Values and work ethic in Iran: a case study on Iranian teachers

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Abstract

Work ethic is a field of culture which follows the dominant rules of culture and society. It has been studied less in Iran compared to other topics related to work and job. This research’s theoretical approach is based on Weber’s theory and studied the relationship between work ethic and individual values. Present study was done through survey method. The sample was Rasht teachers from north of Iran. The Results indicate that there was meaningful relationship between work ethic and teacher’s values in cultural, political and economical fields.

Keywords: Work ethic, Liberal Values, conservative values.

1. Introduction

The development of each country comes out under the patronage of hard-working and especially when there are individuals who struggle and are obliged. Meanwhile work culture and work ethic are related to the process of socialization in family and educational system of each country. These two, family and educational system, as the most important socialization foundations play a key role, in the production of individuals who has the ability to make the society ready for the innate development.

The educational system as a modern foundation, for the formation of psychological ground of social development, must systematically transfer the work ethic to the learning generations’ mind, however; it should be noted that educational system in each society has no responsibility but transferring general values and norms of that society to the new generation, so that work ethic has a relationship with dominating values in a society.

In fact, work ethic is called an area of the culture of the society that included work beliefs and values which follows the dominant general rules on culture and society. Work ethic in Iran has been studied less compared to other topics related to work and job. Nonetheless; few researches done indicate that work culture and ethic in Iran compared to other developed countries is in a lower level (Moeidfar, 2001, p. 4). This problem has been one of the complexities of accessing multilateral development in country (Rajabzade, 1997, p. 64).
The present article, one of its purposes filling work ethic information vacuum in Iran, took a field research, that engaged in the study of work ethic and its relationship with values among the teachers not only as the agents of socializing the students but also as the carrier of social values to the new generation. Research in the field of relationship of values and work ethic in Iran seems necessary and important, since Iran society has observed perceptible evolution in different fields of culture, society, politics and economy during recent decades that indicate the challenge between tradition and the modernization in Iran. Indeed, the evolutions of recent decades in Iran under the dominancy of Islamic Republic system have affected Iranians perspectives, values and behaviors. In accordance, the basic purpose of this article is answering this key question, to which groups of values does work ethic have more relationship in Iran today. Weather the political values in Iran at the time of revolution and the decades thereafter (1970, 1980) still has the most affects on work ethic or other values have relationship with work ethic. In fact, this article aimed at studying the relationship between values (conservative/ liberal) in different fields of culture, politics, economy, society and religion on one hand and work ethic on the other hand.

This study was done by the use of survey method and data was gathered through questionnaire. The sample was teachers of Rasht from north of Iran. According to our sample consist of 400 teachers (55.2 percent women and 44.8 percent men) that were chosen randomly and were studied. The data was analyzed based on descriptive and inferential statistics such as amplitude tables, correlation coefficients and regression analysis.

2. Review of Literature on Background of work Ethic

The concept of Weber’s Protestant work ethic (1958) has opened a new window in research fields related to evolution and development, since it establishes a causative relationship between Protestant ethic and the development of capitalism in west. McClelland (1961) extended Weber’s theory to development/psychology studies and tried to provide socio-psychological clarification through Protestantism and capitalism relationship. Mac Cleland related deeply the Protestant work ethic concept to psychological concept of Need for Achievement, and he considered the extension of capitalism in societies as the outcome of this socio-psychological quality (Furnham, 1990).

In relation to the environmental socialization and the development of values related to job, Melvin Kohn's considerable research (1963) can be referred to. According to him in his classic work, values and personality are affected by the social level. Later, Kohn, Slomczynski and Schoenbach (1986), showed that parents transfer these social level attitudes to their children. Less educated parents from the labouring class, under the pressure of conformity prepare their children for inflexible work environment that they will probably meet, meanwhile the middle class parents, who have high education, prepare their children for jobs level that have security and autonomy. Cherrington (1980) in his research found out that parents' children who themselves, had a disciplined upbringing, seem to have higher work ethic. Also, Furnham (1987) found a considerable correlation between mothers' work ethic and their children's. De witte's study (1995) confirm the correlation.

Regarding the relationship of work ethic and conservative values, the early studies return to Weber’s classical study. He believes that Europe’s historical experiment of modernity indicates a close relationship between work ethic and conservatism. Weber (1958) placed Protestant work ethic in relation to Bourgeois values. In fact, since the emergence of this concept, it was placed in the conservative economical ideals about the strength and wealth distribution (ter Bogt, Raaijmakers, & Van Wel, 2005). In 80s and 90s of twentieth century, again work ethic psychological testing leads to the relationship between work ethic on one hand and values and conservative attitudes on the other hand (e.g., ter Bogt, 1999, & Raaijmaker, 1987).

Studies indicate that work ethic has always been related to the conservatism. But the point isn't clear whether this is included in cultural conservatism or economical conservatism (Atieh, Brief, & Vollerath, 1987). Generally, in spite of the fact that work ethic studies have always attracted many researchers from developed countries in different fields during recent decades only few studies have been performed around this axial subject. One of these few studies is Mocidfar's work (2001) which studied effective social factors on work ethic.
3. Research Theoretical Approach

The most important characteristic of a theory is its applicability during the time this theory still attracts researchers' attention and also the number of researchers who study on this ground (Jones, 1997). If we consider this characteristic as a criterion measurement of strength of that theory, Weber’s protestant work ethic study and capitalism soul and its theoretical concept (work ethic) can be considered a strong theoretical framework in the field of social studies (and even psychological, managerial). This research’s theoretical approach is based on Weber’s theory about work ethic. In Weber’s work ethic tradition, as it was mentioned, there is a close relationship between conservatism, its related values and work ethic. Thus, based on Weber’s theory it is supposed that: There is a meaningful relationship between work ethic and teacher’s (traditional/modern) values in cultural, political, economical fields or teachers (conservative/liberal) values and their work ethic.

4. Concepts and Variables of Research

1-4. Work Ethic:
In this study, work ethic was measured by petty (1993) international index. Work ethic is divided to four dimensions: (1) Dependable (2) ambitious (3) considerate and (4) cooperative and for each dimension, items were taken into account.

2-4. Religious Values
Religious values are values that have the religious foundation; either accepted as ethic criterion in religious resources and is emphasized or accepted as ethic values by excavators. In this study, individuals’ religious values put these values into action based on Almond and Verba model (Almond & Verba, 1963). In this model, the religious values are divided into four dimensions ritualistic, experiential, consequential and believing and in accordance with each dimension, items were taken into consideration.

3-4. Political Values
Political values are values which root from resources such as power and politics (Talebi, 2001, p.36). In this research, political values have been divided into two dimensions Islamic fundamental (conservatism) and democratic for each of which items were taken into consideration.

4-4 Economical Values
Economical values are values which talk about material and living affairs such as food, job, wealth and the usage of the nature. In present study economical values are divided into two conservative and liberal dimensions and items were taken into consideration.

5-4. Cultural Values
Cultural values are values their topic is cultural affairs, beliefs, norms and foundations. In this study, cultural values were divided to two conservative/liberal modernist dimensions based on bilateral decision (ter Bogt, Raaijmakers, & Van Wel, 2005) and for each dimension items were taken into consideration.

5-Discussion and Conclusion
The data obtained from this study showed that most teachers have the conservative tendencies in various cultural, economical, political and social fields and have conservative values. Except in cultural values that focus on generic objects, women were more innovator than men.

Studying the individuals' values, it was recognized that in religious values field, the most trends were in sentimental and eventual dimensions since more than 95 percent of teachers believe in sentimental and eventual dimensions of religious values. The obtained data in the belief dimension of religious values showed that nearly 86 percent of the teachers of case study believe in fundamental religious values. The ideological function of educational system and application of coordinate criterions to employ forces in this foundation can explain the teachers’ high belief and tendency to religious traditional (conservative) values. In relation to the teachers’ tendencies and beliefs in political values, findings showed that nearly 75 percent of teachers in this area (political) have the conservative tendencies and believe in Islamic fundamental political values. In Iran society political system is based on religious foundation and religious values, teachers as the ideological media of Islamic Republic, naturally tend to conservative and Islamic political values than the democratic political values. Findings in economical values field also proved individuals conservativeness in this area. Findings indicated that sum of 65 percent of teachers tend to conservative economical values and agree with governmental economy and monopolistic management of government in the economic section. Meanwhile, nearly 35 percent of the teachers do agree with the liberal values in the economy field. Findings, on the ground of tendency toward cultural values, revealed that more than 60 percent of individuals are culturally conservative and believe in traditional cultural values.

The examination of the scales of the teacher's work ethic made it clear the studied society's work ethic is at relatively high level. Most teachers have interest and affection for their work and do their work actively and efficiently. Moreover, a great majority of them (94 percent) have friendly relations in their place of work. The presence of friendly relations in place of work can result from the influence of traditional characters of Iran society on the education institution showing high interference of the life domains and social institutions and the low rate of the structural differentiation among social institutions.

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<th>Political values</th>
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However, the examination of the effect of people’s values on their work ethic show that there is a meaningful relation between teachers’ values and their work ethic; moreover, the results of the research confirm the relationship between conservatism and the work ethic. The data and gotten results indicate the people having conservative / traditional tendencies to different cultural, economical, and religious areas had scales of work ethic. Examining the simultaneous effect of people’s values on their work ethic showed that religious values in consequential dimensions and conservative economical values have the great scales and intensity of effect on people’s work ethic. Thus, it is shown that cultural and economical conservatism can influence as an effective variable on the work ethic as a cultural factor.
In the end, it is pointed out despite value and cultural changes, Islamic republic of Iran’s educational system as an ideological organization of the government has used teachers who have traditional, religious, conservative characters congruent with the civil policies of the country over the last decade. Findings of this study in one of the most modern provinces of Iran confirm the above claim. Based on the above findings, the results of this research can show the scales of work ethic and its relation with different sorts of values among all Iranians particularly Iranian teachers.
References


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