The relationship between work ethic and justice perception in Islamic Azad University

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the relationship between work ethic and justice perception in the professors and employees of Islamic Azad Universities. The research methodology was descriptive-correlational and the data was collected via field procedure. The population of the study consisted of all the professors and employees of Islamic Azad Universities (N=60000). The participants of the study were 800 professors and employees who were selected from among the population based on cluster random sampling. The sample size was determined using Morgan table. 569 posted questionnaires were completed and returned by the participants. To assess work ethic and the ratio of justice perception, a summarized version of Ali's questionnaire (1998) and Starvan's employees' justice perception questionnaire (1996) were used, respectively. In order to assure the validity of the questionnaires, they were submitted to some professors in the department of Theology and Islamic Thoughts as well as some other experts. Subsequently, the experts' opinions regarding all the questionnaire items were applied in moderating the scales. The reliability of the scales in a sample group using Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to be 0.83 and using test-retest method to be 0.76. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Qualitative data was described using percentage and frequency counts and quantitative data was illustrated using measures of central tendency and variability. Besides, based on the objectives of the study and data type, t test and Pearson's correlation coefficient were used as inferential statistics. The results showed that, out of the maximum mean score of 5 for work ethic, the participants' mean score was 4.09 with the standard deviation of 0.48. The participants' mean score of justice perception was 2.80 with the standard deviation of 0.70, out of maximum mean score of 5. The results of hypothesis tests revealed a weak positive correlation (r=0.280) between work ethic and justice perception in the professors and employees of (all participants) Islamic Azad University.

Key words: work ethic, justice perception, Islamic Azad University.

Introduction

Current society is organizational society. The main part of our daily life is spend in organizations or in relation to them. Every organization, in offering multiple or specialized services, realizes general or specific objectives for the public and society. Therefore, the management of daily life depends on the organizations, and the development and survival of a society is subject to their efficient performance [1].

One of the manifestations of morality and goodness is for the human to be active and furnish his counterparts with the advantages of his activities. In performing the tasks in which they are competent, every individual serves the humanity. Islam refers to work as good deed. According to the teachings of holy Koran, the precondition for achieving the promised paradise is commitment to the three main characteristics of faith, good deed and piety. Needless to say, good deed is the fruit of faith and piety. As a rule, those who believe in the truth are committed to good deeds which result in the provision of society with gift, welfare and felicity. The deeds will bear no humanitarian good or morality unless they are originated from faith and piety. Islam ascribes virtue to good intentions because they are the building block ideas and positive plans for doing things [2].

Experts refer to work ethic as the value that people ascribe to work. Strong work ethic guarantees that hard work is the key for prosperity. Research has shown that strong work ethic leads to higher efficiency, innovation, need for success and job satisfaction as well as more income and conservative attitudes [3]. In an investigation of the concept of work ethic, we may come across two groups with opposite working tendencies; one that craves for
activity, endeavor and effort, does not appreciate stagnation and stillness, and works to flourish their virtues. On the contrary, the second group does not favor work and endeavor and could only be set to work by the application of external forces.

Enquiry into good and evil will lead to the development of ethics. Managing practice enters the domain of ethics when people face contradictions between their organizational interests and social responsibilities. Social ethics and responsibility, defined as moral-philosophical requirements and the criteria used by the individual to assess the adequacy of their behavior toward themselves, others and society, is one of the issues to which the scientists of management have attended over the last two decades.

With regard to the increasing complexity of organizations and the increase in unethical, illegal and irresponsible activities in workplaces, the directors and experts have been attracted toward work ethic and ethical management issues. The identification and prioritization of values for directing organizational behaviors will help manage ethics in the workplace. Ethical plans may help organizations maintain their ethical performance under disheveled circumstances [4].

According to the behavioral theory of work ethic, once an individual's ethical work is appreciated by top managers, they may be encouraged to perform further ethical works so that performing ethical works may become an internal virtue in the individual [5]. Some experts assert that work ethic is repressed by some managers in the organizations because, instead of appreciating work ethic, these managers render the employees' endeavors useless by taking measures that repress the hard work motivations. Moreover, based on the equity theory, if rewards or reprimands do not conform to the rules of justice, Justice and meritocracy, employees may not enjoy the sense of satisfaction with their jobs; consequently, they may evade their duties [6].

Disregard for work ethic in the management of organizations may cause serious problems for the organizations, particularly in societies, like Iranian society, which are rooted in rich ethical values. Besides, as social expectations towards the organizations have grown, societies have become more sensitive to such issues as environment; women, children, the disabled and minority rights; and the equity in employment and workforce cutback [7]. The disregard of organizations for these rights and morals in dealing with outside stakeholders may bring about problems for the organizations and question the legitimacy of the organization and its activities and consequently affect its success and profitability. Low work ethic affects the employees' attitudes toward their jobs, organization and managers, which may eventually influence individual, group and organizational performance.

The equity theory is one of the occupational-motivational theories that discuss the issue of justice in detail. The theories of justice are quite distinct from other theories and address the individual's values rather than the needs and beliefs [8]. Equity theories suggest that the individual assesses the ratio of inputs to outputs and may even calculate this ratio using common scales and subsequently compares it with the inputs and outputs of other individuals. As long as the individual sees this ratio equal (fair), they will be encouraged to carry out their duty, but if they evaluate the ratio as biased - that is when they notice that an individual with lower inputs enjoy the same outputs as theirs- they suffer the sense of inequality and conclude that the organization has not been fair to them. Such feeling produces tension within the individual and arouses them to work less than enough. Social comparison is a reality and the basic assumption of equity theory also seems to be valid.

Justice perception bears some dimensions; payment dimension which refers to the justice perceived via the salary; work and workplace dimension which refers to the justice perceived via the hardness of work and workplace conditions, facilities and social interactions; organizational care and respect dimension which refers to the justice perceived via the respect and care the individual receives from the managers and colleagues; and procedural justice dimension which refers to the justice perceived via the application of rules and regulations which maintain definite rights for the employees [9].

Over the course of history, justice has always been an essential requirement of human social life. Nowadays, with regard to the inclusive and comprehensive role of organizations in social life, the position of justice has been much more crystallized in organizations [10]. Indeed, current organizations are a miniature of society and the realization of justice in them accounts for the realization of justice in society. Therefore, organizational justice, like other important variables in organizational behavior including organizational commitment and job satisfaction, has gained special standing in management literature. Accordingly, managers may not ignore the issue of justice in their organizations because, as with other essential human needs, justice has always been a need. When the managers look for developments, they must be able to induce the employees to perceive the existence of justice in their organizations.

People bear a common value of justice-seeking in the social interactions of their workplaces. It is assumed that employees are aroused to compensate for the injustice when they encounter unjust situations. Almost every individual wishes to be a good employee and when they feel their organization is free of discrimination, they will tend to be thus. People will feel the Justice when the organization follows a fair procedure.

Work ethic and morals can be reinforced in organizations in conformance to Islamic viewpoint so that a reduction in discrimination, injustice,
dissatisfaction as well as an increase in organizational morals, commitment and satisfaction will be fostered in the employees on the one hand, and the growth and development will be nurtured in humans, organizations and society on the other hand [11]. Although achieving mere research and educational goals depends on the efficient use of human, financial and equipment resources, the development of higher education system in universities hinges on several factors including having the professors and employees with high morals, satisfaction and commitment to the goals so that they may do their best to improve the efficiency of their performance in a dynamic environment. However, it is likely that the lack of an appropriate Justice perception strips the university from these good characteristics and the expected efficiency. Thus, this study is conducted to investigate work ethic and justice perception and find an answer to the question: is there any significant relationship between work ethic and justice perception in the professors and employees of Islamic Azad universities?

Materials and Methods

With regard to the topic and objectives of the study, the research methodology was descriptive-correlational and the data was collected via field procedure. The population of the study consisted of all the professors and employees of Islamic Azad Universities (N=60000). The participants of the study were 800 professors and employees who were selected from among the population based on cluster random sampling. The sample size was determined using Morgan table. 569 posted questionnaires were completed and returned by the participants. Two questionnaires were used as the instrument to collect the data. To assess work ethic and the ratio of justice perception based on the equity theory, a summarized version of Ali's questionnaire (1998) and Starvan's employees' Justice perception questionnaire (1996) were used, respectively[12]. Starvan's questionnaire addresses four categories including: payment; work and workplace; organizational care and respect; and procedural justice. Content validity was used to assess the validity of the questionnaires. In this regard, the questionnaires were submitted to some professors in the department of Theology and Islamic Thoughts as well as some other experts. Subsequently, the experts' opinions regarding all the questionnaire items were applied in moderating the scales. The reliability of the scales in a sample size using Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to be 0.83 and using test-retest method to be 0.76. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Qualitative data was described using percentage and frequency counts and quantitative data was illustrated using measures of central tendency and variability. Besides, based on the objectives of the study and data type, t test and Pearson's correlation coefficient were used as inferential statistics.

Results:

According to the findings of the study, the professors' mean age was 37.36 with the standard deviation of 7.01, and the employees' mean age was 37.98 with the standard deviation of 6.82. The professors' mean employment history was 7.85 years and the employees' was 11.15 years. 12.12% of participants had PhDs, 42.17% had MA/MSc, 24.78% had BA/BSc, 6.67% had associate degrees and 14.23% had diploma or lower educational degrees. 84.88% of the participants were married and 15.11% were single. 26.71% had more than one job but 73.28% had just one job. As with the mode of their employment, 44.63% were officially employed, 18.45% were semi-officially employed, 23.34% were contractually employed and 13.53% had other modes of employment. The professors' mean income was 992000 tomans and the employees' was 496000 tomans.

As shown in table 1, the participants' mean score of work ethic was 4.09, out of the total score 5, with the standard deviation of 0.48. More specifically, the professors' mean score was 4.15 with the standard deviation of 0.45 and the employees' was 4.03 with the standard deviation of 0.50.

According to table 2, the participants' mean score of justice perception was 2.80, out of the total score 5, with the standard deviation of 0.70. More specifically, the professors' mean score was 2.98 with the standard deviation of 0.79 and the employees' was 2.62 with the standard deviation of 0.56.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic / Variable</th>
<th>Mean ± Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td>4.15±0.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the data pertaining to justice perception and its subcategories.
Based on table 3, there is a weak positive correlation ($r=0.280$) between work ethic and justice perception in the professors and employees (all participants) of Islamic Azad University.

**Table 3:** The relationship between work ethic and justice perception in the participants (professors and employees).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Ethic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Payment justice</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>0.129</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace justice</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect justice</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural justice</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>0.285</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice perception</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>0.280</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

**Discussion and Conclusion:**

Ethics is closely associated with values and is regarded as an instrument which may put values into practice. Ethics includes such concepts as trust, honesty, and sincerity, conforming to one's promises to others, justice, equality, citizenship values and serving the society. Ethics, as the discrimination of good from evil, has always been a topic of discussion by philosophers and regarded as a subfield of philosophy [13].

According to the findings of this study, the ratio of work ethic in the professors and employees of Islamic Azad University was above average. This is consistent with the findings of several other studies [14]. The findings of this study and other studies confirm the importance of work ethic as a factor which improves the efficiency of employees' work and eventually improves the efficiency of organizations. Work ethic and morals can be reinforced in organizations in conformance to Islamic viewpoint so that a reduction in discrimination, injustice, dissatisfaction as well as an increase in organizational morals, commitment and satisfaction will be fostered in the employees on the one hand, and the growth and development will be nurtured in humans, organizations and society on the other hand [11].

Ethical issues can be managed according to the teachings of holy Koran. For example, the delineation of general moralistic principles may pave the way for the realization of Koranic morals. Moreover, considering the principles using Koran verses and texts may help discover the foundation of ethical values, which sets the stage for achieving normal ethics or ethical theories based on holy Koran. Besides, cogitating on the moralistic principles of Koran and its associated ethical theories along with drawing on ontology, particularly Koranic anthropology, may help delineate the philosophical foundations of ethics and develop metaethics based on holy Koran.

Conformance to social ethical requirements will result in the increase of profits and added value in the long run. The increase in income and profitability as well as improving competitive advantage and attending to all stakeholders will enhance corporate profits in the long run because these may encourage human abilities, increase good social intention and mutual trust, and decrease fines. The organizations are getting more and more ingrained in the conviction that reinforcement of morals and spiritual culture lead to affluent strategic advantages for them.

Ethics affects human activities considerably and is the precondition for the employees' adequate performance, commitment and responsibility. Managing moral values in the workplace leads to the legitimization of management activities, reinforces the integrity and balance of organizational culture, improves the mutual trust between the individuals and groups, and eventually improves the quality and profits in the organization via conforming to standards. With regard to the role humans play in current organizations, the individuals' attitudes towards the organization and their job areas significantly affect their efficiency and consequently the efficiency of the organization.

The findings of the study showed that the ratio of justice perception in the professors and employees of Azad University was below average. This is consistent with the findings of Irannejad (2009) and Parinan (1999) who studied this variable in the employees of Mohaghegh Ardebili University of Ardebil and Firdausi University of Mashhad, respectively. People bear a common value of justice-seeking in the social interactions of their workplaces [10-15]. It is assumed that employees are aroused to compensate for the injustice when they encounter unjust situations. Almost every individual wishes to be a good employee and when they feel their organization is free of discrimination, they will tend to thus [8].

Justice, defined as impartiality and Justice in dealing with the differences, is a broad multifaceted
Concept which bears a philosophical conception across different fields of study [16]. Literally, the word justice means 1) balance as opposed to disproportion, 2) Justice as opposed to discrimination, 3) allocating the due rights of the beneficiary as opposed to oppression, and 4) heeding the individual's capabilities in realizing things as opposed to the refusal of realizing things that are potentially realizable. Each facet of justice conveys several meanings the most important of which include fairness, intent, perseverance, moderation, share, dole, ratio, equanimity, etc [17]. In religion, justice refers to honesty in following the divine course and preferring mind over whims. In essence, the term justice refers to abstention from great sins and lack of persistence with little sins as well as observing piety and avoiding despicable deeds, which are all interpreted as the angel of justice [18].

The school of Islam, inspired by Koran and the teachings of religious leaders emphasizing the pursuit of justice in society, sees economic justice as one of the principles of Islamic economy. It emphasizes justice-seeking in all its social, political, cultural and economic aspects since the realization of social justice is the true cause of the designation of the prophets. As an example, Koran declares the foundation of regimes and designation of prophets to the pursuit of justice and settlement of public conflicts (Sura Baghereh, verse 113; Sura Hadid, verse 25).

A balanced organization should be founded on the hierarchy of justice so that its coordination, work share, leadership chain and diagram would be most perfect. As movement or flight requires balance, a balanced organization tends to direct the individuals to perfection. Recent studies on this topic show that employees encounter at least two sources that may serve or resist justice in the organization. The most noticeable source is the individual's boss or manager who may control such important events as their personnel's pay raise or promotion opportunities. The second source, to which the employees may attribute the justice or injustice, is the organization itself as a whole. Though this source is rather intangible, it still needs to be considered. The employees often consider the organization as an independent social agent which may serve or violate the justice [17].

The majority of decisions the directors have to make in the organization revolve around the policy and issues of Justice towards the employees [19]. Organizational justice is a factor used in describing justice which is directly associated with job positions. It particularly attends to the fact that employees should be well treated so that they may feel they have been treated fairly [20]. Organizational justice is a term used to describe the role of Justice which is directly related to the workplace. It is particularly associated with the procedures the employees use to assess whether the organization is fair to them, which may influence the factors pertaining to the employees' work [21]. Robins asserts that employees would like the payment and promotion systems to be fair and transparent. Considering the type of job and personal skills, fair payment will result in job satisfaction [20].

According to the aphoristic statements of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), justice refers to equanimity in preserving the various rights of people in the society. As far as equanimity is considered, everything should be kept in its due order and consistent with its right. In other words, equanimity refers to moderation in affairs and avoidance of extremities. Oppression and cruelty are at odds with justice. Every Muslim is required not to oppress the others but to resist the oppressors.

The establishment of social justice is regarded as one of the pillars of Islam so that divine justice is one of the principles of Shiites' faith and some Sunnite orders like Mo'azeleh. Mottahari asserts that "once justice refers to theism and hereafter and gives a particular shape to the creation and existence, it becomes a world view; once it refers to prophecy, canonization and lawmaking, it becomes a competence; once it refers to ethics, it becomes a human ideal; and once it refers to society, it becomes a responsibility."

The results of hypothesis testing revealed that there is a weak positive relationship (r=0.280) between work ethic and justice perception in the professors and employees (all participants) of Islamic Azad University. The justice is so crucial a factor that God considers the cause of the designation of prophets as the establishment of justice: "… it is up to people to raise justice" (Golpan Koran, new version). Besides, with regard to attentions paid to justice and the resources and costs that societies and organizations allocate to it, one may infer its importance [22]. On the whole, we may conclude that justice is a moral concept. All the factors that affect the development of ethics affect the development of justice as well. There is close association between justice and order. Establishing a certain inclination in the individual, justice removes them from extremities and sets the stage for taking the right path and eventually removes the sources of corruption and disorder. Believing in the fair system of creation and bearing a justice-driven outlook towards the world will pave the way for bringing order to social and individual behavior [23].

Therefore, when a fair tendency is established in the organization, people will experience a sense of equality. When people experience equality, they will feel more satisfaction, efficiency, commitment to their responsibilities and the objectives of their organizations, and they will not evade their duties. Organizations and organizability are part and parcel of our life [17]. Organization is a social system whose survival depends on the establishment of a strong connection among its components. Perception
References