

The Influence of Spiritual Leadership on Spiritual Well-Being and Job Satisfaction: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

This study offers a conceptual framework which relates the influence of spiritual leadership on employees spiritual well-being and job satisfaction. Spiritual leadership is a relatively new concept in leadership literature. It aims to intrinsically motivate the leaders and the followers for their spiritual well-being. Job satisfaction is a critical concept with various antecedents and consequences. The situational and dispositional factors or the combination of both factors determine the level of satisfaction of the employees toward their job. How the leaders spiritual leadership influences employees spiritual well-being; and its relationship with the employees job satisfaction are discussed. The framework suggests that spiritual leadership is directly influences employees spiritual well-being and job satisfaction. It is also hypothesized that spiritual well-being is also directly influences job satisfaction and mediates the influence of spiritual leadership on job satisfaction.

Key Words: *Spiritual Leadership, Spiritual Well-Being, Job Satisfaction.*

Introduction

How do people treat spirituality in the workplace? People always heard about spirituality but reluctant to associate it with the workplace, due to assumptions that workplaces or other social institutions are secular (Hicks, 2002). Some researchers and scholars have argued that future organizational life and social change in our society consists of critical elements such as spirituality, the desire for meaningful work, and employee job satisfaction (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Karakas, 2009; Marques, Dhiman & King, 2005). Duffy (2006) states that limited number of empirical studies were conducted on the relationship between spirituality and work-related variables such as job satisfaction. Some scholars viewed higher levels of job satisfaction could be nurtured for employees who view work as a means of spiritual expression, as they will have a more positive outlook and contribute more to create better working conditions (Ghazzawi & Smith, 2009). However, even though the interests in the relationship between spirituality and job satisfaction are expanding, only a few studies have found a positive influence of spirituality on job satisfaction (Clark *et al.*, 2007), such as works by Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson (2003) and Garcia-Zamor (2003), who found that certain dimensions of spirituality were positively related with various aspects of work-related variables such as job satisfaction and involvement.

Studies on the link between spirituality and organizational leadership; and the impact of spirituality to employees outcomes such as absenteeism, productivity, turnover, ethicality, stress, and health are growing

and have become a central issue in current trend of spirituality studies (Fairholm, 1998; Fry, 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Justin (2008) states that there has been a rising doubts regarding the impact of spirituality on leadership practices in the past decade, even though there were evident that the effectiveness of the leaders has been associated with their spiritual values and practices (Reave, 2005). How spirituality impact the organizations and individuals; such as leaders and followers (employees) are the main areas of empirical research which tend to highlight the importance of spirituality in the workplace. Nevertheless, Thompson (2002) states that spiritual issues have been neglected in most leadership research and the spiritual qualities of leaders are commonly overlooked. Previous leadership theory neglected the spiritual component and mainly focused on the aspects of physical, mental, or emotional elements of human interaction in organisations (Fry, 2003). Thus, the main objective of this paper is therefore to propose the conceptual framework that examines the influence of leaders spiritual leadership on employees spiritual well-being and job satisfaction.

Spirituality Defined

Zinnbauer and Pargament (1998) suggested that over 300 definitions of spirituality have been published, while Markow and Klenke (2005) say that even though there are more than 70 definitions of spirituality at work, but there is no widely accepted definition or a single, concrete definition of spirituality. Fairholm (1996) defines spirit as “the vital, energizing force or principle in the person which affects our identity, our values, our memories, our sense of humour and integrates guiding principles of wholeness, relationships, inner wisdom and inner authority”; while Rayburn and Rayburn (1996) state that spirituality is the vital force of one’s being. Anderson (2000) further views spirituality as the intangible, life affirming force in self and all human beings. Lean (2002) relates the aspect of an individual’s spirituality to their work by describing spirituality as “a mental disposition or attitude that embraces spirit as integral to one’s work, behavior, thinking, and success.” This study defines spirituality as personal qualities, embedded within self, and it is “a subconscious feeling that energizes individual action that inspires one toward certain ends or purposes that go beyond self” (Fernando, Beale & Geroy, 2009).

Spiritual Well-Being

The terms spirituality and spiritual well-being are often used interchangeably in many studies (Ellison, 1983; Paloutzian & Ellison, 2009). Well-being is defined by Merriam Webster Online as “the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous”. Spiritual well-being is defined as people’s perception of the quality of their spiritual life (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1991), while Hawks, Hull, Thalman, & Richins (1995) defined spiritual well-being as “a sense of relatedness or connectedness to others, a provision for meaning and purpose in life, the fostering of wellbeing (through a stress buffering effect), and having a belief in and a relationship with a power higher than the self”. Spiritual well-being has been conceptualized as satisfaction with one’s spiritual life domain (Lee, Sirgy, Efraty, & Siegel, 2003). In the context of this study, spiritual well-being is defined as a “self perceived state of the degree to which one feels a sense of purpose and direction” (Fry, Vitucci & Cedillo, 2005). Spirituality or spiritual well-being of individual has been studied in the context of other dimensions of individual’s lives such as to emotional, psychological, and physical; such as Emmons (1999) who discovered that spiritual well-being is positively linked to faster recovery from illnesses and overall life satisfaction. Spiritual well-being of the employees is also one of determinants of leadership effectiveness and antecedent of job satisfaction (Fry *et. al*, 2005; Malone & Fry, 2003).

Spiritual Leadership

Astin and Astin (2000) stressed the importance of spirituality to be emphasized in leadership by suggesting that future leaders should not only be equipped with new knowledge and skills, but would also be able to demonstrate a high level of emotional and spiritual wisdom and maturity. Fry (2008) defined spiritual leadership as “the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one’s self and

others so that they have a sense of spiritual wellbeing through calling and membership”. The theory of spiritual leadership is developed within an intrinsic motivation model that incorporates vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love, theories of workplace spirituality, and spiritual well-being; where the spiritual well-being variables are meaning/calling and membership (Fry *et al.*, 2005). The spiritual leadership is about the role of employees in creating value for the organization (Fry, 2003). Fry *et al.* (2005) states that a leader who highly values honesty, integrity, forgiveness, compassion, and helping others would have different attitudes and behave very differently toward followers than if he or she ultimately valued egoistic need satisfaction and personal ambition. It can be said that the spiritual leaders who create different atmosphere invite strong motivation to the followers. This atmosphere composes coherence and mutual understanding between the leaders and the followers, which positively affects the working environment. Fry (2003) mentions spirituality as one of these basic needs for people to survive, and involved tapping into both followers and leaders “for spiritual well-being” (Fry & Cohen, 2009).

Job Satisfaction

Porter and Lawler (1968) define job satisfaction as “an unidimensional construct; that is, job satisfaction is people’s affective (emotional) response to their current job conditions”. Locke (1976) then defined job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from one’s job or job experiences” (p.1300). Job satisfaction is a critical construct because job dissatisfaction has been acknowledged as the single most important reason people leave their job (Sturges & Guest, 2001). However, the actual aspects of job satisfaction that caused people to leave their job are not specified and vary according to circumstances around the people’s experience in the organisation. The situational and dispositional factors or the combination of both factors determine the level of satisfaction of the employees toward their job.

The nature of the work itself, or intrinsic job characteristics, has been touted as the most significant situational influence on job satisfaction (Saari & Judge, 2004). Managers need to be aware that they can shape organisational (situational) factors through job enrichment such as task significance, task identity, work autonomy, role clarity, an effective communication (feedback) system and allowing participation in the decision making process, as these factors all affect the employee’s satisfaction attitude (Fried & Ferris, 1987). To achieve a high level of job-satisfaction, it is important to have a good fit between an employee and his or her work environment because the work environment (e.g., leaders and organizational culture) could be an important predictor of the employee’s job satisfaction (Taris & Feij, 2001). Snyder (1990) found that the degree of an employee’s job satisfaction could be different depending on the leadership style of his or her managers or leaders. Leadership style is another factor that has a large impact on job satisfaction (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2003). Studies have also demonstrated a relationship between preferred leadership style and employee job satisfaction (Thompson, 2002).

In another perspective, there are evidence that differences in the employees disposition or temperament indicates the differences in job satisfaction across employees (Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 2009; House, Shane, & Herold, 1996). However, how exactly disposition affect job satisfaction is inconclusive despite its contributions to the understanding of the causes of job satisfaction (Erez, 1994). Judge and Bono (2001) found a relationship between disposition or personality and job satisfaction is indicated by a relationship between key personality trait, core self-evaluation and employee job satisfactions. In 1965, Kornhauser have assumed that person variables such as mental health and personality are primarily influenced by satisfaction and not vice versa (Arvey, Carter & Buerkley, 1991). Konhauser also established that job satisfaction is significantly associated with general mental health indices. Hammermeister *et al.* (2005) conclude that “spiritual well-being happens to have a positive influence on most aspects of health” (p. 80), including mental health. In that sense, it is posited that spiritual well-being is positively associated with mental health of the employees, and also a significant influencer of job satisfaction. Individual spirituality has been empirically found to be positively associated with life satisfaction (Wolf, 1998) and more specifically with job satisfaction (Brown 2003, Komala & Ganesh 2007).

Relationship between Spiritual Leadership, Spiritual Well- Being and Job Satisfaction

Many studies across diverse arrays of organisations so far support a significant positive influence of spiritual leadership through spiritual well-being on employee life satisfaction, organizational commitment and productivity, various measures of work unit performance, and sales growth (Fry *et al.*, 2005). Spiritual leadership fosters spiritual well-being, which then positively influences employee life satisfaction, corporate responsibility, organizational commitment and productivity, and financial performance (Fry & Slocum, 2008). In a process to further validate the theory of spiritual leadership, Fry, Hannah, Noel & Walumbwa (2011) utilised a SLT scale of spiritual well-being to test a dynamic relationship between spiritual leadership and spiritual well-being (i.e., a sense of calling and membership), and key organizational outcomes in a sample of emerging military leaders. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between spiritual leadership and spiritual well-being; and spiritual well-being was found to mediate the relationship between spiritual leadership and organisation commitment. The study also concludes that overall spiritual leadership model provides support that the variables comprising spiritual leadership (i.e., hope/faith, vision, and altruistic love) form a higher order formative construct that positively influences spiritual well-being in groups (i.e. calling and membership).

Another study in a different setting, Chen, Yang & Li (2012) investigated a spiritual leadership process across two major Chinese societies (China and Taiwan) and three major Chinese industries (manufacturing, financial/banking, and retailing service industries). Chen *et al.* (2012) adopted a SLT measure by Fry *et al.*, (2005) for leader's factors of spiritual leadership, vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love; and spiritual well-being factors, meaning/calling and membership. Spiritual leadership was found to predict spiritual well-being sub-scales of meaning/calling and membership. Meaning/calling and membership were found to mediate the relationship between spiritual leadership and organisational outcomes. Similar finding was also obtained by Bodla & Ali (2012) who conducted a study on 456 employees of banking sector in Pakistan to investigate the impact of spiritual need for leadership among followers, in relation with spiritual leadership behaviors on followers' work outcomes like performance, organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Fry (2003)'s SLT scale was adopted to measure spiritual leadership and spiritual well-being. The study found a significant positive relationship between spiritual leadership and spiritual well-being components; and between spiritual leadership and the followers' work outcomes. The study observed a mediation effect of spiritual well-being to the relationship between spiritual leadership dimensions and organizational outcomes. The study concludes that positive relationship found between spiritual leadership and elements of spiritual well-being has practical implication for banking leaders, to develop a persuasive vision by taking into consideration the values of altruistic love that generate hope/faith in employees to achieve desired organizational outcomes. This will help employees to find meanings in their lives and have positive impact on their attitudes.

Based on the results of above studies, it was hypothesized that leaders spiritual leadership directly influences employees spiritual well-being, and spiritual well-being mediates the influence of leaders spiritual leadership on job satisfaction. Hence, the hypotheses for this study are forwarded as follows:

- H₁: Leaders spiritual leadership directly influences employees spiritual well-being
H₄: Employees spiritual well-being mediates the influence of leaders spiritual leadership on employees job satisfaction

Relationship between Spiritual Well-being and Job Satisfaction

Many research on spirituality are found been conducted in areas of clinical, and health care settings. Study on the relative effect of spirituality to organisational outcomes has been growing to find measures to overcome ever increasing organisational problems. Lazar (2010) conducted a study to examine the relationship between spirituality and hospital nurses' work satisfaction and to determine the influence of various specific aspects of spirituality to their work satisfaction. The results indicated a positive

relationship between life coherency aspects of spirituality such as meaning, purpose in life and mission in life with job satisfaction. In another study at a health care setting, Clark *et al.* (2007) conducted a study to examine whether spirituality is related to job satisfaction; and the structural path relationships among four variables: spiritual belief, integration of spirituality at work, self actualization and job satisfaction. The study surveyed 215 hospital members in Tampa, Florida who completed the Jarel Spiritual Well-Being Scale, the Chamiec-Case Spirituality Integration and Job Satisfaction Scales. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents viewed themselves as having spiritual well-being. Most reported high job satisfaction and spiritual integrations. Spirituality, integration and self-actualization explained 22% of the variation in job satisfaction. The respondents' spirituality at work and greater self actualization significantly improve job satisfaction. Nevertheless, Smalls (2011) found mixed results when he examined the correlation between spiritual well-being and job satisfaction, and between spiritual well-being and job performance by employing the Spiritual Well-being Scale (SWBS) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire-Short Form (MSQ). The findings showed that SWBS and MSQ were not statistically significant. However, self-reported responses from direct questions included in a demographic questionnaire indicated the agreement of majority of the participants that there was a relationship between spiritual well-being and job satisfaction.

All the empirical studies discussed thus far provide evidence that spiritual well-being is important factor in determining the employees' job satisfaction in a health care related settings. In a study outside the healthcare settings, Robert, Young & Kelly (2006) studied the relationships between adult worker's spiritual well-being and job satisfaction on 200 full time working adults from the North Eastern United States. The Spiritual Well-being scale (SWB) and Minnessota Satisfaction Questionnaire Short form were utilised in the study. The findings of the study showed that spiritual well-being, religious well-being and existential well-being were positively related to job satisfaction. Existential well-being was found to have a stronger influence on job satisfaction than religious well-being. However, it is interesting to note that all the empirical studies on spiritual well-being mentioned above utilised a various survey instrument of spiritual well-being which included religious aspects as one of its dimensions. Unfortunately, there is little study found to date that utilise SLT scale to measure spiritual well-being. Among others, Bodla & Ali (2012) conducted a research to investigate whether leadership spirituality affect the individual outcomes i.e. performance, organisation commitment and job satisfaction and the role of spiritual well-being as mediator on the banking sector in Pakistan. Leadership spirituality in this study is defined as spiritual leadership as per works done by Fry (2003). The study utilised Fry's Spiritual Leadership scale (SLT) where spiritual leadership dimensions consist of vision, hope/faith and altruistic love, and spiritual well-being consists of calling and membership. Individual outcomes like job satisfaction, organizational commitment and productivity were measured through 14 items (4 for organizational commitment, 5 for productivity and 5 for job satisfaction) and these items were adapted from Fry (2003). The results found a positive relationship between spiritual leadership and elements of spiritual survival/well-being. Caling/meaning and membership as the dimensions of spiritual well-being were found to have positive relationship with individual outcomes. In the nutshell, spiritual well-being was found significantly correlated with job satisfaction.

Based on the results of above studies, the following hypothesis is forwarded:

H₂: Employees spiritual well-being directly influences their job satisfaction.

Relationship between Spiritual Leadership and Job Satisfaction

There are little studies found to date that attempted to examine, specifically, the influence of spiritual leadership on job satisfaction. This area of study is largely remained unexplored and need to be addressed to further understand the impact of spiritual leadership to the organizational outcomes. In a study by Aydin (2009) on workers of metal working manufacturing industry in Turkey; they investigated the relationship between spiritual leadership, organizational culture and employee satisfaction utilizing Ginevius &

Vaitknait's Organizational Culture Scale and Fry's Spiritual Leadership Scale (SLT). Employee satisfaction value has been calculated as the sum of organizational culture and spiritual leadership. The findings of the study revealed that employee satisfaction has strong correlation with organizational culture and spiritual leadership. In addition to that, results also indicate that spiritual leadership does not have as much considerable effect as the cultural dimensions on employee satisfaction in metal working area. Another study by Asrun, Salim and Thoyib (2012) attempted to investigate the influence of spiritual leadership on workplace spirituality, work satisfaction, and deviant behavior of 152 city government officials of Kendari, South-East Sulawesi Province. Fry's (2005) SLT scale was used and results by structural equation model showed that workplace spiritual leadership has a significant positive impact on job satisfaction.

In a related study, Robertson (2008) attempted to explore the leaders' spirituality as it relates to the overall job satisfaction and resiliency of 80 public school principals from three urban and two rural school districts in the Southeast America. The study utilised Hoyle's Self-Assessment for Spiritual Leadership, Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and Job in General (JIG) instruments, and Wagnild and Young's Resilience Scale, and a demographic questionnaire. The results of this study revealed no statistically significant relationship between spirituality and job satisfaction. There was also a lack of relationship between spirituality of the principles and every facet of the JDI. However, the relationship of spirituality to overall job satisfaction as measured by the JIG was found approaching significance. The study concludes that the reluctance of people to express spirituality in the workplace may have contributed to the lack of a relationship between spirituality and job satisfaction in this study.

Based on the results of above studies, the following hypothesis is forwarded as follows:

H₃: Leaders spiritual leadership directly influences employees job satisfaction

The Proposed Conceptual Model

Based on the review of literatures and the hypotheses forwarded, the proposed model of the study was therefore presented as shown in Figure 1. The proposed model is in fact a partially mediated model which indicates that spiritual leadership as having both a direct effect on job satisfaction and an indirect effect through spiritual well-being. Fry (2003) states that the linkages between spiritual leadership and spiritual well-being would lead to improved organizational outcomes. In other words, leaders spiritual leadership directly influences employees job satisfaction and indirectly influence employees job satisfaction through spiritual well-being.

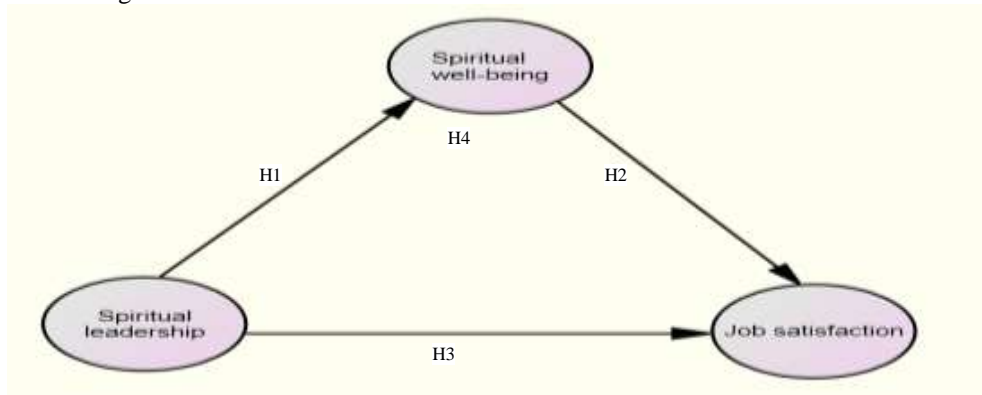


Figure 1: A proposed conceptual framework and hypotheses

Limitations and Future Directions

This paper attempts to address a significant gap in the spiritual leadership studies. The framework presented here approaches this aspect by positing that spiritual leadership influences spiritual well-being and job satisfaction. In addition, this framework considers the mediating effect of spiritual well-being on the influence of spiritual leadership on job satisfaction. While we believe that this framework is built upon sound theory and reasoning, there are a number of limitations. First, the main important limitation of this study is that this study only dealt with issues of spiritual leadership, spiritual well-being, and job satisfaction. This is a small integration model, so other mechanisms influencing job satisfaction could not be comprehensively examined.

For future research, the researcher calls for the integration of other factors, such as personal demographic characteristics of the employees as mediating variables on the influence of spiritual leadership on job satisfaction. Piedmont (2004) hypothesizes that a person's spiritual attitudes can develop as one ages. Additionally, he states that there is evidence of possible relationship between spiritual attitudes and gender. Therefore, the demographics characteristics of the person do affect the spiritual attitudes and behaviors of the leaders and the employees and consequently its behavioural outcomes. Future research can also identify other possible mediators between spiritual leadership and job satisfaction and investigate the relative impact of their direct and indirect effects on job satisfaction.

Secondly, spirituality has been argued extensively as includes religion as well as separately defined. Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin & Kakabadse (2002) contended that spirituality is rooted in religion. Whereas spiritual leadership theory can be inclusive or exclusive of religious elements (Fry, 2005). Any study utilised SLT instrument excludes any elements of religiosity in attempting to distance spirituality from religion, and the results could be well affected by the religious sentiment which could affect the variance explained by job satisfaction. The element of religiousness might also be constructed as an antecedent or a mediator with organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction. Therefore, it could be interesting to note whether spiritual leadership theory is truly applicable in any part of the world by conducting a study which includes religious elements as indicators for another mediating or intervening variables. In addition to that, the proposed framework only focused on individual outcomes. Organizational or interactive outcomes as dependent variable could also be explored. By exploring organizational or interactive outcomes as another dependent variables in the spiritual leadership studies, better information about organizational performance or specifically, financial performance in relation to the influence of spiritual leadership can be obtained.

Another important aspect to better understand the relationships among the study variables is that, future research could be carried out using a longitudinal study design approach. It also would be interesting to examine the relationships among spiritual leadership, spiritual well-being, and job satisfaction across time. Furthermore, cross-sectional data preclude causal inferences as the data collected at a given point in time limits any inferences about causality (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Any interpretations about causality must be approached with caution because in general, causality can be determined only through experimental design approaches (Grimm & Yarnold, 2000). Future research can use longitudinal data to test the proposed model in order to clearly assess the direction of causation on the influence of leaders spiritual leadership on employees spiritual well-being and job satisfaction.

The proposed conceptual model presented in this paper is, to our knowledge, the first attempt to consider the influence of spiritual leadership on spiritual well-being and job satisfaction. All these notions are useful topics for future theory and research to explore. Despite the above-mentioned and other possible limitations, the conceptual framework presented here can serve as a foundation for further theorizing; and more importantly, testing in various work settings and cultures.

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