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The relationship between attributional style and spiritual intelligence and job performance of employees of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences

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Abstract

Background: The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between attributional style and spiritual intelligence (SI) with job performance of employees of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences in 2015.

Methods: The study population consisted of the employees of 8 faculties of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences (n = 647), of which 243 staff members were selected using a stratified sampling method. Data collection was performed using standard Amram Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire, Paterson Job Performance Questionnaire and Rotter Locus of Control Questionnaire. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficient and multiple regressions using SPSS.

Results: Based on Pearson correlation coefficient, SI was significantly correlated with job performance among the employees. In addition, there was a significant correlation between internal locus of control and job performance; however, external locus of control did not exhibit any correlation with job performance. Furthermore, the results showed a significant relationship between SI components and job performance ($P = 0.000$). The results of the regression analysis revealed that all the components of SI were predictors of variables for job performance ($R^2 = 0.26$).

Conclusion: Considering the tests, it was revealed that there is a positive and meaningful relation between the internal control of attributional style and the elements of the SI with personnel job performance. However, based on the result of the regression with the fixed amount of 26 percent, it seems necessary to pay attention to other effective elements on the performance of personnel, except internal control and elements of SI.

Introduction

Nowadays, universities throughout the world are known as professional organizations that play both a significant role in human growth and training and a decisive role in the growth and productivity of the country. Some universities and scientific/research centers of the world have taken major steps in this field, but the development of universities in this regard is not acceptable and new policies are necessary. Successful universities guarantee the development of the country from cultural, political, economic and social points of view, and because of this the role of administrative staff of the universities is not less significant than that of their academic board members. Researchers have found that job performance has a relationship with many factors, such as motivation, ability, job recognition, environmental and organizational factors, locus of control and personality characteristics.[1] Considering that the nature of job performance in an organization is affected by individual and organizational factors, the psychological characteristics of people are especially important. Accordingly, it is essential to recognize these characteristics and at the same time investigate their relationship with job performance of individuals.[2] Educational, service and treatment organizations must have manpower with high-quality performance due to the significance and importance of having professional careers, because work failure of this group will have irrecoverable costs due to their significant role. Lack of job satisfaction, motivation

and attempts for promoting the scientific level and practical skills that result in increasing risk in specialized work areas, efficiency and performance, and the low quality of services provided for the clientele and colleagues are the main problems that exist in the job performance field of the staff of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences.[3]

Poor performance of personnel results in pessimism, lack of motivation and dissatisfaction, creating an organizational environment in which hypo function, absenteeism, lack of responsiveness to responsibilities and lack of attention to the outcomes or products, i.e. humans, prevail. In addition, changes in the era of information do not except any system or technique, including the educational system, which is in fact on the summit of the development pyramid of each community. The performance of personnel is the principal key to the success of organizations; personnel exhibiting quality and productivity believe that the aims of the organization are their own aims, they exhibit commitment and loyalty in order to achieve the aims of the organization and implement the programs of the organization. Their behaviors conform to the values and norms of the organization, resulting in the success of the organization. Therefore, many attempts have been made to find ways to improve the performance of the staff and personnel.[4]

Considering the significance of job performance and its role in individual and organizational efficiency, the necessity for precise investigation of these variables, recognition of their consequences and creating factors for achieving organizational goals is felt more than ever.[4]

Organizations do not operate in a vacuum, but are always affected by factors and pressures that are imposed on them from inside and outside the organization. In the past, the environment was risk-free and there was more security for organizations, but the present world is the world of developments and changes; nowadays, these changes always create opportunities and risks for organizations. In the meantime, organizations are successful that adapt themselves to these conditions and accommodate the changes, and only organizations that have staff with high spiritual intelligence (SI) can act this way.[5]

Good performance in organizations, companies and institutes is attributed to different factors. In addition, there are different ways to solve the problems that lead to poor performance, including concentration on the personality traits of the personnel in the organization.[1] A large number of studies have shown that personality can predict job performance under certain conditions.[6]

Individuals with spiritual attitudes accept changes more easily, seek aims and concepts for their organization, understand the importance of being connected to a larger entity and have a personalized understanding and expression of spirituality. Such individuals have a sufficiency viewpoint, i.e., they believe that sufficient resources are available for all and there is no need for competition. Therefore, individuals trust each other more easily, share their information and duties and cooperate with their colleagues and group members to achieve their final aims.

In the hierarchy of organizations with spiritual attitudes, individuals make attempts to improve each other's capabilities and use win-win strategies in conflicting situations.[7] In addition, there is a relationship between the individuals' cognitive attitudes and job performance. Although job stresses might be exerted simultaneously on all the personnel in an organization, personality traits are unique and cause the individuals to evaluate their environments differently, and attributional style is one of these traits. In general, individuals exhibit a more positive reaction to situations over which they can exert control compared to situations over which they do not have such control.[8]

Krishnakumar and Neak believe that the outcomes of promotion of spirituality in an organization consist of improvements in creativity, honesty, trust, a personal sense of gratification, organizational commitment and finally an improvement in organizational performance.[9] In a study on a group of nurses with high occupational stress, it was shown that a positive attributional style resulted in an increase in the ability to solve problems and a decrease in conflicts and stress and such a strategy had a close relationship with job satisfaction.[10] The positive outcomes of this study might result in positive attitudes in mangers and staff in the university. Improving SI in personnel will lead to positive outcomes such as improvements in creativity, honesty, trust and commitment. Individuals with high SI devote a part of their activities to spirituality and exhibit humbleness, forgiveness, sympathy and gratitude. These individuals also exhibit critical thinking and discuss the nature and existence of the universe itself and metaphysical subjects.

Considering the significance of job performance for the success of an organization and considering the fact that the university is the basic system of education for future generations, the question that is raised here is whether attributional styles and high SI can predict job performance promotion. This research was undertaken in Tabriz University of Medical Sciences.

Job performance is an important criterion for organizational outcome and success. Performance is defined as a behavior. However, it can be non-observable, such as solutions and decisions.[4]

An important aspect of performance is the fact that it should be under the control of the individual. Campbell defines job performance as the behavior that an individual manifests. Based on this definition, job performance is different from the outcome and is not the final outcome of the individuals' performance in an organization; rather, other factors affect it, too.[2]

Campbell defines job performance as an individual-level variable, or something a single person does.[11] This distinguishes it from more encompassing constructs such as organizational performance or national performance, which are higher-level variables. Thus, job performance is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct consisting of more than one kind of behavior. Campbell suggested an eight-factor model of performance based on factor analytic research that tries to capture dimensions of job

performance existent (to a greater or lesser extent) across all jobs.

Another way to break down performance is in terms of task and contextual (citizenship and counterproductive) behaviors. While task performance defines obligatory behaviors, contextual behaviors are behaviors that do not accomplish specific aspects of the job's required role. Citizenship behaviors are described as behaviors that contribute to the goals of the organization through their effect on social and psychological conditions. However, counterproductive behaviors are intentional actions by employees that circumvent the aims of the organization.[12]

SI is a set of abilities people use to apply, show and include spiritual resources, values and qualities in ways that increase daily functioning and well-being.[13]

Amram clarified, expanded and assembled the themes into major themes that appeared as nearly universal across the spiritual traditions and participants. These themes are: Conscience: Nurturing of refined consciousness and self-knowledge, featuring intuitive trans- rational knowing, mindfulness and sacred displines.

Grace: Living in order with the holy, manifesting trust in and love for life that is based on respect, beauty and joy.

Meaning: Experiencing importance in daily activities through a sense of aim and a call for service, including that in the face of pain and suffering.

Transcendence: To go far off the separate egoic self into an interconnected integrity, including a universal system worldview and the developing human relationship through empathy, compassion, loving-kindness and I-Thou orientation.

Truth: Living in open acceptance, remission, curiosity and love for all that is (all creation), including respect for the wisdom of numerous spiritual rituals.

Peaceful surrender: Peacefully yielding to a higher self (god, truth, absolute or true nature), including self-freedom, inner-integrity, equanimity, modesty and selflessness.

Inner-directedness: Inner freedom is associated with responsibly, wise action, including insight, wholeness and freedom from conditioning attachments and fears.[14]

In addition, Emmons suggested five elements for SI: (*a*) ability to use spiritual resources to solve problems, (*b*) ability to penetrate heightened states of consciousness, (*c*) ability to provide everyday activities and relationships with a sense of the sacred, (*d*) capacity for ascendency of the physical and material, and (*e*) capacity to be good.[14]

Attributional styles, attribution or the relation is a process in which human beings begin to search for the reason(s) for events. Therefore, the word pattern or style is used since the human mind uses the same or similar approach for the analysis of the positive and negative events around him.[15]

The style of attribution is a cognitive variable of the character that reflects on people based on their habits. It traces the events in life; in other words, attributional style is a method that people use to determine the positive or negative results of their successes and defeats.[16]

It is referred to a process through which persons decide on reasons for some events like competence, attempt and level of difficulty.[17] As Heider believes, humans have two main attributional or interpretation methods for introvert and extrovert behaviors.[18] In internal attribution, the behavior is attributed to individual specifications, internal reasons, and stable and general attributions; in external attribution, it is referred to social and environmental pressures, external reasons, and unstable and specific attributions. Therefore, attribution of unpleasant and unfavorable behaviors to external elements decreases the fault and feeling of responsibility for the actions by the individual.[19] On the other hand, attribution of negative events to internal, unstable and specific reasons is a type of incompatible attribution that will bring along some problems for individuals. Therefore, attributive interpretations in accepting the responsibility of actions or transferring the responsibility to others will play a determining role.[19]

Materials and Methods

Data were collected from the study field in this correlative practical research. The study population consisted of the administrative personnel of different faculties of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, comprising 647 employees (Table 1). According to the data available in Krejcie-Morgan table, and considering the size of the statistical community, the sample size in this research was calculated at 243 in different departments with relative classification.

The samples were divided into groups and separate classes according to the following table, and samples were selected randomly from each class. The tools used for data collection consisted of questionnaires in addition to library studies. The questionnaires included Paterson Job Performance Questionnaire, Standard Amram Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire and Rotter Locus of Control Questionnaire.

Shekarkan and Neami translated Paterson's Job Performance Questionnaire 1992 into Persian in 2001. The questionnaire consists of 15 questions and each question should be answered based on a 5-point Likert scale from very low (1) to very high (5). The reliability coefficient of this questionnaire is 0.74 based on Cronbach α and 0.67 based on the bisection technique.[20]

Table 1. The study community size and the statistical samples separately in each faculty

Faculty	Community size	Sample size
Dentistry	146	54
Medicine	170	63
Pharmaceutics	130	48
Nutrition and Hygiene	46	18
Paramedics	30	12
New medical sciences	30	12
Rehabilitation	43	16
Nursing and midwifery	52	20

Rotter's control source questionnaire consists of 29 items, with each item consisting of a pair of questions (a and b). The respondents receive a score of 1 for providing a positive response to the internal choices and receive a score of zero for selecting the external choices. The total score of each individual shows his/her internal control rate and individuals with a higher rate of internal control receive a better score.[21]

The SI index was constructed by Amram and Dryer[12] in 2007 after interviews with 71 individuals. Based on the study, 22 principal characteristics were identified as the characteristics of spiritual individuals in all the religions. These 22 characteristics were divided into 7 sections in the form of 45 questions.[7]

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire

Since the job performance and SI questionnaires use the Likert scale for scoring, Cronbach α was used to evaluate their validity. As the control source questionnaire is in the form of zero and 1, the Kuder-Richardson formula was used. The alpha coefficient was >0.7 for all three variables. Therefore, all three variables were considered valid (Table 2).

Descriptive statistical methods (frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations) were used for the analysis of data. In the analytical statistics sections, Pearson correlation coefficient was used for the evaluation of the hypothesis. To test the research question, i.e., the role of each variable in deterring the job performance, multiple regression analysis was used. Data were analyzed with SPSS.

Table 2. The validity and reliability of the researcher-made questionnaires

Variables	No. of questions	α	Test
Job performance	15	0.75	Cronbach α
SI	45	0.9	Cronbach α
Control Source	23	0.75	Kuder–Richardson

Abbreviation: SI, spiritual intelligence.

Results

The results are presented in Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Generally speaking, the multiple correlative coefficient resulted from the influence of SI element that is equal to R = 0.53 and the coefficient for determining the purity is $\overline{R}^2 = 0.26$, which means that the elements of SI determine the job performance as 26% and 74% of the variance for job performance is determined by variables that are not subject to this research.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to evaluate the relationship of attributional style and SI with job performance of employees of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences.

In the present study, 243 staff members of Tabriz University of Medical Sciences were evaluated based on Pearson correlation coefficient, and SI was significantly correlated with job performance among the employees. In addition, there was a significant correlation between internal locus of control and job performance; however, external locus of control did not exhibit any correlation with job performance. Furthermore, the results showed a significant relationship between SI components and job performance ($P = 0.000$). The results of regression analysis revealed that all the components of SI were predictors of variables for job performance ($R^2 = 0.26$).

The principal aim of the present study was to determine the relationship between SI and job performance based on Pearson correlation coefficient at $P = 0.000$ and r = 0.49. There was a direct and significant relationship between these two variables. Based on linear regression analysis R^2 was calculated at 0.24, i.e., it is possible to predict job performance at a rate of 24% based on SI. Marques et al[22] reported that spirituality in the job environment, as a result of optimism and individual good will, results in a motivational organizational culture and an increase in overall performance, finally leading to sustained organizational promotion. Based on King's viewpoint,[23] SI can lead to personal adaptability, affecting the problem-solving process. According to Emmons,[14] SI is effective in fa-

Table 3. The distribution of dispersion of SI and its elements and locus of control

Variable	Number	Average	SD	Skewness coefficient	Minimum	Maximum	The range of changes
Conscience	243	16.09	2.69	-0.39	8	22	14
Grace	243	25.4	4.46	-0.49	7	36	29
Inner-directedness	243	16.16	2.42	-0.03	9	23	14
Meaning	243	17.58	2.86	-0.81	6	24	18
Transcendence	243	15.3	2.49	0.1	8	22	14
Truth	243	36.76	4.7	-0.51	22	51	29
Peaceful surrender	243	55.3	7.02	-0.18	32	72	40
SI	243	182.63	19.41	-0.42	116	228	112
External locus of control	19	6.57	1.5	-0.93	3	8	5
Internal locus of control	224	14.81	3.72	0.3	9	22	13

Abbreviations: SD, standard deviation; SI, spiritual intelligence.

cilitation of solving daily problems, determination of aims and achieving these aims.

Najafi Abyaneh and Askarian showed that SI is a prerequisite for better adaptation to an environment and individuals with higher SI exhibit greater tolerance in the face of life pressures and greater ability to adapt.[7] Rasteghar and Jafarian[24] reported a positive and direct relationship between SI and spiritual leadership, with a positive effect on the work environment. They also reported a positive, direct and significant effect of spirituality in the work environment on the performance of managers. A study by Azad Marzabadi et al[25] showed a positive and significant relationship between organizational spirituality and psychological capabilities, creativity and job stresses. In addition, they showed a significant relationship between job experience and organizational spirituality. Finally, spirituality is considered one of the variables affecting personnel's capabilities and creativity, and organizations' policy-makers should use spirituality to be able to utilize the personnel's maximum abilities to achieve the aims of the organization.

Zarei et al[26] showed that understanding and awareness cannot be achieved only through logical and emotional intelligence and such an aim requires the use of intelligence beyond the two above, which is SI. Ghorbanzadeh[27] reported that the use of SI methods results in full manifestation of personnel's capabilities, and superior behaviors are exhibited by entering the world of spirituality. Abdul Rani et al[28] showed that SI affected job performance; however, age and experience had no effect on it. Aydin and Ceylan[29] focused on the effect of spirituality and SI on organizational relationships and the effect of this variable on the development of leadership and the success of the personnel in organizations. A study by George[30] showed that SI in organizational relationships affects inter-personal understanding, changes in management and removal of obstacles. Hyson[31] reported that SI has a vital role in the efficacy of management and performance of the personnel in public sectors. Garcia-Zamor carried out a study and concluded that a spiritual work environment with personnel exhibiting high SI has a direct effect on the success of organizations, resulting in an improvement in the capability of the personnel and decreases in personnel displacements, fatigue and absenteeism.[32] Evaluation of the relationship between attributional style and job performance with the use of external source control based on Pearson correlation coefficient showed a P value of 0.25 and r = 0.27, with no significant relationship between the two variables. Ahanchiyan et al[19] reported that attributing unfavorable behaviors to external sources decreases the feeling of guilt and the feeling of responsibility for actions in individuals. Rio[33] believes that individuals with an external control source do not see any cause-and-effect relationship between their behaviors and events and believe that luck, chance, accidents or other factors are responsible for the outcomes of their behaviors; therefore, they do not believe that they are the causative agents for these outcomes, do not accept any responsibility and ex-

Table 4. The correlation of SI and its elements and locus of control with job performance

Variable	R	P	N
External locus of control	0.27	0.25	19
Internal locus control	0.404	0.000	224
Conscience	0.32	0.000	243
Grace	0.402	0.000	243
Inner-directedness	0.26	0.000	243
Meaning	0.46	0.000	243
Transcendence	0.14	0.02	243
Truth	0.23	0.000	243
Peaceful surrender	0.48	0.000	243
SI	0.49	0.000	243

Abbreviation: SI, spiritual intelligence.

Table 5. The coefficient of remaining variables in regression

The order of entering independent variables in the shape	Raw coefficients		Standardized coefficient	T	P
	B	SE	Beta		
Constant	23.85	6.86		3.47	0.001
Conscience	0.161	0.3	0.039	0.52	0.6
Grace	-0.127	0.23	-0.051	-0.54	0.58
Inner–directedness	0.316	0.28	0.069	1.11	0.26
Meaning	0.91	0.31	0.236	2.88	0.004
Transcendence	-0.339	0.28	-0.077	-1.21	0.22
Truth	0.199	0.15	0.085	1.27	0.2
Peaceful surrender	0.507	0.15	0.322	3.31	0.001

Table 6. Multiple correlation coefficient for predicting job performance of personnel

Mistake in estimation scale	Pure determination coefficient	Determination coefficient	Multiple correlation coefficient
9.49	0.26	0.28	0.53

hibit negative performance. However, Pearson correlation coefficient revealed a *P* value of 0.000 and r = 0.404 for internal control source. Therefore, there was a moderately significant and direct relationship between the two variables. Based on the linear regression analysis carried out, R^2 was calculated at 0.16, indicating that it was possible to predict the job performance of personnel based on the internal control source of attributional styles at a rate of 16%. Rio believes that positive events of life occur as a result of meticulous programming and continuous efforts of individuals who have an internal source of control. Therefore, they accept the responsibility for their actions and behaviors and accept their consequences. According to Rotter hypothesis,[34] individuals with internal control source believe that they are responsible for their own lives and are interested in working in conditions in which their skills and efforts result in success. As a result, the responsibility aspects of Whiner's hypothesis have a significant relationship with the concepts presented by Rotter hypothesis in relation to the control source. Individuals with an internal control source can more properly conquer problems in the environment and job stresses, increase their satisfaction and improve their job performance and exhibit superb performance in the work environment compared to those with an external control source.[34]

Is answering the main question of the research, "What is the role of each component of SI in predicting job performance?" and in order to explain the job performance of the staff by SI, multiple regression was used, and finally based on data it can be observed that overall, the multiple correlation coefficient of the effect of conscience, grace, inner-directedness, peaceful surrender and meaning, transcendence and truth was R = 0.53 and the coefficient of determination was $R^2 = 0.28$, with a pure determination coefficient of $R^{-2} = 0.26$. In other words, overall the SI components explain the job performance up to 26%, and 74% of job performance variance can be explained by variables beyond the scope of this research.

Some of the limitations of the present study are as follows: Since the present study was carried out in Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, care should be exercised in extending its results to other organizations and locations. A questionnaire was used in the present study to collect data; therefore, since a questionnaire is considered a self-survey tool, the respondents might exhibit bias in their responses. In addition, there were many questions because three questionnaires were used, and the respondents might not have had sufficient patience to answer all the questions accurately; therefore, the responses might not be very accurate. In this study, three questionnaires of three theorists were used and other aspects of SI, job performance and attributional style were not dealt with from the viewpoints of other theorists.

Conclusion

Considering the tests in the study, it was revealed that there is a positive and meaningful relation between the internal control of attributional styles and elements of SI

with job performance of personnel. On the other hand, based on the result of the regression with fixed amount of 26%, it seems necessary to pay attention to other effective elements on performance of personnel besides internal control and elements of SI. In future studies, it is advisable to investigate defects in SI in the staff and managers of governmental organizations, and also the degree of SI of the staff of the governmental organizations in comparison to that of the staff of private organizations.

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