

The Effects of Social Intelligence on Workplace Spirituality

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of social intelligence on workplace spirituality. Data were collected from 71 graduate students in MBA program at a selected public university in Thailand through the Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS) and the Workplace Spirituality Scale. Multiple regressions analysis was computed to examine the impacts of three social intelligence's components on each dimension of workplace spirituality. Results indicated no statistically significant influence of social intelligence on conditions for community. On the other hand, findings revealed statistically significant effects of social skills ($\beta = .666$, $p = .001$) and social awareness ($\beta = .277$, $p = .002$) on meaning of work. Also, results found that social information process ($\beta = .314$, $p = .012$) and social skills ($\beta = .254$, $p = .040$) had a positive significant influence on inner life. Findings of this present study were new knowledge, which create a body of knowledge in this area.

Keywords: Social intelligence, Workplace Spirituality, MBA students.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of social intelligence was firstly introduced more than a hundred

year ago by John Dewey in 1909 (Baggiyam & Pankajam, 2017). Since then, social intelligence has been widely investigated and viewed as the interesting topics in psychological field in a past decade (Ebrahimpoor et al., 2013). Social intelligence is seen as the ability to properly connect and get along with others in order to encourage them to collaborate (Singh, 2014). This concept simply refers to “people skills.” Social intelligence involves with an awareness of situation and social dynamics that direct them, and an understanding of interaction strategies than can support an individual to accomplish their goals in dealing with the other parties (Albrecht, 2006). Social intelligence is sometimes perceived as a collective measure of self and social awareness, including beliefs and attitudes and capability to deal with a challenging social evolution and change (Aminpoor, 2013).

The concentration on studying workplace spirituality has widely been investigated in the past decades due to the substantial benefits on organizations (Promsri, 2016). An increase of the interest in this topic has extensively developed to examine advantages an organization can obtain from this phenomenon to cope with changes (Schutte, 2016). To sustain productivity and compete effectively in a rapidly changing environment, employees in the workplace are required to have self-

motivation effort, which goes beyond monetary compensation solely. To help employees build their self-motivation, organizations have to utilize the different approach, and spirituality has been recognized as one of effective methods to be used (Bella et al., 2018). This approach recognizes that employees do not work with their physical aspect solely, but also with their hearts or spirits (Sehgal & Saxena, 2016). Past research revealed the impact of workplace spirituality on employee performances and outcomes (Daniel, 2012) indicating the importance of spirituality at work on organizational performance. Spirituality workplace alludes to individuals' efforts to explore their self-actualization, to create a robust connection and relationship with others in the workplace, and to have equivalence between their core value and organizational values (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Spirituality at work can simply be described as the acknowledgement that people in the workplace have an inner life that encourages and has been blossomed by the meaningful activities at work (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). The essential part of spirituality at work is related to employees' exchanging and experiencing some common connectedness, fascination, and inseparableness within the organization (Marschke et al., 2009). Workplace spirituality emphasizes on activities in an organization relating to individual development, consideration, relevance and joy at work, trustworthiness, reliance, job commitment, and happiness of employees (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012). Based on this comprehension, spirituality should be dependent on social intelligence. However, previous studies have placed their emphasis on the investigation on relationship between emotional intelligence and workplace spirituality rather than social intelligence (Chin et al., 2011; Pradhan & Jena, 2016). With a lack of study on the association between social intelligence and workplace spirituality, this present study aimed at

filling the gap in this area through the examination of linkage between social intelligence and workplace spirituality. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the effect of social intelligence on workplace spirituality.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

Social Intelligence

Silvera et al. (2001) constructed a reliable and valid scale measurement to measure social intelligence. This scale contained three essential components of social intelligence including social information process (SP), social skills (SS), and social awareness (SA). This instrument was a 21-item of 7-point rating scale to measure social intelligence. Social information process refers to the ability to recognize and anticipate others' emotions and actions as well as the ability to understand both verbal and nonverbal messages when communicating with others. Social skills refer to the ability to adapt oneself behaviors while being in a new situation and the ability to connect to new mates. Social awareness refers to the ability to recognize and be aware of oneself and others' feelings and behaviors when in the affiliation.

Workplace Spirituality

The growth of spirituality at work topics can be described systematically according to these major causes including deprivation of morality and ethics among employees, an increasing of workplace environment importance as a source of social activities, an interest in Eastern culture rather than Western, the importance of life meaningfulness at work, and the meaning of work is needed to pose creativity and innovation (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). The concept of workplace spirituality is different from the religion or belief system (Haryokusomo, 2015). Ashmos and Duchon (2000) noted that spirituality at work is not about an individual who obtains a specific belief

system but refers to employees who recognize oneself that heart and spirit must be presented at work not just physical. According to Ashmos and Duchon (2000) workplace spirituality is defined 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.” Three essential dimensions of workplace spirituality need to be measured including conditions for the community, meaningful work, and inner life.

Inner life dimension alludes to individuals who transport not only their physical to work, but also their spirit. Employees are expected to bring their spiritual needs to work, and never left them at home. Meaningful work dimension refers to the belief that individuals search for the meaningfulness at work. Meaningful work is about employees’ joyfulness sensation to connect them to things perceived as important for their lives. Meaningful work involves working activities that can construct happiness, passion, and the linkage between the heart and work. A condition for community dimension refers to the notion that a person understands on how to make good relationship with the others. The condition of community encompasses exchanging, mutual obligations, and commitments that make affiliation between parties. These values make employees in an organization to feel a sense of membership and have interconnectedness with other people as well as build their soul and spirit (Haryokusomo, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

Two cohorts of graduate students in MBA program at the government university in Bangkok were participated in this study. The total number of graduate students was 87, however, there were only 71 students agreed to participate in this study and returned the questionnaire with completion. The instrument for social

intelligence was modified from Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS) developed by Silvera et al. (2001). This modified version consisted of 21-item with a 7-point rating scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. The workplace spirituality was measured using measurement scale developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) encompassing three dimensions: conditions for community (7-item), meaning at work (6-item), and inner life (5-item). This scale was a 7-point rating scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. These two instruments were widely used in numerous studies in past years in particular Thai context, which indicated the appropriateness of the scale measurement usage (Charoensukmongkol et al., 2013; Promsri, 2014). Social intelligence scale had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.785, and the workplace spirituality had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.703. The reliability of these scales was acceptable, according to Nunnally (1978). Multiple regression analysis (MRA) was used to determine the effects of three dimensions of social intelligence on each aspect of spirituality workplace.

FINDINGS

Data analysis showed that the majority of participants in this study was female (87%) with the average age of 37-40 years (49.3%). The mean scores of each variable were also computed to examine the levels of social intelligence and spirituality workplace. The total mean score of social intelligence was 4.65 with the standard deviation of .620 indicating the moderate level of social intelligence of the respondents. The total mean score of workplace spirituality was 5.07 with the standard deviation of .869 identifying the medium level of spirituality workplace among participants. To focus on each dimension of social intelligence, findings indicated that social information process (M = 5.18, S.D. = .706) was rated as the

highest mean score followed by social skills (M = 4.65, S.D. = .870) and social awareness (M = 4.11, S.D. 1.284). For workplacespirituality, conditions for community was reported as the highest mean score (M = 5.175, S.D. = 1.217) followed by inner life (M = 5.14, S.D. =

0.971) and meaning at work (M = 4.65, S.D. = .910).

Analysis of multiple regressions for each dimension of spiritual workplace indicated that there was no statistically significant effect of social intelligence on conditions for community (Figure 1).

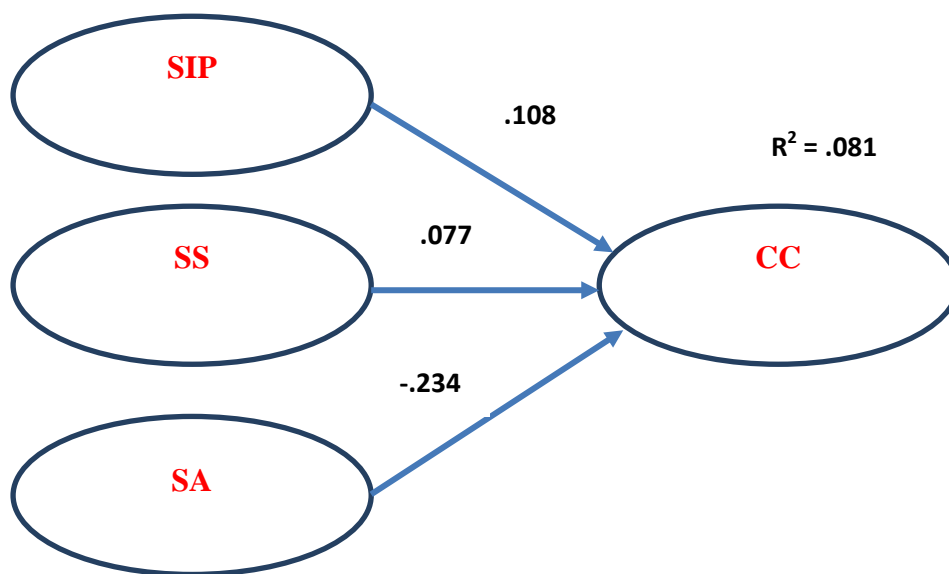


Figure 1: Multiple Regression Analysis of Social Intelligence on Conditions for Community

Figure 2 demonstrated the relationships between three dimensions of social intelligence and meaning at work factor. Multiple regression analysis designated that three aspects of social intelligence could explain 58.8 percent of variance ($R^2 = .588$, $F(3, 71) = 31.928$, $p < .001$). As shown, social skills and social awareness had a significant positive effect on meaning at work indicating that respondents with higher perceived social

skills and social awareness were expected to have a higher score of meaning at work. To be more specific, findings revealed that social skills had a significant impact on meaning at work ($\beta = .666$, $p = .001$), as did social awareness ($\beta = .277$, $p = .002$). However, social skills had more significant influence on meaning at work than social awareness as indicated by the value of higher beta.

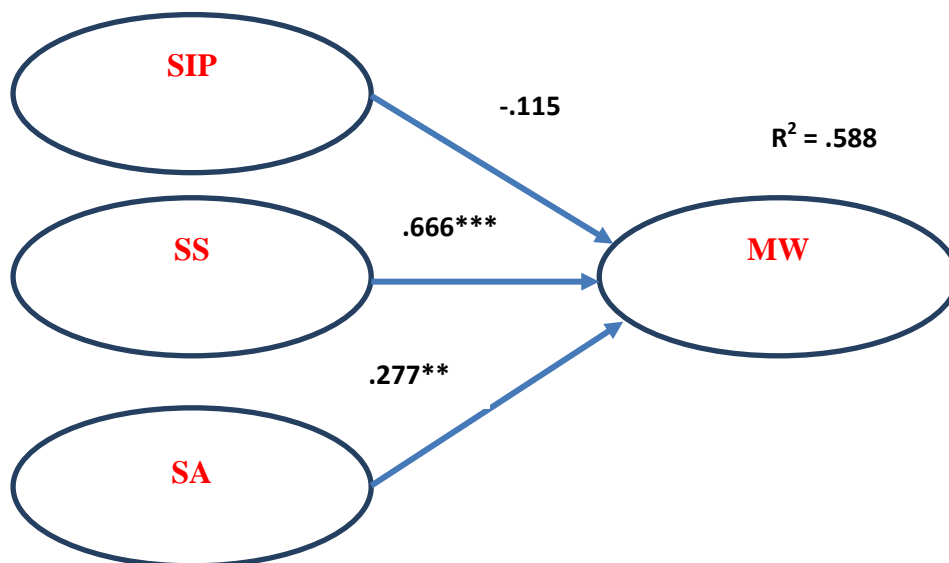


Figure 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of Social Intelligence on Meaning at Work

Results of multiple regression analysis indicated that three aspects of social intelligence could explain 23 percent of variance ($R^2 = .230$, $F(3, 71) = 6.672$, $p < .001$). As shown in Figure 3, social information process and social skills had a significant positive influence on inner life indicating that respondents with higher perceived social information process and

social skills were expected to have a higher score of inner life. Results found that social information process had a significant effect on inner life ($\beta = .314$, $p = .012$), as did social skills ($\beta = .254$, $p = .040$). However, social information process had more significant influence on inner life than social skills as indicated by the value of higher beta.

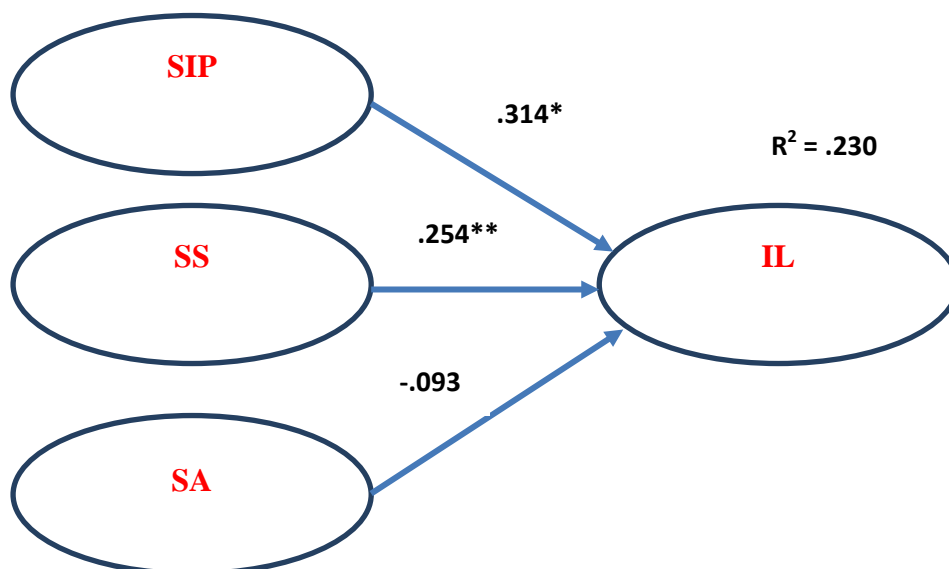


Figure 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of Social Intelligence on Inner Life

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed at examining the effects of social intelligence's three components including social information process, social skills, and social awareness on each dimension of workplace spirituality. To focus on the level of social intelligence evaluated by respondents in this study, findings of this present study were consistent with Promsri's study (2014), which social information process was rated as the highest mean score while social awareness was reported as the lowest mean score among three dimensions of social intelligence. To describe the relationships between three dimensions of social intelligence and each dimension of spirituality at work, multiple regressions analysis was calculated. Results indicated no statistically significant effects of social intelligence on conditions to community, which was inconsistent with the literature since conditions for community refers to the notion that an individual understands how to build a good relationship with another person, which social intelligence is required. Thus, this area should be reevaluated in the further study with the different group of people. In addition, findings revealed that social information process and social skills had a positive significant influence on meaning at work, which produced a new knowledge in this area. To find the meaning of work, an individual needs to have an ability to adjust their behaviors while involving with new situations and working activities, which refers to social skills component. Also, as meaning of work involves various working activities, which needs the cooperation from other employees in the workplace, the ability to acknowledge and be aware of oneself and others' feeling is needed. Moreover, this study found a positive significant influence of social information process and social skills dimensions on inner life. In order to have

an understanding on others' feelings and behaviors and understand delivered message when communicating with them, an individual needs to understand themselves first. Also, understanding other people in the workplace can provide a guideline for an individual to understand oneself better and realize the spiritual being to become in the workplace. Additionally, to bring spirituality to work, an individual needs to have an ability to adjust one's behavior as expected by the organization.

For the limitation of this study, the samples were gathered from graduate students in a public university in Thailand, which limits the generalizability. Hence, an increase of sample size for the next study is recommended. In addition, as respondents in this study were MBA students who come from different organizations, the further study should focus on a specific organization to measure the relationship between these two major variables. Social intelligence measurement scale may have some limitations to describe the phenomenon of workplace spirituality in this study. Thus, the new instrument of social intelligence needs to be developed to suit the concept of workplace spirituality.

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