

Does workplace spirituality enhance motivation of hospitals social workers? The scrutiny in Iran

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Abstract

Background: In today's world as the globe of organizations, employees tend to show endeavor and more involvement in organizational goals and mission by creating workplace spirituality.

Aim: The present study aimed to investigate the role of workplace spirituality in improving hospital social worker's motivation.

Methods: The study employed a cross-sectional design and was conducted in 19 private and governmental hospitals in Karaj city, Alborz province, north Iran in 2019. The statistical population included all 302 hospital social workers who were selected as the sample population according to Cochran's formula. Using two standard questionnaires of workplace spirituality and employee motivation, we assessed the role of workplace spirituality in improving the hospital social workers' motivation.

Results: According to research findings, there were significant relationships between workplace spirituality, meaningful working, sense of community, forgiveness, and honesty with hospital social workers motivation $p \leq .05$. There was a significant difference between age group, gender, level of education and workplace spirituality, and motivation of hospital social workers $p \leq .05$.

Conclusion: Findings suggest that health planners and authorities may need to examine factors that contribute to the promotion of workplace spirituality to increase the motivation of hospital social workers for improved performance of health organizations.

Keywords

Spirituality, workplace spirituality, motivation, social workers, health, hospital

Introduction

Organizations nowadays pay great attention to their employees because experience has proven that a greater fulfillment of material (so-called external) needs leads to higher satisfaction of their psychological and physiological (intrinsic) needs (Ghalesefidi et al., 2019). Failure to meet such requirements significantly reduces one's performance and efficiency resulting in employees' disinclination with reduced willingness to work (Chamberlain & Szöcs, 2013; Nobakht et al., 2018; Sheikhbardsiri et al., 2018). In such a condition, the leader pays special attention to other aspects such as mind, heart (emotions and thrills), and psyche in addition to the physical aspects of followers. Even so, leadership theories in recent years have focused on the physical, emotional, and mental factors of employees and ignored spirituality (Arasteh et al., 2018; Chamberlain & Szöcs, 2013).

One of the main concerns of managers at hospitals is to boost social worker's motivation, however, managers are

always worried about whether or not such investments are effective in motivating social workers and their efficiency for the organization. A motivated employee can change everything for the benefit of society and the workplace with the

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help of ones' willpower and valuable experiences. Also, human resources as the most important and most valuable capital of an organization are organizable factors that can create a powerful and dynamic organization by optimal utilization of other resources (Nobakht et al., 2018).

The study of workplace spirituality is an emerging phenomenon that can be a positive powerful drive for social workers lives because helping people to integrate their work and spiritual life can signify and conduct roughly a 100,000 hours of their working lives, create a more enjoyable, balanced and meaningful work, and raise the morale of employees (Nazem et al., 2010). Workplace spirituality is defined as one's efforts to find a goal in life, attachment and community with colleagues and other people at work, and coordinating with organizational values and goals (Milliman et al., 2003).

The domain of management and organization, both theoretically and practically, has recently been influenced by a powerful drive known as spirituality, which, if managed and directed properly, seems to be capable of leading to the deepest collaboration not only in the occupational field but also for the fullness of humanity, ultimately boosting social workers motivation. There is a consensus about workplace spirituality dimensions at three levels of individual, communal, and organizational, including (1) meaningful working, (2) sense of community, (3) forgiveness, and (4) honesty (Long & Helms Mills, 2010; Vahabi et al., 2018) all of which are intended in this research. The present study investigated the role of the above variables in a hospital's social workers' motivation considering the importance of workplace spirituality at today's hospitals.

Method

Design

This study was approved by Alborz University of Medical Sciences before the collection of the data. A cross-sectional study was used in 2019. The ethical approval code is ABZUMS.REC.1395.920.

Respondent characteristics and setting

The statistical population of the study included all 302 social workers who work in the social work department of private and governmental hospitals in Karaj city, Alborz province, north Iran, 2019. Including private hospitals ($n=92$), Governmental hospitals ($n=210$). The appropriate sample size was selected from all the above staff as the statistical population estimated using Cochran's formula:

$$n = \frac{N \times z_{\alpha/2}^2 \times p(1-p)}{\varepsilon^2(N-1) + z_{\alpha/2}^2 \times p(1-p)}$$

$$= \frac{302(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.05^2)(302) + (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5} = 169$$

The data were collected from a cross-sectional study by the cluster sampling in Iran, Karaj city, Alborz province, in 2019. Researchers sampled hospital social workers, and data were collected randomly selected proportional to the size of the hospital. A sealed box was placed in the middle of the room before distributing the questionnaires, we explained the aim of the study. The questionnaires were self-administered. The only enrolling criterion was a willingness to participate in the study.

Ethical consideration

Data were kept confidentially by putting no name or other personal information in the questionnaires. Questionnaires were handed out by research assistants and distributed to the participants in the office environment and participants filled the questionnaire during their daily work hours.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria were all the personnel who worked in the social work department of private and governmental hospitals. Exclusion criteria included lack of consent for participation in the study and incomplete questionnaires.

Data collection

The measurement scale in our study was a standard questionnaire of workplace spirituality (Milliman et al., 2003) containing 20 questions and also a standard employee motivation questionnaire with 25 questions (Gaminian, 2004). The questionnaire began with questions about the demographic variables of the statistical population. Through the questionnaire, the components of meaningful working (Q 1–5), sense of community (Q 6–10), forgiveness (Q 11–15), and honesty (Q 16–20) were used for workplace spirituality using the 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree). The same scale was employed to measure staff motivation raised by Questions 21 to 45. The workplace spirituality and staff motivation questionnaires were validated using the viewpoints of faculty members at the Electronic Azad University and those at Alborz University of Medical Sciences to resolve ambiguities indicating an acceptable content and face validity of the test. To assess the reliability of the scales in this research, a reliability test was conducted by Cronbach's alpha method among 30 subjects yielding and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .95 showing good reliability of the questionnaires.

Data analyses

To analyze data, descriptive tests including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation and analytical tests including the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test were conducted to

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of research sample.

Variable		Frequency (f)	Percentage (f)
Gender	Female	96	56.8
	Male	73	43.2
Age	20–30	26	15.4
	30–40	80	47.4
	40–50	47	27.8
	>50	16	9.4
Education	Associate	14	8.2
	Bachelor	90	53.2
	Master	57	33.7
	Doctorate	8	4.9
Work experience	<5	19	11.4
	5–10	48	28.4
	10–15	55	32.5
	15–20	32	18.9
	>20	15	8.8

indicate that the data were sampled from a population with a normal distribution. The correlation between workplace spirituality and motivation was examined by the Pearson correlation coefficient, and for the survey comparative mean score of workplace spirituality and motivation base of demographic data was examined by one-way ANOVA and *t*-test. The multivariate regression was used to determine the effects of variables and was assessed using the SPSS 21 software. There was a significant difference at the level of $p < .05$.

Results

According to the results, the gender frequencies of male and female subjects were 56.8% and 43.2%, respectively. The age frequencies were 15.4% (20–30 years), 47.4% (30–40 years), 27.8% (40–50 years), and 4.9% (over 50 years). Subjects with associate, master, and doctorate degrees comprised 8.2%, 33.7%, and 4.9%, respectively. In addition, participants with 10 to 15 years of work experience accounted for the highest (32.5%) frequency rate, and frequency distributions of 11.4%, 28.4%, 18.9%, and 8.8% were detected for work experiences of <5 years, 5 to 10 years, 15 to 20 years, and >20 years, respectively, shows in Table 1.

The ANOVA results revealed a significant statistical difference between age group and level of education with the workplace spirituality and social workers motivation ($p \leq .05$). The *T*-test results also revealed a significant statistical difference between gender and the workplace spirituality ($p = .04$).

The results of Pearson correlation analysis revealed a positive significant relationship between the dimensions of workplace spirituality and social workers motivation. Among the dimensions of workplace spirituality, sense of community ($r = .865$, $p = .000$), meaningful work ($r = .837$,

Table 2. Correlation coefficients for workplace spirituality dimensions with hospital social workers motivation.

Variables		Correlation coefficient	Sig.	No.
Workplace spirituality dimensions	Meaningful work → Employee motivation	.837	.000	169
	Sense of community → Employee motivation	.865	.000	169
	Forgiveness → Employee motivation	.740	.000	169
	Honesty → Employee motivation	.683	.000	169

Table 3. Regression model coefficients.

Model-included variable	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t-Statistic	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	0.237	0.096	—	2.456	.000
Workplace spirituality	0.930	0.027	.937	34.699	.000

$p = .000$), forgiveness ($r = .740$, $p = .000$), and honesty ($r = .683$, $p = .000$) had the highest correlations with social workers motivation, respectively, shows in Table 2.

The regression implementation stages of workplace spirituality with standard and non-standard coefficients, standard deviation, and *t*-test with their significance levels, shown in Table 3. Therefore, it can be stated that there is a significant linear relationship between workplace spirituality and social worker's motivation. *T*-test for regression coefficient also shows the significance of this coefficient ($\text{sig} = .000$). In other words, workplace spirituality has a positive significant effect on social worker's motivation as indicated by the positive sign of the B-factor, shows in Table 3.

The effect and explanatory role of each workplace spirituality dimension on the social workers' motivation were determined by entering method regression analysis. Our data indicate *R* and *R*² values of 0.865 and 74%, respectively, obtained for the sense of community introduced into the regression model to explain the variance level of social worker's motivation. The model-included meaningful work variable also yielded *R* and *R*² values of 0.837 and 70%, respectively. Forgiveness and social worker's motivation displayed *R* and *R*² values of 0.740 and 54%, respectively. Honesty and social worker's motivation also attained *R* and *R*² values of 0.683 and 46%, respectively, shows in Table 4.

Multiple regression models showed that increased meaningful work, sense of community, forgiveness, and honesty increased social worker's motivation. Among all factors influencing social worker's motivation based on

Table 4. The effect and role of each workplace spirituality dimension on hospital social workers motivation.

Regression analysis	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.	Std. error	Durbin-Watson
Meaningful work	0.837	0.701	0.699	391.317	.000	0.308	1.904
Sense of community	0.865	0.748	0.746	495.489	.000	0.283	1.955
Forgiveness	0.740	0.547	0.544	201.568	.000	0.379	2.117
Honesty	0.683	0.467	0.464	146.266	.000	0.411	2.108

Table 5. Correlation coefficients for workplace spirituality dimensions with hospital social workers motivation.

Model		Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	t-Statistic	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
Workplace spirituality dimensions	Constant	0.789	0.141	—	5.585	.000
	Meaningful work	0.754	0.038	.837	19.782	.000
	Constant	0.976	0.117		8.314	.000
	Sense of community	0.726	0.033	.865	22.260	.000
	Constant	1.467	0.149		9.934	.000
	Forgiveness	0.585	0.041	.740	14.197	.000
	Constant	1.693	0.156		10.840	.000
	Honesty	0.530	0.044	.683	12.094	.000

the β coefficient, the Sense of community the most impact on motivating social workers show in Table 5.

Discussion

The present study investigated the role of workplace spirituality in improving hospital social workers motivation in north Iran. Based on the results of demographic variables, workplace spirituality at the university had a greater impact on female employees because of their higher number in the sample population than that of males. Workplace spirituality could influence the motivation of social workers in the age group of 30 to 40 years. The results of this research were more advantageous to employees with a bachelor's degree. Moreover, university experts showed a greater contribution to the research implementation and were more motivated by workplace spirituality.

The results of this study showed that workplace spirituality was significantly related to the social workers motivation. In other words, a significance level and also a positive B-factor show a positive impact suggesting a relationship between workplace spirituality and social workers motivation. Our results on the role of workplace spirituality in social workers motivation are consistent with the result of studies of Hasanzadeh et al. (Kazempour et al., 2012), Golverdi et al. (2014). Workplace spirituality leads to the growth of self-confidence, tolerance, integrity, commitment, and trust of social workers, all of which encourage individuals to participate more in the organization and create more employee motivation in the organization (Saks, 2011). It is, therefore, recommended to strengthen

social workers' motivation by promoting spirituality indicators (meaningful work, sense of community, forgiveness, and honesty). Social workers are recommended to attend the workplace with high morale and good morality because they convey this morale to other employees in the organization bringing about delight and kind greetings by other employees. From the other point of view, this spirit, morality, and workplace spirituality are conveyed unconsciously to the families of social workers, and as a result, to the community. It is noteworthy that society is composed of individuals, and the presence of people with spirituality and morals in the workplace and in society creates a moral and spiritual country that will result in high morale, hopefulness, and delight in the workplace, society, and at a macro level.

The results further show a significant correlation between a sense of community and social worker's motivation. A significance level and also a positive B-factor indicate a positive impact suggesting a relationship between sense of community and social workers motivation. Our findings of the role of sense of community in social workers motivation are in line with the study of Kazempour et al. (2012), Nazem et al. (2010). Sense of community plays an important role in the mental and psychic health of individuals. The greater the sense of community among social workers in the workplace, the better the motivation among employees (Tsafé & Rahman, 2013). It is recommended to create a friendly atmosphere in an organization based on collaboration rather than competition through strategies such as strengthening intra-organizational relationships to engage employees in dialog and positive

relationships, evaluate the benefits of teamwork versus individual interests, and grant them the freedom to express opinions within the framework of their duties and powers. Thereby, they feel like members of a group and try to support their colleagues hoping that indicators of the sense of community and cooperation improve among employees and ultimately lead to the promotion of their motivation.

Other our results showed a significant correlation between meaningful work and social worker's motivation. A significance level and also a positive B-factor indicate a positive impact suggesting a relationship between meaningful work and social workers' motivation. Certainly meaningful work is an important motivation to work, that indicated in previous studies (Michaelson, 2005; Nord et al., 2003). It was also shown in a study of care workers' motivation that meaningful work in which individuals understand their work provides lasting motivation for employees (Bjerregaard et al., 2015). Therefore, it seems that feeling a sense of meaning work related to motivating people. Another finding of the present study demonstrates that forgiveness can significantly influence social worker's motivation. In other words, a significance level and also a positive B-factor imply a positive impact suggesting a relationship between forgiveness and social workers motivation. These observations about the role of forgiveness in social workers motivation are in agreement with results studies of Rastgar et al. (2012), Sadeghifar et al. (2014). Therefore, social workers are recommended to raise their spirituality and appear in the workplace and society with high morale and better morals in order not only to promote the level of spirituality and ethics in others but also provide more forgiveness to others. People are influenced by others and affect them, so dealing with spiritual and affable people in the workplace will create spirituality and good morals in an individual, encourages people to communicate similarly with others, have more calmness, and ultimately reinforces forgiveness.

Moreover, honesty exhibited a significant relationship with social worker's motivation. Put differently, a significance level and also a positive B-factor denote a positive impact suggesting a relationship between honesty and social workers motivation. These outcomes regarding the role of forgiveness in employees' motivation are the following results studies of (Kolodinsky et al., 2008; Pouragha et al., 2013; Tayebi et al., 2018). To create a spiritualist environment and organization, managers should establish and institutionalize an organization with a desirable spirituality and ethics. Individuals that attend an organization with higher morale, good morals, and more spirituality should be encouraged, and this behavior needs to be emphasized in the organization, and other staff should be encouraged to behave the same and institutionalize honesty in motivating employees (Pouragha et al., 2013).

Conclusion

The results show that increasing workplace spirituality raises meaningful work, a sense of community, forgiveness, honesty, and motivation of social workers. Findings suggest that health planners and authorities may need to examine factors that contribute to the promotion of workplace spirituality for improved performance of health organizations and increase the motivation of social workers. Also recommended that future researchers carry out more research on workplace spirituality and examine this topic qualitatively to discover new components for this variable. Various models can be identified for workplace spirituality to be used in future studies.

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Conflict of interest

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