

THE LINKS BETWEEN WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY, JOB INVOLVEMENT AND WORKPLACE DEVIANCE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationships between workplace spirituality, job involvement and workplace deviance. Using simple random sampling, data were collected from 141 participants from diverse backgrounds in the manufacturing and service industries in Ghana. Results from bivariate analysis showed that workplace spirituality related positively and significantly with job involvement. The study also found that the relationship between workplace spirituality and workplace deviance is significantly negative. The implications and limitations of these findings are discussed.

Keywords: *Workplace spirituality, Job involvement, Workplace deviance, Ghana*

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Introduction

The advent of technology and the quest to becoming more efficient and competitive has led to a large number of organizations undertaking downsizing exercises. Downsizing causes job loss. In addition to the pain felt by those people who have lost their jobs, those who are still left are asked to increase production with less resources, in the same amount of time, and for the same rewards. Consequently, people spend a lot of their life at work and partly derive their social identity from the workplace. What happens to individuals on their job is therefore important for their mental and physical health and well-being. Individuals therefore increasingly desire to experience spirituality not only in their personal lives, but also in their work where they spend a large amount of their time (Neck & Milliman, 1994). Studies have noted that, empirical research on the effects of workplace spirituality on organizational outcomes is both important (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003) and inadequately examined (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003). Research has also shown that evidence on spirituality at the workplace have concentrated on describing personal spiritual experiences at work (Konz & Ryan, 1999), rather than on the impacts that the dimensions of workplace spirituality have on individual work-related outcomes. This study addresses this inadequacy. It examines the effect of workplace spirituality on a category of organizational outcome. It focuses on two employee work outcomes, namely, job involvement and workplace deviance. The present study also would add to existing literature in the area of spirituality at the workplace, specifically in the Ghanaian context

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and job involvement
2. To examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and workplace deviance

Literature Review

Workplace Spirituality

There seems to be multiple views of what workplace spirituality is. One view defines spirituality as something originating from inside the individual (Graber, 2001; Guillory, 2000). Another view spirituality religious based. A third perspective argues that spirituality involves existentialist questions such as “the meaning of work and why a person is doing a work” (e.g.

Neck & Milliman, 1994; Kahnweiler & Otte, 1997). Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) argues that all views of spirituality should be embraced at the workplace.

According to Ashmos and Duchon (2000: 137) workplace spirituality “is the recognition that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work taking place in the context of a community or organization.” Ashmon and Duchon (2000) identified three components of workplace spirituality. These three dimensions include; (1) recognition that employees have an inner life, (2) an assumption that employees desire to find work meaningful and (3) a commitment by the company/organization to serve as a context or community for spiritual growth.

Milliman et al. (2003) identified three dimensions of workplace spirituality. These are;

1. Meaningfulness of work – represents how individuals interact with their day-to-day work and involves having a deep sense of purpose and meaning in the workplace.

2. Sense of community - involves having a deep connection to, or relationship with others.

3. Personal goals in alignment with organizational goals - when individuals experience a strong sense of alignment between their values and their organization’s mission and purpose.

Empirical studies of the concept of workplace spirituality have been carried out by many researchers. Workplace spirituality have been found to be linked to enhanced individual creativity (Freshman, 1999), increased honesty and trust within organization (Wager-Marsh & Conely, 1999), enhanced sense of personal fulfillment of employees (Burack, 1999) and increased commitment to organizational goals (Delbecq, 1999; Leigh, 1997). For instance, Duchon and Plowman (2005), in a study of the links between workplace spirituality with performance and leadership among medical units in Southwestern United States found that work unit performance is better when workers feel part of a community and that the leaders of high performing units score higher on a measure of spirituality at work. Fry, Vitucci and Cedillo (2005), uncovered a positive relationship between the qualities of spiritual leadership, spiritual survival and organizational productivity and commitment.

Job Involvement

Lodahl and Kejner (1965) coined the term “job involvement”. They viewed job involvement as an identity concept and that an individual who is highly job involved cannot disassociate himself or herself from the job. Kanungo (1982) defines job involvement as an individual’s psychological identification to his / her job. These two definitions show that individuals who display high involvement in their jobs consider their work to be a very important part of their lives and whether or not they feel good about themselves is closely related to how they perform on their jobs. The concept of job involvement in the past has been studied from two different perspectives (Sekeran, 1989; Sekeran & Mowday, 1987). When viewed as an individual difference variable, job involvement is believed to occur when the possession of certain needs, values or personal characteristics predispose individuals to become more or less involved in their jobs. Rabinowitz and Hall (1977) in a review of job involvement literature found that individual characteristics such as age, education, sex, tenure, need strength, level of control and values were connected to job involvement. The second dimension views job involvement as a response to specific work situation characteristics. This dimension of job involvement implies that the characteristics of the job or work situation can influence the extent to which people get involve in their job. This is consistent with research findings that job involvement is related to job characteristics such as task autonomy, task significance, task identity, skill variety and feedback and supervisory behaviors such as leader consideration, participative decision making and amount of communication (Brown, 1996).

Workplace Deviance

Robinson and Bennett (1995:556) define workplace deviance as a “voluntary behaviour that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of the organization, its members or both.” Workplace deviance is believed to be a voluntary behaviour, in that employees either lack the motivation to conform to, and / or become motivated to violate normative expectations of the social context (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Kaplan, 1975). Robinson and Bennett (1995) developed a typology of workplace deviance along two dimensions of behaviour: interpersonal versus organizational and minor versus serious. *Interpersonal deviance* consists of acts that inflict harm on individuals, such as verbal harassment, assault and spreading rumors. *Organizational deviance* consists of acts directed against the company such as

sabotaging equipment, stealing and wasting resources. The result of their study yielded two - dimensional charts which organizes deviant workplace behaviour into four quadrants labeled: productive deviance, property deviance, political deviance and personal aggression (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). In their review of literature on the antecedents of workplace deviance, Bennett and Robinson (2003) noted the existence of three distinct research trends: (1) studies where deviance is conceptualized as a reaction to work experiences, (2) those that examine deviance as a reflection of employees' personality, and (3) studies investigating deviance as adaptation to the social context at work.

Workplace Spirituality and Job Involvement

Potential of a job to fulfill employee needs has been specified as an antecedent of job involvement (Kanungo, 1982). Research suggests that need fulfillment results in job involvement (e.g. Brown, 1996). Trott (1996) states that, individuals who are open to meaningful and purposeful relationships, which are key aspects of community, are more likely to grow, learn, and achieve at work and less likely to experience job burnout. Workplace spirituality provide intrinsic motivation to employees and the work activities become intrinsically motivating resulting in greater engagement in work (e.g. Fry, 2003). It has also been proposed that organizations which create an environment that is responsive to their employees' sense of purpose and values will have people who are motivated in their work (Catlette & Hadden, 1998; Hawley, 1993) and are more likely to have productive and satisfied workforce (Riordan, Gatewood, & Bill, 1997; Kraimer, 1997). Milliman et al. (2003) suggests that, a strong sense of community and organizational values is related to employee satisfaction and motivation. Similarly, Kolodinsky, Giacalone, and Jurkiewicz (2007) and Arindam and Farah (2010) found a significant positive relationships between workplace spirituality and job involvement.

Pawar (2009) in a study using data from 171 managerial level employees from diverse organisations in India found that the meaning work and alignment of values dimensions of workplace spirituality were positively related with job involvement ($r = .39, p < .001$ and $r = .26, p < .001$ respectively).

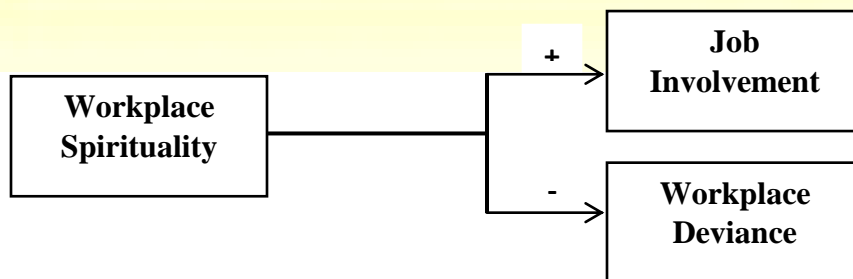
Workplace Spirituality and Workplace Deviance

Although there is research evidence to show that spirituality at the workplace might have a negative influence at the workplace, the positive influence of workplace spirituality on work-related outcomes have been found to far outweigh the negatives aspects. it may be possible that what one considers to be a highly spiritual belief or practice may have a negative impact on other people and that employees who experience a high degree of spirituality at work may become deeply attached to the current practices of the company and therefore become resistant to change (Milliman et al., 2003). However, there is enough evidence to show that workplace spirituality has a profound positive impact on work-related outcomes. Robert and Jarret (2011) found that spirituality is negatively related with interpersonal deviance ($r = -.18, p < .01$). Chawla, (2014) reported a negative of effect of workplace spirituality on sales person’s deviant work behaiours. Mat and Naser (2013) reported a negative correlation between the meaning of work ($r = -.164, p < .01$), and conditions for community at work ($r = -.096, p = < .01$) dimensions of workplace spirituality and workplace deviance.

Statement of Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant positive relationship between workplace spirituality and job involvement
2. There will be a significant negative relationship between workplace spirituality and workplace deviance

Figure 1: Summary of Hypothesised Relationships between Workplace Spirituality, Job Involvement and Workplace Deviance



Methodology

Research Design

The cross-sectional survey design was used in this study. This study was used because data were collected on the study variables at a single point in time with a questionnaire for analysis. In addition, the design was deemed appropriate because the study involved different organisations and employees from different gender, marital status, age, work experiences etc. A purely quantitative approach was adopted as all data were converted into numeric variables.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The sampling procedures involved selecting the organisations and the participants for the study. Probability sampling was used in selecting the organizations and the participants for the study. Specifically stratified sampling was used in selecting the participants and simple random was used in selecting participants. One hundred and forty-one (141) participants were selected for the study. The demographic characteristic of the participants used in the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic variables	N	Percentages (%)
Gender		
Male	79	56.0
Female	62	44.0
Marital Status		
Single	42	29.8
Married	80	56.7
Other	19	13.5
Age		
18 – 25 years	25	17.7
26 – 35 years	54	38.3
36 – 45 years	34	24.1
46 – 55 years	17	12.1
56 years and above	11	7.8
Status in organization		
Management level	41	29.1
Below management level	100	70.9

Work Experience

1 -5 years	54	38.3
6- 10 years	53	37.6
11 – 15 years	27	19.1
16 – 20 years	3	2.1
21 years and above	4	2.8

Pairwise N = 141

Measures

Workplace spirituality - workplace spirituality was measured using the scales developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2002); and Milliman et al. (2003) was adopted in measuring workplace spirituality. This instrument has three subscales: meaningful work-- 5 items; sense of community-- this scale has 5 items; and alignment of values-- 3 items. Milliman et al. (2003) reported an alpha coefficient of .88 for the workplace spirituality scale. Sample items are “*I experience joy in work*”; “*I feel part of a community*”; and “*I feel positive about the values of my organization.*” The scale has a 7-point Likert response format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Job involvement - the scale developed by Lodahl and Kejner (1965) was used to measure job involvement. Sixteen items from this scale were adapted for this study. It has a Cronbach alpha value of .76. Sample items are: “*I’ll stay overtime to finish my job, even if I’m not paid; the major satisfaction in my life does not come from my job.*” The response categories range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Workplace deviance - workplace deviance was measured using the 12 items adapted from the scale developed by Bennett and Robinson (2000). Responses range from 1 (never) to 5 (daily). Sample items on this scale include: “*I worked on a personal matter instead of work for my company*”; “*I made fun of someone at work*”; “*I come in late to work without permission*”. Erkutlu and Chafra (2013) reported a Cronbach alpha of .89 for this scale.

Data Collection Procedure

A verbal pre-survey consent was sought from the HR departments of the selected organisations to announce the intentions of using their organization for the study and ask for their assistance

and cooperation. Questionnaires were then hand delivered to participants who were randomly selected and consented to participate in the study. Completed questionnaires were received in sealed envelopes.

Pilot Study

Questionnaires used for the study were pre-tested to detect possible deficiencies. The main aim of the pilot study is to ensure that the questions are eliciting the responses required (Burns & Bush, 2002; Zikmund, 2000). The scales that were pilot include the dimensions of workplace spirituality (i.e. meaningful work, sense of community, alignment of values), job involvement and workplace spirituality. The pilot study was conducted by selecting 30 respondents from two manufacturing and service organisations from a convenient sample, as is common for pilot tests (Zikmund, 2000). Participants did not express difficulty in responding to the items on all the scales though some respondents expressed their concern that the questionnaire was a bit loaded. The reliability values of the measures met the accepted threshold of .70 recommended by Nunnally (1978). Table 2 shows the reliability values of the measures used in the study.

Table 2: Alpha values of workplace spirituality, job involvement and workplace deviance

Measure	No. of Items	Alpha
Workplace Spirituality	13	.88
Job Involvement	16	.84
Workplace Deviance	12	.71

4. Results

Data were analysed with the Statistical Product and Services Solution (SPSS) version 16.0 for windows. Reverse coding was done for the required items before subsequent analysis were carried out. All missing data were deleted pairwise. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviation scores were computed for workplace spirituality, job involvement, and workplace deviance. Mean and standard deviation scores are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Summary of means and standard deviations of variables in the study

Variable	Mean	SD
Workplace Spirituality	61.35	14.85
Job Involvement	50.18	10.19
Workplace Deviance	18.31	5.29

The hypotheses for this study were tested using bivariate correlation. Specifically the Pearson product -moment of correlation coefficient (Pearson r) was used. The Pearson r was used to determine the strength of the relationship, the direction of the relationship, and the amount of variance shared between the independent (workplace spirituality) and the dependent variables (job involvement and workplace deviance).

The results showed that workplace spirituality related significantly and positively with job involvement ($r = .511$, $p = .000$). This finding confirms that hypothesis that workplace spirituality will relate positively and significantly with job involvement. Based on the benchmarks prescribed by Cohen (1988) for interpreting the magnitude of a correlation coefficient, a significant and large relationship was found between workplace spirituality and job involvement. The correlation of $r = .511$ shows that workplace spirituality explains 26% of the variance in the respondents scores on job involvement.

It was also predicted that workplace spirituality will have a negative and significant relationship with workplace deviance. This prediction was supported ($r = -.250$, $p = .003$). This indicates employees who experience higher levels of spirituality at the workplace are less likely to engage in behaviours that would hurt coworkers and the organization as a whole. Based on the benchmarks prescribed by Cohen (1988) for interpreting the magnitude of a correlation coefficient, a lower but significant but relationship was found between workplace spirituality and job involvement. The correlation of $r = -.250$ shows that workplace spirituality explains 6% of the variance in the study participant's scores on workplace deviance. Table 4 shows a summary of the results for the relationships between workplace spirituality, job involvement and workplace deviance

Table 4: Summary of results for the relationships between workplace spirituality, job involvement and workplace deviance

Variable	1	2	3
Workplace Spirituality	-		
Job Involvement	.511**	-	-
Workplace Deviance	-.250*	-	-

Note: * $p < .01$ ** $p < .001$

Discussion

This study investigated the links between workplace spirituality, job involvement, and workplace deviance in the Ghanaian manufacturing and service sectors. Pearson correlation was used to examine the strength and the direction of the relationships between these variables. It was predicted that workplace spirituality will relate positively with job involvement and negative with workplace deviance. The results from the study confirmed that workplace spirituality has a significant positive relationship with job involvement. This finding is consistent with previous findings (e.g. Arindam & Farah, 2010; Kolodinsky et al., 2007; Milliman et al., 2003; and Pawar, 2009). Milliman et al. (2003) provided empirical support regarding the positive association between spirituality at work, as measured by meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment of values with the organization and job satisfaction. Kolodinsky et al. (2007) found organizational spirituality to be positively related to job involvement among full-time workers taking graduate course work. Arindam and Farah (2010) and Pawar (2009) found a positive correlation between workplace spirituality and job involvement among employees in Indian companies. This indicates that the interpretation of spiritual practices at the workplace and the outcome of these practices on work-related outcomes are similar regardless of the cultural and demographic background of the employees.

The study also found a negative relationship between workplace spirituality and workplace deviance. Thus employees who perceive higher spiritual practices at the workplace are less likely to engage in behaviours that would hurt colleagues and the organization as a whole. This finding

confirms that findings by Robert and Jarret (2011) and Chawla, (2014) reported negative relationships between the various dimensions of workplace spirituality and workplace deviance.

Limitations

The results of this study should be considered in light of its limitations. Similar studies in workplace spirituality (e.g. Milliman et al., 2003), this study used cross-sectional and self-report data. This limits the conclusions that can be made about causality and common method variance. With respect to causality, it cannot be determined that higher spirituality at the workplace causes increase in job involvement and a decrease in workplace deviance. While these linkages are consistent with the literature on the consequences of spirituality at the workplace, self-report measures, which have been found to be problematic due to their socially desirable were used instead of external report (from supervisors and colleagues). However, studies have shown significant support for the use of self-report measures over external reports (e.g. Bennet & Robinson, 2000). External reports have been found to only report detected and more visible behaviours.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

First, this study attempts to help managers and organisational leaders to improve employee involvement with their jobs and to fight out the prevalence of deviant workplace behaviours by suggesting that adopting workplace spirituality could encourage employees to be more engaged with their jobs and reduce employees' deviant behaviours.

Second, by proposing a positive effect of job involvement and a negative effect on workplace deviance, this study extends the list of potential benefits of workplace spirituality in manufacturing and service organisations to suggest that adopting workplace spirituality could be a sound management strategy.

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