



## Providing a Structural Model for Workplace Spirituality, Occupational Ethics, and Organizational Loyalty in Nurses of Ardabil Hospitals in 2019-2020

Taghi Akbari<sup>1\*</sup>, Davod Fathi<sup>2</sup>, Shahriar Dargahi<sup>2</sup>, Soliman Ahmadboukani<sup>2</sup>

1- Assistant Professor, Dept. of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran.

2- PhD Candidate in Counseling, Dept. of counseling, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, University of Mohaghegh Ardabili, Ardabil, Iran.



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#### \* Corresponding author:

Taghi Akbari,

#### E-mail:

akbari-ta@uma.ac.ir

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### Abstract

**Background:** The growing interest in workplace spirituality has led to the development of a new paradigm in organizational science. The present study aims to provide a structural model for workplace spirituality, occupational ethics, and organizational loyalty among nurses at Ardabil hospitals.

**Materials and Methods:** The statistical population, in this cross-sectional descriptive study, was composed of nurses working at Ardabil hospitals, from which 200 employees were selected by the random sampling technique, who responded to the research instruments. The research instruments included questionnaires about workplace spirituality, occupational ethics, and organizational loyalty. Data were analyzed by the Pearson correlation and structural equation modeling using SPSS-25 AMOS-24 software.

**Results:** Results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between the variables of workplace spirituality and organizational loyalty ( $P < 0.001$ ). In addition, an indirect effect was confirmed between these variables as mediated by occupational ethics ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** The results of this study confirmed the appropriateness of the model for workplace spirituality, occupational ethics, and organizational loyalty among nurses at Ardabil hospitals. Upon an improvement in the spirituality climate, managers would be able to promote organizational loyalty as well as individual and organizational performance.

**Keywords:** Workplace, Spirituality, Spiritual Therapies, Hospitals, Humans, Nurses

### Introduction

Organizational behavior is a major branch of organizational research, which has attracted the attention of many researchers. According to Robbins' idea of organizational behavior, attitudes about work depend on the three factors of job satisfaction, job interest, and organizational loyalty [1]. Organizational loyalty, defined as a sense of belonging and a desire for maintaining organizational membership, is based on a strong desire for joining a group, readiness for sharing efforts, a sense of trust, voluntary alignment with a

group, and willingness to follow guidelines [2]. Organizational loyalty indicates an attitude linking employees to the organization, which is based on their organizational commitment [3]. There is a strong theoretical relationship between organizational loyalty and components of organizational commitment. However, components of continuous commitment and normative commitment are not conceptually similar to organizational loyalty [4]. Golparvar and Nadi reviewed the literature on 'organizational loyalty', with the characteristics of which being (1)

employees loyal to the organization express it productively, (2) they demonstrate strong organizational commitment, (3) they behave so as to achieve organizational goals, (4) they adopt positive attitudes in their relationships with other employees, (5) they are receptive to organizational changes, and (6) they exhibit less counter-productive behavior than people of less organizational loyalty [5]. Workplace spirituality is one of the factors associated with organizational loyalty. Workplace spirituality is the understanding and recognition of a person's work life, which is internalized and nurtured by doing meaningful things in one's social life [6]. Workplace spirituality shall be better recognized by three components, including (1) meaningful work at the individual level, by which a person enjoys work and energy from work, and feels to be purposeful at work; (2) the feeling of solidarity at a group level, by which one feels to be connected with colleagues, receives support from employees, and has a common goal with them; (3) the feeling of alignment with values at an organizational level, by which one feels to be connected with organizational goals and values through considering the organization and employees [6]. Rigo and Kahna, in a study showed that all five dimensions of organizational spirituality predict 48% of the variance for the emotional dimension of organizational commitment, which is the most theoretical relationship of organizational loyalty with the component of emotional commitment [4]. Most studies state that there is a strong link between spirituality in the workplace and organizational loyalty [7].

Occupational ethics is another factor effective in organizational loyalty and workplace spirituality. Nowadays, the strategic role of occupational ethics in organizations is well established. Strategic management specialists consider genuine ethical principles in organizations as a prerequisite for apt strategic management [8]. Occupational ethics is a set of behavioral characteristics that create common rights among colleagues and customers, which is manifested in behaviors, such as benevolence, observance of legal limits, non-abuse of a profession, and reliability [9]. Occupational ethics deals with the way a person behaves, manages, and acts when performing occupational tasks, which can cover all occupations [10]. In fact, professional ethics is a set of principles and norms for human behavior that determine the behavior of individuals and groups in a professional structure [11]. Some studies trying to investigate the relationship between organizational ethics and workplace spirituality concluded that there was a relationship

between these two variables [12, 13]. In addition, some studies report a significant relationship between organizational ethics and organizational loyalty [5,14]. Therefore, due to the role of organizational loyalty in increasing efficiency and effectiveness among human resources, especially in the field of health and inattention to direct and indirect impacts of workplace spirituality as well as occupational ethics on organizational loyalty in nurses in the research literature, the present study was conducted to determine the relationship between workplace spirituality, professional ethics, and organizational loyalty among nurses. Besides, no research has yet simultaneously examined the variables of workplace spirituality, occupational ethics, and organizational loyalty among nurses through an integrated model. Accordingly, the present study aims to provide a structural model for workplace spirituality, occupational ethics, and organizational loyalty among nurses at Ardabil hospitals.

### Materials and Methods

In the present study, being a form of path analysis, the statistical population included all employees at Ardabil hospitals. To this end, a total number of 200 nurses were selected by random cluster sampling. The criterion for choosing the number of samples was that if the samples size was 500 and more in structural equations, it would be considered excellent. It is also suggested that the sample size always be 10 times the number of parameters calculated in the model [15]. Accordingly, 4 nurses were randomly selected from among nurses at Ardabil hospitals, and then 50 people were randomly selected from each area. The research instruments were as follows:

**Organizational Loyalty Questionnaire:** The Organizational Loyalty Questionnaire was prepared by Ali and Al-Kazemi (2007) to measure perceived organizational loyalty [16]. This scale had seven questions on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from I totally disagree (1) to I completely agree (5). The scores reflected an individual's perceived level of loyalty to the organization. This questionnaire had been used in Iran by Golparvar and Nadi (2011), with the results of which indicating appropriate technical capabilities of this questionnaire. According to Ali and Al-Kazemi (2007), the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire was reported at 0.81, and Golparvar and Nadi (2011) reported the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire at 0.63, which indicate the desirable reliability of this questionnaire [5]. Accordingly, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.74 in this study.

**Kadozir Occupational Ethics Questionnaire:**

This questionnaire has 35 questions used for collecting data on occupational ethics among employees, with eight dimensions utilized to measure occupational ethics on a five-point Likert scale. In addition, it has eight dimensions, namely (1) honesty, (2) justice, (3) respect, (4) responsibility, (5) legal orientation, (6) social communication, (7) maintenance of human dignity, and (8) empathy [17]. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient in the present study was 0.81

**Workplace Spirituality Questionnaire:** To assess and realize the variable of workplace spirituality, the workplace spirituality questionnaire designed by Miliman et al (2003) was utilized [18]. The three-dimensional questionnaire was used to measure the significance of work (6 items), Feeling of solidarity (7 items), and alignment with organizational values (7 items). This questionnaire has been designed in the form of a Likert scale. Questions 1 to 6 measured the variable of meaningfulness of work, questions 7 to 13 measured the feeling of solidarity, and questions 14 to 20 measured alignment with organizational values. This questionnaire was also designed in the form of a five-point Likert scale, with the answers, including I totally disagree, I disagree, I partly disagree, I agree, and I completely agree. For the entire scale, the minimum and maximum scores were 20 and 100, respectively. In the study

of Miliman et al (2003), reliability of this questionnaire, based on Cronbach's alpha, was 0.82, which indicates the acceptable validity of this questionnaire. In addition, in the study of Farhangi et al (2006), the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire was 0.87 [19]. In the present survey, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire was 0.83.

After obtaining permission from the hospitals and the relevant professor, the questionnaires were distributed among the subjects, which were collected and analyzed after completion. During the research, the staff were briefed on the manner of responding to questions and on the purpose of this research. In addition, ethical considerations were explained to them, and they were assured that the information on the questionnaires would be kept confidential so that they would respond to them honestly. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, and elongation) as well as inferential statistics (Pearson's correlation and the structural equation method using Amos 25 software).

**Results**

The participants' age ranged between 22 and 45. Before examining the hypotheses, the mean and deviation of the criteria as well as the correlation of the variables were examined. Full results have been presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Correlation matrix between research variables

Variable	Mean ± SD	1	2	3
Workplace spirituality	51.94 ± 14.46	1		
Ethics	22.44 ± 5.10	0.75*	1	
Organizational loyalty	45.31 ± 11.28	0.53*	0.68*	1

P < 0/01      \*\*=p < 0/001\*

According to Table 1, the relationship of workplace spirituality and occupational ethics with organizational loyalty is significant (P < 0.01). In addition, the results of the correlation matrix indicate that the correlation between the variables

is significant, so it would be possible to study the model. The fit indices of the model were calculated, with the results of the analysis shown in Table 2 as follows.

**Table 2.** Model's fit indices

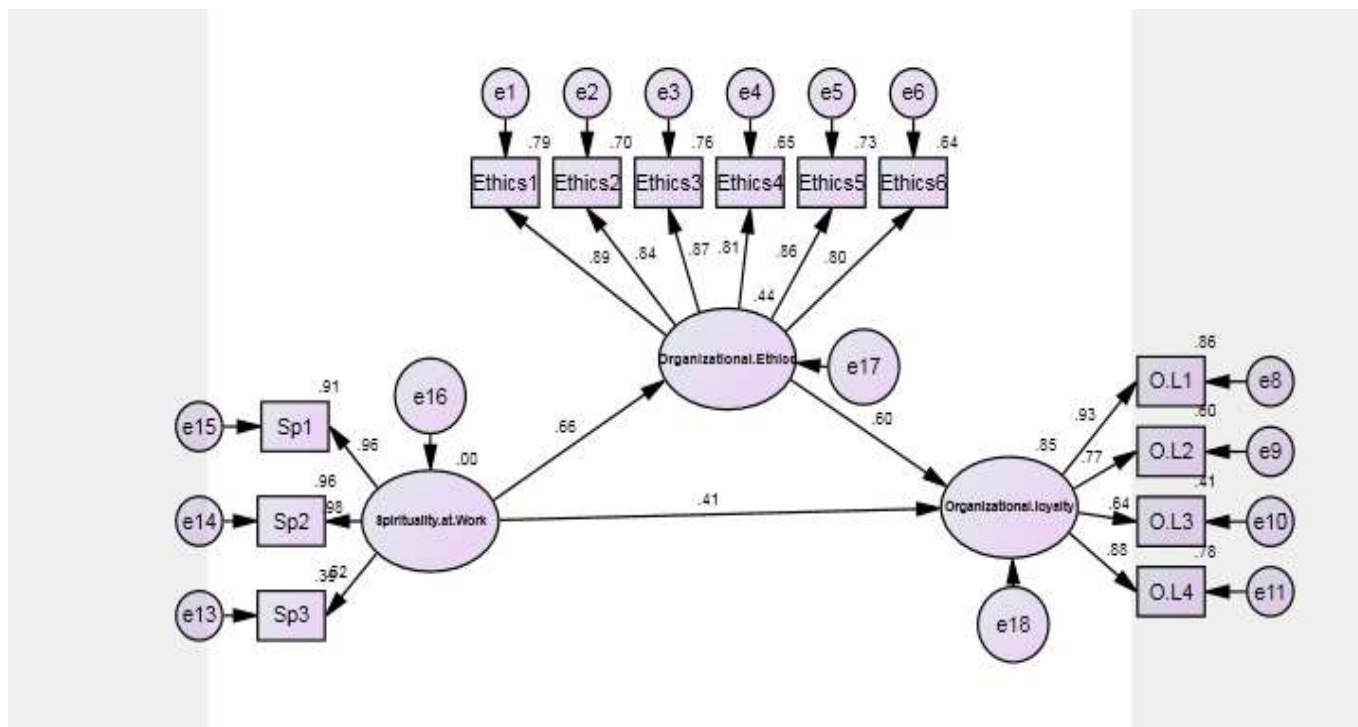
Index	X <sup>2</sup> /df	P	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
Value	1.57	0.005	0.98	0.96	0.98	0/05

**GFI:** Goodness-of-fit; **AGFI:** Adjusted goodness-of-fit index; **CFI:** Comparative fit index; **RMSEA:** Root mean square error of approximation;

According to Table 2, the values of GFI, AGFI, and CFI in the present study indicate the appropriate model-data fit. In addition, the value of the root

mean square error approximation (RMSEA) for the present study was 0.05, which indicated the appropriate fit of the model to the data.





**Fig. 1.** Fitted model for the mediating role of occupational ethics in the relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational loyalty (all three path coefficients were significant) ( $P < 0.001$ ).

In response to the research question, 'Does occupational ethics play a mediating role in the relationship between spirituality and organizational loyalty?' the results showed that both variables had

an indirect effect on organizational loyalty as mediated by occupational ethics. In addition, the accurate results of the research have been presented in Fig. 1 and Table 3.

**Table 3.** Coefficients of direct paths in the model

Path	Estimated value	Standard value	S. E	C.R	P
Workplace spirituality to occupational ethics	3.14	0.66	0.37	8.49	0.001
Workplace spirituality to organizational loyalty	0.92	0.41	0.13	7.03	0.001
Occupational ethics to organizational loyalty	0.28	0.60	0.02	11.46	0.001

According to Fig. 1 and Table 3, workplace spirituality and occupational ethics have a positive direct effect on organizational loyalty ( $P < 0.01$ ). In addition, workplace spirituality has a positive direct effect on occupational ethics ( $P < 0.01$ ).

To examine the mediating role of occupational ethics between workplace spirituality and organizational loyalty, the Bootstrap command was used, with the results of which presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Estimation of indirect paths in the model using the Bootstrap command

Predictive variable	Intermediate variable	Criterion variable	Estimated value	Upper limit	Lower limit	Significance
Workplace spirituality	Occupational ethics	Organizational loyalty	0.39	.049	0.32	0.004

As Table 4 shows, occupational ethics adjusts and increases the effects of workplace spirituality on organizational loyalty, with the mediating role of this variable having been confirmed. According to Tables 3 and 4, the direct effect of workplace spirituality and occupational ethics on organizational loyalty has been significant at the level of 0.01. In addition, the indirect effect of workplace spirituality and organizational loyalty through the mediating variable of occupational ethics has been significant.

**Discussion**

According to the results, workplace spirituality and occupational ethics have a positive direct effect on organizational loyalty, being consistent with most of the studies in this field [4, 5, 14]. Regarding the relationship between spirituality and organizational loyalty, the theoretical logic of this relationship in work environments, according to research, goes back to the role that spirituality plays in making a favorable work environment [5]. Research shows

that the presence of a work environment based on comprehensive ethical and human values affects employee behavior and attitude. This effect is more than anything else due to factors, such as human and moral values in an organization, which raise the sense of belonging and connection for the existence of truth, correctness, and honesty in people. Such feelings in the chain process of individuals tend to maintain and strengthen existing values, thereby increasing the level of effectiveness as well as individual and organizational performance [20]. Thus, one could say that spirituality is an effective factor in reducing psychological stress, increasing a greater level of responsibility in individuals, and improving their cooperation with others, thereby leading to loyalty and organizational commitment [21]. Regarding the relationship between occupational ethics and organizational loyalty, one could say that occupational ethics is a set of principles and standards of human behavior that determine behaviors of individuals and groups, which is in fact the process of rational thinking. The purpose of occupational ethics is to determine organizational values; thus, if an organization fails to consider work ethics and adhere to ethical principles in dealing with HR and external stakeholders, some problems will be created for that organization, thereby challenging the legitimacy of the organization and its actions [22]. Thus, the relationship between occupational ethics and organizational loyalty needs to be explained. In addition, workplace spirituality has a positive direct effect on occupational ethics, which is consistent with most studies [12, 13]. Nurses of high spirituality feel bound to do the right thing at the hospital, so they fulfill both moral and occupational requirements. These people feel energetic in doing their work and in their relationships with colleagues and patients; thus, they show self-confidence and flexibility and attach meaning to their work. According to some authors, there is a significant positive relationship between ethical issues and workplace spirituality among employees of an organization, and spirituality in an organization is a predictor of the existence of ethics at work. In fact, when employees feel meaningful in their profession, they become bound by the principles of occupational ethics. Fear of punishment leads to a kind of self-control and self-management at work [12]. The indirect effect of workplace spirituality on organizational loyalty through the mediating role of occupational ethics was significant in the present study. According to the research findings, by exploiting and strengthening workplace spirituality, a suitable platform will be provided for the development of

moral behaviors among employees. This is due to the fact that in societies where most people are religious and adopt a spiritual approach, there is a greater possibility of promoting spirituality in organizations and the work environment, thereby leading to an improvement in moral behaviors among employees and reinforcing occupational ethics. This could lead to an increase in organizational loyalty, where occupational ethics is at a high level, which ultimately increases loyalty to organizational governance [24]. According to the findings of the present research, when spiritual and religious values dominate the work environment, a convivial atmosphere is created. The sense of security boosts occupational ethics and ultimately leads to the reinforcement of organizational fidelity. In an atmosphere based on spiritual and moral values, humans feel more united, meaningful, purposeful, and hopeful. In addition, they feel more loyal to the environment and goals of their workplace.

This research, like similar ones, had some limitations. Accordingly, the present study focused on a restricted range of dependent variables and did not include moderating variables, such as the gender role. Thus, it is recommended that future studies consider other dependent and moderating variables, such as absenteeism, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), job satisfaction, gender role, health, psychological wellbeing, innovative behavior, and productivity. In addition, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted in other fields, such as vulnerable businesses.

## **Conclusion**

According to the results of the present study, workplace spirituality and occupational ethics have a direct positive effect on organizational loyalty. In addition, the indirect effect of workplace spirituality on organizational loyalty was established. Accordingly, it is necessary to pay necessary attention to the mentioned variables in the nursing community. According to the results of the present study, some suggestions are made to nursing managers and hospitals concerning occupational ethics and spirituality for future planning. It is suggested that hospital managers and their deputies be role models for ethics and spirituality among nurses. Thus, it is recommended that these important variables be practiced primarily by the managers of hospitals so that fundamental values are institutionalized in them and in organizational behaviors. In addition, hospital managers embody the nursing profession; thus, given the important position of this profession in the health

management system, they could provide a model for promoting the meaning of this profession.

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