THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUALITY, ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND INDIVIDUAL INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

The present study scrutinizes the relationship between individual spirituality and its effect on affective organizational commitment and individual innovative behavior as well. Using a sample of 139 individuals from the US and structural equation modeling (SEM) as the statistical technique, it is found that there is a positive and significant relationship between individual spirituality and affective organizational commitment and individual innovative behavior too. Results suggest that employees with high levels of spirituality can present a stronger affective attachment towards the organization and are capable of generating and implementing ideas within the workplace.

Keywords: Individual spirituality, organizational commitment, individual innovative behavior.

1. INTRODUCTION

It has become popular knowledge that the employees are the most important resource that any organization may have (Dibble, 1999). As well it is known that dissatisfied employees would negatively influence the productivity and effectiveness of the organization through high absenteeism and turnover rates (Dalton & Mesch, 1991; Hinshaw & Atwood, 1983). However, businesses may have not been able to link the importance of their employees with the welfare of their own organization; for instance, an unstable work environment would increase the employees' mistrust (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003).

Some authors have suggested that more individuals in developed Western countries are now seeking to satisfy higher level needs (i.e. self-actualization) rather than lower level ones (i.e. security) (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995; Jurkiewicz & Massey, 1997). As implied by Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) "the search for something more has resulted in a quest for postmaterialists assets, of which spirituality may

be one manifestation" (p. 3). Spirituality as to the extent an individual is looking for a meaningful and purposeful existence (Tepper, 2003).

Nonetheless, it seems to be lacking empirical research that studies the relationship between individual spirituality and individual outcomes (Wheat, 1991; Atkins, 2007; Komala & Ganesh, 2007). Thus, the purpose of this study is to scrutinize the impact that individual spirituality has on organizational outcomes. Specifically the focus of this study is to analyze the influence of individual levels of spirituality over affective organizational commitment, and individual innovative behavior. The next section will present the literature review of the variables involved. Then the methodology and results are presented too.

2. LITERATURE

Individual spirituality and its impact in societies can be traced back to ancient times and can be found in different societies (Elkins, 1998). Twigg and Parayitam (2006) noted that spirituality encompass two dimensions. The first one is transcendent with the psychical world and the other is about the connectedness to the physical world. According to them, transcendence is about having an understanding of the outside world or a vision, whereas connectedness is about working with others. Pawar (2009) remarked the effect and relationship that individual spirituality has on individual outcomes. However he noted the importance of expanding the study of individual spirituality with employee outcomes. The next section addresses the linkages.

3. IS AND INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOR

Individual innovative behavior has been noted as an important and powerful tool given to its potential for generating competitive advantage in the organization (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2004; Jansen, 2004). Individual innovative behavior has been defined as "the intentional creation, introduction, and application of new ideas within a work role, group or organization, in order to benefit role performance, the group, or organization" (Janssen, 2004, p. 202). Many activities, behaviors and attitudes can boost the generation of these new ideas. One of this can be the interaction with others.

Since the connectedness side of individual spirituality involves working with other people (Twigg & Parayitam, 2006); it could be established the relationship with innovative behavior. It has been noted that innovative behavior relies on the interaction with other individuals in the workplace (Anderson et al., 2004). Osman-Gani et al. (2013) noted that employees are able to generate greater ideas and build an environment of innovation when they interact with other coworkers. In their extension of Woodman and

Schoenfelt (1989) model of creativity, Woodman et al. (1993) noted that individual creativity is a function of individual characteristics, social influences and contextual factors. They hypothesized that individual creativity will be higher if a group promotes norms such as sharing information. In addition, Zhou and George (2001) studied the conditions under which job dissatisfaction leads to creativity. Results showed that job dissatisfaction is not necessarily bad or undesirable, when certain conditions such as useful feedback and support from coworkers are presented employees can show high levels of creativity. Therefore:

H1: individual Spirituality will be positively associated with individual innovative behavior

4. IS AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Organizational commitment has received a lot of attention in the academic field. Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) noted that this attention mainly relies on the relationship that organizational commitment has with variables such as turnover, punctuality or job satisfaction.

It has been stated that organizational commitment encompasses three approaches: Affective, perceived costs and obligation (Allen & Meller, 2000; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment is when the employee has an affective orientation towards the organization. For instance, an employee can show high levels of affective commitment if within the organization he/she is treated with respect and finds values such as the latter to be important for the organization (Rego & Cunha, 2008). Perceived costs could be viewed as a continuation of an action; it is when the employee realizes the costs associated with leaving the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Becker, 1960). Obligation is presented when the employee stay in the organization because they ought to.

Following the connectedness approach of individual spirituality (Twigg & Parayitam, 2006), it has been stated that social interaction can be related to organizational commitment. Sheldon (1971, p. 144) defined social interaction as "interaction with and identification with other members of the organization". Zaccaro and Dobins (1989) studied the relationship of group cohesiveness as a characteristic of groups with organizational commitment. Results showed that group cohesiveness is positively and significantly correlated with organizational commitment. As well, Heffner and Rentsch (2001) remarked the importance of social interaction between workgroups and new employees. Their research supported the hypothesis that group social interaction is associated with affective organizational commitment. Therefore:

H2: Individual spirituality will be positively associated with individual innovative behavior

5. METHODOLOGY

Sample

A total of 139 individuals from the US were surveyed. The sample included full time and part time students from a University located in the South-east of the U.S., from whom, all of them had a permanent job. In addition, employees from industries such as health, banking, education, automotive, government were also included.

Measurement

Affective organizational commitment was measured using eight items from Allen and Meyer (1990) scale. Some of the questions that were used were "I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it" and "I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization". Individual innovative was measured using seven items from Kleysen and Street (2001) scale. Examples of questions included were: in your current job how often do you "generate ideas or solutions to address problems", "experiment with new ideas or solutions", etc. Individual spirituality was measured using five items from Wheat (1991) scale. Some of the questions included were "I feel sad when I see some one else in pain" and "I experience a sense of the sacred living things". Control variables such as age, education and gender were also included.

SEM analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was the technique used for the analysis of the data. SEM is considered a second generation technique that has been noted to permit complex relationships among variables and that presents a more thorough analysis of the research model (Bollen, 1989; Bullock et al., 1994; Gefen at al., 2000). The first part of the analysis consisted on a factor analysis of the variables involved, in order to test for validity and reliability. The software used for the analysis was WarpPls 3.0 (Kock, 2012). Table 1 shows the results of convergent and discriminant validity. Hair et al. (1998) noted that a good threshold for convergent validity is when the loadings have a value higher than 0.5. Please note that for affective organizational commitment, the items that did not load properly were removed in order to maintain validity of the results. Regarding discriminant validity, it has been noted that one way for measuring it by comparing the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the latent variables involved (Farrel, 2010; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Regarding reliability, Santos (1999) noted that a good measure for reliability is the Cronbach's Alpha. It has been noted that an acceptable threshold is above 0.7

(Nunnaly, 1978). Table 2 presents the correlation matrix among the variables. The AVEs are shown in parentheses.

TABLE 1 - FACTOR LOADINGS FOR INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUALITY, INDIVIDUAL INNOVATIVE BEHAVIOR AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Individual Spirituality	(.764)
Being truthful is important to a successful life	.712
We should give to others in need	.806
It is important that each of us find meaning in our lives	.785
I feel sad when I see some else in pain	.598
I feel guilty when I don't tell the truth	.681
Affective Organizational Commitment	(.742)
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization	.747
I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it	.765
I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own	.743
This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me	.747
Individual innovative behavior	(.929)
Look for opportunities to improve an existing process, technology, product, service or work relationship?	.825
Recognize opportunities to make a positive difference in your work, department, organization, or with customers?	.809
Generate ideas or solutions to address problems?	.768
Experiment with new ideas and solutions?	.846
Try to persuade others of the importance of a new idea or solution?	.854
Push ideas forward so that they have a chance to become implemented?	.883
Incorporate new ideas for improving and existing process, technology, product or service into daily routines?	.876

Cronbach's Alpha is presented in parentheses

TABLE 2 - CORRELATIONS AMONG VARIABLES.

	IS	OC	IB	Age	Gender	Edu
IS	(0.72)					
OC	0.206**	(.751)				
IB	0.214**	0.326***	(0.838)			
Age	0.168**	0.226**	0.127	(1.000)		
Gender	-0.305***	-0.057	0.034	-0.15*	(1.000)	
Edu	0.113	0.125	0.01	0.321	-0.16*	(1.000)

Notes: ***, **, * indicate significant level at 1%, 5% and 10% respectively

Average variance extracted (AVEs) are reported in parentheses.   IS= Individual Spirituality; OC= Affective Organizational Commitment; IB= Individual innovative behavior; EDU= Education

6. RESULTS

Results are presented in Figure 1. As hypothesized individual spirituality is positively and significantly correlated with affective organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.19$; $p < 0.05$) and Individual innovative behavior ($\beta = .23$; $p < 0.05$) as well. Therefore, both hypotheses are supported. The coefficients of determination R^2 for affective organizational commitment and individual innovative behavior are .10 and .08 respectively.
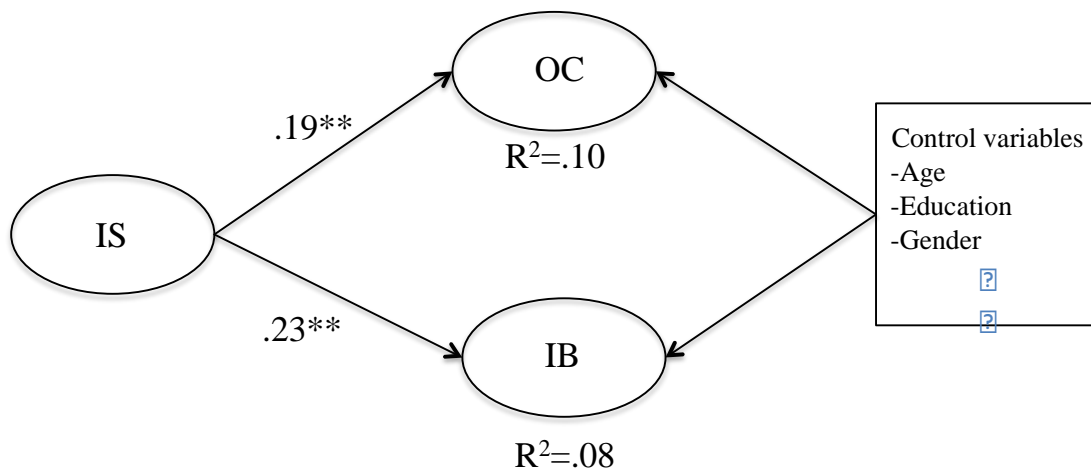
Notes: IS= Individual spirituality; OC= Affective organizational commitment; IB=Individual innovative behavior
***, **, * indicate significant level at 1%, 5%, and 10% respectively.

FIGURE 1

7. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Results from the data analysis remark the importance of individual spirituality. As noted in the literature, individuals with high levels of spirituality develop a higher level of affective commitment towards the organization. In other words, spiritual individuals are able to identify values such as respect or trust and develop an affective attachment towards the organization.

Regarding individual innovative behavior, it can be implied that those employees with high levels of spirituality can create, develop and implement ideas in the workplace. These findings suggest a few implications for practice as well. First, this can represent a relevant input for the hiring and retention policies developed for the management of human resources in the organizations. As suggested by Milliman et al. (1999), the key to success initiates in the hiring process; it is stressed out the importance of people's attitudes and values rather than technical skills. Second, it can be used as a reference to institutionalize in the organizations, employee development efforts to improve individual spirituality levels. Third, it can be use as a point of reference when selecting employees to work on

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innovative/creative processes for their organizations. For example, department such as R&D may focus on selecting individuals with high levels of individual spirituality.

Fourth, these results may be used as a relevant effort in the development of a healthy and ethical environment; as mentioned by Hicks (2003) so as to have a spiritual employee, the organization needs to have the proper organizational environment. In addition, since it was mentioned that individual spirituality encompasses a dimension of connectedness, organizations can encourage activities within the workplace in order to boost cooperation and connectedness among employees. For instance, Hutcherson et al. (2008) noted that meditation as a practice can increase connectedness among individuals and reduce social isolation. Moreover, Branham (2005) stated that building social relationships and connectedness with other co-workers is vital. He mentioned that companies should encourage team projects, create cross-functional teams, organize group outings and allow employees to have free time to have water cooler conversations.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study contributes to the current literature regarding individual spirituality and individual outcomes, this study presents limitations that must be addressed in future research. First, a replication of this study with a larger sample could contribute to the generalization of results in the US. Second an extension of this study including more individual outcomes such as stress or turnover intention is also encouraged, the inclusion of moderator variables such as leadership style can be considered. Third, future studies can also expand the analysis by conducting cross-cultural research.

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