THE CONNECTEDNESS TO THE SUPREME-BEING AS A NEW CONCEPT IN SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION IN THE WORKPLACE

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Abstract

Studying leadership especially in Muslim culture is considered as important research urgency among organizational behavior scholars. Certain leadership theory is tried to apply from Islamic point of view. One of contemporary theory that attract scholar to apply is spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership is defined as comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to intrinsically motivate self and others so they can have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership (Fry, 2003). We propose a new concept to spiritual leadership theory from an Islamic perspective that is Connectedness to the Supreme-Being. The Connectedness to the Supreme-Being is trans-personal connectedness to God or the higher power as an essential part of workplace spirituality in Islamic society. As a new concept, we need to develop its theoretical background and measurement. This paper reveals the theoretical and the measurement development of that new concept. We recruit 100 samples to pretest our proposed questionnaire. Opportunities to future research and contribution to literature on spirituality in relating to religion in the workplace are discussed.

Keywords: spiritual leadership theory, connectedness to the Supreme-Being, theory development, measurement development

1. Introduction

Spirituality in the workplace has become an interesting study especially to organizational behavior scientists, scholars and researchers. Moral hazard in business practice and financial crisis become causes people begin to realize the important spirituality in business and management. Spirituality is beginning to appear in organizational behavior textbook and to build a new special interest group in Academy of Management. Yet, the field of study is marked by all of the typical characteristics of paradigm development including a lack of consensus about a definition of workplace spirituality and the lack of clarity about boundaries of the subject in context of leadership [1]. Dimension of spirituality in the workplace believed to have a significant contribution to the further development of leadership. According to Fairholm (1998) promising new areas of research on leadership have emerged that recognize leadership as the manifestation of a leader’s spiritual core. Researchers like Cook-Greuter 2002, Sanders, Hopkin & Geroy 2003, Thomson 2000 and Wilber 2000, suggest the spiritual domain as integral component of leadership and put forth spirituality as one variable of an integrated leadership development model. The theory development of workplace spirituality and its relationship to leadership is in its infancy [1]. Fairholm (1996, 1998) was one of the first scholars to put the term spiritual and leadership together to explain spirituality in context of workplace leadership. And since then others have attempted to validate his model in order to move the field toward a theory of spiritual leadership. These are in accordance with Moxley (2000) suggestion that holistic leadership that integrates the four fundamental arenas to define the essence of human existence – the body (physical), mind (logical/rational thought), heart (emotions, feelings) and spirit – has come to a call [2].

Relevant studies regarding the management of Islamic employees mostly focus on accommodation, meeting basic needs, and anti-discrimination practices. However, few address their spiritual/motivational mechanism in leadership – work behaviors. Accommodating religious practices in the workplace becomes an important issue in organizational behavior and human resources studies. According to Gockel (2004),
applying spiritual principles to workplace practice has become an increasingly popular trend in business management circles over the last decade. There is a growing and widespread interest in exploring the spiritual dimensions of organizations among researchers and practitioners [3].

As one of religion in the world, Islam, since it is tantamount to accepting a way of life—spiritually, politically and socially, about how one must behave in family and public life—to understand how Islam values enter the workplace is apparently important (Ball & Haque, 2003). In spite of the large population of Muslims and the management practices required to accommodate their religious practices, very few studies have examined either their leadership behavior or their spiritual work motivations and attitudes. In fact, leadership in Muslim cultures is underrepresented in literature and relevant research is called for as a top priority by scholars (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Ahmed, 2014).

One of the important aspect of spirituality is a sense of making meaning through connectedness trans-personally to God or a higher power [4]. It is the purpose of this paper, to propose a new concept of trans-personal connectedness to God or a higher power, namely Connectedness to the Supreme-Being. We investigate theoretical and measurement development of the Connectedness as a new concept. With the sufficient theoretical background, we develop a new questionnaire as measurement tool and test it using a hundred business student sample. We believe that our findings contribute to organizational behavior literature especially which is from religious perspective, in this context, Islamic perspective.

2. Literature Review

Obviously, we refine the scope of the spiritual leadership process from the aspect of workplace spirituality by integrating the concept of “connectedness to the Supreme-Being,” especially for the Muslim population. According to Robbins (2005), the concept of workplace spirituality draws on topics such as values, ethics, motivation, leadership, and work/life balance [5]. Workplace spirituality recognizes that people have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work in the context of community. Organizations recognize that people seek to find meaning and purpose in their work and connect with other human beings. Designing work that is meaningful to employees, the leadership practices that emphasize a higher-order purpose and self-transcendent goal are well matched to the concept of organizational spirituality [6].

In his paper, [4] has postulated conceptualization of spirituality as a sense of making meaning through connectedness in the following dimensions: (a) trans-personally to God or a higher power, (b) inter-personally to others or environment, and (c) intra-personally within oneself [7]. Fry’s SLT [2]; [8] captured the concept of (b) connectedness “inter-personally to others or environment” in terms of the follower’s motivations of “membership,” and the extended SLT model by Chen and Li (2013) captured the concept of (c) connectedness “intra-personally within oneself” in terms of the follower’s motivation of “self-transcendence” [9]. However, the SLT does not capture the very important concept of (a) connectedness “trans-personally to God or a higher power”. Meanwhile, conceptualizations of spirituality include beliefs in and connectedness to a higher power [10]; [11] and faith and meaning derived from experience [12]; [13] and [14] stated that a belief in a higher power (God, the immaterial) who could provide for and liberate them from the evils of the world was emphasized in religious doctrine among Christian African-Americans [7]. Here, we realize that in spirituality including workplace spirituality involve the connectedness to the Supreme-Being or God.

From the perspective of the International Center for Spirit at Work (ICSW), workplace spirituality as the innate human attribute with vertical and horizontal components (ICSW, 2008). The vertical component in spirituality is a desire to transcend the individual ego or personality self, that is experienced as a conscious sense of profound connection to the Universe/God/Spirit, whereas the horizontal component is a desire to be of service to other humans and the planet [15]. The innate human attribute is connectedness to one’s self, other people, nature, universe, God, or any other supernatural power. Fry’s SLT [2]; [8] captured the horizontal component in terms of the follower’s motivations of meaning/calling in their work task and in terms of connectedness to other people (membership). The vertical component in spirituality is captured by self-transcendence in the SLT model by Chen & Li, 2013. However, there is a lack of connectedness to God in the SLT from the Islamic perspective. Meanwhile, conceptualizations of spirituality include beliefs in and connectedness to a higher power [10]; [16] and faith and meaning derived from personal experience [12]; [13], and [14] stated that a belief in a higher power (God, the immaterial) who could provide for and liberate them from the evils of the world was emphasized in religious doctrine among Christian African-Americans [7]. Here we realize that spirituality, including workplace spirituality, involves connectedness to the Supreme-Being, or God. This is especially true for Islam, where organizational behaviors have to achieve the ultimate goal of being a pleasure to Allah, the Supreme-Being [17]. We argue
that the connectedness to the Supreme-Being is an essential part of workplace spirituality in Islamic society. In other word, the connectedness inter-personally to others or environment have included in the dimension of spiritual leadership proposed by Fry et al. (2005). We added the connectedness intra-personally within oneself. Therefore, we have to consider to add another and the most important connectedness in the spirituality concept, that is trans-personally connectedness to God or the higher power, that in this paper we call the Connectedness to the Supreme-Being. This study defines the connectedness to the Supreme-Being as a desire to transcend trans-personally to God or a higher power, or to Allah in Islamic context.

In Islamic perspective, connectedness to the Supreme-Being depends on the level of one’s religious faith. The higher this level, the greater is the sense of connectedness to God. This connectedness will influence every single activity in a Muslim’s life, including his/her workplace [18]. Connectedness to God is the most important principle to which every Muslim abides by. In the context of work, connectedness will lead them to good behaviors toward other people, including supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates as well as organizations, the environment, and themselves [19]. Thus, for Muslims, it is implausible to separate religion/religiosity and spirituality from their workplaces. Therefore, we propose the concept of “connectedness to the Supreme-Being” as a very important component in the Islamic perspective toward spiritual leadership.

3. Methods

This study proposes a new development concept in term of the Connectedness to the Supreme-Being. Theoretical background has explained in Literature Review section above. We believe that arguments in the section is sufficient to build a new concept theoretically. Sequentially, we also propose a new measurement tool in term of questionnaire. As a new tool, we undergo several steps measurement development such as develop statements by summarizing from existing tools, translation process and test its reliability and validity, and last but not least we also conduct pretest. We spread the questionnaire to 150 business school student in Jakarta Indonesia and we use 100 valid responses for further process.

Because of all the questionnaires are in English, since the research will be conducted in Indonesia, the English statements are translated into Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language). One of the most important elements in undertaking research project involving the cross-cultural use of measurement instruments is the translation and validation of the instruments [20]. This research utilizes back-translation and interrater reliability score to at least .70 [21]; [9]. According to Harkness (2003), back translation was initially developed for the situation in which a researcher was not familiar with the target language but wanted some assurance that respondents were indeed being asked the same question in that language [22]. Brislin, Lonner and Thorndike (1973) recommended that an instruments be back translated at least three times, each time by a different translator [20]. Therefore, firstly, holding experiences in multi language research, especially in English and Bahasa, we translate and back translate the questionnaire items, sentence by sentence, and with the help of Paralink Online - the online translation and back-translation (http://translation2.paralink.com/translator/default.asp). Then, we ask for assistance from colleague majoring in English literature to also translate the items from English to Bahasa. She involved native English and native Indonesian person in the process. The Bahasa translation then is being translated back to English by another English literature experts (team from Translation Bureau of Padang State Polytechnic). Finally, the two translation and back-translations are reviewed by three other colleagues, majoring in English literature and management to get interrater reliability. They are all bilingual literates in English as well as in Bahasa. Since they work together as a group (the committee approach) in translation and back translation and/or individually as team member (expert team approach) in reliability interrating, these process can be called collaborative-based work translation [22].

Pretest as a pilot study of the translated instrument [20] is conducted to measure reliability and validity of the questionnaire, because pretesting of the translation is essential to ensure a reliable and accurate translation [22]. We distribute the questionnaire to business school part-time students, whose understanding in business/management and working/organization experience as well.

Statistically, we run reliability and validity test to the questionnaire. Reliability has to do with accuracy and precision of a measurement procedure [23]. We used Cronbach’s Alpha to test the reliability, with criteria: alpha greater than 0.7 (Nunnally & Bernstein (1994)) in [24]; [25]. Validity, is another characteristic for good measurement, see the extent to which a test measure what actually wish to measure [23]. We use Spearman rank correlation analysis to test the validity of the questionnaire. If the correlations are above its significant level, the statement has a construct validity or statistically the construct contains internal consistency which such statements measure the same aspect.
Furthermore, construct validity is to answer the question what accounts for the variance in the measure, to attempt to identify the underlying constructs being measured and determine how well the test represents them. Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to validate the construct with GFI (Goodness of Fit Index) and NNFI (Non-Normed Fit Index), greater than 0.80 [9], greater than 0.90 [21] with RMR (Root Mean Square Residual) value less than or close to 0.05.

4. Discussion

This study reveals a new concept in spirituality in the workplace. We argue that the spirituality, it is implausible to separate religion or religiosity with spirituality especially contextually for Muslim in their daily activity including in workplace. We integrate the Connectedness to the Supreme-Being to spirituality in the workplace as the trans-personal connectedness to the God or higher power – one of important dimension suggested by Reed (1992), the other two are inter-personally to others or environment and intra-personally within oneself that have been captured by [2]; [8] and [9]. This study defines the connectedness to the Supreme-Being as a desire to transcend trans-personally to God or a higher power, or to Allah in Islamic context. In this study we subscribe to Fry’s (2008) model and endeavor to incorporate that model into our study. We consider our perspective parallel to, and in harmony with, Fry’s (2008) model in which inner life is proposed as antecedent for SLT. Fry (2008) believe that linking between spirituality and leadership is the recognition that we all have an inner voice that is ultimate source of wisdom [26]. Observing, witnessing, and cultivating this inner voice as it relates to tapping into or drawing upon a higher power is often the purpose of an inner life or spiritual practice. This study identifies “connectedness to the Supreme-Being” as antecedent of SLT, and can be considered as the “inner life” of Fry’s (2008 model) for Muslim leaders and employees from an Islamic aspect.

We applied a new measurement for the connectedness to the Supreme-Being for the present study. Even though, there was Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality [27] in health area that we believe it can be used in organizational behavior area, we consider to develop the measuring instrument that is in accordance with the objective of this study. According to [4], trans-personal connectedness to God or a higher power is one dimension of connectedness/relatedness in spirituality [7]. The Fetzer Institute has summarized some key domains to measure religiousness/spirituality [27]. Even it was for health area, we believe it can be used in organizational behavior area, because of its universality and value-based human behavior. We gather some of those key domains and the three fundamental teachings of Islam—aqidah or faith/strong belief, ibadah or worship, and akhlaq or behavior [28] to propose connectedness to the Supreme-Being in the questionnaire. Table 1 The Proposed the Connectedness to the Supreme-Being Questionnaire presents 11 statements to measure connectedness: 10 statements in three Islamic dimensions and one overall self-ranking statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension (Islamic)</th>
<th>Dimension (existed)</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Item Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faith Belief</td>
<td>I believe in God</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I believe there is a life after death</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Whole my approach to the right and the wrong in life is based on my religion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship Daily spiritual experience</td>
<td>I feel connected to God, and feel strong and comfort because of support and guided from God</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel thankful for my bless, feel harmony/joy and desire closer to God</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious practices (Org &amp; non org)</td>
<td>I always do everyday prayer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I always read the Holy Book or other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 The Proposed the Connectedness to the Supreme-Being Questionnaire
I always attend religious service and take part in activities at a place of worship 8

I have a certain religion 9

I try hard to carry my religious belief over into all my other dealing in life 10

I am a religious/spiritual person 11

We conducted pretest to the translated into Bahasa questionnaire to measure reliability and validity [20]. We distributed the questionnaire to 150 business school part-time students in Jakarta Indonesia, whose understanding in business/management and working/organization experience as well. 123 questionnaires was back, and we excluded 9 respondent as outlier for several reasons, such as missing value, too extreme value and “the only full time students”. For pretest we took 100 respondent’s response to further reliability and validity measure.

All 11 questionnaire items were tested. We excluded some items that had loading factors less than 0.5 and or had corrected item totals less than 0.5. As a result, we deleted two items of connectedness to the Supreme-Being. Those are item no.7, “I always read the Holy Book or other religious literature”, and item no.8,”I always attend religious service and take part in activities at a place of worship”. These two items are in religious practices (organizational and non-organizational) dimension. We also excluded one more item from connectedness (item number 11: overall self-ranking) since that item was prepared as a general question for confirmation purpose of the connectedness variable. We use that item later in analyzing this newly proposed variable. Descriptive statistics of respondents’ responses are shown in Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Items.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO. ITEM</th>
<th>MEAN</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 (strongly disagree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>0.522</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>0.545</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.562</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>0.545</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>0.533</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>0.578</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.692</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.772</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>0.698</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>0.627</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.739</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We re-run statistical tests of the 8 questionnaire items for the reliability of this instrument that reached very satisfactory levels (Cronbach’s alpha of .92). Based on responses from our research subject, average score of the connectedness construct is 4.27 and all the more, the overall self-ranking reaches 4.20 of average score, shows that it proves that the connectedness is important for employee in the workplace.

Further statistical test is used to verify the validity of the connectedness construct using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The analytic results for the construct are as follows: \( \chi^2 \) is 198.60 with df. 20; GFI is 0.87; AGFI is 0.73; NNFI is 0.92; CFI is 0.95; and RMR is 0.028. All items can be extracted into only one factor with variance accumulation 63.07%. The results indicate a good fit for the construct. Furthermore AVE and CR for this construct are 0.70 and 0.95 respectively, thus its convergent validity is satisfactory. We encourage this instrument can be used for the future study.
Most of Spiritual Leadership Theory (SLT) research have been conducted in developed country such as western country and Chinese-based country such as China, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong with non-Islamic culture background. This study is one of the few research that carried out in developing country, Indonesia with the Islamic cultural background. As we known that recently Indonesia is the biggest Moslem country in the world. Religious life greatly influences the behavior of Indonesian people. Inevitable, this influences the employee’s organizational behavior.

The new concept of the connectedness to the Supreme-Being variable is contribution to theory of spirituality and religion in the workplace. Boscaglia et al. (2005) stated that conceptualizations of spirituality include belief in and connectedness to a higher power [7]. More specific, in Schulz’s 3 Dimension Model of Spirituality, a vertical element involving connectedness to a higher power (God, belief and/or value) was one of the three dimensions of spirituality [11]. Conceptualization of spirituality that stem from the theoretical work of Reed (1992), postulated that spirituality is a sense of making meaning through dimensions of connectedness trans-personally to God or a higher power [4]. Empirical work among Christian African American conveyed that spirituality is a concept whereby transcendence or connectedness to God or a higher power is a critical component [29]. Thus, the centrality of spirituality among Christian African American as a personal relationship with God [30], drives the values, the derived meaning from daily experiences, and the expression of connectedness to others and to self [4]. Cone (2002) stated that a belief in a higher power (God, the immaterial) who could provide for and liberate them from the evils of the world was emphasized in religious doctrine among Christian African Americans [7].

Up here, our understanding about spirituality is complete. Since, theoretical work of Reed (1992) postulated that spirituality is a sense of making meaning through dimensions of connectedness (a) trans-personally to God or a higher power, (b) inter-personally to others or environment, and (c) intra-personally within oneself [7]. Trans-personally relationship to God or higher power is reflected from the connectedness to the Supreme-Being. Inter-personally relationship to others or environment is drawn from follower’s motivation toward work and organization. And, intra-personally relationship within oneself is figured out from the intrinsic motivation. So that, we can argue that spirituality and religion/religiousity must be integrated.

The opportunities for future study are widely open now. We encourage researchers to use the connectedness to the Supreme-Being as a new variable in organizational behavior field of study. It could be by integrating this new variable with several organizational variable especially spiritual leadership. There should be research relate this variable to such as motivation, work ethic or organizational outcome like organizational citizenship behavior. More research will lead to contribution to organizational behavior literature.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, this study reveals new concept in spirituality in the workplace in term of the Connectedness to the Supreme-Being. We seek for strong theoretical background for underlying the concept development. We argue that the connectedness to the Supreme-Being can be assumed as trans-personally connectedness to God or higher power which Reed (1992) postulated as one dimension of spirituality. Two other dimensions (inter-personal and intra-personal) have been captured by scholars in their research. The trans-personal connectedness is left behind. Our finding reveals that the Connectedness to the Supreme-Being is important in Muslim daily activities including in the workplace. We also develop a new questionnaire as measurement tool. Reliability and vaidity of the questionnaire are support statistically. We convince the questionnaire can be used in future research. As a new concept, we encourage researchers to use and verify this variable in widely organizational behavior research area especially in relating with spiritual leadership. This effort will contribute more to literature of organizational behavior field of study.

References


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