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The relationship between workplace spirituality and organisational health in an Islamic context

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It is widely accepted that some characteristics and aspects of spirituality have been mentioned in the religious beliefs, teachings and practices of many divine (Abrahamic) religions, including Islam. This has recently drawn researchers' attention, working in the fields of psychology and religion, towards the relationship between religion and spirituality. At present, research on industrial and organisational psychology seeks to shed light on the relationship between religiosity, intelligence and cognitive abilities. In addition, a healthy organisation is a place where individuals attend their workplace with interest and are proud to work there. In fact, a healthy organisation can be achieved with regard to physical–mental health, security, belongings, meritocracy and the valuation of knowledge and expertise. Considering the significance of this study, it aimed to reflect on the relationship between workplace spirituality (WPS) and organisational health (OH) in manufacturing and service companies in Malaysia. Hence, a total number of 30 trading companies in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Langkawi were selected as the statistical population of the study and 3820 employees in these organisations were investigated by simple random sampling through questionnaires distributed to collect the data required for analysis in SPSS software. The results revealed that the given organisations had good levels of spirituality and health. Accordingly, it was concluded that WPS had a significant positive effect on OH ($p = 0.74$).

Contribution: This article contributes to the relationship between WPS and OH in manufacturing companies.

Keywords: religion; spirituality; workplace spirituality; organisational health; Malaysia; questionnaires; spirituality and health; Kuala Lumpur.

Introduction

By the end of the last century, a variety of integration has been developing as the intermediary between external and internal life. In this sense, the business environment is amongst the important areas in which the given integration has been thus far discussed. Workplace spirituality (WPS) is also one of the new concepts emerging as a new paradigm in recent years in management and business literature in the Western world (Afsar & Rehman 2015). The word 'spirituality' originates from the Latin root 'spiritus', meaning breath or life and describes a 'spiritual' person. Spirituality has traditionally only been alluded to in terms of faith but has now become one of the viewpoints of spirituality. Proponents of the non-religious view of spirituality claim that a vague concept that does not accommodate the 'spiritual' aspect is being religious. In Western cultures, this was largely because of the rise of secularism, which removed religion from the workplace. There have been very few research attempts focusing on the religious aspects of spirituality, considering the number of studies carried out on the idea of spirituality in the workplace, the advantages of WPS within organisations and the related impact on the level of results and success. The way spirituality in the workplace is established on a researcher's theoretical position highlights the ambiguity and diversity of the concept. It ranges from a positivist perspective to a social constructionist perspective that directs the philosophical and analytical approach to the study of spirituality in the workplace.

The last frontier, or the intangible truth, is characterised as spirituality, an inner journey that enables anyone to explore the essence of their being or the deepest values and meanings people live by. Religion on the other hand is characterised by devotional and ritual observances as a collection of beliefs that explain the purpose of existence and give meaning to the universe. A moral code regulating the conduct of human affairs is found in religion. So, we can conclude that one key difference between the two is that whilst spirituality is characterised as a quest within oneself, religion is external to oneself. Religion is the law and ritual of the set pattern, whilst spirituality is the light that comes with a profound understanding of the world and self. The definition of WPS is important to explain here. In spirituality, WPS is characterised as the inborn human quality. Individuals bring this to the workplace as an integral part of themselves. Spirituality is a condition or experience that can give way or meaning to people or offer feelings of understanding, encouragement, inner wholeness or connectedness to individuals. Connectedness may be with oneself, with others, with nature, with the cosmos, with a deity or with any other divine force. Spirituality in the workplace, as we know, increases workers' self-esteem. It can also affect job satisfaction as workplace spirit allows each person to bring their whole self to both work and home; in both areas, it increases the degree of satisfaction. It increases devotion by being affiliated with an organisation that encourages a tremendous sense of allegiance. During the past 400 years, the Western world has been making a distinction between the outside versus the inside world, detaching worldly activities from things such as religion, spirituality and mysticism (Miner et al. 2014).

On the one hand, this orientation has led to advances in science and technology, higher levels of welfare, as well as the rise of democracy and the rule of law, but on the other hand, it has disconnected humanity in many ways from the exalted aspects of existence (Bhatti et al. 2016). In fact, this paradigm, which has spread to the entire world and has assumed control of meeting human well-being, has deserted large aspects of human sensitivity and provided the grounds for human beings, especially for those in the Western world, to demonstrate feelings of dissatisfaction and restlessness (Asgari, Ahmadi & Jamali 2015). That is why they show a great tendency towards spirituality, religion and spiritual rituals, especially the ones in East Asia, to fill the voids of their spiritual needs. Many things once a time classified in the private domain are now being imposed on the public domains (Akhtar et al. 2018; Anwar, Gani & Rahman 2020; Harisa 2019; Khan, Arshad & Khan 2018; Rahmawati, Ahmad & Suriansyah 2019; Rohana 2018; Sari, Zulaikhah & Mahdiyah 2019). Introduction of some concepts such as morality, truth, faith in God or a higher power, honesty, conscience, chivalry and generosity, trust, forgiveness, compassion, feelings and emotions, consideration, meaning, colleague solidarity, encouragement for co-workers, sense of peace, harmony, altruism and the like into research studies as well as business and management practices all imply the emergence of a new paradigm (Karakas, Sarigollu & Kavas 2015). Workplace

spirituality is a novel issue in the organisational field but a topic with limited theoretical–scientific development (Altaf & Awan 2011). It has been thus defined as a completely individual phenomenon, encompassing personal and organisational efforts, aimed at integrating spirituality and work (Anam, Widiastuti & Rofiq 2020; Jin & Lee 2019; Meitasari, Wirama & Suardikhha 2018; Sony & Mekoth 2019). Spirituality in organisations is accordingly the positive outcome of personal spiritual needs and organisational environment (Turco & Maggioni 2018).

Workplace spirituality is like a journey towards the integration of work and spirituality, which can bring perfection and coherence at work (Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson 2003). Despite being in its infancy, organisational spirituality can bring deep and profound energy to life (Burack 1999). This powerful energy can be achieved once work-life is linked to spirituality in the workplace (Rego, Cunha & Souto 2007). Happiness contributes to employee work engagement, job satisfaction, organisational dedication and intrinsic motivation in today's workplace environment. High levels of personal satisfaction tend to make people perform better. The experience of feeling satisfied motivates people to be successful in their workplace with increased efforts to achieve the goals stated. It is possible that happy people are more active, imaginative, inventive and have stronger social relationships. Employee satisfaction is of great importance because it enhances the efficiency and results, decreases absenteeism and strengthens the cognitive flexibility, communication and teamwork (Schutte 2016; Steenkamp & Basson 2013). Accordingly, employees can experience more pleasant, balanced and meaningful working hours even if their work lasts for approximately 1000 h. Paying attention to human resources (HR) as an important capital of organisations can thus provide the likelihood of their success, dynamism and survival in today's complex and changing world (Chand & Koul 2012). By identifying effective variables in organisational and individual activities and goals, organisations can further improve the quality of their HR. Amongst these variables is institutionalised spirituality in the workplace (Ashmos & Duchon 2000). Workplace spirituality can be assumed as a balm to heal the wounds resulting from a lack of identity in organisations. Therefore, the first signs in organisations in this field could be examined with the advent of human relations theory (HRT), whose results highlighted the role of HR in organisational productivity, in a way that, if HR do not cooperate, managers fail to do anything, so that consideration of employees and their values became of utmost importance (Crawford et al. 2008). Workplace spirituality is one of the new concepts emerging in recent years in management and business literature in the Western world. It is also regarded as a new paradigm whose control in organisations is amongst the most important actions taken by future managers. Experts have similarly defined WPS as the propensity to look for the ultimate goal of life and to live accordingly (Chawla & Guda 2010). Also, researchers believe that spirituality in the workplace is a framework for organisational and cultural values, wherein employees go through excellence in the work

process and facilitated communication with others with a sense of perfection and vitality (Duchon & Plowman 2005). It seems that employees, today, wherever they work, are in quest of something beyond bonuses. They are looking for something meaningful and inspiring and even demand work–life balance (Gupta, Kumar & Singh 2014). In most studies, three aspects of meaningful work, sense of community and alignment with organisational values are thus considered for WPS. Accordingly, meaningful work, at the individual level, is regarded as the basic aspect of spirituality in the workplace, which refers to the profound sense of meaning and purpose in individual work. In addition, a sense of community, at the group level, represents the feeling of a bond and a sense of deep harmony with others. Moreover, alignment with organisational values (at the organisational level) signifies the third aspect of WPS when individuals experience the strong sense of solidarity between personal values, missions and goals in organisation. It seems that WPS is associated with other variables in organisations. In this respect, researchers have mentioned different variables in their studies in this field. In the present study, according to a review of previous research, institutionalisation of spirituality in the workplace could provide the grounds for organisational health (OH). The way workers do their work may be deeply influenced by religious convictions. Nearly 80% of individuals are religiously affiliated in the United States and 68% in England and Wales, indicating that a large segment of the workforce can identify with a religion. Yet, in the philosophy and practice of HR, religious identity in the workplace is frequently ignored, making it a challenge of workplace diversity vulnerable to stress and conflict. The case of two Catholic midwives trying to stop supervising abortion procedures entered the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom in 2014, which ruled against them. In 2017, the European Court of Justice ruled, in reaction to the dismissal of a Muslim receptionist, that workplace restrictions on wearing hijabs need not constitute discrimination. Recently in the United States, after several pharmacists refused to fill prescriptions, which they found contrary to their religious values, many retail pharmacy chains faced public outrage. These incidents have attracted scrutiny from the media and public discourse, pointing to possible contradictions in the expression of occupational and religious identities.

The term OH, denoting a situation beyond short-term organisational effectiveness, refers to a set of relatively stable features (Lee, Chen & Xie 2014). In other words, this concept implies durability and survival of organisations in their environment, adaptation, along with promotion and expansion of their capability and capacity for further adaptation (Miller, Griffin & Hart 1999). Obviously, depending on the nature of organisations, OH affects their fate and survival (Lyden & Klingele 2000). Amongst different organisations in society, trading ones are of utmost importance because they keep an eye on the needs of citizens (Lencioni 2012; Ramdass & Lewis 2012) and different needs in society are also met through HR working in such organisations. Therefore, it is essential to reflect on the relationship between spirituality and organisational commitment amongst employees involved in trading organisations and companies.

Methodology

This applied research with a descriptive-correlational design was conducted on a statistical population of a total number of 30 trading companies in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Langkawi, Malaysia, of which 3820 employees were selected as the statistical samples using a simple random sampling technique in 2020. In addition, two standard questionnaires were utilised to collect the data required for this study.

Workplace spirituality scale

This questionnaire was developed by Milliman et al. (2003), which consists of 20 items focused on three aspects of meaningful work, sense of community and alignment with organisational values.

Organisational health inventory

This 30-item questionnaire was designed by Miles (1965) to measure OH within 8 components, including morale, innovation, involvement in decision-making, commitment and independence, goal path, leadership, uniformity and adaptation, as well as development and efficiency. It is worth noting that, in this study, the five-point Likert-type scale from 1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree was employed. After distributing the questionnaires, 3781 cases were found appropriate and the rest were excluded from data analysis because of being incomplete. The spiritual leader hopes for a workplace composed of people with common rituals, values and beliefs that is truly a community. It means that the emphasis will be less on the power of the formal role, enforcement, transformation and less on conformity, regulation. Spirituality does not require the leader to adhere to a single faith or to try to convince subordinates to adopt a particular set of religious principles. Although leaders who prioritise spirituality may base their approach to leadership on Christianity or another religious practice, they may also have so-called 'non-traditional' religious attitudes or may not at all adhere to any specific religion. Spirituality is more concerned with employee development as 'whole people': individuals who demonstrate sympathy to other workers, managers, supervisors and clients. Most workers look to the workplace as a way to find meaning in their lives. Many look upon their workplace as a culture in today's world. The mid-twentieth-century United States is characterised by individuals such as parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins who live near families. Things have now changed, although, as the family is not a ready source of support for many people. An identity crisis is a consequence.

To check the validity of the questionnaires, construct validity was used, particularly fit indices and structural equation modeling (SEM). The root-mean-square-error of approximation (RMSEA) indices > 0.1, Chi-square or degree of freedom (df) >3 and $p > 0.05$ implied the acceptable validity of the construct

under study. In addition, to assess the reliability of the questionnaires, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient using the SPSS software was calculated, whose value for the variables of WPS and OH was 0.78 and 0.81, respectively. Moreover, this value was equal to 0.852 for the whole questionnaires, indicating their appropriate reliability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients < 0.7 indicated that the reliability of the measurement tools had been approved and could be administered.

Results

Table 1 presents correlation coefficients of WPS and its aspects, including meaningful work, sense of community and alignment with organisational values and OH.

Hypothesis 1 (H_1): There is a significant relationship between WPS and OH.

Hypothesis 2 (H_2): There is a significant relationship between aspects of WPS and OH.

Based on the results in Table 1, Pearson's correlation coefficient between the overall score of WPS and OH was equal to 0.74. Moreover, this coefficient was significant at the level of 0.001. The results in Table 1 show that WPS aspects, including meaningful work, sense of community and alignment with organisational values, respectively, with coefficients of 0.68, 0.66 and 0.71, are correlated with OH. All these coefficients were significant at the level of $p > 0.001$. According to the results in Table 2, both hypotheses were confirmed.

To assess the status of the variables in this study, the test of means (one-sample t-test) was used. Accordingly, the mean value of the statistical population was investigated at the error level of 0.05. In this test, using the SPSS software, the utility could represent the mean value larger and smaller than three as the criterion (mean value) in positive and negative concepts, respectively. Table 2 illustrates the results of the test of means (one-sample t-test), indicating the appropriate status of each of the research variables. However, it is still possible to pay much more attention to each variable and to enhance their status in the trading companies recruited in this study.

Discussion

Spirituality in Islam means enjoying high human values such as faith in God, high respect for others, piety, service, optimisms and honesty, which are generally universal.

TABLE 1: Relationship between workplace spirituality (aspects) and organisational health.

Testing H_1 and H_2	OH		
Statistical indices	r	p	n
WPS	3781	$p > 0.001$	0.74
WPS aspects	-	-	-
Meaningful work	0.68	-	-
Sense of community	0.66	-	-
Alignment with organisational values	0.71	-	-

WPS, workplace spirituality; OH, organisational health.

Spirituality in Iranian society is also religion-based, denoting that Islamic religious beliefs, teachings and practices shape spirituality. The main source of spirituality in Islam is the Holy Qur'an and the words of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Infallible Imams (AS). Islamic languages have thus proposed various terms for spirituality as a concept in the Western world, incorporating the meanings of inners, right, meanings, position, blessings, moral perfection, beauty, life and remembrance of God. Muslims deem that spiritual life is based both on fear of God and love for Him as well as submission to His will and search for His recognition as the ultimate goal of creation. Islamic spirituality is associated with Islamic patterns as the pillars of Islam. The spiritual essence of Islam is linked with monotheism and the heart of Islam is the key to understand its different aspects. It should be noted that most internal research performed in the field of WPS was conducted through the Western approach and the components extracted from the foundations of this approach. The Western approach, meanwhile, looks at human beings and their beliefs from a different viewpoint and does not correspond with the concepts derived from our religious teachings and our Islamic culture.

Nevertheless, it is not easy to define the term spirituality because it is exploited in various fields. It is rooted in the Christian tradition that has a long history of theology and religious practices. Spirituality is a search looking inward, which often contrasts with the material, physical and external affairs. Compared with religion, some consider spirituality more dispersed and less institutionalised; on the contrary, others know spirituality as the core of religion, especially when they have mystical and religious experiences. Spirituality has been the long-lasting obsession of humanity, but a critical and comparative study of spirituality in global contexts is an emerging phenomenon. Many religions do not offer a precise word for spirituality; however, the concept of spirituality has today become popular and is now recruited inside and outside of religions. Thus, new interests in spirituality have been accompanied by much more emphasis on personal issues, self-development and a different understanding of human psychology. Spirituality is now a universal keyword, suggesting a search for directions and meanings.

Some researchers accordingly define spirituality as the tendency to search for the ultimate goal of life and to live accordingly. Others illustrate spirituality as meanings and life awareness. Some dwell on the concepts of religions and rituals in the East, such as Taoism, Buddhism, Zen and Islam. Such researchers rightly claim that non-Western societies have much better integrated personal life, work, entertainment, worship and other aspects of life. Reviewing research in this field suggests that spirituality for a Catholic

TABLE 2: Test of means (one-sample t-test) for the study variables.

Variables	n	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
WPS	3781	3.981	0.3654	35.875	0.00
OH	3781	4.1203	0.4753	39.492	0.00

WPS, workplace spirituality; OH, organisational health; SD, standard deviation; Sig, significance.

theologian is the way to move towards divinity; for a physician, it is something that gives meaning to life; for a sociologist, it is a personal search to understand goals and values that may be taken in the concept of God or the transcendence or not; and for others, it means knowing and living as a basis for personal, interpersonal, social and global development, in reference to the knowledge that God is always present in human existence.

The best word that can represent spirituality and reflect its vital role in human life is interdependence. In this sense, individuals working with organisations who are more spiritual can gain more profits. Accordingly, individuals involved in these organisations are capable of demonstrating a higher proportion of their complete self at work. These people can thus utilise their creativity, emotions and intelligence. Without bothering their colleagues or making them angry, these individuals are always looking for ways to express their spirituality in the workplace. They strongly believe that as long as companies fail to learn how to manage and control perfect humans, that is, the great spiritual power that exists in the essence of each individual, they will not be able to supply services and products on a global scale.

For some people, spirituality in the workplace and within organisations has a religious connotation. They believe that spirituality means acknowledging God and His Prophet's manners in the workplace. Spirituality and tendency towards it originate from the major part of its source, that is, the spirituality of the world's major religious institutions, Jesus, Moses and PBUH. Given the importance of this topic, this study examined the effect of WPS on OH amongst 30 trading companies in Malaysia. The results signified the positive effectiveness of WPS in improving OH in the selected companies in this country ($r = 0.74$). Therefore, organisation managers need to pay special attention to the concepts of WPS and OH and benefit from their positive impacts. Spiritual organisations and spirituality within organisations will thus bring many benefits, including the ability to affect spiritual health in employees and their self-control.

Conclusion

The first requirement for performing successful activities by employees in organisations is their physical–mental health so that these individuals must not suffer from any specific physical–mental diseases, have concentration, make efforts to fulfil their tasks, and show successful and excellent performance in terms of thinking, mood and temperament, and behaviour. The effect of spirituality on the health of the body and soul can be well understood when it becomes clear that a faithful person has more confidence that is spiritual, more calm nerves and a healthier heart and does not constantly think of violating the rights of others. From this perspective, if others become successful, these individuals will not feel jealous, greed cannot make their lives a living hell, nervous system disorders do not cause gastric, duodenal ulcers amongst them, lust does not degrade and weaken them, and they will enjoy life and live longer. The health of

the body depends largely on faith, as the most important characteristic of a spiritual human. The main point here is that if individuals have faith, deficiencies do not wear them out but maintain their balance.

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