The Relationship between Personnel’s Job Stress and their Spiritual Intelligence and Organizational Spirituality in a Military University

Azad-Marzabadi E.1 PhD, Hoshmandja M.2 MSc, Poorkhalil M.3 MSc

1Behavioral Sciences Research Center, Baqiyatallah University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
2Department of Elementary Education, Islamic Azad University of Behbahan, Behbahan, Iran
3Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

Aims: The present study was an attempt to explore the relationship between job stress and organizational spirituality and spiritual intelligence in the personnel of Baqiyatallah University of Medical Sciences.

Method: The research population consisted of all the personnel in that military university. According to Morgan table, 352 participants were needed for the purpose of this study. Data were collected using Milliman Organizational Spirituality Questionnaire, King Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire and HSE Job Stress Questionnaire. The reliability and content validity of the questionnaires used were also checked.

Results: There was a significant negative correlation between job stress and organizational spirituality (r =-0.28). The same was observed regarding the relationship between job stress and spiritual intelligence (r =-0.32). There was no significant difference between male and female participants in organizational spirituality. Also, education could not cause any significant difference in organizational spirituality. However, experience could cause a significant difference among groups in their organizational spirituality except for the two groups of 4-7 and 8-15 years of experience.

Conclusion: Spirituality and spiritual intelligence are two of the most important variables affecting stress in employees. As such, in order to increase efficiency, policy makers need to take important steps for minimizing job stress in their personnel.

Keywords: Organizational Spirituality, Spiritual Intelligence, Job Stress

*Corresponding author: Azad-Marzabadi E. Email: esfandearazad@yahoo.com
**Introduction**

Organizations do not work in vacuum. They are continuously under the effect of all types of pressures and factors which are imposed on them both from inside and outside the body of organization. In past, institutes faced few threats, but now it is the transformation era. The present transformations and changes affect organizations by presenting both threats and opportunities. The successful organizations are those which can adapt themselves with the present situation [1]. Such organizations are those whose personnel have a high spirituality at work. As such, some of the theorists in management suggest the concept of ‘spirituality at work’ as the key to face the changes in the modern complex world [2]. That is why spirituality at work is known as an important concept in the improvement of human resources in any organization. In the present study, spirituality is defined in the same way as Ashmos did. It is the understanding and identification of an individual’s living dimension related to his job. It is internal and developmental and can be developed as a result of doing meaningful work in one’s life. The introduction of such concepts as ethics, truth, faith, honesty, conscience, trust, generosity, affection, truth seeking, solidarity with coworkers, etc to the realm of research in management and organizations demonstrates the presence of a new paradigm called ‘spirituality at work’ [3]. The realm of management and organization, both theoretically and practically speaking, is under the influence of supra-structural and supra-organizational factors. Consequently, some of the most important issues addressed in management in the 21st century include concepts such as ‘god in an organization,’ ‘ethics,’ and ‘personnel’s spirituality,’ etc [4]. This concept is used to better understand the transformations, explain value systems, and develop leadership and management in an organization. It is also used as a special feeling to energize individuals in an organization in order for them to do their assigned responsibilities as best as possible. Spirituality at work can be identified based on three elements: a) meaningful work, b) sense of community, c) alignment of values. As such, conceptualizing spirituality at work happens at three levels: personal, group, and organizational levels. The personal level includes enjoying doing one’s job, feeling energized by working, and having a purpose at work (meaningful work). The group level includes feeling a bond with colleagues, supporting each other at work, and having a common goal (sense of community). The organizational level includes bonding with the organizational goals and values (alignment of values)[5].

Another concept examined in the present study is ‘spiritual intelligence.’ Spiritual intelligence was first introduced in 1996 by Stevetez and was then developed by Amons in 1999. Amons defined spiritual intelligence as the comparative use of spiritual information for solving daily problems and reaching one’s goals. Zoher and Marshall define it as an intelligence that elevates problem solving by giving it a deeper meaning and higher value. To them, it is possible to use spiritual intelligence to place our life and actions in a context which is much deeper in meaning. It is also possible to determine which lifestyle or action is more efficient [6].

Moreover, in the recent decade, stress has been considered as one of the most important organizational behavior. The main cause of mental disorders and boredom coming from the exhaustion, which is very common in organizations’ personnel, can be found in the behavior and personality of managers. Stress at work is a growing concern these days. Organizations are getting more complicated day by day and adapting with the coming changes gets more difficult every day. The mental pressure and stress at workplace can have a negative and vast impact on an individual’s health and daily performance at work, affecting all aspects of his or her personality [7]. There is no limit to job stress and
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both men and women at any position are affected by it [8].

In modern organizations, spirituality at work has attracted a good deal of attention to the extent that even business organizations show an interest in this subject. For example in the 1990s, the Fortune and Week magazines reported an intense interest in concepts such as meaning of life and work among their staff. Even Schmocs and Dowchon, two well-known scholars in this field, have introduced the concept of ‘spiritual movement.’ They believe that those organizations which acted only based on logic in the past are now trying to develop the spiritual dimension in them [9]. Iran is an Islamic country working on the Islamic cultural and religious principles according to which there are two dimensions for human life: material and spiritual. The Islamic principles and guides can help lead human being to perfection and solve his/her problems in all aspects of life. As such, doing research on the effect of such principles is needed [10].

Moreover, considering the importance of paying attention to the issue of stress at home and work for individuals and organizations as well as the fact that every year organizations spend millions of dollars to deal with stress at work, it is necessary that we examine the role of job stress in creating organizational problems more closely [11]. There have been numerous studies done in this field. Claude found that a spiritual working environment can directly affect an organization’s success by reducing staff replacement, stress, exhaustion, and absence at work [12]. Milliman, examining the relationship between spirituality and organizational commitment and job satisfaction, observed that meaningful work could result in emotional commitment and job satisfaction [5]. Rippetrop, studying the relationship between spiritual welfare and mental health in students, found a negative significant relationship between the two. He also observed that religious welfare can predict mental health [13]. Salvador observed that the faculty staff at the department of Primary Education enjoyed a high level of spiritual intelligence and had an average level of job stress [14]. Lavasani et al. also found a negative correlation between job stress and organizational spirituality [15]. Moreover, Maltby observed that internal religious orientation has a positive relationship with mental health, while external religious orientation showed a negative relationship. In addition, external religiosity had a positive correlation with psychosis while internal religiosity had a negative relationship with psychosis. Therefore, it can be concluded that the more one’s religiosity is internal, the more likely she is to have a better mental health [16]. Francis et al. concluded that students’ positive attitude toward a religion has a strong positive relationship with their mental health [17]. Krause found that religious beliefs can help reduce symptoms of depression. Moreover, he observed that depression symptoms had a significant relationship with internal religious orientation and religious bonds [18]. Lotfi and Sayar, examining the relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental health in 350 participants in Behshahr, Iran, found a significant relationship between the two. While there was no significant difference between male and female participants in their spiritual intelligence, they significantly differed from each other in their mental health [19]. Khazayi observed that spiritual intelligence had a significant relationship with tolerance of mental pressures, optimism, and feeling responsible. Those who had a higher spiritual intelligence could act better in confrontation with problems. They could analyze the situation and find a solution to the problems. They were also able to cope with mental pressures much better [20] Moalem also found a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and mental health [21]. Many scholars have concluded that those with spiritual orientations can respond better in facing with problems, can manage the stressful situa-
tion they are in, and have a better mental health as a result. Spiritual intelligence can help individuals search for a meaning in any stressful situation in their life [22].

**Methods**

The present research which was a descriptive correlational study was carried out in 2012. The research population included all the personnel working in a military university in Tehran, Iran. The inclusion criteria were for the personnel to be officially employed, to have at least Diploma, and to have 1 to 25 years of experience. Those who were retired or were not officially employed, students, and those who did not complete the questionnaires were excluded from the study. The population included 4,100 male and female respondents from among whom 352 personnel were selected using cluster sampling based on Morgan’s table. From among the participants, 225 (64%) were male and 127 (36%) were female. Regarding work experience, 42 participants (12%) had 1-2 years of experience, 99 (28%) had 4-7 years of experience, 130 (37%) had 8-15 years of experience, and 81 (23%) had 16-23 years of experience.

For the purpose of data collection, three questionnaires were used. The first questionnaire was Milliman et al.’s (2003) Organizational Spirituality Questionnaire with 20 items in 3 subscales: meaningful work (at the personal level), sense of community (at the group level), and alignment of values (at the organizational level). It is a five point Likert scale with a Cronbach alpha of 0.87. The reliability of this questionnaire was found to be 0.89 in Beikzadeh et al.’s study in 2012. The second questionnaire was King’s Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire with 25 items in 5 point Likert scale with a Cronbach alpha of 0.89. In Rezazadeh’s study in 2011, the reliability of this questionnaire was found to be 0.90. Finally, the third questionnaire was HSE Work-Related Stress Questionnaire with 40 items in a five point Likert scale. In each item, 1 showed an undesirable state and 5 showed a desirable state. The reliability of this questionnaire was reported to be 0.78 by Azad and Tar-khooni. They had also used university professors at a military university to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire.

The studied university was divided into five sections and a number of participants were randomly selected from each: the military hospital (207 participants), Faculty of Nursing (36 participants), Velayat Complex (24 participants), Najmiyeh Hospital (47 participants), and Faculty of Hygiene (38 participants). The questionnaires were distributed and the needed explanation about how of completion was presented. A week later, the questionnaires were collected. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS.

In order to check the existence of any relationship between organizational spirituality and work-related stress, Pearson product moment correlation was used. The check whether gender could cause any difference in spirituality, an independent samples t test was run. Finally, in order to examine whether work experience makes in difference in spirituality, a one-way ANOVA test was used with a posthoc Scheffe test.

**Results**

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the three variables under study in this research, namely, Organizational Spirituality, Spiritual Intelligence, and Work-related Stress.

As it is evident in Table 2, the correlation between organizational spirituality and work-related stress was found statistically significant ($r = -0.28$). Work-related stress also had a significant and negative relationship with spiritual intelligence ($r = -0.32$). In other words, the more organizational spirituality and spiritual intelligence, the less work-related stress.
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Table 1. The Correlation Coefficients among Variables of the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spirituality</th>
<th>Spiritual intelligence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual intelligence</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>······*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>-0.28*</td>
<td>-0.32**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*P<0.05  **P<0.01

The results of the regression test indicate that organizational spirituality and spiritual intelligence can significantly predict job stress: $F(5, 302) = 7.4$, $p = 0.001$. The model could explain 13 percent of the variance in the dependent variable.

Table 2. Organizational Spirituality and Spiritual Intelligence Predicting Job Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constant</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$R$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Spirituality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual intelligence</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Results of ANOVA in Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of squares</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regression</td>
<td>8945</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>78934</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>267</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>90154</td>
<td>307</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Checking whether male and female participants differed from each other in their organizational spirituality, no significant difference was found, $t(350) = 0.96$, $p = 0.92$.

Table 4. Results of t test Comparing Male and Female Participants in Organizational Spirituality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants’ educational level could not make any distinction in their organizational spirituality either, $F(3, 349) = 1.2$, $p = 0.30$.

Table 5. One-Way ANOVA for Educational Level and Participants’ Organizational Spirituality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sum of Squares</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>352</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, checking the effect of work experience in distinguishing between participants in their organizational spirituality, the difference among groups was found statistically significant, $F(3, 349) = 1.97$, $p = 0.001$. The posthoc analysis using Scheffe test indicated that all groups were different from each other but for the two groups of 4-7 and 8-15 years of experience.

Table 6. One-Way ANOVA for Work Experience and Participants’ Organizational Spirituality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sum of Squares</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>241</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>352</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Discussion
The findings showed the existence of a negative correlation between organizational spirituality and job stress (r = -0.28) which was in line with the findings of other studies [5,12,13,16-18,22]. Rippentrop found a significant negative correlation between mental health and spiritual welfare. In addition, religious welfare could predict mental health. For example, those patients with chronic pains who find it difficult to trust in God and feel that God has abandoned them lack spiritual experience, receive no support from the religious community, and do not consider themselves as religious individuals. These patients are more likely to lose their mental health. It seems that not trusting in God and negative religious coping correlate with lower mental health and more severe pains in patients [13]. Exline et al. observed that anger toward God for having the feeling of being abandoned is correlated with lower mental health and less efficient problem solving strategies. As such, spiritualism and religion can work like a shield against problems and pressures one faces and can help decrease mental disorders and increase mental health [22].
Moreover, the results indicate that there was a significant negative correlation between spiritual intelligence and job stress. This was in line with results of previous research [19-21]. Gender and educational level could not distinguish between participants in terms of organizational spirituality. However, differences in work experience did result in differences in organizational spirituality for most groups.
All in all, it seems that the research in the recent decade indicates that spirituality and spiritual intelligence can help improve mental health and lower mental disorders in the long run. Spiritual welfare can improve mental health and help individuals cope with their life problems by increasing their self-awareness, making bonds between them and others, receiving social support from others, increasing their self-confidence and meaning of life, and teaching them effective strategies in dealing with emotional problems.

Conclusion
Since personnel’s mental health is in close relationship with their performance, providing them with a healthy work environment is of utmost importance in any organization including universities. In case they enjoy a high level of spiritual intelligence, a healthy work environment can satisfy most their needs and guarantee their emotional and mental health. Managers need to pay attention to their personnel’s spiritual needs. They should try to provide their personnel with an active and motivating working environment. This way, one can hope that the personnel will enjoy doing their responsibilities, are more content, and have less stress. Considering the findings of the present study, some of the issues that can affect the improvement of organizational spirituality are: the use of financial and spiritual incentives for improving spirituality in the personnel; eliminating such organizational problems as intra-organizational conflicts and bribery in order to ensure peace both in personnel and clients in the organization; organizing some instructional programs for the personnel on how to cope with pressure at home and work; and shaping spiritual supportive groups at work to help and give consultation to the personnel when a problem arises.
It seems that by promoting altruism in an organization, spirituality can make people pay more attention to themselves and their past and make better connection with others. This will help shape communication networks among people and leaders, and managers can identify their personnel’s needs and interests so that they can later assign more responsibilities to them. Spirituality in an organization can help shape spiritual beliefs and faith in work in the staff. This way, spirituality as an internal motive can cause self-improvement and help the staff do their responsibilities as best as possible. In case managers man-
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age to improve spirituality in their personnel, no one will try to escape their assigned responsibility both in the organization and society. As such, it is suggested that managers try to promote spirituality both at the personal and the organizational levels. By creating a friendly environment based on cooperation rather than competition, managers can lower stress, make a kind of investment in the organization, and increase the sense of solidarity in the personnel. This will increase the efficacy of the organization as well.

Since the only research tool used in the present study was questionnaires and data triangulation was not done, the interpretation of the results should be done with great care. It is suggested that in future research, other research methods such as observation, interview, and content analysis be used.

It is also suggested that, due to the importance of the relationship between job stress and organizational spirituality and spiritual intelligence, managers plan some pre-service or in-service instructional courses on the strategies of improving spirituality and decreasing job stress. It is a good idea that personnel’s job stress and spirituality be checked at least once a year and necessary actions be taken accordingly. It is also recommended that more spiritual and financial incentives be used in order to elevate spirituality levels in employees. This can be done by meeting the minimum financial needs of the personnel as well as solving organizational problems such as the intra-organizational conflicts and bribery.

References

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