

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AND JOB PERFORMANCE AMONG STAFF OF AZAD ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY, IRAN

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Article History: Received on 04th October 2017, Revised on 26th December 2017, Published on 12th February 2018

Abstract

Purpose: This study aims at specifying the relationship between workplace spirituality and job performance among Isfahan Azad Islamic university's staff.

Methodology: This study is descriptive correlational one conducted in 2015. Research population were all Isfahan Azad University staff, 375 individuals among the 189 ones were accidentally and based on the mass of their department, and Cochran sample mass selected. Instruments used in this study were [Ashmos \(2000\)](#)'s 22-item questionnaire of workplace spirituality and Paterson's (1970) 15-item questionnaire of job performance. The stability of these questionnaires in Cronbach's Alpha was computed as 0.88 and 0.83 for workplace spirituality and job performance, respectively. Data extracted in this study was analyzed through multi-regression tests, Pierson correlation coefficient and SPSS software of variance analytical tests.

Main Findings: The results of this study show that there exists a meaningful relation between workplace spirituality ($r=0.330$), meaningful work ($r=0.287$), a sense of connection and positive social relations with coworkers ($r=0.298$), individual's alignment with the organization's values ($r=0.326$) and job performance. ($P=0.001$) in the first step, from among these workplace spirituality dimensions, meaningful work is the best indicator of staff's job performance.

Implications: This study and results can throw light on strategies to be adopted to enhance job performance in University staff.

Originality: This type of study is done first time in University.

Keywords: *job performance, workplace spirituality, azad islamic university, Iran*

INTRODUCTION

These days, manpower as the greatest and most important asset of an organization can provide competitive advantages. Therefore, organization managers are to develop and improve manpower inside their organization. Today's organizations will be successful if they can fully respond to their staff's biological, social, mental and spiritual requirements. Concerning the importance and role of manpower and its performance in an organization and the significance of spirituality in human life as well, recently special attention is paid to workplace spirituality. Studies conducted up to now demonstrate instances for the fact that spirituality exhortation has got many advantages for an organization by which organization can enhance its efficiency and functionality. [Neck and Milliman \(1994\)](#) for instance, find out that spirituality positively affects organizations' performance. [\(Kordi & Aftab Azari, 2011\)](#). More spirited individuals do more teamwork in their workplace, treat more kindly and fairly, are more sensitive to others' requirements, more confident, honest and trustworthy, organizationally more committed, less likely to have willing to leave their job and more satisfied with their job.

In these individuals one can easily see increase in creativity and efficacy and more involved in organizational-citizenship behaviors. Therefore, by creating workplace spirituality, organization's managers and leaders make their staff feel themselves as assets of their department and to support themselves and be more compatible with organization purposes and missions. [\(Beik zadeh et al, 2010\)](#) job performance advancement is one of the most significant purposes to which managers are attending, as promotion brings efficiency [\(Moshabaki, 1997\)](#) and causes of growth in the national economy, service qualities and organization production. [\(spectoriel, 2007\)](#) job performance is a degree of task delegated to an individual. [\(Suliman, 2006\)](#) performance has been defined as activities which are usually a part of an individual's job and should be fulfilled by him. [\(Alirezaeei et al, 2013\)](#) one's ability and liking is considered as the basic factor in his performance and efficiency. That is, to what extent has an individual ability (knowledge, skill, experience and eligibility) to do work and to what extent is he eager (motivated, interested, committed and confident) to work.

According to the theoretical framework, various variables influence individuals' performance in the workplace. Spirituality is among these variables. Workplace spirituality consists of one's efforts to fulfill a purpose, a sense of connection and positive social relations with coworkers and individual's alignment with the organization's values and purposes. Spirituality in the workplace is not always and essentially binding to religions, but also it is based on philosophical consideration and an individual's values. Spirituality is concerned to staff who see themselves in a spiritual, moral manner, as spiritual emotions and mentalities need to be quickened. Through special beliefs and emphasis on its formal framework, a religion makes its follower aside from other religions, whereas spirituality is a universal, liberal and intellectual phenomenon. (Taleghani & Mohammadi, 2013).

The implication of workplace spirituality is considered at three levels: individual, group and collaborative and organizational. At the level of individual, spiritual work is enjoying the work, work energy absorption, feeling spiritual at work. At group level, it consists of a fixation feeling at work that is a communications link to other colleagues, staff support for each other and their common purpose. At the level of organization, values computability is comprised of linking to organizational purposes, values compatibility consists of linking to the organization's purposes, linking to organizational values and organization respect of its staff. Those who experience a spiritual life can make themselves and their organization promoted and developed through the methods in accord of the organization's purposes (Milliman et al, 2003).

Researchers believe that workplace spirituality has got many advantages such as; increase in creativity, trustworthiness, honesty and reliability, arousing personal interaction feeling, increasing organization commitment, improving job attitudes like increase in job consent, job incorporating and decrease in job leaving will, enhancing job morality, conscience and motivation which lead (directly or indirectly) to improvement of organization's efficiency, profitability and efficacy (Salajegheh & Farahbakhsh, 2011).

By improving organizational spirituality, managers will be able to promote organization's commitment and thus personal and organizational efficiency. One reason is that individuals have positive reactions toward an organization which satisfies their spiritual requirements and allow them to have a feeling of mental safety and therefore lead to feel valuable and worshipful as human (Taleghani & Mohammadi, 2012) .

Today, competitive atmosphere governing organizations include organization like higher education institutes. These institutes compete for absorbing more students and achieving better academic ranking. From among these institutes is the Asad Islamic university which is always in competition to public universities for absorbing more students and enhancing their scientific level and knowledge. To this end, they are in need of improving organization performance and thus improvement in its staff performance. in order to improve staff performance, it is better to identify the most influential factors to reinforce them. Workplace spirituality is counted among these factors. The present study is to answer this question that how is the relationship between workplace spirituality and job performance of Isfahan Azad university's staff.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the applicable purpose and descriptive correlational method. Statistical population were all Asad Islamic university's staff of the Isfahan branch (375 people) from which 189 individuals were selected accidentally and in proportion to their department mass and based on Cochran sample mass, as statistical sample, in 2015. In order to collect data, the researcher used workplace spirituality and job performance questionnaires.

Workplace spirituality questionnaire: this questionnaire was put forward by Ashmos (2000) and contain 22 questions. In this questionnaire, Likert 5-point scale has been used as; absolutely right, usually right, equally right and false, usually false, absolutely false. According to Ashmos and Duchon (2000), workplace spirituality dimensions are; Meaningful work, a sense of connection and positive social relations with coworkers and individual's alignment with the organization's values. (Nour Alizadeh et al, 2012)

This questionnaire, as Farhangi et al. (2006) in a research on workplace spirituality and its role in improving citizen behaviors of an organization point out, has got the stability coefficient 0. 87.

Job performance questionnaire: this questionnaire presented by Paterson (1970) and translated to Persian by Arshad and Shokr kon (1996) has got 15 questions by which one can select one testing issue in a 5-point Likert scale pattern (quoted by Saatchi, 2010).

In this study the stability coefficient was computed as 0.88 and 0.83 for workplace spirituality and job performance questionnaires, respectively. The data were then analyzed through multi-regression test, Pierson correlation coefficient and version 19th of SPSS software for variance analysis.

FINDINGS:

Findings of this study show that there exists a meaningful correlation coefficient between workplace spirituality and its dimensions and staff's job performance. ($r=0.33$) that is a meaningful relation between spirituality at work and each dimension of it, meaningful work($r=0.287$) sense of connection and social relation to others($r=0.298$), individuals alignment with organization values($r=0.326$).

According to signification coefficient, 8.2% variance spirituality in the workplace, 8.9% variance of connection sense and 10.6% variance of value alignment were common with staff's job performance. As shown in table (1).

Table 1. Correlation coefficient between workplace spirituality and its dimensions and staff's job performance

Statistical indicator Predicting variable	Correlational coefficient	Correlational coefficient square	Level of meaningfulness
Spirituality in the workplace	**0.033	0.109	0.001
Meaningful work	**0.287	0.082	0.001
Sense of connection and positive social relations with coworkers	**0.298	0.089	0.001
Individual's alignment with the organization's values	**0.326	0.106	0.001

Findings of this study demonstrate that from among these in-regression understudy variables, the best predicting variable for staff's job performance in the first step is the individual's alignment with the organization's values. According to step to step regression analysis, there exists a meaningful relation between individual's alignment with the organization's values and staff's job performance. And based on first step regression staff's alignment coefficient specifies 10.6% of job performance variance. Observed frequency in the level of $p < 0.01$ was also meaningful. So the regression is generalizable to whole statistic population.

Table 2. Multiple correlation coefficients in predicting of workplace spirituality dimensions with staff's job performance.

Statistical indicator/ Criterion variable	Predicting variable	R	R ²	Ad R ²	F coefficient	Level of meaningfulness
Staffs job performance	1 st step Dimension of alignment with the organization's values	0.326	0.106	0.101	19.499	0.001

$p < 0.01$

Findings of this study show that Beta coefficient increases staff's job performance to 0.326 as value alignment increases one unit. The predicting equation is like this: Staff's job performance = (2.331) + value alignment (0.309)

Table 3. Beta Coefficient in predicting staff's job performance based on workplace spirituality dimensions.

Statistical indicator/ Criterion variable	Predicting variable	Standard coefficients beta	Standard beta coefficients	T coefficient	Level of meaningfulness	
Staffs job performance	1 st step Dimension of alignment values	0.309	0.070	0.326	4.416	0.001

$p < 0.01$

Findings of this study demonstrated that the dimensions of meaningful work and sense of connection and positive social relations with coworkers have no meaningful relation to staff's job performance.

Table 4. Variables out of in-regression equation for predicting staff's job performance based on workplace spirituality dimensions

	Scale	Beta	T amount	Level of meaningfulness
1 st step	Meaningful work	0.85	0.720	0.473
	Sense of connection	0.106	0.879	0.381

p<0. 05

This study aimed at exploring the relationship between workplace spirituality and its dimensions and staff's job performance. Findings of table 1, show that correlation coefficient between workplace spirituality, its dimension and staff job performance is meaningful. That is, there exists a meaningful relationship between spirituality in the workplace and each of its dimensions like meaningful work, a sense of connection and positive social relations with coworkers and individual's alignment with the organization's values. These findings is in agreement with the results of Kambel &Hava (2014) based on the fact that emotional and normative commitment are positively affected by workplace spirituality and therefore lead to improvement in job performance. [Ghanbarpur \(2012\)](#) also shows that there is a meaningful relation between dimensions of organizational spirituality and personal performance.

Also general scores of organizational spirituality predicted individual's performance as positive. [Salajegheh and Farahbakhsh \(2010\)](#) come to the same conclusion in that spirituality positively affects organizational performance. [Daniel \(2012\)](#) also demonstrates that spirituality in the workplace has a meaningful and positive impact on all staff's job consequences such as intention to quit. Concerning this result, one can say spirituality gives individuals a new insight and surprisingly raise their self-confidence and make them perform better and stronger. Spirituality in the workplace and the organization is considered as a special work feeling to energize individuals to do their best. Many theoretical fundamentals of confirm this positive and meaningful influence of spirituality concerning the improvement in organizational performance. Those who act according to spirituality paradigm have more intention to make changes and have a purposeful life work, are aware of their communication with the whole universe and will have an intrinsic cognition of spirituality. Spirituality causes individuals to reach a higher level of awareness and thus promote their intuitive competence and abilities. This intuitive competence is in turn a valuable guide and management skill which finally lead to individual and organizational efficiency. Staffs who are strongly seeking for maintaining organizational values, are more likely to have a higher personal commitment in their organization success or failure.

A clear-cut spiritual attitudes make a strong link between employees and organizations through satisfying individuals' interests. Consequently, the staff's motivation to better work will be increased. Managers can improve individuals' performance by improving and reinforcing spiritual atmosphere of the workplace. According to the theoretical framework and research literature, one can claim that spirituality in the workplace makes university's staff to do their tasks with a spiritual sense of work, an internal motivation and more interest, enjoyment and energy of the work. It causes staff to have a sense of connection and positive social relations with their colleagues and coworkers and to observe the organization's values and purposes which are essential prerequisites in order for an appropriate job performance to occur. Concerning the data demonstrated in table 2, from among understudy in-regression variables the best predicator of staff's job performance in 1st step is the dimension of individuals' alignment with organizational values. Findings of this study in table 3 show that Beta coefficient enhance staff's job performance to 0.326 for a unit increase in alignment with organizational value. As the results in table 4 indicate, there is no meaningful relation between dimensions of meaningful work, sense of connection and positive social relations with coworkers and individual's job performance. According to the findings of this study there is a meaningful relation between staff's alignment with the organization's values and their job performance.

This findings of ours is compatible with that of Abdolahi et al. (2014) which may specify the meaningfulness of staff moral treatment as these researchers came also to the same conclusion in their study. In 2003, Miliiman et al. chose three dimensions out of 7 dimensions presented by [Ashmos and Duchon \(2000\)](#) for workplace spirituality and used them in an empirical study. These three dimensions which are correspondent to three levels of individual, group and organizational are: meaningful work at

the individual level, a sense of connection and positive social relations with coworkers at group level and individual's alignment with the organization's values at the organizational level. Concerning the obtained data in this respect, based on more power to predict and more alignment to organizational values, mission and purpose, these staff matched themselves more for university purposes.

They realize that their personal profit is in the realization of university interests. They also understand organization consideration toward themselves and their requirements. These conditions make them see the workplace atmosphere as positive and to accept their task and responsibility best, and as a consequence, to be more interested to do their best in the organization because they will be sensitive to organization face and image and eager to make their organization best of all. What brings staff alignment with the organization's values, are the results of 2 other dimensions of workplace spirituality. In other words, meaningful work and sense of connection and positive social relations with coworkers are imbedded in value alignment to be more precise consequences of meaningful work and sense of connection with coworkers are necessary input value alignment. So if value alignment is realized for staff in an organization, then undoubtedly dimensions of meaningful work and sense of connection are also prepared for them.

CONCLUSION

Findings of this study show that there exists a meaningful relationship between workplace spirituality and job performance among Azad Islamic university's staff. From among understudy variables, the best predictor of job performance is workplace spirituality. Concerning the relationship between workplace spirituality and job performance, value alignment was the best predictor of job performance. Regarding the obtained results of this study, a set of actions and processes is recommended to be taken which can expand and reinforce spirituality in staff. In order to make staff realized spirituality in the workplace, managers are required to improve spirituality both at the level of individual and organization. Managers can improve staff perception of the sense of meaning in work and job enjoyment (dimensions of spirituality in the workplace) through turning job, job development and enrichment and enhance a sense of teamwork and staff connection by creating a friendly atmosphere based on cooperation. To this end, it is recommended that managers and superiors to be modest for each other and respect to each other's ideas, even if they are not in agreement with their attitudes, and also to respect each other's aptitude as human.

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