

Do women have lower work ethic in an Islamic society? A case-study in Iran

Hamid Ebadollahi Chanzanagh¹⁺, Mahdi Akbarnejad²

¹ Social Sciences Department, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, The University of Guilan, Tehran road, Rasht, P.BOX: 41635-3988, Iran

² Independent researcher, No 6, Rose Alley, Firooz Street, Tabriz, P.BOX: 5173874478, Iran

Abstract. This study tries to investigate the relationship between work ethic and gender in an Islamic society. The protestant work ethic (PWE) and Islamic work ethic (IWE) questionnaires were conducted on 266 (191 male and 75 female) Muslim educated individuals working at a public bank in Iran. Although Levene's Test results show that there is no relationship between the whole construct of protestant work ethic and the whole construct of Islamic work ethic on one side and gender on the other side, further analysis indicates that there is a significant relationship between gender and one of the dimensions of protestant work ethic (delay of gratification) and that of Islamic work ethic (work results for Islamic nation) such that the rate of 'delay in satisfaction' and 'work results for Islamic nation' among men is more than that among women.

Keywords: Protestant Work Ethic, Islamic Work Ethic, gender.

1. Introduction

Studying about work ethic involves widespread studies in different fields and some of them have studied the relationship between work ethic and gender and reported differences in the rates of work ethic among men and women [1]. Despite the fact that these studies are mainly performed in western countries, presumption of some of these studies is gender socialization effect on internalization of work ethic among men and women, i.e. 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.

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 look at the subject from affirmative viewpoint and the second series look at the subject from negative viewpoint. In fact, the first group of studies concentrate on the effect of "gender socialization of women" on their behavioural characteristics in work and the second group of studies concentrate on "resistance of woman against values in patriarchal society in work world".

Because of their patriarchal structures, Islamic and eastern societies 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 comparison with women in western societies they

⁺ Corresponding author. Tel.: +98-131-776-0138; fax: +98-131-669-0280.
E-mail address: h_ebadollahi@guilan.ac.ir.

are less prepared to play role in modern work world. This study tries to investigate this presumption in an Islamic society thorough evaluating the amount of women's work ethic and comparing it with men's work ethic.

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. If the results show higher protestant work ethic amount in women, it shows 'modern identification of women' in a patriarchal, traditional and religious society.

2. 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 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.

3. Research Theoretical Approach

Gender socialization theory [11, 12, 13] 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 [14, 15, 16, 17]. 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.

4. 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). Multidimensional work ethic profile (MWEP scale) [18] was used to evaluate protestant work ethic and Islamic work ethic scale [19] used to evaluate Islamic work ethic. We used results of previous studies on validity of MWEP and IWE scales in

Iranian society [19, 20]. In these two scales, responses to each item were made on a 5-point Lickert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree).

5. 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 1 Kalmogorov Smirnov Test

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

Table 2. Descriptions for male's and female's MWEP and IWE

| Construct | Sex | N | Mean | SD | Std. Error Mean |
|-----------|--------|-----|-------|-------|-----------------|
| MWEP | Male | 189 | 67.14 | 8.473 | .6163 |
| MWEP | Female | 73 | 66.09 | 7.234 | .8467 |
| IWE | Male | 189 | 64.78 | 8.34 | .6068 |
| IWE | Female | 73 | 64.33 | 8.14 | .9533 |

Table 3 Levene's Test verifying equality of variances of MWEP and IWE across two sexes

| Construct | | Levene's Test for equality of variances | | t-Test for comparing Means | | |
|-----------|------|---|------|----------------------------|--------|----------------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig.(2-tailed) |
| MWEP | EVA | 3.025 | .083 | .936 | 260 | .350 |
| | EVNA | | | 1.004 | 152.14 | .317 |
| IWE | EVA | .044 | .834 | .398 | 260 | .691 |
| | EVNA | | | .403 | 133.76 | .688 |

EVA= Equal variances assumed

EVNA= Equal variances not assumed

The amount of protestant work ethic in men and women is $67/16 \pm 8/47$ and $66/09 \pm 7/23$ and Islamic work ethic in men and women is $67/78 \pm 8/34$ and $64/33 \pm 8/14$, 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 MWEP and IWE are equal across two sexes, 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.

Table 4 Levene's Test verifying equality of variances of MWEP dimensions across two sexes

| MWEP Dimensions | | Levene's Test for equality of variances | | t-Test for comparing of Means | | |
|------------------|------|---|------|-------------------------------|---------|----------------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig.(2-tailed) |
| Self- reliance | EVA | 3.361 | .068 | -1.384 | 260 | .167 |
| | EVNA | | | -1.518 | 160.376 | .131 |
| Morality/ ethics | EVA | 1.808 | .180 | -.845 | 260 | .399 |
| | EVNA | | | -.875 | 141.057 | .383 |
| Leisure | EVA | .448 | .504 | .197 | 260 | .844 |
| | EVNA | | | .202 | 137.518 | .840 |
| Hard work | EVA | .000 | .994 | 1.057 | 260 | .292 |

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|------------------------|------|------|------|-------|---------|------|
| Work centrality | EVNA | | | 1.054 | 130.369 | .294 |
| | EVA | .746 | .389 | .985 | 260 | .326 |
| Wasted time | EVNA | | | .921 | 115.251 | .359 |
| | EVA | .534 | .465 | .281 | 260 | .779 |
| Delay of gratification | EVNA | | | .294 | 144.683 | .769 |
| | EVA | .556 | .457 | 2.572 | 260 | .011 |
| | EVNA | | | 2.455 | 119.650 | .016 |

Table 5 Levene's Test verifying equality of variances of IWE dimensions across two sexes

| IWE Dimensions | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-Test for comparing of Means | | |
|------------------------------------|------|---|------|-------------------------------|---------|----------------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig.(2-tailed) |
| Justice & fairness | EVA | .392 | .532 | -.921 | 260 | .358 |
| | EVNA | | | -.922 | 131.182 | .358 |
| Work results for the Islamic Ummah | EVA | .403 | .526 | 2.398 | 260 | .017 |
| | EVNA | | | 2.334 | 124.074 | .021 |
| Cooperation & collaboration | EVA | .659 | .418 | -.464 | 260 | .643 |
| | EVNA | | | -.454 | 125.506 | .651 |
| Trusteeship | EVA | .663 | .416 | -1.151 | 260 | .251 |
| | EVNA | | | -1.196 | 141.848 | .234 |
| Work intentions | EVA | .566 | .452 | 1.038 | 260 | .300 |
| | EVNA | | | 1.063 | 137.374 | .290 |
| Work type | EVA | .783 | .377 | -.904 | 260 | .367 |
| | EVNA | | | -.899 | 129.474 | .370 |

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