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WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY PARADIGM AND JOB STRESS

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ABSTRACT:

For today's organizations challenges are increasing with the increasing competition. It has become difficult to remain competitive and profitable in the business world. Importance of employees is well known to everyone and without this source profitability cannot be gained. In the present scenario organizations are facing difficulty to retain and engage their competent employees. Employees are also losing their interest in the workplace due to extra workload and long working hours. Especially employees in the banking sector are facing job stress and lower commitment. In this backdrop it is thought imperative to look into some new management concepts in banking sector. There is a dire need to study those factors which can make the workplace stress free for the employees and they feel highly committed. Management literature tells us that workplace spirituality is the concept through which organizations can retain and engage their employees and workplace spirituality can help the organizations to reduce employee job stress. This study was conducted on managerial employees of banking sector of Pakistan. Sample was drawn from different commercial banks operating in Pakistan for this study. This research was an attempt to address the theoretical gap that how Workplace spirituality can enhance employee commitment and reduce job stress with the mediating role of psychological contract.

INTRODUCTION

The ever increasing competition in the business world has forced organizations to look into the ways to effectively engage their employees and utilize their full potential by reducing stress and enhancing affective organizational commitment. The quest to finding out new and improved management concepts led researchers towards the area of Workplace spirituality. The banking sector is one of the tremendously growing industries in the financial sector all over the world (Shrivastava and Purang, 2011). The banking sector of Pakistan has gone through profound and rapid changes in last few years. Due to this reason, new management practices needs to be studied and employed for better performance, (Bodla and Ali 2012). The study by Hunjra Ahmed et.al., (2011), found that competition in Pakistani banking sector has increased due to new entrants in this industry, that is why to survive in the competition, banks have

to rely on providing out class services at lower prices and to do so they need skilled workforce and retention of skilled workforce is a major issue for banking sector in Pakistan. To retain and engage their employees banks have to adopt different human resource practices. Research work on WS showed its positive link with effective commitment which in consequently leads to employee retention. Research work of many researchers in the field of WPS discovered its numerous benefits to the organization and employee as well as organizational and employee development and commitment. The main focus of this article will be on the relationship between workplace spirituality and affective organizational commitment as well as with job stress. Before proposing the model we briefly discuss the literature regarding workplace spirituality, affective commitment, job stress and psychological contract.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace spirituality and Affective Organizational Commitment

Despite the growing body of knowledge on WPS, researchers like Milliman et al. (2003) stated that this area is still lagging behind in empirical research. WPS approach in management asks for engaging workers holistically, that is, physically, mentally, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually (Duchon & Plowman, 2005). Ashmos and Duchon, (2000) defined WPS as the “recognition that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work taking place in the context of a community”. According to Allen and Meyer (2000), the employee’s relationship with the organization is a psychological state which can be termed as organizational commitment and it reduces the probability of leaving the organization. Allen and Meyer (1996 & 2000) have developed a model of organizational commitment which is one of the most cited models. This model segregates organizational commitment into three different components, namely affective, continuance and normative, and according to them Affective commitment is the emotional attachment of employee with the organization. Karakas (2009, p 89) in his research summed up that, “(a) Spirituality enhances employee well-being and quality of life; (b) Spirituality provides employees a sense of purpose and meaning at work; (c) Spirituality provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community”. Research work of Rego & Cunha (2008) showed that workplace spirituality results in high level of affective commitment and reduces job stress. According to Rego and Cunha, (2008), when employee identify himself/herself with the organization, becomes involved and feel valued in the organization then affective commitment results. When they feel that organization treats them fairly, respectfully and in supportive manner then they become affectively committed, and when spirituality at work is ignored then affective commitment lowers and continuance and normative commitment become high. This discussion leads to the proposition that:

Proposition1: There is a positive relationship between Workplace Spirituality and Affective Organizational Commitment.

Workplace Spirituality and Job Stress

Another challenge facing today’s organizations is job stress. Job stress can be defined as a misfit between a person’s abilities and skills and demands of the job, it is a misfit in terms of person’s needs which are supplied by its job environment and it can be a threat to an individual, on this basis, it can be assumed that an individual’s behavior is a function of person – environment (PE Fit Theory), (Salami, 2006). According to Nayak and Jayashree (2008), every individual faces job stress either they know it or not, and this job stress is due to increasing competitiveness either at work or in family. Research work of

Csiernik and Adams, (2002) explored the impact of spirituality on stress and impact of stress on spirituality. In their research it was found that spirituality is an inner strength which helps in dealing with uncertainty or chaos in any one's personal life and helps in wellness. It is also helpful in improving job stress at workplace. In his research Walt, (2007) found that spirituality can induce some traits like, internal locus of control, positive self-esteem, high tolerance level and coping effectively with job stress in a person. Therefore according to Walt, (2007), spirituality can help a person to cope effectively with stress; this can lower down stress in the organization. Some authors like Nasina and Doris, (2011) have given four dimensions of workplace spirituality and these include team's sense of community, sense of contribution to society, enjoyment at work, alignment between organizational and individual values. These values help in lowering stress in the organization. According to Noor et al. (2011), people who have great sense of spirituality they perceive their organization as more improved and healthier, moreover spiritual organizations can reap the benefits like increased organizational performance and organizational commitment, which ultimately leads to organizational outcomes like satisfaction and reduced job stress. As per findings of Kolodinsky et al., (2003) when more spiritual an organization becomes, its employees will feel less friction and stress at job because there is more participative decision making and sharing of information in spiritual organizations, this gives a sense of importance to the workers and they feel empowered. The actual nature of spiritual organizations is openness and orientation towards community, which reduces job stress. Therefore an inverse relationship is expected between personal and organizational spiritual values and job stress. Therefore it can be hypothesized that:

Proposition 2: There is a negative relationship between Workplace Spirituality and Job stress.

Workplace Spirituality and Psychological Contract

Along with AOC, another bond between the employee and the organization is psychological contract. Psychological contract is indirectly formulated at the initial stages of the employment between the employee and the employer. To be treated fairly is a normal expectation of every employee. This normal expectation is an integral part of the psychological contract. According to Rousseau, (1995) psychological contract can be defined as the "individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organizations". If this trust is violated it not only creates loss in physical term, but also results in negative feelings due to disloyalty and job stress. Psychological contract, its breach and fulfillment has attracted a lot of researchers to probe into the area and according to, Barringer and Milkovich (1995), Robinson (1996), Morrison and Robinson (1997), Turnley and Feldman (1999), the perceived violation of psychological contract has a negative relationship with outcomes of work like AOC. Culture of an organization is particularly important in the concept of psychological contract; it is formed by the internal spirituality of top management and forefathers of the organization and is clearly depicted in an organization's vision, mission, policies and procedures (Konz & Ryan, 1999). Therefore the spiritual culture of an organization results from the impact of spirituality of the top management. Top management's spirituality is articulated in the organization's culture as found by Konz and Ryan (1999). According to Moore (2012) as a firm adopts a more spiritual culture, its psychological contract becomes more attractive for the people who look for meaning in their work and life and in this way organizations can expect to gain the benefits that originate from spiritual

workplace. When studying a spiritual work place the main focus is the degree to which a psychological contract contains the two elements, (i.e transactional and relational). Uen, Chien, and Yen (2009) explored that the main focus of transactional contracts is “economic terms, have a specific duration, are static, narrow in scope, and are easily observable”. Therefore, organizations that view their employees as commodity like resources, usually focus on transactional aspect of psychological contract, which is also non developmental, as opposed to spiritual organization that considers their employees as competitive advantage source (Moore, 2010). As opposed to the view of transactional organization, the focus of a spiritual organization is on developmental aspects of their employees, which is evident in their culture and human resource policies (Moore, 2010).

Mediation of Psychological Contract

Review of literature revealed that so far no study has taken psychological contract as a mediator between WPS and AOC and WPS and job stress. Therefore this study will attempt to fill this gap by taking psychological contract as a mediator. Psychological contract is believed to have an agreement for specific provisions of employment exchange relationship between employee and employer (Grimmer & Oddy; 2007). Workplace behaviors can be better explained and understood through social exchange theory. Much of the contemporary research under the notion of social exchange theory has been directed towards investigating the social relationships at workplace (e.g., Shore, Tetrick, & Barksdale, 1999; Shore et al., 2004). Social Exchange theory suggests that certain determinants of different workplace behaviors can result into social exchange relationships (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001). Employers can generate positive consequences by simply “caring employees”. Social exchange relationships can effectively mediate between organizational factors to produce employees’ positive outcomes and behaviors. This has been greatly realized as the reasoning for describing Blau’s (1964) idea of social exchange relationship framework. According to this important point suggested by Blau, Psychological contract can mediate between WPS and AOC.

The norms of reciprocity are fostered as a major element of social exchange relationship. Employees develop a stronger sense of trust, emotional attachment, and engagement when respected and valued by their organizations (Blau; 1964; Ali et al.; 2010, and Bal et al.; 2010). Therefore employees are most likely to reciprocate with positive feelings when organization tends to fulfill its obligation by favoring employees. Psychological contract is itself a social exchange relationship therefore it can mediate between WPS and AOC. Therefore the aim of this paper is to evaluate the association between WPS and AOC and WPS and stress with a mediating role of psychological contract. So it can be hypothesized that:

H 1: There is a mediating role of Psychological Contract between Workplace Spirituality and Affective Organizational Commitment.

H 2: There is a mediating role of Psychological Contract between Workplace Spirituality and Job stress.

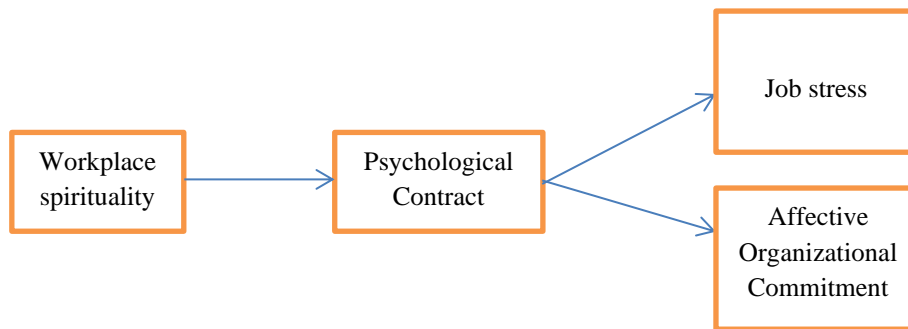


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

ADDITIONAL DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

The proposed model will study workplace spirituality at the organizational level but the future research may involve workplace spirituality at individual level or group level. Similarly future research can explore WPS relationship with other forms of commitment like normative and continuance rather than affective.

Another avenue for future research may be that the present study focuses on banking sector employees while future research may be conducted on other sectors like manufacturing, SME's and educational institutes etc to determine whether workplace spirituality exert similar effect on commitment in various occupational groups or not.

Similarly it can also be interesting to explore that whether the workplace spirituality vary across cultures, so this proposed model can be studied in different cultural settings like Asian culture versus western culture and also among the sub cultures within a specific culture.

EXPECTED FINDINGS

This research study will help researcher to deeply understand the knowledge about relationship of workplace spirituality with affective organizational commitment and job stress with a mediating role of psychological contract. This will give an insight into the mediating role of psychological contract and this will be beneficial in understanding the importance of workplace spirituality along with the psychological contract to reduce stress and frustration and increase effective commitment which can be beneficial for the management of commercial banks to apply new concepts of workplace spirituality to improve their competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

In this paper researchers have presented workplace spirituality as a new function of management to enhance affective commitment and reduce job stress by emphasizing the mediating role of psychological contract in the backdrop of Pakistani banking sector which is a stressed out sector and is in dire need of some new management techniques to fully engage its employees by increasing their affective commitment in order to remain competitive in the cut throat competition among the commercial banks.

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