

EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND WORK VALUES AMONGST HOSPITALITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Recent attention to issues of holistic wholeness among employees has ignited great concern about the relevancy of traditional management thinking. It has been argued that this thinking is not sufficient to address current and future concerns about effective business practice based on values, motivation and ethics in management practices. In today's business environment where more time is spent in the workplace, understanding spirituality and work values could provide a better picture of how educational institutions could best prepare future managers. The hospitality work environment requires individuals who are 'people people'. The core of this 'people people' lies in work and spiritual values. Hospitality school graduates entering the world of work lacking these values will not perform as expected and will be unable to develop their future professional role. Hence, hospitality management schools should be more than places for academic development, and hospitality schools should develop not only academic competence, but also a student's self-concept. This paper reports on the investigation into the relationship between levels of spirituality and work values in the career choices of students enrolled in hotel, culinary arts and foodservice programmes. The relationship between Spirituality and Work (intrinsic) Values was found to be $r = .42$, significant at .001 level (highest was Awareness of Life and Creativity, $r = .56$, significant at .01 level). However, the findings revealed no significant association between gender, spirituality and work values.

Keywords: Spirituality, Work Values, Hospitality, Students

INTRODUCTION

There is increasing evidence that spirituality is important to people for complete human functioning in the work place (Mitroff, 2003). Hence, interest in workplace spirituality has steadily increased over the last decades (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). This concept has been particularly significant in the workplace as workers try to handle the unprecedented changes and stress that continue to exist. Americans (from a secular and individualistic society) have already begun to develop the need to find the inner meaning in what they do and who they are (Conlin, 1999). This means that one must understand the power of inner strength in order to satisfy the outer life which may lead to positive behaviour for the

organization (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). This development has great implications for educational institutions in a developing future workforce capable of coping with new challenges and expectations in the world of work. American colleges are now offering business courses that deal with the subject of spirituality (Neal, 1997; Barnett *et al.*, 2000). We have to remember that higher educational institutions are not just places to impart technical knowledge and competence and profess the concept of materialism, but places to develop and enhance the student's development of affective competencies. If the objective of higher education institutions is to provide a career education, then the efficacy of the programme must be more than just imparting job-related psychomotor competencies, but include also the growth of certain affective competencies. Successful completion of a programme does not, however, indicate whether a student has acquired the relevant career-related values and commitment to a career in his/her discipline. Higher educational institutions have to accept the fact that commitment is a manifestation of the individual's inner self and existence (Mottaz, 1988). Despite the fact that spirituality has become an important subject in education and the workplace (Burke & Hackey, 1999; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003), the hospitality sector has been lagging behind in taking the issue seriously.

Ironically, the hospitality work environment requires individuals who are "people people". The core of this lies in work and spiritual values. Hospitality school graduates entering the world of work lacking these values will not perform as expected and be unable to develop their future professional role. Hence, hospitality management schools should be more than places for academic development, and they should develop not only academic competencies but also a student's self-concept. This will lead to the development of 'awareness contexts' of a particular work, which is liable to change in the light of work experience and exposure.

Despite the fact that spirituality is gaining importance in the work place, this does not mean that it diminishes the relevance of other values. Values are often used to make decisions, yet many students do not have a clear idea of what work values are, since work values are the underlying beliefs that influence an individual's occupational choice. People whose career direction matches their expectations and work values' profile increase their probability of achieving job satisfaction and staying longer within their chosen career (King & Nicol, 1999; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Dudeck, 2004). The probable reason for the high rate of attrition amongst hospitality graduates could lead to acceptance of the fact that the curricular feature is unable to match the characteristics of the students and the program's environmental features that will influence students' career choice.

In the same way, tourism's unprecedented growth in Malaysia has generated an exceptional demand for hospitality services. As the industry expands, so too does the number of hospitality programmes. Hospitality programmes are striving to strengthen and expand their hospitality and tourism curricula. As such, it is imperative that hospitality schools have a thorough understanding of the student's spiritual and work values before any proactive initiatives are put in place.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between the spirituality and work values of students enrolled in hotel and foodservice programmes at the Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, UiTM. Specifically, the first objective of this study was to measure the relationship between work values and spiritual values. The second was to identify the relationship between gender and the values dimensions. To accomplish these objectives, the study was organized as follows. First, the study reviewed the literature on spirituality and work values. Second, the research methodology employed was discussed, followed by the findings and conclusion of the study.

The subject of “spirituality” is a sensitive one. Hence, the study of spirituality within the scope of the study is not restricted to any particular religion or faith. People always relate and accept that the nature of the subject is extremely personal and are quite sceptical about its introduction and relevance in the world of business. Nevertheless, to put the issue into perspective, this study attempts to address the concept of spirituality and human experience in a way that would contribute a better understanding of the student’s inner-self and relate this to the multi-racial and multi religious nature of Malaysians and find a common denominator of values among the various faiths. Nevertheless, the results of this study could not be generalized because only one institution is involved in which the students are predominantly Malay and Muslim.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent attention to issues of holistic wholeness among employees has ignited great concern about the relevancy of the traditional management thinking (Macoby, 2003). It has been argued that it is not sufficient to address current and future concerns for effective business practice based on values, motivation and ethics in management practices (Cavanagh, 1999, Macoby, 2003). A decade ago Nonaka and Takuechi (1995) wrote about the importance of Japanese spirituality or inner-self, or the image of self (Weick, 2001) in the work place environment. They said that in order to understand reality one has to shift management thinking away from its traditional models and paradigms toward a wholly new spiritual imperative in understanding employees and organizations. To be ‘lean and mean’ is no longer an effective philosophy; organizations have to accept the concept of ‘lean and meaningful’ in order to survive in today’s turbulent business environment (HR Magazine, 1998, cited in Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

The health of the organization is dependent on the health of its employees (physically and spiritually). Spirituality in the workplace has become popular terminology and a researchable topic for researchers and practitioners these days that will enhance the quality of the individual and the organization (Gibbon, 1999). Human beings have long been trying to make sense of the environment surrounding them. One of the crucial elements in this sense-making involves

finding a deep meaning and purpose in one's work (Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson, 2003). Ashmos and Duchon (2000, p.137) define workplace spirituality as

'the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community'.

Subsequently, Gibbons (1999, p. 4), cited in Milliman *et al* (2003), conceptualizes the definition of spirituality at work as :

"A journey toward integration of work and spirituality, for individuals and organizations, which, provides direction, wholeness and connectedness at work".

Spirituality is about working with others to bring about a better world, about challenging oneself and others to be, to borrow the words of the advertisement for the US Army, "the best that you can be", which may or may not involve the doctrine of expressions within a religious institution.

According to the spirituality literature within secular society, religion and spirituality are two different concepts (Mitroff, 2003). Religion is seen as identifying people through dogma and has its emphasis on formal structure. On the other hand, spirituality is a basic human dimension that can be learned, understood, and incorporated into the workplace (Senge, 1990). However, within the Islamic perspective, these two terms are inseparable (Nasr, 1987, p.35). Work must be carried out in accordance with the Islamic Law (*Shari'ah*).

A spiritual paradigm would provide a more holistic meaning of self and how it connects with others and the surroundings (Biberman & Whittey, 1997). This is basically the main characteristic of a collectivistic society, which has a high concern for others and keeps other people in mind and promotes a sense of oneness. According to Helmeniak (1987, p.35) understanding values could lead to 'authentic transcendence'.

Apart from the spirituality which deals with one's deeper meaning of self and others, work values are also an important element in determining individual career choice and development. Studies have suggested that people seek vocations and work environments that are consistent with certain values and attitudes they hold (Pinfield, 1984; Snir & Harpaz, 2001; Chak-Keung & Kam Ho, 2003) Assessment of work values is important to career intention or choice process (Chung *et al*, 1995). It has been highly recognised that there is a strong correlation between job satisfaction and work values. In a pioneering effort, Super (1968) has developed the Work Value Inventory to measure extrinsic and intrinsic values in work. Decades ago, studies on work values on an individual's occupational choice showed that there is a strong correlation between work values and career choice. The concept of spirituality and work values can be used as an index of predicting students' career choices (Pietrofesa and Splete, 1975).

Work values are values that lead to understanding the concept of work, in which Dewey (1916) differentiates between the terms 'job' and 'work'. According to Dewey, the term job refers to 'a way of making a living'; on the other hand, work

not only provides one with a salary to make a living, but also includes the deeper meaning of the purpose of life, personal well-being and one's chosen vocation. The WVI scale has been empirically tested in a variety of occupational behaviour research works. Niles *et al* (1997) applied the WVI scale in their study concerning the relationship between occupational decision-making and perceptions of work values among college students. Their findings revealed that, if students were highly committed to a specific occupation before their graduation, they were likely to seek more intrinsic values and satisfaction in their job.

Super provides the following explanation of the 15 Work Values dimensions:

<i>Altruism</i>	– <i>Work value exists in work that enables one to contribute to the welfare of others. It measures social desirability.</i>
<i>Aesthetic</i>	– <i>Value relates to artistic interest, to beautiful things, and to contributing beauty to the world.</i>
<i>Creativity</i>	– <i>Opportunity to invent design or develop new things and new ideas.</i>
<i>Intellectual</i>	– <i>Independent thinking and learning how and why things are significant in this intrinsic value. Individuals tend to be more abstract and want to use their own intellect and to make their own judgment.</i>
<i>Achievement</i>	– <i>A satisfying feeling of accomplishment characterizes achievement. Individuals are task oriented and desire tangible results in a chosen occupation.</i>
<i>Independence</i>	– <i>It represents the desire to work one's own way without undue interference.</i>
<i>Prestige</i>	– <i>Respect /standing in the eyes of others. Highly related to intrinsic value that differs from status and power.</i>
<i>Management</i>	– <i>It is associated with the desire to plan the work of others or at least plan one's own work.</i>
<i>Economic Return</i>	– <i>Often referred to as materialism. This value attaches strong importance to tangibles and to earnings.</i>
<i>Security</i>	– <i>A strong value for those who fear being out of a job. Security reflects the desire always to know where one stands.</i>
<i>Surrounding</i>	– <i>Reflects an appreciation of pleasant working conditions.</i>
<i>Supervisory Relation</i>	– <i>concerns about the boss, whether he/she is fair, and for how one gets along with him/her are summarized by Supervisory Relation.</i>
<i>Associates</i>	– <i>This value addresses concern for one's fellow workers, how one gets along with them, and whether one likes them.</i>
<i>Way of Life</i>	– <i>This is associated with the kind of work that permits one to live the kind of life one chooses and to be the type of person one wishes to be.</i>
<i>Variety</i>	– <i>It is highly rated by those who become bored easily and desire the opportunity to do a number of things in their occupation.</i>

Workers have to understand their role and how they can add value to the organization rather than expecting the organization to provide lifetime employment (Biberman & Whittey, 1997). A decade ago Harari (1993) already predicted that the future will be a time in which workers who can add value to the organization will have more opportunities than those who cannot.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore differences in levels of spirituality and work values in the career intentions of students enrolled in Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, UiTM. Accordingly, it is also important to recognize the fact that data and methods of capturing data are inextricably interdependent (Leedy 1980, p. 75). As this study is the first of its kind to be carried out in Malaysia, a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and working out of the way respondents react to the questions are vital. So as not to reinvent the wheel, the initial list of Work Values was adapted from Super's (1968) WVI and the Human Spiritual values inventory was adapted from Wheat's (1991).

Sampling and Data Collection

The sample frame/or population and the size are drawn from the Faculty's students registration database (convenience sampling). The total size of the sample is 326 students and a self-administered questionnaire was employed. A 5-point Likert scale was used to test the degree to which each student rated the importance of each question in the Spirituality (20 items) and Work values (45 items) scales. The questionnaire was distributed through the assistance of the representatives of the respective cohorts. Students were asked to respond to the questionnaire that contained Super's (1968) Work Values Inventory and Wheat's (1991) Spirituality Scale, as well as five personal details questions. Students who did not respond on the first occasion were reminded through their class representatives. Composite scores for spirituality and work values were carried out by aggregating each response for each of the two categories. With a response rate of 66.6 %, the sample obtained consisted of 53 male (24.4 %) and 164 female (75.6 %).

Analysis

This distribution represents the student population of the Faculty. The mean scores and standard deviations (SDs) were performed on the data to measure the difference between the first year and final year students. In order to respond to the research objective, correlational (two –tailed) analyses and reliability tests were employed. To test whether there were differences between gender and the value scales, we first split the data into two sub-files (male and female) and obtained the desired correlation from each sub-file.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The overall scale for the Spirituality scale (Wheat, 1991) and the WVI scale indicated a higher reliability than the subscales. The overall Cronbach alpha for Work Values was 0.93 and the Spirituality scale was 0.78. Spirituality subscales (represented by 3 dimensions) ranged from 0.68 to 0.86 and the Work Values subscales ranged from 0.57 to 0.877. Table 1 shows the ranking of the work value attributes (15 dimensions) from the student sample. The respondents considered having a good supervisor relationship as a very important dimension. The results reveal that dimensions related to “supervisor relationship”, “Association” and “Achievements” were among the top three attributes. In other words, they wanted to have a fair and reasonable supervisor, teamwork and opportunity for career advancement in their future workplace. “Management”, “Prestige”, Altruism”, “Security” and “Aesthetic” were among the bottom five dimensions ranked by the respondents.

A two-tailed correlational analysis was conducted on career choice and values scales. A statistically significant relationship was found. The analysis revealed several negative relationships (Career choice and Surrounding, $r = -.385$ significant at 0.01 level; Way of Life, $r = -.220$ at 0.01 level; and Compassion, $r = -.459$ at 0.01 level). A two-tailed correlational analysis was conducted on Spirituality and Work Values scales. A statistically significant relationship was found. However, there were several negative relationships identified between several dimensions of the Spirituality and Work Values scales: Awareness of Life and Surrounding ($r = -.431$, p at the 0.01 level), Awareness of Life and Independence ($r = -.173$, p at 0.05 level).

Table 1: Mean and Ranking of WVI Dimensions

Dimension	Rank (mean)		
	Sample (n=271)	Male (n=72)	Female (n=199)
a. Supervisor Relationship	1 (4.42)	3 (4.31)	1 (4.46)
b. Association	2 (4.35)	5 (4.25)	2 (4.38)
c. Achievement	3 (4.30)	1 (4.37)	4 (4.27)
d. Creativity	4 (4.29)	4 (4.23)	3 (4.31)
e. Surroundings	5 (4.09)	2 (4.32)	6 (4.02)
f. Variety	6 (4.07)	6 (4.11)	7 (4.02)
g. Economic Return	7 (4.06)	8 (4.06)	5 (4.06)
h. Way of Life	8 (4.00)	7 (4.10)	8 (3.98)
i. Intellectual	9 (3.97)	9 (4.04)	9 (3.96)
j. Independence	10 (3.87)	11 (3.86)	10 (3.88)
k. Management	11 (3.83)	10 (3.96)	11 (3.81)
l. Altruism	12 (3.80)	13 (3.78)	12 (3.80)
m. Prestige	13 (3.75)	12 (3.72)	13 (3.75)
n. Security	14 (3.62)	15 (3.62)	14 (3.60)
o. Aesthetic	15 (3.57)	14 (3.57)	15 (3.54)

Wheat (1991) provides the following explanation of the three Spirituality dimensions:

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- Larger Context - Looking at the purpose and meaning of life and moral behavior.
 - Awareness of Life - Individuals with high levels of awareness are continually expanding their horizon and have the ability to create the results in life they truly seek and a connection with another life
 - Compassion - Significance of life and the awareness of pain and suffering of others.
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The strongest relationship found was between Larger Context and Creativity ($r=0.56$, significant at the 0.01 level). The relationship between spirituality and intrinsic values was also computed separately for female and male. The Pearson correlations for each gender were then compared with the sample sizes of female ($n=164$) and male ($n=53$). The correlation between Spirituality and Intrinsic values for female was ($r=.500$, $p<.01$) and ($r=.361$, $p<.01$) for male.

Table 2: Overall Ranking

Dimension	N	Ranking	Mean	Std. Deviation
Supervisor Relation	217	1	4.42	.466
Association	217	2	4.35	.469
Achievement	217	3	4.30	.453
Creativity	217	4	4.29	.683
Surroundings	217	5	4.09	.663
Variety	217	6	4.07	.619
Economic Return	217	7	4.06	.445
Way of Life	217	8	4.00	.437
Intellectual	217	9	3.97	.480
Independence	217	10	3.87	.373
Management	217	11	3.83	.444
Altruism	217	12	3.80	.594
Prestige	217	13	3.75	.495
Larger Context	217	14	3.73	.324
Awareness of Life	217	15	3.64	.600
Security	217	16	3.61	.618
Compassion	217	17	3.61	.322
Aesthetic	217	18	3.57	.529

A comparison between the dimensions of work values and spirituality values revealed that students placed greater importance on the majority of the extrinsic values as compared to intrinsic values. This is evidenced in Table 2 where the three spirituality dimensions are among the bottom five. It is assumed that the students still felt quite sceptical about its relevance in the world of business.

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to explore the relationship between spirituality and work value dimensions in career choice among hospitality undergraduates. The purpose of this study has been to search possibilities rather than providing conclusive findings and prove hypotheses. The study found that hospitality students who participated were likely to work in the hospitality industry after graduating from the university. It also revealed that there are relationships between work values, human spirituality and career choice. In general, students concurred that having a good relationship with their supervisors and working in a friendly atmosphere were of importance in their future job choice.

Interestingly, male respondents were quite hesitant to consider “economic return” as among the top five values. Indeed, the respondents acknowledged the fact that hospitality businesses do not often provide good compensation, especially for entry-level jobs. It is imperative for hospitality educators to integrate spirituality values into the curriculum to stimulate the necessary qualities for graduates to confront the turbulent business and working environment. The study of spirituality is not restricted to a particular religion or faith and it is recommended that for future research, a comprehensive study of spirituality at work on individuals and organizations is undertaken. This will address the general human experience in a way that would accommodate the multi-racial and multi-religious nature of the country and find a common denominator among the various faiths. Alternatively, we will enter an era where Spirituality Quotients (SQ) could well provide another perspective to better understand work behaviour and human motivation. And according to Ian I. Mitroff, spirituality could be the ultimate competitive advantage in today’s turbulent business environment. As mentioned earlier, the changing working environment has evolved through time and the hospitality curriculum has not changed (compartmentalization of discipline) significantly to meet today’s demands. An ‘adds-on approach’ or ‘assumption-based approach’ to curriculum development and improvement has not proven to be effective. As such, an integrated curriculum that addresses the industry demands needs to be designed. Despite the recognition of the importance of spirituality in the workplace, religious or spiritual insensitivity among hospitality educators or Malaysian hoteliers can have a very negative impact on graduates’ career intentions, not to mention workers’ productivity and commitment.

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