

Defining and Measuring Professionalism in Professions of Service Sector.

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is intended to measure the degree of professionalism in the professions like doctors, professors, lawyers, librarians, and advertisers. The study will measure the level of professionalism among them on the base of which their expectations for outcomes in the respective fields can be denied or honored. Moreover, the study will identify problem areas in these professions and opportunities for improving the quality of professional's work. This study attempts to measure professional's individual attributes by using questionnaire developed by William Snizek in 1972. This tool measures five factors of professionalism: organization as major referent, belief in public service, belief in self-regulation, sense of calling to the field and autonomy. Professionalism will be measured by calculating means of each factor and collective mean of factors for each profession. The study suggest that all under study professions have professionalism in them but there is room for improvement as well.

Keywords

Professionalism, Factors of Professionalism, Public Service

Introduction

This study discuss professionalism with respect to five professions i.e. doctors, teachers, lawyers, librarians and advertisers. The reason for studying these respective professionals is the significance of their work. The importance of doctors can't be underestimated. They are viewed as healer and have sense of responsibility towards human race (Bloom, 2002). Lives of patients are in their hands so professionalism cannot be compromised in this profession and it is important to check their seriousness towards their work (Rothman, 2000). Every civilized society has a strong legal system. In the case of legal profession, the critical question is whether lawyers are giving their best? (Hamilton, 2008). This study will try to answer this question. Teaching profession is extremely

important for any society because they are in a position to shape the future leaders of a nation (Jon, Marks, Rowland, & Walker, 2001). So for the sake of better future it is important to measure their professionalism and to identify the weak areas which this study intended to do.

Literature Review

The concept of professions is not the new one in occupations. Its origin dates back to pre-literature time. Initially the number of professions were few i.e. law and medicine but with the passage of time more and more occupations became professions through professionalization process (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933). After attaining the status of profession the professionals are expected to have certain characters like creativity, knowledge base, interpersonal skills, etc. (Goodwin, 1994) and when it comes to professionalism, it refers to those attitudes or behaviors that lead to success (Mercedes S. Tichenor, 2004). The concept of professionalism is quiet difficult to explain and measure because existing literature does not provide any solid theoretical foundation (Kolsaker, 2008). It is a compound or multi-dimensional concept (Moncrief, 1988; Thomas E Boyt, 2001). Therefore most of the discussions about it involves implicit assumptions, varying and incomplete usages (Freidson, 1994; I. G. A. Hargreaves, 1996). It can be said that the meaning of professionalism vary for different people so it is difficult to use it in one concrete way without any language policy (Fox, 1992) or we can say that Professionalism is a complex concept (FW Hafferty, 2010). Most of the professionalism studies focused on institutional professionalism (Burns & Haga, 1977; Martz, 1988; Zeff, 1987) and professional organization (Hooks, 1992; Lindblom & Ruland, 1997; Willmot, 1989) rather professional individual attributes. However Richard Hall (R. Hall, 1968) was one of the few scholars who measured professional behaviors and attributes at individual level (William E. Shafer;Wood M. Liao, 2002).

The development of a nation can be determined by the educational standard of the citizens. Libraries are established with the motive of helping students in improving their study and reading skills so that they become independent learners. Teachers and librarians both contribute in the education of students, so professionalism of librarians are of great importance too and can't be neglected (Itsekor, 2011). Advertisement creates awareness and educates society on different social issues. The work of advertisers requires great depth research, responsibility and creativity (Keane, 1974).

Professionalism means excellence irrespective of any occupation. Pro a short form of professional and it stands for one of the best or among best. Professionals basically profess that they have better understanding of certain matters and can provide solutions for the problems of their clients (Everett C. Hughes, 1963). In short they claim to have expertise in certain skills or field of knowledge (Baggini, 2005).

The word professionalism is used in different context and it is difficult to provide a single definition of it. In normal routine, it refers to activities that a person is not willing to do voluntary and is being paid for them. It is also used to show occupational status of the person (Kennedy, 2007). Meaning of professionalism in business field is taken as behaviors which lead to success (Mercedes S. Tichenor, 2004). Professionalism is a tough concept as it is not well explored and existing work doesn't provide any solid theoretical foundations. It is very difficult to identify its characteristics (Kolsaker, 2008).

It is a compound or multi-dimensional concept (Moncrief, 1988; Thomas E Boyt, 2001). Therefore most of the discussions about it involves implicit assumptions, varying and incomplete usages (Freidson, 1994). Even Goodson also complained about lack of consensus on meaning of professionalism (I. G. A. Hargreaves, 1996). It can be said that the meaning of professionalism varies for different people so it is difficult to use it in one concrete way without any language policy (Fox, 1992). In fact the idea of not having any consensus on the base on which professionalism can be defined is widely acknowledged. Some authors defined Professional as a term characterized by technical or ethical standards of a profession. A professional must have the qualities of a good leader with proper knowledge, skills, confidence, commitment to duties and the urge to learn more etc. He must also serve as a role model for his subordinates (Jernigan, 1976).

Most of the professionalism based studies focus on occupational or institutional professionalism (Burns & Haga, 1977; Martz, 1988; Zeff, 1987) and professional organization (Hooks, 1992; Lindblom & Ruland, 1997; Willmot, 1989) rather than professional individual attributes. However Richard Hall (R. Hall, 1968) is one of the few scholars who measured professional behaviors and attributes at individual level (William E. Shafer; Wood M. Liao, 2002). Hall identified indicators of Professionalism in different professions i.e.

1. Using the Professional Organization as a Major Referent i.e. POMR (Goode, 1957; E. Greenwood, 1957): POMR means involvement of employees in formal organization or social groups within or outside the organization (R. Hall, 1968). It is concerned with the existence of formal or informal professional organization (Savard, 1986). These organizations help their members to enhance their working standards and gain collective reputation (Gray Southon, 1998). Activities are designed in such a way that they enhance creditability, boost professional skills, educate professionals and improve their overall performance (Bugher, 1983).
2. Belief in Public Service i.e. BPS (Gross, 1958; Taylor, 1968): One of the most fundamental characteristics of traditional profession is the recognition of social commitment and obligation to serve general public (Parsons, 1954). The employee must believe that his work or job is beneficial for himself as well as for the society (R. Hall, 1968). If the interests of a professional and society conflicts, it is expected from professionals to sacrifice their benefit for the betterment of society (Wilensky, 1964). Professional work is an orientation of service towards society or others (Jean E. Wallace, 2001).
3. Belief in Self-Regulation i.e. BSR (Goode, 1957; E. Greenwood, 1957): The concept of self-regulation involves criticism and opinion of the coworkers or colleagues who are the part of the profession therefore their opinion matters in comparison to a layman (Abbot, 1988; Halls, 1968). So the person who is in the best place to judge the work of a professional is his professional colleague not any outsider. William Goode divides society in to two parts i.e. larger society and professional society. Larger society put their trust on professional society. Professional society consists of professional. The society have an understanding that professionals would never exploit them not because professionals are better or nobler than any other citizen but the professional associations keep an eye on the activities of professionals because they believe that any kind of exploitation

- on the behalf of professional would not only effect the individual but also lower the prestige of the profession as a whole.
4. Sense of Calling to the Field i.e. SCF (Gross, 1958; Kornhauser, 1962) : It refers to the professional dedication and commitment of the person (R. Hall, 1968). Professional commitment means the degree to which a person is involved in his professional job. Some scholars take professionalism as synonymous with professional commitment (Lopopolo, 2002) as both require professional work to be focal point of a practitioners life and expect a long term dedication and commitment towards their occupation (Leicht & Fennell, 2001). Professionals having sense of calling towards their particular field are motivated to work even in unfavorable conditions (R. Hall, 1968). They believe that worth of their expertise lies in full devotion (Kornhauser, 1962).
 5. Autonomy (Scott, 1965): Some sociologist view professionalism as an effort by some occupations to obtain control (power) over their employer and client (Freidson, 1973; T. J. Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977; Roth, 1974). Autonomy is the most discussed and supported component of professionalism (Engel, 1970; Peter F. Meiksins, 1989; Snizek, 1972). Autonomy indicates the power of a professional to make his own decisions without any external interference. This shows his desire to make his work related decisions independently (Snizek, 1972).

Methodology

This is a descriptive study in which survey was conducted to measure professionalism of doctors, lawyers, professors, librarians and advertisers through questionnaire. Unit of analysis were individuals not any organizations. This study attempts to measure professional's individual attributes. The study was conducted in natural environment which is known as non-contrived study. This study aims at finding the degree of professionalism of certain selected professions of service sector. Therefore its population with reference to service sector includes health sector profession, legal profession, teaching profession, librarianship, and advertising sector.

Hall established 50-item Likert scale to measure five factors of professionalism (R. Hall, 1968). It was a great approach and contributed a lot in the measurement of professionalism. Later Snizek reassessed Hall's scale and eliminated half of the items which were unreliable while maintaining Cronbach alpha of 0.841 (Snizek, 1972). Snizek empirical reassessment of Hall's scale was used by many (Arthur G. Bedeian, 1991; Bartol, 1979; Charles A. O'Reilly III, 1980; John T. Schnitzius, 1980; Mohamed Gamal Sabet, 1993; Paula C Morrow, 1988; Raelin, 1986a).

Stratified sampling technique was used in the research. Doctors were taken from health sector and they were divided into public and private hospital. Data was collected from two private and two public hospitals on the base of convenience. From teaching professions professors were taken and were also divided into public and private institution professors. Questionnaires were distributed in one public and one private university. Librarians were also divided into private and public librarians. Data was collected from four public and two private libraries. In the case of legal profession lawyers were selected and data was collected from high court and district court Lahore. Population of advertising sector was divided into sponsors and agencies.

This research has used quantitative approach which means that an objective and systematic process is used to collect data and test research hypothesis. The instrument used to collect data was questionnaire. Questionnaire was developed by William Snizek in 1972. Snizek's scale was actually a reassessment of Hall's scale of professionalism (R. Hall, 1968) which was a 50-item scale to measure five factors of professionalism. Hall's scale is the best scale to measure professionalism (Blezek, 1987). Snizek reassessed Hall's scale and eliminated half of the items which were unreliable while maintaining Cronbach alpha of 0.843 (Snizek, 1972). Snizek empirical reassessment of Hall's scale was later used by many (Arthur G. Bedeian, 1991; Bartol, 1979; Charles A. O'Reilly III, 1980; Goetz, 1991; Haywood-Farmer & Ian Stuart, 1990; John T. Schnitzius, 1980; Lawrence P. Kalbers, 1995; Mohamed Gamal Sabet, 1993; Nik Hazimah Nik Mat, 2010; Paula C Morrow, 1988; Raelin, 1986a) . Richard Hall himself recommend Snizek shorter version of scale (Bobo, 1979; Yoon, Yoon, Hwang, Mun, & Lee, 2008)

The questionnaire uses 5 point Likert scale consisting of 25 items, measuring 5 factors i.e. 5 items for each factor. Five point Likert-type rating scale is: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), Neutral (N), disagree (DA) and strongly disagree (SD) with scores 1 to 5 respectively.

Data Analysis:

Table 1- Professional Organization as major referent i.e. POMR

Professionals	Means
Doctors	3.20
Lawyers	4.24
Librarians	3.53
Professors	3.59
Advertisers	3.18

Table 1 depicts the results of one of the dimension of professionalism which is POMR. All the professions have mean score which is more than average cut value of 3 so they all have positive response toward this dimension.

Table 2- Belief in Social service i.e. BSS

Professionals	Means
Doctors	3.12
Lawyers	4.08
Librarians	3.04
Professors	3.09
Advertisers	3.54

Table 2 illustrate second dimension which is BSS. This dimension measures professional's perception about the importance of their work in the eyes of society. This understanding is more common among lawyers as compare to other professions under

study with the highest mean 4.08. Lawyers are followed by advertisers with 3.54 mean, doctors with 3.12 mean, professors with 3.09 mean and librarians with 3.04 mean.

Table 3- Belief in Self-Regulation i.e. BSR

Professionals	Means
Doctors	3.14
Lawyers	3.99
Librarians	3.30
Professors	3.12
Advertisers	3.08

Table 3 examines third dimension which is BSR. Here self doesn't refer to an individual but a profession. Hence professional's work can only be judged by his colleague professional for whom understanding of each other work is required. Results depict that lawyers have better understanding about each other work with highest mean which is 3.99. Other professions can be graded as follows: (2) librarians with 3.30 mean, (3) doctors with 3.14 mean, (4) professors with 3.12 mean and finally advertisers at 5th position with 3.08 mean.

Table 4- Sense of Calling to Field i.e. SCF

Professionals	Means
Doctors	3.31
Lawyers	4.12
Librarians	3.53
Professors	3.79
Advertisers	3.56

Results of the above table 4 explain degree of professional commitment of the professionals with their respective professions. According to recorded responses, lawyers seem more committed to their profession. They score highest among other professions. Under the light of calculated means, professions can be categorized in the following order: (1) Lawyers (4.12), (2) professors (3.79), (3) advertisers (3.56), (4) librarians (3.53) and (5) doctors (3.31).

Table 5- Autonomy

Professionals	Means
Doctors	3.05
Lawyers	4.08
Librarians	3.50
Professors	3.42
Advertisers	2.98

Above prepared table 5 presents the responses of professionals regarding their experience of autonomy in the work. Results show that among the professions under study, lawyers experience highest (4.08) level of autonomy followed by librarians (3.50), professors (3.42), doctors (3.05) and least level of autonomy is experienced by advertisers (2.98).

Table 6- Professionalism

Professionals	Means
Doctors	3.1437
Lawyers	4.1008
Librarians	3.3792
Professors	3.4010
Advertisers	3.2667

Degree of professionalism in professions:

1. **Doctors:** Out of maximum score of 5 the mean score of professionalism of doctors is valued at 3.1437 which is very close to average value of 3. Results shows that professionalism exist in doctors at neutral level. In doctors, SCF is stronger than any other attribute of professionalism. The profession of doctors requires a soft heart inclined towards hospitality and the sense of responsibility towards human race (Rothman, 2000). So it is a part of their training to be a responsible human as the life of many patients are in their hands. Doctors work is of such nature that it requires them to be updated for which they made discussions and read medical journals, magazines, research papers, etc at systematic rate. That's why after SCF, POMR behavior is common in doctor. Results show that doctors have positive response towards BSR. As professional are expected to perform activities in the best interest of society (Bloom, 2002), respondent doctors are also agreed to the point that their profession is important for society. The mean score of autonomy is 3.05 which is quiet close to average cut value 3 so we can conclude that doctors have neutral response toward autonomy.
2. **Lawyers:** Lawyers with mean value above 4 shows that they are highly professionals. The practice of using POMR is the most common behavior in lawyers with the mean score of 4.24 which is quite higher than the average cut of value of 3. Lawyers learn more from their practice then from their law institutions. Robert Nelson use craft-like labor process term for lawyers in which lawyer are craftsman committed to produce possible best work which requires complex judgment which they can learn from more experienced mentors (Regan, 1999). In professional organizations, lawyers practice this formal mentor relationship. Experienced lawyers interact with new ones and act as a mentor (Neil Hamilton, 2007). The mean of SCF attribute is valued at 4.21 which is also quite good. This value shows that lawyers agreed to be very committed and dedicated towards their job and are willing to continue their job even in difficult conditions. Respondent lawyers strongly agreed with the point that they experience autonomy and strongly believe in social service. Lawyer's shows strongly agree response towards the point that they can judge each other's competence.
3. **Librarians:** Librarians with mean score of 3.379 are perceived to be professional. Responses shows respondents agreed that they have affiliation with professional organizations. This is because library associations help librarians to improve their knowledge base, face challenges and motivate them, etc (V.K. Thomas, 2010). Their mean score shows that respondents agreed upon having SCF. Respondents

- claim that they practice autonomy in their job. Results show that librarians do know about working activities of their colleagues. Thus they can comment and are in position to judge their coworkers work. Respondent librarians also think that their work/job is important to society as they believe in social service and media and people have a positive or heroic image of librarians (Luthmann, 2007).
4. **Professors:** In the field of teaching, mean value of professionalism is 3.4010 which is greater than 3 so professionalism exist. The most common attribute of professionalism in professors is SCF unlike the results of Hazimah's research in which autonomy is the most common attribute while dedication to profession was the least scored factor (Nik Hazimah Nik Mat, 2010). On the base of the results of this study it appears that currently professional dedication of teachers is not influenced by economic considerations. As professors strongly agreed to be dedicated to their work, so they are also agreed to their participation in professional organizations as it is a source of increasing knowledge and experience which will help teachers in performing their working activities effectively. Respondents also agreed upon experiencing autonomy in their work setting which is good because person feel himself valued when his voice is heard. Whereas mean score of social service and self-regulation attributes are very close to average value of 3 so, we can say respondents are neutral about them.
5. **Advertisers:** The advertiser's mean score of professionalism is 3.2667 which is more than 3 (average cut value) so, we can conclude that advertisers agreed to be professionals and have professionalism. On the base of data analyzed in chapter 4, SCF attribute is the one on which most of the respondents agreed to have. Advertisers are agreed on continuing their work irrespective of any difficulty. The second most common factor of professionalism among advertisers is BSS which means that advertisers understand the importance of their job not only for the individual but also for the society. Respondents also agreed to have affiliation with professional associations and claim to have understanding of their co-worker's work. The recorded response for autonomy is equal to 3 i.e. 2.98 which shows that advertisers have neutral feeling or opinion on experiencing autonomy in their work setting. Organizational settings or structure have sufficient influence on professionalism as they limit autonomy of the workers (Wong & Chan, 2010). It is important for management to address this point as previous studies show that autonomy (professionalism attribute) have a positive impact on organizational-professional conflict (Shafer, Park, & Liao, 2002).

Conclusion

The findings suggest that the professionals of the five selected professions have professionalism in them as their mean scores are greater than three (average cut value). So we can conclude that any demands made by them are justified. Almost all the professionals are dealing with some difficulties in their working scenario. Their scores suggest that all the professionals take their work seriously and maintain the quality of their work irrespective of all the problems but the mean score for all the professions except lawyers fall between 3-3.5 so it can be said that there is huge margin for improvement for the remaining four professions.

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