

## The effects of workplace spirituality and work satisfaction on intention to leave

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### Keywords

Workplace Spirituality, Work Satisfaction, Intention to Leave

### Abstract

*The objective of this study was to examine the effects of workplace spirituality and work satisfaction on intention to leave the organization. A sample of seventy-one graduate students in the MBA program at the selected public university was gathered in October to November in 2015 for data collection by using a self-administrated questionnaire. The results indicated that workplace spirituality and work satisfaction had a significant negative effect on intention to leave at 0.01 level. In short, the findings found that workplace spirituality significantly influenced the intention to leave ( $\beta = -.295, p < .01$ ), as did work satisfaction ( $\beta = -.249, p < .05$ ). The discussion and recommendations for the further studies were also discussed.*

### Introduction

The concept of workplace spirituality has long been investigated extensively in the past years. The increasing focus on workplace spirituality is due to the significant advantages on organizations. Spirituality in the workplace refers to the efforts of employees to discover their self-actualization, to build a strong relationship with their colleagues and other people connected with work, and to have uniformity between their core value and organizational values (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Ashmos and Duchon (2000) defined workplace spirituality as "the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community." Previous research empirically showed the multi-levels of benefits of spirituality in the workplace encompassing individual and group levels. For instance, past studies that focused on individual level indicated the significant relationships among workplace spirituality and organizational commitment, work satisfaction, and intention to leave the organization (Charoensukmongkol, Daniel, & Chatelain-Jardon, 2013). In addition, work satisfaction is defined as an enjoyable feeling state resulting from the evaluation of employee's job fulfillment perception. If an employee perceives that his/ her job value is fulfilled, he/she is satisfied with the job (Mandi, Mohdzin, Mohd Nor, Sakat, & Abang Naim, 2012).

Previous studies attempted to examine the relationship between work satisfaction and intention to leave in different contexts and cultures. Intention to leave refers to the employee's intention to stay or leave the current employing organization. Most of these studies found the relationship between these two variables and also the effect of work satisfaction on intention to leave (Hong, 2009; Gatling, Kim, & Milliman, 2014; Mandi, Mohdzin, Mohd Nor, Sakat, & Abang Naim, 2012). Despite the investigation of workplace spirituality has been scrutinized increasingly in the past decade, there are still little empirical evidences on the impact of workplace spirituality and work satisfaction on intention to leave in Thai context. Thus, this study aims to explore the effects of workplace spirituality and work satisfaction on the intention to leave.

### Literature Review

Hong (2009) attempted to bond the concept of workplace spirituality to the human service field by investigating the relationship between workplace spirituality (based on Ashmos and Duchon's work), and three work related variables including job satisfaction,

intention to leave, and emotional exhaustion. A sample of 412 direct service workers at the Community Mental Health Centers in the state of Kansas was collected for this study by using the questionnaires. Workplace spirituality of service workers was measured by workplace spirituality scale of Ashmos and Duchon whereas job satisfaction and intention to leave were used the instrument developed by Quinn and Staines in 1979. By using stepwise multiple regression analysis, the results indicated that there were a positive effect of perceived workplace spirituality on job satisfaction, and a significant negative impact on intention to leave and emotional exhaustion. However, as this study used convenience sampling technique to collect data from samples, there might be questionable on the use of inferential statistics and generalization of the findings.

Mandi et al. (2012) studied the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention. The aim of their study was to find the effect of job satisfaction among employees in a local printing company in Malaysia. Thirty-six structured survey questionnaires were used for data collection. Non-executives and executives in a local printing company were distributed the questionnaires. Only thirty-two questionnaires were returned with completion with 89% of the response rate. After analyzing completed data by using Pearson's correlation, this study found the negative relationship between job satisfaction both intrinsic and extrinsic factors and turnover intention. The researchers also indicated that the job satisfaction had effected on turnover intention. Thus, they claimed that work satisfaction is an antecedent of intention to leave. However, since the researchers had used only Pearson's correlation to test the hypothesis, which showed only correlation between the two variables not causation, the conclusion on the effects of job satisfaction on turnover intention was in doubt.

Gatling, Kim, and Milliman (2014) examined the relationships between workplace spirituality, organizational commitment, and turnover intention by gathering data from 190 Starbucks supervisor in the southwest region of the U.S. Questionnaires were used for data collection by adopting the workplace spirituality scale developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000), which encompassed three dimensions - meaningful work, a sense of community, and alignment with organizational values. By using Structural Equation Modeling, the findings showed that supervisors' workplace spirituality had a significant positive effect on their organizational commitment. Supervisors' organizational commitment had a significant negative effect on their intention to leave. Also, this study found that supervisors' workplace spirituality had a significant negative effect on their intention to leave the current job.

Munda (2015) investigated the influence of workplace spirituality on quality of patient care delivered by medical professionals and turnover intention. A sample of 253 medical professionals in both large public and private hospitals in north India was gathered for data collection. The instrument used for data collection in this study was based on Ashmos and Duchon's Workplace Spirituality Scale. Stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to test the research hypotheses. The finding demonstrated that workplace spirituality was a positive predictor of quality of patient care, and a negative predictor of turnover intention in both hospitals equally.

Based on literature reviews, the past studies attempted to explore the relationships between job satisfaction and turnover intention, and workplace spirituality and intention to quite, but there was no study investigated the impacts of workplace spirituality and work satisfaction on the intention to leave especially in Thai context. Therefore, this present study proposed the research hypothesis as "*workplace spirituality and work satisfaction have a significant negative effect on intention to leave.*"

### **Methodology**

A modified version of workplace spirituality developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) had been used to measure workplace spirituality encompassing conditions for community (7-item), meaning at work (6-item), and inner life (5-item). Adjusted versions of work satisfaction (5-item) and quitting intention (3-item) developed by Babin and Boles (1998) were used for the

measurement of work satisfaction and intention to leave. Since the workplace spirituality scale developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) has widely been used in several studies in different settings and cultures in the past years (e.g. Hong, 2009; Charoensukmongkol, Daniel, & Chatelain-Jardon, 2013; Gatling, Kim, & Milliman, 2014; Munda, 2015), this instrument was practically appropriate to use in this study. Participants were gathered from MBA students at a selected public university. Only two cohorts were required to participate in this study. The reason to select only two cohorts was due to the accessibility to collect the data as students in these two cohorts had still enrolled for their courseworks at the present time. Participants were asked to rate each item of these modified version of scale to the extent in which they agreed or disagreed based on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). To ensure the meaning of each item when translated into Thai Language, a reversed translation was implemented by a professional translator. Additionally, content validity was used to validate each statement of the instrument based on the evaluation of the three experts in the management field. Based on the index of item-objective congruence (IOC), the score of more than 0.5 was acceptable. All questions of scale measurements in this study had IOC score greater than 0.5, which means that all of each statement was suitable for data collection. For the reliability, the workplace spirituality scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.703, work satisfaction had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.610, and intention to leave had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.773, respectively. According to Nunally's (1978), Cronbach's alpha of 0.60 was acceptable. To test the research hypothesis, the multiple regression analysis (MRA) was used.

### The Findings

Demographic factors of sample respondents showed that the majority of respondents was female (88.7%) with the age of 31-40 (49.3%).

To test the correlation between workplace spirituality, work satisfaction, and intention to leave, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used. Table 1 showed that workplace spirituality and work satisfaction were associated with intention to leave, and these predictors not correlated strongly with one another, thus the basic assumption of multicollinearity was suitable for the regression analysis.

Table 1 Correlation between Workplace Spirituality, Work Satisfaction, and Intention to Leave.

		SW	WS	IL
Workplace Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	1	.181	-.341**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.130	.004
	N	71	71	71
Work Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.181	1	-.303*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.130		.010
	N	71	71	71
Intention to Leave	Pearson Correlation	-.341**	-.303*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.010	
	N	71	71	71

\*Significant at 0.5 level, \*\*Significant at 0.01 level.

Multiple regression analysis was used to test if workplace spirituality and work satisfaction significantly predicted participants' rating of intention to leave. The results of the regression indicated two predictors explained 17% of variance ( $R^2 = .176$ ,  $F(2, 71) = 7.274$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As can be seen in Table 2, the workplace spirituality had a significant negative weight, indicating that respondents with higher perceived workplace spirituality scores were expected to have lower score of intention to leave. In addition, the work satisfaction had significant

negative regression weight, indicating respondents with higher scores on this scale were expected to have lower score of intention to leave. In short, the results found that workplace spirituality significantly influenced the intention to leave ( $\beta = -.295$ ,  $p < .01$ ), as did work satisfaction ( $\beta = -.249$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Table 2 Multiple Regression Analysis of Workplace Spirituality and Work Satisfaction on Intention to Leave.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error				Tolerance	VIF
Constant	7.784	1.217		6.377	.000		
SW	-.560	.212	-.295	-2.640	.010**	.967	1.03
WS	-.377	.169	-.249	-2.229	.029*	.967	1.03
n = 71							
F = 7.274		df = 2	p-value < .001	R <sup>2</sup> = .176	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> = .152		
Durbin-Watson = 1.789							

\*Significant at 0.05 level, \*\*Significant at 0.01 level. SW = Spirituality in the Workplace, WS = Work Satisfaction.

### Conclusion, Discussions, and Recommendations

This study aimed to examine the effects of workplace spirituality and work satisfaction on intention to leave. The findings showed that workplace spirituality and work satisfaction had a significant negative influence on intention to leave at 0.01 level. Therefore, the research hypothesis was confirmed. The findings were consistent with the past studies which significantly negative relationships between workplace spirituality and intention to leave and work satisfaction and intention to leave were found, respectively (Hong, 2009; Mandi et al., 2012; Gatling, Kim, & Milliman, 2014; Munda, 2015). The results demonstrated that workplace spirituality was a crucial aspect or a vital key that helps provide employees a sense of purpose, a touch of piecing together, and a feeling of meaning at work. The past study indicated that once the employees realized that the job is not the final destination, but a tool that leads them to self-actualization, and encourages them to perform an outstanding job level, then the intention to leave decreases (Munda, 2015).

The consequence of a negative effect of work satisfaction on intention to leave also demonstrated that when employees perceived that their job values were fulfilled and compatible with their expectation, they were satisfied to their jobs. Once they were satisfied to the job, they were more likely to commit to the job, and less likely to leave the job. The result of this present study reconfirmed the previous findings indicating that the more perceived work satisfaction of employees, the less intention to leave the organization. Also, this study contributed the empirical evidence for existing research in its field that workplace spirituality and work satisfaction of employees are key factors to reduce intention to leave the organization. As respondents of this present study were MBA students who worked in both public and private organizations, the implication of these findings can be advantageous for both types of organizations.

Like other studies, this present study had some limitations. As the samples of this study gathered solely from the MBA students at a selected public university, the findings of this study could not be generalized to other studies. The expansion of sample size was recommended. The investigation on the relationship between workplace spirituality and work satisfaction on intention to leave in a specific setting or organization in Thai context would be interesting for the further study. Additional relevant variables such as organizational

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commitment or employee loyalty should be added for the future study to increase more understanding on workplace spirituality. As the work satisfaction instrument received a low reliability, a revised version of this scale should be developed for the further study.

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