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# Arak city governmental employees' life span experiences of weakness of culture of work: A qualitative study

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** The weakness of the culture of work and the tendency of people in the society to work poorly and inadequate performance of their duties and responsibilities is one of the problems of human societies. The present study examined the life span experiences of individuals in this field.

**Methods:** This study was performed qualitatively, using phenomenological methods. Participates were selected from the staff and managers of Arak city governmental agencies and organizations. 42 participants were selected by purposeful sampling. The method of data collection was semi-structured interview which was recorded and rewritten with the consent of the participants and was analyzed by colazzi method.

**Results:** Data analysis resulted in the extraction of six main categories and several subcategories. The main categories included lack of organizational justice, change of intrinsic values of work, weakness of personality system, Weakness motivational system, Weakness socialization and poor growth of spirit of intellect.

**Conclusion:** The present study, by describing the weakness of the culture of work, provided a new understanding of individuals' experiences of this phenomenon. It also links the origins of such an event to the individual factors in addition to structural factors, which are mutually interconnected.

Therefore, it is suggested that in order to change the culture of work and to achieve an excellent and progressive culture of work, at the same time, it is necessary to modify both middle-level and large-scale community structures and mechanisms, as well as to reinforce, educate, and change its individual and personal contexts.

**Keywords:** Culture of Work, Poor Working, Socialization, Justice, Intellect

## Introduction

A basic feature of the new world is the amazing expansion of organizations. They cover all aspects of life so that their effects are almost in no way spared. Organizations provide the individual and group interests of community members but their success depends on their working culture and human resources. Culture of work is a set of

beliefs, attitudes and evaluations of individuals of society about the work and activity that are essential to the development and success of organizations (1). Culture and engagement are the most important issue companies face around the world (2). In other words, culture of work is a set of values, beliefs and shared and accepted knowledge in activities of a workgroup engaged in the production or creation of added values.



Research and resources have shown that culture of work in Iran is a social issue So that national efficiency in Iran is close to zero and useful working hours are about one hour a day While daily working hours in the US and Europe are seven hours a day and in Japan is more than 8 hours (3). The results also show that in Iran the waste of useful time is higher than the international standards and every employee or worker loses a lot of his or her time without doing anything useful. The lack of a strong culture of work in our country has led to poor working of individuals become a habit (4). Achieving comprehensive development of the country requires a workforce with an advanced culture of work that can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. Furnell and Clarke defines the high culture of work as keeping order in performing tasks, being hard working, and saving in utilization of goods (5). Torraco also defines advanced culture of work and its development as a set of features such as accuracy and speed at work, sensitivity in doing tasks, job adaptability, sufficient motivation to perform responsibilities, thinking about work, as well as attention to organizational goals and effort to get it (6). According culture of work, employees are conscious of Organizational culture, and they learn it in their life at workplace, then align their professional goals with the Organization's goals (7). Leadership and organizational culture are considered to be two of the most crucial organizational elements in order for firms to compete successfully and to gain sustainable advantage (8). Accordingly, advanced culture of work lead to organizational goals and increased efficiency, but an unfavorable or regressive working culture results in waste of resources and reduction of efficiency in the organization. Research on culture of work indicates that these are mostly quantitative studies and an explanatory model has not yet been designed that takes into account the various aspects of the weakness of the work culture qualitatively. Therefore, it is important to know the culture of work and identify the social cultural contexts that influence on formation of culture of work among different

occupational groups. What is important and essential to this research is finding out what is the Employee Understanding of Governmental Work and Jobs? What social and cultural contexts play a role in forming and giving meaningful to culture of work in governmental agencies and organizations?

## Methods

Phenomenology is both a philosophical field and a research method that has been developed to understand phenomena through human experiences. This research method seeks to clarify the structure and origin of experienced phenomena and to describe them accurately by analyzing the participants' life experiences. The present study was conducted to understand the experience of governmental employees in Arak city from the weakness of culture of work using phenomenological method in 2018. The sampling method was based on purposive sampling. In-depth and semi-structured interviews with 42 governmental employees continued in the 2 to 3 sessions until information saturation. The data were collected by Conversational style during the period of 45-100 minutes in Arak city offices. Inertance criteria to this study included employees who were able to express their life span experiences in addition to being employees and consenting to participate in the interview. Interviews started with questions such as telling the reasons for the weakening of the culture of work in governmental agencies? And telling your experience of interest and attitude to work? Subsequent questions were then asked to continue and complete the interviews and to obtain richer data based on the type of responses of the participants. Data were analyzed using seven stages of colazzi (9). First, the descriptions of all participants were read in order to feel comfortable with them. Each note was then referenced and important terms were extracted. The concept of each important phrase was developed in the third step, which was referred to as the adjusted concepts. In the fourth step, the adjusted concepts were organized into subject categories. The findings were then integrated into a comprehensive description of

the intended phenomenon. In sixth step, a comprehensive description of the intended phenomenon was obtained in the form of an explicit statement. The final validation step was evaluated on the basis of validity and reliability criteria. Reliability refers to the validity of a study from the perspective of the reader, participant, and researcher (10). According to Creswell (10), a qualitative researcher must employ at least two strategies to evaluate his research. In this study, two methods of control or accreditation by members and audit Technique (Controlled by colleagues) (11) have been used to reach the criterion of reliability. The researcher presented some of the extracted interviews and categories to four of his specialist colleagues who had experience in fieldwork and qualitative research, and asked them questions about the validity of the categories and codes. In fact, the concepts and categories were reviewed and stabilized by their comments. In the manner of investigation by members, the concepts and categories extracted from the interviews (research results) were presented to several participants and they were asked to evaluate the contexts and categories and comment on their accuracy. Finally, the results were confirmed. Ethical considerations are very important in research. To protect participant rights, the researcher first gave information about the nature of the research to individuals and, after giving them a full explanation and satisfying the interviewee, he invited them to the interview. The participant was completely free to participate in the interview or not, and the researcher did not insist on participating of participant in the interview. Also, the researcher tried to provide comfort and convenience to the participants. Therefore, the interview time was determined by the participants themselves and the researcher tried to select places for the interview that were relatively comfortable and convenient for interviewee. Furthermore, it was tried to use more public places to make the interviewee feel more secure. Also, when the interviewee was not satisfied with the recording of his voice by the researcher, his right was respected and refused to record. The principle of

confidentiality of the participants' identities was also applied in the research and the researcher has not named any of them in the research.

## Results

The analysis of the data eventually led to the formation of six main categories: lack of organizational justice, change of intrinsic values of work, weakness of personality system, weakness of motivational system, Weaknesssocialization, poor growth of intellect of rationality several sub-categories.

### Lack of organizational justice

Governmental employees often suppose the conditions governing the organization as lacking distributive justice and they believe they do not have equal opportunities for growth and promotion. So, they believe that the structure of the organization is an unfair one. Accordingly, they are indifferent to the organization and its goals and do not have sufficient motivation to carry out their duties. One of participant (Code No. 1) stated, *"I am a contractor employee and my colleague is an official one. His salary is twice as much as mine, provided that both my experience and my education are greater than his.* The rewards and overtime of official employees are much more than contractor employees. We do not receive welfare benefits and we do not have job security. In our office, there is injustice in all areas. "The manager (Code No. 2) *also believed "According to law and regulations, there are many differences and differences in the salaries and benefits of employees. And it is not possible for equality in pay to employees. These discriminations are due to legal restriction and we cannot act for equality and justice.* A woman (Code No. 3) believed that even between men and women there was discrimination and inequality in promoting and organizational growth. She (Code No. 3) said that opportunity to elevate organizational positions and achieve management and leadership positions for women in the municipality has become impossible, and all managerial positions are available to men. Gender discrimination is a tangible reality in governmental administration. A contractual employee for specific job

(determined job) at the organization of Housing and Urban (Code No).

4) said: "There is a great deal of discrimination between me and my colleague that his employment is constant. I receive my service annually, and I have to pony up financially at the end of the year. Whereas official and contractual employees have job security and job stability. Employees for specific job in governmental agencies are very much subject to injustice and oppression. My salary is a quarter of the salaries of contractual employees who do exactly the same job as me at the same office.

#### **Change the intrinsic values of work**

Financial costs, need to earn money, paying attention to money for living expenses, and meeting the needs of livelihoods has diminished the intrinsic value of work. So, governmental employees judge their jobs based on their desirability and economic outcomes. The head of a governmental organization (Code No. 5) said: *"Work has lost its spiritual and human value; employees want their jobs for its income and what is important to them is that they can make a living through their jobs and income. It is a valuable job for employees that has the most salaries. Many employees at our office take into account the financial criteria for their work and they are looking for the jobs that bring the most benefits"*. Also, a teacher (Code No. 6) said: *"teachers are expected to look at their jobs from a spiritual perspective but the reality is that the salaries of education staff don't even meet their livelihood needs. Many of them are skeptical about the work as worship. Nowadays, the working conscience has lost its value and poor working is even considered clever"*. An employee (Code No. 7) stated that at work you should only spend time and finish the scheduled time for daily work. Concern for the future of this country and society is wrong. You can't make progress by working. I'm totally distrusted and I think everyone is lying. A woman who has been employed for two years, (Code No. 8) said: *"I was just looking to get a job and earn income and monthly salary. What matters is that a woman becomes financially independent. Society has become such that if you don't have the money you*

*can't live and you have to die. Having money is the greatest social value.*

#### **Weakness of personality system**

Some know their personality and social status above that they spend all their time and energy on the organization. One of the high-ranking employees of a governmental company (Code No. 9) believed that: *"We have not been well-developed in personality dimensions. Improper arrogance, ignorance of work, wrong culture of sitting at the table, and believing in false prestige for ourselves, prevent us from doing anything. We only want to give orders and we find it difficult to work for ourselves"*. Also, service worker of an office (Code No. 10) said: *"The new generation cannot work. We, the older generation, have always relied on God and were not afraid of work. Work makes the man strong; but the new generation is just looking for the ready morsel, neither trusts in God nor strives to succeed. If the faith of man is strong, he will never work poorly and owe himself to others"*. The director of a governmental agency (Code No. 11) believes we are not properly trained in personality and we have learned how to work poorly and how to be tricky, in the community. We have also learned to escape responsibility. The new generation is very tricky and works reluctantly. They like to eat ready morsel. That means they want to get to everything without any effort". A highly educated and doctorate staff (Code No. 12) said that his job in the office is not in his dignity and his degree. He believed that he should not work, but that he should just manage and order. Office work is not attractive for him. He (Code No. 12) said: *"I have studied for many years and I should have supervisory work, not executive work"*.

#### **Weakness of motivational system**

Weakness of motivation system of employees reproduces weakness of culture of work in governmental agencies. An employee (Code No. 13) said: *"When I see that the administration doesn't worth my work, I conclude that working is not worth. The administration doesn't make any difference between me and the one who doesn't do his work right. The administration is not grateful of its hard-working workers. In my fifteen years of service, I have learned that I am not making*



*progress in my job by hard working". Also, a computer engineer (Code No. 14) believed: "Many governmental agencies have a mechanical view of work. Employees are seen as tools and devices, and less attention is paid to the emotional and psychological needs of individuals. The personal and social status (degree) of employees is not taken into account. The culture of team work has not grown and Participatory management is less common in governmental departments. When the mental and emotional needs of employees are ignored, they also lose motivation to work".* An employee believes that management of office is not grateful for the hard work of the staff and the hardworking and compassionate staff retire with the least respect after thirty years. And even retirement rewards are hardly paid to them. The personal and social status of employees is also sometimes overlooked by managers. In such a situation, employees cannot get motivated and become frustrated. A contractual employee who does the service work said that there is always encouragement for the high-paid staff and reprimand for the low-paid staff. The organization operates in such a way that the employee's motivation disappears and cannot work with desire for the government. Some managers don't even care about our primary needs, such as polite behavior. Sometimes they think we are second class citizens. Organizational culture and motivation are crucial variables in every Organization. This is due to the general recognition that these variables do not only influence the individual employee's performance but the whole Organization's effectiveness, performance and sustenance (7).

### **Weakness of socialization**

Socialization plays an important role in the culture of work. The lack of proper socialization in responsibility has led to the institutionalization of spirit of poor working among employees. A participant (Code No. 15) said: "We have learned laziness from the family and the community. We haven't learned to try. We're always looking for the shortest and easiest way to get destination. Families may not have been able to teach their children responsibility and hard

*working. Even the structure of organizations is such that employees learn to work poorly in the organization. And there are wrong values in organizations that encourage poor working and people learn to be poor working.* A manager said: "Our educational and cultural system is wrong and undesirable. Schools and universities rely solely on theoretical education and less attention is paid to the human and ethical dimensions of science and education areas. We have not adequately trained morality, commitment, and cultural and human values to new generations. In our society, hard-working is not institutionalized and effort is not very important". An education department's employee (Code No. 16) said: "we have not received the training needed to work properly. We really have educational poverty. In-service training for employees is also not effective. Employees are often given training that is not appropriate for their job. Holding non-specialized, doctrinal and political courses cannot increase the efficiency of the workforce. We need specialized courses, not ideological training. Another employee stated that governmental office space is such that the employee learns not to work governmental office space is such that the employee learns not to work spontaneously. In organizations, values are dominant that employees are forced to follow. The overcoming of values such as hypocrisy has made the employee look for hypocrisy, secrecy and pretense rather than work. In organizations, not working isn't a flaw, but it is smart. Someone is considered smart who can receive his full salary without working.

### **Growth of intellect**

The intellect choice and growth of the spirit of profitability and instrumental rationality among the individuals of society has made every person tries to make the most of his profit by reducing his cost. A 35 years old employee (Code No. 17) expressed about profitable attitude: "Some of my colleagues say you should not work too much in the organization. We have to work in such a way that we are not just interrogated and not lose our jobs. They believe that because our salaries are low, so we work to the extent that it is in line with the salaries we receive. By pretending to working, they pretend to look working too much, whereas in

*reality they are trying to escape work and by slacking off at work avoid accepting responsibility".* One person (Code No. 18) also stated in this regard: *"Most employees have a business and economic outlook on work and jobs and they are always seeking to earn the most money and income with the least amount of work. What is important to them is that only they receive their salaries per month and they don't care about the quality of work at all. They would like the working time to be finished as soon as possible and leave their work, go home"*. Supervisor of an executive unit in a governmental company said that employees often seek to increase their income and they look at their jobs as a means of earning money. For them, the priority is to get the most salaries with the least amount of work possible. Governmental employees often have a really looking for profit's view of work and jobs. The director of a governmental department said that employees no longer care about the values and ethics of work. Perhaps the problems of life have weakened their work commitment. So, seek to meet the needs of their lives, not the goals of the organization. Employees have come to believe that everyone has to think for themselves and he must be able to manage his life in such a way that he does not get into financial trouble. In such a situation, we cannot expect employees to work too hard for the organization and devote their time to governmental work.

## Discussion

Manpower is regarded as the most valuable wealth in any society; As we have seen in the international system, countries with larger populations have overtaken other nations in economic growth. Human force is a capital that can, with its expertise and knowledge, indigenize science and knowledge and promote economic growth, in whatever context the country needs it and achieve self-sufficiency. However, what makes manpower the most valuable wealth is the expertise and knowledge, along with the culture of work that makes it useful for society. But employing people in a work that is incompatible with their abilities and information or changes in their work activities can give rise to unhappiness

and Avoidance of work in the individual. Also, Avoidance of work has also become a natural thing for many people. Numerous studies indicate the weakness of the culture of work in Iran. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the life span experience of Arak governmental employees from culture of work weakness that these experiences were categorized into six main contents and several sub- contents. The first contents examined was the lack of organizational justice. Employees believe that organizations do not treat justice to the rights, benefits, promotion, and payment of financial and non-financial rewards among them. And even job security as the most important need of employees lacks an unprejudiced procedure. Various discriminations and differences between employees result in the pessimistic attitude of employees and their unwillingness to conform to the organization and weaken the culture of work in organizations. This finding is consistent with the results of Zahirinya's research (12). It is also consistent with Colquitt's view that perception of injustice has a detrimental effect on work culture. He knows justice as the key to the survival and sustainability of an organization and Staff expect justly treatment from the organization (13). So, when the organization treats employees justly and ethically, they also want to make up for it by working more and spending more time. It is also possible to explain this finding consistent with Adams's theory of equality that employees expect to receive benefits from the organization such as pay and reputation, social relationships and external rewards, in terms of what they give to the organization, such as education, experience, effort and loyalty. Employees always expect that there is a balance between giving and receiving and that they are treated justly. So, when they feel they are rewarded as much for the tasks they perform, they try harder. And whenever they feel inequality and injustice on the part of the organization, they show negative reactions, including poor working, which weaken the culture of work (14). culture is often considered as the precondition of teamwork in the

organization (15). According to the participants of the present study, changing the intrinsic values of work has an important role in the weakness of culture of work. In explaining this concept, agreeing with Ambrose's theory, it can be expressed that the existence of financial costs and attention to money for cover expenses have made the intrinsic value of the work diminished. Finally, governmental employees judge their jobs based on their desirability and economic outcomes (16). So, what's important to them is the wages they receive for their work, not the human or moral values of the work. In fact, they want the job for its pay. They evaluate their behaviors and attitudes favorably and they have no motivation to work hard and spend a lot of time for their office. Because in doing work, they pay more attention to the economic value of their job and they work poorly to do some their tasks and avoid the risk of being fired. The weakness of the personality and motivational system is another reason for the weakness of the culture of work. Improper arrogance, ignorance of work, culture of sitting at the table, and believing in false prestige for ourselves, laziness, fear of taking responsibility, Worthless of work for the government, comparing yourself with others, and learning poor working from others in the workplace have led to a reduction in the culture of work and effort in organizations (17). Herzberg has also reached this conclusion in the theory of motivation and health. He believes that humans have two different needs. The first are health factors that describe the human environment and their main function is to prevent job dissatisfaction. The second category of needs, that are related to this present finding, are motivators that motivates people to perform better (18). According to Bogt's theory, motivations are satisfying factors that guarantee a sense of achievement and professional growth, and they make everyone experience the effort with respect in his or her job. Motivations have the ability to positively influence on culture of work and increase individual's efficiency (18). One of other factors affecting the culture of work is socialization. Socialization is the learning process of norms and values. Lack of proper

socialization, laziness in the family, weaknesses in the in-service training, transfer of undesirable values, wrong patterning has weakened the culture of work. The results of Naderi's research also confirm the results of the present study (19). This researcher expressed that a low level of tendency to laziness in society is not a sign of a low level of laziness, but a social status that facilitates laziness in society. He believes that laziness in Iran is due to structural and social factors rather than individual dimensions. Developing of intellect spirit is another major weakness of the culture of work. Governmental employees are keen to spend more time on leisure, rest and instrumental benefits and spend less time working in the governmental system. This finding is consistent with the theory of intellectual choice. The central principle in the explanatory model of intellectual choice is that human behavior is purposeful, considered and thought-out. And people, in their social actions, choose and practice behaviors that bring him the maximum benefit and the least harm. In this study, reluctance to do administrative work and weakening culture of work among governmental employees is an intellectual choice. In fact, this is a reflection of the impact of organizational structures. And governmental employees perform poor working as a rational and retaliatory strategy against the structural conditions of the organization. But a different assumption of this study from the classical theory of intellectual choice is that the purpose of poor working of individuals is not necessarily to achieve financial gain, and they may even be deprived of financial and economic benefits because of their poor working; But what is important to employees is achieving the often spiritual goals and objectives they have in their mind. According intellectual choice, people with intellectual choices are those who choose a career that is the most important way to achieve their goals, within the context of their beliefs and with considering their consequences (20).

### Conclusion

According to the findings of this study, weakening the culture of work in governmental agencies and organizations is a two-dimensional

phenomenon and a reciprocal process. On the one hand, structural and main factors lead to the formation and weakening of the culture of work. On the other hand, agents and actors (governmental employees) in a reciprocal relationship help to learn and promote and ultimately reproduce this undesirable culture by having subjective interpretations and beliefs resulting from structural factors. Therefore, the weakness of the culture of work in governmental agencies is a social phenomenon, not merely an individual issue. Accordingly, in order to change the culture of work and to achieve an excellent and advanced culture, it must simultaneously both modify the middle and upper level platforms and mechanisms of society and strive to strengthen, educate and change its individual and personal contexts.

The purpose of any phenomenological research is providing a description that is obtained by going through the various steps. What added to the difficulty of this research and devoted much of the researcher's energy, in addition to the difficulty in preparing and constructing an interview based on the theoretical model and research design, was to gain the satisfaction of the staff for the interview. The researcher was also subjected to physical and linguistic violence, including ridicule and Accusation of being a spy. Keeping the interview on the neutral and impartially path was another problem, as the interviewees expected sympathy and support from the researcher.

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### Conflicts of Interest

In the present study, the authors showed no conflict of interest.

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