

# The Effect of Workplace Spirituality on Innovative Work Behavior

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Received: October 1, 2019

Accepted: October 28, 2019

Online Published: November 8, 2019

doi:10.5539/ibr.v12n12p29

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v12n12p29>

## Abstract

Workplace spirituality is a novel concept and it has been identified as a unique way to improve organizational performance. On the other hand, many organizations are experiencing undesirable consequences of lack of workplace spirituality, such as employee stress, turnover, absenteeism, and lack of employee creativity. Hence, organizations are now focusing on developing workplace spirituality in the workplaces as it offers many advantages to organizations. Despite the growing interest on workplace spirituality, there is still a dearth of research on the topic of workplace spirituality. Literature suggests that employee innovative work behavior directly leads to enhance organizational performance and workplace spirituality leads to increase innovativeness and creativity of employees. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to fill the gap in literature, to a certain extent by proposing a conceptual model to examine the effect of workplace spirituality on employee innovative work behavior. Thus, it proposed that there is a positive effect of workplace spirituality on employee innovative work behavior. Consequently, intrinsic motivation from componential theory of creativity was integrated to identify the mediating effect of intrinsic motivation on the effect of workplace spirituality on innovative work behavior.

**Keywords:** workplace spirituality, innovative work behavior, intrinsic motivation

## 1. Introduction

Employee innovative work behavior is essential for long-term survival of organizations (Afsar & Rehman, 2015; Oldham & Cumming, 1996) as innovative work behavior is essential for achieving competitive advantage over their competitors (Aravamudhan & Krishnaveni, 2014). Innovative work behavior of employees has taken a burgeoning interest of employers in organizations due to highly dynamic economic environment, globalization, ever changing customer wants in the business environment and rapid change in the market (Akram, Lei & Haider, 2016; Tajeddini & Trueman, 2008). According to Afsar and Rehman (2015) spirituality of an individual's mindset encourage or motivate creativity and innovativeness within a person and it directly affects organizational productivity. Moreover, workplace spirituality brings happiness and joyfulness to the employee and it provides a meaningful working environment for the employees (Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson, 2003). Today, organizations are experiencing negative consequences of lack of workplace spirituality, such as employee stress, turnover, and absenteeism which reduces organizational performance (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Hassan, Bin Nadeem, & Akhter, 2016).

Previous studies revealed that workplace spirituality positively related with employee work attitudes (Neck & Milliman, 1994), employee engagement (Roof, 2015; Saks, 2011), organizational citizenship behavior (Saks, 2006), intrinsic work satisfaction (Milliman et al, 2003), trust and personal fulfillment (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002), and job satisfaction (Lee, Lovelace, & Manz, 2014; Mydin, Kanesan, & Pitchay, 2018; Milliman, et al., 2003). Further, workplace spirituality increase the productivity of the organization (Fry & Matherly, 2006), innovation and creativity of the employees, and employee performance (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). Fry (2003) identified that workplace spirituality encourages employee to play extra role or pro-social behavior, develop unity within the organization, reduce absenteeism, reduce turnover (Milliman et al., 2003; Gatling, Kim, & Milliman, 2016) and decrease employee deviant behavior (Ahmad & Omar, 2014). Lee et al. (2014) examined the relationship between workplace spirituality and the ethical climate

and identified a significant positive relationship between workplace spirituality and ethical climate. Workplace spirituality has a positive impact on decision-making, problem solving capabilities, and greater creativity (Weitz, Vardi, & Setter, 2012). Ahmadi, Nami, and Barvarz (2014) posited that workplace spirituality is not related to any particular religion or religious system. Moreover, prior studies found that valuing the work is a vital driving force to be intrinsically motivate the employee (Fry, 2003; Urdan & Maehr, 1995).

Though the organizational leaders have understood the importance of innovative work behavior of employees and workplace spirituality (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007; Gupta, Kumar, & Singh, 2014; Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008; Saks, 2011), it was not sufficiently studied (Afsar & Rehman, 2015; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). Burgeoning interest on workplace spirituality has led to develop different theories and empirical work on workplace spirituality and its outcomes (Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2008; Pawar, 2009). However, dearth of research on the topic of workplace spirituality was highlighted (Gatling et al., 2016; Pauer, 2014; Sheep, 2006) especially in the Eastern world (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). Besides, human beings are not only rational but also emotional and spiritual (Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008). Hence, the objective of the current study was to examine the effect of workplace spirituality on the innovative work behavior of employees. Further, intrinsic motivation from componential theory of creativity was integrated to the model to identify the mediating effect of intrinsic motivation on the effect of workplace spirituality on innovative work behavior.

To align with the objective of the study, this paper hypothesized a conceptual model for workplace spirituality and employee innovative work behavior. The conceptual model was developed based on the literature related to the innovative work behavior (as the dependent variable) and workplace spirituality (as the independent variable). Employees show creative working behavior when their work is meaningful (Afsar & Rehman, 2015). Moreover, intrinsic task motivation is one of the components that enhance individual's creative behavior (Amabile, 2012; Vinarski-Peretz & Carmeli, 2011). Besides, there is a significant positive effect of workplace spirituality on intrinsic motivation (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009; Fry, 2003; Urdan & Maehr, 1995). Hence, the proposed conceptual model suggests that intrinsic motivation mediates the effect of workplace spirituality on the innovative work behavior of employees.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the review of literature concerning workplace spirituality and innovative work behavior of employees. Next, in Section 3, formulation of hypotheses and the development of the conceptual model is discussed. Section 4 presents the theoretical framework and methodology of this study is given in Section 5. Then, the implications of this study and directions for future research are presented in Section 6. Finally, the conclusion of the study is given in Section 7.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Workplace Spirituality*

Workplace spirituality refers to “the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaning work that takes place in the context of community (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000, p.137). Belwalkar, Vohra, and Pandey (2018) defined workplace spirituality as the experience which people undergoing when seeking meaning in their work and desire to connect with other human beings. According to Harrington (2004, p.33) “spirituality is employees’ sharing and experiencing some common attachments and attractions with each other within the workplace.” Pawar (2009) explained spirituality as the employee experience that includes sense of meaning, community, and transcendence Kolodinsky et al. (2008) referred organizational spirituality as employee attitudes towards higher order values and promoting those values to realize collective interest through fulfilling an individual's interests.

According to Mousa and Alas (2016), the concept of workplace spirituality has become a buzzword in contemporary organizations. Further, organizations consist of group of people and the spiritual needs of individuals should fulfill accordingly (Krishnalumar & Neck, 2002). Otherwise, individuals become dissatisfied and organizational spirituality becomes low. Bringing employees’ heart, soul, mind, and body into one place is very much important for both individual and organizational success (Mousa & Alas, 2016).

Workplace spirituality consists of individual experience with his/her inner feelings (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004) and his/her workplace environment (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). Workplace spirituality is not about specific religion or converting people to a particular religious’ system (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Afsar & Rehman, 2015; Pourmola, Bagheri, Alinezhad, & Nejad, 2019). According to Fagley and Adler (2012), through workplace spirituality, employees can find out their ultimate purpose of life. Thus, it leads to develop connectedness with peers and others related to the working environment. Workplace spirituality includes tolerance, feeling of interconnectivity, acceptability of the norms in organizations (Afsar & Rehman, 2015), kindness, empathy, and

trust (Hassan, Bin Nadeem & Akhter, 2016). According to the review of literature much of the studies defined workplace spirituality at individual level (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Milliman et al., 2003) and some other studies have defined workplace spirituality at organizational level (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Kolodinsky et al., 2003).

Now a days most of the people are more spiritual not only in their personal life but also in their working life (Neck & Milliman, 1994). The benefits of workplace spirituality can be categorized under three levels; individual-level, organizational level and societal level (Faro Albuquerque, Campos Cunha, Dias Martins, & Brito S á 2014). Individual level benefits include the mental and physical fitness of employees, dramatic increase in personal growth and self-worth (Krahnke, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2003), and realization of employee full potential (Mitroff & Dentor, 1999). Workplace spirituality leads to an increase in work productivity because it creates an enjoyable working experience in the workplace (Janfeshan, Panahy, Veiseh, & Kamari, 2011). According to Neck and Milliman (1994) organizations focusing on spiritual values tend to provide more opportunities to employees for their personal growth and development. Furthermore, it was observed that workplace spirituality leads to increase feeling toward others and it acts as a weapon that attracts and retain employees within the organization (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Jena & Pradhan, 2018). Enhancing trust among people (Neck & Milliman, 1994) and increasing interconnectedness (Daniel, 2015) create a more motivated organizational working environment as benefits of workplace spirituality. Workplace spirituality is very much important not only because it leads to enhance personal growth but also to increase the psychological contract between employers and employees (Ahiauzu & Asawo, 2012). Simply, the goals of the spirituality are to reach a higher personal potential that leads to greater employee creativity, commitment, and motivation (Osman-Gani, Hashim, & Ismail, 2013). Pandey, Gupta, and Arora (2009) identified workplace spirituality as an employee friendly working environment which mainly focuses on employee spirit. Moreover, Fairholm (1996) identified organizations as spiritual entities because employees spend more hours at the workplace. According to Brown (2003) organizational spirituality leads to improve integrity, introduce ethics to the workplace, motivate emotional competencies, and establish specific groups in the workplace and empowering the workforce.

Different scholars see workplace spirituality as a multi-faceted construct (Hussain & Sharma, 2012; Singh & Mishra, 2016). There are six dimensions of workplace spirituality, namely, 1) inner life 2) meaning and purpose in work 3) a sense of connection and community 4) block of spirituality 5) personal responsibility and 6) positive connection with other individual and contemplation (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). However, Milliman et al. (2003) did some modifications to these dimensions and introduced three new dimensions that mainly focus on motivation and psychology. Meaningful at work focus on individual level was the first dimension (Janfeshan et al., 2011). The sense of community was the second dimension focusing on the community level. The third dimension was organizational values which aligned with the organizational level. Some scholars categorized workplace spirituality into three camps based on the definitions, such as individual experience and organizational facilitation and a mix of both (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017). According to Burack (1999) workplace spirituality has three main components, namely internal, external and integrated.

## 2.2 *Intrinsic Motivation*

Intrinsic motivation refers to the degree of interest or enjoyment that an individual is experiencing when performing a work task without being controlled by external factors (Saeed, Afsar, Shahjehan, & Shah, 2019). According to Legault (2016), intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in the behavior that is inherently enjoyable and intrinsically motivated action that is not separable from the behavior. For instance, children play outdoor games (such as running, jumping) not for any reason just because of their fun and internal satisfaction. Ryan and Deci (2000) found that enjoyment and psychological well-being as some benefits of intrinsic motivation. Nevertheless, the social environment should play an important role to flourish the intrinsic motivation and this can be done by influencing perceived autonomy and competence. For an example, when supervisors give positive feedback to their employees, intrinsic motivation of those employees rises. However, to have more fruitful results employees should have autonomy and feel competent in performing the action.

Componential theory of creativity (Amabile, 2013) identified three components of creativity namely domain relevant skills, creativity relevant process, and task motivation. According to Amabile, intrinsic motivation involves activity of interest, enjoyment and personal sense of challenge and this is only not sufficient to get favorable creative outcomes (Vinarski-Peretz & Carmeli, 2011). Intrinsic motivation is an important condition for innovative work behavior because it influence employee's cognition, behavior and emotions and directly affect their performance (Saeed, Afsar, Shahjehan, & Shah, 2019; Zhou & George, 2003). When employee behavior is controlled by intrinsic motivation, his/her actions become more stabilize and his/her performance goes up. According to Jaussi and Dionne (2003) employee creative performance increase when they are

intrinsically motivated. Saeed, Afsar, Shahjehan, and Shah (2019) also highlighted that intrinsic motivators are bound up with the work itself.

### *2.3 Innovative Work Behavior*

Innovative work behavior is considered as a very important tool that leads to gain competitive advantage over competitors in this knowledge-driven economy as no organization can survive without having continuous innovation (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2014). Innovative work behavior refers to deliberately introducing new ideas and implement those ideas with the behavior modification to increase organizational as well as employee's performance (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007). Employee creativity and innovative work behavior are two different concepts. Innovative work behavior focusses on discovery, recognition, generation, development, modification, adaption and implementation of ideas (King & Anderson, 2002; Scott & Bruce, 1994) while creativity involved with novel, new and useful ideas (Scott & Bruce, 1994). According to Singh and Sarkar (2019) innovative work behavior means the employee's ability to find new ideas, promote them and to implement new ideas.

Innovative work behavior consists of three steps namely idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization (Rahman, Osman-Gani, Momen, & Islam, 2015). Idea generation happens when employees produce new ideas, whereas idea promotion means finding supporters surrounding the ideas and idea realization involves producing a prototype, which can test by individuals or organizations (Rahman, Osman-Gani, Momen, & Islam, 2015). Moreover, De Jong and Den Hartog (2010) introduced another step as idea implementation that transform creative ideas into innovative ideas. There are many benefits of innovative work behavior including increasing work engagement, declining work-life conflicts (Abstein, Heidenreich, & Spieth, 2014), and increasing organizational effectiveness (Basadur, 2004). Most of the organizations use employee innovation ideas as building blocks to produce new products or services in their organizations (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007).

Previous study findings have indicated employee innovative work behavior highly dependent on their relationship with their peers, subordinates, supervisors and the clients (Anderson, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2004). Moreover, employees are able to enhance their business performance through their ability to create and translate their ideas to successful business outcomes (Pradhan & Jena, 2019). The importance of innovative work behavior of employees has encouraged researchers to examine the impact of different factors such as personality types, leadership styles, and working environment on innovative work behavior (Pelz & Andrews, 1966). Moreover, a plethora of studies revealed that there is a positive impact of transformational leadership on employee innovative behavior (Afsar, Badir, & Bin Saeed, 2014). Some scholars have examined the relationship between innovative work behavior and organizational resources (Spreitzer, 1995; Madjar, 2008), climate for innovation (Scott & Bruce, 1994), personality (George & Zhou, 2001), self-efficacy (Axtell, Holman, Unsworth, Wall, Waterson, & Harrington, 2000), problem solving skills (Scott & Bruce, 1994), transformational leadership (Masood & Afsar, 2017; Pieterse, Knippenberg, Schippers, & Stam, 2009). However, the review of literature highlighted that workplace spirituality is not sufficiently studied (Afsar & Rehman, 2015; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). Even though there is a burgeoning interest on workplace spirituality (Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2008; Pawar, 2009), little research has been carried out on the topic of workplace spirituality (Gatling et al., 2016; Pawar, 2014; Sheep, 2006). Hence, by developing a conceptual model and by statistically validating the model, researcher contribute to fill the gap of workplace spirituality literature to a certain extent.

## **3. Hypotheses of the Study**

### *3.1 Workplace Spirituality and Innovative Work Behavior*

Most of the prior research focused on the benefits of workplace spirituality (Quatro, 2004). It was found that workplace spirituality positively affects organizational performance (Quatro, 2002), profitability (Duchan & Plowman, 2005), organizational commitment (Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005), job involvement and organizational based self-esteem (Milliman et al., 2003). According to Milliman et al. (2003), meaningful work is expected to be related to individual attitudes towards the organization. Employees exhibit creative behavior (Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003), discretionary behavior such as innovative work behavior (Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, & Dunham, 1989), and they try to do changes in the work place accepting challenges (Afsar & Rehman, 2015) when they find meaning in work. Moreover, employees try to understand the problems in a way that is more rigorous and try to search for more solutions when they perceive that their work roles are important in the organization, (Gilson & Shalley, 2004). Besides, some other research posited that workplace spirituality assist achieving sense of purpose, encourage creativity, and in turn leads to motivate innovative work behavior (Pawar, 2009; Gupta et al. 2014; Afsar & Rehman 2015). Based on the above justification, hypothesis one ( $H_1$ ) is

proposed:

H<sub>1</sub>: Workplace spirituality has a significant positive effect on innovative work behavior.

### 3.2 Mediating Role of Intrinsic Motivation on the Relationship Between Workplace Spirituality and Innovative Work Behavior

Intrinsic motivation refers to the will and energy that leads to the behavior or the interest and the pleasure or satisfaction that employee gets when he/she engaged in an activity (Saeed et al., 2019). According to Saeed et al. intrinsic motivation affects employee's emotions, behavior, and cognition. Accordingly, it leads to enhance more stable and better performance. When an employee intrinsically attracts to an activity, he/she is focused on it and tries to do experiments with it and this leads to having more creative behavior (Jaussi & Dionne, 2003). Intrinsic motivation is one of the components in the componential theory of creativity which leads to uplift the individual's creative behavior. Further, when employees try to find out the final meaning and the purpose of his/her work, it motivates employees to do differences within the working environment (Afsar & Rehman, 2015). The link between meaning at work [workplace spirituality] and intrinsic work motivation was established in very early research as well (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Well-established self-determination theory also highlighted that employee freedom, competence, and relatedness in their work activities leads to intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) When employees think their task as interesting and meaningful, they engage with it in a psychological freedom that enhance intrinsic motivation (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Workplace spirituality leads to share power, trust and flexibility which leads to improve intrinsic motivation (Afsar, Badir, & Kiani, 2016; Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009). Based on the above justification, hypothesis two (H<sub>2</sub>), hypothesis three (H<sub>3</sub>), and hypothesis four (H<sub>4</sub>) are proposed:

H<sub>2</sub>: Workplace spirituality has a significant positive effect on intrinsic motivation.

H<sub>3</sub>: Intrinsic motivation has a significant positive effect on innovative work behavior

H<sub>4</sub>: When intrinsic motivation is high, workplace spirituality has a stronger effect on innovative work behavior.

## 4. Theoretical Framework

Based on the comprehensive review of literature, it was clear that there is an impact of workplace spirituality on innovative working behavior. When workplace spirituality level increases, the innovative working behavior also increases. In addition, workplace spirituality has an impact on intrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation has an impact on innovative work behavior. Further, intrinsic motivation influences the relationship between workplace spirituality and innovative working behavior. Therefore, based on literature the conceptual model developed for the current study is given in Figure 1:

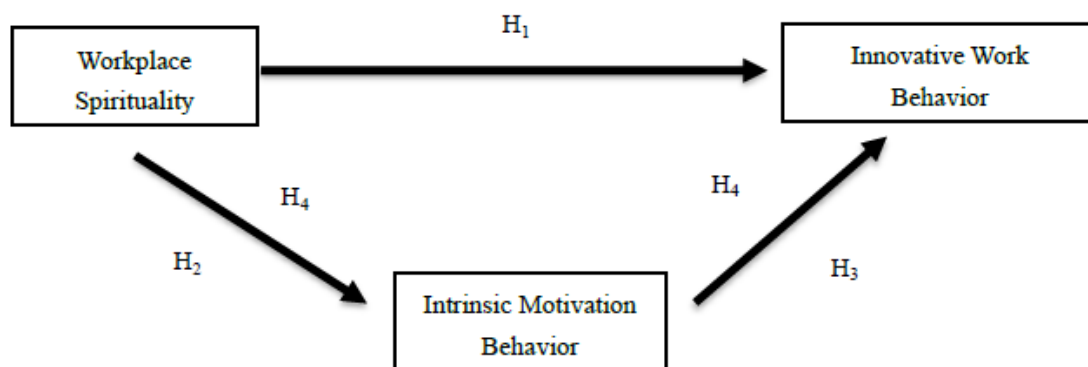


Figure 1. Conceptual model

## 5. Implications and Directions for Future Research

As the impact of workplace spirituality and innovative work behavior was not addressed to date, this study offers important implications to theory and practice. . It is very much important to identify the factors that foster innovative work behavior of employees as the human resource in an organization vary according to their culture, family and educational background (Afsar & Rehman, 2015). Thus, this study may assist to understand the drivers of innovative work behavior among employees through workplace spirituality and intrinsic motivation. Up until to date, most of the research on spirituality at work has focused at individual level. This study is

amongst the few studies that attempts to examine workplace spirituality at the organizational level on innovative work behavior of employees. The model developed in the current study considered only two factors; workplace spirituality and intrinsic motivation as the factors that promote innovative work behavior. Future research needs to be done to examine other factors that may have an impact on innovative work behavior.

## 6. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to develop and validate a theoretical model to understand the effect that workplace spirituality has on innovative work behavior and how intrinsic motivation influence the impact of workplace spirituality on innovative work behavior. It is theorized that when workplace spirituality is high in the organization, the innovative work behavior of employees tends to be high. Furthermore, literature argued that intrinsic motivation has an influence on the effect of workplace spirituality on innovative work behavior of employees. Thus, based on the literature the theoretical model was hypothesized. The model developed will be empirically tested in future research for its statistical validity.

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