

Article

Muslim Work Ethics: Relationships with Religious Orientations and the “Perfect Man” (*Ensān-e Kāmel*) in Managers and Staff in Iran

Nima Ghorbani ¹, P. J. Watson ^{2,*}, Maryam Karimpour ¹ and Zhuo Job Chen ³

¹ Department of Psychology, University of Tehran, Al-Ahmad Ave., P.O. Box 14155-6456, Tehran 14155, Iran; dr.nimaghorbani@gmail.com (N.G.); karimpour.marya@gmail.com (M.K.)

² Department of Psychology, Department #2801, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, 615 McCallie Avenue, Chattanooga, TN 37403, USA

³ Department of Psychology, 1418 Brackett Hall, Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29634, USA; zhuoc@clemson.edu

* Correspondence: paul-watson@utc.edu; Tel.: +1-423-425-4291

Received: 25 June 2017; Accepted: 29 July 2017; Published: 1 August 2017

Abstract: Weber’s association of a work ethic with Protestantism has been extended to religions, including Islam, more generally. Managers and staff in a bank and department store in Tehran responded to Muslim religiousness measures along with the multidimensional work ethics profile (MWEP). The MWEP is a 7-factor instrument that records Weber’s interpretation of work ethics. Intrinsic, extrinsic personal, and extrinsic cultural religious orientations predicted a higher work ethic. Two extrinsic cultural religious orientation factors exhibited especially strong connections with MWEP factors. The morality/ethics MWEP factor most consistently predicted Muslim commitments. Integrative self-knowledge and self-control served as empirical markers of an Iranian Muslim spiritual ideal called *ensān-e kāmel* or the “perfect man.” Both correlated positively with morality/ethics and with three of the four extrinsic cultural religious orientations. Managers scored higher than staff on morality/ethics, on the two characteristics of the “perfect man”, and on the three of four extrinsic cultural religious orientation factors. These data supported the existence of a Muslim work ethic.

Keywords: work ethics; Islam; multidimensional work ethics profile; religious orientations; Muslim “perfect man” (*ensān-e kāmel*); Iran

1. Introduction

Intellectual efforts to link religion with a work ethic most famously appeared in Max Weber’s ([1920] 1996) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber found historical origins for a Protestant work ethic in especially Calvinist perspectives involving predestination, economic success as a sign of salvation by God, and work as a calling. For Calvinists, salvation was the gift of a gracious God and could not be earned through hard work. At the same time, however, hard work demanded an ascetic renunciation of pleasures of the flesh that gave believers confidence that they were among God’s chosen. In other words, hard work alleviated anxiety about salvation. Such influences, Weber argued, gave capitalism a modern “spirit” that made it progressively more rationalized and productive. A work ethic of rationalized productivity then became a nonreligious intrinsic good as processes of secularization increasingly disconnected this work ethic from its Protestant roots.

The multidimensional work ethic profile (MWEP) makes it possible to assess Weber’s interpretation of the work ethic (Miller et al. 2002). This instrument includes seven factors. Self-reliance breeds a sense of personal independence. Morality/ethics reflects commitment to a moral and just way of life. Leisure

represents a rejection of the desire to have time off from work. Hard work describes work as a discipline important in the development of virtues. Centrality of work identifies work as a good in and of itself. Wasted time records personal efforts to always be productive. Delay of gratification assesses an asceticism in the present as necessary for satisfying desires in the future. Initial data confirmed the validity of these factors in samples of university students, air force personnel, and work organization employees. All seven factors, for example, correlated positively with conscientiousness and with the need for achievement in university undergraduates.

1.1. Work Ethics in Iran

Since Weber's time, conceptual and empirical advancements have led to the more expansive claim that many religions encourage a work ethic (Collins 1996; Geren 2011; McCleary 2007). The present investigation explored the possibility already supported in the research literature that Islam is among those religions (Abdi and Azizpour 2013; Akbarnejad and Chanzanagh 2011; Chanzanagh and Akbarnejad 2012; Feess et al. 2014). Muslim religious traditions do seem to encourage a work ethic. The Hadith, for example, is a collection of sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammed and to later imams, and one saying points toward a Muslim work ethic by warning, "He who neither worketh for himself, nor for others, will not receive the reward of God" (as quoted by Al-Suhrawardy 1905). Moreover, Muslims "have a higher belief in hell than Protestants", and fear of hell is what Weber identified as the motivating force underling the 'religious anxiety' [that] leads to increased productivity or industriousness" (McCleary 2007, p. 62). Moreover, "the Qur'an explicitly states that God's help comes to those who strive with commitment (Qur'an 28.70, 29.69). Work in general is viewed as striving in the service of God" (McCleary 2007, p. 67), and the Qur'an helps construct a work ethic by encouraging "Muslims to progress economically and socially, without compromising religious principles and obligations" (Kamri et al. 2014). A Muslim work ethic also seems to conform with an implicit personality theory attributed to Islam: "One of the greatest areas of difference between most approaches to personality and Islam is the Islamic belief in the overall beneficence of society and the importance of subordinating one's personal desires for what is seen as the greater good" (Smither and Khorsandi 2009, p. 92). An ethics of hard work would presumably be part of an Islamic personality dedicated to the greater good. The present study tested this hypothesis by examining MWEP relationships with three sets of constructs reflecting Iranian Muslim religious commitments.

First, religious orientation scales assessed three well-established motivations for being religious (Gorsuch and McPherson 1989). An intrinsic religious orientation appears to be a sincere attempt to make religion the ultimate motivation in life. With an extrinsic personal orientation, religion serves as a means for achieving a sense of subjective well-being. The extrinsic social orientation involves the use of religion to obtain social benefits. In Iranian Muslims, the intrinsic and especially the extrinsic personal orientations predict religious and psychological adjustment (Ghorbani et al. 2007). The extrinsic social orientation turns out, instead, to be weak and ambiguous in its mental health implications. The expectation, therefore, was that MWEP factors would correlate positively with the intrinsic and extrinsic personal orientations. Support for this possibility already exists in Iran, but only in an investigation that did not distinguish between the two extrinsic motivations and that did not use the MWEP (Ghalavandi et al. 2013).

Second, and more importantly, this analysis of Iranian religious motivations also included the use of a more recently developed extrinsic cultural religious orientation scale (Ghorbani et al. 2010). A self-subordinating Muslim commitment to society should appear in religious motivations that encourage a culture-enhancing participation in social life. The extrinsic social orientation scale is inadequate for recording such a motivation. The extrinsic cultural religious orientation scale addresses this problem by defining four factors that express desires to be religious in order to contribute to the well-being of society. MWEP and extrinsic cultural factors should correlate positively.

Third, procedures sought to relate work ethics to a goal of Iranian personality development called *ensān-e kāmāl* or the "perfect man" (Shimamoto 2008). In Iran, Islamic philosophy has defined the "perfect man" as someone who combines self-knowledge with self-control in order to achieve a Muslim spiritual ideal. The basic idea is that self-insight combined with self-control should help

purify the Muslim self and bring it into a closer connection with God, who according to the Qur'an is always closer to an individual than "his jugular vein" (50:16: (Ali 1993)). Studies using integrative self-knowledge (Ghorbani et al. 2008) and self-control (Tangney et al. 2004) scales have confirmed the relevance of this "perfect man" for understanding Iranian religious adjustment (Ghorbani et al. 2011; Ghorbani et al. 2016b). Weber, incidentally, also linked the Protestant work ethic with a "systematic self-control" (Weber [1920] 1996, p. 115) that required self-knowledge. Benjamin Franklin, for example, was Weber's exemplar of someone with a Protestant work ethic, and "Franklin's tabulated statistical book-keeping on his progress in the different virtues is a classic example" of self-control combined with self-knowledge (Weber [1920] 1996, p. 124). In short, integrative self-knowledge and self-control should correlate positively with the MWEP factors and with the intrinsic, extrinsic personal, and extrinsic cultural religious orientations.

In addition to examining correlations, sampling procedures made it possible to compare managers with their work staff. Logic alone suggests that a stronger work ethic should lead to better advancement within a work organization, and religious adjustment should also encourage greater success in a formally Islamic society like Iran. The possibility of connecting managerial status with a stronger work ethic also seems implied in Weber's observation that in comparison to Catholics, Protestants with their stronger work ethic were "attracted to a larger extent into the factories in order to fill the upper ranks of skilled labor and *administrative positions*" (Weber [1920] 1996, pp. 38–39, emphasis added). Moreover, higher social classes would more likely include those who have been successful in business; and in Iran, higher social classes display higher MWEP scores (Chanzanagh and Akbarnejad 2012). The overall expectation, therefore, was that managers would score higher than the staff on the MWEP, the intrinsic and extrinsic personal religious orientations, all extrinsic cultural religious orientation factors, self-knowledge, and self-control.

1.2. Hypotheses

In short, this investigation sought to further explore the existence of a religiously-based work ethic within the Iranian Muslim cultural context by testing five sets of hypotheses.

First, MWEP factors should correlate positively with the intrinsic, extrinsic personal, and extrinsic cultural religious orientations.

Second, MWEP factors should correlate positively with the integrative self-knowledge and self-control scales.

Third, integrative self-knowledge and self-control should also correlate positively with intrinsic, extrinsic personal, and extrinsic cultural religious orientations.

Fourth, managers should score higher than their work staff on all these work ethic and religiously related measures.

Finally, of further interest was the possibility that different MWEP factors would make independent contributions to the prediction of the religiously relevant measures. In comparison to correlations, therefore, more robust relationships should appear in multiple regression procedures that used all seven MWEP factors as simultaneous predictors of intrinsic, extrinsic personal and extrinsic cultural religious orientations and of integrative self-knowledge and self-control.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

Included in a sample of 220 Iranians living in Tehran were 38 men and 62 women who worked in a bank and 52 men and 68 women employed in a department store. Of these participants, 89 were managers, 107 were members of the work staff, and 26 failed to self-report their role within the organization. Average age was 33.6 ($SD = 7.9$).

2.2. Measures

All psychological measures appeared in a single questionnaire booklet. Creation of Persian integrative self-knowledge and extrinsic cultural religious orientation measures took place during scale development procedures. Translation of the self-control scale occurred prior to a previous Iranian investigation with the work ethics scale translated in preparations for the present project. In these procedures, one individual translated English statements from an instrument into Persian, and then another translated them back into English. Refinements in the Persian translations resolved any meaningful discrepancies between original and back-translated statements. Participants responded to all questionnaire items using a 1 to 5 Likert scale. The average response per item expressed responding to each instrument. Scales appeared in the questionnaire booklet in the order of their presentation below.

2.2.1. Integrative Self-Knowledge

The integrative self-knowledge measure included 12 statements that reflected attempts of an individual to make sense out of past, present, and desired future self-experience (Ghorbani et al. 2008; $\alpha = 0.75$, $M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.70$). A representative item said, “If I need to, I can reflect about myself and clearly understand the feelings and attitudes behind my past behaviors.”

2.2.2. Work Ethics

Sixty-five statements defined the seven MWEP factors (Miller et al. 2002): self-reliance (10 items, $\alpha = 0.79$, $M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.57$), morality/ethics (10 items, $\alpha = 0.73$, $M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.65$), leisure (10 items, $\alpha = 0.76$, $M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.65$), hard work (10 items, $\alpha = 0.89$, $M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.77$), centrality of work (10 items, $\alpha = 0.83$, $M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.68$), wasted time (8 items, $\alpha = 0.74$, $M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.55$), and delay of gratification (7 items, $\alpha = 0.60$, $M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.59$). Illustrating self-reliance was the claim, “Self-reliance is the key to being successful”. Morality/ethics items said, for example, “One should always take responsibility for one’s actions”. Indicative of leisure was the reverse-scored self-report, “I would prefer a job that allowed me to have more leisure time”. Hard work appeared in such assertions as, “Nothing is impossible if you work hard enough”. A representative expression of the centrality of work asserted, “Even if I were financially able, I would not stop working”. Indicative of wasted time was the statement, “It is important to stay busy at work and not waste time”. Delay of gratification appeared in such statements as, “If I want to buy something, I always wait until I can afford it”.

2.2.3. Religious Orientations

Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) religious orientation scales recorded intrinsic (8 items, $\alpha = 0.70$, $M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.74$), extrinsic-personal (3 items, $\alpha = 0.75$, $M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.06$), and extrinsic-social (3 items, $\alpha = 0.69$, $M = 2.26$, $SD = 0.96$) motivations for being religious. “My whole approach to life is based on my religion” is the statement that Gorsuch and McPherson identified as most indicative of the intrinsic orientation. Most expressive of the extrinsic-personal orientation was the self-report, “What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow”. As modified for a Muslim cultural context, the most representative extrinsic-social item said, “I go to activities associated with my religion because I enjoy seeing people I know there”.

2.2.4. Extrinsic Cultural Religious Orientations

The extrinsic cultural religious orientation scale included factors that measured family and social order (16 items, $\alpha = 0.66$, $M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.45$), disorder avoidance (5 items, $\alpha = 0.50$, $M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.77$), peace and justice (5 items, $\alpha = -0.66$, $M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.88$), and cultural foundations (6 items, $\alpha = 0.40$, $M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.64$). Internal consistencies of these measures were low and very unlike the much stronger data obtained previously with university students and Islamic seminarians in Iran (Ghorbani et al. 2010, 2016a) and with university students in the United States (Watson et al. 2014). Exploratory analyses examined the possibility of improving the psychometrics of these measures

through a removal of items, but meaningful increases in Cronbach α values led to sometimes striking reductions in relationships with other constructs. Statistical analyses, therefore, maintained a focus on the full scales, but the lower internal reliabilities suggest a need for interpretative caution.

With regards to the content of these extrinsic cultural factors, one illustrative family and social order item said, “I am religious because I believe religion is a necessary element in a loving marriage”, and another added “I am religious because I want to make my small contribution to the improved relationships within a religious society”. Exemplifying disorder avoidance was the self-report, “Most of the problems of society result from the failure of people to be sincerely religious”. Peace and justice included such claims as, “My motivation for being religious is a desire to develop a human society that is peaceful, just, and happy”. Reflecting cultural foundations was the assertion, “Underlying my faith is the belief that religion is essential to the moral development of the society”.

2.2.5. Self-Control

The brief version of the (Tangney et al. 2004) self-control scale included 13 statements ($\alpha = 0.82$, $M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.73$). One item said, for instance, “I am good at resisting temptation”.

2.3. Procedure

All procedures conformed to institutional regulations for the conduct of ethical research. Participants volunteered for the project, and all responses were confidential. Administration of questionnaire booklets to groups of varying sizes occurred in the workplace. After a preliminary evaluation of possible gender influences on responding, statistical analyses began with an examination of correlations among measures. Multiple regression procedures then used all seven work ethics factors as simultaneous predictors of the other measures. Finally, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) assessed differences between managers and their staff.

3. Results

3.1 Preliminary Analyses

Gender displayed no association with any work ethics factor. The number of men and women in the manager and staff groups also did not differ, $\chi^2 = 0.00$, $p > 0.95$. Statistical procedures, therefore, ignored this variable in subsequent analyses.

Table 1 summarizes correlations observed among the religious orientation, extrinsic cultural religious orientation, integrative self-knowledge, and self-control measures. The intrinsic religious orientation correlated positively with the extrinsic personal and extrinsic social motivations, with family and social order, and with cultural foundations. The extrinsic personal orientation predicted higher levels of family and social order, and this latter instrument also displayed a direct linkage with cultural foundations. Correlations among disorder avoidance, peace and justice, and cultural foundation were all positive and significant. Integrative self-knowledge exhibited robust positive linkages to higher disorder avoidance, peace and justice, and cultural foundations. Self-control also displayed linkages with higher disorder avoidance, peace and justice, and cultural foundations. Integrative self-knowledge and self-control correlated positively.

Table 1. Correlations among Religious Orientation, Extrinsic Cultural Religious Orientation, Integrative Self-Knowledge, and Self-Control Measures.

Variables	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Intrinsic Orientation	0.60 ***	0.15 *	0.15 *	−0.03	0.12	0.17 *	0.06	0.15 *
2. Extrinsic Personal	−	0.08	0.31 ***	0.01	0.04	0.12	0.10	0.03
3. Extrinsic Social		−	0.13	0.04	−0.04	0.00	0.02	0.03
4. Family and Social Order			−	0.00	−0.02	0.17 *	0.00	−0.03
5. Disorder Avoidance				−	0.43 ***	0.46 ***	0.82 ***	0.39 ***
6. Peace and Justice					−	0.47 ***	0.72 ***	0.58 ***
7. Cultural Foundations						−	0.80 ***	0.46 ***

8. Integrative Self-Knowledge	-	0.57 ***
9. Self-Control		-

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

3.2. Work Ethics Relationships

Table 2 presents relationships among the work ethics measures. Leisure failed to display any relationship with other MWEF factors. Self-reliance and wasted time correlated positively with all but leisure. Hard work, centrality of work, and delay of gratification correlated positively.

Table 2. Correlations among Work Ethics Measures.

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Self-Reliance	-	0.34 ***	-0.08	0.41 ***	0.32 ***	0.44 ***	0.41 ***
2. Morality/Ethics		-	0.08	0.10	0.05	0.36 ***	0.13
3. Leisure			-	0.09	0.00	0.13	-0.03
4. Hard Work				-	0.46 ***	0.43 ***	0.57 ***
5. Centrality of Work					-	0.52 ***	0.27 ***
6. Wasted Time						-	0.35 ***
7. Delay of Gratification							-

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

As Table 3 makes clear, each work ethic measure correlated positively with at least one religious motivation. Especially noteworthy were positive correlations of morality/ethics with all seven religious orientation constructs, integrative self-knowledge, and self-control. Relationships of family and social order were positive and strong with all seven work ethics factors. The extrinsic personal orientation displayed a positive relationship with all but leisure. The one unexpected outcome was the inverse linkage that appeared between self-control and hard work.

Table 3. Relationships of Work Ethics Measures with Religious Orientations, Integrative Self-Knowledge, and Self-Control.

Variables	Work Ethics Measures						
	SR	M/E	LE	HW	CW	WT	DG
Intrinsic Orientation	0.11	0.22 **	0.02	0.04	0.11	0.21 **	0.15 *
Extrinsic Personal Orientation	0.28 ***	0.21 ***	-0.01	0.27 ***	0.19 **	0.34 ***	0.40 ***
Extrinsic Social Orientation	-0.09	-0.08	0.12	0.16 *	0.07	0.03	0.08
Family and Social Order	0.40 ***	0.24 ***	0.38 ***	0.66 ***	0.64 ***	0.60 ***	0.58 ***
Disorder Avoidance	0.08	0.24 ***	0.06	-0.07	-0.05	0.03	0.08
Peace and Justice	0.14 *	0.74 ***	-0.10	-0.08	-0.05	0.13	-0.01
Cultural Foundations	0.21 **	0.42 ***	0.08	0.05	0.17 *	0.32 ***	0.12
Integrative Self-Knowledge	0.12	0.44 ***	0.02	-0.08	-0.01	0.08	0.05
Self-Control	-0.02	0.43 ***	-0.09	-0.20 **	-0.02	0.08	-0.01

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Work ethics measures were self-reliance (SR), morality/ethics (M/E), leisure (LE), hard work (HW), centrality of work (CW), wasted time (WT), and delay of gratification (DG).

Again, multiple regression procedures used all seven work ethics factors as simultaneous predictors of the other constructs. These results appear in Table 4. Most noteworthy were findings that the family and social order and the peace and justice motivations exhibited especially strong associations with work ethics taken as a whole. All but self-reliance contributed to the family and social order effect. Explaining the peace and justice result was a strong positive connection with morality/ethics and an unexpected negative linkage with leisure. Direct associations with wasted time and delay of gratification defined the extrinsic personal outcome. Significant associations that were inverse with self-reliance and direct with hard work contributed to the extrinsic social result. Cultural foundations displayed connections that were positive with morality/ethics and wasted time but

negative with hard work. Morality/ethics was the sole significant determinant of associations observed for the intrinsic orientation and for disorder avoidance. Integrative self-knowledge displayed a positive linkage with morality/ethics and a counterintuitive inverse relationship with hard work. The prediction equation for self-control included morality/ethics as a positive predictor and self-reliance, leisure, and hard work as unexpected negative predictors.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Results with Work Ethics Measures Predicting Religious Orientations, Integrative Self-Knowledge, and Self-Control.

Variables	Multiple		Work Ethics β					
	R ²	SR	M/E	LE	HW	CW	WT	DG
Intrinsic Orientation	0.30 **	−0.03	0.18 *	0.00	−0.14	0.06	0.13	0.16
Extrinsic Personal Orientation	0.46 ***	0.05	0.09	−0.03	−0.01	0.00	0.19 *	0.31 ***
Extrinsic Social Orientation	0.26 *	−0.17 *	−0.05	0.09	0.20 *	0.03	−0.01	0.04
Family and Social Order	0.89 ***	0.02	0.09 *	0.35 ***	0.21 ***	0.38 ***	0.12 **	0.31 ***
Disorder Avoidance	0.29 **	0.05	0.24 **	0.07	−0.17	−0.01	−0.06	0.15
Peace and Justice	0.78 ***	−0.08	0.82 ***	−0.15 **	−0.08	0.03	−0.10	−0.02
Cultural Foundations	0.48 ***	0.02	0.35 ***	0.05	−0.17 *	0.11	0.17 *	0.08
Integrative Self-Knowledge	0.47 ***	0.02	0.46 ***	0.01	−0.18 *	0.06	−0.08	0.10
Self-Control	0.54 ***	−0.17*	0.51 ***	−0.12*	−0.29 ***	0.11	0.01	0.12

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Work ethics measures were self-reliance (SR), morality/ethics (M/E), leisure (LE), hard work (HW), centrality of work (CW), wasted time (WT), and delay of gratification (DG).

3.3. Comparisons between Executives and Staff

A MANOVA uncovered significant overall differences between managers and their staff, Wilks' $\Lambda = 0.70$, $F(16, 177) = 5.81$, $p < 0.001$. Managers scored lower on leisure and higher on morality/ethics, disorder avoidance, peace and justice, cultural foundations, integrative self-knowledge, and self-control (see Table 5).

Table 5. Comparisons between Executives and Staff on Work Ethics, Religious Orientations, Integrative Self-Knowledge, and Self-Control.

Variables	Managers		Staff		F
	M	SD	M	SD	
Self-Reliance	4.00	0.55	4.02	0.56	0.06
Morality/Ethics	4.26	0.77	3.93	0.51	12.44 **
Leisure	2.82	0.60	3.04	0.62	4.98 *
Hard Work	3.58	0.76	3.72	0.81	1.51
Centrality of Work	3.67	0.71	3.84	0.64	3.19
Wasted Time	3.98	0.62	4.08	0.49	1.42
Delay of Gratification	3.59	0.55	3.65	0.61	0.56
Intrinsic Orientation	3.46	0.75	3.31	0.72	2.24
Extrinsic Personal Orientation	3.56	1.02	3.72	1.09	1.09
Extrinsic Social Orientation	2.24	0.83	2.29	1.06	0.21
Family and Social Order	3.52	0.48	3.63	0.43	3.04
Disorder Avoidance	3.48	0.77	3.21	0.75	5.93 *
Peace and Justice	4.05	0.73	3.37	0.84	35.70 ***
Cultural Foundations	3.70	0.61	3.39	0.61	12.40 **
Integrative Self-Knowledge	3.56	0.64	3.10	0.67	23.12 ***
Self-Control	3.70	0.63	3.05	0.64	49.70 ***

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

4. Discussion

Weber's (1920/1996) analysis of the "spirit" of capitalism has led to the more expansive suggestion that religious traditions more generally encourage a work ethic (Collins 1996; McCleary 2007). In the present project, data obtained from Iranian bank and department store employees

further supported the claim that Islam is among those religious traditions. (Feess et al. 2014; Ghalavandi et al. 2013). As hypothesized, intrinsic, extrinsic personal, and extrinsic cultural religious orientations correlated positively with a variety of single MWEF factors. The family and social order and the peace and justice extrinsic cultural motivations exhibited especially strong linkages with all MWEF factors combined. Integrative self-knowledge and self-control served as empirical markers of an Iranian Muslim spiritual ideal called the “perfect man” (Ghorbani et al. 2011), and their strong linkages with all but one of the extrinsic cultural factors confirmed their importance within Iranian religious commitments. Both also displayed strong and expected positive linkages with the MWEF morality/ethics factor. In further evidence of a specifically Muslim work ethic, managers scored higher than staff on morality/ethics, on three of four extrinsic cultural religious orientation factors, and on both markers of the “perfect man.” Overall, the MWEF moral/ethics factor appeared to be centrally important within a Muslim work ethic.

Hypotheses of this project presumed that relatively consistent implications would be obvious within indices of Muslim religious adjustment and within the MWEF factors. Unexpected outcomes pointed toward more complex possibilities. Especially in multiple regression analyses, self-control displayed counterintuitive associations with lower self-reliance, leisure, and hard work. Higher self-control and its strong connection with morality/ethics perhaps reflected a more consolidated and general form of Muslim self-discipline that obviated the need for supplemental dedications to these other dimensions of a work ethic. In multiple regression but not correlation results, unexpected inverse associations also appeared for hard work with cultural foundations and integrative self-knowledge and for leisure with peace and justice. Strong ties with morality/ethics perhaps suppressed the appearance of these negative associations in the correlation data that then became apparent in multiple regression procedures. For the unexpected cultural foundations result, a covariance with wasted time may have been a contributing factor as well. Most generally, these unpredicted outcomes perhaps supplied one more indication of the central influence of morality/ethics in explaining the dynamics of a Muslim work ethic. Finally, against expectations, managers scored lower than staff on leisure. Straightforward economic factors perhaps explained this outcome. Higher paid managers presumably could better afford leisure.

Again, evidence for the existence of the “perfect man” appeared in positive correlations of integrative self-knowledge and self-control with the religious motivations of disorder avoidance, peace and justice, and cultural foundations. Indeed, integrative self-knowledge displayed especially robust linkages that explained over 50% of the variance in these extrinsic cultural measures. Such results conformed with Islamic philosophical arguments in Iran that emphasize the primacy of self-knowledge in the development of the “perfect man” (Shimamoto 2008).

A positive correlation also appeared between the intrinsic religious orientation and self-control, although this outcome was negligible in terms of the variance explained. Indeed, this relationship only achieved statistical significance because of the very large sample size and thus may not have been conceptually noteworthy. In addition, hypothesized connections of the intrinsic orientation with integrative self-knowledge and of the extrinsic personal orientation and family and social order with both integrative self-knowledge and self-control did not appear. Failures to confirm these hypotheses could have reflected atypical characteristics of this sample. In addition to the low extrinsic cultural internal reliabilities, family and social order did not correlate with disorder avoidance and peace and justice, and it exhibited only a weak positive association with cultural foundations. Family and social order in a previous study explained at least 50% of the variance in each of these other extrinsic cultural constructs (Ghorbani et al. 2010). On the other hand, a project-in-progress will examine Iranian university students, Islamic seminarians, and office workers and will demonstrate that the intrinsic but not the extrinsic personal religious orientation correlates positively though not strongly with both integrative self-knowledge and self-control and that both orientations predict greater integrative self-knowledge when Muslim spirituality is high and lower self-knowledge when Muslim spirituality is low (Ghorbani et al. 2017). The suggestion across these studies is that the extrinsic cultural religious orientation may be critically important in efforts to understand the “perfect man” and that the relevance of other religious motivations may be weaker and more complex. Future

research may in fact demonstrate that the intrinsic and extrinsic personal orientations are not especially useful in empirical efforts to clarify the “perfect man”.

Previous Iranian research has described the extrinsic social religious orientation as weak and ambiguous (Ghorbani et al. 2007). Unsurprisingly, therefore, was its failure to correlate with any MWEF factor. Multiple regression results, nevertheless, seemed to offer at least some insight into the ambiguity of this motivation. An inverse association with self-reliance perhaps suggested a maladaptive dependency upon others. A direct connection with hard work may have pointed, instead, toward a more adaptive desire to join with others in productive labor.

4.1. Limitations

Three procedural limitations may be especially noteworthy in suggesting a need for caution in interpreting the results of this investigation. First, and most importantly, internal reliabilities for the extrinsic cultural factors were low and indeed much lower than those observed with previous Iranian and American university student samples (Ghorbani et al. 2010; Watson et al. 2014). Future research will need to determine whether this problem reflected characteristics of an anomalous sample or a more general characteristic of working adults. Until such issues can be resolved, the present data usefully highlighted the extrinsic cultural orientation as an important possible contributor to the Muslim work ethic, but a more precise definition of that influence will require additional research.

Second, this study used a convenience sample of bank and department store employees in Tehran. Such research participants were not necessarily representative of workers in Iran. Findings obtained in Iran also may not generalize to workers in other Muslim societies or to Muslims living as a minority community in other cultural contexts. Additional studies with a more diverse array of Muslim samples is another obvious need.

Finally, conclusions of this project rested upon correlational data that can say nothing definitive about causation. It cannot be said, for example, that Muslim religious commitments caused a work ethic. A stronger work ethic might instead have promoted a better integration of Muslims into a formally Islamic society. Some other unexamined variable might also have produced linkages between non-causally related religious and work ethics variables. Attempts to establish causality will require the use of different research designs.

4.2. Final Considerations

Results of this investigation supplemented recent theoretical developments and a growing body of research to suggest that religions in general have the potential to promote a work ethic (McCleary 2007; Feess et al. 2014). Religion may encourage an asceticism that promotes, for example, a productive use of time, an ability to delay gratification, and belief in work as a good in and of itself. The connection between morality/ethics and religious commitments seemed especially important in the present Iranian sample, and that possibility should also be examined in workers from other societies and other religious traditions.

In multiple regression analyses, self-reliance was the lone MWEF factor that did not serve as a positive predictor of any religious motivation. Self-reliance also displayed a counterintuitive negative linkage with self-control. “Islam” is an Arabic word that literally means “submission”. Social life in a “submissive” Muslim society like Iran may encourage more collectivistic tendencies that are less evident in the more individualistic and presumably more self-reliant West. Relationships of self-reliance and work ethics with collectivism and individualism may, therefore, deserve cross-cultural examination.

This project focused on integrative self-knowledge and self-control as empirical markers of a specifically Iranian Muslim spiritual ideal (Shimamoto 2008; Ghorbani et al. 2011). Strong relationships with disorder avoidance, peace and justice, and cultural foundations supported the Muslim “perfect man” interpretation of these two instruments, and both scales also predicted higher morality/ethics scores. At the same time, however, neither scale displayed noteworthy positive linkages with the intrinsic and extrinsic personal orientations; so, their relevance to Muslim religiosity seemed unexpectedly limited. Integrative self-knowledge and self-control measures expressed these two psychological constructs in nonreligious language, and this fact may have two

implications for future research. First, stronger associations of the “perfect man” with MWEP factors and with Iranian religious commitments might appear if scales expressed integrative self-knowledge and self-control (Ghorbani et al. 2016c) in a more explicitly Muslim language. Second, integrative self-knowledge and self-control may be relevant to work ethics outside of Muslim societies, as Weber’s ([1920] 1996) analysis of Benjamin Franklin suggests. Possible correlations of these integrative self-knowledge and self-control scales with the MWEP, therefore, deserve examination outside of Iran in the more secularized West.

This study pointed toward other variables that deserve additional attention in cross-cultural research. The extrinsic cultural religious orientation validly predicts psychological adjustment and religious commitments in American university students (Watson et al. 2014). The obvious hypothesis is that extrinsic cultural factors will predict a stronger work ethic not only in Iran, but in the United States and perhaps in other societies as well.

In summary, this investigation confirmed the existence of a Muslim work ethic that paralleled Weber’s ([1920] 1996) Protestant work ethic as expressed by the MWEP. Evidence suggested that the intrinsic and extrinsic personal religious orientations were not especially noteworthy in defining that ethic, but findings for the extrinsic cultural orientation made it very clear that the Iranian work ethic has not lost its connections with Islam. Extrinsic cultural data more generally supported the claim that an implicit personality theory within Islam emphasizes society as a greater good that requires personal sacrifice (Smither and Khorsandi 2009). In the West, the work ethic has largely lost its linkages with religion through processes of secularization. Weber famously described the post-Protestant followers of the ethic as “specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart” (Weber [1920] 1996, p. 182), and research increasingly confirms that the Protestant work ethic in the West has become secularized without essential groundings in religion (Ray 1982). An explicitly Muslim work ethic will apparently have foundations in an extrinsic cultural religious orientation and will necessarily be different because “unlike the western concept of work ethics that [is] mainly based on the philosophy of materialism, work ethics in Islam is beyond that philosophy and seen as an act of worshipping Allah” (Kamri et al. 2014, p. 166).

Author Contributions: In this project, Nima Ghorbani and Maryam Karimpour collected data from managers and staff in Tehran. P. J. Watson, with the help of Nima Ghorbani and Zhuo Job Chen, wrote the paper. P. J. Watson was principally responsible for analyzing the data, but the three other co-authors made contributions to this effort as well.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- (Abdi and Azizpour 2013) Abdi, Saleh, and Mansour Azizpour. 2013. Surveying the relationship between human resource strategies and employees work ethic in Iran’s media. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review (OMAN Chapter)* 2: 129–37.
- (Akbarnejad and Chanzanagh 2011) Akbarnejad, Mahdi, and Hamid Ebadollahi Chanzanagh. 2011. Protestant work ethic, class and ethnicity: Case of Iran. *International Conference on Humanities, Society, and Culture* 20: 205–9.
- (Ali 1993) Ali, Al-Qur’ān. 1993. *Al-Qur’ān: A Contemporary Translation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- (Al-Suhrawardy 1905) Al-Suhrawardy, Abdullah Al-Mamun, Sir. 1905. *Sayings of Muhammad*. Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1905. Available online: <http://muslimcanada.org/hadiths.html> (accessed on 25 May 2017).
- (Chanzanagh and Akbarnejad 2012) Chanzanagh, H. Ebadollahi, and M. Akbarnejad. 2012. Work ethic, gender and social class in an Islamic society: A case-study in Iran. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 2: 41–47.
- (Collins 1996) Collins, Randall. 1996. Introduction. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Edited by Dawn Van Dercreek. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company, pp. vii–xxxix.
- (Feess et al. 2014) Feess, Eberhard, Helge Mueller, and Sabrina G. Ruhnau. 2014. The impact of religion and the degree of religiosity on work ethic: A multilevel analysis. *Kyklos* 67: 506–34.
- (Geren 2011) Geren, Brenda. 2011. The work ethic: Is it universal? *Journal of International Business and Cultural Studies* 5: 1–8.

- (Ghalavandi et al. 2013) Ghalavandi, Hasan, Zahra Moradi, and Mohammad Reza Faridi. 2013. The explanation of the relation between religious orientation and work ethic: A case study of Urmia University staff. *International Research Journal of Applied and Basic Sciences* 6: 836–41.
- (Ghorbani et al. 2007) Ghorbani, Nima, P. J. Watson, and Ziasma Haneef Khan. 2007. Theoretical, empirical, and potential ideological dimensions of using Western conceptualizations to measure Muslim religious commitments. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 2: 113–31.
- (Ghorbani et al. 2008) Ghorbani, Nima, P. J. Watson, and Michael B. Hargis. 2008. Integrative self-knowledge scale: Correlations and incremental validity of a cross-cultural measure developed in Iran and the United States. *The Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied* 142: 395–412.
- (Ghorbani et al. 2010) Ghorbani, Nima, P. J. Watson, Jamileh Zarehi, and Kadijeh Shamohammadi. 2010. Muslim extrinsic cultural religious orientation and identity: Relationships with social and personal adjustment in Iran. *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 31: 15–28.
- (Ghorbani et al. 2011) Ghorbani, Nima, P. J. Watson, Zahra Rezazadeh, and Christopher J. L. Cunningham. 2011. Dialogical validity of religious measures in Iran: Relationships with integrative self-knowledge and self-control of the “perfect man” (*ensān-e kāmel*). *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 33: 93–113.
- (Ghorbani et al. 2016a) Ghorbani, Nima, P. J. Watson, Mahmood Amirbeigi, and Zhuo Job Chen. 2016a. Religious schema within a Muslim ideological surround: Religious and psychological adjustment in Iran. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 38: 253–77.
- (Ghorbani et al. 2016b) Ghorbani, Nima, P. J. Watson, Mahsa Omidbeiki, and Zhuo Job Chen. 2016b. Muslim attachments to God and the “perfect man” (*ensān-e kāmel*): Relationships with religious orientations and psychological adjustment in Iran. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 8: 318–29.
- (Ghorbani et al. 2016c) Ghorbani, Nima, P. J. Watson, Fazlollah Tavakoli, and Zhuo Job Chen. 2016c. Self-control within a Muslim ideological surround: Empirical translation schemes and the adjustment of Muslim seminarians in Iran. *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 27: 68–93.
- (Ghorbani et al. 2017) Ghorbani, Nima, P. J. Watson, Hamid Reza Gharibi, and Zhuo Job Chen. 2017. Muslim spirituality and the actualization of religion: Relationships of Muslim experiential religiousness with religious orientations in Iran. Manuscript in preparation.
- (Gorsuch and McPherson 1989) Gorsuch, Richard L., and Susan E. McPherson. 1989. Intrinsic/extrinsic measurement: I/E revised and single-item scales. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28: 348–54.
- (Kamri et al. 2014) Kamri, Nor Azzah, Siti Fairuz Ramlan, and Azharsyah Ibrahim. 2014. Qur’anic work ethics. *Journal of Usuluddin* 40: 135–72.
- (McCleary 2007) McCleary, Rachel M. 2007. Salvation, damnation, and economic incentives. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 22: 49–74.
- (Miller et al. 2002) Miller, Michael J., David J. Woehr, and Natasha Hudspeth. 2002. The meaning and measurement of work ethic: Construction and initial validation of a multidimensional inventory. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 60: 451–89.
- (Ray 1982) Ray, John J. 1982. The protestant ethic in Australia. *The Journal of Social Psychology* 116: 127–38.
- (Shimamoto 2008) Shimamoto, Takamitsu. 2008. The question of “self-knowledge” (*ma’rifat an-nafs*) in Islam: Mortazā Motahharī’s theory of the “perfect man” (*ensān-e kāmel*). *Journal of the Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions* 4: 25–45.
- (Smither and Khorsandi 2009) Smither, Robert, and Alireza Khorsandi. 2009. The implicit personality theory of Islam. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 1: 81–96.
- (Tangney et al. 2004) Tangney, June P., Roy F. Baumeister, and Angie Luzio Boone. 2004. High self-control predicts good adjustment, less pathology, better grades, and interpersonal success. *Journal of Personality* 72: 271–324.
- (Watson et al. 2014) Watson, P. J., Zhuo Chen, and Nima Ghorbani. 2014. Extrinsic cultural religious orientation: Analysis of an Iranian measure in university students in the United States. *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 35: 61–78.
- (Weber [1920] 1996) Weber, Max. 1996. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company. First published 1920.

