

## EFFECT OF CULTURE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE ON WORK ETHICS: THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

This study determines the relationship between organizational climate, culture and Islamic work ethics in the Northern Nigerian setting with the aim to provide a proposed model for the country, since most of the existing literature on work ethics is derived from non-Islamic perspectives. There has been a scarcity of literature, which propose evidence on the way work ethics is to be applied in our society. In Nigeria, the period of the Sokoto caliphate witnessed by Islamic sharia indicates the presence of Islamic work ethics. However, after the Nigerian independence and with the formation of Nigerian constitution, work ethics based on Islamic sharia was abolished, and that led to the practice of unethical behaviors evident in all sectors of the region's development. Therefore, this study aimed at ascertaining the effect of both culture and organizational climate on the work ethics of organizational employees. It is hoped that the practice of work ethics would be based on Islamic perspective. It tried to provide a model that could be useful for work ethics in the Northern region as well as other states of Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Culture, Organizational climate, Islamic Work ethics

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Work ethics is understood to be a set of values and manners associated to the workplace that a society viewed as moral (Sanders, 2004). Islamic work ethics refers to the activities and behaviors of the individual which will make him have a stronger commitment towards the organization's performance compared to others. Its spiritual norms, demarcating between right and wrong, brings the individual closer to God (Allah) (Rokhman, 2010, Gilani-Williams, 2014).

Culture is the entire socially spread behavioral forms, beliefs, institutions and all other results of human work characteristic of a community at a given time (Amro & Bahauddin, 2015). Globally, every country developed or under-developed today, has

diverse cultural behaviors and methods of training their citizenry. However, what is perceived to be ethically and morally good in some societies is actually condemned in other societies (Al-Aidaros, Mohd, Shamsudin, & Idris, 2013). For instance, indecent dressing in Muslim youth especially females is disallowed by Islamic culture, while it is tolerable in the western world (Alkharraz, 2009). In Nigeria, the socio-cultural, political and economic developments have been hijacked by the menace of unethical behaviors (Saleh & Lawal, 2013). These unethical behaviors affect all sectors of economic development (Agbibo, 2012; Imhonopi & Moses, 2013; Ndikumana, 2013; Rasul & Rogger, 2013). There are several forms of unethical economic dealings or cultural conduct that are in strong violation of Islamic work ethics such as interest dealing (*riba*), hoarding, false swearing, inaccurate weight which are being practiced in Nigerian markets (Dogarawa, 2013). Notwithstanding the relevance of work ethics in all dealings in Nigeria, there has been little contribution to the area. In view of the foregoing, this study seeks to examine the effect between culture, organizational climate and Work ethics in Islamic perspectives with a view to address the issues of non-compliance with Islamic work ethics and adding to the body of knowledge on the area as well.

The paper will be divided into three sections, while section one provides introduction into the study, section two discusses the review of past studies then, development of the conceptual framework of the study would be discussed. Finally, a conclusion and recommendation will be captured in the final section.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses culture, organizational climate and work ethics based on past studies, as well as Al Qur'an and Hadiths. Other sub-sections discuss the effect of culture and organizational climate on the work ethics. Several studies were conducted on culture in diverse contexts and jurisdictions, in the Hadith and the Holy Qur'an. Work ethics has been discussed in the literature for different types of business and dealings based on the conventional and Islamic perspectives.

### 2.1 Culture

Culture developed from Latin word "cultura" which is derived from "colere" meaning "cultivation" or tending. From the meaning in English Oxford Dictionary of 1510, culture was meant to be "manners" or "training of the minds". From the anthropological view, however, culture is defined as 'the way of life of a specific group' (Philips, 2006). Furthermore, culture is seen as the total of socially transmitted behavioral patterns, beliefs, arts, institutions and all other products of human work

typical of a community at a given time, (Amro & Bahauddin, 2015). Culture is also defined as man-made characteristic of human environment (Philips, 2006). In addition, Shaffer (2005), view culture to be “a group of forces that defines the main self-identity of a specific group of people that comprises the factors of ethnicity, religion, history, and civilization”. Arslan (2009) further consider cultural knowledge as rooted in the culture, and conceded on through symbols, language, and rituals. Most often, to interpret a situation, individuals depend on tradition, upon assumptions, norms, values, and beliefs. Ismaeel and Katharina, (2012), submitted that religion is one of the most influential forces that affects cultural behavior.

Roomi (2011) opined that the development of women-owned enterprises is affected negatively by socio-cultural factors in Pakistan. However, according to Tlaiss, (2015), Islamic culture played a positive role in the significant attitude of Muslim women entrepreneurs in adhering to Islamic work ethics in the four countries around Middle East. In Nigeria, it was revealed that there are various cultural influences among the three major ethnic groups which include Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo (Aluko, 2003). The study further discovered that one of the tribes is less hostile at work and more religious, while the other one is more hostile with high prominence on money than a relationship exists between culture and ethical behaviors of managers (Okpara (2014). He further found that, some of the determining factors of the cultural influence of the Nigerian Manager include loyalty to the family and the community, long-term family commitment and respect for elders.

## 2.2 Islamic work ethics

The concept of Islamic work ethics (IWE) has its origin more than 1400 years ago. Its existence is inscribed in the Qur'an and proven by the actions and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) (Aldulaimi, 2016; Ali & Al-Owaihian, 2008). Hayati and Caniogo (2012) believed that Islamic work ethics covers potentials in one's behavior at work, which incorporates his dedication, effort, responsibility, cooperation, creativity and social relations. While Kumar and Rose (2010) opined that Islamic work ethics to be as encouraging consultations and cooperation, as well as being an avenue of addressing problems and avoiding many mistakes in meeting one's needs in life. Islamic work ethics is further believed to be the expectations from the relationship between individuals themselves and their attitude at work in accordance to Islamic tenets and values (Usman, 2015). Essentially, Islamic work culture has multi-dimensional relations with several aspects of life, including social, political and economic aspects (Ahmad, Rofie, & Salim, 2016). Ahmad et al. (2010) stressed that the knowledge of ethics is significantly consistent in Islam because of its origin in *iman* (faith). It is the believers' *iman to taqwa* (fear and respect of Allah), that will

give the seller in the market the courage to reveal the faults in the stuffs he is selling. Moreover, a debtor may settle his debt earlier than the due date while a lender may be lenient or ready to compromise on the debt of those who may not afford to settle their payments, all for their desire to please Allah (SWT).

### 2.3 Culture and Islamic Work Ethics

Culture, pleasures, science, art, and literature and are not sufficient to be contented by man in his nature (Al-Qaradawi, 1995), thus, it is only his belief in the almighty Allah that can provide peace to the mind and heart as well as security. As a global religion, Islam brought most of the believers of many ethnicities and nationalities to accept the Islamic culture. Also, with the evolution of the Islamic empire, there is widespread of knowledge amongst the Muslims leading to their exposure to the culture of other Nations they conquer (Tracy, 2015).

Culture has been considered to be among the most important factors that have impacted on ethical decision-making of organizations (Okpara, 2014). Almoharby (2011) cited Mittelstaedt (2002), stating “that cultural beliefs of market participants are controlled by religion, and the boundaries of social behaviors acceptable in the market are also defined by religion”.

Islam identifies the different forms of people’s culture, language, food and dress, which are regarded as Allah’s abundances to mankind (Al-Qur’an 30:22). Thus, any form of culture that opposes the teachings of Islam is rejected (Al-Qur’an 4:115,). In another verse, Al-Qur’an says:

*“O mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted”* (Al-Qur’an 49:13).

Islam believed that no culture in the world is superior to Islamic culture. Qur’an decrees:

*“You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah”* (Al-Qur’an 3:110)

Islam is a complete religion that was revealed from God with full guidance. As such, any culture initiated from the experimentation of any human being can never compete with it. Qur’an states:

*“This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed my favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion”* (Al-Qur’an 5:3).

Culture has a great effect on the attitudes of individuals positively and or negatively. Moreover, from the prophetic hadith, it was specified that everyone is born in a moral Islamic shape, but the society he lives will change him to his or her individual status. This is evident in hadith No: 2658 narrated by Sahih Muslim that AbūHurairah reported on the saying of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH):

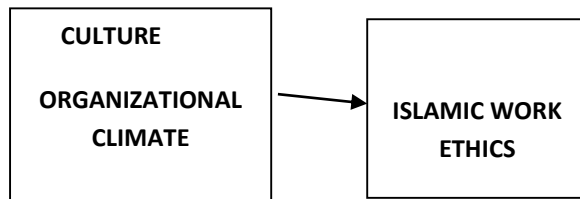
“There is no child who is not born in a state of Fitrah (instinct) and then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian.” (Muslim, 2007).

#### **2.4 Organizational Climate and Ethics**

Schneider and Rentsch (1988) describes organizational moral climate to be “a mechanism which helps the individuals to understand organizational policies, procedures, and reward systems”. Moreover, ethical climate refers to individual beliefs about organizational standards, practices, procedures, and ethical values (Schwepker, 2001). Several studies have been carried out and mostly argued that climate for ethics significantly impact on the way workforces appraise and behave (Valentine, 2010). The study further opined that being compatible with organizational needs, organizations must create an ethical environment which may increase employees’ job satisfaction. Kohlberg’s (1981) theory believed that individuals’ behavior may be persuaded by three basic types of ethical climate which are egoistic, benevolent and principled climate. Egoistic climate refers to giving importance to organizational interest, benevolent refers to individual’s own interest, while principled climate refers to complying with rules and regulation (Coldwell *et al.*, 2008). According to Trevino (1986) and Koh and Boo (2001), ethical climate in organizational setting offers common norms which leads employee’s behavior. Several empirical studies have recognized that organizational ethical climate could possibly affect the job satisfaction of workers. Essentially, it has proven that two or more climate types may coexist in an organization (Deshpande, 1996; Joseph and Deshpande, 1997; Koh and Boo, 2001). However, some researchers could not find such a relationship by testing the hypothesis on organizational climate for ethics and job satisfaction (Sims and Kroeck, 1994).

#### **2.5 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is presented below, Culture and organizational climate are the independent variables while Islamic work ethics is the dependent variable.



### Conceptual framework

According to Okpara (2014), culture has been defined to be an important factor that have strong impact on the ethical decision making of organizations. A business organization needs information about the cross-cultural ethics differences (Forsyth & O’Boyle, 2010). This is because cultural norms, religious dealings and what is in actual practice differ broadly and most often contradictory (Roomi, 2011). For instance, a frequent happening in some culture, people only care about increasing their income at the expense of the company as a whole and others, thus, leading to unethical behavior in their businesses (Forsyth & O’Boyle, 2010).

While from the Islamic viewpoints, cultural attitude has a great influence on Islamic work ethics, individual perform positively or negatively in business transactions in accordance with their cultural attitude. The Glorious Al-Qur’an and the Sunnah of the prophet (PBUH) emphasis on both the positive and negative impacts of culture on work ethics. For instance, one of the determinants of the negative influence, is impatience as well as greediness of individuals to acquire additional wealth to take advantage of others, making them behave unethical. Al-Qur’an says:

*“Truly man was created very impatient. Fretful when evil touches him. And niggardly when good reaches him. Not so those devoted to prayer. Those who remains steadfast to their prayer. And those in whose wealth is a recognized right. For the (needy) who asks and him who is prevented (for some reason from asking). And those who hold the truth of the day of judgement”* (Al-Qur’an 70:19-26).

The instantaneous culture of a man to become very rich also influences his ethical actions. Al-Qur’an prescribes:

*“And a man is ever hasty”* (Al-Qur’an 17:11) *“But you (men) love the present life of this world. And neglect the hereafter”* (Al-Qur’an 75:20-21).

Again, there is a culture that controls the behaviors of human in performance of his activities which is the acquisition of power, and that makes him transgress. Al-Qur’an prescribes:

*“Nay, verily man does transgress (in disbelief and evil deed). Because he considers himself self-sufficient. Surely, unto your Lord is the return”.* (Al-Qur’an 96: 6-8)

The lack of awareness about the implication of immoral acts is another reason. Al-Qur’an dictates further:

*“Truly, We did offer Al-Amanah (the trust of moral responsibility or honesty and all the duties which Allah has ordained) to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it (i.e. afraid of Allah’s torment, but man bore it. Verily, he was unjust (to himself) and ignorant (of its results))”* (Al-Qur’an 33:72).

The positive aspect of cultural influence include, Trustworthiness (*Amanah*) which is part of the Islamic culture that influences Islamic work ethics. Being trustworthy necessitates being fair and honest in one’s business dealings, as well as being punctual and honoring commitments, trust and keeping promises. Al-Qur’an states further:

*“Those who are faithfully true to their amanah (all the duties which God has ordained, honesty, moral responsibility and trusts, etc.) and to their covenants.... these indeed are the inheritors. Who shall inherit paradise. And dwell there in forever* (Al-Qur’an 23:8, 23:10-11)

Islam instruct all Muslims to hold people’s right with high esteem. Islam also condemns all vices and corruption. Qur’an states:

*“Verily, God does command you to render back your trusts to whom they are do”.* (Al-Qur’an 4:58)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warns against upholding the rights of others when he said: “God says ‘There are three people whom I shall be their opponent on the day of judgment: A man who was given something in My name and then betrays; A man who sells-off a free man (as a slave) and consumes the price; and a man who hires a laborer, make use of his service then does not give him his wages”.

(Saheeh Al-Bukhari)

When an individual possesses modesty or shyness, he does not behave badly to his fellow human beings. A modest person always treats other people fairly in any aspect. Prophet (PBUH) dictates:

*“Modesty is part of faith (Bukhari& Muslim). He also says: “Iman has sixty odd or seventy odd branches. The uppermost of all these is the testimony of faith: La ilahailallah (There is no true God but Allah), while the last of them is the removal of*

*harmful object from the road. And shyness is a branch of iman*".(Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

When a person lacks shyness, he behaves differently in business. Prophet (PBUH) says: "Indeed from the teachings of the first Prophets which has reached you is 'if you do not have shyness then do as you please'" (Al Bukhari)

Honesty characterized the culture of a true Islamic society that does not dishonesty in all forms. As such, Islam emphasizes honesty in all dealings. Al-Qur'an dictates:

*"O you, who believe, fear God and be with those who are true (in words and deeds)"* (Al-Qur'an 9:119)

The effect of honesty is reflected in the Prophetic tradition narrated by Saheeh Al Bukhari:

"Truthfulness leads to the righteousness, and righteousness leads to paradise. In addition, a man keeps on telling the truth until he becomes a truthful person. Falsehood leads to wickedness and evil-doing, and wickedness leads to the (Hell) fire, and a man may keep on telling lies till he is written before God, as a liar",

The culture of Muslims is also characterized by chastity. Chastity preserves the integrity of Muslims and the society they live. Al-Qur'an commands every Muslim to control oneself in words and in actions to be recognized as good people in the society. Qur'an says:

*"Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts)"* (Al-Qur'an 24:30).

Prophet (PBUH) says:

*"Whoever guarantees for me (that) what is between his legs and what is between his two beards (i.e between the right- and left-hand sides of his beards; meaning his mouth not performing any act of indiscretion), I guarantee for him paradise"* (Bukhari).

Accordingly, for a Muslim to obtain Allah's pleasure, he must control all his words and actions in the conduct of his business process. Thus, chastity influences Muslim actions on Islamic work ethics.

According to Valentine *et al.* (2010), top management in organizations express growing interest to develop a positive working environment which is beneficial for organizations and the employees' as well. Top management is considered as right and only authority for decision making in many organizations, while individuals are required to fulfill each directive according to their manager's instruction even if it



contradict their basic work values on what is right or wrong (Koh & Boo, 2001). Organizations which presents authoritative culture are the source of some unethical behavior through unfair means. Mayer *et al.* (2009) reported that there are two schools of thought. One school of thought are of the opinion that top management significantly impacts on organizational ethics and the behavior of individuals. On the other hand, another school of thought claims that lower management has more influence because of their familiarity and close interaction with employees.

Consequently, it shows a typical behavior among top management and supervisors as models for ethical behavior. These ethical values must be appropriate with the employee's religious beliefs and hopes to produce the right desire for the employee to put in their best to achieve organizational values and goals (Komari & Djafar, 2013).

In view of the above, content analysis was used to describe the effect of culture and organizational climate on work ethics, from the Islamic perspective. Islamic work ethics relates to the activities and behaviors of a person that will make him have a higher commitment towards the organization's performance compared to others. It is referred to as spiritual norms, describing between the right and the wrong, bringing individual closer to God (Allah) (Rokhman, 2010, Gilani-Williams, 2014).

### 3.0 CONCLUSION

There are several studies on work ethics for decades. In Nigeria, work ethics has been practiced since the past sharia era after the establishment of the Sokoto caliphate. Muslims workforce during the caliphate era observed the work ethics. The most important part of work ethics was founded from the Al-Quran and Hadiths. The holy Quran presented and cited ethics frequently. Moreover, numerous hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) discussed on work ethics for Muslims. Also, many Islamic scholars around the world also explained the meaning of work ethics. It is noteworthy that most of the literature on work ethics presented in this paper has been viewed from the Islamic perspective.

While work ethics is a vital tool for more study, there is scanty, or lack of western literature on it, particularly in Nigeria. Some reasons could be believing that the issue of religion to be a sensitive issue by some scholars. Future studies may consider the work ethics as presented in the books of Sokoto caliphate, as well as the practice of work ethics in the period. These studies could also look at the influence of the management on work ethics.

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