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Workplace spirituality and organizational commitment : A study on the public schools teachers in Menoufia (Egypt)

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Due to its significant impact on organizations' survival and success, workplace spirituality has gained popularity in both academic and work environments over the last decade. This popularity has been created and maintained because of employees' feeling of hyper stress and anxiety stemming from the very high demands and expectations imposed by their organizations. In reaction to such high targets, employees tend to increase their levels of absenteeism, leave their jobs with less provocation, raising rates of turnover, and yield very poor results in terms of work performance. This study tried to investigate the relationship between workplace spirituality dimensions and organizational commitment approaches in the Egyptian public primary schools where teachers show low level of organizational commitment. The authors distributed 200 questionnaires to collect their data and found a 75% response rate of their respondents. By analyzing their data using the statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) (version 13), they discovered that only meaningful work and sense of community had a significant correlation relationship with organizational commitment approaches (affective, continuance and normative), whereas organizational values had very weak effect on the three approaches of commitment.

Key words: Workplace spirituality, organizational commitment, affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment.

INTRODUCTION

Educational system is always seen as a paradigm for attaining economic soundness and organizational effectiveness. That is why many developing nations put a great emphasis on its educational process as a step towards their prospective development (Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003). Egypt is one of the developing countries that have tried to use education as a mechanism for accelerating its potential to reach the level of developed country (Mahrous and kortam, 2012). However, Egypt is currently facing a serious problem that affects the whole

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educational process; the majority of its teachers are leaving governmental schools in search for better work opportunities in the private sector and gulf countries. Many teachers claim that besides their low salaries, their schools do not show a sense of community. Others claim that they do not see their work to be meaningful, while the rest of them admit that they exhibit the same lack of professionalism as other governmental employees do when they mistrust their organizational values, including work slowdowns, high level of absenteeism, low productivity and high rates of turnover.

Since governmental schools are the main destination for children of Egyptian low and middle income families, this lack of commitment may harm not only the whole educational process but also the whole trials for economic reform. The researcher has considered what has been said by the teachers themselves and found that sense of community, meaningful works and organizational values are three dimensions of workplace spirituality. Accordingly, this study attempts to investigate the relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment in an attempt to find a solution for this problem.

Over the last decade, workplace spirituality has gained a currency in both academia and work arenas. This intangible asset has a considerable effect on the long term survival and maintenance of any organization (Usman and Danish, 2010). According to Altaf and Awan (2011) tough competition which takes place in our current global and local markets has fostered companies to set very high targets for their employees. Accordingly, employees feel a hyper stress and anxiety (Gupta et al., 2014). This issue causes employees' poor health and social interactions (Ahiauzu and Asawo, 2012). In such climate of suffering, building a spiritual presence of Gods' values at the workplace that is, care, affection, love and peace is vital for satisfying employees' inner lives (Daniel and Jardon, 2015). That is why, many companies that is, International Business Machines (IBM), Google and Microsoft are currently deploying spiritual lecture sessions, not only for nourishing their employees' moral and spiritual lives, but also overcoming their employees' anxiety and hyper stress (Tredget, 2001). Such companies have recently realized that only monetary rewards are not sufficient for upgrading employees' self-actualization.

From another perspective, it has been noted that there is a rarity in empirical research with respect to the relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment. Organizational commitment has been seen to be an essential element in any workplace due to its effect on outcomes such as rates of turnover, absenteeism and then effectiveness (Daniel and Jardon, 2015). Rego and Cunha (2008, P.4) stated that "in the management discourse, commitment is a central variable, given that more committed people tend to devote higher efforts to work, thus contributing to

organizational performance". Accordingly, the topic of organizational commitment has been discussed theoretically and empirically in many managerial fields such as organizational behavior and human resources management (Ahiauzu and Asawo, 2012). However, there is a need to find out the factors that influence employees' commitment in order to enhance both individual and organizational effectiveness (Fry, 2003).

Considering the limited research conducted to investigate the association between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment, this study seeks to fill in this gap and attempts to introduce an approach for enhancing organizational commitment.

Literature review

Spirituality and workplace spirituality

Because spirituality has gained popularity only during the two last decades, there is a limited amount of empirical research with respect to its impact in work place. Daniel (2014) considered changes in both demographic and religious aspects, besides the improvement in the standard of living as the main drivers for the popularity of the term spirituality in workplace. Gupta et al. (2014) saw that both stress and anxiety, derived from high targets and heavy workloads required from employees, shaped the main motives for the emergence and maintenance of this term in both the academic and working environments. Moreover, Roof (2015) highlights that the growing tendency of employees to satisfy their higher order needs especially those with high cultural and ethical concerns, necessitates increasing discourse about spirituality.

Rego and Cunha (2008), Deshpande (2012) and Alas and Mousa (2016) indicated that workplace spirituality is a reality in the business world that should not be ignored. This supports what has been highlighted by Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004) when mentioning that spirituality in workplace is a basic need for employees' personal growth due to the declining role of families, neighbor-hoods, and other societal main players. Waddock (1999) assures that bringing employees' heart, mind, body, and soul to organizations is vital for both individual and organizational success. In line with this, Alas and Mousa (2016) clarified that spirituality is a dynamic factor in building trust between employers and their employees, the matter that positively affects overall organizational performance.

While it might be thought that workplace spirituality is the same as religion, the study of Rego and Conha (2008) clarifies that spirituality relates to values; whereas religiosity relates to behaviors. Also, spirituality is much more personal, but religiosity is much more communal. Malik and Naeem (2010) added that workplace spirituality is characterized as open-minded, whereas religiosity is

viewed as close-minded and it excludes those who do not follow the same religion and do not share the same beliefs. According to Gupta et al. (2014) spirituality can be discussed but religiosity is an inappropriate subject for discussion at the workplace.

Workplace spirituality differs from the usual concept of spirituality. On one hand, spirituality may be defined as a consistent trial to find an ultimate being (Heschel, 1955). Roof (2015) defines it as "the personal relationship or experience with God or the divine that informs an individual's existence and shapes their meaning, purpose, and mission in daily life. It does not need to encompass religion nor does it by nature exclude religion".

On the other hand, 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". It could be also defined as" a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy" (Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004).

So, workplace spirituality is about connectedness (Daniel, 2014). Harrington (2004) sees that spirituality in workplace is about employees who have the same sense of purpose and meaning in their work. The concept also indicates that employees can fulfill their spirits through work (Gupta et al., 2014). That is why spiritual transformation is vital, not only because of its collaboration to employees' personal growth, but also because of its ability to build a psychological contract between employer and employee by which the employee feels valued, either on or off his job (Dniel and Jardon, 2015; Ahiauzu and Asawo, 2012).

Usman and Danish (2010) indicate that empowering the philosophy of spirituality, which counts on disseminating the universal values of ethics, norms, rules and guidance, in workplace aligns employees with their organizations for achieving success.

Also, Quatro (2004) sees that prompting spirituality promotes harmony and cooperation instead of fear at workplace.

Accordingly, the concept of spirituality has become a buzzword in modern successful businesses. Moreover, companies such as Boing, AT&T, Pizza Hut and Deloitte have launched programs to motivate their employees' spiritual identities (Fry, 2003).

Tredget (2001) declares that workplace spirituality has become a main part of any training and human resources development program.

Although workplace spirituality includes many dimensions, the researcher has chosen to discuss only three of them (meaningful work, sense of community, organizational values) in this study.

Organizational commitment

Because of the importance of organizational commitment, many studies (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Allen and Meyer, 2000; Manion, 2004; Steijn and Leisink, 2006; Zainal et al., 2010; Omer et al., 2012) discussed its context (definition, approaches and consequences). The organizational commitment definition varies from one researcher to another. Mowday et al. (1982) saw commitment as "The willingness to expend personal, temporal and psychological resources on behalf of a particular domain". They explain organizational commitment as "The extent to which an individual identifies and involved with his or her organization and/or is unwilling to leave it". Allen and Meyer (2000) defined it as "a psychological state that characterizes an employee's relationship with the organization and reduces the likelihood that he/she will leave it". Gbadamosi (2003) considers it as "identification, involvement and loyalty as well as a feeling of obligation to stay with one's organization". Haim (2007) sees organizational commitment as "a rational behavior of employees, designed to protect their occupational and employment assets in terms of salary and benefits, and as a function of tenure".

The study of Sreejesh and Tavleen (2011) considers commitment towards an organization as a matter of personal choice, but based on rational judgment. According to the study of Meyer and Allen (1991), organizational commitment encompasses three approaches: affective, normative and continuance. Allen and Meyer (2000) mentioned that affective refers to the emotional attachment to the organization, while normative commitment describes the psychological contract of values and obligations towards an organization, whereas continuance commitment points out the costs associated with leaving the organization.

Sreejesh and Tavleen (2011) stated that "affective commitment is developed when the employees become involved in and/or derive their identity from an association with the organization. Normative commitment develops when employees internalize the organizational norms through socialization; receive benefits that induce them to feel the need to reciprocate and/or to accept the terms of a psychological contract. Continuance commitment develops when the employee perceive that there are no alternatives other than to remain in the current organization".

Li et al. (2010) highlighted that the importance of organizational commitment is derived from its strong impact on organizational performance and subsequently, organizational success. Zainal et al. (2010) claimed that employees who identify with their organization tend to focus much more on their organizational survival and competiveness. That is why they do their best to attain better quality work performance and to fulfill their responsibilities in achieving higher productivity rates.

Moreover, Omar et al. (2012) highlighted that committed employees are the most valuable assets for any organization. Thus, having committed employees enhances organizational competitiveness by reducing rates of turnover and intentions to quit (Omar et al., 2012).

In a different perspective, Haim (2007) raised the argument of whether or not the organizations should keep their long-term commitment/contracts to their workplace despite the on-going technologization and globalization. He indicates that there is a growing trend towards downsizing and outsourcing of labor activities which may yield a need to restructure the meaning and measurement of the concept organizational commitment. Using Albert Hirschman's (1970) model of voice and loyalty, employees can use a range of five behavioral modes of commitment in facing organizational crisis: Exit, voice, loyalty, neglect, and silence (Haim, 2007). Whereas, Atak (2009) maintains that the following elements are the main indicators of organizational commitment: accepting the organizational mission, adopting the organizational culture (values and behaviors), feeling and showing a desire to continue membership in the organization, and exerting maximum effort to achieve organizational goods.

Education in Egypt

As said before, education is the backbone for any trial towards economic development (Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003). Accordingly, Egypt often tries to use education as a mechanism to foster its prospective advancements as explained by Mahrous and Kortam (2012). According to Hargreaves (2001), the education in Egypt has passed through three stages: the first was 1950 to 1970, the second was 1970 to 1981, and the third is 1981 till present. In the first stage (1950 to 1970), the educational programs were controlled by the principles of socialism, Arabism and national consciousness due to the 1952 revolution (Hargreaves, 2001). In the second stage (1970 to 1981), the educational system reflected a mixed economy and divided culture because of the concentrated shift towards establishing an open economy during this stage (Hargreaves, 2001). In the third stage, despite the fact that in 1995 the Egyptian ministry of education and higher education described educational reform as a matter of national survival (Hargreaves, 2001), there was and still are some negative educational social phenomena such as drug addiction, slum living conditions and children living in the streets (Soliman and Abd Elmegied, 2010).

Also, there was an initiative to training Egyptian teachers in Western countries, but this kind of educational dialogue did not continue for a long period. The halt of this educational training initiative shows a missing ability to create a real liaison with any outside resources with the capabilities of assisting Egyptian educational system reform (Soliman and Abd Elmegied, 2010).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework is designed based on a review of previous studies that had been conducted to demonstrate the relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment. In this study, the proposed independent variables are: meaningful work, sense of community and organizational values. Organizational commitment approaches (affective, continuance and normative) function as dependent variables.

Hypotheses

Based on the previous literature review, the researcher will test the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a positive connection between workplace spirituality (meaningful work, sense of community and organizational values) and affective commitment.
H2: There is a positive relationship between workplace spirituality (meaningful work, sense of community and organizational values) and normative commitment.
H3: There is a positive relationship between workplace spirituality (meaningful work, sense of community and organizational values) and continuance commitment.

Survey instruments

This quantitative research used a questionnaire in collecting the primary data. Most of questions included in the questionnaire are based on established, existing models, with some modifications made to the original questions with regards to the cultural aspect of this study sample. The questionnaire prepared for this study contained three main sections: Demographic variables, organizational commitment and workplace spirituality. A five –point Likert scale was used for all items under organizational commitment and workplace spirituality.

Section A: Demographic variables involve questions about the personal information of the targeted respondents such as gender, age, marital status, level of income and organizational tenure.
Section B: Organizational commitment based on Allen and Mayer's (1990) three dimensional model of organizational commitment, this section covers the three approaches of organizational commitment: affective, continuance and normative. This section involves three subscales and each subscale involves eight items.
Section C: Workplace spirituality based on Gupta et al. (2014) designed survey of workplace spirituality. This section is prepared to cover three selected dimensions of workplace spirituality: meaningful work, sense of community and organizational values. This section includes three subscales, the first subscale involves seven questions about meaningful work, and the second has seven questions about sense of community, whereas the third contains five questions about organizational values.

Scope of the study

Teachers who are working in public schools in Menoufia Province, Egypt are the main population sample of this study. They are chosen as a sample for this study because they represent the

category of Egyptian teachers who are working in public schools and who are likely to opt for offers from private school or to accept others from Gulf countries. Also, it deserves to be mentioned that the researcher can reach out to many teachers in this province. By dividing the population into homogenous subgroups and then taking a simple random sample from each subgroup, the researcher counts on stratified random sampling. Such adoption of stratified random sampling reduces any possible bias and at the same time ensures that the chosen simple random sample represents the general population. Since teachers who are working in Egyptian public schools are classified into five categories: junior teachers, first class teachers, alpha first class teachers, expert teachers and finally senior teachers, the use of stratified random sampling guarantees that each subgroup is represented in the chosen sample.

Since it is difficult to determine the size of population in this case, the researcher has chosen to distribute 200 sets of questionnaires to the targeted respondents. Needless to say, the sets of questionnaire will be delivered in both Arabic and English to match the abilities of all targeted respondents and to motivate them to respond.

Data analysis

For data analysis, the SPSS will be used to show the normal descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation. The SPSS Pearson correlation will be adopted to obtain the results of hypotheses testing.

Research findings

As previously stated, the researcher distributed 200 sets of questionnaires and he received responses from 150 teachers. With the help of stratified random sampling, the researcher formed the following respondents' profiles (Table 1).

Reliability analysis

The Cronbach alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of each of the variables used in the study. As depicted in Table 1, all variables have adequate levels of internal consistency and they meet the acceptable standard of 0.60 (Sekaran, 2003). In this study, the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient is 0.9777 (Table 2).

Hypothesis 1

a) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of 0.796 and the value is highly significant (P = 0.0). This highly significant positive correction coefficient proves that meaningful work positively affects teachers' affective commitment. The result ($R^2 = 0.0634$, P = 0.0) suggests that when meaningful work is assigned, there is a 63.4% increase in teachers' affective commitment (Table 3).
b) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of 0.760 and the value is highly significant (P = 0.0). This highly significant positive correlation coefficient proves that sense of community positively affects teachers' affective commitment. The result ($R^2 = 0.577$, P = 0.0) suggests that if employees work in groups with common purposes, the result is a 57.7 % increase in affective commitment (Table 4).
c) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of 0.142 and the value is highly significant (P= 0.083), showing that there is no significant statistical relationship between organizational values and affective commitment. The result ($R2 = 0.020$, P = 0.083) shows that even if there is an alignment with organizational values, there is

no increase in the level of affective commitment (Table 5).

Findings 1: Since only meaningful work and sense of community can affect affective commitment, and that organizational values have no effect, the first hypothesis is partly supported. The results show that meaningful work (0.0634) has much more effect than sense of community (0.577) on the level of affective commitment.

Hypothesis 2

a) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of 0.761 and the value is highly significant (P= 0.0).This result indicates that meaningful work positively affects continuance commitment. The result ($R^2 = 0.579$, P = 0.0) suggests that when meaningful work is assigned, there is a 57.9 % increase in teachers' continuance commitment (Table 6).
b) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of 0.755 and the value is highly significant (P = 0.0). This result proves that sense of community can positively affects continuance commitment. The result ($R^2 = 0.570$, P= 0.0) suggests that when teachers work in groups with common purposes, the result is a 57% increase in the level of teachers' continuance commitment (Table 7).
c) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of 0.184 and the values is moderately significant (P= 0.072), showing no significant effect for organizational values on the level of continuous commitment. The result ($R^2= 0.034$, P= 0.072) shows that even if there is teachers' alignment with organizational values, there is only a moderate chance that they will perceive a loss by leaving their school (Table 8).

Findings 2: Both meaningful work and sense of community affect teachers' level of continuance commitment positively, whereas organizational values have no significant effect. Accordingly, hypothesis 2 is not fully accepted. The results also show that meaningful work (0.579) has much more effect than sense of community (0.570) on the level of continuance commitment.

Hypothesis 3

a) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of 0.811 and the value is highly significant (P= 0.0).This highly significant and positive correlation coefficient implies that meaningful work can positively affect teachers' normative commitment. Specifically, the result ($R^2 = 0.658$, P = 0.0) suggests when meaningful work is assigned, there is a 65.8% increase in teachers' feeling that they are in the right organization (Table 9).
b) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of 0.813 and the value is highly significant (P = 0.0). This highly significant and positive value of correlation coefficient implies that sense of community positively affect the teachers' normative commitment. The result ($R^2 = 0.661$, P = 0.0) suggests that if teachers work in group, their feeling of obligation towards their school increases by 66.1% (Table 10).
c) The analysis results in a Pearson coefficient of 0.192 and the value is highly significant (P = 0.018).This result shows a very weak correlation between organizational values and teachers' normative commitment .The result ($R^2 = 0.037$, P = 0.018) shows that even if there is an alignment with organizational values, there is a moderate chance of increasing teachers' level of normative commitment (Table 11).

Findings 3: Both meaningful work and sense of community affect teachers' normative commitment, whereas organizational values have a very weak effect. Thus, hypothesis 3 is partly accepted. The results show that sense of community (0.661) has much more effect than meaningful work (0.685) on the level of normative

Table 1. Respondents profile.

Demographic variables	Items	Count
Gender	Male	123
	Female	27
Age	below 25 years	15
	26-30 years	30
	31-35 years	30
	36-40 years	25
	41-45 years	20
	46-50 years	20
	More than 50 years	10
Marital Status	Single	40
	Married	74
	Other	36
Level of Education	Bachelor	100
	Bachelor + Diploma	48
	Master	2
Level of Income	EGP 1200	15
	EGP 1300-2500	60
	EGP 2500-4000	65
	EGP 4000-5500	10
	Above 5500	0
Organizational tenure	Less than 1 year	0
	1-3 years	45
	4-6 years	55
	7-9 years	40
	10-12 years	10
	Above 15 years	0
Religion	Muslim	145
	Christian	5
Work Bases	Full time	150
	Part time	0

commitment.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the relationship between workplace spirituality dimensions (meaningful work, sense of community and organizational values) and organizational commitment approaches (affective, continuance and normative). In concordance with the study of Rego and Cunha (2008), the results of the current study shows a strong positive relationship between both meaningful work and sense of community with affective, continues and normative commitment.

In contrast to Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004) and Rego and Cunha (2008), this study discovers a very week relationship between organizational values and the three approaches of commitment. The researcher thinks that aspects of organizational values (for example, caring about the poor, differentiating between right and wrong, connecting with the mission of the schools and etc.) are considered unattainable luxuries for teachers and other public employees in Egypt who witness an increasing rate of corruption with minimum monthly wages of 1200

Table 2. Reliability analysis.

Scale name	Number of items	Coefficient alpha values
Organizational Commitment		
Affective commitment	8	0.771
Continuance commitment	8	0.760
Normative commitment	8	0.801
Workplace spirituality – Affective commitment		
Meaningful work	7	0.981
Sense of community	7	0.941
Organizational Values	8	0.707
Workplace spirituality – Continuance commitment		
Meaningful work	7	0.967
Sense of community	7	0.940
Organizational Values	8	0.840
Workplace spirituality – Normative commitment		
Meaningful work	7	0.964
Sense of community	7	0.915
Organizational Values	8	0.705
Total	90	0.977

Table 3. Correlation and Regression between affective commitment and meaningful work.

Model	r	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate
1	0.796	0.634	0.632	0.58654

Table 4. Correlation and Regression, between Affective Commitment and Sense of community.

Model	r	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate
1	0.760	0.577	0.574	0.42126

Table 5. Correlation and regression, between affective commitment and organizational values.

Model	r	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate
1	0.142	0.020	0.013	0.43496

Table 6 Correlation and Regression, between Continuance Commitment and Meaningful Work.

Model	r	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate
1	0.761	0.579	0.576	0.51306

EGP (Corruption in Egypt, Minimum monthly wages). Meaningful work has emerged to be the most dominant variable in predicting teachers' affective and continuance commitment to their school, whereas, sense of

Table 7. Correlation and Regression, between continuance commitment and sense of community.

Model	r	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate
1	0.755	0.570	0.567	0.38955

Table 8. Correlation and regression, between continuance commitment and organizational values.

Model	r	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate
1	0.184	0.034	0.027	0.72248

Table 9. Correlation and regression, between normative commitment and meaningful work.

Model	r	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate
1	0.811	0.658	0.656	0.50979

Table 10. Correlation and regression, between normative commitment and sense of community.

Model	r	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate
1	0.813	0.661	0.659	0.31920

Table 11. Correlation and regression, between Normative commitment and Organizational values.

Model	r	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate
1	0.192	0.037	0.031	0.30253

community tends to be the most influential dimension in terms of normative commitment. Guided by the results of this study and the result of the studies of Ashmos and Duchon (2000), Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004), Daniel (2010), Malik and Naeem (2011), Roof (2015) and Alas and Mousa (2016), a work climate in which teachers perform meaningful work and work in a group enhances their likelihood of reaching full capacity and realizing full potential at work. That is why the study of Ahiauzu and Asawo (2012) states that exercising spirituality in workplace leads to higher performance and better quality of work by decreasing employees' levels of absenteeism and rates of turnover.

Given the history of public schools in Egypt, the ministry of education and each school's administration need to rethink the psychological and cultural mechanism they adopt when dealing with their teachers. Schools need to understand that monetary aspects alone are not sufficient for satisfying teachers' inner and outer lives. Thus, promoting and maintaining spiritual practices such as yoga classes, meditation and training sessions on spirituality are important for creating a healthy and happy work environment where teachers feel valued and their full capacities are utilized for the betterment of their schools

Conclusion

The present study has tried to fill in a gap in management literature by examining the relationship between workplace spirituality dimensions and organizational commitment variable. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this study appears to be the first to discuss workplace spirituality and organizational commitment in Egypt and the whole Arab region. That is why the results may seem to be different, to some degree, from those results yielded by studies done in Europe. This study may be subject to criticism because it excluded moderating variables such as turnover values, organizational satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors. However, such moderating variable may be considered in future research done by the researcher and/or other scholars in the management academic field.

Conflict of interest

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest

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