

Work Ethics and Quality Workplace: An Observation from the Conventional and Islamic Application

Khatijah Othman¹
Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

Abstract

In general, good work ethics is always being assumed as a good conduct of employees' behavior within the workplace. However, Islamic work ethics having much deeper values and goals to achieve both in this world and hereafter in comparison to the conventional work ethics. Whilst Islamic workplace quality, on the other hand, differ from what the conventional meant. Therefore, this paper intends to highlight the meaning, characteristics, and the application of Islamic work ethics in the organization. Through this study, the researcher at the same time addressed the meaning of Islamic workplace quality and analyze its relations to how Islamic ethical conduct helps to improvise and realize the existence of Islamic workplace quality. This study is based on the secondary resources gained from library research and web based journals and articles. The finding of this study shows that the workplace quality can be built with the essence of Islamic akhlaq and adab (ethical good conduct) which contain the spirits, understandings and practices of struggle and responsibility, knowledge development and knowhow, excellence at work, justice, truthfulness, trustworthiness and amanah. The current conceptual analysis is hoped to be able to contribute to the understanding of the concept of Islamic work ethics and its applications in the Islamic organization, especially to meet the vision on realizing the Islamic workplace quality in the contemporary highly competitive economy.

Keywords: Islamic ethical conduct, Islamic quality workplace, Islamic values, conventional work ethic, Islamic organization

INTRODUCTION

The historical evolvement of human civilization and the development of the human being from the Western perspective shows that the Greek word for work was 'ponos', taken from the Latin 'poena', which means 'sorrow'. In this association, old Greeks, viewed work as a curse, and manual labor meant for slaves (Porter, 2004; Addis, 2010). The Greeks believed that a person's

¹ Corresponding author : Khatijah Othman, Faculty of Leadership and Management, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, e-mail : khatijah@usim.edu.my.

wisdom and morality were directly proportional to the amount of time he or she devoted to leisure. In this relation, the great philosopher Aristotle, even seen work as a corrupt waste of time that would make a citizen's pursuit of virtue more difficult (Addis, 2010). On the other hand, Porter, (2004) viewed on the basis of historical origination that the meaning of work has varied across time and culture. From this understanding, his elaboration on the meaning of work is associated with work as a curse, a calling, a social obligation, a natural activity, a means to a better life, or simply what we do because we have to.

The Romans considered hired labor or handicrafts to be vulgar, dishonorable work (Porter, 2004; Addis, 2010) and the work supposed to be done only by the slave (Addis, 2010). Then a new perspective on work evolved, as a result of the political and religious upheaval in Western Europe in the 16th century. At that time, it was believed that people could serve God through their work; that profession was useful, and that work was the universal foundation of society (Addis, 2010). Another positive aspect crept into attitudes about work; that earnings through work were acceptable to the extent that it prevents on being reliant to others for basic needs of life (Porter, 2004). It was accepted that the work people did depend on their social class. However, people were expected to work diligently in an occupation that was appropriate for the class into which they were born and were not to aspire to a trade or profession that was above their rank (Addis, 2010).

In this inference and certainly not to disregard the attribute of Weber's work on the 'Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalist' produced in 1904-1905. It marked the development of traditional work ethics based on the Protestant religious belief and contributed a bigger part to the concept of organizational work ethics that is being practiced at this current time. Cherrington (1980) emphasized that the essence of Protestant work ethic contains elements of hard work, long hours with little or no time for leisure, pride in the work and a job well done, an orientation toward achievement as well as acquired wealth, along with frugality, thrift and wise investment. Nevertheless, after the colonization of America, the ideals of the Protestant work ethic were retained with less emphasis on the individual self but emphasis more on national virtues and social duty without particular reference to religious doctrine (Porter, 2004). In the light of Weber's thesis, M. Arslan (2001) summarized five underlying dimensions of the Protestant ethics which are: (i) hard work brings success, (ii) work as an end itself, (iii) money and time saving, (iv) internal locus of control, and (v) negative attitude to leisure.

The Meaning of Conventional Work Ethic (CWE)

On the meaning of ethics, Wines and Napier (1992) defined ethics as the activity of applying moral precept to concrete problems. Whereby the application of moral codes becomes complicated as individuals begin to evaluate values, which were perceived as 'good' or 'accepted' in an abstract manner whenever applied to a specific issue. With this, the application of principle ethics is expected to produce complicated outcome and may differ across cultures. Therefore, ethics, according to western sociologists is relatively dependent on individual perspective in order to determine what is good or bad and right or wrong (Shukri Ahmad & Musa Yusuf Owoyemi, 2012).

In noting the meaning of work and work ethic from the modern perspective, Heelas (2002:78) ascribed that work ethics is an attribute to the value to work, the means to some ends. Miller et al. (2001) defined work ethic as a commitment to the value and importance of hard work among the potential employees. At the same time work ethic also can be considered as a belief in the moral benefit of work and its ability to enhance one's character (Addis, 2010). Whilst Saks et al., (1996) viewed work ethic as a critical personal attribute that may strongly predict the propensity of workers to identify their work. Addis (2010) supplemented that a high value placed on having a strong work ethic in conventional work ethic (CWE) is a relatively recent development, for the concept has had a negative connotation throughout the medieval history. In this regard, Rice (1999) stated that, over the centuries, Western developed the 'value-free society' whereby the focus was exclusively on the mechanics of economies. So post-modernization saw a new phase of a moral dimension in business.

Hence, to surmise, a strong work ethic is created from a set of values based on commitment and diligence of the individual worker concerned. This relation has been emphasized in practiced and philosophical idea altogether at the points of socio-economic activities, organizational ethics, and liberal economies, which, for example, has been raised and discussed by Saks et al. (1996), Heelas (2002), Miller et al. (2001), Addis (2010), and etc.'s. Indeed work ethics is considered very important in building good image of the organization. Without considering the organization, size, area, volume of production or profit earn or not. However, in this issue, Beckett and Maynard (2013) interject that the discussions of values and ethics must include the issue of religion since religion for many people is a source of value. Therefore, many questions arise in this ethical-religious linkage in CWE. What is the relationship of ethics, value and religion? Is religion considered as important element in ethical conduct? Does being ethical mean religious?

In this regards many Muslim scholars are aware of the current state of work ethics and this realization has been postulated amongst those are by Abbas J. Ali (1988), Rafik Issa Beekun (1997), Rice (1999), Rice & Mohammed Al-Mossawi (2002), Rafik Issa Beekun & Jamal Badawi (2005), Abbas J. Ali & Abdullah Owaihan (2008), Riham Ragab Rizk (2008) and others that most studies on business ethics in general and the work ethic in particular, have been based on the experiences of Western concept and understanding. What about the Islamic work ethics (IWE)? What is the linkage of religious and ethics in Islam? Does applying Islamic work ethics mean religious? What is the role function of IWE in the organization? Does it capable in supporting its application to realize the objective of Islamic activity? And whether the Muslim understand its real conception and able to apply it in reality? Hence there forth, the focus of this paper is to discuss on the issue of religiosity and ethics within the perspective of CWE and IWE. But the emphasized will be more on IWE since ethics in Islam is part of religion. It is not a separate entity and the model shown is considered as good example in practicing ethics in business both for the Islamic and conventional organization. For the purpose to clarify and answer those questions lets understand the meaning of IWE, its characteristics and application. And thereafter, the comparison between both IWE and CWE is conducted to analyze and to see how it differ in its conception and application.

The Meaning of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE)

Within an Islamic context, the term most closely related to ethics in the Quran is *khuluq*. At the same time there are many other Arabic (Islamic) terminology that are interchangeably used in the Quran, to describe the concepts of morals or positive values that are directly and indirectly related to the ethics or *khuluq*: such as *khayr* (goodness), *birr* (righteousness), *qist* (equity), *'adl* (equilibrium and justice), *haqq* (truth and right), *ma'ruf* (known, approved), and *taqwa* (piety) (Rafik Issa Beekun, 1997).

Work in Islam is considered as a virtue in light of man's needs in balancing between the individual and society's needs. Work enables man to be independent and is a source of self-respect, satisfaction, fulfillment (Abbas J. Ali, 1988), to advance societal welfare and reaffirm faith (Abbas J. Ali & Abdullah Owaihan, 2008). On the other hand, Rice (1999) emphasized on duties or works in IWE that fulfilled the self-interest and undoubtedly will safeguard the right of everyone in the society. In this connotation, Abbas J. Ali (2011) defined IWE as the application of values to human actions and behaviors. It deals with the issue of right and wrong, morality of conduct and relationships in the market place. In similar note, Rafik Issa Beekun (1997) defined IWE as a set of moral principles that are able to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong in accordance to Islamic principles. Abbas J.

Ali (2011) added that each religion that exist in this world has its own set of values and beliefs which became a determining factors of what is considered right and wrong. In this notion, Muhammad Asad (2007) further elaborated that the concept of right and wrong in Islam, do not change from case to case or from time to time but retain their validity for all times in all conditions. Contrariwise, the concept of right and wrong established by human thoughts that being practiced in CWE is essentially subjective and strongly influenced by time and environment.

Islam therefore has its own concept of work ethics that is derived from the Quran and sunnah and hadith of the prophet Muhammad SAW (Abbas J. Ali, 1988), (Rafik Issa Beekun, 1997), (Rice, 1999), (Rafik Issa Beekun & Jamal Badawi, 2005), (Muhammad Asad, 2007), (Mohamed Branine & Pollard, 2010), (Wahibur Rokhman, 2010). In actual fact many verses of the Quran speak about justice and honesty in trade, courtesy and fairness in employment relationships, and also encourage humans to learn new skills and to strive to do good work that benefits both the individual and the community (Mohamed Branine & Pollard, D., 2010). As the Prophet Muhammad SAW words;

'The most perfect believer in respect of faith is he who is best of them in manners' (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 40, Number 4665).

Hence, morality is one the most important components of true faith. It is therefore an important religious duty of every Muslim to learn about and practice to the very best that they can afford. And the best role model of ethical and morality is our Prophet Muhammad SAW, his behaviour and exemplary as confirmed by Surah Al-Ahzab; verse 21 (33:21);

"You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern of (conduct) for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the praise of Allah".

Abbas J. Ali (2011) stressed that, in Islam, religion/faith remain as determining force in ethics formation and application. In this notion, it has been beautifully summarized by Abbas J. Ali & Abdullah Owaihan (2008) that, in Islam, work is viewed not as an end itself, but as a means to foster personal growth and social relations. Unlike CWE, IWE emphasizes more on intention rather than the result. Allah SWT is the sole creator of the universe and as His servant, Muslim should obey his instruction.

THE CHARACTERISTICS AND APPLICATION OF ETHICS

Work ethics is associated with the economic and non-economic activities. It contains the value in motivating workers and necessary connection between economic activities and cultural values (Heelas, 2002: 78). Nevertheless Riham Ragab Rizk (2008) pointed that, the adoption of a comprehensive corporate ethics program should instigate from the top management and it should be integrated with the system of rewards and punishments. However why the application of ethics is important to all workers and organizations? For the social workers, for example, one of the general purposes of work ethics is for the (NASW, 2008) general public able to hold on the belief that social work profession is accountable and it can reflect the profession's core values of enduring commitment in helping vulnerable and oppressed people (Reamer, 1998).

The Application of Conventional Work Ethics (CWE)

Conventional work ethics (CWE) derived from the values practice in the business, organization, workplace and the society as a whole. Beckett & Maynard (2013) described values on the notion of preference or choice over something important. They further opined that no value is better than another, but different culture uses different sets of criteria due to different circumstances and different traditions. Riham Ragab Rizk (2008) observed that the application of conventional ethics based on the general types of behavior, the intrinsically right or wrong. Right action can be classified based on its conformance to the set of moral rules, and wrong action means it is in opposition to the standard moral set. Riham Ragab Rizk (2008) discovered that this approach is called 'deontology'; derived from the Greek word and places emphasis on duties. Deontologists based their judgments on a set of 'moral rights', where individual has the right to be treated in a way that ensures his dignity, respect, and autonomy. And from 'deontological approach' mentioned, two operational models emerge:

- i. The Golden Rule model, derived from the New Testament, which states that one should treat other people in the same way he/she would want to be treated; and
- ii. The rights driven or Kantian Model, named from Immanuel Kant, which rests on the assumption that every person has basic rights in a moral universe, and accordingly, an action, is morally correct if it minimizes the violation of the rights of all stakeholders.

From conventional point of view and the origin of work ethics and the evaluation of what is right and what is wrong, the author choose to put forward the idea stated by Beckett and Maynard (2013); on the main approaches to evaluate what is considered as ethically right or wrong from four main characteristics underlined as follows:

- i. Duties and rights: meaning that by just becomes a human being, it entitled human to expect certain treatment from others and required to treat other human being likewise.
- ii. Consequences: means that the rightness or wrongness of an action should be judged by weighing up its positive and negative consequences.
- iii. Virtues: means the behavior that make a human being grow and thrive as a human being. It is about good human qualities, for example, trustworthiness and courage.
- iv. Structure and power: means on the relationship of the rightness and wrongness of actions to politic of interest on ‘whose interest would this serve’?

Whilst from the modern organizational perspective, (Addis, 2010) underlined four D’s to describe strong CWE into the practice of the action plan. Instead of elaborating on the personal features, he went further to address the mission and action plan of the organization rather than individual. Though, his focus mainly concentrated on strategic ethical organizational commitment rather than individual ethics. Those characters include; (i) ‘desire’ on how important you accomplish your mission or goals? (ii) ‘dedication’ to turn desire into action and how dedicated are you to your goals and dreams? (iii) ‘determination’ to represents the intensity with which you are dedicated to the accomplishment of your goals. (iii) ‘discipline’ is action-oriented. It decides how one does achieve the goals by staying with that strategy.

Miller et al. (2001) posits that work ethic reflects a constellation of attitudes and beliefs pertaining to work behavior. The characteristics construct contained multidimensional, motivational construct reflected in behavior and not necessarily tied to any set professions and religious beliefs. Beckett and Maynard (2013) highlighted that doctors, lawyer, accountant, social workers, and another professional occupation are all having their own code of professional ethics in their organization. These ethical guidelines set a specific framework of expectations in a specific field of work. Thus, conventional ethics shows it’s important for the business activities and in the organizational applications. However, the application of organizational work ethics is keep increasing in crisis as it is seen as a means in supporting the activities of privatize consumers (Heelas, 2002: 86). In this notion, so many writers have highlighted the fact that work ethic is declining both in America as well as at another industrialized countries.

The Application of Islamic Work Ethics

Abbas J. Ali (1988) noted that, in the opposite to Christianity/Protestant, Islam views that man’s economic activities as an obligation. The Quran

forbade lying, stealing, adultery, and murder, and every act that would remove righteousness and bring evil, whether it benefits the perpetrator or not, it is forbidden in Islam (Riham Ragab Rizk, 2008). The Quran explicitly state in Surah Al-Mutaffifin, verse 1-4 (83:1-4);

“To those that deal in fraud -- Those who, when they have to receive by measure, from men, exact full measure. But when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due. Do they not think that they will be called to account?”

And Muslim must practice the attribute of honest and trustworthy/‘amanah’; for example giving full measure and weight in business interaction, not cheating. Quran; Surah Hud, verse 85 (11:85) stated that;

“And my people! give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due: commit not evil in the land with intent to do mischief”.

The Quran designates the Muslim community as witness before God, as well as mankind, in regard to the espousal of justice (Riham Ragab Rizk, 2008). In Surah An-Nisa’, verse 135 (4:135); Allah SWT warned:

“O you who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do”.

Islamic work ethic advocates the importance of performing one’s work to the best of ability for the pleasure of God (Norshidah Mohamed et al., 2010), not for one’s individual satisfaction alone. So on the perspective of man’s relation to Allah SWT, IWE (Muhammad Asad, 2007) laid down a definite scheme of behavior to be adopted by all Muslim. The principle guidance on the characteristics in Islamic work ethics has been underlined in the Quran, Surah An-Najm, verse 39 (53:39);

“That man can have nothing but what he strives for”.

It is about the struggle, the effort put by Muslim on certain economic activities. It bring the meaning that, for those who struggle, with the blessing of Allah SWT, He will make it possible for man to earn it. However for those who lazy and show no effort, nothing will come directly to his feet. Work

means struggle and putting effort into something that producing benefit for individual and society. On the same account, Abbas Ali and Abdullah Owaihan (2008) stated that IWE specifically prohibits dishonesty in all kinds of dealing with other human being. Allah SWT warns this kind of attitudes to Muslims in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 188 (2:188);

“And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for the judges, with intent that you may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of (other) people’s property”.

In this respect, Rafik Issa Beekun and Jamal Badawi (2005), supplicated three main criteria on IWE namely justice and balance, trust, and benevolence. Just is an essential behavior for all Muslim. This affirmation is in Quranic verse Surah Al-Ma’idah, verse 8 (5:8);

“O you who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah, for Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do”.

The word ‘just’ is mentioned in the Quran as ‘*adl*’ and this lead to ‘balance’ behavior. It means doing things in a proportionate manner, avoiding extremes. Trust relates to the concept of ‘*amanah*’ and since man is God’s trustee on earth, man must bear responsibility for all his actions. As stated in the Quran, Surah Al-Muddaththir, verse 38 (74:38);

“Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds”.

Whereas, the concept of benevolence ‘*ihsaan*’ means excellence, also appropriate being practiced at work. Thus, Islam stresses not only productivity but also excellence at work. In this relation the Quran emphasizes that reward should be commensurate with effort as stated in the Quran Surah Al-Imran, verse 136 (3:136);

“For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens with rivers flowing underneath, an eternal dwelling; how excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)!”.

In Surah Al-Zalzalah, verses 7-8, (99:7-8);

*“Then shall anyone who has done an atom’s weight of good, see it!
And anyone who has done an atom’s weight of evil, shall see it”.*

In Surah Al-Fath, verse 19, (48:19);

“And many gains will they acquire (besides): and Allah is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom”.

In those verses mentioned, Allah SWT promised the rewards to those who even done a very tiny weight of goodness and similar to those doing bad and evil, they will get punishment. The verses had been elaborated in such a way it were able to be understood by all human being. Therefore in improving one's self, Muslim are highly encouraged to seeking knowledge in everything they do as to ensure that all action must be done on the basis of knowledge, skill and knowhow not out of ignorance and guessing. This has been reminded in the Quran in Surah Ta Ha, verse 114, (20:114);

“High above all is Allah, the King, the Truth! Be not in haste with the Qurán before its revelation to thee is completed, but say, “Oh my Lord! advance me in knowledge.”

Therefore, it is crucial for Muslim in putting efforts in seeking knowledge for self- development and tools in decision making. The reason is, in Islam, all economic activities and business dealing, (Rice, 1999), the goals are not primarily a materialist. As stressed by Rafik Issa Beekun and Jamal Badawi (2005), Islam recognizes the fact that the firm has the right to make a profit, but not at the expense of the claims of various other stakeholders. From the above discussions on the principles and characteristics of Islamic work ethics underlined by the Quran, the summarizations of important verses in Islamic ethics that enact as a guideline of Islamic ethical characteristics are built. It noted on the Islamic ethical principles underlined in the Quran that are strongly practical, relevant, substantial to all people, without considering boundary and place and applicable from the time of Quranic revelation until now and even to the day of doomsday. The Islamic ethical characteristics at the very least must contain the principles of struggle and responsibility, knowledge development and knowhow, excellent at work, justice, trust and truthfulness, honesty and *amanah*. These are shown as enlisted in table 1 follows:

Table 1: Islamic Ethical Principles and Islamic Ethical Characteristics

| Islamic Ethical Principles from the Quran | Islamic Ethical Characteristics |
|---|---|
| <p>Surah An-Najm, verse 39 (53:39); <i>“That man can have nothing but what he strives for”.</i></p> <p>Surah Al-Zalzalah, verses 7-8, (99:7-8); <i>“Then shall anyone who has done an atom’s weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom’s weight of evil, shall see it”.</i></p> | <p>Struggle and Responsibility:</p> <p>Putting effort in work. Performing one’s work to the best of ability for the pleasure of God (Norshidah Mohamed et al., 2010).</p> <p>On the perspective of IWE on how man’s struggle and man’s relation to Allah SWT (Muhammad Asad, 2007).</p> |
| <p>Surah Ta Ha, verse 114, (20:114); <i>“High above all is Allah, the King, the Truth! Be not in haste with the Qurán before its revelation to thee is completed, but say, “Oh my Lord! advance me in knowledge.”</i></p> | <p>Knowledge Development and Knowhow:</p> <p>Effort in seeking knowledge for self-development and tools in decision making.</p> <p>Four primary characteristics that must be built within the IWE; efforts, healthy competition, transparency and morally responsible conduct (Abbas J. Ali & Abdullah Owaihan (2008).</p> |
| <p>Surah Al-Imran, verse 136 (3:136); <i>“For such the reward is forgiveness from their Lord, and gardens with rivers flowing underneath, an eternal dwelling; how excellent a recompense for those who work (and strive)!”.</i></p> | <p>Excellent at work:</p> <p>Reward should be commensurate with effort, for the reward in this world and hereafter world.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Surah An-Nisa', verse 135 (4:135); Allah SWT warned:</p> <p><i>"Oh you who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do".</i></p> <p>Surah Al-Ma'idah, verse 8 (5:8);</p> <p><i>"Oh you who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah, for Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do".</i></p> | <p>Justice:</p> <p>Muslim community as witness before God, as well as mankind, in regard to the espousal of justice (Riham Ragab Rizk, 2008).</p> <p>Eradicate inequity, injustice, exploitation and oppression (Rice, 1999).</p> <p>Justice and balance, trust, and benevolence are essential to all Muslim (Rafik Issa Beekun & Jamal Badawi, 2005).</p> |
| <p>Surah Al-Muddaththir, verse 38 (74:38);</p> <p><i>"Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds".</i></p> <p>Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 188 (2:188);</p> <p><i>"And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for the judges, with intent that ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of (other) people's property".</i></p> | <p>Trust, Truthfulness:</p> <p>Promulgate the truthfulness and directness in negotiation, 'amanah' and responsible in all actions.</p> <p>Prohibit dishonesty in all kinds of dealing with other human being (Abbas J. Ali & Abdullah Owaihan, 2008)</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Quran; Surah Hud, verse 85 (11:85);</p> <p><i>“And Oh my people! give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due: commit not evil in the land with intent to do mischief”.</i></p> <p>Surah Al-Mutaffifin, verse 1-4 (83:1-4);</p> <p><i>“Who to those that deal in fraud -- Those who, when they have to receive by measure, from men, exact full measure. But when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due. Do they not think that they will be called to account?”</i></p> | <p>Honesty and Trustworthy (Amanah):</p> <p>Give full measure and weight in business interaction.</p> <p>Forbade lying, stealing, adultery, and murder, and every act that would remove righteousness and bring evil (Abbas J. Ali, 1988), (Riham Ragab Rizk, 2008).</p> |
|---|---|

In Islam, business activity is considered to be an important socially useful function to all Muslim; for Prophet Muhammad himself was involved in trading during his teenager until he married the successful woman entrepreneur, Sayyidatina Khadijah. Rice and Mohammed Al-Mossawi (2002) noted that the Islamic socio-economic system includes detailed coverage of particular economic variables such as interest, taxation, circulation of wealth, fair trading, and consumption. Hence similarly, the ethical conduct on those economic variables are clearly guided and stated in the Quran by the command of Allah SWT, God the Creator of the universe.

QUALITY WORKPLACE FROM CONVENTIONAL VIEW

Work serves as a source of significant that provide opportunity’s identity for exploration and cultivation (Heelas, 2002: 78). The organizations in which people work affect their thoughts, feelings, and actions in the workplace likewise; people’s thoughts, feelings, and actions affect the organizations in which they work (Brief & Weiss, 2002). Harter et al. (2003) noted that the workplace is a significant part of an individual’s life that affects his/her life and the well-being of the community. In this notion, Harter elaborated that work is a pervasive and influential part of the individual’s life. Therefore, the emotional of employees, satisfaction at work and workplace environment affect their performance at work and also the turnover rates.

Therefore, it is imperative for the employees and organization to have a mutual understanding and benefits in these two way relationships. However, the modern phenomenon brings many problems in the workplace; the work

culture is not fulfilling, with all facilities and technology at work, employees feel confused, and in most of the workplace the work culture turns to hedonism. Roelofsen (2002) conducted surveys to 400 facilities management manager in US that revealed that workplace environment has the biggest effect on productivity in relation to job stress and job dissatisfaction. He found out that, by putting wise investment in the quality working environment, it contributed to better organizational productivity. Hence, this prove that better workplace environment contribute to better organization's productivity.

From the well-being perspective, a healthy workforce means the presence of positive feelings in the worker that result in happier and more productive workers (Harter et al., 2003). The concept of quality well-being at workplace refers to general mental health, including the mental and physical conditions that affect workplace productivity. In economic terms, employers can calculate the costs related to health insurance claims, on the job accidents, absenteeism and productivity loss (Porter, 2004) to measure and benchmark their own workplace quality well-being towards their employers in comparison to others. In this relation, workers view, and comment should be taken into consideration since they are the one who experienced the real situation and having the fact to be improvised. Like what had been stressed by Smith (2010), he delineated fairness in the workplace through five properties expressed by the workers; place, contribution, situation, relationships with others, and relationship with one's own work.

Basic needs in the workplace means the fulfilling expectations of basic materials and equipment provided (Harter et al., 2003). In order to have quality of life at work, it is not enough to have a job that generates labor satisfaction. There are other factors involved, such as the physical conditions of the workplace, which contribute to a better or worse quality of life at work. Other relevant factors involved are the level of stress, fatigue, overcrowding, and weekend work schedules and the relations with other colleagues at work. However the most important, better quality of life at work undoubtedly be determined by other elements of relationships, trust and commitment with bosses and/or subordinates (Requena, 2003). And all these involved the ethical values and moral practiced in the organization from employee's and employer's perspectives. Indeed all these factors contribute to determine the quality of life at work that a person experiences vice versa for the organization as a whole. Tsahuridu (2006) noted this by stated that business organizations are subjected to increased pressure for more responsible behavior and are now seeking to improve the ethicality of their decisions and actions, including their behavior towards employees.

Islamic Quality Workplace

Work in Islam portrays a virtue and commitment towards Muslim effort and struggle in life (Rafik Issa Beekun & Jamal Badawi, 2005). Any act is a potential act of worship if it is done with 'pure' intention, and within the limits prescribed by God. Accordingly, all work (*'amal*) and business-related activities may be regarded as acts of worship in accordance to two conditions mentioned earlier; the pure intention and within what has been command by Allah through the Quran. The Qur'an confirms this by mentioning *'amal* in more than 50 verses in conjunction with iman (faith) (Ahmad Mushtaq, 1995). Hence, the desire to please God through productive work can be a tremendous intrinsic motivator for the Muslim worker at whatever level he or she is working. So whenever the workers are fully motivated, their commitment and loyalty towards their work will increase in addition of seeking the pleasure of Allah SWT.

However, to create an Islamic quality workplace, there are two conditions have to be fulfilled here. The first one is the obligation of the employee to employers; to prepare kinds of facilities that take into consideration all the religious and humanistic factors. On the employer side, they must pay considerable wages and other rewards for their employees. The example also given by Rafik Issa Beekun and Jamal Badawi (2005), such as in hiring, in promoting or in assessment and evaluation, giving the employee his/her due (*qist*) and behaving in an equitable and balanced manner (*'adl*) are a must from the employer side.

The second condition here is the obligation of the employee towards their employer. They have to work in very honest manner, timely, trustworthy, committed, and give their best effort to the organization. Rafik Issa Beekun and Jamal Badawi (2005) supported that the concept of worship in Islam includes any constructive endeavor or work. It implies that a committed Muslim employee at any organizational level should perform his/her work for the love and responsibility to God as the prior with the realization that God is watching his/her behavior all the time, and the responsibility towards employer come second. This indication is for the Muslim employees to fear Allah SWT first, and others come second. Any work should be done because of Allah SWT, not because of human being, then the final product/production come as good and the best as they can be. This principle certainly ensures the effort from the employees' side to the benefit of themselves and also employers.

Hence there forth, the prior need for quality workplace for the Muslim employees is imperative in this sense. By mentioning Islamic quality workplace here means the workplace is well equipped with all the necessary

needs for Muslim workers; such as a prayer room, small library, reading facility, halal café, health clinic, child care center, pharmaceutical, etc.'s. Those facilities also should be included with other services that facilitate employees in their daily transaction as such a post office, a small bank, ATM machine, IT center, internet facilities, sport center facilities and etc.'s. No doubt that all those facilities provided depends to the awareness of the leader and management concerned. Abbas J. Ali (1988) emphasized that the loyalty to the leader or management at the workplace is necessary for the organization to smoothly survive. The Islamic quality workplace requires the Islamic ethics of justice and balance, trust and benevolence on two way relationships from employer to the employee and from employee to employers. This will benefit both parties and will lead to the growth and successfulness of the organization.

ISLAMIC ETHICS IMPROVISE THE QUALITY WORKPLACE

By means, the application of Islamic ethics enable man to be independent and having self-respect, then, it is paramount for the Muslim to follow a correct Islamic ethical conduct at the workplace to signify their obedience towards Allah SWT and in gaining self-respect from the society. The principles of work ethics and management in Islam derive from the Holy Quran, the sayings and practice of Prophet Mohamed. Many verses of the Quran speak about justice and honesty in trade, and courtesy and fairness in employment relationships, and also encourage humans to learn new skills and to strive to do good work that benefits both the individual and the community (Mohamed Branine & Pollard, 2010).

In general working condition, Islam pays a strict attention that workers are not exploited and that work conditions are good. It insists on reasonable and affordable work load for the employee to perform. This is stated in the Quran Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 286 (2:286) that;

“On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear....”

As for the overall welfare of the employer, the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW reminded that:

‘Ibn ‘Umar reported that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, “All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock. A man is the shepherd of the people of his house and he is responsible. A woman is the shepherd of the house of her husband and she is responsible. Each of you is a shepherd and each is responsible for his flock.”(Al-adab Al-Mufrad, Al-Bukhari. Number 212)

The term 'shepherd' implies that the business owner will guide, look after, protect, and provide for his/her employees and do not allow for any work behavior that may hurt and harm the employees (Rafik Issa beekun & Jamal Badawi (2005).

Wahibur Rokhman (2010) investigated the effect of Islamic work ethics on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intention in the Islamic microfinance institutions in Central Java, Indonesia. The results showed that there was positive relationship between the IWE implementation and job satisfaction and job commitment. Simultaneously, IWE application also indicated it success in reducing the turnover intention of the workers. Similar study conducted by Muhammad Shakil Ahmad (2011) likewise exhibited that there are a positive impact of IWE on employee job satisfaction, motivation and organizational commitment, so it is necessary that governmental as well as private sector organizations adopt and follow the IWE for better productivity and employee satisfaction.

In another study by Norshidah Mohamed et al. (2010) where the survey was conducted to 147 employees of Higher education Islamic institution found out that there were significant contributions of Islamic work ethic and attitudes towards computer use ethic to job satisfaction. This survey suggests that individual ethics is an important consideration towards managing a satisfied workforce. The findings also support that professional's Islamic work ethic and job satisfaction positively, directly and significantly relate to organizational commitment.

However, there arise some critics that Islamic work ethics is no difference with what the western is practiced. In this connotation Abbas J. Ali (1998) had conducted the research towards Muslim in America and he found out that the lack of work ethics in individual came from the problem of cultural attitude towards discipline, lack of organizational efforts, lack of persistence in pursuing goals as well as other motivational factors. It certainly not because of the principal Islamic ethical values imposed. Ten years after that he again (Abbas J. Ali & Abdullah Owaihan, 2008) conducted a survey to the managers and employees in three Muslim countries; Saudia Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. The finding exhibited that managers and employees were having very high commitment to their job and their work ethics. They took full responsibilities at work to the best of their abilities. It revealed that the respondents view work with virtue; justice and generosity are necessary conditions for society's welfare.

Rice (1999) stressed that, in Islam, there is no conflict between the moral and socio-economic requirements of life. Islamically, good ethics or moral

conduct will produce good workers. Good workers will require better working condition, better salary suitable with their qualification and work responsibility, better benefits and other facilities that can facilitate their job provision. Therefore, moral uplift enthusiast from a quality workplace environment as such high commitment towards job assign, high level of responsibilities, highly motivated, highly satisfied with their work and etc.'s; are all indicators to the configuration of IWE contributed to the Islamic environment and high quality workplace.

Without a doubt, IWE in Islam is beyond self-interest, it helps Muslim achieved success in both of world, this world and hereafter world. By implementing Islam, it encompasses overall ethical rules in Muslim daily lives. Abbas J. Ali (2011) remarked that in general, whenever people are more attached to their religion, they have a stronger bond in their identification and commitment to religiously sanctioned ethics in comparison if they ignore religion. This condition contributes to the powerfulness and durability of Islamic ethics across the time, places and boundary. Hence, from the discussions on the above research conducted it can be concluded that it is highly encourageable for Muslim to understand and provide proactive reaction and committed to the application of IWE. Whenever Muslim willingly applied; thus this will able to depict positive result to their organizational, economic activities and to realize their Islamic quality workplace for the benefit of all parties concerns.

FINDING

In conventional perspectives, work ethics is crucial in determining the quality of work deliver to the stakeholder and the level of integrity that the workers uphold. Heelas (2002: 78) emphasized on the role of work ethics in motivating workers and the existence of necessary connection between economics activities and cultural values. Without work ethics, human has no check and balance system in ensuring they stick to the regulation and procedure. No doubt, the level of personal well-being at work increases when the worker is in the context of greater trust, relationships, communication, commitment and influence on the job.

However, the traditional, authoritative work ethics is no longer significance whilst the organizational work ethics always in increasing crisis. Notwithstanding on morally good establishment of Protestant or traditional work ethics, today's competitive business environment filled with greed, monopoly, profit maximization, no transparency and other negative attitudes. All the same, it pushes people towards various degree of corruption and

abuse in power that lead to the misconduct, mistrust and misbehave either in the organization or whenever deals with any economic activities. Therefore in the CWE, the character and credibility of people involve in economic activities and work is significant elements that determine the presence of ethical employees in a quality workplace.

CWE emphasized that no sets of ethics is better than others, and different culture use a different set of criteria due to differences of circumstances and tradition. On contradict the IWE fixes only one standard criteria on which that characteristic persistently obtained from the commandment of Al-Quran and hadith of the prophet Muhammad SAW. It is applicable to all people, all races, all time, to all boundary, circumstances and traditions. Furthermore if the entire time one has to point the right and wrong to somebody else, this will create uncomfortable and difficult situation both to the workers and employers. Muhammad Asad (2007) buttressed this by defining moral values of what is right and wrong; or good and evil is very difficult and subjective unless they are interpreted with knowledge of the nature and the purpose of human existence, from the Islamic teaching.

In fact, the presence of positive workplace perceptions and feelings are associated with better profit, higher productivity and lower rates of worker turnover (Harter et al., 2003). With the implementation of good ethical conduct, IWE, it will lead to better quality workplace. Quality work place is critical since it helps employees to implement the good ethical conduct without enforcement but inculcate the values from their inner self. It is considers as awareness of attitudes towards individual self and organization as a whole.

In fact, there are many verses of the Quran emphasize on the implementation of IWE either directly or indirectly in order to inculcate the culture of goodness in habitual act. As such a guideline on Islamic ethical characteristics in producing a better and high quality human being had been clearly stated. This guideline should become a tool for Muslim to strive for the betterment in all actions undertaken. For example, the verses on struggle and responsibility (Quran, 53:39; 99:7-8) advised Muslims to put hard effort in their work and to produce anything at their best ability. In this relation, all the good efforts are counted and indirectly it will increase the *iman* towards Allah SWT. Similarly in knowledge development and knowhow (Quran, 20:114), Muslims are encourage to always seeking knowledge to improve themselves in all aspects of actions in life. While, excellent in work in IWE bring the meaning of excellent with the objectives of not only for this world but the real objective is to bring the excellent for the reward from Allah SWT in *akhirah* (Hereafter world).

In execute any work, justice must be hold firm in all avenues as what has been mentioned in Quran (4:135; 5:8). Justice should not be implement in exchange with other self-interest or any other interest, but it should be just for the sake of Allah SWT alone. Favoritism, hatred or lust should not influenced any decision making. And all the actions should be done for the sake of fear Allah SWT, not because of other beings. Truthfulness, responsible and committed should be the essence of all actions since all actions will be held accountable for each individual Muslim in the Day of Judgement (Quran, (74:38). Honesty and trustworthy (*amanah*) are the key towards accountability and integrity in all the actions done. Hence the spirits, understandings and practices of struggle and responsibility, knowledge development and knowhow, excellent at work, justice, truthfulness, trustworthy and *amanah*, are all the elements of *akhlaq Islamiyyah* (ethical good conduct) that enable Muslims to properly develop all their actions as *ibadah* towards Allah SWT. Muslim supposed to feel that Allah SWT always looking upon all the deeds done, then the feeling of responsible and accountable is stronger. Hence this finding is strongly related with the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW about *Iman, Islam and Ihsan*. Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah;

“One day while the Prophet was sitting in the company of some people, (The angel) Gabriel came and asked, “What is faith?” Allah’s Messenger replied, ‘Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, (the) meeting with Him, His Apostles, and to believe in Resurrection.’ Then he further asked, “What is Islam?” Allah’s Messenger replied, “To worship Allah Alone and none else, to offer prayers perfectly to pay the compulsory charity (Zakat) and to observe fasts during the month of Ramadan.” Then he further asked, “What is Ihsan (perfection)?” Allah’s Messenger replied, “To worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion then you must consider that He is looking at you.”.....”

The conceptual analysis is hoped would be able to contribute to the realistic understanding of the concept of Islamic ethics and its application specifically in the Islamic organization, especially to meet the vision on realizing the Islamic quality workplace. Through this discussion, it can be seen that IWE acts as a medium in facilitating Islamic quality workplace. In short, Muslims across geographical boundary and time reiterate their commitment to their religious directive (that is Islam) and Islamic ethical conduct in rendering an act of manifest to the continuity of religiously sanctioned ethics (Abbas J. Ali, 2011) based on Al-Quran and Hadith of Rasulullah SAW.

CONCLUSION

Workers should be aware that there would be the emergence of new ethical issues from time to time since the function of societal and other changes would contribute behavior and societal crisis. Thus, it would certainly contribute to ethical misconduct that needs a new code of ethics in addressing the issue. Whilst Islam is the religion of enduring system; applicable to all at any time and any place. The code of ethics is simple and applicable to all human being; it needs the belief in what has been instructed by Allah SWT in the Quran and the Sunnah and hadith delivered by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. In Islam, business and work in general must be based on ethical and moral foundation taught by the exemplary of Prophet Muhammad SAW with the guidance from Al-Quran. It must be beneficial and meaningful to individual and society. In regards of IWE, its characteristics are conducive in profoundly building economic activities that are founded on justice and responsible competition. Good intention, hard work, commitment, transparency, honest, justice are the examples of credibility promises that help individual Muslim to progress well in realizing their quality workplace in today's economy.

Indeed, the key to IWE philosophy lies on man's relationship with the Creator, Allah SWT, His universe and all His creation on earth. The Islamic ethical system is balanced, fair, just, and benevolent, and seeks to respect the rights of both primary and derivative stakeholders without allowing for exploitation, nepotism and other human ills. It is a system that is divinely inspired, a temporal and tailored to fit the needs and rights of God's trustee, man. IWE set the boundaries for acceptable conduct and behavior to all human being notwithstanding their religious belief, races and boundary. By fully apply IWE, it encourages organizational competitiveness and growth in such a healthy manner.

IWE does not based on what is right or wrong, but it is about abiding the rules and regulation, the commandment of the way of life and its conduct contains in the Al-Quran; the absolute guidance for all human being. All these are regards as an act of worship and obedience towards Allah SWT commandment. The goals and objectives to achieve are for the purpose of God blessing, in this world and hereafter world. For this world; it achieve the objective of the concept of respect each other, struggle and put effort for life, hard work, commitment, honest, justice, trust, benevolence and etc.'s, and to achieve the goals to grow and live in a healthy Islamic society. Whilst for the hereafter world; it achieves the goal and objective of getting a blessing from Allah SWT and safe from any punishment and ending in His paradise.

REFERENCES

- Al-Quran. English Translation – Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Retrieved February 14, 2014 from http://www.quran4u.com/quran_english_Yeh.htm
- Abbas J. Ali. (1988). Scaling an Islamic work ethic. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 128(5), 575-583.
- Abbas J. Ali. (2011). Islamic ethics and marketing. In Handbook of Islamic marketing. Edited by Ozlem Sandikci and Gillian Rice. Part 1. Pp. 17-35. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, UK.
- Abbas J. Ali & Abdullah Owaihan. (2008). Islamic work ethic: a critical review. *Cross cultural management: An international Journal*, 15(1), 5-19. Emerald Group Publishing Limited 1352-7606. DOI 10.11081/13527600810848791.
- Addis, F. S. (2010). Building a strong work ethic. Rough notes. Vol. 153(1). Pp. 88-90. Retrieved February 20, 2014 from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/200343783?accou>
- Beckett, C. & Maynard, A. (2013). Values and ethics in social work. 2nd Edition. Sage Publications Ltd. London.
- Brief, A. P., & Weiss, H. M. (2002). Organizational behavior: Affect in the workplace. *Annual Review of Psychology*. Vol.53. Pp. 279-307.
- Cherrington, D.J. (1980), *The Work Ethic: Working Values and Values That Work*, AMACOM, New York, NY.
- Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L. & Keyes, C. L. (2003). Well-being in the workplace and its relationship to business outcomes: A review of the Gallup studies. *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well-lived*. Vol. 2. Pp. 205-224.
- Heelas, P. (2002). Work ethics, the soft capitalism and the 'turn to life'. In Cultural Economy: Cultural Analysis and Commercial Life. Edited by Paul du Gay & Michael Pryke. Sage Publication Ltd. London. Chapter. 4, Pp. 78-97.
- Miller, M. J., Woehr, D. J., & Hudspeth, N. (2001). The meaning and measurement of work ethic: Construction and initial validation of a multidimensional inventory. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 59, 1-39. doi:10.1006/jvbe.2001.1838.
- Muhammad Asad. (2007). The principles of state and government in Islam. Islamic Book Trust. Kuala Lumpur.
- Mohamed Branine & Pollard, D. (2010). Human resource management with Islamic management principles: A dialectic for a reverse diffusion in management. *Personnel Review*, Vol. 39(6). Pp.712 – 727. DOI: 10.1108/00483481011075576
- M. Arslan. (2001). The work ethic values of Protestant British, Catholic Irish and Muslim Turkish managers. *Journal of Business Ethics*. Vol. 31. Pp. 321–339. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands.

- NASW, National Association of Social Workers. (2008). Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers. Retrieved February 14, 2014 from <http://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/CODE/Default.asp>
- Norshidah Mohamed, Nor Shahriza Abdul Karim & Ramlah Hussein. (2010). Linking Islamic Work Ethic to Computer Use Ethics, Job Satisfaction and Organisational Commitment in Malaysia. *Journal of Business Systems, Governance & Ethics*. Vol. 5(1). Pp. 13-23.
- Porter, G. (2004). Work, work ethic, work excess. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 17(5). Pp.424 – 439. DOI: 10.1108/09534810410554461
- Rafik Issa Beekun. (1997). Islamic Business Ethics. International Institute of Islamic Thought. Herndon, Virginia, U.S.A.
- Rafik Issa Beekun & Jamal Badawi. (2005). Balancing ethical responsibility among multiple organizational stakeholders: the Islamic perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*. Vol. 60. Pp. 131–145. DOI 10.1007/s10551-004-8204-5.
- Reamer, F. G. (1998). The evolution of social work ethics. *Social work*, 43(6), 488-500. Rhode Island College Digital Commons @ RIC. Faculty Publication. Retrieved February 14, 2014 from <http://digitalcommons.ric.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1169&context=facu>
- Requena, F. (2003). Social capital, satisfaction and quality of life in the workplace. *Social indicators research*. Vol. 61(3). Pp. 331-360.
- Rice, G. (1999). Islamic ethics and the implications for business. *Journal of Business Ethics* 18: 345–358. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands.
- Rice, G. & Mohammed Al-Mossawi. (2002). The Implications of Islam for Advertising Messages: The Middle Eastern Context. *Journal of Euromarketing*, Vol. 11(3).
- Riham Ragab Rizk. (2008). Back to basics: An Islamic perspective on business and work ethics. *Social Responsibility Journal*, Vol. 4(1/2). Pp. 246-254.
- Roelofsen, P. (2002). The impact of office environments on employee performance: The design of the workplace as a strategy for productivity enhancement. *Journal of Facilities Management*. Vol. 1(3). Pp. 247-264. DOI: 10.1108/14725960310807944
- Saks, A. M., Mudrack, P. E., & Ashforth, B. E. (1996). The relationship between the work ethic, job attitudes, intentions to quit, and turnover for temporary service employees. *Revue Canadienne Des Sciences De l'Administration*. Vol.13(3). Pp. 226-236.
- Shukri Ahmad & Musa Yusuf Owoyemi. (2012). The concept of Islamic work ethic: An analysis of some salient points in the prophetic tradition. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*. Vol. 3(20). Pp. 116-123.

- Smith, R. S. (2010). The meaning and essence of fairness in the workplace: A phenomenological study of organizational justice. (Order No. 3397627, The George Washington University). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. P. 311. Retrieved February 20, 2014 from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/219967522?accountid=14645>. (219967522).
- Brent D. Rosso, Kathryn H. Dekas, Amy Wrzesniewski
 - *Research in Organizational Behavior, Volume 31, 2011, Page 277*
- Tsahuridu, E. E. (2006). Anomie and ethics at work. *Journal of Business Ethics, 69*(2), 163-174. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10551-006-9074-9>
- Wines, W. A. & Napier, N. K. (1992). Toward an Understanding of Cross Culture Ethics: A Tentative Model. *Journal of Business Ethics, Vol. 11*(11). Pp. 831-841.
- Wahibur Rokhman. (2010). The effect of Islamic work ethics on work outcomes. *Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies, Vol. 15*(1). Pp. 21-27.