The Relationship between Spiritual Leadership and Quality of Work Life among Employees: Case Study of Education Offices in Mazandaran, Iran

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Abstract

In this study our purpose is to investigate the relationship between spiritual leadership and quality of work life among employees in Mazandaran, Iran. In this descriptive/correlational research, statistical population consists of all the employees of education offices in the West of Mazandaran Province. Of this, 140 subjects were randomly selected as study samples using cluster sampling method. To measure participants, we used Inventory of spiritual leadership developed by Fry et al. (2005), and a designed quality of work life questionnaire. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and multivariate regression analyses. According to the statistical results, we found a significant relationship between spiritual leadership (vision, altruistic love, faith, meaning, membership, organizational commitment, productivity) and quality of working life (p<0.01), and these seven variables together were able to explain 34% of variations in quality of working life. Among these predictors, “hope/faith” factor showed the highest effect on prediction of quality of working life among employees.

Keywords: spiritual leadership, quality of work life, faith, employees.
1. Introduction

With the beginning of the new century, an increasing attention to organizational and societal change has been made which call for more holistic leadership that integrates the four fundamental areas that define the essence of human existence—the body (physical), mind (logical/rational thought), heart (emotions, feelings), and spirit (Moxley, 2000, cited by Fry, 2003). For leaders and followers, it is important to adhere to and practice five key spiritual practices for personal leadership and professional development and effectiveness (Kurth, 2003): know one’s self, respect and honor the beliefs of others, be as trusting as you can be, and maintain a spiritual practice. These high-commitment workplace spirituality practices “create an intrinsic motivating force that elicits spontaneous, cooperative effort from people, and make it more likely for employees to learn, develop, and use their skills and knowledge to benefit both themselves and their organizations” (Fry, 2003: 705). Spiritual leaders must develop inspiring vision and mission statements that foster development of a spirit of cooperation, trust, mutual caring, and a commitment to team and organizational effectiveness and to gain follower acceptance, they need to be competent in four areas of credibility, teaching, trust, and inspiration (Fairholm, 1997, 1998, 2001). Spiritual leadership theory is a causal leadership theory for organizational transformation designed to create an intrinsically motivated, learning organization. Its purpose is “to tap into the fundamental needs of both leader and follower for spiritual survival/well-being through calling and membership, to create vision and value congruence across the individual, empowered team, and organization levels and, ultimately, to foster higher levels not only of psychological well-being and positive human health but also organizational commitment and productivity” (Fry and Matherly, 2006: 4). Spiritual leadership (SL) is defined as the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and others so they have a sense of spiritual survival/well-being through calling and membership (Fry, 2003).

In today's complex world, man's private lives have been intertwined such that private life has been dominated by work life which has caused new term of "Quality of Work Life" to be coined (probably by Mills, 1978). Quality of work life (QWL) improvements are defined as “any activity which takes place at every level of an organization, which seeks greater organizational effectiveness through the enhancement of human dignity and growth” (Ozleyand Ball. 1982). In 1979, American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) defined QWL as “a process of work organizations which enable its members at all levels to actively; participate in shaping the organizations environment, methods and outcomes. This value based process is aimed towards meeting the twin goals of enhanced effectiveness of organizations and improved quality of life at work for employees”. QWL is an indicator that can provide valuable information to the management about staff creating a sense of ownership, autonomy, responsibility and a sense of security in them whose result is increased employee productivity. QWL consists of both physical and mental wellbeing of employees (Lawler, 1982; Cascio, 1998). Hackman and Oldhams (1980) described QWL in relation to the interaction between work environment and personal needs and is the extent to which employees can enhance their personal lives through their work environment and experiences. Determining staff perceptions about quality of work life is an important consideration for employers interested in
improving employee job satisfaction (Krueger et al. 2002). In today's society, QWL improvement has become as one of the most important goals of the organization and its staff. Since the human resources management is linked to the quality of working life; therefore, reviving employees through improving the quality of working life is key to the success of any organization.

Given above, in this study our purpose is to study the relationship of spiritual leadership with Quality of work life among employees of education offices in Mazandaran Province of Iran. We wanted to answer to question “Have vision, altruistic love, faith, meaning, membership, organizational commitment, and productivity relationship with QWL?

2. Materials and Methods
This study is a descriptive/correlational research surveying the relationship between SL and QWL. Fry (2003) suggested seven dimensions for SL. Following we present a brief discuss about them.

- **Vision:** ‘Vision refers to a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future’ (Kotter, 1996). It describes the organization’s journey, give meaning to work, garner commitment and establish a standard of excellence. (Fry, 2003)

- **Altruistic Love:** It defines as a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others. It includes the values patience, kindness, lack of envy, forgiveness, humility, selflessness, self-control, trust, loyalty, and truthfulness. (Fry, 2003)

- **Hope/Faith:** faith is defined as, “The assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Webster’s dictionary). Hope is a desire with expectation of fulfillment. Faith adds certainty to hope. It is a firm belief in something for which there is no proof. Hope/faith is thus the source for the conviction that the organization’s vision/purpose/mission will be fulfilled. (Fry, 2003)

- **Meaning/Calling:** It refers to the experience of transcendence or how one makes a difference through service to others and, in doing so, derives meaning and purpose in life. People seek not only competence and mastery through their work but also a sense that work has some social meaning or value (Pfeffer, 2003).

- **Membership:** It is a part of spiritual survival/well-being that gives one an awareness of being understood and appreciated which is largely emanated from interrelationships and connections through social interaction and group membership (Fry, 2011).

- **Organizational Commitment:** It is an attitude and a mental state that represents desire, needs and requirements in order to continue the activities in an organization. “people with a sense of calling and membership will become attached, loyal to, and want to stay in organizations that have cultures based on the values of altruistic love” (Fry, 2003: 714).

- **Productivity and Continuous Improvement:** “people who have hope/faith in the organization’s vision and who experience calling and membership will ‘do what it takes’ in pursuit of the vision to continuously improve and be more productive” (Fry, 2003: 714).
We used them as study variables to investigate the relationship of SL with dependent variable (QWL) in the form of research hypotheses:

H1. There is a significant relationship between vision and quality of work life;
H2. There is a significant relationship between altruistic love and quality of work life;
H3. There is a significant relationship between faith and quality of work life;
H4. There is a significant relationship between meaning and quality of work life;
H5. There is a significant relationship between membership and quality of work life;
H6. There is a significant relationship between organizational commitment and quality of work life;
H7. There is a significant relationship between productivity and quality of work life;

Statistical population of this study includes all the employees of education offices in the West of Mazandaran Province of Iran in 2013-2014. Of this, 140 subjects were randomly selected as study samples using cluster sampling method. We used library method for collecting literature and a field study to collect data from participants. To measure WQL and SL we used following tools:

- **Spiritual leadership questionnaire**: We designed a Persian language questionnaire based on Fry et al. (2005) SL inventory to measure spiritual leadership of subjects. Our questionnaire has 25 items rated based on five-point Likert scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It measures seven SL dimensions of vision (3 items), altruistic love (6 items), hope/faith (3 items), meaning/calling (3 items), membership (3 items), organizational commitment (4 items), and productivity (3 items). Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate of the reliability of this questionnaire where all scales had alpha higher than 0.7 which was acceptable.

- **Quality of work life questionnaire**: This Persian-language questionnaire has 32 items rated based on five-point Likert scale ranged from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). It measures the participants’ quality of working life. Its Cronbach's alpha was obtained as 0.771 which showed its acceptable reliability.

For analyzing collected data we used statistical tests including frequency, mean, standard deviation, and multiple regression analysis conducted in SPSS software.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Characteristics of participants

Data reported that study participants were 76 male (54.3%) and 64 female employees (45.7%) (N=140). Most of them had Associate degree (42.1%) (see table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational level</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2. Statistics of research variables
Table 2 shows mean and standard deviation (SD) of QWL and seven dimensions of SL variables. QWL had a mean ± SD of 114.85 ± 13.584. Among SL dimensions “altruistic love” showed the highest mean (18.95 ± 5.178) and “meaning” variable had the lowest mean (10.19 ± 2.636).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of research variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QWL</td>
<td>114.85</td>
<td>13.584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>10.59</td>
<td>2.298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altruistic love</td>
<td>18.95</td>
<td>5.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>10.66</td>
<td>1.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>10.22</td>
<td>2.869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>10.19</td>
<td>2.636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational commit</td>
<td>13.80</td>
<td>3.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>10.28</td>
<td>2.458</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3. Testing research hypotheses
To test the relationship of each SL dimensions with QWL, first the results of the correlation between them were obtained as shown in Table 3. For conducting multiple regression analysis all seven SL dimensions were entered into the regression equation. Results are presented in Table 4. It provides the R, and adjusted R² values as well as change statistics.

Table 3. Correlation results between QWL and SL dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>0.339</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altruistic love</td>
<td>0.304</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>0.392</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>0.350</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>0.330</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational commit</td>
<td>0.378</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>0.348</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the results we can say that all SL dimension have significant relationship with QWL ($F(7, 132)=9.818$, Sig.$=0.000<0.01$), so the linear combination of values are significantly associated with QWL. R-Square is 0.342 which indicates that 34% of QWL variations can be explained by linear combination of SL dimensions. In this regard, we can state that all seven SL dimensions have the ability to predict the criterion variable (QWL), so the regression equation can be generalized to the entire statistical population. Coefficients of regression analysis are shown in Table 5. According to significant level and F and t statistics values of each seven SL dimensions in, it can be said that all of them have significant relationship with QWL.

We can produce regression equation from model 1 as below:

\[ QWL = 52.760 + 1.200 \times \text{vision} + 0.190 \times \text{altruistic love} + 1.955 \times \text{faith} + 0.478 \times \text{meaning} + 0.130 \times \text{membership} + 0.610 \times \text{organizational commitment} + 1.003 \times \text{productivity} \]

### 3.4. Discussion
The main hypothesis states that SL has significant relationship with QWL. According to the results shown in table 4, correlation coefficient (R) = 0.585 and Sig.=0.000. This indicated that SL has significant and positive relationship with QWL ($p<0.01$). So, we can say that with the increase of spiritual leadership, the quality of work life of employees in the workplace increases. These results are consistent with the findings of Fry et al. (2005), Fry and Slocum.
Gibbons (1999), Daft & Lengel (1998) and Pfeffer (2003). These studies showed that organizational leaders, can increase the likelihood of success of the organization in achieving its goals by recognizing the dimensions of spiritual leadership and using it for the purposes of their organizations; provide an intrinsic motivation for themselves, and the ground for the extrinsic motivation of their employees, and increase the quality of working life and their motivation in the organization.

Hypothesis one stated that there is a significant relationship between vision and quality of work life. Correlation test results provided Ras 0.339 and significant level as 0.000 (see table 3). Since p-value was less than 0.01, we found out that vision has significant relationship with the quality of working life (p<0.01). This is according to the findings of Fry and Slocum (2008). Spiritual Leadership through vision and culture based, positively and significantly affects spiritual well-being and organizational performance of employee.

Hypothesis two stated that there is a significant relationship between altruistic love and quality of work life. Correlation test results (table 3) supported this hypothesis and we found a significant relationship between them (R=0.304, Sig.=0.000 <0.01). This is consistent with the findings of Fry et al. (2005). Since altruistic love include the values patience, kindness, lack of envy, forgiveness, humility, selflessness, self-control, trust, loyalty, and truthfulness, altruism culture in the organization causes the individuals to have special attention to themselves and their past life, and have good relationships with others. This causes the formation of an effective communication network between individuals.

Hypothesis three stated that there is a significant relationship between faith and quality of work life. According to correlation test results shown in Table 3, R= 0.393 and Sig.=0.000. Since p-value is less than 0.01, we can say that faith and quality of work life have significant and positive relationship with each other. This is according to Fry and Slocum (2008). Faith in workplace is based on values, attitudes and desirable behaviors that are expected to be fulfilled, and Spiritual leadership lead to the formation of spiritual beliefs and faith in workplace. This internal dynamic in staff develop them and increase their responsibility.

Hypothesis four stated that there is a significant relationship between meaning and quality of work life. Correlation test results for this hypothesis reported R= 0.350 and Sig.=0.000 (see table 3). Since p-value < 0.01, then we can state that meaning and quality of work life has significant relationship with each other positively. This is consistent with the results of Gibbons (1999) and Pfeffer (2003). Spiritual Leadership causes employees to understand the meaning of their jobs and care about it, and always seek to have a significant inner work life.

Hypothesis five stated that there is a significant relationship between membership and quality of work life. Results of correlation test for the two variables showed that R= 0.330 and Sig.=0.000 (Table 3). Since P-value is less than 0.01, we can say that there is a positive and significant correlation between them. With the increase of membership, quality of life at workplace will be improved. This is according to the findings of Pfeffer (2003), Fry et al (2012) and Daft & Lengel (1998). Membership and considering the personality of person in a network of social relations causes him/her to grow up, to live longer, and be meaningful in relation to a larger community.

Hypothesis six stated that there is a significant relationship between organizational commitment and quality of work life. The correlation coefficient obtained for both variables was positive and significant at the 0.01 level (R=0.378, Sig.=0.000). Therefore, we can claim that with the
increase of organizational commitment, the quality of working life is also increases. This result is consistent with the findings of Fry et al. (2005). Organizational commitment makes employees understand the organization's problem and take steps to resolve them, and if the managers have confidence to employees, it will increase their participation in the organization.

The last hypothesis stated the existence of a significant relationship between productivity and quality of work life. For this hypothesis, correlation coefficient was also positive and significant at the 0.01 level (R=0.347, Sig. =0.000). In this respect, we found out that productivity has significant relationship with the quality of work life, and with the increase of productivity, quality of life at workplace increases. Findings of Fry et al. (2005) was consistent with our results. Productivity makes the employees become informed of how the work goes on, be aware of the weakness of their performance, improve their strengths, pay attention to the quality of their work, and finally, take steps to improve the organization through the obtained information.

4. Conclusion
In this study we tried to evaluate the relationship of spiritual leadership with quality of work life. Participants were 76 male and 64 female employees of education offices in Mazandaran, Iran. By conducting survey study, statistical tests results showed that seven dimensions of spiritual leadership including vision, altruistic love, faith, meaning, membership, organizational commitment, and productivity had significant relationship with quality of work life. Given this, we concluded that spiritual leadership and quality of life at workplace have relationship with each other.

Acknowledgments
This paper was extracted from a Master thesis prepared by Fahime Karimi Osboei which was approved by Islamic Azad University of Tonekabon, Mazandaran, Iran in 2015.
References