Religiosity, ethics and the spirit of capitalism in HRM

Mohamed Branine

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Introduction

The recent re-awakening of religiosity in the world as a whole and in Asia in particular has

led to a significant increase in the number of people who claim to have a faith even in

countries such as the People's Republic of China and Vietnam where the practice of religion

was suppressed for many years. This phenomenon has attracted the attention of scholars from

various disciplines, sparked a raft of macro level, and politically oriented studies, but there is

very little academic research on the impact of religion and religiosity on management

practice. Studies on the relationship between religious beliefs, organizational behavior,

managerial practices and organizational outcomes are still scarce, as already pointed out by

Tayeb (1997), Abuznaid (2006), Schwartz (2006), Mellahi and Budhwar (2010) and Razimi,

Noor and Daud (2014). Much of the debate over the rise of religiosity and spirituality as a

form of personal identity has focussed on the effects of religion at the national rather than the

organizational and workplace levels, and has been concerned with the negative aspects of

religious extremism rather than on the positive implications of religious enlightenment on

work and employee relations.

This chapter aims to expand on the debate of the later by exploring the role of

religion, religiosity and ethics in managing employees in East Asian countries for reasons as

discussed below. Very often, the literature on management and culture overlooks the

importance of religious values in employee relations because many studies treat religion as

part of cultural norms and values of secular societies (see for example, Hofstede, 1991). As

Mellahi and Budhwar (2010, p. 686) noted, there is an extensive amount of literature on the

effects of rituals and ceremonies in Japanese organizations but there is very little reference to

the impact of group prayers on organizational outcomes (c.f. Abu Bakar, Cooke, & Muenjohn, 2016).

The focus of this chapter on East Asian countries is of particular importance because religion is hardly considered in the study of management and employee relations in this part of the world. Most of the recent studies of the effects of religion on management and organizational behavior have focussed on the Middle Eastern countries (e.g., Ali, 1992; Yousef, 2001; Mellahi, 2007; Mellahi & Budhwar, 2010; Yamak, Ergur, Unsal, Uygur & Özbilgin, 2015; Uygr, Spence, Simpson and Karakas, 2016), Malaysia and Indonesia (Debrah, McGovern and Budhwar, 2000; Aziz & Shamsul, 2004; Mamman & Somantri, 2014) and India and Pakistan (Budhwar & Bhatnagar, 2009; Cooke & Saini, 2012; Khilji, 2002; Rao, 2012; 2015) which are not intended to be within the confines of this discussion.

The other reason for focusing on East Asian countries is that the scale of information that is available on the complexity and diversity of beliefs in Asia makes it uneasy to describe with certainty what aspects of what particular religion has really influenced the making of a particular group. It is easy to generalize by saying that such countries have been influenced by Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam and Taoism, but there is very little evidence of the extent or the specific outcomes of such influence in practice. This is mainly because of the lack of research in this area. This chapter attempts to re-emphasize the importance of empirical research for understanding the role of religion and religiosity in managing human resources in East Asian countries.

The reason why it is important to understand the role of religion and religiosity in managing human resources is that people in organizations tend to act and interact in response to established norms but according to their inner and outer perceptions of the world around them. Religion, when it exists, it influences such perceptions because when people go to work they do not leave their religion at home. They take their whole self to work. In an

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uncertain economic climate where job security is something of the past and work-related stress is on the increase, many employees have "began to turn to their faith as a source of stability and comfort...often viewing the inclusion of spirituality at work as a panacea to their woes" (Mohamed, et al. 2001, p.102 cited in Miler & Ewest, 2010, p.52). Therefore, the aim of this chapter is not to compare religions or to separate between religious beliefs and cultural values or to claim that one faith is better or worse than the other is. It attempts to describe and analyse the main beliefs, virtues, values, principles and practices by which individuals conduct themselves in organizational contexts because they are influenced by a particular religion and/or philosophical doctrine. As far as East Asia is concerned, the most influential doctrine is that of Confucianism, followed by Buddhism and Taoism, and then Islam and Christianity. The common moral and ethical values of these belief systems are described and their influence on the main functions of human resource management is discussed; using evidence from the scriptures and published texts. Finally, a conclusion of the main issues is drawn after a discussion of religiosity and the spirit of capitalism in East Asia.

Religion, religiosity and ethical behavior

Religion is a belief or a set of beliefs that form a common doctrine, ideology, faith, creed, and a system, by which people conduct themselves, relate with each other and to God. This is a spiritual interpretation of the concept of religion and a general interpretation of the divine religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam that follow external revelations from God. However, there are definitions that see religion as a human thing with no relationship to God. For example, Smith (1998, p.183) defined religion as "a way of life woven around people's ultimate concerns" while Nigosian (1990, p.6) postulated that religion is "the creative activity of the human mind that satisfies inherent spiritual needs and desires". It can be argued that the later definitions apply to most of the Asian beliefs and in particular, Hinduism,

Buddhism, Taoism, and the like because they came from individuals' insights and consciousness as a result of their concerns about human social order, justice, desires, sufferings, harmony and so on (Barrett, 1993; McGreal, 1995; Hill, 2006). Different religions have had various effects on the attitudes, moral character, work ethics and value systems of individuals in different societies (King et al., 2009; Miler and Ewest, 2010; Pekerti & Sendjaya, 2010; Hage & Posner, 2015). Most of the world religions teach the virtues of piety, compassion, helping and giving, kindness, love and sacrifice. They are supposed to help us to follow the right path to goodness and to reject what is bad for us. However, it can be argued that many ideologies and cultural values and norms have the same aims as those of great religions. This is because the relationship between religion and culture is in most cases a source of major confusions. It is generally assumed that religion is only one of the components of a broader cultural spectrum in a society but this differs from one society to another. In most countries, religion has some degree of influence on the cultural values of their people and their institutions (Hofstede, 1991; Tayeb, 1997). Such influence depends on the type of religion and the level of religiosity in a particular society. Although this analysis is beyond the scope of the chapter, it can be argued that religious beliefs make only a small but growing element of the overall spiritual fabric and cultural norms and values of Asian societies.

Religiosity, which is also referred to as spirituality, is the extent to which religion is manifested in society in its different rituals, symbols and forms of relationships (McCleary & Barro, 2006; Hage & Posner, 2015). It is also simply defined as the belief in a religion, a philosophy or an ideology, and the devotion and commitment to follow its teachings, policies and rules. According to McDaniel & Burnett (1990) religiosity can be measured behaviorally and cognitively. Behavioral measurements include attendance to the places of worship, involvement in religious activities, giving to religious charities, supporting and promoting the

causes of religious organizations. Cognitive measurements refer to the level of spiritual devotion a person holds towards his/her religion or the extent to which religion is important in the daily life of an individual. In other words, religiosity or spirituality can only exist when there is a belief system, which may or may not be a religion.

A number of factors ranging from individual attributes to organizational and social factors influence ethical behaviours. Individual attributes can be mental and physical, inherited or developed, and personally or group inspired. Religiosity plays a major role in the perception and expression of such attributes in an organizational context. While this cannot be denied, religion can only be one of the factors that may influence ethical behavior because the influence of other social, economic, political and environmental factors cannot be underestimated. According to Magill (1992) the nature of ethical behavior depends on the person's level of personal religiosity. Moreover, according to Weaver and Agle (2002) "religiosity is known to have an influence on human attitudes and behavior. This behavior is influenced by religious self-identity, which was formed as a result of the internalization of the role expectations offered by the religion" (cited in Rashid & Ibrahim, 2008: 909).

Therefore, it can be concluded that religion is more of a social construct (Senguta, 2010) that develops into socio-economic and political contexts while religiosity is the spiritual aspect of that social construct which makes the difference between believing and implementing what is believed. One may believe in an idea or ideology to make it part of his/her religion without practicing that religion, making religion a pre-requisite for religiosity (Hage & Posner, 2015). This is why there is a strong link between ethics and religion in the practice of management (see Sidani & Thornberry, 2010). Ethical values are good religious beliefs but being ethical does not always imply being religious and vice versa could be true. Moreover, many studies have linked religiosity to ethical behavior (Weibe & Fleck, 1980; Magill, 1992; Weaver & Agle, 2002; Vitell, Paolillo & Singh, 2006). It has also been found

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that ethical behavior may have no relationship to religiosity (Abratt et al., 1992). A study by McDonald & Pak (1997) found that religious orientations had no influence on ethical behavior. Factors like ethnic origin, nationality, educational background, age and status were also found to play a significant role in determining ethical behavior (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1999; Rashid & Ibrahim, 2008) rather than religion or religiosity.

People of different societies and communities have differing levels of religiosity (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1999; Ford, Nonis & Hudson, 2005; Rashid & Ibrahim, 2008) because of their histories, cultures, political systems and levels of economic development and industrialization. For example, the Chinese of Mainland China have less concern for religion than the Chinese of Malaysia and the latter have less concern for religion than the Indians and Malays of the same country. Therefore, it can be deducted that although Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism are not divine religions, the ethical behaviors of their followers imply having a level of religiosity/spirituality. According to Lim (2015, p.17), "Confucianism is not so much a religion as it is a code for social conduct and its influence is so pervasive that Chinese function unconsciously in a Confucian manner". This implies the existence of religiosity without a religion among many Chinese people (see Chapter in this volume on the influence of Confucianism in HRM in China, Japan and South Korea).

The role of religion and religiosity/spirituality in East Asian societies

There are many religions and philosophies that have induced differing levels of religiosity among the various nations and societies of East Asia but the most influential ones are Confucianism and Taoism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. Being mindful of the fact that the effects of each of these belief systems on the practice of management and employee relations are also covered in other parts of this book, the focus here will be on the role of these beliefs in managing people in selected East Asian countries.

Confucianism and Taoism

Confucianism and its effects on the practice of human resource management and employee relations in Asian societies are well and clearly discussed in other chapters of this book. This brief discussion here is to emphasize the point that both Confucianism and Taoism are not religions but philosophies that have characterised the cultures of Asian societies to the extent that they are often treated as religions in the absence of a dominant divine religion (Barrett, 1993; Oldstone-Moore, 1998, 2005).

Confucianism came from Confucius who was a teacher and a wise man in 551-479 B.C. At a time when China was characterized by social anarchy, wars, elitism and inequality, Confucius used his wisdom and strong character to teach the virtues of social relationships that led to the establishment of a harmonious society (Oldstone-Moore, 1998; Hill, 2006). Confucianism sees the existence of individuals through their relationships with others (Sungmoon, 2008; Lim, 2015) and is often summarised in this Confucius proverb: "*If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there is peace in the world*" (Smith, 1994: 10 cited in Steiner, Gilliland and Skarlicki, 2002: 56).

With the passing of time, Confucius teachings became integrated with other beliefs and cultural values initially of Buddhism and then Islam and Christianity. One of the aspects of following Confucianism is to be able to choose any religious belief, as a Buddhist, Christian or Muslim, while adhering to the traditional Confucian principles of social relationships. In addition, Confucianism fitted well with the strict enforcement of the law by the authoritarian and totalitarian governments that dominated Asian countries. This phenomenon is present to varying degrees in all Asian countries where for centuries the

absolute authority resides with the head of state and it is natural for the individuals to be law obedient.

Besides Confucianism, there was the emergence of **Taoism or Daoism**, which was derived from *Tao Te Ching* and was introduced by Lao Zi in the 6th century BC. It is interpreted as the path to the right conduct or the way to achieving moral and physical order without having to strive in pain. It is believed that this kind of order can only be achieved through harmony with nature. Unlike Confucianism that focuses on the moral behaviours of human beings, Taoism focuses on nature and its elements like darkness and light, day and night, moon and sun, *ying* and *yang* as well as men and women. According to Taoism, these harmonious and complementary elements are continuously changing in their different formats but in one direction, which is 'The Way'. In this respect, natural rules rather than societal rules of Confucianism have to be followed with pure simplicity in the pursuit of eternal life or the way. Authority, seniority, family ties and the virtues of decency, filial submission and loyalty are seen as natural behaviors (Hill, 2006). Taoism came to complement the social rules of Confucianism and then it accepted the concept of spiritual guidance as it became in contact with Buddhism that has been also influential in East Asia.

Buddhism

Buddhism came mainly from Hinduism because Buddha was a Hindu prince who denounced the practice of Hinduism in relation to caste, rituals, austerities, creation and self, and accepted the belief in the existence through reincarnation and being guided by the laws of cause and effect (*karma*) (McNair, 2015). Hinduism is one of the oldest belief systems in Asia going back for more than two thousand years B.C. It started in India and then spread into Southeast Asia. There are many sects and different interpretations of the original Hindu ideas but it is based on the belief that the world has a source, (*Brahman*) from where it began

and it will return to that source after going through numerous reincarnations (rebirths). The process of life goes upwards towards *Brahman* and downwards towards material existence that is decided by the laws of *Karma*. According to Hinduism, a current life of a human being is determined by his/her actions in the previous life and the experiences of a future life are determined by the current life and so on (Knott, 2016). The practice of meditation is believed to free a person from his/her attachment to material existence to become a spiritual being. There are many and different gods in Hinduism and each god is a display of a particular superlative creature. Despite its influence on Buddhism, Hinduism is not widely practiced in East Asia, and therefore, its effects on people management and employee relations are not discussed in this chapter.

Siddhartha Gautama (around 563-483BC) is known as Gautama Buddha or the Buddha was a sage and enlightened man who did not claim to be a prophet or a superhuman being but just someone who was able to identify and understand the sources of pain and suffering in people. He introduced a basic pattern of living that is meant to free human beings from suffering, sorrow and despair to live a life of awakening and enlightenment through meditation and rejection of material existence. This basic way of life, which is known as Theravada, was preached in India and then spread into Southeast Asia until the first century A.D when Mahayana was introduced in Northern India as another version of Buddhism with more teachings and forms of meditation. The teachings of Buddha are called *Dharma* which are based on four noble truths: 1) all life is suffering; 2) suffering is caused by desires; 3) suffering has an end; and 4) the end of suffering is achieved by reaching *Nirvana* through eight right paths of behavior which are: 1) understanding; 2) thought; 3) speech; 4) action; 5) livelihood; 6) effort; 7) mindfulness; and 8) concentration. In other words, the paths to the end of suffering involve good thinking, not harming others, not overindulging, not having

malicious thoughts or intentions, awareness of what to do, and meditation (Rarick, 2007; McNair, 2015).

As Buddhism spread into East Asia, it integrated and developed with the belief systems of the societies it encountered. It shares with Confucianism the five core virtues as Buddha's five precepts and contributed to the emergence of Taoism and Shintoism in China (Ling, 2004). Today the majority of the Buddhist population is in China, mainly in the Tibet region, and East Asia with the highest percentage is in Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar and Japan. Together with legalism and other ideologies like Communism, these ancient philosophies (Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism) of social order, morality and spirituality have contributed to the making of contemporary Chinese culture. However, one should not underestimate the increasing influences of other world religions such as Christianity and Islam as they are the fastest growing faiths in the People's Republic of China, and in all other East Asian countries.

Islam

Islam was first introduced to China in 650 A.D. with the arrival of a delegation led by the companion of Prophet Mohammed, Sa'ad ibn Abi Waqqas. The delegation was sent by the companion and the third Caliph of Islam, Uthman ibn Affan, eighteen years after the death of Prophet Mohammed, to invite the Chinese Emperor Gaozong during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) to accept the faith of Islam (Wang, 2000; *BBC, Religion & Ethics, online*). It was reported that the Emperor expressed his admiration and was generally pleased with the virtues and rules of the new religion, seeing that many of its aspects were compatible to the teachings of Confucius and granted the freedom to the Muslims to practice their religion in China (Ting, 1987; Cho, 2003; Gladney, 2004). Since then, Islam has been recognized as one of the religions of China even during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when all religious

practices were forbidden. As a recognized minority religion, it was officially declared by the new republican government after the fall of the Manchu dynasty in 1911 that the country belonged equally to the Han, Hui (Muslim), Tsang (Tibetan) and the Meng (Mongol) people (Gladney, 1996). Today's Muslims in China are likely to be born in China and they are likely to be nationalists, Confucians and even Communists as there are very few Chinese converts and very few Muslim immigrants to China (Gladney, 2004) but they are still a minority in comparison to the overall population of China. Nevertheless, although a minority religion in East Asia (about 3% in China, 1% in Japan and less than 1% in Korea) the number of Muslims is significantly large in comparison with those of other Muslim countries. For example, there are more Muslims in China today than they are in Malaysia, and more than every Arab country with the exception of Egypt.

Islam is a way of life that is guided by a set of rules and principles that are based on the revealed book, the holy *Quran*, the doings and sayings (*Sunnah* and *hadith*) of the Prophet Mohammed, the consensus of the Muslim scholars (*Ijma'a*), and in some cases individual scholars' interpretations of the *Quran* and *Hadith* (*Ijtihad*). The *Quran*, which is also spelt Koran, contains the words of God that were revealed syllable by syllable to Prophet Mohammed in Makkah and Medina (currently cities in Saudi Arabia) over 23 years. It started on 22 December 609 AD, when Prophet Mohammed was 40 years old, and ended in 632 AD, the year of his death. In Islam there is no intermediary between humans and God as the person's relationship with the creator (God or *Allah* in Arabic) is direct through his/her deeds and acts of worship. To become a Muslim one has to believe in the existence and oneness of God, in the Angels, in the revealed books (*Torah* revealed to Moses, the Psalms [*Zabur*] revealed to David, the Gospel (*Injil*) revealed to Jesus, and the *Quran* revealed to Mohammed), in the Prophets, in the Day of Judgment, and in the Divine Order.

Unlike other religions, Islam is "an all-encompassing creed, it governs every aspect of life, public and private, political and economic, and as such is relevant to business activities. In other words, there is no separation between worldly and religious aspects of life", (Tayeb, 1997: 355). In this context, there is a growing literature on Islamic economics, banking, finance, and management. As far as management is concerned, there are core values and principles of management that are derived from the holy *Quran* and the Prophet's *Sunnah* and *Haddith* (See Kalantari, 2005; Branine & Pollard, 2010; Syed and Ali, 2010; Razimi et al. 2014) but the ways by which they are implemented are flexible and changeable depending on the interpretation of the text by different scholars. The core principles are loyalty, truthfulness, obedience, discipline, patience, consultation, professionalism, fairness, dedication, and respect for seniority, and moderate and accountable personality (Tayeb, 1997; Shah, Larbi & Batley, 2007; Branine & Pollard, 2010). It can be seen that Islam has much in common with Buddhism and Confucianism in relation to the virtues of social order and interrelationships. The main difference, which is fundamental, is the belief in the oneness of God and the ways of worshiping and seeking the blessing and pleasure of the one God. In other words, while the social virtues and the principles of relationships in worldly matters are to some extent similar, the differences are in the more divine and spiritual aspects of the religion. Indonesia, Malaysia and the Sultanate of Brunei are predominantly Muslim countries in South East Asia but they are also homes to significant proportions of Christians and Buddhists. More than a third of their populations is from Chinese, Indian and Western European origins, and so the traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity have had a major impact on management practices and social relations. This has resulted in the development of a distinctive mixture of Asian and Western management systems influenced by Islamic values and principles.

Christianity

The presence of Christianity in East Asia is relatively recent, comparatively small but potentially very influential because of the significant growth of Christian believers in the People' Republic of China over the last three decades. For example, the number of Chinese Protestants has grown by an average of 10 percent annually since 1979. Historically, Christianity arrived to China in the late 16th century when the early waves of Christian missionaries led by the Italian Matteo Ricci started preaching in East Asia. By the 19th and 20th centuries Christianity had entered every part of Asia with the spread of Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, British and French empires into the East. However, Christianity declined significantly with the departure of Westerners, the rise of nationalism and the introduction of communism in a number of East and Southeast Asian countries. After the opening up of China in 1979, the Chinese government officially recognized five religions: Buddhism, Catholicism, Daoism, Islam, and Protestantism. Currently, Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism) is the fastest growing religion in China with some predictions that it will be the majority religion overtaking Buddhism within the next twenty years. It seems that the current economic prosperity has led to materialism and hence the creation of a spiritual vacuum. In search for happiness beyond the achievement of material desires, many Chinese are looking for spiritual enlightenment. Given the choice and the freedom to do so, more and more Chinese are choosing Christianity over other faiths, such as Tibetan Buddhism, Islam, or Falun Gong, because Christianity is seen perhaps politically a safer option especially for those who aspire to Western ways of life. Christianity has been present for many years and significantly influential in a number of East and South East Asian countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Singapore and Thailand.

In Western societies, the classical book of Max Weber (1930) on the *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* is possibly the most serious work on the role of religion in

management and organization. He argued that the moral values of Protestantism led to the rise of capitalism in Western industrialized societies. Weber (1930) argued that a relationship exists between certain religions and economic activities of the countries where they are practiced, and the Protestant theology in particular had the strongest link with economic growth and capitalism. "In the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Weber argues that capitalism required a disciplined workforce and regularised investment of capital, driven by the motivation to increase wealth as a goal in itself, rather than to satisfy material needs" (Shah, Larbi & Batley, 2007: 3). Weber (1930) observed that business success was seen as a sign of God's pleasure and a pointer to eternal reward. It was assumed that God blessed profitable work, the individuals who are bestowed this blessing through hard work, and economic use of resources and time are rewarded here and in the hereafter. However, he also stated that Hinduism and Confucianism were "unable to give rise to a capitalist ethic" (Shah, Larbi & Batley, 2007, p.11). It will be argued later in this chapter that Weber's predictions have been proved to be wrong.

Effects of religion and religiosity on the practice of HRM in East Asia

After explaining the type of religions and the nature of religiosity in East Asia, this section is to attempt to analyse how each of the main people management functions might be influenced by these religions put together. It will be discussed how the key common virtues of religiosity and spirituality might have contributed to the contemporary characteristics of human resource management in Asian countries. It can be inferred from the religions and philosophies described above that they all emphasize on keeping harmony and order, providing justice and empowering people. These fundamental goals are based on respect for seniority, acceptance of authority, long-term orientation, humility, self-restraint, and

collectivism. In other words, they seem to promote a soft and gentle approach to human resource management where the workplace looks like a family unit. The organization as a social entity is based on a family like structure and principles of behavior. It is not just in terms of family ownership of conglomerates as in Japan and South Korea but also in terms of management and employee relations even in state owned companies and cooperatives in the People's Republic of China. 'Familism' is characteristic of all of them regardless of type of ownership and plays a significant role in management-workers relations. Superiors as leaders and managers treat their subordinates as their children – with ren (benevolence) and employees [subordinates] should exhibit *zhong* (loyalty) and *yi* (politeness or righteousness) to the organization [institution] and its leaders] (see Fan Xing, 1995; Laulusa, 2008; Sungmoon, 2008; Hashim, 2008; Razimi et al., 2014). The extent to which this type of 'familism' or paternalism, and the spiritual virtues and principles associated with it, has influenced the theory and practice of HRM in East Asian countries is discussed below.

Recruitment and selection

The importance of trust, fairness, equality and competence in the recruitment and selection of employees is emphasized in all the religions described above. Trust seems to be the key to keeping the organization in harmony and free from deception and wrong doings. Commenting on the importance of trust in Chinese society, Lim (2015, p.20) states that "the extent to which one is willing to ascribe good intentions to and confidence in the words and actions of the other people should be strong enough to match favours and trusts of the givers so that they are giving 'face' to those who receive their favours and trusts and that they gain 'face' at the same time because they are thought of as being sincere". Both Buddha and Confucius stressed the importance of trust for maintaining strong interpersonal relationships while in Islam the concept of trust in recruitment is clearly related to strength and

competence. The *Quran* reports what the wife to be of the Prophet Moses said to her father: "O my (dear) father! Engage him (Moses) on wages, truly the best of men for you to employ is the strong and trusty" (Al-Quran, chap.28, verse 26). Accountability, which implies having knowledge and skills to do the job, is also emphasized in Islam. This can be found in the verse that reports Prophet Yusuf saying to the King of Egypt "set me over the store-houses of the land, I will indeed guard them, as one that knows" (Al-Quran, chap.12, verse 55). Other important factors such as motivation, sincerity, knowledge, and responsibility are also mentioned in the *Quran* and in the *Haddih* (see Hashim, 2008; 2010; Branine & Pollard, 2010; Branine, 2011; Razimi et al. 2014).

Nevertheless, when you have an organization that is managed like a family unit, as explained earlier, the importance given to trust in recruitment and selection has often resulted in the inclination to recruit friends and relatives. These actions can be interpreted from a western perspective as nepotism and favouritism. All actions that may promote inequality and discrimination are against the teachings of all religions and philosophies stated above but they are still widely carried out in many Asian countries. This is because the recruitment of friends and relatives is perceived to have positive rather than negative outcomes and reinforces the Confucius fundamental moral behavior, which is to honour the supervisor and to favour the friend and the relative in society (Hwang, 2001). The Chinese *Guanxi* (reciprocal relationships), is used by the Buddhists and the Muslims as well as other religious and non-religious people in all over East and South East Asia in the recruitment and selection of employees to gain employees' loyalty and to have their trust and commitment to the organization. It is believed that reliance on recommendations by friends and relatives, the use of guanxi based on kinship, and political connections will result in trustworthy, loyal and committed employees who will learn their job faster, work harder, and stay in the organization for longer (Tsang, 1998; Shen 2001; Hill, 2006). It can be concluded therefore

that the HRM function of recruitment and selection in East Asian countries is influenced by a common tradition of social relationships (*Guanxi*) rather than by religious beliefs because the over reliance on trust alone in recruitment and selection is different from, if not contradictory to, the Buddhist and Islamic requirement of strength (ability) and accountability. Therefore, there is no evidence yet of religion and religiosity having any significant influence on the practice of recruitment and selection in Asian countries.

Training and development

The belief in the law of causality is embedded in all religions and philosophies that have influenced Asian people's perception of learning and development. It is believed that nothing exists in its own right because everything has been caused by something. The drive of oneself to enlightenment and perfection can only be through understanding that comes from learning, reasoning and acting. For example, in the *Zen* doctrine of Buddhism, self-discipline, learning, self-determination and control of one's path to mastery and perfection are the keys to personal development and the development of others. The Buddha is reported saying: "Only a man himself can be the master of himself...then there is true help and self possession". This can be also encapsulated in the Chinese proverb: "don't give me a fish today and I will starve tomorrow, teach me how to be a fisherman so I will never starve". The Buddha is reported saying: "If a man should conquer in battle a thousand and thousand more, and another should conquer himself, his would be victory, because the greater of victories is the victory over oneself" (cited in Rarick, 2007, p.4). In addition, in Islam there are many verses of the *Quran* that emphasize the concepts of *Itqan* (perfection) and *Ikhlas* (sincerity) in all behaviors or deeds. Humans are expected to learn to do things with perfection and "to ensure that all activities in their daily life are planned and executed at the best level of performance" (Ahmad, 2008, p. 39). It can be inferred that self-improvement through continuous training

and development while seeking perfection and goodness is a crucial element of all Asian societies. Human resource development in Asian countries is inspired by a tradition of learning and self-development.

Moreover, seeking knowledge through reading and learning is strongly advocated by all religions and moral philosophies in Asian countries. Both Buddha and Confucius were teachers. Confucius said: "there is both a great happiness and satisfaction in constant studies" (cited in Sleziak, 2013, pp.31-32). It is also reported that Confucius was "the first person in China to offer education to everyone who came to him, irrespective of that person's social status" (Lin & Stening, 2015, p.5). His main aim was to educate as many people as possible to be the future leaders of a harmonious and prosperous Chinese society. The educated and the knowledgeable persons are highly valued and respected in Asian societies. Teachers are seen as masters and a source of knowledge and wisdom, and treated with high respect not by their students only but by everyone in the community. Being obedient and respectful to the teacher or the "master" is seen as a character of a good learner in all Asian societies.

Challenging the authority of the teacher is seen to be a sign of disrespect, deviance and unwillingness to excel in what is being learnt (Cunningham and Rowley, 2007). In this context, Newell et al. (1999: 291) stated that 'the teacher is the expert and the learner can simply learn by listening and following. Dialogue would be avoided in this situation because dialogue presupposes a process of joint knowledge production, which would undermine the belief in the expert teacher'. This process of learning makes the learners passive receivers of information and dependent on their teachers. This passive, uncritical and dependent approach to learning is common among most Asian societies where memorising is a popular way of gaining knowledge. The religious scripts, the teachings of gurus and sage people and even institutional rules, regulations and policies are learnt by heart through rote and memorising.

Most Asian students have developed the ability to visualize and grasp the written text and accept it as knowledge not to be questioned. This passive process of learning does not stop after school or university level but it transcends to the workplace where employees learn instructions from their managers and the managers learn the rules and regulations by often memorising policy documents produced by their superiors. This style of learning has been very often criticised for producing 'a lot of "vacuum cleaners" – students who sucked up a lot of information but participated little in the classroom' (Hutton, 2000: 22). However, Chan (1999) argued that what seems to be rote and memorising from a western perspective is just a process of Chinese learning by repetition. 'In this case, repetition is used to assist students in the accurate recall of information. Unlike rote learning, repetitive learning enabled the learner to attach meaning to the material learned' (Chan, 1999: 300).

It should be noted that the only way to memorise the *Quran* in Arabic, as many millions of Muslims do throughout the world, is through rote and repetitive learning. It is not a religious requirement but it is the easiest way to preserve the holy book in the minds of the believers and this is how it has been descended unchanged from one generation to another over 15 centuries. Therefore it can be concluded that the fact that most Asian students learn through rote and memorising is traditionally an effective way of learning from texts written in a native language (Chinese, Japanese or Arabic) and has nothing to do with any religious belief. It is a common way of learning that is influenced by tradition rather than religion.

Rewards and remuneration

All Asian religious teachings call for ethical considerations to take precedence over the financial ones. The ultimate reward for one's deeds and behaviors is to be satisfied and to satisfy others, and God for those who believe in God. Unethical earnings through deception, theft, corruption, laziness, and the like are not in the spirit of any belief system because they

may satisfy one side not the other. Therefore, the key factors in an ethical and spiritual reward system are justice, fairness, equality and satisfaction. Those who believe in God and in the day of judgement will seek the eternal reward in the hereafter for all their work in this life.

For example, in Islam, the ultimate reward for any activity is God's pleasure. All deeds in whatever form or size are rewarded in this life and in the life after death. The *Quran* states: "Then shall everyone 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" *(*Al-Quran, chap. 99, verses 7-8). What does this mean at the organizational level? It means that workers are treated equally and rewarded fairly for their work. It also implies that performance appraisal is used at all levels. Work is considered as an act of worship that has to be done with perfection but employment contracts have to be honoured and employees have to be rewarded in line with the terms and conditions of their contracts.

For example, in Islam, the Prophet Mohammed said: "Give the worker his wages before his sweats dries". And in another *Hadith* narrated by Abu Huraira, the Prophet said that God will be against the person who employs a labourer and gets the full work done by him but does not pay him his wages. In reality there is a big gap between what is expected, according to the belief systems and what is actually practiced in the workplace. There are many cases of inequality in pay, discrimination in promotion, exploitation of low wage employees, and so on. It seems that religion and religiosity have had no significant effects on the human resource management function of rewards and remuneration. Most of the current problems of inequality, discrimination and exploitation have emanated from materialistic, non-religions and unethical policies and practices.

Employee Relations

The area where religion and religiosity should have had significant effects is employee relations because most of the religious teachings, as explained above, are about relationships in social and economic life. In a paper on the implications of Confucianism for employee relations in China, Laulusa (2008) confirms that the employee-employer relationships are still based on Confucian social rules and values rather than on the Western style of contract relationships. The employee-employer contractual relationship in Chinese organizations is very often described as a father-children relationship characterized by respect of authority, seniority and older age, obedience to the rules, and loyalty to individuals and institutions (Boisot & Liang, 1992; Chen, 1995; Fan Xing, 1995). Also, according to Confucius, the best way to govern is by virtue or *ren* which means through moral education with benevolence and leading by the example not by imposing legislation (Child & Warner, 2003). In this respect, Confucius is reported saying "if you lead the people with political force and restrict them with law and punishment, they can just avoid law violation, but will have no honour and shame. If you lead them with morality and guide with *Li* [moral codes], they will develop a sense of honour and shame, and will do good of their own accord" (McGreal, 1995, p.7, cited in Child & Warner, 2003, p.8). It can be concluded that those in position of power are requested to treat their subjects or subordinates with respect and kindness, and to consult them in the decisions that concern them. Both employees and employers are expected to have a positive relationship with a minimal level of conflict or aggression. Confucianism emphasizes the importance of group orientation and conflict avoidance. The existence of individuals is in the benefit of others and only within a harmonious relationship and therefore "group pressure is applied to ensure conformity through eliciting shame (losing face), and conflict is generally handled through intra-group mediation rather than an external legal system (Fang Xing, 1995, p.17).

In Islam, the prophet Mohammed said: "Do not dispute with your bother, ridicule him, nor promise him and then break your promise". He also said: "A strong person is not the one who throws his adversaries to the ground. A strong person is the one who contains himself when he is angry". Also in Buddhism, emotions have to be controlled and anger is not encouraged as in the words of Buddha: "Never speak harsh words, for once spoken they may return to you. Angry words are painful and there may be blows for blows". This 'familism' type of employee relations is a result of accumulated beliefs that promote the concept of 'non-self' and reject the concept of 'oneself'. It is believed that individuals can only exist in harmony as groups and communities. For example, the role of trade unions is cooperative and non-adversary and has always been centred on 'labour productivity, worker morale and welfare' (Henley & Nyaw, 1986: 648) in the workplace and at the national level (see also Child & Warner, 2003).

Moreover, stressing the importance of harmony, the Buddha said: "many do not know that we are here in this world to live in harmony. Those who know this do not fight against each other" (cited in Rarick, 2007, p.5). He is also reported saying "all the great rivers on reaching the great ocean lose their former names and identities and are reckoned simply as the great ocean". Similarly, this notion of collectivism and 'no-self' is found in Islam as the Prophet Mohammed said: "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself". And he also said "the wolf eats the sheep that wanders off alone". In other words, these religious teachings promote the right to association, to join trade unions, to collective bargaining, workers' participation, teamwork and joint consultation. Analysing the resurgence of Islam in Asian countries, Tayeb (1997, p.5) states that "self-discipline, trustfulness, honesty, resolve, loyalty, and abstinence, should encourage managers to trust their subordinates' judgement and integrity, which could in turn lead to a participative management style. Co-operation, patience, and family-like relationships among people,

should encourage teamwork and mutual support within an organization and care for the community outside it". Participation in the decision making process through consultation is clearly stated in the *Quran.* It is stated in the chapter of Consultation: "and their business is conducted through consultation among themselves" (*Al-Quran*, Chapter 42, verse 38). The Prophet Mohammed also said: "He who consults is guarded against regret; one who mistreats those under him will not enter paradise".

Another argument for employees' right to representation and to be consulted and involved in the process of decision-making is that all religions came to free people from suffering including exploitation in the workplace. According to Syed and Ali (2010, p.462), "the existence of a union is treated as a virtuous endeavor and a necessary condition for the prevention of wickedness. This implies that the formation of trade union has a religious dimension and is a moral duty to counter possible abuse at the workplace". However, despite all these spiritual and religious teachings that promote workers' rights to organise and to join trade unions, many Asian countries have imposed tight controls of the activities of trade unions. Even when trade unions are recognized and employees are free to form and to join trade unions, genuine collective bargaining is very rare and industrial actions are very often prohibited. Authoritarian regimes throughout Asian have controlled trade unions' movements and democratic freedoms under the disguise of national unity, national security and economic growth. Asian employee relations are influenced by the state in power rather than by religion or philosophy because the state is the largest employer, the regulator, the policy-maker and the decision- maker. Cultural values such as avoiding conflict, saving face, keeping harmonious relations and respecting the lines of authority have contributed to preserving the domineering role of the state in employee relations. Therefore, it can be concluded that despite the emphasis of most Asian religions and philosophies on individuals' rights and freedoms there is very little evidence of these at the organisational level in Asian countries.

Religiosity and the Spirit of Capitalism in East Asia

When talking about religiosity and the spirit of Capitalism, one cannot avoid the work of Max Weber (1930) and the responses it has received over the years. Although Weber's theory has been widely reviewed and criticised it still remains valid to a great extent in many Western countries. However, it is his evaluation of the effects of other religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam that has not stood the test of time. His argument that the core doctrines of Confucius were the main reasons for the failure of China to develop and industrialize as the Western countries has been fiercely challenged. Many studies have concluded that Confucianism has had significant effects of the impressive economic growth and prosperity of Asian countries (Yu, 1987; Amsden, 2001). Yu (1987) provides a critical analysis of Weber's theory and argued that the doctrines of Buddhism and Daoism were during the Tang dynasty (618-907) similar to the Protestant ethic and these were strengthened by the neo-Confucianism during the Song dynasty (960-1279) and until the economic reforms of the 1980s. The slowness of Chinese economic and social development happened only when religious beliefs including Confucianism and the spirit of capitalism were deliberately suppressed, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The post-1979 reforms encouraged the spirit of consumerism which has precipitated economic growth and social development. Japan, South Korea and Singapore are industrialised and capitalist countries while still maintaining their traditional values. For example, from a study of 72 Chinese entrepreneurs and executives, Redding (1995) concluded that "Confucian core religious values such as paternalism, collectivism, feminism and social hierarchy have created a significant context from which new ventures are fostered" (cited in Miler & Ewest, 2010, p.51). Wooddrum (1985) also found that Buddhism had a similar effect in Japan to Protestantism in the West.

The economic dynamism of the region over the last three decades has been often attributed to the work ethics and the moral and spiritual values of their people. Economic and social success of Asian countries such as Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea can be attributed to 'Confucian capitalism' but it can also be argued that Western influence or the globalisation of capitalism is the major factor in bringing in such economic miracles. Yes, as stated above, the prevailing religious principles in Asian countries urge people to work hard, to produce, to earn and to own but these are also the key drivers of capitalism. Most of the characteristics of current western management practice such as commitment, loyalty, sharing, caring, continuous improvement and harmony already exist in the management of employees in Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea. These characteristics are at the heart of every Asian culture and they condition employees' work ethics, employers' business and consumers' ethical behavior. Studies of the economic miracles of Japan and the other Asian tigers in the 1980s agreed that the success of these countries is due to their ability to adopt western technology and adapt them to their traditional cultural values and beliefs, especially the teachings of Confucius (Ouchi, 1980; Cheng, 1998, and many others.

Moreover, it is argued that the principles of management in Buddhism and Islam are consistent with much of western management thinking (see Rarick, 2007; Branine & Pollard, 2010). However, it is also pointed out that the impact of socio-economic change and western influence on the young population of Asians, who are attracted to Western values and ways of life, should not be underestimated. It is feared that the young generation of Asians will gradually move away from their traditional values because they have been constantly exposed to Western management education and life style in the globalizing world of capitalism. For example, a study by Ralston, Egri, Stewart, Terpstra and Kaicheng (1999, p.425) found that in China "the emergent profile of the New Generation of Chinese managers and professionals

who will be leading China into the 21st century is one of a generation whose values are clearly more individualistic, less collectivistic and less committed to Confucian philosophy than their previous generation counterparts". However, so far there is very little evidence that the young generation of Chinese managers and business people are abandoning their cultural norms and values. From a recent study on the role of Confucianism in South Korea, Sleziak (2013, p.45) concludes that "the younger generations, finding their own space within urban areas and being under influence of foreign value systems may depart from the economic and social interests of their parents and grandparents; nevertheless the respect for the elderly they were taught since childhood is not suppressed by the modernity. Similarly, the entire traditional Confucian aspect of Korean life is neither forgotten nor disregarded in the process of modernization". Another study by Lim (2015) in Singapore found that "the mentality of Chinese Singaporeans is still shaped largely by the teachings of Confucius" (p.17). Therefore, it can be concluded that religiosity in East Asian countries encourages the spirit of capitalism and there is no evidence of successful Chinese managers and entrepreneurs, old or young, moving away from their traditional values in the face of western capitalism.

Conclusions

The recent renewed interest in religiosity in the world and in Asia in particular has attracted the attention of scholars from various disciplines but there is still very little academic research on the impact of religion and religiosity on management theory and practice. A contributing factor to this is that religion is seen as only one of the components of a broader cultural spectrum in a society. It can be confirmed that religious beliefs make only a small part of most of the East Asian countries' cultural norms and values. They are all secular countries and most of them are multi-religious and multi-cultural while some of them are institutionally non-religious (atheists). In overall, the most influential doctrine is that of

Confucianism but the passing of time, Confucius teachings became integrated with other beliefs and cultural values of the region, initially Buddhism and Taoism and then Islam and Christianity. One of the aspects of following Confucius philosophy is to be able to choose any religious belief, as a Buddhist, Christian or Muslim, while adhering to the traditional Confucian principles of social behavior. Also, Confucianism fitted well with the strict enforcement of the law by the authoritarian and totalitarian governments that dominated Asian countries. This integrated belief system that characterizes the cultures of East Asian societies emphasize on keeping harmony and order, providing justice and empowering people. These fundamental goals are based on respect for seniority, acceptance of authority, long term orientation, humility, self-restraint, and collectivism. In other words, they seem to promote a soft and gentle approach to human resource management where the workplace looks like a family unit. However, there is very little evidence of a significant influence of any religion on the practice of human resource management in East Asian countries because the gap between religious teachings and the policies and practices of managing people is very wide. Moreover, as far as the spirit of capitalism is concerned, religiosity in East Asian countries has no conflict with western principles of management and there is no clear evidence of the claim that Chinese managers are moving away from their traditional values in the face of capitalism and modernity.

The above theoretical contribution to the debate on the role of religion and religiosity in the workplace and their effects on the management of human resources in Asian countries is in need of further empirical evidence. More research is needed on this subject. It should be noted that even those who can understand the different religions through learning their concepts, scriptures, guidance, practices, rituals, places and leaders, they may not be able to ascertain their effects on people management without empirical academic research. It is often easy to attribute the way people manage their resources to their culture rather than to their

religion because of the confusing overlap between culture and religion. Hence, this chapter is a modest attempt to scheme through the vast array of norms, values, rituals and practices that have characterized the cultures of the many Asian countries and conditioned, to various extents, HRM policies and practices in their organizations. Being aware of the sensitivity of the subject of religion, any possible unintentional generalizations should be treated with the understanding that in all religions, there are different interpretations.

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