

AIMC 2017
Asia International Multidisciplinary Conference

**EFFECT OF WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY ON THE AFFECTIVE
COMMITMENT OF PAKISTANI BANK EMPLOYEES**

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Abstract

A great deal of research has been conducted on management concepts dealing with employee attitudes. One such new area of research is workplace spirituality. Previous research in this field discovered numerous benefits of workplace spirituality to the organization and employee as well as organizational and employee development, and commitment. Despite the growing body of knowledge on workplace spirituality various researchers stated that this area is still lagging behind in empirical research. Literature review pointed out that Pakistani banking sector is facing the problem of employee commitment. Present research is an attempt to deal this problem of employee commitment with the help of workplace spirituality along with its three dimensions (Meaningful work, community at work and positive organizational purpose). Subjects for this research were 338 bank employees working in commercial banks in Pakistan. Structural equation modelling SEM – PLS was the main statistical technique utilized in this study. All the main relationships were found to have significant effect on employees affective commitment, Overall, the results indicate that the model provide good understanding of the workplace spirituality's influence on employees commitment in banking sector of Pakistan.

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Keywords: Workplace spirituality, Affective Commitment, Meaningful work, Positive organizational purpose, Community at work.

1. Introduction

Organizations confront different challenges to remain competitive and profitable in the business world. An important resource to help gain profitability and competitiveness is no other than employees. It is a complex and challenging task for every organization to engage competent employees. Management literature suggests that affective commitment is a key to engage employees. Organizations seek different management techniques to create or enhance employee commitment, one such newly emerged management concept is workplace spirituality (WPS). WPS approach in management asks for engaging workers holistically, that is, physically, mentally, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually (Duchon & Plowman, 2005). WPS 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” (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Past empirical researches showed different outcomes of WPS like commitment. And these outcomes are of benefit to the organization as well as employee.

Workplace spirituality (WPS) is a multi-dimensional concept. Three dimensions of WPS have been described by many researchers, 1) – Meaningful work, 2)- Community at work, 3)- Positive organizational purpose. Past research work shows that these dimensions help organizations to increase the affective commitment and develop a positive sense of spirituality among employees as they perceive their organization more valuable to them. This sense of spirituality can lead to positive outcomes like increased commitment. For Pakistani banking sector this concept of WPS is new and highly understudied therefore this study suggests dealing the problem of affective commitment in Pakistani banking sector with the help of workplace spirituality. Present research also employed three dimensions of workplace spirituality and these include meaningful work, community at work and positive organizational purpose

1.1. Meaningful Work

Meaning in work is defined as “a sense of what is important, energizing, and joyful about work” (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Researchers found that people feel involved when they find meaning in their work and this can be done through spiritual workplace, they become more healthy and happy, act in a more engaged and collaborative manner, apply their full potential to work and bring their entire selves to the organization (Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Gavin & Mason, 2004; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Tischler et al., 2007). The organizations where WPS is applied employees become more active and affectively committed than those organizations where WPS is ignored. Research work shows that ignoring spirituality at work can lead to lower employee affective commitment (Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008). Therefore it can be hypothesized that:

Hypothesis H1: There is a relationship between meaningful work and affective commitment.

1.2. Community at Work

As spiritual beings people live in connection to other human beings. And the aspect of community at work is an important dimension of WPS; it asks for having a deep connection or relationship with, others, which has been expressed as a sense of community (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Past research work revealed that the aspect of community at work is linked to commitment of the employees. It was postulated that

higher will be the AC of the employees if stronger will be the sense of community (Milliman et al., 1999). Previous research indicated that there is a significant relationship between affective commitment of the employee and community at work aspect of WPS (Milliman et al., 2003). It was also found that there exists positive relationship between community at work and affective commitment (Fry et al., 2005; Rego and Pina e Cunha, 2008). It has also been found a significant positive relationship between community at work and AC of the employee (Shankar Pawar, 2009). Based on the literature review it can be hypothesized that;

Hypothesis H2: There is a relationship between community at work and Affective commitment.

1.3. Positive Organizational Purpose

Positive organizational purpose shows the extent to which employees perceive that their organization is having a positive purpose with regards to society and employees (Duchon & Plowman, 2005). It has been pointed out that this dimension of WPS is alignment with organization’s values and purpose and when employees have strong association between their personal values and their organizational purpose then their commitment with the organization will also be strong (Milliman et al., 2003). This element of WPS incorporates the connection of employees with the larger organizational purpose (Mitroff and Denton, 1999). Research findings in the context of WPS have found that positive organizational purpose has positive and significant relationship with (Shankar Pawar, 2009). Hence, based on the review of literature it can be hypothesized that;

Hypothesis H3: There is a relationship between positive organizational purpose and Affective commitment.

On the basis of literature review a conceptual framework has been proposed, as shown in figure 01.

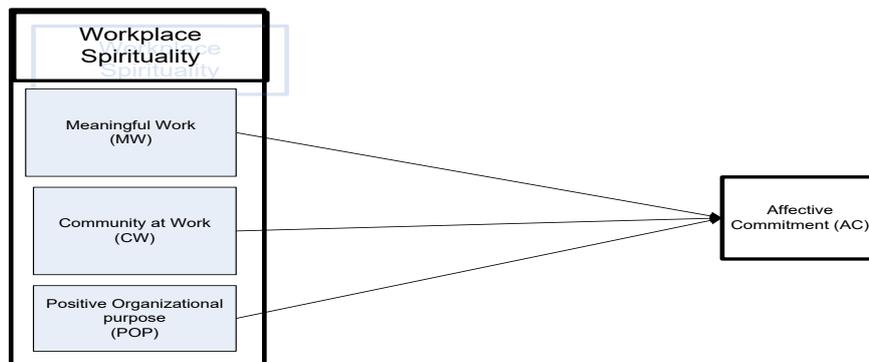


Figure 01. Conceptual Framework

2. Problem Statement

World has witnessed a shift in economies of developed countries towards service sector. According to the research service sector contribute 73 percent in the GDP of developed countries and 53 percent of GDP in developing countries (Ahmed & Ahsan, 2011). In case of Pakistan this contribution is 58.1 percent in GDP out of which eighteen percent is due to banking sector as per Economic Survey of Pakistan (Wasti, 2014). Banks in Pakistan performed merger and acquisition which raised the psychological issues that

ultimately affects the affective commitment of the employees. Research work shows that employee's intention to quit trend within one year of mergers and acquisition in Pakistani banking sector is increasing. (2006-2007 = 7%, 2007-2008 = 15%, 2008-2009 = 7%, 2009-2010 = 9%, 2010-2011 = 6%, 2011-2012 = 9%, 2012-2013 = 11%) which clearly depicts that this restructuring in the banking sector has affected the commitment of bank employees (IrfanShakoor et al., 2014). This is clear evidence that there is a lack of commitment in the employees of Pakistani banking sector. Research work of many researchers on WPS showed its positive linkage in enhancing affective commitment. Therefore it was thought significant to study the concept of WPS in Pakistani banking sector.

3. Research Questions

The present study is aimed at looking into the role of workplace spirituality on affective organizational commitment among the employees of banking sector of Pakistan. Research questions for this study are:

3.1. Research Question 1

Does workplace spirituality influences affective organizational commitment in the employees of Pakistani banking sector?

3.2. Research Question 2

Does meaningful work, community at work and positive organizational purpose effect the affective organizational commitment in Pakistani banking sector

4. Purpose of the Study

Purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship of workplace spirituality with affective organizational commitment among the employees of banking sector. This research endeavour aims at finding the effect of three dimensions of workplace spirituality in enhancing effective commitment of the bank employees.

5. Research Methods

Quantitative method and survey design was used in this study to explore the direct relationship between three WPS dimensions. The meaningful work (MW) and community at work (CW) aspects were measured using the "meaningful work" and "community" scales². The third dimension, positive organizational purpose (POP) was measured through four items adapted from the "Work unit community" and "Work unit and meaningful work" subscales (Duchon & Plowman, 2005). To measure AC which is a dependent variable, the organizational commitment scale by (Allen & Meyer, 2000) was used. Responses were on a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5). Data for this research study was obtained from the employees of banking sector of Pakistan from different commercial banks operating in the capital city Islamabad. Multi stage sampling method was used to collect data through

a personally administered questionnaire. Total sample size for this study was 338 bank employees. SEM - PLS was used for testing the research hypothesis and analyzing the data.

6. Findings

In data analysis, validity and reliability of the measurement model was calculated which was followed by the validation of structural model. In measurement model results point out that all the items which were used to represent the construct were having internal consistency reliability, as shown in table 1, all CR and CA values are greater than 0.8 or 0.9.

Table 01. Internal Consistency values

	Composite Reliability (CR)	Cronbach's Alpha (CA)
AC	0.872	0.830
WPS CW	0.912	0.888
WPS MW	0.938	0.924
WPS POP	0.916	0.877

Convergent validity is acceptable when Average Variance Extracted value of the construct is at least 0.5. Table 2 given below shows that all AVE values lie within the range from 0.527 to 0.732. This result shows that the measurement model has acceptable convergent validity.

Table 02. AVE Values

	Average Variance Extracted
AC	0.534
WPS CW	0.599
WPS MW	0.655
WPS POP	0.732

In SEM structural model shows the hypothesized relationship between the latent construct. The main criteria to check Goodness of the structural model is Coefficient of determination (R²) in SEM (Hair et al., 2012). Higher R² value is desired as the main aim of PLS-SEM is to explain the variance in dependent variable by independent variable. As depicted in the table 3, R² value for AC is 0.607. It shows that 60.7% variance in AC is significantly explained by the independent variable WPS dimensions.

Table 03. Coefficient of Determination value.

	R²	Result
AC	0.607	Strong/Significant

Evaluation of path coefficient value helps in assessment of the structural model. Table 4 given below shows the path coefficients, t-value and p-value as well as significance level for all paths. Acceptance or

rejections of the proposed hypotheses are determined from the results of path assessment. Hypotheses are supported at a significance level of 0.05.

Table 04. Path Coefficient values.

Path	Path Coefficient	S.E	t-value	p-value
WPSMW→AC	0.154	0.056	2.763	0.006
WPSCW→AC	0.272	0.074	3.692	0.000
WPSPOP→AC	0.429	0.057	7.532	0.000

Results of the structural model are used to test the research hypotheses of the present study. Hypothesis can be tested on the basis of results of path coefficients, p values and t values; significance level is 0.05 as shown in table 4 given above. The path coefficient assessment shows that all hypotheses are accepted on the basis of path analysis. The present study established significant and positive relationship between all three dimensions of workplace spirituality and affective commitment.

Figure 02. given below shows path coefficient between workplace spirituality dimensions and affective commitment.

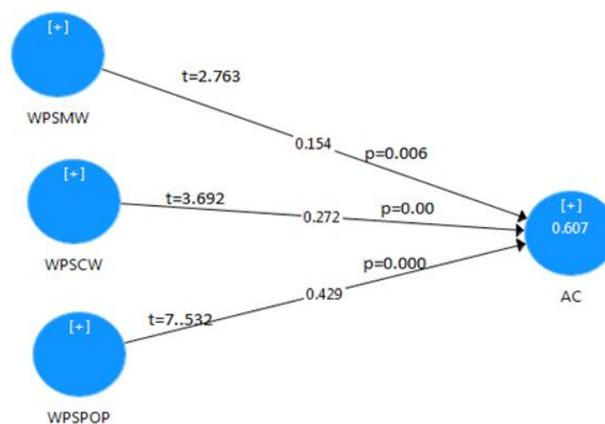


Figure 02. Path Coefficient between WPS and AC

Employees play a key role in the workplace (Khan et al., 2014; Qureshi et al., 2013; Qureshi et al., 2015; Qureshi et al., 2016; Yasir et al., 2016). The results of this study are consistent with the previous research work (Geigle, 2012), which shows that WPS can be helpful for managers to increase the AC of their employees. These findings are also in line with the findings which found that the ultimate result of WPS is high level of AC (Rego and Pina e Cunha, 2008). These results authenticate the previous research findings by providing empirical evidence at this stage in the sample of bank employees. This specifies that bank employees tend to show high level of AC when they found their working environment to be highly spiritual in which they can derive meaning out of their work. Past research findings also revealed the same results that employees show high AC towards their organizations if they find their work interesting and

meaningful (Milliman et al., 2003). Theoretical and empirical findings of current study is consistent with the findings of researchers who established that caring activities on part of an organization regarding the spiritual needs of employees like meaningful work can enhance the AC of the employees (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Mitroff, 2003). This result validates the findings that the spiritual employees who derive meaning out of their work show lesser amount of willingness towards intention to leave due to high AC (Hong, 2012). Therefore these results show that the problem of employee retention in Pakistani banking sector can be dealt with by enhancing AC through practicing WPS in the organization through which employees can derive meaning out of their work.

7. Conclusion

Present study has demonstrated the fact that there are potential benefits of workplace spirituality on enhancing employee's affective commitment in the banking sector. Therefore top management of the banks can implement WPS to enhance the AC of the employees which can ultimately enhance employee engagement and retention. Practically the present study suggests that meaning full work, sense of employee connectedness with one another and positive organizational purpose (dimensions of WPS) can enhance employee engagement by enhancing their AC which is an important concern to be dealt with in the banking sector employees. Therefore this new management concept of WPS in the backdrop of Pakistani banking sector can be an effective management tool and a novel way to enhance affective commitment of employees.

One proposition of the present study is to extend the scope of this study by conducting it on individual and group level as well. The impact of individual spirituality can also be checked on the model proposed by this study. Furthermore it is also suggested to conduct a longitudinal study in contrast to present one and in this way the AC level can be determined before and after the implementation of WPS. Moreover it is also suggested that with the proposed model the comparative study in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries can also be done.

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