

Spirituality in Management from Islamic Perspectives

Edited by

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Spirituality in Management from Islamic Perspectives

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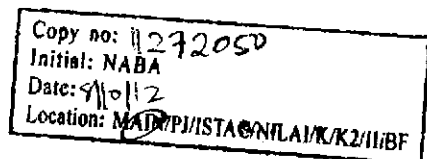
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CHAPTER 3

Workplace Spirituality and Human Capital Development from Islamic Perspective

AAhad M. Osman-Gani, Junaidah Hashim and Zaireena Wan Nasir

Abstract

At the backdrop of many corporate scandals and ethical violations in today's corporate business environment, managers and policy makers are looking for new ways of managing and developing people with appropriate interventions. Research shows that employees are also looking for soul enriching fulfilment at work by exploring new meanings of working in organizations. In this regard, workplace spirituality is getting increasing attentions from employers and the employees. But, not much empirical research was done to study the effects and implications of spirituality on relevant variables of interests. Particularly, no study was found that investigated spirituality at workplace from Islamic perspectives. Moreover, the effects of HCD/HRD interventions that could help in enhancing the degree of employee spirituality was not studied. This chapter proposes a conceptual model showing the relationships and effects of several variables on spirituality by reviewing the existing literature of spirituality and other relevant areas. The chapter also highlights the implications of the proposed model for future research and for professional practice.

Introduction

Organisations continually search for methods to improve work environments and workplace relationships. Both academic scholars and employers have recognised that employees are now looking for soul enriching fulfilment at work, and in some cases employers also

embracing such a philosophy. Many organisations started to focus on creating work environment that brings a greater sense of meaning and purpose (Garcia-Zamar, 2003; Klerk, 2005). Spirituality in workplace is gaining prevalence as a mainstream topic in management theory. A growing base of literature suggests that there are significant effects of religiosity and spirituality on people's lives (Enander, 2000; Hutson, 2000; King, 2007; King and Crowther, 2004). Religion is also said to have a lot of influence on the behaviour and performance of human being. This includes the way people live, behave and work. Religiosity and spirituality are evident and persuasive in the ethical attitudes, moral reasoning and management behaviour of many managers (Hutson, 2000; King, 2007).

Practitioners are seeking to understand the concept of spirituality at work, and business leaders in general are willing to leverage spirituality as a means to promote ethical compliance and improve workplace behaviours (Smith, 2006). Spirituality has generally been assumed to have an effect on individual behaviour, but much of the research has failed to define the relevant constructs in a theoretical context. As the popularity of the emerging discipline of spirituality in the workplace matures, most writings to date have been philosophically driven and conceptual in nature, rather than empirical and field study based. As our spiritual lives ultimately are an integral component of our daily lives that inevitably influence other facets, this chapter aims to discuss about how spirituality has been incorporated into human capital development field at the workplace in today's organizational environments. Specifically, this chapter focuses on understanding the concept of spirituality, religiosity, workplace spirituality, the relationship with workplace initiatives toward human capital development from an Islamic religious perspective. The chapter will also discuss how these initiatives influence employees' attitudes toward their workplace learning and development. Although some studies have been done on workplace spirituality, most of those dealt with general management issues, and almost no study could be found that addressed the issues of human capital development (HCD) or human resource development (HRD), relating to performance development of employees, particularly from Islamic perspectives. This chapter therefore provides an orientation of workplace spirituality relevant to HRD interventions from Islamic perspective.

Spirituality in the Workplace

Spirituality is a broad and divergently interpretable phenomenon. According to Geh and Tan (2009), many scholars have struggled to define spirituality within the work context without achieving consensus. Some have defined spirituality with atheistic and materialistic constructions (Mintroff and Denton, 1999; Ashmos and Duchon, 2000).

Workplace spirituality as defined by Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) is a framework of organisational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy. This view focuses on organisational aspects and through them seeks to induce employee experiences of spirituality at work. This approach focuses on several organisational features such as spiritual values, business plans and goals, and HRM practices that are supportive of these values. Based on extensive review of workplace spirituality definition; Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) identified five themes in spirituality at work: connection, compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work and transcendence.

Workplace spirituality constitutes the impact individual spiritual values have on the work environment and may also represent a summation of individual spiritual values that create unique spirituality within a work group or organisation. The use of spirituality as a term is in no way meant to describe the appropriateness of the spirituality manifested rather its existence and influence in the workplace. According to Neck and Milliman (1994), a central aspect of spirituality involves the meaning of one's work, something which an increasing number of employees are striving to attain (Hawley, 1993). One philosophical viewpoint suggests that work is intended to be one of the most profound ways of experiencing the divine presence in the world, that is, of experiencing spirituality (Holland, 1989). The nature of an individual's work (e.g. spiritual or non-spiritual) may depend largely on how one views it. An individual's attitude toward his/her work is a primary factor toward his/her work becoming a spiritual process (Dale, 1991).

The goal of workplace spirituality is seen as being able to reach one's full potential and to have positive attitudes and relationships with the world (Hawley, 1993). In this sense, spirituality is seen

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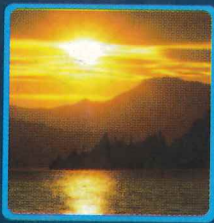
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Spirituality in Management from Islamic Perspectives

Organisations are continually searching for methods to improve work environments and workplace relationships. Both academic scholars and employers have recognized that employees are now looking for soul enriching fulfillment at work. Management scholars are taking urgent steps to include spirituality studies in responding to this trend, particularly after the recent episodes of ethical and moral violations through many financial scandals in the corporate world. Spirituality in workplace is now gaining prevalence as a mainstream topic in management theory. Although Spirituality has been studied from several religious perspectives, very little research has been done from Islamic perspectives, and no book or major publication is available that covered the Islamic religious issues which are closely related to spirituality studies. This book, *Spirituality in Management from Islamic Perspective* attempts to fill this gap, and presents the functions, roles, and purposes of spirituality studies based on the learning from the Islamic religious scripture (Holy Qur'an), and teachings of the prophet (Ahadiths). The book covered several major areas of organizational management (e.g., Human Resource Management, Organisational Behavior, Quality Management, Entrepreneurship, Business Ethics, Leadership, Human Capital Development), and discussed the implications of spirituality from Islamic perspectives on these areas. The various chapters of the book presented several conceptual models, which were developed based on extensive reviews of relevant literature. Those conceptual frameworks would help future researchers in designing new research agenda for studying the effects of several independent variables on relevant dependent variables of individual and organizational performance. The conceptual frameworks may also help managers and policy makers to understand the potential impacts that spirituality might have on employee performance, and thereby management could be inspired to nurture and develop employees' spirituality at workplace for enhancing ethical standards, integrity, and commitment to work. Hopefully this book will trigger substantial research interests among the readers for conducting empirical research in future, results from which would provide significant contributions to the contemporary Management literature.

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