to all, the people from different backgrounds can apply and join as employees. Those who can fulfill the conditions, fit to service rule and those who have constitutional rights are appointed. However, since it is an Islamic organization, everyone has to follow its "Code of Conduct". They cannot violate it.

There are different educational systems in Bangladesh such as public, private, general and Islamic etc. Some students pass from general schools while some are from Islamic schools/Madrasahs. Madrasahs also are mainly of two types. Alia is funded by the Government and Qawmi is run independently by its bodies without taking financial support from the Government. Their curriculums are different. All of them are also accommodated here. Again, those who are behind in the competition are also given the opportunity following different ways. A couple of such initiatives were also taken several times. For example, students of Qawmi Madrasah are very good in Arabic, but not good in English. However, since their religious education is good, they have been accommodated a few times by special training on Bengali and English. There are others who passed diplomas. They were given the opportunity too. The bank provided the necessary education to them. Then it gave opportunities at different stages. That is, the bank is open to everyone. There is no class distinction. Although AIBL tries to accommodate graduates from all educational background, some researchers say the opposite. Disparities based on social background, economic status, and gender exist in every facet of education in Bangladesh (Islam & Alam, 2024).

Unity in Diversity without Discrimination

The Head of Public Affairs and Brand Communication Division of the First Security Islamic Bank said that they do not feel who are Muslims or Hindus. All are fellow colleagues. The one who is working here being a Hindu does not even think that *"He is not a Muslim."* Everyone has his/her rights. The most important issue is the *Rizq* that is determined by the Almighty Allah. *"He might have Rizq here and I am getting what I have in my Rizq. I do not need to worry about it. It is Allah's affairs. We prioritize the unity in diversity."* Recent study on religious diversity and workplace inclusion indicates that organizations that authentically embrace and respect diverse faiths contribute to the mitigation of identity-based discrimination and promote a sense of belonging within the organization (Härtel *et al.*, 2017). Diversity alone does not guarantee favorable outcomes; in the absence of inclusion, differences may result in disengagement or conflict instead of cohesion (Kesharwani, 2025).

Unity in Diversity with Comfort for Everyone

The Head of Corporate Affairs and Branding Division of another prominent Islamic bank- Export Import Bank of Bangladesh Limited is a Hindu. He also holds another key position in the bank- the Head of Marketing and Development Division. He shared his opinion that those who are not Muslims are now learning about Islamic banking and it is getting much popularity among them too. Islamic banking is a worldwide banking system, particularly not in Islamic countries. *"Even being a Hindu, I feel comfortable working here,"* he said. *"The Management of EXIM Bank also feels comfortable with me. Here I am the spokesman of this organization despite being a non-Muslim. Actually, my chairman happily says about me in different places,"* he added.

EXIM Bank has a Hindu Entrepreneur Director too. While transforming a conventional bank into a *Shariah* bank, the approval of all the directors is needed. If all the directors like it, then this transformation can be possible, otherwise not. The Bank Chairman asked him whether he had any objections in transforming this bank into a Shari'ah bank. This Hindu Director said to the Chairman that, *"No, I do not have any objections. Make this bank an Islamic bank and I'll sign the papers."* The Head of Corporate Affairs and Branding Division reiterated that he felt very comfortable working in Islamic bank because he had no clash with anyone or anything. *"As I also want a beautiful life; I want to live my life in rules and regulations, discipline and peace. Those are also the teachings of Islam."* There is evidence that diversity and inclusion are associated with favorable performance results, even though the majority of research on diversity in Islamic banking concentrates on board features and business performance. Higher diversity and inclusion scores, for example, are associated with better performance measures for globally listed companies, indicating that inclusive cultures have advantages beyond social peace (Saha *et al.*, 2024).

Unity in Diversity with Equality and Justice

The Head of Public Relations of ICB Islamic Bank Limited also sees the practice of unity in diversity in his bank very positively. He said that they may have different religion, different language, but at the end of the day they are brothers. *"If my brother has any problems, I must help him,"* he added. The ICB Islamic Bank always tries to maintain unity in diversity. It can be in the office or outside. It is nicely practiced with the internal and external publics. The story at ICB Islamic Bank emphasizes interpersonal harmony but makes no clear mention of the mechanisms that guarantee equitable access to opportunities and accountability (Konrad & Bhardwaj, 2023). Deeper inclusion is based on a psychologically inclusive atmosphere, which is facilitated by the emphasis on brotherhood and mutual aid. Intergroup tensions are lessened and organizational commitment is strengthened by such unity (Platania *et al.*, 2025).

Unity in Diversity with Human Dignity

The Head of Public Relations of the Union Bank Limited mentioned that his bank upholds the human dignity to maintain unity in diversity. It considers every human being as Allah's servant. This is the religious side. The social aspect is that the customers are highly respected persons in the bank irrespective of Muslim, Hindu, Bhuddist or Christian. *"As we do Islamic banking, the customers trust us and deposit their money to our bank. We have to protect it."* Additionally, scholarly writing contends that human dignity is essential. Hasegawa (2024) believes that human dignity is necessary for moral and legal reasoning, supporting social inclusion and equality (Hasegawa, 2024).

Unity in Diversity with Focus on Team Spirit

The Head of Public Relations of Shah Jalal Islami Bank stated that there are different types of people in his bank though the number of Hindu and Buddhist is comparatively low. *"Now if I give you a sweet to eat you will not bother regarding people of which religion made this or if you are travelling to Malaysia by air and who constructed this plane is not your concern."* Similarly, anyone working on anything important does not concern their religion and they do not promote such discrimination. *"We all work as unitedly and we have such good teams having strong team spirit and unity in diversity. As a result, our internal and external environment remains good."* Team cohesion and innovative problem-solving are strengthened when participants of an inclusive workplace feel psychologically comfortable sharing a variety of viewpoints (Bodla *et al.*, 2018).

Unity in Diversity with Harmonious Co-existence of All Communities

The Head of the Marketing, Branding and Communication Division of the Social Islami Bank Limited said that a lot of people of other religions work there in spite of being Islamic bank. Though they do not have any board member from other reli-

gious backgrounds, they work as officers and employees without any complaints. This is what they called unity. They are not facing any kind of problem in practicing Islamic banking and they join here with the basic information about *Shariah*. There is a Hindu employee in the Public Relations Department who works in marketing. SIBL believes in harmonious co-existence of all communities in the society. It provides services to all irrespective of their caste, creed and social status. It is an equal employment opportunity provider for people from all religions and communities. The image, culture and practice of this bank attract the people of all backgrounds. According to the literature, genuine unity entails more than simply passive cohabitation; it also entails active inclusion and structural mechanisms that enable varied voices to influence organizational norms and decision-making (Singh Sengupta *et al.*, 2024).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Islam is for the welfare of all mankind. It opens the door of opportunities for everyone. It's universal. It's humane. Islamic banks of Bangladesh follow these basic teachings of Islam and maintain unity in diversity in their public relations and all other activities. Unity in diversity helps Islamic banks to grow smoothly and rapidly. The employees from different races and religions work together and contribute to Islamic banks maintaining harmonious co-existence, team spirit, equality, and human dignity. This study implies that people from different religious and cultural backgrounds can contribute to developing organizations and countries following the proper practice of unity in diversity, one of the main strategies of Islamic public relations. The policy makers of different countries, particularly Muslim countries can include unity in diversity in various policies. The bank management can prepare guidelines for unity in diversity to be practiced in their offices. The public relations organizations can arrange training programs for PR professionals focusing on effective communication with the people from different religions and cultures maintaining unity in diversity.

To maintain peace and harmony among the people of multi-cultural society and to bring success to organizations, this type of study can be done on a large scale in different organizations in other countries of the world. Although Islamic banks are open to all, irrespective of race and religion, there may be some lack of understanding in the non-Muslim community. The current study found that a Hindu head of public relations in an Islamic bank certified that there is nothing bad about Islamic banks, and they are great examples of unity in diversity. More research on non-Muslims' involvement in Islamic bank public relations and its possible effects can be conducted.

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