

Organizational spirituality and teachers' stress

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Abstract

Feeling of meaning at work and existence of unity between work and life are among concepts which are proposed recently in organizational spirituality paradigm. Accordingly, investigating elements of organizational spirituality and their effect on organizational setting is important. Current study is carried out focusing on specifying the role of organizational spirituality on teachers' job stress. The research method is correlational and its' goal is applied. The whole population of the study was 326 which includes all Birjands' first grade high school teachers in 2014-2015 academic year. 196 persons were chosen from the population as the sample group based on stratified random sampling. To gather the required data two questionnaires of (Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson, 2003) organizational spirituality and (Doa, 1994) job stress questionnaire were used. The result of the study while confirming the negative effect of (the feeling of meaning at work) and (the feeling of relatedness at work) on job stress revealed that alignment of personal values with organization does not have an impact on the rate of persons' stress at work.

Keywords: Job stress, Organizational spirituality, Organizational setting.

1. Introduction

By working not only human's financial needs are met, but also lots of their spiritual needs are fed while working and through interaction with people who spend a lot of time at work and his health condition are affected by tensions and the lack of psychological balance at work. Rezaiyan [1] (2007) believes that stressful and bothersome life of 21 centuries has turned psychological tension to an important issue in the organizational behavior, discourse due to increased competition; the employees are asked to work more with higher quality in a short period of time with the use of as fewer resources. Research finding shows that these job tensions have a destructive effect on personal lives and the quality of performance of employees. Stress at work is one of the representations of the modern style of life. Stress is one of the major causes of reduction of production, absence of employees, disintegration, and disarrangement of the organization. Overtime working and inadequate training is among the latent causes of quit that are caused by stress [2].

Referring to the notion of stress seems to be obligatory considering the complicated nature of life. Stress is the cause of a vast number of undesirable, costly, irreparable outcomes that affect both the organization and employees. In an organizational environment, stress is the major cause of problem in employees' performance and health which happens inadvertently and faces the organization with its consequences [3]. Studies show that part of job stress is resulted from dominant conditions and relations and workplace that are among the prominent factors in determining the employees' level of stress [4] [5] [6]. Therefore, by changing conditions and environment of work place lots of stress provoking factors will be abolished and one of the factors which aims at promoting huge changes in an organization is the paradigm of spirituality and more specifically organizational spirituality. In general, it is possible to say that spirituality facilitates productivity and creation of more standards in organization and prevents the inclusion of stress in an organization [7].

In this regard a nice working environment is considered as one of the most important challenges of organization environment in current century and the inclusion of concepts such as semantics, recognition and entrance of concepts such as truth seeking, recognition of work values and imparting meaning to the workers lives and ameliorating the relationship between workers using the direction that is put forward by the notion of spirituality at work which seeks to apart from abstract and arid organizational paradigm [8].

Spirituality at workplace in an increasing rate is considered as an important variable in predicting psychological performance when dealing with stress [9], Some believe that the presence of the degrees of support and cooperation in the organization is considered as prominent factors that can have a positive effect on stress reduction at work place [10] [11]. Studies of Arnold and et al. [12], (2007) and Cooper [13] (2011) reveal the necessity of insisting on meaningful job and activities that are valued by nature of creation of mental health and the presence of feelings of success and job stress reduction. In most organizations in which there is not enough meaningful job, there exist a fear of job loss, depression and high levels of stress and therefore these people appear at work with stress [14]. On the other hand Whitener [15] (1997) also stresses on the influential role of alignment between worker and organizations' values in the creation of job adaptability which contributes to less stress.

One of the most important human associations is school and one of the most influential characters of the society is a teacher. Being a teacher is one of the most important jobs of the society which is highly valued and greatly influences the present and future condition of the society, being a teacher is a job [16]. Borg [17] (1990) came to the conclusion that one third of teachers consider their job stressful. Wilson [18] (2000) with respect to job stress has found that to 67 percent of teachers the job is stressful and any kind of stress has direct influence on their behavior with students and consequently the formation of their future generation personality, therefore, inclusion of spirituality in this section is important and influential in eliminating stress provoking factors from the workplace by changing the situation.

Teaching has been considered as one of the mentally stressful professions. In particular teachers' everyday activity is based on social relations and teachers has to control colleagues, students and their parents' emotional behavior in addition to their own. Teachers' positive feeling increases adaptability of his students and his health. Further, by providing suitable, positive climate a teacher can facilitate learning [19]. According to what is said earlier, it seems that spirituality and

its elements have influential role on workplace and since organization, spirituality and its elements have not been practiced in educational system particularly in school and the effect of each one of the three factors of organizational spirituality (feeling of meaning at work, feeling of relatedness at the workplace and alignment between values and goals of the individual and the organization) on the job stress variable has been rarely studied, therefore, according to diagram 1, the current study aims to investigate the impact of all factors of organizational spirituality on first grade high school teachers' job stress.

Stress has been considered as a fact in modern life and without enough knowledge, it is not possible to manage it. The first step is the recognition of different definitions of this phenomenon. Studying the notion of job stress has begun at first by Selye's studies in 1956 hence he has been called the father of stress. Job stress is a kind of dangerous physical and emotional reactions which happens when job inquiries are unable to connect capabilities, resources or job requirement [20]. In traditional view stress is defined as the collection of the requirements that getting access to them is beyond current resources and facilities [21]. Job stress is a combination of pressures at the workplace, the individuals' own characteristics and pressures outside the organization. These pressures can lead to the disease symptom at workplace and finally to real disease [22].

Selye has divided stress to two parts: desirable stress (positive stress): a kind of stress which arises the individual toward success. Undesirable stress (negative or binary stress): a kind of stress, which makes the individual bewildered and powerless and brings about difficulties and problems in reaching the goal. Moreover, Lazarus (1991) has defined stress as a reflection between workplace conditions and the characteristics of the working individual in a way that pressures at work and its requirements are beyond the individuals' capabilities [23]. There are different classifications for job stress. Some divided stress as the social environment, personal and mental. Others have divided factors to external and internal or have examined them based on economic, cultural, official factors (lack of job security, bureaucracy, dominance of connections over criteria.....) political factors (indefiniteness of the individual's involvement in determining their own destiny, absence of the feeling of security). Weinberg, Cooper and Sutherland [24]., (2010) also considers main resources of stress at the workplace as job requirements (workload, working hours, changes in system, balance between work and life, requirements of physical work), control at workplace (working methods, the importance of cooperation for decision making, and ameliorating the skills), lack of support at work, weak working relationships. In general with respect to job stress resources it is possible to conclude that job stress factors are divided into two general categories: external pressures (undesirable working situations, heavy workload, lack of support and etc.) internal factors such as personal characteristics of individuals [25]. The result of Nottingham university (2003) study revealed that job stress is primarily dependent on organizations' designers and managers of workplaces, further, they claim that although personal factors may also contribute to job stress, organizations should properly design and manage their systems to prevent stress overgrowth [26]. Wily [27] (2000) also has divided teachers' stress provoking factors in four categories which involve: external stress provoking factors which are outside of organizations and are imposed on the workers, inter organization factors, stress provoking factors which are related to job related activities and responsibilities, personal stress provoking factors which are related to personal problems that can be worse with different job responsibilities and roles.

It is possible to examine personal and organizational dimensions of consequences of job stress, which are presented briefly in the Table 1.

These consequences are even worse with respect to the teaching profession. Teachers' stress has a detrimental effect on teachers, students and learning environment. Fatigue, negative attitude toward students, low efficiency of teachers and creation of negative beliefs in students are among these consequences.

Table 1: Personal and organizational consequences of job stress

| Organizational consequences | Personal consequences |
|--|---|
| <p>-Organizational consequences: productivity reduction, retirement, error growth, cooperation reduction, skillful workers' loss, reduction in the quality of services and products, reduction of connections with costumers, customer loss, sick leave increase, early retirement, cooperation decrease, chance loss, increased internal conflicts and unpredictable work atmosphere,</p> <p>-Organizational costs: costs caused by low performance and efficiency, costs caused by replacing individuals, medical treatment cost increase, health keeping cost increase, costs of complaints against the organization, costs related to damaged equipment.</p> | <p>-Unpleasant feelings and behaviors, such as: job satisfaction, motivation decrease, demoralization, decreased quality of working life, job exhaustion, absence, change and conversion, willingness to quit, low productivity, reduction of work quality and quantity, decrease in decision making ability, sabotage and work ignorance,</p> <p>- Physical disorder,</p> <p>- Psychological disorder, such as: depression, anxiety, reduction of resistance, self- confidence and self-activation, the feeling of absurdity, ignoring social norms and values, dissatisfaction with life and job staying away from facts and emotional fatigue.</p> |

The sources of job stress (Ganster and Schaubroeck, 1991)

Moreover, the school itself can affect weak teachers' performance and efficiency and be a cause for their absence and replacement. Stress not only hurts teachers but also students are affected by its' detrimental role and leads them to emotional fatigue, low efficiency, loss of eagerness, and educational fatigue. These consequences affect the whole school, other schools and at upper level the society [27]. Job stress is the result of a combination of different factors and brings about plenty other consequences and in this process recognition of its leading factors and prohibitory was against it is very important and one of the related and influential concepts related to job stress can be organizational spirituality.

From the late last century and around 90s a kind of renewed unity was formed between internal and external life. One of the fields in which this unity is raised is the work place [28]. Inclusion of concepts such as morality, truth, belief in God or superior force, honesty, conscience, reliance, meaning seeking at work, affinity with colleagues and encouraging colleagues to do research and management and working proceedings. They all reveal the presence of a new paradigm which is a reaction to a modern mechanistic paradigm and is a spiritual paradigm [29]. King [26] (2008) Believes that spirituality is an innately driven need of human to connect to something beyond human. Spirituality is also a positive response to internal and instinctive needs. Spirituality is the connection of human beings with God and the inward spiritual world and explaining nobility by meaning and metaphysical [30]. In Iranian context, spirituality is based on

religion. In the sense that Islamic doctrines are the basis of formation of spirituality, the source of Islamic spirituality are holy Quran, dignified prophet and Imams [31].

According to Ashmos definition, spirituality at work, is the recognition and understanding one dimension of the working life of a person that is internal and trainable and they can develop by engaging in meaningful activities in social life. Spirituality at work is an experience of mutual relationship and trust between those who are cooperating in carrying out an activity which is created as a result of good will and leads to an organizational motivational culture which at the end brings about stable organizational excellence [32]. Spirituality is comprised of internal dimension (spiritually and mentally) and external (social and biological). The biological dimension can be related to sensitivity to intrapersonal communication, social dimension to sensitivity toward interpersonal communication, the mental dimension to sensitivity to interpersonal communication and the spiritual dimension by sensitivity to intra personal communication [33].

Saas[34] (2000) in a qualitative study stated that three characteristics of spirituality at workplace are congruente between values of organization owner, managers and employees, personal spirituality and connection based organization, in the sense that the organization is seen like a family. The stated characteristics by Saas (2000) are related to three level organizational spirituality of Milliman et al. [35], (2003) which involves congruence between values, the feeling of meaning at work and the feeling of relatedness which are considered as organizational spirituality elements in the following section.

One of the fundamental dimensions of spirituality at work involves the deep feeling of meaning and intention at work. This dimension of spirituality at work, determines how employees have interaction at the personal level in their daily work. Inclusion of spirituality at work is based on the premise that everyone has his internal motivation, desires and favorites in carrying out an activity and imports more meaning to his and others lives [36]. The meaningfulness of job is related to value of tasks and goal, everyone's understanding about meaningfulness of the job he/she is doing affects his/her job satisfaction and the feeling of empowerment [37]. To Milliman the feeling of meaning at personal level includes enjoying the job, getting energy while doing the job, and the feeling of meaningfulness and goal at work. Terez [38] (2000) view of the feeling of meaning at work is job satisfaction that can decrease job stress if it has been reinforced.

This dimension deals with the deep feeling of relatedness and connection with others [36]. This dimension happens as a result of human behavior at group level at work place and implies the interactions between workers and colleagues. Relatedness at work is based on the belief that individuals consider themselves as connected and the fact that there is a relationship between the inner-self of every individual with that of others [35]. From Milliman's view the feeling of relatedness at workplace or organization includes a feeling of connectedness with employees, support and shared goals between employees. Relatedness is the feeling of mutual responsibility between some people or some groups which involves wisdom and determination. Relatedness can also include brotherliness and human connections in general terms or even mutual dependence of life and interests between them [39].

The third dimension of spirituality at work place, experience is a strong feeling of alignment between personal values of employees and organizations' values and goals. This dimension of spirituality at the workplace includes the interaction of employees with higher organization goals [40]. At academic circle, extra attention is paid to the consequences of cooperation of personal

values and organizations' values. Peters and Waterman in 1982 have indicated that every organization takes into account importance of the process of formation of values. Organizations use ideologies and cultures to limit their own activities and to justify their decision to their members and people interested when they believe that their values are in line with that of the organization [41]. Spirituality at individual level is like an observer to the individuals' personal experience where he feels that he is with a congenial group. In this sense working is meaningful to him and is filled with inmost life. In a congenial group, individual has the feeling of improvement and growth. Everyone respects him and all work together. The individuals' responsibility, effective connections with other people also the individuals' reflection on himself and life increases spirituality on this level. In contrast, disturbing factors in a congenial group, the meaningfulness of job and inmost life decreases spirituality at this level. Spirituality at working level, includes employees' view of that work unit as congenial unit and also the stream of effective and positive values. Taking into account employees liveliness and spirit by a working unit will be a basis for flourishing talents and abilities, encouraging learning new skills, therefore, that unit will be a spiritual one [36].

Among three internal studies Azad Marzabad, Hushmndja and Pourkhalili[42], (2012) have concluded that there is a backward relation between organizational spirituality and job stress. Lavasani, Keyvanzade and Arjmand [43] (2008) also showed negative correlation between spirituality and job stress among nurse Tischler, Biberman and McKeage [44] (2003) in their study has concluded that referring to the concept of spirituality in organization decreases stress and increases creativity and performance. Daniel,[45] (2015) in his study titled workplace spirituality and stress based on evidence from Mexico and United States showed that meaningful activities and jobs decrease job stress. Duace [41] (2002) in a study titled unidirectinality of individual and organizations' values (research attitude) concluded that the concordance of values has a strong effect on peoples' attitude toward working and direct relation to the compatibility level of individuals' values and that of the organization. Arnold et al. [12], (2007) in a study titled evolutionary and emotional leadership: the role of meaningful job among health and service sector indicated a positive relationship between meaningful working and psychological health. Xie, Schaubroeck and Lam [46] (2008) concluded that there is a negative relationship between adherence to values and job stress, and traditional employees have less stress because of more adherence to values, examining previous studies show that there is a negative relationship between spirituality at work place and job stress but this is studied rarely among the teachers' population. In particular, this study seeks to determine the degree of effectiveness of each one of the organizational spirituality elements (feeling of meaning at work, feeling of relatedness at work place, and alignment of individual and organizations' values) in decreasing job stress experienced by teachers. Therefore, more effective solutions for decreasing teachers' job stress can be found. Accordingly, one question and three hypotheses are formed and investigated.

2. Methodology

This is an applied research. Data collection is done based survey study premises and is based on correlational analysis. The research population involves all junior school Birjand teachers' in academic year 2014-2015. Based on the stratified random sampling technique and Krejcie and Morgan's table a sample of 196 participants was chosen. Two questionnaires were used to investigate variables of the study, organizational spirituality of Milliman et al., (2003) and also job

stress questionnaire of Doa (1994) which was developed to investigate university employees and professors. Reliability of both questionnaires was reported to be 0.90. The reliability of organizational spirituality questionnaire factors, feeling meaning at work, feeling of relatedness and alignment were consecutively 0.84, 0.80, 0.82.

3. Results

Question1: how is the state of the variables of study, job stress and organizational spirituality and its elements in the population under study?

Results revealed that about 58 percent of the sample population has an average level of stress and 42 percent are experiencing low levels of stress. In order to investigate the status of organizational spirituality and its' dimensions that are (feeling of meaning at work, feeling of relatedness at work place, and alignment of individual and organizations' values) mean value, standard deviation and on sample T-test is used.

Table 2: Mean and variance values of stress, organizational spirituality and its' dimensions

| Variables | number | Mean | Variance | T | Degree of freedom | Significant level |
|-----------------------------|--------|------|----------|--------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Stress | 196 | 2.54 | 0.53 | -11.31 | 195 | 0.001 |
| Organizational spirituality | 196 | 3.40 | 0.61 | 9.04 | 195 | 0.001 |
| Feeling of meaning at work | 196 | 3.84 | 0.73 | 15.95 | 195 | 0.001 |
| Feeling of relatedness | 196 | 3.47 | 0.69 | 9.51 | 195 | 0.001 |
| Alignment with values | 196 | 2.89 | 0.74 | -2.05 | 195 | 0.001 |

Examining the mean of job stress in the population under study showed that job stress is at an acceptable level among teachers. Also, according to table 2 results revealed that the sample mean with respect to the status of spirituality at work and its dimensions (feeling of meaning at work, feeling of relatedness at work place, and alignment of individual and organizations' values) among teachers are respectively, 3.4, 3.84, 3.74, 2.89. Moreover, result of one sample T-test indicated that all dimensions except the dimension of alignment of values have an average mean value and is more than the acceptable number three and this is a statistically significant difference. Therefore, it is possible to say that from employees' view, spirituality at work and its' dimensions except alignment of values are at acceptable levels. But the alignment of values and smaller mean value than the acceptable level and there is a significant difference.

Hypothesis: Organizational spirituality has a significant and negative relationship with job stress.

Relationship between organizational spirituality and its' dimensions with job stress and also the effect of each one of the dimensions of organizational spirituality on teachers' job stress has been investigated.

Table 3: Correlation coefficient between organization spirituality dimensions and job stress

| Pearson correlation | Organization spirituality | Feeling of meaning at work | Feeling of relatedness | Alignment with values |
|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Job stress | 0.67** | 0.69** | 0.69** | 0.49** |

** Significant level lower than 0.01

According to table 3 there is a significant correlation between organizational spirituality and all its' dimensions. The highest level of correlation 0.69 has been found between feeling of relatedness and the feeling of meaning at work and job stress and finally there is a relationship between alignment with values and job stress 0.49 that verifies the existence of a significant and negative relationship between job stress and dimensions of organization spirituality. In the following section more explanations of the relationship between three dimensions of organizational spirituality and job stress will be provided.

Table4: Path coefficient related to causal relation of organization spirituality dimensions and job stress

| Path | Path coefficient | significance | Coefficient determination |
|-------------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| meaningful work stress | 0.41 | 0.001 | 0.57 |
| feeling of relatedness stress | 0.41 | 0.001 | |
| alignment with value stress | 0.01 | 0.87 | |

The following section explains the effectiveness of organizational spirituality elements on job stress considering error rate. The coefficient of determination between elements of organizational spirituality and job stress was estimated to be 0.57 which means that two elements of feeling of meaning and relatedness at workplace have 57 percent influential role in determining the job stress variance. According to table 4 path coefficient between the feeling of meaning at work and job stress is equal to 0.41 and it means that the effect of feeling of meaning on job stress is about 0.41 which is a direct, negative and significant effect between the feeling of meaning at work and job stress. Path coefficient between the feeling of relatedness and job stress was estimated to be 0.41 which is a significant value. The path coefficient between value alignment and job stress was about 0.01 which is not significant and according to the findings, it is possible to conclude that among the elements of organizational spirituality two factors of feeling of meaning at work and feeling of relatedness at work have direct, negative, significant effect on job stress. First and second hypothesis have been approved and the third hypothesis has been rejected which has the negative direct effect on alignment of values and job stress.

4. Discussion

Investigation of the variables of the study revealed that among organizational spirituality factors, alignment with the goals and the values of the organization are at the lowest level. Nonaligned goals and values of individual and organization can be considered as an alarm to both organization and individual. A non-aligned connection triggers the individual to consider himself separated from the organization, therefore he has to try for his goals without organizations' support. In this sense he believes that the organization and its' aims are in contradiction to his own. Alienation of goals and values trigger disappointment, discouragement and paranoia toward organization. Therefore, decreases the rate of organizations' access to the goals and increases the distance between the individual and the organization which finally will end up in job stress. Other spiritual organizations' factors such as feeling of meaning at work is at the highest rate and the feeling of relatedness is at the relatively desirable state. These two factors are very influential in increasing job satisfaction among teachers and school activities. According to the findings of the

study, spirituality has a negative relationship with job stress, and, increasing level of organizational spirituality can decrease teachers' mental pressures and stress. The findings of the current study are in line with findings of Tischler et al., (2003) that believed that insisting on the spirituality at work brings about creativity and decreases job stress. Moreover, there is a direct, negative, significant relationship between two factors of feeling meaning at work and feeling of relatedness. Also the direct negative and significant effect of these on the job stress has been approved. The findings of the current study are in accord with Daniel (2015) and Arnold et al. (2007) they believed that doing meaningful tasks and activities have an influential role in decreasing stress and increasing employees' mental health. Additionally, Terez (2000) indicated that provision of meaning at work is the key to job satisfaction, feeling meaning at work by creating balance between personal life and job is influential on many personal factors and internal stress by creating purposeful activities and encouragement and pleasure toward work based intrinsic motivation. Regarding the effect of feeling of relatedness at work on job stress Zaffane and McLoughlin (2006) also believed that a specific degree of cooperation and support in organization has a negative effect on decreasing job stress, moreover, Chen et al. (1998) also insisted that the lack of cooperation is linked with high levels of job stress. Griffith, Steptoe and Cropley [47] (1999) also concluded that high levels of job stress is linked with scant social support or it is possible to say that it is feasible to decrease job stress by increase social support at work. Examining factors and sources of job stress shows that many of the contributing factors of job stress are rooted in insufficient support and working relationships that can be eliminated by extension of feeling of relatedness. According to the results of the study, the negative effect of alignment with values and job stress has not been approved based path analysis and its effect wasn't significant. Further, the result of the current study does not approve Whitener (1997) and Duae (2002) claims who believed that alignment with values leads to individuals' adaptation, creation of a positive attitude toward work and job stress decrease. Studies which have focused on the relationship between spirituality and the healthiness of workplace and stress confirms the negative role of spirituality on individuals' level of stress and have introduced spirituality as a solution to stress and anxiety. This issue is also applicable to organizational life which is approved by the findings of this study. Dividing the universality of life to its discrete sections and separating different parts of today's life from each other and also assigning works without considering their generality, is the cause of stress and anxiety for many people at work place. Spirituality is seeking meaning in life and organizational spirituality aims at connecting personal life to work together by creating meaning at work and in linking work with individuals' aims which results in freedom from meaningless work and absurdity and finally less job stress. On the other hand feeling of relatedness at work place not only feeds employees' financial needs, spiritual needs and their social and mental ones, but also help people to feel relaxed at the social workplace and have lower levels of stress.

In conclusion considering descriptive findings of the question of the study it is suggested that leaders of education and training organizations can help alignment between individual and organization by providing a clear and joint vision for the organization and including their personal responsibilities in this vision and by rewarding those with aligned behaviors with values of the organization. Moreover, considering the results of the first hypothesis of the study and the significant impact of feeling of meaning at work on job stress, school principals and organizations' higher state administrators can help with the creation of purposeful feeling in individuals and

expansion of meaning at work and job satisfaction of individual and low levels of job stress by more appreciation of employees' efforts, creating balance between job and life, clarifying aims and struggle for organizations credit, creating positive challenges, familiarizing employees with the importance of social work and creating purposeful feeling.

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