

# Protestant Work Ethic, Gender Role Attitudes, Ethnicity and Class: Case of Iran

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**Abstract**—This study investigates the relationship between sex, gender role attitude, social origin and ethnicity with Protestant Work Ethic (PWE). 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 sex, gender role attitude, 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. Though the results shows no significant relationship between sex and PWE, gender role attitudes which demonstrates gender clichés, have positive relationship with PWE. The results derived from regression model shows that social origin and gender role attitudes have effects on PWE and the other variables (sex and ethnicity) remained out of regression model.

**Index Terms**—Protestant work ethic, gender role attitude, ethnicity, class origin.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Protestant Work Ethic (PWE) as one of the key concepts in development took into consideration by the thinkers having Weberian approach to development and underdevelopment. As Weber [1] indicates PWE is the cultural characteristics of the people and communities that had deep impacts on changes in the west. These changes cover a vast area of economic, social, cultural and even political changes. Empirical studies carried out on this concept covers vast areas of studies in the other fields of social sciences. 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 [2].

So, from a liberal point of view, we can conceive social inequalities among people due to the low amount of PWE as a socio-economic characteristic or due to low amount of “need for achievement” [2]. This idealistic and liberal point of view conceives differences of societies mostly cultural and mainly rising from the lack of culture of work and effort .In

the other hand the left materialist approach, sees PWE as the outer layer of unjust capitalist system especially in its incipient years of establishment in northwest Europe. They say that every “mode of production” has its special ideological level which enables reproduction of that mode of production in the whole. Thus the reproduction of every system depends on the reproduction of legitimizing ideology of that system. They think of PWE as legitimizing ideology for inequalities in the capitalist system [3, 4, 5, 6]. 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.

All of the institutions of the society specially institutions related to education and socialization, modernizes with modernization of the society. It results in more evenness of the people in spite of their differences in class, ethnicity and gender. In other words, as the modernization begins, expectations for gender democratization of their culture increases and ethnic, class and race differences in that society decrease as a result. As it is expected that in a traditional society, socio-ethnic psychology dominates various parts of the country and men and women carry out different socio-economic roles and there are major differences among genders, races, religions and different ethnic 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, gender clichés 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

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women are socialized differently to enter the world of work. In the second step to study the relationship between work ethic and gender more carefully, we will investigate the effect of gender attitudes on work ethic.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

First reports of correlates between PWE and class origin returns to the study of Furnham [7]. 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 [8] 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 [9] 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 [10] 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 [10].

There are very much studies carried out on gender and work ethic. In fact, very much studies have been carried out regarding ethical characteristics of men and women in the work environment to find out whether men and women have different ethic characteristics or not? Research concluding the existence of gender differences in ethical or moral behaviour [11, 12, 13, 14] generally attributes the differences to the differential socialization of women and men into socially prescribed gender roles. At the other hand several authors have argued that occupational experiences override socialized gender ideologies, resulting in similar ethical and value preferences for women and men [15, 116, 17, 18]. Mason and Mudrack [19] in their research on a sample of 308 individuals, observed that gender differences in ethical orientation were found in the full time employed group (consistent with gender socialization but in opposition to occupational socialization) but were lacking in the not employed group (inconsistent with gender socialization). In another research Firestone, Harris and Lambert [20] investigated the relationship between gender role attitudes and occupational earnings. In examining the literature they noticed that some literature suggests that the stereotypically female characteristic of nurturance is valued less in the labor market than the stereotypically male characteristic of aggressiveness [21]. The results of their study provide strong support for the socialization explanations of gender-based occupational wage differences [22, 23, 24]. In another research Stickney and Konrad [25] investigated the relationship between gender role attitudes on earnings for married individuals on 4785 males and 4368 females from 28

countries. Their results showed that as time passes men and women get egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles and both of them believe that both genders are equal. Also they found that the importance that egalitarian women place on their work life reflects their gender role attitudes and results in a stronger focus on paid work, which manifests itself in behavior leading to higher earnings. Their results showed that in 26 countries out of 28 countries women earn less than men. The results get by other researchers shows significant relationship between gender role attitudes and work ethic. Furnham and bland [26] showed that there is positive relationship between PWE beliefs and conservative attitudes. Also the results derived by ter Bogt et al [10] shows that PWE embedded in cultural conservatism.

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. Moeidfard's study [27] 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

Many of researchers carried out researches on gender, values and work related ethics. Some researchers [19] say that women in general hold different values and ethical views than men, so gender differences in responses will exist. They are in agree with eagly [28] that women are typically socialized into communal values reflecting a concern for others, devotion, and a desire to be at one with others; men are typically socialized into instrumental values involving self-expansion, self-assertion, competence and mastery. Also Hill [29] suggested that gender-role stereotypes may account for differences in the endorsement of work ethic between men and women. In particular, the images of work portrayed by the media present most occupational information through male role characterizations.

As many treat gender as a biological concept (i.e. sex) and some others think of it as a social variable, we will investigate the relationship between gender and work ethic in these two forms: a. between sex and work ethic b. between gender clichés and work ethic. Taking into consideration the extensive literature on gender socialization of work ethic, in both of the said forms, the hypothesis is that: the amounts of work ethic in both genders are different. In whole, these differences could have sociological denotations and could be the witness for gender socialization work and work ethic or it indicates that women have many struggles to get better socio-economic and political situations in family and society and to get more distance from gender roles of traditional women.

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 [2]. This approach mainly derived from Max Weber's classic work [1]. 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 [30].The second approach, despite it's various branches, mainly originates from Karl Marx [31] and his followers criticism of capital system [5, 6, 30].

In Iran as a changing society, because of its religious and traditional background and its 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.

IV. 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 [32].

For better investigation of the relationship between PWE and gender role attitudes we used items from different scales of gender role attitudes designed by: Firestone, Harris and Lambert [20], Stickney and Konrad [25], Moors [33].

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).

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.

As both PWE and different gender role attitudes scales are at the interval level and the results of Kalmogorov Smirnov Test show normal distribution, so we used Pearson Correlation Coefficient. As table (23-4)shows correlation

between the whole construct of PWE and Firestone, Harris, and Lambert [20], is significant and it has not any significant correlations with the other two gender role attitudes scales.

TABLE I: KALMOGOROV SMIRNOV TEST

Construct	N	Mean	SD	Positive Difference	Negative Difference	KS - Test	Sign
PWE	266	66.78	8.24	.031	-.027	.506	.96

TABLE II: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT SCALES OF GENDER ROLE ATTITUDES AND PWE

Scales	Pearson Correlation	Sig
Stickney & Konrad	.079	.202
Firestone, Harris & Lambert	.22	.000
Moors	.102	.098

As table II shows, there is correlation between Firestone, Harris, and Lambert scale [20] and PWE. It indicates that people having more powerful gender role attitudes have more PWE which is in conformity with the results of previous studies claiming that PWE belongs to cultural conservatism [10].To investigate the relationship between PWE and gender role attitudes carefully, we tried to investigate this relationship at the level of the 7 dimensions of PWE. The results shown in table III indicates positive correlations between Self-Reliance, Hard Work, Wasted Time, Centrality of Work and Delay of Gratification dimensions of PWE and Firestone, Harris, and Lambert scale [20] .

Furthermore it must be indicated that Delay of Gratification dimension of PWE has positive correlation with Moors scale [33], too.

After investigating the relationship between gender role attitudes with the whole construct of PWE and its 7 dimensions, now we try to investigate the relationship between PWE and ethnicity.

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.

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. 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 III: CORRELATION BETWEEN DIMENSIONS OF PWE AND DIFFRENET GENDER ROLE ATTITUDE SCALES

Dimensions of PWE	Scales	Pearson Correlation	Sig (2-tailed)
Self reliance	Stickney & Konrad	.030	.628
	Firestone, Harris & Lambert	.157*	.010
Morality/Ethics	Moors	.084	.174
	Stickney & Konrad	-.045	.466
Leisure	Firestone, Harris & Lambert	.052	.394
	Moors	-.071	.250
Hard work	Stickney & Konrad	.116	.059
	Firestone, Harris & Lambert	-.013	.829
Centrality of work	Moors	.097	.115
	Stickney & Konrad	.101	.099
Wasted time	Firestone, Harris & Lambert	.125*	.042
	Moors	.067	.276
Delay of Gratification	Stickney & Konrad	-.058	.346
	Firestone, Harris & Lambert	.209**	.001
	Moors	-.024	.700
	Stickney and Konrad	.059	.341
	Firestone, Harris and Lambert	.137*	.025
	Moors	.024	.700
	Stickney and Konrad	.061	.320
	Firestone, Harris and Lambert	.179**	.003
	Moors	.153*	.012

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).  
 \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

TABLE IV: PWE SCORES OF RESPONDENTS BY ETHNICITY

Ethnicity	N	Mean	SD
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
Lak	1	61.07	0
Tati	1	64.70	0
Mazani	12	69.43	7.15
Turkmen	5	72.37	7.92
Armenian	3	66.44	17.61
Others	25	65.06	6.37

Between-group mean squares = 64.475  
 Inter-group mean squares = 65.915  
 F=0.978  
 P=0.467

TABLE V: DESCRIPTIONS FOR PWE WITHIN DIFFERENT CLASS ORIGINS

Class origin	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 VI: ANOVA

Class origin	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			

TABLE VII: 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

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

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	724.561 <sup>a</sup>	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			

<sup>a</sup>. R Squared = .042 (Adjusted R Squared = .023)

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

In the last step in description of PWE according to the independent variables, to determine the independent variable having the most effect on PWE construct, we entered all of the independent variables in the regression. To describe the amount of PWE according to the sum of independent variables we used multi way regression with step by step method. The results shown in table IX and X indicate that 2 important independent variables have remained in the regression model. Table IX indicates that 45% of variances in the amount of PWE can be determined by independent variables. The results of Table X also show that regression is linear because F to define Significance of independent variables effect on PWE equals to 74.007 with significance level of .000.

TABLE IX: MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.55	0.302	0.300	11.06
2	0.676	0.457	0.451	9.80

Dependent variable: PWE

Independent variables: class origin, gender role attitude, ethnicity, sex.

TABLE X: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	sig
regression	28450.193	4	7112.548	74.007	0.000
Residual	33829.511	352	96.107		
Total	62279.704	356			

In the whole, according to Table XI and considering unstandardized Beta Coefficients, we can understand that Constant (*a*) equals to 43.297 and class origin, gender role attitudes have the most effect in definition of the amount of PWE and their Beta are respectively 9.354 and 0.148.

Finally, omitting the Constant (*a*) through standardizing the amount of independent variables we observe that class origin (Beta=0.422) and gender role attitudes (Beta=0.239) have the most impact in anticipating the amount of PWE.

TABLE XI: INDEPENDENT VARIABLES' COEFFICIENTS

Model	Unstandardized	Coefficients	Standardized		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	52.01	1.961		26.519	0.000
Class origin	12.186	0.983	0.550	12.401	0.000
Constant	43.297	2.153		20.114	0.000
Class origin	9.354	0.924	0.422	10.122	0.000
Gender role attitudes	0.148	0.034	0.239	4.291	0.000

The results of multiple regression analysis in the above table shows that only 2 of the independent variables in this study have entered regression and the remaining independent variables have remained out of the regression model. This

finding confirms the results of the prior studies regarding near relationship between conservatism and PWE [34, 35].

## VI. DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm the results of the prior studies regarding relationship between conservatism and work ethic [34, 35, 36, 37]. In fact, in Iran too, work ethic belongs to the realm of conservatism and intrinsically it is a conservative-traditional phenomenon, and also is part of a nearly comprehensive system of conservative attitudes towards life accompanied with gender role attitudes. Though the sample in this study are the staff of one of the most important banks in Iran (EXIM Bank of Iran) and banks are one of the most rational organizations, there is significant relationship between gender role attitudes and PWE of staff in this bank, too. The more investigation in the results shows that gender role attitudes have significant relationship with these dimensions of PWE: Self-Reliance, Hard Work, Wasted Time, Centrality of Work and Delay of Gratification. These dimensions are defined as manly ethics in a conservative society.

In this research we treated gender as a social variable and not a biological characteristic and tried to investigate the relationship between PWE and gender as a social variable. The results showed that though gender remained out of regression model, gender role attitudes remained in the regression model. Also the results showed that even now gender role attitudes have effects on PWE in Iran society. Furthermore, the other finding that must be taken into consideration is the effect of persons' class origin on their PWE. As it was mentioned in the results, the average of PWE in the persons from high class origin is higher and in the people from middle class origin is lower. We can induce from the results that the amount of cultural conservatism in people from high class origin is higher than the people from lower class origin which is a considerable result and against the hypothesis that conservatism is higher in low SES. This is to some extent due to the fact that in Iran people which were in low social layers before revolution are in high social layers in after revolution and for this reason nowadays in high SES in Iran we can see high amount of gender stereotypes.

In addition to these findings we must take into consideration the very little difference among men and women regarding the amount of work ethic. In fact, the results showed that in spite of the existence of gender attitudes in Iran society, there is no significant relationship between sex and PWE in the way that the averages of PWE in both genders are very close. This finding may be a witness for the matter that in spite of the existence of gender attitudes in traditional-religious and nearly conservative society of Iran, women try to change their situation. Furthermore we must consider the finding that ethnicity has no effect on PWE. This finding is in contrast to the public notion that some ethnic groups such as Azeri have higher work ethic in comparison with the others. The results of this study showed that there is no significant difference in PWE between various ethnics. As this finding is derived from local staff, maybe it would be violated in studying samples from private companies.

In the whole the results of this study shows that Iranian society is having socio-cultural changes in spite of the

dominance of traditional-conservative ideology on ideological systems of government, women gradually exit from their traditional status and try to achieve better social and economic situations. This can be seen in the other arenas of Iran society, too. Spread presence of women in universities studying in various fields is a witness of women endeavor to attend in one of the legitimate spaces in a relatively traditional and conservative society under the sovereignty of conservative official ideology. This is the case even now that gender attitudes are present in Iranian society and act as an important variable in the relationship between two genders in family ,economy and other institutions.

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