



# **Islamic Work Ethic?**

## **In Search of Empirical Evidence in the WVS**

### **(Final Report)**

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# Outline

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# Introduction

- Work ethic denotes “commitment to the value and importance of hard work” (Miller, Woehr & Hudspeth 2001).
- Protestant work ethic (PWE) has often been used to explain the economic success of countries.
- Since Weber, the thesis of PWE has taken up “a life of its own”.

# Introduction

- PWE focused on “earning more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life” (Weber 1958).
- **BUT** high level of work ethic  $\neq$  prosperity, and vice versa.
- Alternative explanations for economic growth in Protestant countries include literacy and education (Delacroix & Nielsen 2001).

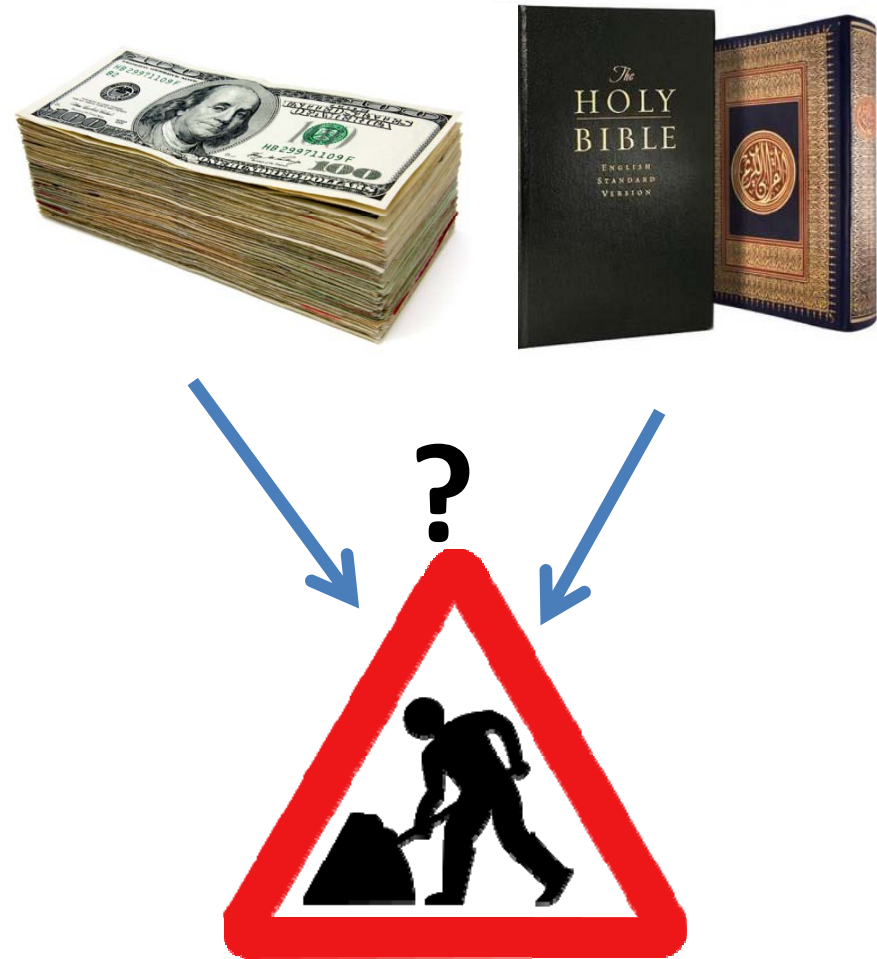
# Introduction

- **Today**, Protestant countries are characterized by lower levels of PWE than non-Protestant and non-Christian countries (Furnham; Arslan; Norris & Inglehart).
- The decline in PWE in NW Europe and N America has been connected with growing **security of living** in highly developed countries and a growing demand for **non-materialist qualities** in work there (Inglehart).
- Conservative values associated with work ethic, including Protestant work ethic, are more likely to be supported in developing countries, where people turn to religion in search for security:

**POVERTY->INSECURITY->RELIGION->WORK ETHIC**

# Purpose of the Study

- The **purpose** of this study is to investigate the influence of economic and religious factors of work ethic among contemporary Muslims and Christians.



# Key Concepts

- “**Islamic work ethic**” (IWE) is one of newer concepts proposed for explaining economic behavior (Ali 1988), along with Confucian and Orthodox versions.
- For many years, it has been questioned **why** Islamic countries have not modernized rapidly in the last 50 years despite the fact that Islamic doctrine is not opposed to economic progress (Kuran 1997; McCleary & Barro 2006).

# Key Concepts

- The recommended mode of work in IWE emphasizes **cooperation**, **good relations** at work and **consultation**.
- Islamic business ethic demands cooperation and equality, following the principles of trusteeship and justice (Rice 1999).
- Excessive accumulation of wealth is condemned; work is not an end in itself.



# Key Concepts

The principles of IWE (Ahmad&Owoyemi 2012):

1. Work is a worship
2. Earthly reward and higher reward
3. No detriment to religious and social obligations
4. Wealth is OK if purified by social commitment
5. Awareness of time
6. Work hard/ play hard

# Key Concepts

- **Common features** of IWE and PWE:
  1. Hard work is treated as a worship and should lead to reward after life;
  2. Careful use of time and the value of time;
  3. Blaming laziness, poverty is explained religiously.

BUT:

PWE = leisure avoidance and independence.

# Key Concepts

- Various scholars admit that, despite the official discourse of Islamic ethic, the gap between discourse and economic behavior can be spacious enough.

# Hypotheses

- H1: Muslim respondents will demonstrate stronger work ethic on each item of the work ethic scale of WVS questionnaire than Christians but weaker importance of having an interesting job. This would correspond to postmaterialist shift and to the previous findings.
- H2: Since the type of culture is positively related to individual's work ethic, it is likely that Muslims in Muslim societies will demonstrate strongest work ethic
- whereas H3: Protestants in Protestant societies will demonstrate weakest work ethic.

# Data and Method

- Waves 3-5 of WVS (1995/1998, 1999/2000, and 2005/2008) which cover many Islamic countries in addition to mainly Christian European countries otherwise represented in European Values Survey or European Social Survey
- 54 countries with both Christian and Muslim respondents got to the target dataset
- The sample used in bivariate analysis includes 50 countries

# Variables

- Independent variables:
  - religious denomination of respondent (Muslim or Christian)
  - Gender
  - age cohort
  - Income
  - education level
  - importance of religion
  - HDI + interactions

# Variables

“Work is a duty towards society”

“It is humiliating to receive money without having to work for it”

“People who don’t work turn lazy”

“Work should come first even if it means less spare time”

“Work/Leisure is what makes life worth living”

“To develop talents you need to have a job”

“People should not have to work if they don’t want to”

“It is important to teach children to work hard”

“It is important to have an interesting job.”

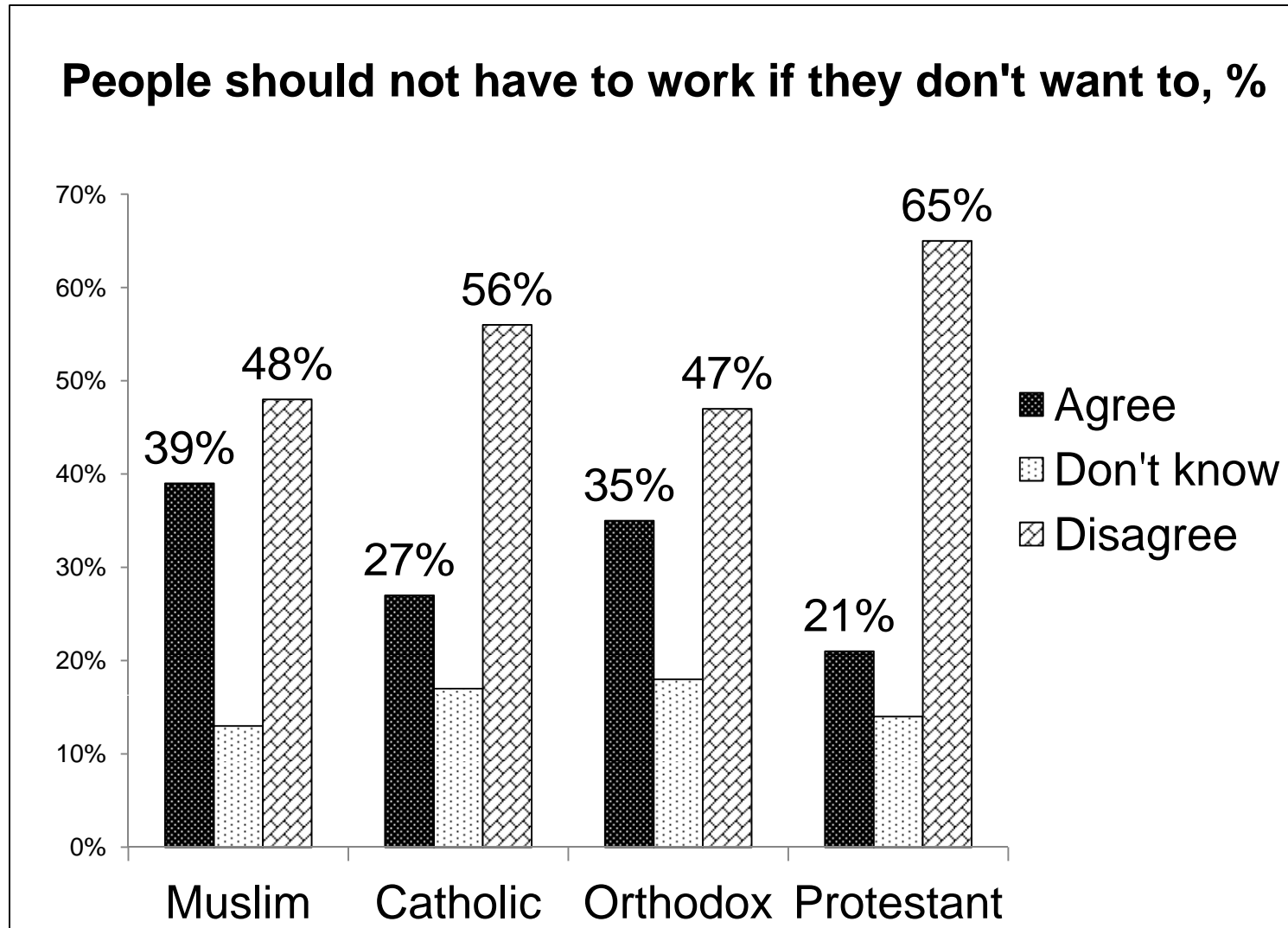
# Bivariate Results

**SCALE 0-4, 0=Disagree completely; 4=Agree completely; Child, Job: 0=N, 1=Y; M = Muslim, O= Orthodox, P = Protestant, C= Catholic.**

Work ethic item	<b>M</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>C</b>	Correlation (sign.)
Work as duty	1.77	<b>2.29</b>	2.08	2.10	.212***
Humiliating	2.09	2.28	<b>2.59</b>	2.55	.195***
Lazy	1.84	2.09	<b>2.28</b>	2.21	.157***
Work first	1.87	2.18	2.42	<b>2.44</b>	.219***
Leisure-Work	<b>2.81</b>	2.58	2.57	2.66	.149***
Talent	1.75	2.01	<b>2.25</b>	2.16	.197***
Don't have to work	2.14	2.17	<b>2.63</b>	2.39	.191***
Child: hard work	.65	<b>.75</b>	.52	.51	.202***
Job: interesting	.62	.63	<b>.70</b>	.54	.107***



# Bivariate Results



# Multilevel Results

## H2: Muslims in Muslim Societies have strongest work ethic

Dependent variable: Work as a duty to society (0-4 point scale)			
Level 1 39,873 individuals	M1 R12=5%	M2 R12=8%	M3 R12=9%
Level 2 42 countries	R22=20%	R22=44%	R22=45%
<b>Fixed effects:</b>			
Intercept	2.53(38.2** a)	3.79(9.6***)	3.97(9.24***)
HDI	-	-3.42(-2.6*)	-4.01(-2.9**)
HDI squared	-	2.16(2.1*)	2.63(2.5*)
Muslim culture(=1)	-	-	-.13(-1.1)
Muslim(=1)	.11(2.7*)	.10(2.4*)	.08(1.7)
Muslim culture(=1)	-	-	+.13(2.1*)
Secondary education	-.01(-.69)	.31(4.3***)	.31(4.4***)
HDI	-	-.46(-4.6***)	-.47(-4.7***)
Upper education	-.04(-1.5)	.52(5.9***)	.53(5.9***)
HDI	-	-.80(-6.8***)	-.80(-6.7***)
30-49 years	.06(4.3***)	.06(4.1***)	.06(4.1***)
50+ years	.23(8.2***)	.23(8.3***)	.23(8.3***)
Gender(1=male)	.06(3.6***)	.06(3.7***)	.06(3.7***)
Income scale (0-9)	-.01(-3.5**)	-.01(-3.4**)	-.01(-3.4**)
Importance of religion (0-4)	.13(13.5***)	.14(13.5***)	.13(13.4***)

# Multilevel Results

## H3: Protestants in Protestant Societies have weakest work ethic

Dependent variable: Work as a duty to society (0-4 point scale)			
Level 1 39,873 indiv.	M1 R12=5%	M2 R12=9%	M3 R12=9%
Level 2 42 countries	R22=22%	R22=47%	R22=46%
<b>Fixed effects:</b>			
Intercept	2.63(35.0***)	3.99(11.7***)	3.93(11.9***)
HDI	-	-3.72(-3.2**)	-3.59(-3.0**)
HDI squared	-	2.38(2.6*)	2.30(2.4*)
Protestant culture(=1)	-	-	-.06(-.6)
Protestant(=1)	-.17(-3.6***)	-.16(-3.2**)	-.20(-3.4**)
Protestant culture(=1)	-	-	+.08(2.5*)
Orthodox(=1)	-.11(-2.6*)	-.09(-2.3*)	-.09(-2.3*)
Catholic(=1)	-.06(-1.3)	-.06(-1.2)	-.06(-1.1)
Secondary education	-.01(-.68)	.32(5.1***)	.32(5.1***)
HDI	-	-.48(-5.6***)	-.48(-5.5***)
Upper education	-.04(-1.56)	.55(6.4***)	.53(6.2***)
HDI	-	-.84(-7.4***)	-.81(-7.1***)
30-49 years	.06(4.2***)	.06(4.0***)	.06(4.1***)
50+ years	.23(8.2***)	.23(8.1***)	.23(8.1***)
Gender(1=male)	.06(3.6***)	.06(3.7***)	.06(3.7***)
Income scale (0-9)	-.01(-3.4**)	-.01(-3.3**)	-.01(-3.4**)
Importance of religion (0-4)	.14(14.0***)	.14(14.0***)	.14(14.1***)

# Summary of Results

1. H1 is not supported: Muslims are not higher on each work ethic indicator.
2. Muslims have no significant differences in attitudes to work as a duty to society (+.08), but Muslims in Muslim societies declare it more often (+.21\*), which corroborates H2.
3. Protestants tend to show weaker attitude to work as a duty to society (-.20\*\*) and stronger in historically Protestant societies (.08\*) as well (H3 refuted).
4. Elder; more religious; males have stronger work ethic.
5. More educated and richer people have weaker “work as a duty” attitude.

# Discussion & Conclusions

- a. This study developed the finding that Protestant countries today have lower work ethic.
- b. Contrary to my expectations, Christians of various denominations, including Protestants, demonstrated higher levels of work ethic in the items saying that it is humiliating to receive **money without work** or that a person may not work if he or she **does not want to**. At the same time, Protestants were most likely to express the values of postindustrialized society: for 70 % of them a good job should be **interesting**.

# Discussion & Conclusions

- c. Work ethic is positively connected to **gender** (male) and **age** (elder).
- d. As R. Inglehart's theory predicts, more **educated** people as well as those who experience more security (higher **income**) tend to have weaker work ethic.
- e. Although **HDI** is related to work ethic in a curvilinear way, respondents in developing and developed nations react to increasing education by weakening their work ethic.

# Discussion & Conclusions

- f. Since more individuals are starting to support postmaterialist values around the world, it could be time for new work ethic indicators. Work is losing its appeal as a duty to society which had a “clear collectivist imprint” to it (Dülmer 2011).
- g. In multilevel modelling it has been shown that **Muslims in Muslim countries** have stronger attitude that **work is a duty** towards society, whereas **Protestants in Protestant societies** have a **positive attitude to the old work ethic**.

Thank you for your attention!