

**WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AND COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOUR
(CWB): A MALAYSIAN PERSPECTIVE****Norazuwa Mat**School of Business Management
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nooraida@usm.my**ABSTRACT**

The concept of counter-productive work behaviour (CWB) has been the focus attention from organisation researchers and practitioners. Counterproductive work behaviours are prevalent among employees in many organizations today, but much of it apparently goes unnoticed, unreported, or both. With regard to these CWB issues, is it caused by an individual's lack of control or spirituality resulting in undesirable acts? Should a person be naturally aware of the ways to control their behaviour? According to the Counselling Theory by Imam Al-Ghazali, apart from an individual's ability to control his / her emotions, an individual also should properly be able to control his / her heart that is inner spirituality. The heart is a source of the good and bad of human life. Once the heart is damaged, the lust is inclined towards the negative and the soul is not at peace. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between work spirituality and counterproductive work behavior. Results from regression analyses indicated that two dimensions in workplace spirituality (meaning at work and work unit community) are making unique contribution to the prediction of CWB. Work unit community is the strongest influence to counterproductive work behaviour.

Field of Research: *Counter productive work behaviour, workplace spirituality, meaning at work, work unit community*

1. Introduction

Counterproductive work behaviour is prevalent among employees in many organizations today, but much of it apparently goes unnoticed, unreported, or both (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Robinson & Greenberg, 1998). Atkinson (2000) in his research suggested that there might be a possibility that organisations will not report counterproductive work behaviour to protect the reputation of the

organisations concerned. Nevertheless, the regularity and widespread occurrences of CWB, which include unlawful, and other questionable behaviours in organisations often receive public attention through the frequency of media reports which are often based on reliable sources. These include cases involving dishonesty (Utusan Malaysia, 2010), bribery (Berita Harian, 2010) and poor work attitude (Utusan Online, Disember 2006).

Past research on counterproductive work behaviour has identified certain variables which are commonly correlated with these behaviours. Among these variables are job satisfaction (Huiras et.al., 2000; Kulas et.al., 2007); work-related stress (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001); leadership, organizational structure, organizational culture and ethical climates (Appalbaum, 2005; Boye & Jones, 1997; Schein, 1985). Studies in the past have cited organisational change as one of the factors that will reduce employees' satisfaction and lead to employees' retaliation in the form of deviant behaviour at the workplace (Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). While many studies have been conducted on the antecedents of employee CWB fewer studies have focused on the influence of workplace spirituality on deviant behaviour.

The Federation of Malaysian Consumers Association (FOMCA) has also reported that they have received a lot of complaints concerning the quality of service not only in the public service at the common level but also in the professional group (Berita Online, Julai 2008). Research by the Royal Malaysian Police on police officers who are found in violation of discipline under the Public Officers Rules (Offense and Discipline) 1993 in the years 2008-2009 held that among the causes of violation of discipline in PDRM are irresponsibility; greed; materialism; failure to control lust; weakness in self-control / finance / family and career; weak self-discipline; and lack of reason / self knowledge (Royal Malaysia Police Report, 2009).

With regard to these CWB issues, is it caused by an individual's lack of control or spirituality resulting in undesirable acts? Should a person be naturally aware of the ways to control his or her behaviour? According to the Counselling Theory by Imam Al-Ghazali, apart from an individual's ability to control their emotions, an individual also should properly be able to control their heart that is inner spirituality. The heart is a source of good and bad of human life. Once the heart is damaged, the lust is inclined towards the negative and the soul is not at peace (Sarmani and Mingal, 2008). Thus, this study attempts to answer the following question: Does workplace spirituality have a relationship with counterproductive work behaviour?

2. Literature Reviews

2.1 Counterproductive Work Behaviour (CWB)

Organisational studies generally focus on the positive-normative behaviour of individuals that result in constructive benefits for organisations such as teamwork, increasing job satisfaction, organizational commitment and performance. The "darker" side of organizational behaviour has not received the same attention and researchers are beginning to focus on these critical behaviours that leave a profound effect on the organization and its individual members. There are several opportunities for employees to contribute value to their organization, but there are also instances where employees can engage in behaviours that are in opposition to the organization's goals. An accepted term for this type of behaviour is counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) which is defined as any intentional behaviour on

the part of an organization member viewed by the organization as contrary to its legitimate interests (Sackett & DeVore, 2001).

The literature of employee counterproductive behaviour at workplace is extensive for the past 10 years. CWB is a subject that has been researched from different angles and viewpoints using different labels to refer to a partially overlapping set of destructive acts. Some of the well-known areas of study that are linked to counterproductive behaviours are deviant behaviour, antisocial behaviour, dysfunctional behaviour, and organizational misbehaviour.

2.2 Workplace Spirituality

The study of workplace spirituality has gained the interest of many researchers in recent years because of a wide variety of changes. These include the loss of psychological contract, massive layoffs, increased use of technology, and physiological abuse of workers. The consequences are that morale has deteriorated causing people to seek out new ways to re-energize themselves (Harrington, 2002). People are increasingly finding themselves spending a greater part of their day at work. The office has become a place where increasing numbers of people use it as a base for a variety of daily activities that not only include having meals, exercising, building personal relationships and resting but also a place where their kids spend their after-school hours.

Today people are so far removed and out of touch with their surroundings that the lack of continuity and connection in so many areas of their lives have caused them to unsurprisingly look to their organisations as a one-stop communal centre. In recent surveys it was found that Western managers and leaders preferred a deeper sense of meaning and fulfilment on the job than to money or vacation time (Fry, 2003).

Research with a central focus on workplace spirituality has found that delving into and understanding spiritual issues will not only facilitate greater self-discovery but also a greater feeling of personal security. (Anderson, 1999; Kolodinsky et al., 2003). This new found self-realization and security is believed to improve the self-esteem of employees and perceptions about their work environment, especially those perceptions viewed as political unfair and uncaring (Kolodinsky et al., 2003). Therefore, spirituality might be a contributing factor to boosting employees' inner security holistically even if the external organisational environment is not secure. Mitroff & Denton (1999a, 1999b) in their research observes that in their spiritual journey, people face a great struggle in finding the true meaning of their work. Workplace spirituality is gaining momentum in response to a rising and increasing recognition for the need to have spirituality in the workplace. This is evident as companies such as Taco Bell and Pizza Hut are seeing the good and appreciating the spiritual teachings from the perspective of churches, temples, and mosques.

There are more than 70 definitions of spirituality at work, and still, there is no widely accepted definition of spirituality. The fuzziness, ambiguity, and the complexity of the construct make spirituality a difficult research topic to investigate (Karakas, 2010).

Leaders are also going through a transformational change in their personal and professional lives as they increasingly embrace and integrate spirituality into their work. It is generally agreed that this

integration has positively affected their relationships and effectiveness (Neal, 2001). Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) provide a scientific perspective on workplace spirituality and define it as: "A framework of organisational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected in a way that provides feelings of compassion and joy".

Eisler and Montuori (2003) asserted that spirituality is abstracted from daily life, and enables people to withdraw from what is occurring in their external environment. Specifically, it is believed that spirituality may help individuals cope with the chronic injustice and miseries that are inherent in some relationships.

Ashmos and Duchon (2000) identified a model composed of three levels; the *individual level*, the *work-unit level*, and the *organizational level*. The individual level was composed of three primary components. The first component, *inner life*, referred to capturing the individual's hopefulness, awareness of personal values, and concern for spirituality. From this the individual created *meaning at work*, which represented items that captured a sense of what was important, energizing, and joyful about work. The third component of the individual level was the *condition for community*, which represented the fellowship dimension of spiritual development.

The second level was the work unit level, which consisted of two primary components: *work unit as community* and *positive work unit values*. Work unit as community represented the extent to which the work unit was encouraging and caring. *Positive work unit values* referred to the extent to which the individual identified with the work unit's values, goals, and mission.

The third level identified was the organizational level. One of its primary components was *organizational values*; the individual's perception of the values of the organization.

1.3 The Relationship between Workplace Spirituality and CWB

Spirituality in the workplace is increasingly being encouraged and applied by employers today as a means to boost employee morale, commitment, and productivity. Research suggests that a free expression of spirituality at work will have a holistic effect on the employees enabling them to feel holistically complete, and resulting in a high level of personal fulfilment and morale that will increase organizational performance (Turner, 1999; Burack, 1999). Bento (1994) concluded that spiritually-empowered employees not only possess characteristics that include trustworthiness, bravery, and empathy but exhibit these characteristics in their work environment. Similarly Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) further emphasised that the promotion of workplace spirituality can lead to an increase in organisational performance especially in the areas of creativity, honesty, personal fulfilment, and commitment.

Studies have shown that the developmental growth and manifestation of workplace spirituality may not only address and resolve the issues of stress and burnout, but also promote the well-being of employees. Reave (2005) references the review done by Emmons (1999) which is a summary of seven studies, reports "a significant correlation between spirituality and mental health indices of life satisfaction, happiness, self esteem, hope and optimism, and meaning in life".

Increasing evidence in spirituality research reinforces the belief that workplace spirituality programmes does indeed result in positive outcomes at the personal level in the workplace such as increased joy, serenity, job satisfaction, and commitment (Fry, 2003; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003; Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Reave, 2005). Milliman et.al. (2003) found a positive correlation between workplace spirituality and employee attitudes such as commitment to the organization, intrinsic work satisfaction, and job involvement.

The definition of spirituality suggests that an individual's sense of spirituality causes differing reactions to negativity in the work environment. In particular, spirituality is expected to influence CWB. For example, employees who perceive politics, injustice, a lack of support, and organizational violations, are likely to develop a negative attitude towards the organization. On the other hand, a strong sense of spirituality will reduce CWB through an individual's innate sense of purpose guiding his/her life, and the belief that there exists a higher meaning to the events that occur in all aspects of life. Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996 noted that a greater sense of control, meaning and deeper intimacy is associated with stronger spiritual beliefs.

According to Neck and Milliman (1994) spiritual values positively affect an individual's well-being and job performance. There is increasing research data to show that organisations that promote spiritual and caring work environments not only enjoy the benefits of having employees who are less apprehensive and more principled but also the added benefit of seeing the increase in commitment, productivity, adaptability and innovation in their employees (Eisler & Montouori, 2003).

Further evidence shows that programme promoting workplace spirituality foster favourable personal outcomes that not only induce the sources of pleasure and contentment such as increased joy, peace, serenity, job satisfaction, and commitment but also improved productivity and reduced absenteeism and turnover (Fry, 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Thus, based on the studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- H1 There is a relationship between workplace spirituality (*Conditions for Community, Meaning at Work, Work Unit Community*) and CWB.

3. Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature review, the theoretical framework was proposed. The dependent variable is counterproductive work behaviour and independent variable is workplace spirituality. The relationships of the above mentioned variables are depicted in Figure 1.

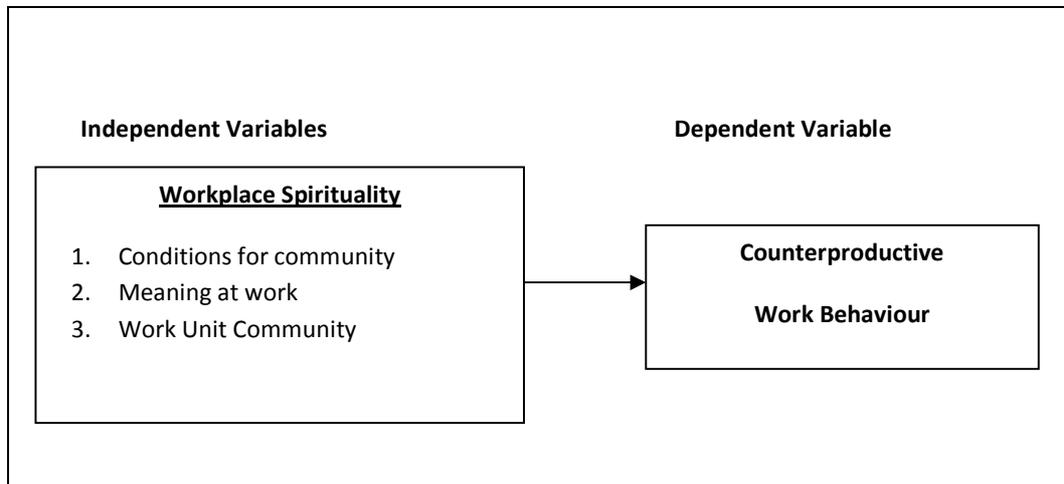


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

4. Methodology

4.1 Population and Sampling Frame

The population of this study comprises of supporting employees (technical and administration) of one of the Malaysian Public Universities located in Northern Malaysia. The name of the university has not been stated to protect its anonymity. The total populations of the study were 1686 employees and the unit of the analysis was the employee themselves. According to Babbie (1995), the sampling frame is the list of elements from which a sample is selected. The total number of employees is based on the official staff directory that can be accessed from the university's portal.

4.2 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used for the research is the disproportionate stratified random sampling. Stratified random sampling involves a process of stratification or segregation, followed by random selection of subjects from each stratum. The population is first divided into mutually exclusive groups that are relevant, appropriate and meaningful in the context of the study. The subjects drawn from each stratum can be either proportionate or disproportionate to the number of elements in the stratum. For proportionate stratified random sampling, the researcher may decide to include in the sample 20% of members from each stratum, while for disproportionate stratified random sampling, the number of subjects from each stratum can be altered, while keeping the sample size unchanged (Cavana, et al, 2001).

In this study, disproportionate stratified random sampling is used because the redistribution of the numbers in the strata is considered more appropriate and representative for the study than the previous proportionate sampling design which would not truly reflect how the employees at the respective categories would truly respond. In this study, 337 questionnaires were distributed.

4.3 Research Instrument

An instruments developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) was adopted to measure workplace spirituality. This study only focused on three dimensions (*Conditions for Community, Meaning at Work, and Work Unit Community*) because they have been seen as important in previous studies of workplace spirituality (Milliman et al., 1999; Mitroff & Denton, 1999b). A 5-point Likert scale format ranged:- (1) = *Strongly Disagree*, (2) = *Disagree*, (3) = *Neutral*, (4) = *Agree* and (5) = *Strongly Agree* was used to assess reactions to the items.

The dependent variable in this study consists of interpersonal and organizational counterproductive behaviours. Both counterproductive work behaviour scale designed by Bennet and Robbinson (2000) were adopted. Self reports were used because supervisors and co-workers probably were not aware of these behaviours as they are often carried out in private attracting little or no attention at all. Research has shown self-reports to be reliable measures of behaviour (Spector, 1992) and other previous studies have proven the accuracy and reliability of self-reports when compared to other methods of assessment of counterproductive work behaviour (Fox and Spector, 1999). Respondents were asked to state how many times they had indulged in the stated behaviour in the past 12 months. A 5-point Likert scale format ranging from:- (1) = *Never*, (2) = *Once*, (3) = *Several Times*, (4) = *Often* and (5) = *Very often* were used. Table 1 shows the instrumentation for variables studied.

Table 1: Instrumentation of study variables

Variables	No. of items	Source	Reliability
Counterproductive work behaviour	18	Bennet and Robbinson (2000)	.86
Workplace spirituality	18	Ashmos & Duchon (2000)	.86

4.4 Data Collection Method

In order to distribute the questionnaires to 337 respondents, self administered techniques were used by the researcher. This technique was chosen because any clarification needed by the respondents can be explained immediately and the data could be collected from the respondents within a short period of time after the questionnaires were distributed. On average, it took the respondent 15 minutes to answer the questionnaire. The respondents' anonymity were assured. Therefore no name and code numbers were given in the survey and all responses remained anonymous. Every returned questionnaire was sealed in an envelope that was provided together with the questionnaires. A clear instruction in the cover letter stressed that participating in this survey was confidential and all the answers given will be used to fulfill academic needs only. It will not jeopardize their career in the organization. Such information needed to be included in the cover letter to facilitate a higher response rate (Babbie, 1990). Every respondent was also given a souvenir as a token of appreciation for their participation in this research.

5. Findings & Discussion

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Frequency analysis was used to examine the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The study indicates that from the total of 258 respondents, 123 of them (47.7%) were male while the remaining were female. In terms of age, 113 respondents (43.8%) were between 20-30 years, whereas 72 respondents (27.9%) were within the age of 31-40 years, 51 respondents (19.8%) are within the age of 41-50 years. Only 22 respondents were over 51 years old and represent 8.5% from the total respondents. None of the respondents were 20 years and below.

In terms of marital status, 72 (27.95%) respondents are single, 176 (68.2%) are married and others 10 (3.9%). Based on the level of education, 33 (12.8%) respondents hold Bachelor Degree, 111 (43.0%) STP/STPM/Diploma, 92 (35.7%) SPM and 22 (8.5%) SRP/Certificate. Based on tenure ship, 28.3 % of the respondents were less than 5 years, 85 (32.9%) 5-10 years, 34 (13.2%) 11 – 15 years, 15 (5.8%) 16 – 20 years and 51 (19.8%) more than 20 years. In term of scheme, 131 respondents (51.6%) are administrative staff while the remaining are technical staff (48.4%). Table 2 summarizes the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table2: The Respondents' Demographic Profile

Demographic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Gender	Male	123	47.7
	Female	135	52.3
2. Age	20 years and below	-	-
	20 - 30 years	113	43.8
	31 - 40 years	72	27.9
	41 - 50 years	51	19.8
	51 years and above	22	8.5
3. Marital Status	Single	72	27.9
	Married	176	68.2
	Others	10	3.9
4. Level of Education	Master	-	-
	Bachelor Degree	33	12.8
	STP/STPM/Diploma	111	43.0
	SPM	92	35.7
	SRP/Certificate	22	8.5
5. Tenure	Less than 5 years	73	28.3
	5 – 10 years	85	32.9
	11 – 15 years	34	13.2
	16 – 20 years	15	5.8
	More than 20 years	51	19.8
6. Scheme	Administration (N)	131	51.6
	Technician (C, F & J)	125	48.4

5.2 Reliability Test

In this study, all the independent variables and dependent variable met the requirement. The Cronbach's Alpha results for all the variables indicated as follows : Counterproductive work behavior=.91, workplace spirituality=.90

5.3 Correlation Coefficient

A correlation test was conducted to determine the relationship (direction, strength and significance) between the dependent variable (counterproductive work behaviour) and the three dimensions of workplace spirituality as independent variables (*Conditions for Community, Meaning at Work, and Work Unit Community*). The correlation matrix between CWB and dimensions of workplace spirituality is exhibited in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlations between Workplace Spirituality and Counterproductive Work Behaviour

	1	2	3	4
1. Conditions for Community (cfc)	1			
2. Meaning at Work (maw)	.681**	1		
3. Work unit community (wuc)	.694**	.633**	1	
4. CWB	-.096	-.164**	.000	-.092

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

H1_a There is a relationship between *conditions for community* and CWB.

The relationship between *conditions for community* was tested against counterproductive work behaviour. The results indicate that there was no significant negative relationship between the two variables ($r = -.096$, $n = 257$, $p > .01$). Therefore, hypothesis 1_a is not accepted.

H1_b There is a relationship between *meaning at work* and CWB.

The relationship between *meaning at work* was investigated against CWB. The results indicate that there was a negative relationship between the two variables ($r = -.164$, $n = 257$, $p < .01$). The relationship between the variables is significant although the correlation is moderate. Therefore, hypothesis 1_b is accepted.

H1_c There is a relationship between *work unit community* and CWB.

The relationship between *work unit community* was tested against counterproductive work behaviour. The results indicate that there was no relationship between the two variables ($r = .000$, $n = 258$, $p > .01$). Therefore, hypothesis 1_c is not accepted.

5.5 Multiple Regression

Multiple Regression analysis was conducted to identify which among the independent variables that explained most the dependent variable. The result is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Result of Regression Analysis of Workplace Spirituality on CWB

Variables	DV – CWB (Beta Standardization)	Sig.
▪ Conditions for Community	-.053	.580
▪ Meaning at Work	-.212	.031
▪ Work Unit Community	.243	.024

R² = .057
Adjusted R² = .035

The results indicate that only 5.7% of the variance (R square) in counterproductive work behaviour is significantly explained by the three dimensions of workplace spirituality: conditions for community; meaning at work; work unit community. Beta values in standardized coefficients are used to compare the distribution of each independent variables. Work unit community was found to be the most important factors in explaining CWB (beta value of .243), while conditions for community; meaning at work; had negative value of -.053, -.212,. Significant (sig.) value for meaning at work and work unit community were less than .05, therefore these two variables make a significant unique contribution to the prediction of the dependent variable (CWB).

6. Conclusion and Future Recommendation

Although not much is known about the relationship between workplace spirituality and CWB, the results of the study reveals that meaning at work is significantly related to CWB. It suggests that having a meaningful work could lead to a sense of purpose when performing a job. Thus management should consider redesigning and introducing jobs with interesting, stimulating and challenging in nature. If employees understand the purpose of their work and how it gives meaning to their daily job, the tendency to commit bad things or harm the organization can be eliminated. The research has also provided us with a better understanding of the relationship between workplace spirituality factors in order to enhance managerial effectiveness and organisational success. An organisation that practices management principles based on workplace spirituality that emphasis on employee wellbeing and meaning at work allows employees to engage themselves in the organisation and increase job satisfaction. Hence it is suggested that more research should be undertaken in this area.

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