Modern Perceptions of Work Ethic and the Dynamics of Healthcare Human Resource Planning In Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

According to the World Health Organisation 55% of total healthcare cost in Pakistan is financed through Out of Pocket (OOP) while 26% of the population (largely public sector workers and military officers) have their healthcare cost partially funded by the state. In 2016, the gross total OOP expenditure incurred by households in Pakistan exceeded $3.9 million dollars. In the midst of escalating healthcare cost among the majority low-income households, expenses associated with sudden illness, are managed through adopting several coping strategies such as drawing on savings, borrowing and selling productive assets such as poultry, cattle and land. Despite the effort by many to survive the challenging healthcare environment in Pakistan, several researchers have documented patients face other hidden challenges as vast majority of modern medical personnel in view work as just a means to an end, serving as nothing other than an economic function (Furnham, 1990:148). This is largely the perception of most Pakistanis when it comes to the work ethic of healthcare professionals. This review examines the modern perceptions of work ethic and the dynamics of healthcare human resource planning in Pakistan to meet the dire healthcare challenges facing its people.

Keywords: Work, Ethic, Pakistan, Modernity, Professionals, Perception

INTRODUCTION

Work ethic is considered to be a major force that drives economic activity at all levels of society. Indeed the literature has identified low work ethic as a factor that inhibits economic growth and development and contributes to the persistence of poverty (Applebaum, 1992; Bernstein, 1988). In their working paper, “Why doesn’t development always succeed; the role of a work ethic”, Zabojnik and Patrick (2000) argue that development efforts are more efficient in the high-work-ethic ‘steady’ state. Stucky (1998) reports a direct relationship between the work ethic and the socio-economic development of a country. McCleland (1961: 1965; 1971 in Munroe and Munroe, 2001) argues that the Protestant work ethic values are associated with an individual’s concern with achievement. The concept of the work ethic was first coined by the German sociologist, Max Weber (1904/1905). Weber himself argued that the Protestant work ethic was responsible for the development of capitalism in Western Europe and North America. According to some development theorists, capitalism is the economic system in which economic development occurs most rapidly. One of such theorists, Rostow (1971, 1978) argued that an aggressive work ethic among employees was one of the factors that made it possible for countries in East Asia, for example, to move from low- to middle-income status. Hospitals as organisations (whether for profit or not) are subject to the same processes of strategic management, partly as objects and victims but also as beneficiaries of entrepreneurial culture and work ethic. The role of the hospital is locked within the national systems to supply the healthy human resources needed for
sustainable socio-economic development (Akinci, 2012). The concern for the declining work ethic, according to Miller et al. (2001/2002:452), is that poor work ethic corresponds to “lower levels of job performance, higher levels of absenteeism, and increases in counter-productive behaviour, ranging from unauthorized breaks to employee theft.” Although schools, vocational education and career development programmes are expected to address these requirements, such efforts often fall short of expectations (Hill and Petty, 1995). Bhagat (1979) maintains that career education cannot prepare students adequately for developing a desirable work ethic. Thus the decline in the work ethic among healthcare professionals is of greater concern and the sources must be identified and curtailed. Most researchers note that for the vast majority of modern medical personnel view work as just a means to an end, serving as nothing other than an economic function (Furnham, 1990:148). This is largely the perception of most Pakistanis when it comes to the work ethic of healthcare professionals. This review examines the modern perceptions of work ethic and the dynamics of healthcare human resource planning in Pakistan.

**Brief History of the Work Ethic**

Past researchers have alluded to the development of the work ethic through the ages within particular ideological contexts. Various economists, poets and philosophers, have tried to explain the nature of work. According to Furnham (1990) the Hebrews thought work was necessary because it was punishment imposed upon men due to the sins of their fathers. Others, like the Greeks and Romans, viewed work as punishment, a curse suitable for slaves (Furnham, 1990; Maywood, 1982). Historically, the cultural practice of attaching a moral value to the act of doing a good job is a new belief system (Hill, 1997). According to this author, working hard was not the norm for Hebrew classical or medieval cultures and that it was only after the Protestant Reformation that physical labour became culturally acceptable. The Reformation period during the 16th Century, brought about many new principles including new ideas about labour, which came to be regarded as one of the important attributes of an individual ‘personality’ (Tilgher, 1930). According to Tilgher (1930) many early ‘heretics’ as well as some later leaders in the Reformation, such as Martin Luther, placed an emphasis on work as a form of serving God. These leaders did not however approve of commerce, trade and finance, which they claimed required no real work. According to the German sociologist Max Weber (1904/1905), the real architect of this major change in attitude towards work, was Protestantism. Weber linked such shifts in attitude to the doctrine of ‘Predestination’ whose exponents were leaders within Protestant sects. In his best-known book, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1904/1905), Max Weber examined the historical relationship between the emergence, and rapid expansion, of capitalism as a result of industrialization in Western Europe and North America, and the Protestant Reformation that had occurred in earlier centuries. He focused on the asceticism that had developed within Protestant sub-denominations such as Baptism, Pietism, Calvinism, and Methodism and identified a new perception whereby work was revered as a calling by God. Weber concluded that the Puritan value of asceticism and the belief in a ‘calling from God’ were partly responsible for the rapid expansion of capitalism and industrialization in Western Europe and North America (Lehmann, 1993; Furnham, 1990; Byrne, 1990). Weber proposed that it was the application of such values that led to the development of the new work ethic (Woehr, Arciniega and Lim, 2007). The teaching by Protestant reformists such as John Calvin (1509–1564) that financial success through hard and persistent worldly activity was a sign of being chosen by God as one of the ‘saved’ placed great emphasis on the doctrine of predestination. The same economic system grew to be regarded by the proponents of modernization theorists as being responsible for economic growth and development (Kendall, 1999).

The doctrine of predestination was a belief that all people were divided into those who were saved and those that were damned. Only God knew who belonged to the saved group (The Elect), that were predestined to go to heaven after death, and those who were to be damned and predestined for hell. In order to create assurance of salvation, which is itself a sure sign or proof of election, diligence in one’s calling (hard work, systematic use of time, and a strict asceticism with respect to worldly pleasures and goods) was highly recommended. The most important contribution of Protestantism to capitalism was the spirit of rationalization that it encouraged. To Weber, therefore, wealth is an unintended consequence of religious piety and hard work. For him, the spread of such a belief system, together with the social behaviour that accompanied it, fitted very well with the activities of capitalists, and contributed to the spread of such behaviour throughout society, including those societies in which Calvinism was not dominant.

**Modern Perceptions of the Work Ethic**
Weber noted that more mature capitalist-value practices, although religious in origin, have become rationalized and secular (Weber, 1904/1905). He observed that, with the secularizing influence of wealth, people often think of wealth and material possessions as the major (or only) reason to work. However, according to Kendall (1999), although no longer referred to as the ‘Protestant Work Ethic’ (PWE), many people still refer to the ‘work ethic’ in somewhat similar terms as Weber did. Over the years the PWE has been transformed into a concept that relates to character ethics, business ethics, work values, work beliefs, and belief systems (Smola and Sutton, 2002). For example, political and business leaders in the USA often claim (as mentioned earlier) that ‘the work ethic is dead’ referring to the seeming decline of the same principles of the PWE. It is felt not only by politicians and businessmen, but also by some social scientists (Highhouse, Zicklar and Yankelevich, 2010). These authors conducted a study, following reports which suggest that Americans have lost their belief in working for work’s sake. The study sought responses to the following question: “Would you continue to work if you inherited enough money to live comfortably without working?” They found that Americans are currently less likely to say that they would continue working if it were not a financial necessity. They concluded that, indeed, the shift in emphasis from industry and achievement to personal growth and even self-indulgence was said to begin with post-war societal changes and the growth of human relations in industry. The general trend suggested a decline in the type of employment commitment that goes beyond direct financial rewards. The same result was found across different sectors of the USA’s working population. They report, however, that this decline has recently stabilized (Highhouse et al., 2010). Yankelevich (1978) previously observed that loyalty to the organization had been replaced by loyalty to the self and that concern for leisure had taken over from concern for work. Morse and Weiss (1955 in Highhouse, 2010) had posed the same question (as that of Highhouse et al., 2010, mentioned above) to a sample of working men in various parts of the USA. They found that 80% of respondents would indeed continue to work. Vecchio (1980 in Highhouse, 2010) examined the responses to a similar question posed by the United States National Opinion Research Center in 1974, 1976 and 1977 to see whether Morse and Weiss’s findings still held true. He reported that 72% of the respondents across the three data sets had indicated that they would continue to work. Vecchio concluded that the results supported the view that there had been a steady decline in the value attached to work since the middle of the 20th century. According to Vecchio, a leisure ethic might be replacing the traditional work ethic in the USA. In its operational sense, the work ethic can be described as a set of characteristics and attitudes in which an individual worker assigns importance and merit to his or her work. Those with a high work ethic place a positive value on doing a good job and describe work as having an intrinsic value of its own (Hill and Fouts, 2005). Employees with a high work ethic are generally dependable, have good interpersonal skills, and demonstrate initiative. Other desirable qualities relating to the work ethic include hard work, community involvement, avoidance of idleness, and a tendency to evaluate work as being the most worthwhile way to spend one’s time (Tang and Tzeng, 1991). Because of the obvious associated economic benefits, employers try to encourage a high work ethic. Employees who have a low work ethic are said to cause companies a loss in productivity and profits (Hill and Fouts, 2005). Research has however shown that such an idealized work ethic, as described above, is hard to find among employees. Tang and Tzeng (1991) emphasized this finding, noting that “the PWE today cannot be defined as it was in early America because Americans now live in a society where only the experience of the moment is important and pleasure is the overriding goal” (Tang and Tzeng, 1991:164, citing Albee, 1977). They support the impression that people with high levels of education are less likely to support the PWE and also note that modern Americans are less likely to accept traditional values. The authors also observe that well educated persons may be able to find better jobs and do not, therefore, have to strive as hard as would be the case for less educated persons. Halman and Muller (2006) support the above Tang and Tzeng findings, although with fewer generalizations. They confirmed that, in Western Europe and Africa, education and income are important predictors of whether people endorse Weber’s work principles relating to the intrinsic value in work or not. Their finding on the correlation between education and work ethic is, however, a negative one as far as education and income are concerned. They report that in both Africa and Western Europe, intrinsic work qualities (inner satisfaction) are stressed more by the highly educated and people from higher income groups. Gabannesch (1972) offers a further explanation for this and states that educated people’s abilities and cognitive skills make them critical of authority; they enjoy a higher level of personal autonomy and the freedom to make individual judgements. Zanders (1994) agrees with Gabannesch and observes that educated people are more likely to
pursue personal development goals in work, in comparison to less-educated, or uneducated, people. Other demographic differences have been reported in the literature, including age, urban versus rural contexts (level of development), work experience, marital status, religiosity, and gender.

Religious Work Values and Economic Outcomes in Contemporary Societies

Following Weber’s (1904/1905) publication, a great deal of work on religious values has been reported. Over the years, this work has especially received impetus from the publication of large-scale, cross-cultural values surveys (Inglehart, 1990, 1997; Hofstede, 1980, 2001). The surveys made it possible to empirically examine value differences between countries and relationships between values and social economic outcomes at individual- and group-level in a variety of nations and cultures. While some researchers have continued to investigate this aspect using the approach by Weber, others have examined ethical values of a variety of religious beliefs and how these relate to economic performance. For example, Harrison and Huntington (2000), Kahn (1979) and others have studied Confucianism; Tawney (1926) studied Catholicism; and Granato, Inglehart and Leblang (1996) studied non-religious-specific values. Further studies by Barro and McCleary (2003) and Guiso, Sapienza and Zingales (2006) have correlated religious values with economic behaviour. In the majority of these studies, the context is the link between religion and work ethic and how this relationship influences economic outcomes. The Islamic work ethic (IWE) is known to have originated from the Quran in the sayings and practices of Prophet Mohammed (Yousef, 2000). The IWE states that dedication to work is a virtue and that people should put sufficient effort into their work. The IWE emphasizes cooperation in work and consultation is seen as a way of overcoming obstacles and avoiding mistakes. Healthy social relationships at work are encouraged in order to meet one’s needs and to establish equilibrium in one’s individual and social life. In addition, work is considered to be a source of independence and a means of fostering personal growth, self-respect, satisfaction and self-fulfilment. In summary, IWE is based on the notion that for peoples’ lives to have meaning, they should work hard. Yousef (2000) found that people who support IWE principles, particularly people belonging to the Islamic religion, were committed to their organizations, placed an emphasis on hard work and meeting deadlines on time, and were likely to positively embrace change in their work environments Allport’s (1950) Religious Orientation Scale, with its conceptualisation of intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness, is regarded as one of the most widely used religious scales. Individuals with an intrinsic orientation towards religion view their practice of religion as a goal in and of itself and believe in religious practices for their own sake. Those with an extrinsic orientation perceive the practice of religion as a means to a personal or social end, such as acceptance in a group or the attainment of personal comfort (King and Crowther, 2004). It is expected that devout people will be inclined to strive for virtue, morality and justice in line with the teachings of their religion. All major religions contain certain moral codes and teachings and truly religious people (that is, those with an intrinsic orientation to religion) should be less willing to engage in unethical behaviour because they believe that God knows all things and will be displeased by such behaviour (Conroy and Emerson, 2004). Hence, religious people would be expected to consider certain anti-social practices — such as cheating, lying, stealing — as unethical, since their religious beliefs consider that such behaviour is wrong (Lowery and Beadles, 2009). A number of research studies have investigated relationships between religious constructs and ethics among students. Angelis and Ibrahim (2004) surveyed business students and found a significant relationship between the degree of religiousness and attitudes towards the ethical aspects of corporate social responsibility. Using a measure of religiosity based on church attendance, Conroy and Emerson (2004) observed that religiosity influenced students’ ethical attitudes. Vitell and Singh (2005; 2006) observed a significant relationship between intrinsic religious behaviour and consumers’ ethical beliefs. Lowery and Beadles (2009) found that people tend to perceive ethical behaviour differently if the behaviour takes place while the person is at work, as opposed to when the person is outside work. Unethical behaviour at work appears to be relatively more acceptable than if one actively benefits (for example, adjusts scales used to measure food items) or passively benefits (for example, fails to report the receipt of excess payments) at the expense of others. Unethical behaviour that might cast an individual’s employer in a negative light is not considered to be as bad as those behaviours where one benefits, either through an active or passive role, at the expense of others in transactions that do not involve the individual’s place of employment. Deceptive behaviour (such as accidentally bursting a sachet of milk in a supermarket and doing nothing about it), although viewed as wrong, was more tolerated than...
unethical behaviour in the work environment (Lowery and Beadles, 2009). According to Vitell and Muncy (1992), the difference between deceptive behaviour and actively-benefitting behaviour is that although the individual plays an active role in both, deceptive behaviour is less likely to be considered illegal. Assessed from a Christian perspective, intrinsic practice of religion was a significant predictor of work-related ethics. People who are ‘true believers’ (with an intrinsic orientation to religion) view unethical activity in a very serious light - both at work as well as outside the work environment – as opposed to those with an extrinsic orientation to religion. People who are more religious appear to be relatively less likely to hide mistakes at work, to falsify reports, to inflate figures, to use company resources for personal purposes, and to engage in other unethical activities – perhaps because they want to please God and/or avoid punishment for sin. In contrast, the practice of religion for the purpose of want to please God and/or avoid punishment for sin.

In Islamic Work Ethic (IWE)

IWE considers „dedication to work” as a virtue. It is an obligation of a capable person to exert a sufficient effort in work. To avoid mistakes and overcome obstacles, cooperation and consultation is encouraged. To manage individual and social life, social relations at work are encouraged. Work itself means of establishing an independent self identity, self respect, personal growth, and satisfaction, where as creative work is seen as a noble source of accomplishment and happiness. Most importantly, IWE considers „hard work” as a virtue, to succeed one needs to work hard and not working hard is seen as a cause of failure [29]. IWE is derived from the intentions of the work rather than results of work. To have a welfare society, it is necessary to have justice and generosity at the work place. Competition in work is also seen as improvement in work quality. Concisely, IWE argues that there is no meaning of life without work and it is an obligation to engage in economic activities to earn bread and butter [30]. According to IWE, work is a „noble deed”; it fulfills the necessity of survival and maintains equilibrium in individual and social life. Work gives man sense of independence, self respect, satisfaction, pleasure and fulfillment. IWE encourages commitment, as it can reduce the problems of society if each person is committed to his job and avoid unethical methods of wealth accumulation. Another piece of work that brings out an outstanding revelation is Gerald Knaus’ article on “Islamic Calvinists”. This work opens with some interesting questions that need to be reiterated for further analysis: “can Islamic states foster an entrepreneurial ethic” Do certain religious attitudes promote economic development? Or is it the other way round: does development lead people to embrace interpretations of their faith that make it compatible with their enrichment?”(Knaus, 2007:13). The work by Barro et al (2003) sought to identify the determinants of economic growth. The result reveals that growth responds positively to religious beliefs and influence individual traits that enhance economic performance. The conclusion then boils down to Weber’s argument that draws a direct relationship between religion and capitalism. It is obviously on this basis that Lewis (Cited by Knaus, 2007:13) suggested that, Islam was being practiced in a way that is inimical to development, encouraging fatalism and suppressing innovation. Secularists are reported to have said “successful development requires the retreat of Islam” (Knaus, 2007:14) It is therefore quite unusual to find the appearance of the discussion of a topic such as “Islamic Calvinists change and conservatism in central Anatolia” According to Knaus (2007), the most outstanding revelation is the fact that the Anatolian entrepreneurs had began to see business in the way the Calvinist did; they considered opening a factory, a kind of prayer. This is an indication that the kind of ‘ethic’ that Weber identified among the Protestants was not limited to Protestants or Christians only, but even among Muslims (as revealed in the case in Turkey). What is happening in Turkey could be described as a functional equivalence of Weber’s Protestant Ethic Thesis in Germany and other parts of Europe. Various authors seem to be referring to culture as the pipe through which religion brings about the kind of economic transformation described. Perhaps different authors only express it differently: Landes (2000, cited in Knaus; 2007) for instance talks about religion bringing about a personality type; Barro et al (2003) say religious beliefs influence individual traits that enhance economic performance. Also in the case of the Islamic Calvinists, the story is not too different; there is a description of an evolving milieu of the coexistence of Islam and modernity in Turkey, gradually giving way to the growth of businesses and enterprise.

List of References


