

Work Ethic, Gender and Social Class in an Islamic Society: A Case-Study in Iran

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Abstract—This research endeavours to investigate the distribution of work ethic among genders and social classes in an Islamic society. To achieve this goal, 266 Muslim educated individuals working at a public bank in Iran have been selected as sample and the protestant work ethic (PWE) and Islamic work ethic (IWE) questionnaires were conducted on them. The results demonstrate that there is no relationship between the whole construct of PWE and the whole construct of IWE on one side and gender on the other side, but regarding social origin the amount of PWE and IWE in men from low class origin is higher than women from same class origin. Also results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the whole constructs of PWE and IWE on one side and social origin on the other side, such that the amount of IWE in people from low class origin is higher than those from high class origin and the amount of PWE in people from high class origin is higher than those from middle class origin.

Index Terms—Islamic work ethic, protestant work ethic, class origin, gender.

I. INTRODUCTION

Girls and boys are involved in different social interactions from their birth and they are expected to show womanly and manly social roles; therefore they gradually internalize ‘gender-related characteristics’. From childhood, some behaviours like “independence”, “diligence” and “hard working” are expected from boys and behaviours like “attendance and dependence” are expected from girls from their childhood. Internalization of values and norms in workplace is also related with gender socialization [1]. Regarding this matter, some other researchers [2, 3] believe that women illustrate higher amount of work ethic. They claim that, this can be because of the women’s endeavor to obtain more independence and freedom. According to them, existence of equal opportunities for presence of women in social fields in western countries caused women to show more endeavors in work. Both groups mentioned above, assume the work world full of values, norms and gender-related behaviours. In fact, the first group of studies looks at the subject from affirmative viewpoint and the second series look at the subject from negative viewpoint. In fact, the first group of studies concentrates on the effect of “gender socialization of women” on their behavioural characteristics in work and the second group of studies

concentrates on “resistance of woman against values in patriarchal society in work world”.

Islamic and eastern societies, because of their patriarchal structures, are expected to experience higher gender socialization. According to this presumption, women are prepared to have activities at homes and play their roles as mothers and wives in these societies. In fact, in a pre-modern society gender was defined as a social category rather than a biological category, and people were assigned to different social status according to it and were expected to take particular social roles concurrent with their social status. Men and women performed particular activities in accordance to their membership in men or women groups. Case of Iran as a developing Islamic society propounds the following questions: Does in Iran, pre-modern social factors such as gender are supposed to be chief variables influencing socio-psychological characteristics of individuals on work or like modern societies class origin of the people is chief influencing factor on that characteristics?

This study investigates correlates of PWE with gender and class origin. As in Iran like many other developing Islamic countries, gender ideologies accompanies with the socialization process yet, if we find relationship between PWE and class origin, the amount of PWE in men and women from similar class origin would be examined to define whether in the same social layer men and women are socialized differently to enter the world of work. As Islam has wide instructions for leading behaviours in different fields of individual and social life, so values, norms and behaviours of work world in an Islamic society are influenced by Islamic instructions. Considering the above-mentioned case, two scales of ‘protestant work ethic’ and ‘Islamic work ethic’ were used in evaluation of the amount of work ethic among men and women to discern the differences between two genders in the two mentioned scales.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studying relationship between work ethic and gender attracted attention of the researchers from the beginning of studies on protestant work ethic. Most of these studies have reported difference in the amount of protestant work ethic among men and women [1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]. Most of these studies, have reported more work ethic for women than men. For instance, Kirkcaldy et al [3] and Spence et al [2] found evidences confirming women’s tendency to obtain higher scores in work ethic in different occupations. Meriac et al [10] criticized the previous studies and claimed that the results of the previous studies cannot be authentic because of not

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paying attention to stability of the protestant work ethic measure among two genders and specially because of not paying attention to multidimensional characteristic of the protestant work ethic construct. Using multidimensional work ethic profile (MWEP) Meriac et al [10] attempted to assess the stability of protestant work ethic scale and then attempted to investigate the relationship between the seven-dimensional work ethic construct (MWEP) and gender empirically. The results showed that multidimensional work ethic profile (MWEP) is stable in terms of measuring the two gender, so unlike the others, the results of his study can have higher validity. The results of their study showed that there is a very low significant relationship between two genders in seven dimensions of PWE which is in favor of men. Thus the perspective that men and women have been socialized to display different attitudes toward work is not confirmed. They claimed that gender-related differences in work ethic reported by previous studies result from using single-scale work ethic measure instead of multidimensional work ethic inventories (i.e. MWEP) and we must doubt them.

First reports of correlates between PWE and class origin returns to the study of Furnham [11]. He found a significant correlation of .24 between the work ethic of the mothers and their children, but no correlation between that of fathers and their children. De witte [12] reported a similar correlation of .30 between the ethic of mothers and children, but he also failed to find the same correlation between the ethic of fathers and their children. Kohn et al [13] showed that parents transfer these class-related attitudes to their children. Lower educated, working class parents prepare their children for the inflexible working environment they are likely to meet and stress conformity, while middle class parents with their high education prepare their children for the occupational level they will probably secure and stress self-directedness. In a longitudinal study, ter Bogt et al [14] investigated the socialization of PWE in different socio-economic statuses. Their study showed that parents' social economic status and educational level are associated with their cultural conservatism, and with the educational level and cultural conservatism of their children. Lower educational level and higher cultural conservatisms of adolescents predict a stronger work ethic. Furthermore, their study showed that work ethic is a stable type of attitude, with work ethic at a younger age strongly predicting work ethic at a later age [14]. Despite the fact that researches on PWE in Iran have not long record, carried out in this regard, indicate that in Iran PWE correlates with socio-economic status. Moeidfar's study [15] showed implicitly that any decrease in work ethic results from an increase in SES. Also, he found that the amount of work ethic among educated people and city dwellers was less than under-educated and rural people.

III. RESEARCH THEORETICAL APPROACH

Gender socialization theory [16, 17, 18] emphasizes on difference between two genders in ethical variables towards work and believe that they are resulted from socialization of socially prescribed gender roles. Instead, occupational socialization theories emphasize on socialization of persons in workplace [19, 20, 21, 22]. The socialization in workplace

(in comparison with gender socialization happening in childhood) happens through occupational training, being exposed to organizational culture and work environment factors such as rewards for competence and progress in adulthood and causes reduction of differences between two genders in work ethic and increases similarity between two genders as a result. According to "occupational socialization theory", occupational experiences in workplace overcome the socialized gender ideologies and result in similarities in 'work-related ethics and values' within men and women. In Iran as a changing society, because of it's religious and traditional background and it's great social, economic and political changes within the last century, considering gender as contributing factor in the work ethic, is necessary. Gender socialization of work values in traditional societies, could cause different amounts of work ethic between men and women.

Regarding the relationship between work values and social class we can define two approaches. First, liberal approach, it defines work values and particularly work ethic as a major factor in class mobility of the individuals and development of the societies. It also attributes social inequalities to different amounts of work ethic in individuals [23]. This approach mainly derived from Max Weber's classic work [24]. The other one is critical approach, which defines PWE as capitalist system's ideology. Some researcher with critical approach emphasized on class socialization of work values and work ethic and defined it as the source of 'class inequality reproduction' in capitalist societies [25]. The second approach, despite it's various branches, mainly originates from Karl Marx [26] and his followers criticism of capitalist system [27, 28, 25].

In this study gender explanation of work ethic combined with class explanation of work ethic and the correlation of class origin and gender with the amount of PWE and IWE in individuals are examined simultaneously.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Samples of this national study are Export Development Bank of Iran staff (whole number of staff:1000 individuals). This bank is a specialized bank which supports non-oil exports and raw materials import for main factories in Iran. It has 33 branches in different provinces throughout Iran. Questionnaires were used to collect data. We did not take any sampling method and the questionnaire was sent to all of the staffs and only 266 individuals returned the questionnaire (191 male and 75 female).

Considering Iranian culture and relying on three different approaches in class measuring (i.e. 'Life style', 'Job prestige' and 'Class conciseness'), we designed 13 items to examine class origin of the respondents. These items are designed to measure class status of respondents during their adolescence and the years prior. These 13 items are related to: parents' educational level, parents' reading habits, family's weekend programs, father's leisure time activities (how father passes his leisure times), father's job(occupation), having well-known paternal family, residence region, ownership of residential house (i.e. rental or owned), (family) travelling abroad, going to cinema and restaurant habits of the family.

Multidimensional work ethic profile (MWEPE scale) [29] was used to evaluate protestant work ethic and Islamic work ethic scale [30] used to evaluate Islamic work ethic. We used results of previous studies on validity of MWEPE and IWE scales in Iranian society [30, 31]. In these two scales, responses to each item were made on a 5-point Lickert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

V. RESULTS

The results of Kalmogorov Smirnov Test showed that distribution of the scores of protestant work ethic construct and Islamic work ethic construct are normal in the way that the significance level of this test in both constructs is <0.05 .

TABLE I: KALMOGOROV SMIRNOV TEST

	MWEP	IWE
N	266	266
Mean	66.78	64.52
SD	8.24	8.36
Positive Difference	.031	.033
Negative Difference	-.027	-.064
KS-Test	.506	1.041
Sig	.96	.228

TABLE II: DESCRIPTIONS FOR MALE'S AND FEMALE'S MWEPE AND IWE

Construct	Sex	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean
MWEPE	Male	18	67.14	8.47	.6163
	Female	73	66.09	7.23	.8467
IWE	Male	18	64.78	8.34	.6068
	Female	73	64.33	8.14	.9533

TABLE III: LEVENE'S TEST VERIFYING EQUALITY OF VARIANCES OF MWEPE AND IWE ACROSS TWO SEXES

Construct		t-Test for		Comparing	Means
		F	Sig.		
MWEPE	EVA	3.02	.08	260	.350
	EVNA	5	3		
IWE	EVA	.044	.83	260	.691
	EVNA		4		

EVA= Equal variances assumed EVNA= Equal variances not assumed

The amount of protestant work ethic in men and women is 67.16 ± 8.47 and 66.09 ± 7.23 and Islamic work ethic in men and women is 67.78 ± 8.34 and 64.33 ± 8.14 , respectively. According to Levene's test, the amount of protestant work ethic and Islamic work ethic is not different in men and women. Despite the fact that variances in the total scores of MWEPE and IWE are equal across two sexes, results for dimensions of MWEPE and IWE demonstrate significant mean differences between men and women on "delay of gratification" dimension of MWEPE and "work results for Islamic nation" dimension of IWE; in the way that their amount are higher in men than women.

TABLE IV: LEVENE'S TEST VERIFYING EQUALITY OF VARIANCES OF MWEPE DIMENSIONS ACROSS TWO SEXES

		t-Test for		Comparing	Means
		F	Sig.		
A	EVA	3.361	.068	260	.167
	EVNA		-1.518		
B	EVA	1.808	.180	260	.399
	EVNA		-8.75		
C	EVA	.448	.504	260	.844
	EVNA		.202		
D	EVA	.000	.994	260	.292
	EVNA		1.054		
E	EVA	.746	.389	260	.326
	EVNA		.921		
F	EVA	.534	.465	260	.779
	EVNA		.294		
G	EVA	.556	.457	260	.011
	EVNA		2.455		

EVA= Equal variances assumed EVNA= Equal variances not assumed

A= Self-reliance

B= Morality/ ethics

C= Leisure

D= Hard work

E= Work centrality

F= Wasted time

G= Delay of gratification

TABLE V: LEVENE'S TEST VERIFYING EQUALITY OF VARIANCES OF IWE DIMENSIONS ACROSS TWO SEXES

		t-Test for		Comparing	Means
		F	Sig.		
A	EVA	.392	.532	260	.358
	EVNA		-.922		
B	EVA	.403	.526	260	.017
	EVNA		2.334		
C	EVA	.659	.418	260	.643
	EVNA		-.454		
D	EVA	.663	.416	260	.251
	EVNA		-1.196		
E	EVA	.566	.452	260	.300
	EVNA		1.063		
F	EVA	.783	.377	260	.367
	EVNA		-.899		

EVA= Equal variances assumed EVNA= Equal variances not assumed

A= Justice and fairness

B= Work results for the Islamic Ummah

C= Cooperation and collaboration

D= Trusteeship

E= Work intentions

F= Work type

Then we explored correlation between class origin on one side and PWE and IWE on the other side. The results reveals that the average PWE in people from high class origin equals

to 68.77 ± 7.88 , in people from middle class origin equals to 65.48 ± 7.61 , And in people from low class origin equals to 66.37 ± 8.82 . Results of one-way analysis of variance show that amount of F equals to 3.57 with significance level of .02 which is an evidence of PWE difference in various class origins. Further investigation reveals that the average amount of PWE in respondents from high class origin is higher and in people from middle class origin is lower. Furthermore, the results of pursuing LSD test shows that the amount of PWE in the three class origins (I .e .low, middle, high) are different.

The results shows that like PWE the average amount of IWE in respondents from different socio-economic status does not have significant differences too and the differences are not great. The exact explanation of IWE regarding different socio-economic status follows: The average amount of IWE in respondents from low socio-economic status is 68.83 ± 9.05 , in respondents from middle socio-economic status is 66.74 ± 8.5 and in respondents from high socio-economic status is 65.62 ± 11.61 . Applying one-way analysis of variance ($f = 2.311$ with significance level of $p = .04$) shows significant difference in IWE amount of different socio-economic statuses, in the way that the amount of IWE in respondents from low socio-economic status is higher and in respondents from high socio-economic status is low. Furthermore the results of Pursuing LSD test showed that the amount of IWE in low socio-economic status has significant difference with the other socio-economic statuses (i.e., high and middle).

TABLE VI: DESCRIPTIONS FOR PWE AND IWE WITHIN DIFFERENT CLASS ORIGINS

Work ethic	Class origin	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
PWE	Low	99	66.3719	8.82001	46.37	85.06
	Middle	89	65.4846	7.61916	49.91	85.06
	High	78	68.7762	7.88547	54.48	91.52
	Total	266	66.7800	8.24090	46.37	91.52
IWE	low	99	68.8324	9.05990	29.00	88.69
	Middle	89	66.7402	8.50067	50.00	83.93
	High	78	65.6222	11.60500	35.00	80.10
	Total	266	66.9379	9.96599	29.00	88.69

TABLE VII: ANOVA

Work ethic	Class origin	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
PWE	Between Groups	476.666	2	238.33	3.578	.029
	Within Groups	17520.12	263	66.616		
	Total	17996.78	265			
		8				
IWE	Between Groups	454.629	2	227.31	2.311	.040
	Within Groups	25865.44	263	98.348		
	Total	26320.07	265			
		3				

After defining correlations between class origin on one side and PWE and IWE on the other side, we explored the

correlates of PWE and IWE with gender and class origin .Two-way analysis of variance shows class origin significant correlation with PWE and IWE in loneliness, however in combination with gender, they did not show any significant impact on PWE and IWE.

TABLE VIII: DESCRIPTIONS FOR PWE WITHIN DIFFERENT CLASS ORIGINS

Work ethic	Sex	Class origin	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Men	Low	84	66.78	8.84
		Middle	57	65.57	7.22
		High	48	69.64	8.79
		Total	189	67.14	8.47
PWE	Women	low	13	62.54	8.20
		Middle	30	66.33	7.62
		High	30	67.38	6.04
		Total	73	66.09	7.23
Total		Low	97	66.21	8.83
		Middle	87	65.84	7.32
		High	78	68.77	7.88
		Total	262	66.85	8.14

As 4 respondents have not marked their gender, data in TABLE VIII differs from the data presented in TABLE VI.

TABLE IX: DESCRIPTIONS FOR IWE WITHIN DIFFERENT CLASS ORIGINS

Work ethic	Sex	Class origin	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Men	Low	84	66.21	11.73
		Middle	57	66.67	8.26
		High	48	68.33	10.03
		Total	189	66.89	10.34
IWE	Women	low	13	61.67	11.18
		Middle	30	67.97	8.15
		High	30	69.62	7.28
		Total	73	67.53	8.78
Total		Low	97	65.60	11.71
		Middle	87	67.12	8.20
		High	78	68.83	9.05
		Total	262	67.07	9.92

As 4 respondents have not marked their gender, data in TABLE IX differs from the data presented in TABLE VI.

TABLE X: TEST OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS (DEPENDENT VARIABLE: PWE)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	724.561 ^a	5	144.912	2.235	.051
Intercept	818188.337	1	818188.337	12618.334	.000
Sex	169.522	1	169.522	2.614	.107
Class origin	472.316	2	236.158	3.642	.028
Sex and Class origin	195.225	2	97.613	1.505	.224
Error	16599.355	256	64.841		
Total	1188285.390	262			
Corrected Total	17323.917	261			

^a. R Squared = .042 (Adjusted R Squared = .023)

TABLE XI: TEST OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS (DEPENDENT VARIABLE: IWE)

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	745.709 ^a	5	149.142	1.529	.181
Intercept	827379.106	1	827379.106	8484.133	.000
Sex	19.742	1	19.742	.202	.653
Class origin	712.115	2	356.058	3.651	.027
Sex and Class origin	295.628	2	147.814	1.516	.222
Error	24965.316	256	97.521		
Total	1204341.269	262			
Corrected Total	25711.024	262			

^a. R Squared = .029 (Adjusted R Squared = .010)

Though TABLES X and XI showed no significant relationship between MWEP and IWE on one side and sex on the other side, from TABLES VIII and IX it can be derived that the mean of MWEP and IWE between men and women in different class-origins are different. TABLES VIII and IX show that the mean of MWEP and IWE in men from low class-origin are definitely higher than that of the women from the same class-origin. On the contrary, we can't find the same difference in MWEP and IWE between men and women from high class-origin and especially between men and women from middle class-origin. It means that, in comparison with high and middle class-origins, in low class-origin, the subject of work ethic, definitely is a gender-related one and it shows that regarding work ethic men and women are differently socialized.

This finding, in addition to confirming the results of the previous studies, has noticeable points. In a society like Iran, gender socialization and the presence of gender ideologies in low Socio-Economic Status are definitely higher than that of the high Socio-Economic Status. It can have traditional and religious reasons. Free from the reasons, in Iran 'work' in low Socio-Economic Status in comparison with high Socio-Economic Status is mostly defined as a masculine affair.

VI. CONCLUSION

Results of this study indicates that Iran as a changing Islamic society, has some characteristics of traditional-religious societies and it also shows some characteristics of modern societies. Lack of difference between women and men in the average of work ethic (Protestant and Islamic) shows that women in the world of work has not significant differences with men and regarding work related matters both genders are socialized nearly at the same level. Similarity between women and men regarding average of work ethic (Protestant and Islamic) could be caused by socialization of work values in women either before or after their entry to the world of work. Also the results of this study reveals that in Iranian society in spite of

the growth of rationality in the world of work which high average of PWE in the sample indicates it, Islam as a traditional phenomenon still fills the world of work with religious values in the way that the same samples have got high average of IWE and esteem most of the Islamic values in the world of work.

Despite the fact that variances in the total scores of MWEP and IWE are equal across two sexes, in this national study, results for dimensions of MWEP and IWE demonstrate significant mean differences between men and women on "delay of gratification" dimension of MWEP and "work results for Islamic nation" dimension of IWE; in the way that their amount are higher in men than women. These findings can reveal some characteristics of the new generation of Iranian women. Consumerism and individualism as new social values combined with vying with others, has led new generations of Iranian women to consumerism and fast gratification and carelessness to 'work results for the others'. Consumerism as a symbol of western culture is one of the prevalent characteristics of Iranian society in the last decade. Consumerism and individualism are in relationship with other modern social values spread in the last two decades in Iran social background. One of the major reasons of expansion of modern social values is vast use of new mass media such as satellite in Iran. It is important to indicate that we must not construe presence and prevalence of modern values in Iranian society as an indication of traditional-religious values obliteration and their replacement with modern values, on the contrary, it indicates the occurrence of some special articulations between modern and traditional values which we can see it's manifestation on the high consumerism in woman in comparison to men. In fact, higher consumerism in women drives from combination of consumerism with traditional characteristics of Iranian women. As a result of patriarchal structure of family in Iran in the past, men worked and earned money for the family and women managed home affairs spending the money earned by men. In fact, to keep the family right men acted as the producer and women as consumers. This traditional characteristics of Iranian women, continues in their new generations to some extent, in the way that, nowadays in spite of employment new generations of Iranian women, does not suppose themselves as the main provider of the family economic needs and suppose it men's duty and as their traditional counterparts they are interested in consumerism. This consumerism and fast gratification can be supposed as the characteristics of both traditional and modern women.

We can conclude from these discussed results besides those derived from gender distribution of PWE and IWE presented in prior pages that traditional characteristics of women which marked with their lower averages in work ethic in comparison with men, still can be observed vastly in low social class. In fact, nowadays the work issue is more gender related than before in Iran. It is important to mention that, considering the results derived from other studies, women's showing the same average of work ethic as men indicates endeavors of new generations of women to obtain more independence and freedom and emancipation from patriarchal structures of Iranian traditional family. In middle and high social classes these endeavors greatly exceeds that

of the low social class.

Finally it must be pointed out that the samples of this national study are staffs of one of the most important banks in Iran (i.e. EXIM bank of Iran) and banks as a bureaucratic organization have staffs with high rationality and reasonableness and we must take into consideration that we must not suppose them to be a sample representing the developing society of Iran.

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