
Workplace Spirituality and Employee Affective Commitment in the Public Health Sector of Rivers State

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Abstract: *The main purpose of this study is to investigate Workplace Spirituality and Employee Affective Commitment in the Public Health Sector of Rivers State. Of particular interest is the choice of the dimensions (meaningful work and alignment with organizational values) and the measure of affective commitment used in this study. The study was driven by a survey research design and a sample size of 331 from the accessible 5 Local Government Areas. Two of the three hypotheses formulated were tested with the spearman rank order correlation coefficient, while the moderating role of organizational culture was tested with the hierarchical multiple regression analysis. With a response rate of 86%, the findings revealed a significant correlation between meaningful work and employee affective commitment, significant relationship but no correlation between alignment with organization values and employee affective commitment, while the moderating effect of organizational culture revealed that organizational culture has little influence in moderating the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee affective commitment. These findings support extant literatures on the relationships between the dependent and independent variables and draws a distinction on other studies in the public health sector of the geographical scope as well as on the moderating role of organizational culture. Hence, the study concludes that workplace spirituality has implications for employee affective commitment among public health workers and therefore recommend among others that, health institutions should ensure a healthy, conducive and friendly work setting as an avenue to motivate and encourage their employees. We also provided a map for further research.*

Keywords: *Workplace spirituality, employee affective commitment, organizational culture, public health sector*

Introduction

Several studies support the fact that most organisation have realized the extent to which the performance of the workers plays very crucial role in defining the success of such organization. (Ajila & Awonusi, 2014; Zheng, Sharank & Wei, 2010). This implies that it is very important and essential for Managers of Organizations to ensure the existence of processes and procedures that would bring out the best in the workforce.

Max Weber's bureaucratic theory in the late 19th century was developed with the objective of ensuring that organization would be more efficient through specific position in a hierarchical style. Over the years, other perspectives like the human approaches influenced interactions in organizations, all in an attempt to achieve greater performance.

Several studies have linked committed attitude of workers to performance, improvement at individual and team levels with remarkable results in significant increased productivity (Fry, 2003; Brown, 2003 and Meyer & Herscovitch, 2010; Colakoglu, Culha & Atay, 2010).

In a study on the ecology of work attitude in Nigeria, Ejiofor (2009) posit that, work attitudes form the base on which any productivity, efficiency or effectiveness drive rests.

The issue of workplace, commitment has assumed an enviable slot in the direction of examining the antecedents of employee performance. These employees are highly motivated in their contribution to the pursuit of the goals of the organization hence affirming the conclusion that there is a very high relationship between employee commitment and organizational performance (Agba, Nkpyoen, & Ushie 2010; Ireferin & Mechanic, 2014).

The importance of the commitment of employees has occupied the front burner of researches by management scholars, over the years. This position is drawn from the various studies conducted that have established the relationships organizational commitment and attitudes and behaviours of workers in the organization (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boullan 1974; Angle & Perry, 1981; Rego & Cunha, 2008; Zheng, et al, 2010).

Hence, current scholars have focused their research on not just the definitions of commitment but adopting two major approaches viz. commitment related attitudes and commitment-related behaviour. The notion of commitment is better understood from Batemen and Strasser (1984) who defined commitment operationally as being multidimensional in nature, and involving employee's loyalty and willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization, degree goal and value congruency with the organization and desire to maintain membership.

Drawing from the above positions, it is important to establish the link between evaluations of the performance of an organization to its goal attainment. Hence, we will establish a position in this study by dwelling on the perspective of Buchanan (1974) and Wainaina, Mavo and Waitilu (2014), that commitment is a bond between an employee and the employer. To be more specific, affective commitment explains the emotional attachment, identification and the involvement of an employee with its organization and goals (Mowday, Steers & Porter 1979; O'Reily & Chatman, 1986; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Agba, et al, 2010).

Armstrong (2008) posits that organizational commitment plays an essential role in the human resource management philosophy. This view, in the present dispensation entails that organizations design their human resource management policies to maximize employee commitment. Hence, Meyer and Martins (2010), in reviewing some studies, conclude that employees with particular emphasis on being affectively committed to an organization are less likely to leave the organization and more likely to perform affectively and exhibit attached behaviour towards the organization. In trying to establish determinants of commitment, Wainaina, et al, (2014) posit that, an employee's desire to stay in an organization is driven by dedication and loyalty which has been linked to be a bye-product of the kind of support he gets from the organization and the synergy existing between the employee and the employer spirituality. An employed that is affectively committed (desire to stay) tends to exhibit an emotional attachment with the organization. This is where the point of departure is established with workplace spirituality.

What could possibly be responsible for the attitude exhibited by majority of the workers in public health institutions? Several researches have been conducted to investigate the attitude of workers to work and such studies had dealt with issues of motivation, reward, employee involvement, employee participation, among others. Despite all of these contributions, workers are still not committed to the extent of guaranteeing the level of performance in these institutions.

The main focus of this research is to examine how workplace spirituality can lead to employee affective commitment in the quest to achieve a more committed workforce with veritable commitment-related attitudes and commitment-related behaviour that would launch a paradigm shift in the public sector.

In previous studies, workplace spirituality has been established to have positive impact on employee commitment (Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson 2003). Though, most of such studies were conducted in the European context, we are therefore restricted to examine how workplace spirituality will influence employee affective commitment, given the notion that majority of the employees in the public sector seem to remain in their jobs because they do not have alternatives or any other choice. This plausibly, affects their attitude to work. How then can the best in such workers be achieved to ensure a more meaningful involvement on their job? A public sector that is driven by employees with affection, attachment and involvement in their jobs is envisaged.

Research Hypotheses

The objective of the study prompted three research questions that provided the following hypotheses to guide this study.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between meaningful work and employee affective commitment.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between alignment with organizational values and employee affective commitment.

H₀₃: Culture will not moderate the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee effective commitment.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

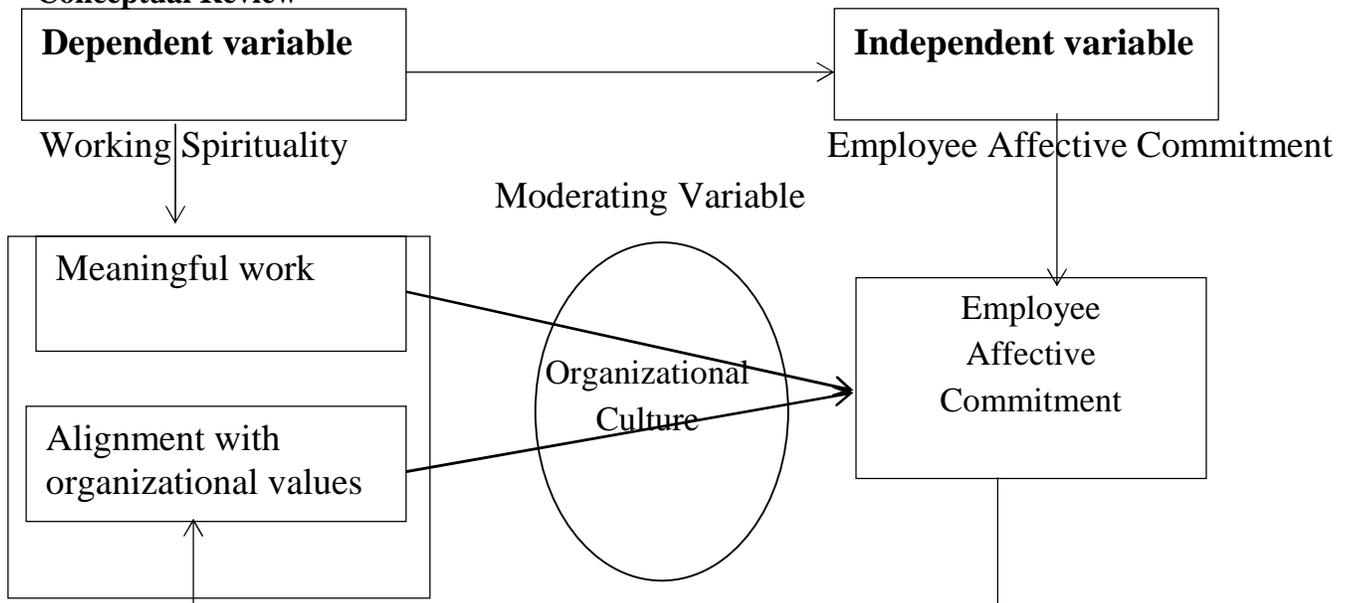


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework. (Adapted from Milliman, et al (2003) and Meyer & Allen, (1991))

The concept of workplace spirituality has generated series of disagreement hence, Mckee, Mills and Driscoll (2008) stated that there is minimal consensus on the meaning of workplace spirituality. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) defined workplace spirituality as “the recognition that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work taking place in the context of a community.

On the other hand, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) defines workplace spirituality as;

“a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote employee’s experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of competence and joy”

Majority of the scholars that had proffered definitions of workplace spirituality opted for specific components or differences in emphasis in their definitions. They ensure that explanations highlight workplace spirituality to be different from the notion of a religions view. Hence, Laabs, (1995) and Cavanah, (1999) suggest that spirituality at work does not refer to religion or convincing people to convert to a specific religious belief system, but rather addresses individual values and philosophy.

Mitroff (2003) aptly puts it that, spirituality from this perspective is tolerant inclusive and open-minded unlike the religions perspective that divides people through dogma and emphasis on formal structure that discriminates against those with different beliefs.

In the management discourse, workplace spirituality relates to employees who see themselves as spiritual being, whose soul require nourishment at work, and whose work provides them with an experience of a sense of purpose and meaning in their workplace and a sense of connectedness to others in the workplace (Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Harrington, Preziosi & Gooden 2001; Millimen, et al, 2003).

Meaningful Work

The spirituality aspect of work is further understood by considering the meaning of work as one of the dimensions of workplace spirituality. Meaningful work implies that work should not only be interesting or challenging but all-encompassing and includes searching for deeper meaning and purpose, living one’s dream, expression of one’s inner life needs and contributing to seeking meaningful work for self and others (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Neal, 1998).

For Millimen et al, (2003), the concept of meaningful work explains affective commitment, intrinsic work satisfaction, job involvement and self-esteem, while on the other hand, Wainaina et al, (2014) posit that meaning work represents employees day-to-day interaction with their work at the individual level.

Understanding the meaningful of work can be traced to the clamour or effort by the scientific management school perspective in the designing of jobs as an option to checkmate boredom. This position is further buttressed by Hackman and Oldham (1976) who proposed that three job characteristics combine to determine the psychological meaningfulness of a job, the variety of different activities and skills used in executing tasks on the job and the extent to which a job requires the completion of an identifiable piece of work, and the degree to which a job has substantial impact on the lives or work of other people.

Alignment with Organizational Values

Alignment with organizational values as a dimension of workplace spirituality, deals with measuring whether or not individuals experience a strong sense of alignment between their personal values and the organization's mission and purpose (Rego & Cunha 2008).

Alignment with organizational values goes beyond the concept that employees desire to work in an organization whose goal is to seek a high sense of ethos or integrity and the welfare of employees, customers and society. This alignment plays a very vital role in the organization when viewed from a shared value perspective.

The emphasis on alignment with organizational values points toward the compatibility of individuals' values with that of the organization as suggested by Verquer, Beehr and Wagner (2003) that the establishment of alignment with organizational values indicates that there is a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the organization which subsequently contributes to the attainment or fulfillment of the needs/goals of both parties.

Organizational Culture as a Moderating Variable

Mullins, (1999) defined organizational culture as the embodiment of traditions, beliefs, values, policies and attitudes that constitute a pervasive content for everything one does and thinks in an organization's. Several scholars have proposed that organizational culture has a moderating effect on employee behaviour, either in their capacity as leaders or employees. (Wainaina, et al, 2014; Lee & Kamarul, 2009; Rego & Cunha, 2008)

Theoretical framework

The base line theory that propels this study are the organizational support theory and the social exchange theory. The organizational theory perspective holds that, employees normally form general beliefs concerning how much their organizations value their contributions to the organization and care about their wellbeing, provided this meets their social and emotional needs as well as assessing the organization's readiness to reward increased efforts.

Colakoglu and Cunha (2010) in a study found that, perceived organizational support (POS) has a significantly positive effect on employee commitment. The implication is that employees who are cared for and valued by their employers will be affectively attached to their organization.

On the other hand, the social exchange theory posits that employees naturally calculate the overall worth of a given relationship by subtracting its cost from the reward it provides. Within the workplace setting, the destiny of the existing relationship between the employee and the organization is determined by the premium placed on the relationship by the two parties involved.

According to Wainaina, et al (2014) the social exchange theory holds that, the major force in interpersonal relationships is the satisfaction of the self-interest of the parties involved (the employees and organizations). Employees naturally expect benefits from their organizations in form of financial rewards, status enhancement and emotional comfort while in return, their commitment to the organization would be the cost in terms of time spent in the workplace and lost opportunities.

Empirical Review

Waddock, (1999), concluded in a study that acknowledging the importance of community as a basis on which success and survival can be achieved when employees bring mind, heart, soul and

boot into union, individually and collectively. This implies that for organizations to achieve the maximum participation from employees there must be a visible display of total commitment or a transformation of the employees that reflect the ideals of the organization.

Several studies conclude that leaders that are more developed in terms of their spirituality are more effective (Fry 2003, Fry, Vitucci & Cedillo, 2005; Rego and Cunha, 2008).

In another study, Brown (2003), concludes that workplace spirituality provides a kind of cure for what he terms the “ills of modern management”. While Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, (2004) conclude that workplace spirituality is a way of recapturing the trust between employer and employee, supposedly lost with the alienation that is triggered by the dehumanized practices that accompanied processes like downsizing, abuse of workers and other actions that breach the psychological contracts.

Milliman, et al (2003) in a study on how workplace spirituality explains attitudes and organizational commitment established a positive connection between spirituality at work and attitude of employees towards improved work performance.

In another study on the typology of workplace commitment elements and antecedents affecting organizational effectiveness, Fornes and Rocco (2010) concluded that workplace spirituality played a positive impact on the employee’s attachment to the organizational.

Duchon and Plowman (2005) in a study of medical units concluded that work-unit performance is associated with work-unit spirituality.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted in this study focusing on the public health institutions in Rivers State as the study population. Rivers State comprises 23 Local Government Areas with each of the local government areas having a public health institutions and this constitutes the target population. The accessible population was five of the LGA’s situated at the upland.

Data obtained from the Rivers State Ministry of Health, indicated that the five LGA’s have a total of 1922 employees. This number of employees were factored into the Taro Yamene model (Baridam 2010) to determine the sample size of the study as 331.

Research Instrument

The research instrument for this study was a researcher designed questionnaire divided into two sections. Section A contained 6 questions that addressed the bio-data of respondents while section B contained 14 questions that addressed the main thrust of the study with the aid of simple close-ended questions adopting the 5-point Likert scale of strongly agree with a 5 point score to disagree with a score of 1 point.

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was subjected to a face validity. The instrument was assessed by acclaimed Scholars with organizational behaviour and operations research background. A pilot test was conducted resulting to the internal consistency of the items as they relate to the study area and determined via a test re-test approach which yielded satisfactory composite alpha value of .86 (Nunnaly & Bernstein, 1994).

Data Analysis Techniques

The researcher used the spearman rank order correlation coefficient to establish the relationship

between the independent and dependent variables. The effect of the moderating variable on the relationship between the dependent and independent variables was tested with the hierarchical multiple regression analysis there were selection with use of the SPSS version 22 (statistical package for social sciences) to analyse the results.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Response Rate

331 copies of the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents. 301 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved but only 287 copies were useable constituting a response rate of 86%. The responses to the questionnaire were analysed with descriptive statistics and the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient and hierarchical multiple regression analysis.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

Demographics of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender of Respondents		
Female	178	62.0
Male	109	38.0
Age of Respondents		
less than 30	79	27.5
31-40yrs	141	49.1
41 and above	67	23.4
Marital Status of Respondents		
Single	61	21.2
Married	173	60.3
Widow/separated	53	18.5
Educational Qualification of Respondents		
Masters and above	25	8.7
First degree	139	48.4
OND/HND	72	25.1
School certificate	51	17.8
Distribution of Respondents by years in service		
less than 5years	65	22.6
6-10yrs	139	48.5
11 years and above	83	28.9
Total	287	100

Source: field Survey, 2017

The male respondents were 109 representing 38% of the respondents while the female were more in number with 178 constituting 62%. The implication this distribution implies that majority of the employers in the health sector are women. 141 of the respondents constituting 49.1% of the total fell within the range of 31yrs to 40yrs. Those in the age bracket of 41 years and above were

67, constituting 23.4% of the respondents, while those in the age catering of 30 years below were 79, constituting 27.5%. This result implies that majority of the workers were not above the age thresh of 40 years indicating a youthful impression. The distribution of the marital status, represents 173 of the respondents who are married, constituting 60.3% while 61 of them are single constituting 21.2% of the respondents. Those in the separated widowed category are 53, representing 18.5 %. The implication of the marital status distribution explains a set of employees that are classified as being responsible in the African context with families at their disposition who must be catered for. The educational level statistics indicates that 48.4% of the respondents had first degrees constituting 139 of the sample size. The least were those with Master’s degree who were 25, constituting 8.7%. Those with school certificate were 51, constituting 17.8%. Those with OND/HND were 72 constituting 25.1%. The statistics of the years in service of the respondents indicate that 48.5% of them constituting 139 fall within the duration bracket of 6-10 years while those in the category of 11years and above are 28.9% constitutes 83 respondents. Those in the category of 5 years and below are 65 constituting 22.6% of the respondents. The implication of this statistics is that majority of the respondents (77.4%) fall under the category of 6 years and above indicating that the respondents are aware of the gains of the source of their livelihood.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The first hypothesis states that, there is no significant relationship between meaningful work and employee affective commitment.

Table 2: Test of Hypothesis One

		Meaningful work	Affective Commitment
Spearman's rho	Meaningful work		
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.762**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	287	287
Affective Commitment	Affective Commitment		
	Correlation Coefficient	.762**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	287	287

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2017

Table 2 represents the result from the test of hypotheses one that there is no significant relationship between meaningful work and employee affective commitment (rho =.762; sig =.000) where correlations is significant at the 0.05 level.

The findings revealed a significant correlation between meaningful work and employee affective commitment. These findings support the works of Rego, Cunha and Souto (2007); Rego and Cunha, (2015) and Harrinton, et al, (2001).

Hypothesis 2: The second hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between alignment with organizational values and employee affective commitments.

Table 3: Test of Hypothesis Two

			Alignment with organizational values	Affective Commitment
Spearman's rho	Alignment with organizational values	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.126**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.033
		N	287	287
	Affective Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.126**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.
		N	287	287

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2017

Table 3 represents the result from the test of hypotheses two that, there is no significant relationship between alignment with organisation values and employee affective commitment. (rho=.126; sig= 0.33) where correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The findings reveal a significant relationship but no correlation between alignment with organization values and employee affective commitment. These finding supports the contributions of Krishnakumar and Neck (2002), Ashmos and Duchon, (2000), Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002).

Hypothesis 3: This hypothesis states that organizational culture will not moderate the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee affective commitment.

Table 4: Hypothesis Three: Moderating role of organizational culture on Workplace spirituality and employee affective commitment.

Control Variables			Workplace Spirituality	Employee affective commitment	Organizational Culture
-none ^a	Workplace Spirituality	Correlation	1.000	.525	.623
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		df	0	285	285
	Employee affective commitment	Correlation	.725	1.000	.654
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		df	285	0	285
Organizational Culture	Correlation	.623	.654	1.000	
	Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	
	df	285	285	0	
Organizational Culture	Workplace Spirituality	Correlation	1.000	.628	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	.000	
		df	0	284	
	Employee affective	Correlation	.628	1.000	
		Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.	

commitment	df	284	0
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a. Cells contain zero-order (Pearson) correlations.

SPSS output, Version 20 – Field Survey, 2017

The output of table 4 reveals a weak positive relationship between workplace spirituality and employee affective commitment while control variable organizational culture is statistically ($r(285) = .628, n = 287, P = .000$); the zero order examined the effect of organizational culture on the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee affective commitment. Also, when organizational culture is not controlled, the result revealed a significant but weak correlation between the variables ($r(284) = .628, n=287, P = .000$). This implies that organizational culture has little influence in moderating the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee affective commitment thereby rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternate hypotheses. This findings support the positions of Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004) and Rego and Cunha, (2015) that the presence of certain values and cultural traits (e.g. benevolence, dignity, fulfilment, hope honesty, humanness etc) create an environment that provides for engaging the whole person in the work process.

Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations

This study sought to examine workplace spirituality and employee affective commitment among public health workers in Rivers State Nigeria. The main thrust of the study is to ascertain how workplace spirituality can serve as a basis for a shift in the poor attitude to work of public office employees mostly in the public health sector as a representative of the general work-force. Three hypotheses were formulated and statistical tested. Hypothesis 1 states that, there is no significant relationship between meaningful work and employee affective commitment. This was tested with the spearman rank order correlation coefficient. The hypothesis was rejected at the null form while the alternate was accepted. The implication is that, there is a significant relationship between meaningful work and employee affective commitment.

Hypotheses two sought to establish the relationship between alignment with organizational values and employee affective commitment. The hypothesis was accepted at the alternate form, implying that, there is a significant relationship between alignment with organizational values and employee affective commitment.

The third hypotheses sought to establish the role of organizational culture as a moderating variable. The findings revealed a significant correlation between workplace spirituality and employee affective commitment, while organizational culture has a significant but weak correlation between workplace spirituality and employee affective commitment.

Based on the foregoing, this study concludes that if employees in the public sector are affectively attached to their organization, they will be motivated to make greater contributions which will lead to reduced absenteeism rate, lower employee turnover, improved performance, among other advantages.

Based on the above, this study then recommends that;

- Organizations should ensure a healthy, conducive and friendly work setting to motivate and encourage the employees.

- The organization should make effort to establish a unique link with employees to ensure that their individual aspirations are easily understood with that of the organization.
- Disputes or policies that would affect the employee's lack of commitment or reduced commitment should be discouraged

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