

Protestant Work Ethic, class and ethnicity: case of Iran

Mahdi Akbarnejad ¹⁺ and Hamid Ebadollahi Chanzanagh ²

¹ Independent researcher, No 6, Rose Alley, Firooz Street, Tabriz, P.BOX: 5173874478, Iran

² Social Sciences Department, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, The University of Guilan, Tehran road, Rasht, P.BOX: 41635-3988, Iran

Abstract. There are evidences of higher PWE in lower socio-economic status in PWE literature. These studies are mainly carried out in western societies and are few in developing societies, especially in Islamic ones. This study wants to answer this question: Does PWE correlates with socio-economic status in an Islamic developing society or still traditional variables such as ethnicity are determinant factors for most of the behavioral characteristics of people in these societies? Results of this national study on 266 highly educated employed individuals shows that the amount of PWE in people from high class origin is higher than those from middle class origin. Furthermore, the results show that PWE construct has no significant relationship with ethnicity.

Keywords: Protestant work ethic, class origin, ethnicity

1. Introduction

A review of literature in work ethic reveals that ,some researchers think of PWE as a socio-psychological variable which is one of the most important factors in definition of economic status in individual and social level in the way that its changes, results in the change of economic situation status in individual and social levels [1]. Some others think of PWE as an ideology to legitimate existing social inequalities in the capitalist system, as it indicates that inequalities among people are natural and are as a result of different amounts of work ethic [2, 3, 4, 5]. Free from these two opposite approaches, we can claim that work ethic is a socio-psychological phenomenon, which accompanies with modernism and modern socio-economic changes.

In pre-modern societies, individual's socio-psychological characteristics are defined within the framework of closed groups. Ethnic and gender groups were the most important social groups. Socialization within ethnic groups, was giving individuals particular socio-psychological characteristics .Furthermore, 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 and ethnicity 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 ethnicity, gender and class origin. At the first stage, the relationship between PWE and ethnicity is examined and in case of non-relationship between them, the relationship between PWE and class origin is examined. As in Iran like many other developing 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.

⁺ Corresponding author. Tel.: +98-411-441-7201; fax: +98-411-557-2907.
E-mail address: ma2907@ymail.com.

2. Review of Literature

First reports of correlates between PWE and class origin returns to the study of Furnham [6]. 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 [7] 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 [8] 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 [9] 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 [9].

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 [10] 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.

3. Research Theoretical Approach

We can define two approaches regarding the relationship between work values and social class. 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 [1]. This approach mainly derived from Max Weber's classic work [11]. The other one is critical approach, which defines PWE as capital 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 [12]. The second approach, despite it's various branches, mainly originates from Karl Marx [13] and his followers criticism of capital system [4, 5, 12].

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 ethnicity and gender as contributing factors 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. In this study gender explanation of work ethic combined with class explanation of work ethic and the correlation of class origin, ethnicity and gender with the amount of PWE in individuals are examined simultaneously.

4. Methodology

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. PWE was measured using Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP) scale [14]. Ethnicity of respondents divided to: Azeri, Kurd, Lor, Gilak, Arab, Lak, Tati, Mazani, Turkmen and Armani. 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. 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).

5. Results

The results derived from One-way analysis of variance shows no significant correlations between PWE as a whole construct and ethnicity. However, exploring the relationship between ethnicity and 7 dimensions of PWE shows significant correlations between ‘self-reliance’ dimension and ethnicity.

Table 1. PWE scores of respondents by ethnicity

Ethnicity	N	Mean	SD	Between-group mean squares	Inter-group mean squares	F	P
Azerbaijani	107	66.47	7.32				
Kurd	25	68.27	9.34				
Lor	20	68.51	9.24				
Baluch	4	59.41	7.18				
Gilak	10	67.36	11.91				
Arab	3	69.11	9.97	64.475	65.915	0.978	0.467
Lak	1	61.07	0				
Tati	1	64.70	0				
Mazandarani	12	69.43	7.15				
Turkmen	5	72.37	7.92				
Armenian	3	66.44	17.61				
Others	25	65.06	6.37				
Total	216	66.92	8.11				

Then we explored correlation between class origin and PWE. 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.

Table 2. Descriptions for PWE within different class origins

Class origins	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
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

Table 3. ANOVA

Class origins	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	476.666	2	238.333	3.578	.029
Within Groups	17520.122	263	66.616		
Total	17996.788	265			

After defining correlations between class origin and PWE, we explored the correlates of PWE with gender and class origin .Two-way analysis of variance shows class origin significant correlation with PWE in loneliness, however in combination with gender, they did not show any significant impact on PWE.

Table 4. Descriptions for PWE within different class origins for men and women

Sex	Class origins	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
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

Table 5. 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 & 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)

Though Table 5 showed no significant relationship between MWEP and sex, from Table 4 it can be derived that the mean of MWEP between men and women in different class-origins are different. Table 4 shows that the mean of MWEP 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 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.

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