

Workplace Spirituality and Positive Work Attitudes: The Moderating role of Individual Spirituality

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Abstract

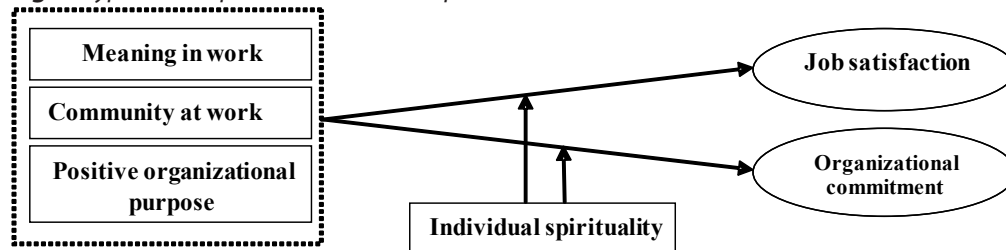
The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between workplace spirituality aspects and two positive work attitudes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment) considering the moderating role of individual spirituality. Workplace Spirituality scale (Milliman et. al, 1993), *daily spiritual experiences scale*, DSES (underwood, 2006), Job in General Scale (JIGS, Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989) and affective commitment scale (Meyer and Allen, 1990) were administered to 300 full-time employees working in an industrial company in Iran that were selected by stratified random sampling method. Of this sample 81.81% were men with an average age of 41 years. The data were analyzed applying hierarchical regression analysis. Results indicated that workplace spirituality aspects (meaning in work, community at work and positive organizational purpose) were positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment and employee's individual spirituality can moderate the number of these associations.

Keywords: workplace spirituality, individual spirituality, job satisfaction, organizational commitment

1. Introduction

Assessing spirituality in the business/work environment is a relatively new area of study. Previous research showed that spirituality plays the key role in Many peoples' lives, and given the amount of time people spend at work. Spirituality has become increasingly prevalent Work environment as a growing number of employees seek value, support, and meaning in their work as well as their lives (Cash, Gray, & Rood, 2000). Researchers have related spirituality to individual and organizational functioning in prior studies (Chawla & Guda, 2010). Theorists have presumed that spirituality in an organization encourages a more dedicated, imaginative, moral, content, and efficient workforce that fosters improved organizational performance (Fahey, 2007). Also, Within organizations, spirituality May provide benefits for employees and organizational strategy. For example, Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson (2003) found that spirituality was related to organizational commitment, intentions to quit, intrinsic work satisfaction, and organization-based self-esteem. Furthermore, spiritual employees may perform better due to increased feelings of motivation and meaning in their work (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). Milliman, et. al (2003) report the encouraging role of workplace spirituality in building unity within organizations, which leads to greater teamwork and collaboration and reduced occurrences of absenteeism and employee turnover. Research has shown that organizations that provide their employees with the opportunities for spiritual development are better in performance than others (Konz & Ryan, 1999). At an individual level, spirituality at work provides job satisfaction and reduces employee burnout as found in the case of health care professionals (Komala & Ganesh, 2007). Also, Research on the topic of 'Workplace Spirituality' is still in its early stages. Specifically, The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationships between spirituality at work and two employee positive attitudes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment), as well as the moderating effect of individual spirituality on the relationships between workplace spirituality and these variables (see figure 1).

Fig.1. Hypothetical pattern of relationship between research variables



2. Background and hypotheses

2.1 Workplace spirituality and individual spirituality

The terms spiritual and spirituality relate to the spirit, the unseen makeup of humans (Garrett, 2004). The word ‘spirit’ comes from the Latin word Spiritus meaning breath—breath of life. Gull & Doh (2004) described spirit as “the essence of life” (p. 130). Identifying oneself with the spirit is Spirituality. Spirituality is a multidimensional notion, and hundreds of potential customs of living spiritually exist (Beazley, 1997). The most prominent feature of spirituality is oneness with all beings in the universe, and therefore, Krishnan (2008) conceptualized spirituality as oneness with all other beings. One of the difficulties of doing research on the topic of ‘Workplace Spirituality’ is to provide a suitable working definition to it (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Owing to the subjective nature of workplace spirituality, the definitions are in plenty. Mitroff & Denton (1999) found that the participants understand spirituality as the basic feeling of being connected with one’s complete self, others, and the entire universe. This view is similar to the notion of inner life. Milliman, et. al (2003) include the aspects of the sense of community and meaningful work in workplace spirituality. Kinjerski & Skrypnik’s (2006) conceptualization of individual spirituality at work has three of the four dimensions as follows: engaging work (meaningful work), sense of community, and spiritual connection (inner life). Individual spirituality at work is about expressing one’s inner self through meaningful work and belongingness to the community at work. The scale for workplace spirituality consists of three levels of measures: individual, work unit and organization. The first-level measure consists of items which denote the employee perceptions of their individual spirituality at work. While there are several definitions of workplace spirituality (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008), quite a few of them (e.g. Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Milliman et al., 2003) include the dimensions of meaning in work and community at work though the terms used may take various forms such as calling, purpose, belonging, membership, and connectedness. Thus, in this paper the three aspects of work place spirituality are as follows:

- *Meaningful Work*: Consistent with Ashmos & Duchon (2000), the aspect of meaning in work reflects “a sense of what is important, energizing, and joyful about work”. The Meaning at work is the feeling of wholeness and harmoniousness with some animating (higher) purpose that gives direction to one’s work (Overell, 2008). Meaning relates to whether purpose and significance is felt (Overell, 2008).
- *Sense of Community*. The second dimension is based on the idea that spiritual beings live in connection to other human beings and here community refers to ‘the notions of sharing, mutual obligation and commitment that connect people to each other’ (Duchon & Plowman, 2005, p. 814).
- *Search for purpose and meaning*. Mitroff & Denton (1999) noted that spirituality is “the basic desire to find ultimate meaning and purpose in one’s life and to live an integrated life” (p. Xv). Bloch (2004) depicted spirituality as a “search for meaning, purpose, and integration in life” (p. 344).

2.2 Spirituality at work, job satisfaction and organizational commitment

Researchers have noted that empirical research on the effects of workplace spirituality on employee’s attitudes is important (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). The present study examines the effect of workplace spirituality on organizational outcomes— employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

2.3 Workplace spirituality and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction “is an affective (that is, emotional) reaction to a job that results from the incumbent’s comparison of actual outcomes with those that are desired ...” (Cranny, Smith & Stone., 1992). As workplace spirituality dimensions fulfill employees’ higher order and spiritual needs (Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005), they should induce a more favorable employee affective response. Thus, there should be a positive relationship between workplace spirituality dimensions and job satisfaction. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

- Meaning in work will be positively associated with job satisfaction.
- Community at work will be positively associated with job satisfaction.
- Positive organizational purpose will be positively associated with job satisfaction.

2.4 Workplace spirituality and organizational commitment

Organizational commitment reflects employees’ psychological identification with and involvement in an organization and manifests in aspects such as employees’ acceptance of organizational goals and values (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992). Literature (e.g. Fry, 2003) suggests that fulfillment of employees’ spiritual needs of Meaning and community is positively associated with employees’ organizational commitment. Consistent with this, the existing research has found support for the positive relationship between membership (community) and organizational commitment (Fry et al., 2005). Further, as positive organizational purpose can make organizational goals and hence organizational identification more valuable to employees, there is likely to be a positive relationship between

positive organizational purpose and employees' organizational commitment. Consistent with this, Milliman, Ferguson, Trickett & Condemi (1999) suggest that organizational spiritual values, which include an organization's having a "cause" to serve, are likely to be positively associated with employee work attitudes. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

- Meaning in work will be positively associated with organizational commitment.
- Community at work will be positively associated with organizational commitment.
- Positive organizational purpose will be positively associated with organizational commitment.

2.5 Moderating role of individual spirituality

Benson, Roehlkepartain & Rude (2003) note, "spiritual development is the process of growing the intrinsic human capacity for self-transcendence, in which the self is embedded in something greater than the self, including the sacred. It is the developmental 'engine' That propels the search for connectedness, meaning, purpose, and contribution". This definition suggests that high individual spirituality level will result in a stronger urge for meaning and connectedness. Further, Duchon and Plowman (2005) suggest that workplace spirituality implies an employee's experience of meaning and community at work. Such aspects of work place spirituality are likely to be more valued by employees with high levels of individual spiritual development who, as noted previously, have a greater urge for them. As a result, the relationship between work place spirituality aspects and employees' positive work attitudes is likely to be stronger for employees with high individual spiritual development than for employees with low individual spiritual development. This suggests that the relationship between workplace spirituality and work attitudes will be positively moderated by individual spirituality. Therefore, we propose the following:

- Individual spirituality moderates the relationship meaning in work and job satisfaction. The higher Individual spirituality, the stronger the positive association between Meaning in work and job satisfaction.
- Individual spirituality moderates the relationship community at work and job satisfaction. The higher individual spirituality, the stronger the positive association between community at work and job satisfaction.
- Individual spirituality moderates the relationship Positive organizational purpose and job satisfaction. The higher individual spirituality, the stronger the positive association between Positive organizational purpose and job satisfaction.
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- Individual spirituality moderates the relationship Positive organizational purpose and organizational commitment. The higher Individual spirituality, the stronger the positive association between positive organizational purpose and organizational commitment.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

Respondents for this study were selected by stratified random sampling method from an industrial company in Iran. Anonymous questionnaires were distributed to 300 full-time employees (working in various company units). All together, 286 questionnaires (234 males, 52 females, mean age: 41 years) were returned and analyzed and response rate was 95.33%.

3.2 Measures

Workplace spirituality. Workplace spirituality and its aspects were assessed by 20 item Workplace spirituality (meaningful work, 6 item., sense of community, 7 item and positive organizational purpose, 7 item), by Milliman et. al (1993). A five-point Likert format with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.89.

Affective commitment. Given evidence of its construct validity and widespread sample reliability (Allen & Meyer, 1996), Meyer and Allen's (1990) 8-item measure was used to tap affective commitment. Exemplary items include "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own" and "I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization" (reverse-coded). This measure used a 1-5 response scale (1, strongly agree, to 5, strongly disagree). Taylor (2010) reported Cronbach's alpha of .89 for this scale and in the current study the reliability was 0.93.

Job satisfaction. job satisfaction was measured with the Job in General Scale (JIGS, Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989). This 18 item scale is scored by assigning numeric values to each "Yes," "No," and "undecided" response. Ironson et al. (1989) reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.91 to 0.97 for this scale. In the present study Cronbach's alpha was 0.88.

Individual spirituality. Individual spirituality is measured with 16-Item *daily spiritual experiences scale* (DSES). Underwood (2006) notes that DSES is designed “to measure ordinary or ‘mundane’ spiritual experiences”. It measures experiences of relationship with and awareness of the divine or the transcendent. DSES contains 16 items. The scale uses a six-point form at for 15 items and response options range from “never or almost never” to “many Times a day”. In this study the scale was scored in a manner that higher scores reflect higher frequency of spiritual experiences. In the current study the Cronbach’s alpha was 0.94.

4. Results

The descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), the correlations among research variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Correlations for Research Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Meaning in work	3.90	0.50	___					
Community at work	3.84	0.52	0.67*	___				
Positive organizational purpose	3.91	0.82	0.82*	0.62*	___			
Individual spirituality	4.05	1.08	0.77*	0.54*		___		
organizational commitment	22.25	5.42	0.44*	0.32*	0.66*	0.48*	___	
job satisfaction	45.16	7.51	0.11*	0.32*	0.41*	0.34*	0.66*	___
* $p < 0.001$								

Table 2. Results of hierarchical regressions analysis for testing moderating effect of individual spirituality

Independent variables	Dependent variables	
	Job satisfaction β	Organizational commitment β
Step 1 (only the main effect)		
Meaning in work	0.11**	0.44*
Community at work	0.32*	0.32*
Positive organizational purpose	0.41*	0.66*
R ²	0.60*	0.54*
Step 2		
Individual spirituality	0.85*	0.72*
R ²	0.64*	0.58*
Step 3 (interaction term added to above model)		
Meaning in work* Individual spirituality	0.22*	0.09
Community at work* Individual spirituality	0.05	0.21*
Positive organizational purpose* Individual spirituality	0.31**	0.35*
R ²	0.68*	0.73*
ΔR^2	0.04*	0.05*
F	440.930*	699.857*
* $p < .0001$ ** $p < .05$		

H₁ and H₂ associated with six sub-hypotheses (H_{1a}-H_{2c}) were tested using two separate multiple regressions– one each for job satisfaction and organizational commitment as the dependent variable that included three workplace spirituality dimensions as inde-

pendent variables. These findings and the results of hierarchical regression analysis for investigating the moderating role of individual spirituality in the relationship between workplace spirituality dimensions and work attitudes are reported in Table 2.

Direct effect of workplace spirituality dimensions on job satisfaction and organizational commitment (H₁, H₂): The results in Table 2 Indicate that meaning in work, community at work and positive organizational purpose were positively associated with job satisfaction ($R^2=0.60, p<.001$). Thus, H1a-c are supported. Also, all three dimensions of workplace spirituality are Significantly associated with organizational commitment ($R^2=0.54, p<.001$). indicating support for hypotheses H_{2a}, H_{2b}, and H_{2c}. (see Table 2).

Interactive/moderating effects model: As indicated in Table 2, the effects of Meaning in work and positive organizational purpose on job Satisfaction are moderated by individual spirituality ($R^2=0.68, \Delta R^2=0.4, p<.001$) and the moderating effect of community at work was not significant. Thus H_{3a} and H_{3c} are supported. Also the results of hierarchical regression analyses in step 3, indicate a statistically significant interaction between community at work and positive organizational purpose with individual spirituality as significant predictors of organizational commitment ($R^2=0.73, \Delta R^2=.05, p<.0001$). meaning at work and organizational commitment was moderated by individual spirituality was not significant. Therefore, H_{4b} and H_{4c} received support.

Consistent with the practice of plotting interactions (e.g. Witt, 1991), the nature of these interactions was plotted in Figure 2, 3, 4 and 5 by evaluating the equation from the third step of the hierarchical moderated regression analyses at high (1 SD above the mean) And low (1 SD below the mean) values of the moderator variable (individual spirituality).

Fig.2. Regression slopes for the interaction of meaning in work and individual spirituality

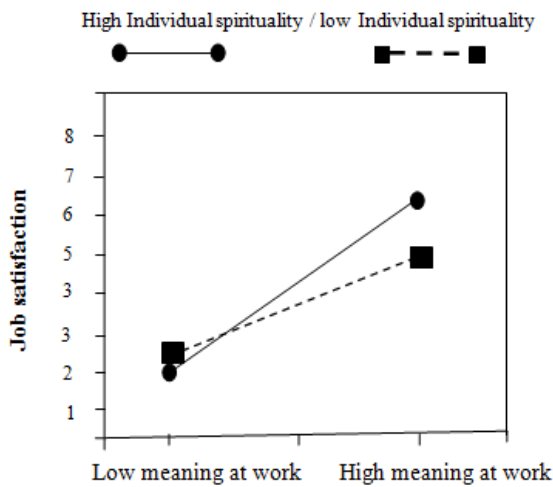


Fig.3. Regression slopes for the interaction of positive organizational purpose and individual spirituality

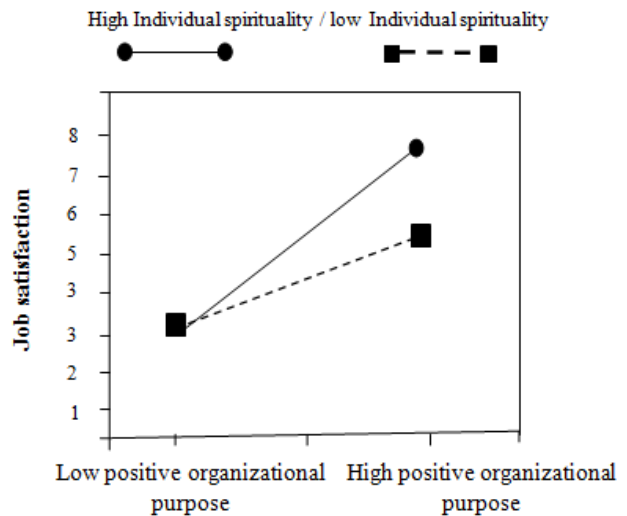


Fig.4. Regression slopes for the interaction of community at work and individual spirituality

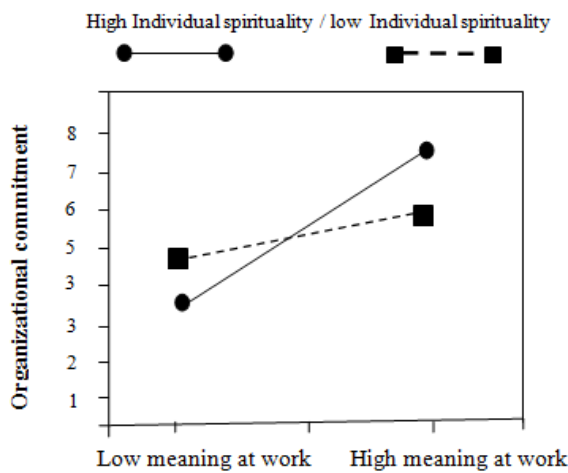
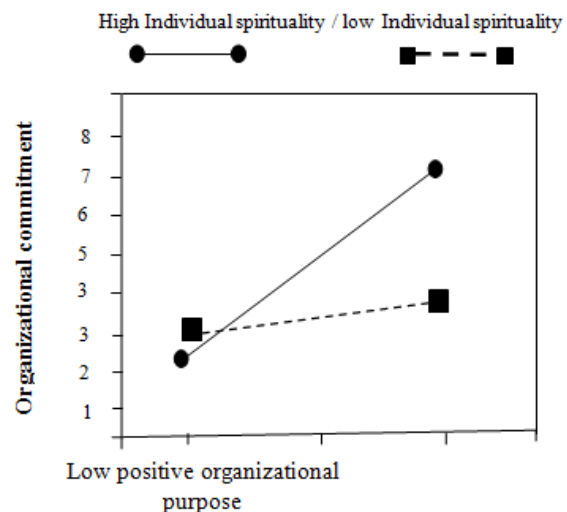


Fig.5. Regression slopes for the interaction of positive organizational purpose and individual spirituality



Indeed, the interaction plots in figure 2 indicate that with an increase in meaning at work aspect of workplace spirituality, job satisfaction increases more responsively for employees with high individual spirituality level than for employees with low individual spirituality level. The interaction plots in figure 3 indicate that with an increase in positive organizational purpose aspect of work place spirituality, job satisfaction increases more responsively for employees with high individual spirituality level than for employees with low individual spirituality level (H_{3a} , H_{3c}). Also, the simple slopes indicate that the relationships between two facets of workplace spirituality (community at work and positive organizational purpose) and organizational commitment are stronger at high levels of individual spirituality (H_{4b} , H_{4c} , see figures 4 and 5).

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine spirituality in relation to the work environment. Consistent with previous spirituality researches (Sprung, Sliter & Jex, 2012., Douglas, 2010, Pawar, 2009), participants scoring higher on spirituality also reported better self-reported job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Also, work place spirituality has a significant effect on work attitudes even beyond the effect of individual spirituality. This pattern provides a more detailed insight into the direct effects of individual spirituality and workplace spirituality. The results come as expected. The employees who align their self-concept to their spiritual identity express their spiritual identity by meaningful work and by belongingness to the community. Thus, there is an alignment between who one is and what one does, then there comes the satisfaction. The same reason holds true for the positive relationship between professionals' spirituality at work and organizational commitment. When there is belongingness, i.e., the feelings of existing together in the community and when one is happy with the work then one may not intend to leave the job and more committed to the organization. Thus, aligning one's self-concept to the spiritual identity (inner life) at workplace and expressing this spiritual identity through meaningful work and belongingness to the community makes them feel satisfied with their jobs, increase their commitment towards the job. Individual spirituality was also investigated as a moderator of the relationship between three dimensions of workplace spirituality and work attitudes. However, the results of the examination of the interactive effects model indicated that individual spirituality, seems to positively moderate (i.e. strengthen) the relationship between workplace spirituality and work attitudes.

5.1 Practical implications

The study findings suggest important implications for practice also. As management seeks to improve productivity, organizational leaders are increasingly trying to find what draws workers in and to give them incentives to remain with an organization. Contemporary managers and leaders need to understand that certain individuals want to discover the significance of life during their work (Fairholm, 1997). As technology advances and globalization intensifies, many workers might feel an increased need to grow professionally by finding meaningful, sustaining, and fulfilling work. Work contributes to the individuals' definition of self. Enhancing factors associated with meaningful and fulfilling work will, in turn, enhance job satisfaction. Personal growth involves development through self-direction and reflexive learning, which enhances spiritual development. The results of this study should be communicated to professional business organizations where employees might communicate and influence organizations where change might be beneficial for increased understanding of spirituality and employee's work attitudes.

5.2 Limitation and future research

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, results should be considered preliminary. While the current findings are interesting and potentially of practical value, they must be considered in light of the study's limitations. A cross-sectional data were used, no causal inferences can be made. This study was limited in that data with self-reported dependent measures were used and future research should further investigate spirituality in relation to the work environment to determine specific situations where spirituality could be a benefit /detriment to employees.

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