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The Relationship between servant leadership and spirituality in the workplace and perceived organizational support among nurses of medical and educational centers in Kermanshah

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between servant leadership and spirituality in the workplace and perceived organizational support among nurses. The present study is descriptive-analytical in terms of method of study and developmental-applied in terms of objective of study. It was conducted by using cross-sectional method. The population of study consisted of all nurses in Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences that 306 of them were selected using random stratified selected. The data were collected by using questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part of questionnaire related to demographic information of subjects and the second part contained 43 items related to three components of spirituality in the workplace (11 items), perceived organizational support (9 items) and servant leadership (23 items). The validity of questionnaire was confirmed using content validity and according to valid books and resources, and other confirmed questionnaires and its reliability was examined and confirmed by determining the internal stability of tool through calculating the Cronbach's alpha. To analyze the data using SPSS-21 software, descriptive statistics was used in order to determine and compare the mean total score and the scores of the three components of the study. In the analytical statistical part, statistical methods of Pearson correlation coefficient, multivariate simple regression regressions were used at the significant level of 0.05. In addition, one-dimensional Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to examine normal distribution of the data used in the study and correlation test was used to test the hypotheses of the study. The results of this study indicated the significant and positive relationship between servant leadership and spirituality in the workplace ($p= .861$) and between servant leadership and perceived organizational support ($p=0.352$). Additionally, significant and positive relationship was found between components and the areas examined in this study and all hypotheses were confirmed. The results of this study showed that servant leadership style significantly increases workplace spirituality and organizational support of nurses. To institutionalize the importance of servant leader in the organization of hospitals, development of educational programs through workshops in order to develop servant leadership skills in different levels of managers, it has been proposed that servant leader is effective leading to increased satisfaction of patients as the most important factor in assessing the service quality in hospital by enhancing the job satisfaction level of employees.

Keywords: servant leadership, spirituality in the workplace, perceived organizational support, quality of service, patient satisfaction, hospital, nurse

INTRODUCTION

Hospital is one of the main components of the health services system that its main duty is to provide high quality care for patients and to meet their needs. This important duty requires the institutionalization of quality in hospitals [1].

On the other hand, one of the important strategies in the organizations is production of value for the customers and the people who are regarded as the most important resource for organizations as knowledge capitals and intangible assets. It includes knowledge, skill, and attitude of the manufacturer, abilities, capabilities, and competence available in human resources known as human capital. In fact, organizations that have systematical and strategic program to develop this type of assets can produce more value for customers and one of the approaches to develop capacities and capabilities of human resources for the production of value is competency-based education [2].

Hence, assessment the behavior of individuals in organizations with the aim of improving the work environment and achieving some kind of individual behavior helps to organizational efficiency and effectiveness has been considered by investigators, organizations are not able to develop their effectiveness without the desire of employees to collaborate. In fact, they require employees who are working beyond the formal and legal requirements and this voluntary and spontaneous performing of the meta-role tasks has been referred as organizational citizenship behavior in the modern literature of management [3].

As any other organization, hospital is looking for meeting the needs of its customers and as the risk of these services is high, the provided services should have high quality. In the health and medical care sector, human resources have more important role than other factors of the organization and hospital, as one important institute providing services with its unique facilities, plays crucial role in physical and mental health of patients and the promoting the health level of society. This issue helps to hospital to empower its nurses in achieving organizational goals and performance of one nurse is not only depends on his knowledge and skill in the management of patients, but also each of his activates should have characteristics in line with his profession. Therefore, paying attention to this issue has very special importance in the hospital workplace since it leads to satisfaction of patients and helps hospital in achieving its organizational goals [4]. Despite considerable progress of science and technology in this century, organizations have particularly focused on development spirituality of employees in the workplace, and recently, science and research centers have considered spirituality effects on business important. While this issue has been considered increasingly, a few studies have been conducted in this regard. Contemporary management theorists believe that businesses will change the way of thinking and acting and in this area the need to develop concepts with new dimensions is being felt and spirituality is in priority in this regard [5]. In fact, human resources supported by organization will have more coordination with values and goals of organization and greater motivation for servicing will lead to improved performance of organization facilitating the way to achieve to organizational goals. Perceived organizational support is used currently as important explanatory framework to understand the relation between employees and organization [6].

In this regard, servant leadership is a popular concept in leadership styles. While this concept is interesting, it has not been defined systematically and supported by experimental research. In fact, this style of leadership is investigated to develop a basic theoretical framework as basis for classification and evaluation of the characteristics of servant leaders in order to help organization's managers [7] and most of theorists and researchers introduce servant leadership as a valid model for leadership of modern leadership. This model provides the basis for practical application, so that the servant leadership can potentially change the organizations and communities, and it causes organizational and personal transformation [8].

Therefore, servant leadership can solve many problems that organizations face with them in the twenty-first century, since in the servant leadership style leaders serve to employees through creating knowledge and skill in them, removing the barriers and problems, and encouraging to creativity and innovation and empowering the employees. The fact that great leaders are the great servants is considered as key for their majesty and magnitude [9].

The investigation of relationship between factors such as perceived organizational support and servant leadership and spirituality has always been emphasized, the way that these components are correlated in the local culture context of Iran, especially among nurses, has not been investigated and it requires accurately investigating. In the conducted studies, two components have been considered. However, three important components were considered in this study at the level of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences hospitals and various health sectors to examine the relationship between servant leadership and spirituality in the workplace and perceived organizational support among nurses. By identifying the possible relationships between spirituality in the workplace and perceived organizational support and servant leadership among the educational centers nurses and comparing these variables, this study was conducted to take a step in identifying factors effective in creating desired workplace in order to improve quality of services, to increase the satisfaction of patients, and organizational excellence of hospitals.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is developmental and applied in which analytical - descriptive method was used according to nature of subject of study. In other words, this study has applied aspect in addition to its scientific aspect. After defining operational variables, 306 nurses were firstly selected using random stratified sampling to test the model. Then, data of study were collected by distributing 306 questionnaires among the sample group.

The data collection tool was a questionnaire consisted of two parts. Its first part included demographic information such as name of the hospital, the health sector where nurses are working, gender, education, age and work experience. The second part of the questionnaire included 43 items related to research hypothesis. To develop data collection form, a standard form Taylor's Servant Leadership Questionnaire (2002)[10], Mylymn standard questionnaire spirituality at work (2003)[11] and perceived organizational support standard questionnaire Eisenberger et al (1986)[12] were used. Items 1-11 included three areas of philanthropy, belief in work, and social faith related to spirituality component in the workplace, items 12-34 included three areas of servicing, humility, reliability, and kindness related to servant leadership component, and items 35 and 43 included items related to perceived organizational support. The questionnaire was scored using 5-Likert scale in which the minimum score was 1 and maximum score was 5.

The validity of tool was confirmed using content validity method and according to valid resources and books and other questionnaires that they have validity has been confirmed already and after review by some experts and two faculty members, necessary reforms were applied on it. Reliability of tool of study was also examined and determined by determining the internal stability of tool and calculating Cronbach's alpha (0.82). In this study, total Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire was calculated 0.987 using SPSS-21 software indicating relatively high capability of questionnaire. These coefficients were obtained 0.9626, 0.923, and 0.827 for component of spirituality in the workplace, servant leadership, and perceived organizational support, respectively.

For data analysis using SPSS 21 statistical software, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics was used in organizing, summarizing, and preparing tables and diagrams and describing the collected data, and inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was also used to investigate the normal distribution of main variables data, and correlation test and Amos software were used to test the research hypotheses.

RESULTS

In this study, 33.3% of nurses had work experience less than 10 years, 49.7% of them had work experience between 10 and 20 years, and 17 % of them had work experience more than 20 years. In addition, 36.6% of them were male and 63.4% of them were female.

In terms of age, 16% of subjects are under 30 years old, 33.7% of them are between 31, and 40 years old, 39.9 % of them are between 51 to 60 years old. In addition, 18.3% of them have associate degree, 72.9% of them have bachelor degree, and 8.8% of them have master and higher degree.

Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficient in the relationship between servant leadership and spirituality in the workplace

		spirituality in the workplace
Servant leadership	Pearson correlation coefficient	0/861
	Significance level	0/00
	F significance level= 0/000	F=869/742
	R² (determination Coefficient)=0/741	R=0/861

According to significance level obtained from analyzing data that is 0.000 and comparing it with allowed error level of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), it can be said that there is significant relationship between servant leadership and spirituality in workplace with 95% confidence level. In addition, considering the value of Pearson correlation coefficient that was obtained 0.861, this relationship is positive. Therefore, the research hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 2: Pearson correlation coefficient of relationship between servant leadership and perceived organizational support

		perceived organizational support
servant leadership	Pearson correlation coefficient	0/352
	Significance level	0/000
	F significance level= 0/000	F=43/069
	R^2 (determination Coefficient)=0/124	R=0/352

According to significance level obtained from analyzing data that is 0.000 and comparing it with allowed error level of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), it can be said that there is significant relationship between servant leadership and perceived organizational support with 95% confidence level. In addition, considering the value of Pearson correlation coefficient that was obtained 0.352, this relationship is positive. Therefore, the research hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 3- Pearson correlation coefficient in relationship among the research components

Variable		Pearson correlation coefficient	Significance level	Test result
Servant leadership	Altruism	0/758	0/000	Direct and positive relationship
	Belief in working	0/789	0/000	Direct and positive relationship
	Social sense	0/796	0/000	Direct and positive relationship
Spirituality in workplace	Servicing	0/748	0/000	Direct and positive relationship
	Humility	0/834	0/000	Direct and positive relationship
	Reliability and kindness	0/761	0/000	Direct and positive relationship
Perceived organizational support	Servicing	0/211	0/000	Direct and positive relationship
	Humility	0/197	0/001	Direct and positive relationship
	Reliability and kindness	0/504	0/000	Direct and positive relationship
Servant leadership	Spirituality in the workplace	0/861	0/000	Direct and positive relationship
Servant leadership	Organizational support	0/352	0/000	Direct and positive relationship

Considering the significance levels obtained from analyzing the data in the Pearson correlation coefficient and comparing them with allowed error level of 0.05, it is seen that research hypotheses are confirmed with 95% confidence level.

DISCUSSION

One reason for the increasing importance of spirituality in the workplace is its potential impact on organizational effectiveness. On the other hand, the benefits of servant leadership in organization are considered one of the factors affecting the success and organizational effectiveness. Servant leadership is also one of the potential factors in the formation and development of workplace spirituality [13]. Although many studies have been conducted in the field of development of conceptual models and tools to measure servant leadership in organizations in recent years, this area suffers from lack of knowledge and applied studies on conditions facilitating the activity of servant leaders. Much evidence shows a positive relationship between workplace spirituality and trust within organization, commitment and organizational loyalty, job satisfaction and reduced willingness of employees to leave work, and increased willingness of employees for cooperation [14].

The results of the study on the relationship between servant leadership and spirituality in the workplace are consistent with results of studies conducted by Ghalavandi *et al* [15], Yousefi Saeidabadi *et al* [16], Gholipour *et al* [10], Salari [17], and Ghalavandi *et al* [18], In addition, Nadi and Golparvar [19], conducted a study on relationship between spirituality in the workplace and loyalty. The results showed significant positive relationship among all components of spirituality and loyalty. In the study conducted by Rezaeiemanesh and Kermanshahi [20], significant positive correlation was found between spirituality and organizational commitment in the workplace. Finally, Milman *et al* [21] reported that spirituality in the workplace has positive and significant correlation with job attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job involvement and reduced stability of leaving work.

On the other hand, results of this hypothesis are in line with study conducted by Mohammadi, Hazrati, and Jafari [22]. The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between the dimensions of workplace spirituality (feeling of belonging to the group, consistency of individual and organizational values, significance in work) and employees' perceptions of their managers characteristics based on four servant leadership components (servicing, humility, reliability, kindness).

Additionally, results of this study on the relationship between servant leadership and perceived organizational support are in line with research conducted by Abdipour [23], Hosseinpour and Ahoupay [24], Kharazi et al [25], Ardalan et al [26], Akharbin et al [27], Mittal and Dorfman [28], and Leiden et al [29]. Additionally, Gholipour et al [10], conducted a study on servant leadership, organizational trust, and empowerment in Iranian public organizations. Its results of analyzing the hypotheses suggested strong relationship between servant leadership, organizational trust, and empowerment. Moreover, in a study conducted by Yousefi Saeidabadi et al [16] on servant leadership and quality of work life, it was found that there is significant and positive relationship between servant leadership and quality of work life, and characteristics of servant leadership are effective in improving the quality of work life.

CONCLUSION

Researchers have considered spirituality in the workplace as one of the main factors in forming and strengthening the servant leaders. While spirituality and leadership theories belonged to separate categories in past, recent studies conducted in this regard suggest positive and direct correlation between these two factors. Additionally, results of this investigation on servant leadership showed that servant leadership plays an important role in personal integrity and service to others such as employees, customers and society. Results could confirm the positive and significant impact of servant leadership on spirituality in workplace and social capital. Therefore, considering the confirmed relationship between servant leadership dimensions, spirituality in workplace dimensions, and organizational support, finding the ways for increased use of servant leaders to improve the spirituality at personal and organizational levels in the workplace could increase the effectiveness of the organization.

As servant leadership characteristics affect positively the spiritual beliefs of leaders and cause that leaders to show positive behaviors and employees to evaluate their leaders positively, servant leadership style is an incentive for leaders to move toward serving values. It could be recommended that serving characteristics and values to be promoted among the managers and the managers should be factors to change organizational climate toward spirituality. This will be achieved through honesty and truthfulness, involving employees in decisions of the organization, improving the spirit of participation and teamwork, transparency in daily affairs and strengthening trust in the organization, trustworthiness and commitment, compassion, honest relationships, friendliness and openness, being grateful for employees' effort by managers that include servant leadership style characteristics. Finally, results of this study suggest that servant leadership variable could explain the spirituality in workplace and perceived organizational support of nurses.

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