

Investigation of the Relationship Between Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Commitment (Case Study: The Employees of National Iranian Oil Distribution Company)

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the relationship between the spirituality and organizational commitment among the employees of National Iranian Oil Distribution Company. The organizational spirituality questionnaire by (Memarzadeh and Sanei) and organizational commitment questionnaire by Allen and Mir were applied. Data was collected from a sample of 190 employees of National Iranian Oil Distribution Company.

Key words: Individual spirituality, group spirituality, organizational spirituality, affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment

INTRODUCTION

The time we live is called the age of complication and change. Those live in this age have entered a modern period in which their lives is extremely changing. Since sixteenth, West have distinguished between the worlds inside and outside of human and assumed worldly activities and affairs like sect, religion and spirituality to be completely separated. This have separated human beings from the most eminent aspects of his existence and his internal needs. But from the late twenties and early 21st century up to now, a sort of integration is taking part between people's internal and external lives. The organizational business environment is among such aspects. Emergence of concepts such as morality, truth, faith in God, honesty, conscience, spirituality, commitment, etc., illustrates the formation of new issues and paradigms inside the organizations. Spirituality is a new found phenomenon in the organization that has attracted the attention of many management and organizational experts and managers in different levels. Therefore, many of them know spirituality as a sustainable resource for organizations that can be helpful in critical and turbulent situations in order to resolve the conflicts between order and anarchy. Today, considering the continuous changes in the organizations, thinkers of management have concluded that human resource is the most important parameter to gain comparative advantage by the organizations. Therefore, it is among the main concerns of managers to pay attention to the commitment and faith of human resource, so that they can do the best both in their own roles and their extra role performance.

Literature review

Definition of spirituality: There is no accurate term to describe the concept of spirituality in most religions. Nevertheless, today, spirituality is a generalized concept. The considerable difficulty in defining spirituality is derived by the conceptual complication of this (intangible, qualitative and non-assessable) term (with multiple concepts and meanings) (Rezayimanesh and Shaghayegh, 2010). In his book, the spiritual life, underhill (mentions that while on one hand, we have to avoid too much ambiguity and abstraction on the other hand, complicated and precipitant definitions should be avoided as well because in human language, no term fits spiritual facts suitably and accurately. According to Baverman, definitions of the term spirituality make it more complicated rather than clarify this concept. Moreover, some others believe that the lack of spirituality or its feeling and the difficulties in its assessment leaves it no meaning or concept. Even more, some suppose that nothing exists unless it can be assessed (Abedijafari and Ali, 2007).

Five meanings are mentioned by Oxford for the term spirituality, here are the fourth and the fifth: an abstract and non-material state of existence full of sacredness and emotions. Skelley mentions three meanings for the term spirituality:

- A human capacity for self-transcendence
- A religious part of life and the ways the capacity of self-transcendence are actualized by God
- A specific religious experience that creates self-transcendence (e.g., Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Judaism)

He noted that spirituality is not necessarily derived by a sect or religion, it is rather a universal capacity for individual transcendence which let one experience spirituality in his daily affairs. Mitroff and Denton (1999) have mentioned some of the key characteristics of spirituality in different definitions presented in their studies: spirituality is not a coherent and organized order but it's completely general, comprehensive and receptive to all. It is the ultimate source of the life meaning and purpose, an eternal source of faith and will and an ultimate sacred objective. It goes beyond sects. It is a universal concept regardless of time. It is deeply and mutually related to anything and it creates inner comfort and calmness. Moreover, spirituality seeks an eminent and divine purpose beyond the one's individuality.

Emergence of spirituality in organizations: Spirituality is a newfound phenomenon in the organization that has attracted the attention of many management and organizational experts and managers in different levels. Therefore, many of them know spirituality as a sustainable resource for organizations that can be helpful in critical and turbulent situations in order to resolve the paradox between order and disorder because constant activity of organizations requires continuous exchange of change and stability moods (Yazdani *et al.*, 2010). Because of the anomalies derived by mechanistic paradigms, it must be the time to improve organizational performance through reengineering, downsizing, etc. and seek new strategies to revive the exhausted and exanimate spirit of employees that have increased their service leave and absence in organizations; Since, the prescriptions and suggestions of mechanistic paradigms has not been able to satisfy the needs of employees. Therefore, some of the resulted difficulties are expected to be resolved through presence of spirituality and development of its particular aspects in the workplace (Rezayimanesh and Shaghayegh, 2010).

Islamic spirituality: Islam's attitude towards workplace under the title of "Islamic work ethics" is completely separable from the viewpoint of other religions. Followers of Islam are asked to be committed to their organization and workplace. This commitment requires them to accept organizational changes with open arms. In Quran, spirituality is based on four principles: temperament, Occult, divine spirit and Sharia and it is fed by rationality, knowledge, devotion and spirituality of internal and external powers. The spirituality illustrated by Quran has a widely ranged, complete and comprehensive. It is the origin of a blissful life and the root of divine-human civilization. Spirituality makes meaningful all devotional-social aspects of individual and collective life (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2011).

Organizational commitment: Today, considering the continuous organizational changes and evolutions, management thinkers have concluded that human resource is the most significant parameter to gain comparative advantage by the organizations. Organizational commitment is an attitude towards employees' faithfulness. It is a continuous process through which the organizational members show their interest in constant success and efficiency of their organization (Bagheri and Ruhollah, 2010). In early eighteens, the organizational commitment of employees was among the most important issues considered by many scholars and there were a wide range of studies in this arena. It went on until 1985, when Walton issued his famous paper, "management by commitment". He mentioned the need to move from control-based management to management by commitment. Doing this he oriented the studies in this arena himself.

Just like other concepts of organizational behavior, organizational commitment have been defined in different ways. The most regular method to encounter organizational commitment is to consider it as a type of emotional dependence. Based on this method, an extremely committed individual takes his identity from the organization, participates it, incorporates with it and enjoys being a member of it. Porter defined organizational commitment as acceptance of organizational values and involvement in the organization. According to them, the scales to measure organizational commitment include high level of motivation, acceptance of organization and its objectives, readiness to try hard and interest in membership maintenance. Chatman and O'Reilly define organizational commitment as the protection and emotional dependence to organizational objectives and values, because of the organization itself and not as "a tool to achieve other objectives" (avoiding instrumental value). Organizational commitment refers to positive and negative attitudes of individuals towards the whole organization in which they are employed. Just like other concepts of organizational behavior, organizational commitment have been defined in different ways. The most regular method to encounter organizational commitment is to consider it as a type of emotional dependence. Based on this method, an extremely committed individual takes his identity from the organization, participates it incorporates with it and enjoys being a member of it. Porter defined organizational commitment as acceptance of organizational values and involvement in the organization. According to them, the scales to measure organizational commitment include high level of motivation, acceptance of organization and its objectives, readiness to try hard and interest in membership maintenance. Chatman and O'Reilly define organizational commitment as the protection and emotional dependence to organizational objectives and

values because of the organization itself and not as “a tool to achieve other objectives” (avoiding instrumental value). Organizational commitment refers to positive and negative attitudes of individuals towards the whole organization in which they are employed (Shaemibozorgi and Jila, 2010).

Theoretical viewpoint about the effective parameters on organizational commitment: Different sociological viewpoints have been applied in order to evaluate the effective parameters in organizational commitment. Based on success and value propositions (George Homans), organizational commitment is a function of work compensation and value, i.e. if a highly committed individual doesn't receive the compensation he expects, his commitment would be reduced. The congruence between work compensations (organizational and social compensations) and work values promotes organizational commitment. According to Adams' Equity theory, when employees feel to be behaved unfairly, they will take some actions aiming to adjust their feelings towards fair behavior. Therefore, if the received compensations are fair from employee's point of view, they would be more satisfied because employees feel to receive a compensation in accordance with the actions and attempts they take (Davis and John, 1991).

Workplace spirituality and organizational commitment: Emergence of the concept of organizational commitments is one of the most important advantages of spirituality. Spirituality increases commitment through creating a “secure atmosphere” in the workplace. Organizational commitment aims to take advantage of dependence and attachments of individuals and employees to the organization. Just like other concepts of organizational behavior, organizational commitment have been defined in different ways. The most regular method to encounter organizational commitment is to consider it as a type of emotional dependence. Based on this method, an extremely committed individual takes his identity from the organization, participates it incorporates with it and enjoys being a member of it.

Workplace spirituality: Organizational spirituality is a framework of tangible values in organizational culture that results in employees' transcendence during the work process. They feel perfection and vitality as the sense of being with each other is growing inside them (Moghbel and Mustafa, 2011).

Individual spirituality: In its individual level, workplace individuality refers to a personal set of values that promote the transcendence experience through work

process and facilitates the communication of employees in order to develop a feeling of perfection and satisfaction among them.

Group spirituality: In addition to delegation of authority, strategic leaders inform their followers about the role of their position in organizational performance. This link develops a relationship between group and individual positions, values and organizational perspectives. Through such relationship, leader specifies direction and path of activities for his followers. In addition to empowerment, the process of establishing such relationship also develops competence and purposeful independence, a base of internal motivation and workplace spirituality (Rezayimanesh and Shaghayegh, 2010).

Organizational spirituality: In its organizational or strategic level, workplace spirituality describes the organization as a general concept. Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) define it as a framework of organizational values reflected in the culture which promotes the experience of organizational transcendence through work process and facilitates the feeling of being related to others to develop the sense of perfection and satisfaction.

Organizational commitment: Just like other concepts of organizational behavior, organizational commitment have been defined in different ways. The most regular method to encounter organizational commitment is to consider it as a type of emotional dependence. Based on this method, an extremely committed individual takes his identity from the organization, participates it, incorporates with it and enjoys being a member of it.

Organizational commitment refers to identity formation among the individuals through involving and making them participate a specific organization. Conceptually, organizational commitment can be identified by at least three components.

Affective commitment: Affective commitment is the most important component of organizational commitment. It can be defined as one's dependence or attachment to the organization. Affective commitment is positively related to organizational justice, job performance and job satisfaction. There is also a strong positive relationship between affective commitment, professional commitment and perceived organizational support that cause an increase in reliance as well as reducing the service leave in organizations (Bagheri and Mahdi, 2010).

Continuance commitment: Continuance commitment is the third component of organizational commitment. According to Allen and Mir, continuance commitment is developed based on two factors: the number or sum of an

investment and the significance of that investment. Employees remain in the organization as they suppose that it costs too much if they leave it (Baharifar *et al.*, 2011).

Normative commitment: Normative commitment is the second concept and component that develops organizational commitment. It is defined as a type of commitment and obligation that leads the employees to feel like staying with the organization.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is an applied research since it proceeds to test the efficiency of scientific theories on organizational commitment and workplace spirituality to develop the applied knowledge about the relationship and interaction between these two variables. Data was collected through desk and field study. Correlation test were applied as data analysis method. Statistical population includes all official and contractual employees of National Iranian Oil Distribution Company, who were tested through questionnaires. In this questionnaire, questions related to workplace spirituality were mainly extracted from the inventory by Memarzade Tehran and Sanei. Organizational commitment questions were mainly Allen and Mir's Questionnaire. Thus, ones level of satisfaction affect (increases or decreases) his commitment which have its own effect on his attempts and performance. Based on Vroom theory, behavior is affected by three factors: value of compensations, the relationship between compensations and the required performance and the needed attempt for this performance. As a result, motivation largely affect the perception of individuals from the results of their behavior. This can also affect one's behavior in the future including his commitment (Moghimi, 1998).

Statistical population and sample: From 522 individuals included in the statistical population, 158 ones were selected through Morgan's Formula. Nevertheless, 190 questionnaires were distributed among the selected samples from which 165 ones were filled by them. These questionnaires were evaluated in order to analyze the data included.

Data collection instrument: Data was collected through distributing and recollecting two questionnaires among the samples: spirituality assessment and organizational commitment.

The spirituality questionnaire extracted from a study named spirituality assessment (Memarzade Tehran, Sanei) is adjusted to evaluate spirituality in individual, group and organizational levels.

Organizational commitment questionnaire is based on three indices introduced by Allen and Mir including affective, continuance and normative commitment. The standard Allen and Mir Questioner was designed by the scholar through making some changes.

Reliability of organizational commitment questionnaire: The second output determines Cronbach's alpha and the number of question or variables. Since, the value Cronbach's Alpha (0.853) is bigger than 0.7, the reliability of this test is acceptable.

Organizational spirituality questionnaire: The second output determines Cronbach's alpha and the number of question or variables. Since, the value Cronbach's alpha (0.961) is bigger than 0.7, the reliability of this test is acceptable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Considering the results of spearman correlation test and the sig. value which is lower than 5, the zero assumption is rejected and H_1 assumption is confirmed. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company.

The results of Spearman correlation test implies on the correlation between the two variables (individual spirituality and affective commitment), thus, existence of a significant relationship between individual spirituality and affective commitment in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company is confirmed. Therefore, the 1st secondary hypothesis is approved.

The results of Spearman correlation test implies on the correlation between the two variables (individual spirituality and continuance commitment), thus, existence of a significant relationship between individual spirituality and continuance commitment in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company is confirmed. Therefore, the 2nd secondary hypothesis is approved.

The results of spearman correlation test implies on the correlation between the two variables (individual spirituality and normative commitment), thus existence of a significant relationship between individual spirituality and normative commitment in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company is confirmed. Therefore, the 3rd secondary hypothesis is approved.

The results of spearman correlation test implies on the correlation between the two variables (group spirituality and affective commitment), thus existence of a significant relationship between group spirituality and affective commitment in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company is confirmed. Therefore, the 4th secondary hypothesis is approved.

The results of Spearman correlation test implies on the correlation between the two variables (group spirituality and continuance commitment), thus, existence of a significant relationship between group spirituality and continuance commitment in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company is confirmed. Therefore, the 5th secondary hypothesis is approved.

The results of Spearman correlation test implies on the correlation between the two variables (group spirituality and normative commitment), thus, existence of a significant relationship between group spirituality and normative commitment in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company is confirmed. Therefore, the 6th secondary hypothesis is approved.

The results of Spearman correlation test implies on the correlation between the two variables (organizational spirituality and affective commitment), thus, existence of a significant relationship between organizational spirituality and affective commitment in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company is confirmed. Therefore, the 7th secondary hypothesis is approved.

The results of Spearman correlation test implies on the correlation between the two variables (organizational spirituality and continuance commitment), thus, existence of a significant relationship between organizational spirituality and continuance commitment in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company is confirmed. Therefore, the 8th secondary hypothesis is approved.

Table 1: Results of hypothesis testing

| Hypothesis | Sig. | Spearman Coef. | Correlation Coef. | Existence of relationship between variables |
|--|------|----------------|-------------------|---|
| Main hypothesis: investigation of the relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company | 0.00 | 0.561 | 1.00 | There is a relationship |
| The 1st secondary hypothesis: investigation of the relationship between individual spirituality and affective commitment | 0.00 | 0.573 | 1.00 | There is a relationship |
| The 2nd secondary hypothesis: investigation of the relationship between individual spirituality and continuance commitment | 0.05 | 0.218 | 1.00 | There is a relationship |
| The 3rd secondary hypothesis: investigation of the relationship between individual spirituality and normative commitment | 0.00 | 0.313 | 1.00 | There is a relationship |
| The 4th secondary hypothesis: investigation of the relationship between group spirituality and affective commitment | 0.00 | 0.470 | 1.00 | There is a relationship |
| The 5th secondary hypothesis: investigation of the relationship between group spirituality and continuance commitment | 0.02 | 0.243 | 1.00 | There is a relationship |
| The 6th secondary hypothesis: investigation of the relationship between group spirituality and normative commitment | 0.05 | 0.219 | 1.00 | There is a relationship |
| The 7th secondary hypothesis: investigation of the relationship between organizational spirituality and affective commitment | 0.00 | 0.601 | 1.00 | There is a relationship |
| The 8th secondary hypothesis: investigation of the relationship between organizational spirituality and continuance commitment | 0.00 | 0.356 | 1.00 | There is a relationship |
| The 9th secondary hypothesis: investigation of the relationship between organizational spirituality and normative commitment | 0.02 | 0.244 | 1.00 | There is a relationship |

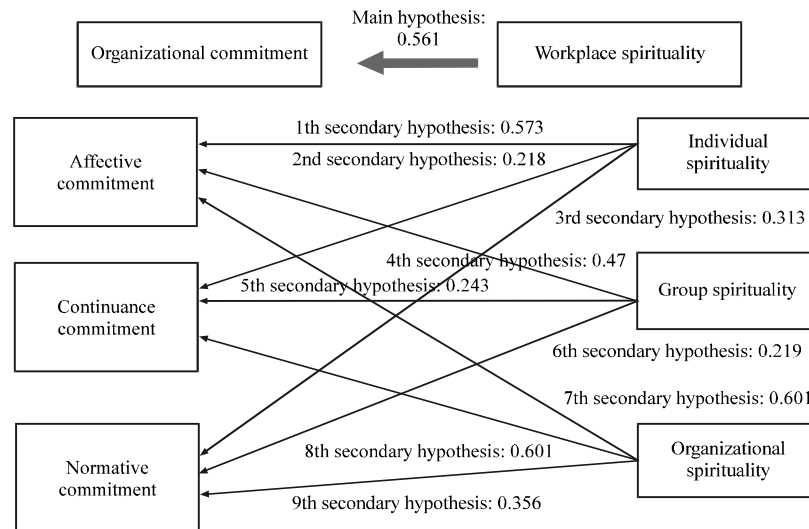


Fig. 1: The ultimate analysis model

The results of Spearman correlation test implies on the correlation between the two variables (organizational spirituality and normative commitment), thus, existence of a significant relationship between organizational spirituality and normative commitment in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company is confirmed. Therefore, the 9th secondary hypothesis is approved (Table 1 and Fig. 1).

CONCLUSION

Results indicated that according to the main hypothesis, there is a significant relationship between the workplace spirituality and organizational commitment in of National Iranian Oil Distribution Company. There is also a positive and significant relationship between the variables of all secondary hypotheses. Investigating the gender variable, it was indicated that apart from continuance commitment, the average score of women in other indices was higher compared to men included in the sample. As to the age variable in all indices except for continuance commitment, those older than 50 had a higher average score compared to the other age groups. When it came to education, compared to the other groups, those with no diploma had higher average scores in all indices.

SUGGESTIONS

Indices and items related to organizational spirituality in all three (individual, group and organizational) levels must be considered in human resource management schedule. These indices must be periodically monitored in order to increase the level of organizational commitment among the employees.

Since, it is necessary to take care of employees in order to avoid them from leaving the organization, the indices related to continuance and normative commitment should be developed and promoted as well. That makes employees more interested in staying in organization than leaving it. Because of the services, support and attention they receive from the organization, not only they do not think of leaving it but also know themselves as being spiritually and morally committed to the organization and its improvement.

Development of participative management in National Iranian Oil Distribution Company and its improvement in top, medium and first-line level of management in order to promote the thrust of employees to managers and decisions made by them.

Developing and updating the performance evaluation system in order to pay employees and contractual forces different types of prizes compensations.

Adjustment of the vision of National Iranian Oil Distribution Company the document must give meaning to individual life and make it distinguishable. Then, the base of social culture-building, moral system and fundamental key-values must be included as well.

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