

Islam-based spiritual orientations and quality of work life among Muslims



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Individuals' beliefs, as well as their spiritual orientations (SOs), can affect the quality of their work life cycle. Given that a large portion of people's lives are spent in organisations, it is crucial to consider the factors affecting quality of work life (QWL) among employees. Against this background, the present study investigated the effects of the Islam-based SOs on the QWL in Muslim employees working for Iraqi municipalities in 2022. For this purpose, an applied research design was adopted, using field studies of the correlational type for data collection. In total, 1345 staff of Iraqi municipalities were selected by simple random sampling in 2022, and two standardised questionnaires were utilised to collect the data. The content validity method was further recruited to determine the validity of the questionnaires, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure the reliability. To analyse the data, descriptive tests, including frequency, mean and standard deviation (SD), along with inferential statistics, namely one-sample *t*-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent-samples *t*-test, were implemented using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software package. The correlation coefficients accordingly showed a rising trend in the QWL among these employees following the growth in their SOs. Moreover, there was a significant relationship between the components of SOs, namely spiritual beliefs, sense of spirituality, spiritual self-actualisation and spiritual practices, and the QWL of the Muslim employees.

Contribution: This study revealed that the increase in the Islam-based SOs and its components led to an increase in the QWL of Iraqi Muslim employees.

Keywords: Spiritual orientations; Islam; spiritual practices; quality of work life; municipality employees.

Introduction

Human resources (HRs) are assumed to be one of the vital strategic resources in any organisation. Unquestionably, the success of organisations, work environments and different job positions is based on the effective utilisation of HRs. To deal with the major challenges of recruiting HRs effectively, a broad understanding of its related concepts, constructs and specific tools is thus of utmost importance (Aspridis & Kyriakou 2012). In the wake of such ideas toward HRs, research has determined the most important predictors of quality of work life (QWL) as a variable that has recently been considered by many managers to improve the quality of their HRs, even though the study of the indicators that are beneficial or harmful to the QWL has a long history (Martel & Dupuis 2006). Improving individual and organisational performance is accordingly one of the main goals of any living and active organisation. Directing HRs and exploiting the abilities and talents of the working people to achieve organisational goals are correspondingly deemed to be the significant issues for managers. In addition to the specialised workforce in the educational sector, the higher education system also includes those working in the administrative one. Moreover, there is a direct relationship between HR management (HRM) measures and QWL. In this line, stimulating employees through promoting QWL is the key to the success of any organisation and the criterion for measuring the success of managers in fulfilling their responsibilities and reaching their goals. Quality of work life programmes may be further presented as HRM strategies, including the QWL functions as well as the improvement of such programmes and the development of organisational efficiency and effectiveness (Sirgy et al.

Dates: Received: 07 Oct. 2022 | Accepted: 28 Nov. 2022 | Published: 27 Feb. 2023

How to cite this article: Al-Hawary, S.I.S., Subrahmanyam, S., Muda, I., Kumar, T., Ramírez-Coronel, A.A. & Al-Salami, A.A.A., 2023, 'Islam-based spiritual orientations and quality of work life among Muslims', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79(1), a8194. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8194>

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2001). Moreover, the QWL programmes take account of any progress in the organisational culture that leads to the growth and excellence of employees. Therefore, the QWL value system sheds light on investing in individuals as the most important variable in the strategic management transaction (Hill et al. 2010).

Considering the weight of religion, particularly spiritual beliefs and attitudes, in human life, it is worthy to investigate the relationship between spiritual orientations (SOs) and QWL among the Muslim employees of Iraqi municipalities. Accordingly, this relationship was delineated in the present study. Therefore, the present study investigates the effect of Islam-based SOs on QWL among Muslim employees of Iraq.

Literature review

As the theoretical bases of research on spirituality were used, SOs were grouped into three categories of recognising feelings and behaviours through some factors, such as giving meaning to life, creating a sense of happiness and satisfaction with life, reinforcing specific personality traits, developing social support and paving the grounds for better coping with factors affecting human life, especially improving the QWL components. The factors related to SOs can be also categorised and summarised in four components, that is, spiritual beliefs, spiritual self-actualisation, sense of spirituality and spiritual practices (Atarhim, Lee & Copnell 2019). The spiritual beliefs with several dimensions, such as remembrance, faith in God's power, God's presence in life, hoping to be guided, meaningfulness, believing in God in human life, believing in the unseen world and life after death, having peace of mind and trusting in God to overcome problems and troubles, etc., could be used to measure this component. The sense of spirituality also has dimensions, including belief in the call of conscience, the importance of doing one's duty before God, preferring God's pleasure over personal desire, activity with the intention of closeness and reviving the power of meaning to give to others and sacrifice. Other dimensions are satisfaction with one's fate, satisfaction with life, belief and purpose in life, belief in divine tests, belief in God's help and feeling close to God to express spiritual self-actualisation. Finally, for spiritual practices, the components of interest in religious programmes, interest in religious pilgrimages, preference of religious books over others, etc., could be mentioned (Kasmo et al. 2015).

So far, more research has been conducted on quality of life, putting emphasis on the objective and material aspects, such as income, food and housing. It is generally accepted that quality of life is shaped by nonsubjective material factors, and the research topics have been mostly concentrated on them; therefore, it is necessary to mind the aesthetic aspects of quality of life. Overall, people's motivations include a wide range of basic to advanced needs. The quality of human life today has further gained wide dimensions and become more complex and extensive in the foreseeable future, as the past trend confirms. This intricacy is the result of increasing human awareness of visible and hidden factors which have

transformed their lives. Nowadays, the dimensions of the quality of human life can be largely described as speed (namely, the best possible use of time, variety and flexibility, responding to functional needs, spending time in life, work, leisure, gaining knowledge, etc.), security and safety and health.

Quality of work life, independently suggested for the first time in 1970, refers to an attitude that attempts to improve the quality of people's lives and meet the needs of employees, who have been reduced to the role of production along with other factors, such as capital, and become alienated. Several definitions of QWL have thus far been given, including a set of real working conditions in an organisation, such as salary and benefits, amenities, health and safety considerations, participation in decision-making, management methods and job enrichment (Rethinam & Ismail 2008). Quality of work life is one of the modes of organisational growth that tries to provide the three factors of motivation and satisfaction, acceptance of responsibility and sense of commitment to work together. The basic goals of an effective QWL programme are to improve working conditions and facilitate greater organisational effectiveness (mainly from the employers' viewpoint). The positive results of the aforementioned programmes have been further supported by a number of previous studies, which include reducing absenteeism, creating interactions between personal and work life, inspiring constructive competitions between employees, examining performance, developing security and trusting higher authorities. Meeting the needs of employees can also lead to the improvement and long-term efficiency of organisations (Lau 2000). The QWL programme is thus a process by which all members of an organisation are somehow involved in the decisions that affect their jobs in particular and their work environment in general through open and suitable channels created for this purpose. As a result, their participation and satisfaction with work increase, and the mental pressures caused by work decrease. In fact, QWL indicates a kind of organisational culture or a management style based on which employees feel ownership, self-management, responsibility and self-esteem.

Therefore, QWL needs to improve the physical and mental health of employees and, above all, augment organisational productivity (Rose et al. 2006). In addition, spiritual and religious helpers are divine gifts for a person to give them a philosophy of life. Religion accordingly fulfils basic psychological needs and desires, especially the need for love and immortality. Religious beliefs have always been with humanity throughout the history of human life, and in no period or time have they been without religious beliefs. According to Viktor Frankl, the founder of logotherapy, there is a deeply rooted religious feeling in the unconscious mind of all humans (Cragun et al. 2016). Even though the positive influence of spiritual and religious orientations on physical and mental health is a matter of relevance for countless people, there are conflicting views about the impact of religious beliefs on human beings. For example, some researchers have spoken with a positive attitude about the

consequences of religious orientations on mental health (Lun & Bond 2013), but a group of researchers believe that religiosity is associated with irrational thinking and emotional disorders. Research has further substantiated a strong relationship between spirituality, religion and giving meaning to life, physical and mental health symptoms and religious ritual practices and mortality, in such a way that being religious and performing related practices reduce the risks of mortality. Performing religious rituals and establishing a strong social bond arising from being religious can thus have a positive role in health (Oman & Thoresen 2005). Considering the studies about the relationship between religion and human life, as well as the importance of this variable on the quality of life, the present study aimed to elucidate this relationship.

Spirituality or SOs give meaning to the general content of life, make a person's behaviours and thoughts purposeful and portray a direction for people's lives. They also play a significant role in improving quality of life. Today, the goal of urban management is to increase services and satisfy more citizens. City services include a huge range of municipal services for citizens, and their optimal provision has a significant effect on amplifying their satisfaction in any society.

According to the responsibility they bear, and considering the important point that the lack of social satisfaction among people has irreparable consequences, and that the biological sustainability of cities is directly related to the level of satisfaction and participation, municipalities bring all their efforts into play to provide maximum welfare and comfort to the citizens and in this way meet their satisfaction. Therefore, at the first stage, it is appropriate to pay attention to their employees' satisfaction, because satisfied personnel provide better services to citizens. To the best of the authors' knowledge, examining the relationship between SOs and QWL has not yet been sufficiently addressed in Iraq; therefore, the effect of SOs on QWL among Muslim employees was investigated in this study. The given relationship was also likely to be influenced by contextual and demographic variables, so the effect of these variables on QWL was explored.

Research questions

The research questions were:

- How is QWL in the Muslim employees of Iraqi municipalities from their viewpoint?
- What are the Muslim employees' attitudes regarding QWL based on the demographic variables?
- What are the effects of Islam-based SOs on QWL in Muslim employees of Iraqi municipalities?

Materials and methods

This study aims to investigate the effect of Islam-based SOs on QWL in Muslim employees of Iraqi municipalities in 2022. Therefore, an applied research design was adopted. In the present study, the related literature was initially reviewed by preparing the research plan, and then the

research hypotheses were addressed after examining the theoretical foundations. Thereafter, the library method and field study were utilised in this study. In the library method, the necessary reviews of the theoretical foundations, thematic literature and the history of the problem statement and the research subject were carried out. In addition, the sources, theses and research studies related to the subject of this study were explored. Furthermore, the field studies were employed as the main stages of this study to collect the data. In total, 1345 staff of municipalities in Iraq were selected as the statistical population, and two standardised questionnaires were administered to collect the data, as described below.

Quality of Work Life Questionnaire

Walton's Quality of Work Life Questionnaire (QWLQ) contains 29 items and 8 indices, namely fair and equitable compensation; safe and healthy working environment; opportunities for continuous development and security; rule of law in work organisations; social dependence of work life; total work life cycle; integrity and social cohesion; and human capabilities (Walton 1973). In this questionnaire, a five-point Likert-type scale was utilised, ranging from completely disagree to completely agree, and its acceptable reliability was obtained based on the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85.

Spiritual Orientation Inventory

The 15-item Spiritual Orientation Inventory (SOI) was designed by Sharifi et al. (2008) to measure the four indices of spiritual beliefs, sense of spirituality, spiritual self-actualisation and spiritual practices. In this questionnaire, a five-point Likert-type scale was used, ranging from completely disagree to completely agree, and its acceptable reliability was achieved based on the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78.

In order to determine the validity of both the questionnaires, the content and face validity methods were utilised; thus, both the QWLQ and the SOI had content and face validity. In terms of matching the questionnaire items with the research subject and objectives, it was authorised by five social science and five psychology professors of Iraqi universities, in line with their research records and expertise.

Findings

To address the research questions, descriptive tests, including frequency, mean, and standard deviation (SD), and inferential statistics, namely one-sample *t*-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and independent-samples *t*-test, were recruited using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 16) software package.

First question

How is QWL in the Muslim employees of Iraqi municipalities from their viewpoint?

The results of the one-sample *t*-test in Table 1 showed that the QWL mean score in Iraqi municipalities from the viewpoint of the Muslim employees was 2.23, with the SD of 0.44, which was smaller than the statistical mean of 3, and this difference was significant at the 0.01 level. Therefore, it was concluded with 99% confidence interval (CI) that QWL in Iraqi municipalities from the perspective of Muslim employees was lower than the mean value of 3. Moreover, the mean and SD of each QWL component were as follows.

The mean score of *fair and equitable compensation* was 2.18 with the SD of 0.71, which was smaller than the statistical mean of 3. As a result, it was decided with 99% CI that QWL in Iraqi municipalities from the viewpoint of the Muslim employees regarding this component was lower than the moderate level. The mean value of *safe and healthy working environment* was 0.77, which was greater than the statistical mean of 3. Therefore, it was determined with 99% CI that QWL in Iraqi municipalities from the point of view of the Muslim employees in the given component was above the moderate level. The mean score of *opportunities for continuous development and security* was 2.13, with the SD of 0.55, which was smaller than the statistical mean of 3. Consequently, it was settled with 99% CI that QWL in Iraqi municipalities from the perspective of the Muslim employees in this component was lower than the moderate level. Moreover, the mean value of *rule of law in work organisation* was 2.21, with the SD of 0.69, which was smaller than the statistical mean of 3. Hence, it was decided with 99% CI that QWL in Iraqi municipalities from the viewpoint of the Muslim employees for the given component was lower than the moderate level. Besides, the mean score of *social dependence of work life* was 2.20, with the SD of 0.69, which was almost equal to the statistical mean of 3. Therefore, it was concluded that QWL from the perspective of the Muslim employees in this component was at the moderate level. The mean score of *total work life cycle* was 2.11, with the SD of 0.49, which was smaller than the statistical mean of 3. As a result, it was concluded with 99% CI that QWL in Iraqi municipalities from the perspective of the Muslim employees in the given component was lower than the moderate level. Likewise,

the mean value of *integrity and social cohesion* was 2.30, with the SD of 0.59, which was smaller than the statistical mean of 3. Therefore, it was established with 99% CI that QWL in Iraqi municipalities from the viewpoint of the Muslim employees in this component was lower than the moderate level. Ultimately, the mean score of *human capabilities* was 2.41, with the SD of 0.65, which was almost equal to the statistical mean of 3. Consequently, it was concluded that QWL in Iraqi municipalities from the perspective of employees in the given component was at the moderate level.

Second question

What are the Muslim employees' attitudes regarding QWL based on the demographic variables?

Using the *F*-statistic observed at $p = 0.05$, the results in Table 2 showed no significant difference between the mean score of the opinions of the Muslim employees regarding QWL in terms of age, education and years of work experience. The independent-samples *t*-test results for comparing the viewpoints of the Muslim employees about QWL, according to gender, are presented in Table 3.

The results in Table 3 demonstrated no significant difference between the mean scores of the attitudes of the Muslim employees regarding QWL in terms of gender.

Third question

How are the effects of Islam-based SOs on QWL of the Muslim employees of Iraqi municipalities?

The correlation coefficient between SOs and QWL and their components were investigated, and the results showed a relationship between QWL total mean score and SOs and their components by 0.543. As well, there was a relationship between QWL and each of the four components of SOs, including spiritual beliefs = 0.586, sense of spirituality = 0.730, spiritual self-actualisation = 0.486 and spiritual practices = 0.620, which were significant at $p = 0.0001$.

TABLE 1: Investigating quality of work life for Iraqi employees of municipalities from their viewpoint using one-sample *t*-test.

Indicators	Variables	Observed mean	SD	Statistical mean	<i>t</i> -statistic	Degree of freedom	Significance level
Components	QWL	2.23	0.44	3	5.530	1344	**0.000
	Fair and equitable compensation	2.18	0.71	3	7.100	1344	**0.000
	Safe and healthy working environment	3.09	0.77	3	3.200	1344	**0.001
	Opportunities for continuous development and security	2.13	0.55	3	5.070	1344	**0.000
	Rule of law in work organisation	2.21	0.69	3	5.100	1344	**0.000
	Social dependence of work life	2.20	0.69	3	0.227	1344	0.776
	Total work life cycle	2.11	0.49	3	9.070	1344	**0.000
	Integrity and social cohesion	2.30	0.59	3	5.080	1344	**0.000
	Human capabilities	2.41	0.65	3	0.870	1344	0.392

QWL, quality of work life; SD, standard deviation.

*, Significant at the level of 0.05; **, Significant at the level of 0.01.

TABLE 2: The *F*-statistic results for comparing the opinions of Muslim employees in terms of age, education and years of work experience.

Sources	Statistic	Variables	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean squares	<i>F</i> -statistic	<i>P</i>
QWL	Age	Between-group	0.31	-	0.11	-	-
		Within-group	55.76	-	0.28	-	-
		Total	67.55	1344	-	0.41	0.6.3
QWL	Education	Between-group	1.24	-	0.34	-	-
		Within-group	53.22	-	0.24	-	-
		Total	70.34	1344	-	0.47	0.15
QWL	Years of work experience	Between-group	1.16	-	1.10	-	-
		Within-group	56.47	-	0.26	-	-
		Total	70.34	1344	-	1.44	0.52

QWL, quality of work life.

TABLE 3: The independent-samples *t*-test results for comparing the opinions of the Muslim employees by gender.

Source	Statistic	Frequency	Mean	SD	Degree of freedom	<i>T</i> -statistic	<i>P</i>
QWL	Male	187	2.80	0.51	-	-	-
	Female	31	2.79	0.63	-	-	-
Total		-	-	-	216	-0.62	0.51

QWL, quality of work life; SD, standard deviation.

Based on this, it was concluded that QWL was elevated from the point of view of the Muslim employees with the increase in spiritual beliefs, sense of spirituality, spiritual self-actualisation and spiritual practices, and in general with the rise in Islam-based SOs, which meant a positive relationship between SOs and QWL.

Discussion

The whole creation is centred on needs, and humans as creatures within it are beings in need. Considering both principles in the human creation, two orientations have thus far been highlighted. Notably, the heavenly principle of humans tends to its own principle, that is, the realm of the heaven; therefore, human natural tendencies are always toward God. Since then, humanity has become interested in understanding and worshiping God. In contrast to the heavenly dimension, there is a natural tendency toward origins, that is, the world of property and matter; just as nature tends to heaven, human nature tends to wickedness, and thus humanity is aware of both existential tendencies. Human beings have two types of needs in their existence, namely material needs, such as the need for food, water, housing and so on, and spiritual needs, including the need for worship, love and things like that. Both needs exist in all humans. The material needs are temporary, and spiritual needs guide a person in the direction of achieving a peaceful and divine life and ultimately forming one's character. The ultimate goal of fulfilling such needs is to reach divine nearness and perfection; for example, the remembrance of God is considered a spiritual need that brings peace of mind to a person (Surah Ar-Ra'd, Ayat 28). Worship is also a spiritual need, as God created all beings for worship (Surah Adh-Dhariyat, Ayat 56). From various verses and narrations, it is realised that spiritual needs guide a person in the direction of a better life to reach perfection. Against this background, this study aimed to investigate the effects of Islam-based SOs on QWL of the

Muslim employees of Iraqi municipalities in 2022. The study results showed that the QWL mean score was lower than the moderate level. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no study was found in the related literature on the relationship between these two variables. Quality of work life in Iraqi municipalities in the components of fair and equitable compensation, opportunities for continuous development and security, rule of law in work organisation, total work life cycle and integration and social cohesion were below the moderate level, valued at 3. In the components of social dependence of work life and human capabilities, QWL was at a moderate level of 3. Besides, in the component of safe and healthy working environment, it was above the moderate level of 3.

Quality of work life is also one of the variables emphasised by Islamic teachings. For example, 'When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than it, or at least return it equally' (Surah An-Nisa, Ayat 86). Therefore, one of the religious duties of managers is to create affection and intimacy with employees, and considering that employees respect managers, they should have mutual respect. In another place, it is said, 'Speak good to people' (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 83), and it has also been stated, 'Do not contemptuously turn your face away from people, nor tread haughtily upon earth' (Surah Luqman, Ayat 18). Other cases also show the importance of dealing with people appropriately, so this study focused on desirable behaviours in the workplace.

Regarding the research hypothesis, there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the opinions of employees regarding QWL in terms of age, education and years of work experience. The present study accordingly aimed to investigate the relationship between SOs and QWL, and the findings demonstrated a significant positive relationship between Islam-based SOs and QWL in the Muslim employees of Iraqi municipalities as the statistical population, so it was concluded that QWL increased with the growth in SOs. This consistency indicated that SOs as a whole could lead to an improvement in QWL because of their effects on both beliefs and the cognitive system of individuals and the activities of individuals directly and indirectly. Given the attitudes they could create in a person for life, beliefs, convictions and SOs could create meaning in life, purpose in one's life, creation and hope of life and

overall increase in life satisfaction, which could ultimately lead to the improvement of the overall QWL. The influence of SOs through spiritual activities and functions in the sense that SOs could create more social support, participation in organised and unorganised meaningful activities, as well as adherence to spiritual principles, could directly affect people's lifestyles, and this influence could enhance the quality of a person's life. The results also demonstrated a significant relationship between the components of SOs and QWL, so that QWL is augmented with the elevation of each component. The correlation coefficients for the relationship between SOs and QWL, as well as the relationship between sense of spirituality and QWL, spiritual self-actualisation and QWL and spiritual practices and QWL showed significantly positive values.

Conclusion

Based on the study results, some suggestions are made. Since the statistical population investigated here for SOs and QWL had already been less noticed, it is recommended to improve the results and generalise them to other target populations in other working environments by examining SOs and their influence on QWL so that proper planning can be undertaken. To institutionalise within organisations and boost QWL in different populations with regard to maximum variation, the results could definitely promote the overall QWL of employees and planning based on other related factors. If organisations advance all aspects of the quality of employees' work life, specifically their spirituality, and provide the conditions in the work environment, they can sense justice, progress, success, security, growth and promotion or the opportunities to express their abilities and creativity and generally feel satisfied with their jobs. Then there will be an increase in employee performance and growth and, above all, dynamism in organisations.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

S.I.S.A.-H. contributed to the writing of the article; S.S. conducted the investigation; I.M. was responsible for the methodology; T.K. contributed to project administration; A.A.R.-C. undertook the formal analysis; and A.A.A.A.-S. was responsible for validation.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding Information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors and the publisher.

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