

# Studying the role of spirituality in quality of work life amongst Muslim employees in Indonesia



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The Abrahamic religions, which have been propagated and promoted by the divine prophets, aimed to guide human beings to worldly and heavenly happiness. Islamic spirituality is achieved by observing religious rules. As people spend much of their lives at the workplaces, it is imperative to address spirituality at the workplace and its effect on the quality of work life in the field of religion psychology and industrial psychology. Therefore, this study determined the role of spirituality in the quality of work life of 10 000 employees of 80 government organisations in Jakarta, Makassar, Medan and Burger in Indonesia, by simple random sampling. The participants were analysed through questionnaires. Given the religious conditions governing Indonesia, an acceptable level of spirituality was confirmed in the studied organisations. Furthermore, path analysis tests in Linear Structural Relationship (LISREL) software verified a positive and significant relationship between spirituality and quality of work life ( $p = 0.71$ ;  $T = 12.64$ ). Organisations are slowly transforming from a small environment of purely economic and social activity into places of spiritual growth. Moreover, organisations that provide opportunities for the spiritual development of their employees have been shown to be more successful than the others. The quality of work life of employees is also relevant as the most valuable asset of the organisation. Consequently, the results of this study should be considered by managers of organisations to enjoy the positive outcomes of spirituality and quality of work life.

**Contribution:** This article contributes to the relationship between spirituality and quality of work life.

**Keywords:** happiness; religion; spirituality; quality of work life; industrial psychology; Muslim employees; Indonesia; organisational change.

## Introduction

Spirituality in the workplace is in pursuit of meaning and purpose in life to establish a strong connection between co-workers and to achieve harmony between core beliefs and organisational values. In today's competitive world, organisations need to make effective use of human resources (Ahmad & Omar 2016). Hence, a new strategic approach has been introduced in the human resources in the literature. In other words, human resources are both the agent of work and its creator, therefore they play a pivotal role in the development of the organisation and the great organisational changes that originate from the capabilities of the human resources (Altaf & Awan 2011). The importance and necessity of spirituality in the organisation are such that it can bring humanity for the organisations, activities for the community and responsibility for the environment (Ahmadi, Nami & Barvarz 2014). To meet environmental demands and stay competitive, organisations need motivated and productive employees who work hard to achieve organisational goals (Belwalkar, Vohra & Pandey 2018). In present times, employees seem to be looking for something beyond material rewards at places they work. They seek meaningful, hopeful work and want to balance their lives (Gupta, Kumar & Singh 2014). Organisations are faced with mature employees who seek to find meaningful, purposeful work and nurture the workplaces with such characteristics. In fact, spirituality at work describes the experience of employees whose work is satisfying, meaningful and purposeful (Adhikari & Dhruva 2010).

The concept of quality of work life is related to a philosophy in organisations that will increase the dignity of employees (Rice et al. 1985). The value system of quality of work life considers investing

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in human resources as the most important element of the organisation, meaning that addressing the needs of employees will lead to improvement and long-term efficiency of the organisation. In recent years, quality of work life programmes have played an essential role in increasing the productivity of human resources and subsequently the efficiency of large organisations and companies. Quality of work life has been an important part of employees' workplace experiences in the literature of the humanities since the 1970s, and has been cited as a variable providing employee satisfaction over the decades since its inception. Improving the quality of work life is currently one of the most important goals of the organisation and its employees (Sirgy et al. 2008). The quality of work life programme includes any improvement in the organisational culture that supports the growth and excellence of employees in the organisation. Accordingly, the present study aimed to investigate the role of organisational spirituality on the quality of work life of Muslim employees in Indonesia in 2020.

## Spirituality

Spirituality in simple terms is understood as anything that includes or is related to meaning and soul, and is the opposite of appearance and material. Spirituality means the existence of meaning and anything that is not material. Religion is a metaphor for spirituality. Spirituality is contrasted to verblatity and materiality. It looks inward, as opposed to outward. Spirituality can encompass sacred or unseen matters, moral values, religion, mysticism and any act that adds meaning to life. Spiritual life does not necessarily mean belonging to one of the institutional and historical religions; but it does mean having an attitude towards the world and humans that gives humanity peace, happiness and hope (Ashmos & Duchon 2000). As the word spirituality is used in a variety of contexts, it is difficult to define. The subject of spirituality has been a long-standing concern of humankind, but the critical and comparative study of spirituality in the global context is an emerging phenomenon. Many religions did not provide a precise definition or term to convey the concept of spirituality. Nevertheless, the concept of spirituality has become widespread, more so today. Spirituality means energy, meaning, purpose and awareness in life (Duchon & Plowman 2005). Spirituality is a constant search for the meaning and purpose of life, a deep understanding of the value of life, the vastness of the universe, the existing natural forces and the system of personal beliefs. There is a relatively more comprehensive and accurate definition of spirituality: Spirituality is an attempt to nurture sensitivity to oneself, others, in human beings and God (Vis major), to explore the direction of what is needed to become human or to search for perfect humanity. In other definitions of spirituality, the key points are as follows: not formal, coherent or organised; completely comprehensive and receptive to anyone; the ultimate source of meaning and purpose in life; the sanctity of anything; an eternal source of faith and willpower; the ultimate goal; non-sectarian, beyond sects; universal and without time dimension; majesty in the presence of a transcendent dignity;

a deep sense of interaction with anything and inner comfort and tranquillity (Bhatti et al. 2016). Traditionally, many religions consider spirituality to be one of the true dimensions of religious experience. Many equate religion with spirituality, but the decline of the followers of official religions with the growth of secularism in the Western world has led to the growth of broad views of spirituality. Spirituality refers to the ultimate or immaterial truth. It is an inner path that enables one to discover the nature of existence or the deepest values and meanings of people's lives; the goal of spiritual exercises, including prayer and meditation, is to achieve peace and strengthen personal inner life (Faro-Albuquerque et al. 2014). Such exercises lead to experience or connection with a higher truth, that is, a better understanding of oneself in relation to other persons or to human society, to nature or the world or to the spiritual realm. Spirituality is often seen as a source of energy or direction in life. Spirituality can be considered as paying attention to immaterial or enduring truths or the transcendent essence of the world (Chawla & Guda 2013). The authors in the current study used Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson (2003) definition of spirituality including meaningful work at the individual level, sense of community at the group level and alignment with the values of the organisation at the organisational level.

Emotions and spirituality are often referred to as moving boxes, in fact subjects that we do not understand well. Such terms are vague, and no specific definitions can be given for them. However, spirituality has a personal nature, and this has led to multiple views about it (Gatling, Kim & Milliman 2016). Some consider spirituality to come from within human beings and say that spirituality is a subject beyond religious rules and is related to the flow of meaning-making and inner self-discovery, which is formed in them regardless of individuals (view of the inner being of spirituality). In this view, although religion is certainly derived from the power that emanates from within each individual, it also includes a sense of connection to one's own work and that of others. Even proponents of this view have pursued spirituality as the individual's main emotional connection within others and the world as a whole (Duchon & Plowman 2005). Spirituality in various cultural and religious concepts is considered a spiritual way in which a person can achieve a high level of consciousness or human perfection or achieve wisdom or union with God or creation. The allegory of Plato's Cave in the seventh book of the Republic is a description of a journey. The spiritual journey is a path with a mental and individual dimension (Houghton, Neck & Krishnakumar 2016). The spiritual journey to reach a certain goal can be short or long. Every life event is part of this journey, but it can also have specific or salient moments, such as various spiritual exercises (such as meditation, prayer and fasting), relationship with a person who has had deep spiritual experiences (called a master, elder, spiritual guide or guru depending on the culture) and a person's approach to sacred texts and so on. If the spiritual path is completely or partially the same, at the beginning of the path, these states may be in the form of experiments or overcoming, such tests are often pre-social tests for the person who has reached

them before the social result. Spirituality can have two dimensions: one is inner growth, and the other is expressing the result of this growth in the world (Bhatti et al. 2016).

In the 20th century, at a time when the rise of Islam in the world was thought to be challenged by the growing influence of Western liberal democratic culture, on the one hand, and the unbridled advancement of Marxism on the other, the people of Southeast Asia trapped themselves in local indigenous cultures and ideas. Chinese and Indian customs, which were liberated and almost ignored by Western schools and philosophies, showed widespread popularity in spirituality and Islam.

It is important to note that, from the beginning of the 20th century, numerous religious associations were formed in Indonesia for cultural and religious activities that later played an important role in country's independence and anti-colonialism movements. Amongst them are the establishment of the Muhammadiyah Association in 1912 and the Ulema Movement in 1924. The purpose of their establishment was propagating and organising Islamic religious activities that facilitated introduction of Islam to people who were thirsty for Islamic knowledge and spiritual teachings.

## Quality of work life

The term quality of work life was first coined in 1972 at the International Conference on Labor Economics and Labor Relations. The quality of work life to date has been viewed in a variety of ways, including as a movement and as a set of organisational interventions and as a form of employees' work life. Quality of work life as a goal is to improve organisational performance by creating more challenging, satisfying and effective jobs and work environments for people at all levels of the organisation. Quality of work life as a process is to call for efforts to achieve the above goal through the involvement and active participation of all members of the organisation. Through their active involvement, individuals can have a meaningful participation in the organisation, experience a greater sense of satisfaction and be proud of their personal growth and development (Sirgy et al. 2008). Researchers know that quality of work life is one of the developmental techniques of the organisation that tries to provide the three factors of motivation and satisfaction, acceptance of responsibility and a sense of commitment to work. It is designed to improve the functioning of the organisation by making the workplace more humane and democratic and by involving employees in decision-making. Although some researchers consider the quality of work life to be broader and different from the organisational development (Trau & Hartel 2007), some believe that the quality of work life from the perspective of employees means the desirability or non-desirability of the work environment. In other words, quality of work life programmes is the ways in which organisations recognise that their responsibility is to create jobs and working conditions in a way that is both attractive and desirable for people and provides profitability and economic health of

the organisation (Cascio 2005). Furthermore, the employee participation approach is one of the most common methods used to increase the quality of work life programmes. This approach consists of several systematic sub-methods in which employees can intervene in decisions that affect them and their relationship with the organisation. Employees' sense of responsibility is enhanced by using this method, and sometimes they may even feel that they own the decisions they have participated in making (Rahimi, Rajaeipour & Salimi 2007). To be successful in quality of work life projects, it must be seen as more than a few systematic techniques. Therefore, quality of work life should be part of organisational culture. Many organisations in the United States have injected this philosophy into their organisational structure to increase employee satisfaction (Cascio 1992). Accordingly, spirituality seems to be able to affect the quality of work life. Reviewing the background of the researches, it is concluded that various researches have been done on spirituality as well as on the quality of work life. But no comprehensive study was conducted to simultaneously examine the spirituality and quality of working life amongst Muslim employees of Indonesian government agencies. Therefore, the research hypothesis of this study is presented as follows:

Spirituality has a positive role in the quality of work life of employees.

## Methodology

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-correlational in nature. The statistical population of the study consists of 10 000 Muslim employees of 80 government agencies in Jakarta, Makassar, Medan and Burger in 2020 selected through simple random sampling method. These organisations have been selected as the statistical population of the research because of the ease in collecting data by the authors. The questionnaires were used to collect the necessary data. Thus, the 20-items spirituality questionnaire provided by Milliman et al. (2003). This questionnaire measures various aspects of significant work, the feeling of solidarity with others and alignment with organisation values and the 32-items questionnaire based on Walton (1975) factors (adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working, opportunities for continued growth and security, constitutionalism in the work organisation, social relevance in work life, overall life space, social integration and cohesiveness, and human progress capabilities) were applied to assess the quality of work life of employees.

To evaluate the reliability of these questionnaires, Cronbach's alpha of the Indonesian sample was calculated in the Statistical Product and Service Solutions Version 25 (SPSS) software. It is worth noting that Cronbach's alpha coefficient for spirituality and quality of work life variables was 0.83 and 0.86, respectively. Furthermore, this coefficient was 0.92 for the whole questionnaire, which indicates the appropriate reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.7 indicate that the reliability of the measuring

instrument has been confirmed and can be the basis for further work (Moss et al. 1998). Content validity was used to assess the validity of the questionnaires, and 10 university professors expert in this field confirmed the validity of the questionnaires (Moss 1995). Moreover, the present study uses 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) for both scales. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' was employed as it has been most recommended by the researchers that it would reduce the frustration level of the participant respondents and increase response rate and response quality (Sachdev & Verma 2004). After distributing the questionnaires by simple random sampling method within one month, 8,542 questionnaires were deemed suitable, and the rest of the questionnaires were excluded from the analysis. After aggregating the questionnaires, the descriptive statistics of the research obtained were as follows: 44% of organisations are production organisations and 56% of organisations are service organisations; 42% of the sample are women and 58% are men; of these, 35% were under 30 years old, 48% were between 30 and 40 years and 17% were over 40 years and above; 47% of people have a bachelor's degree, 42% have a master's degree and 11% of them have doctoral and PhD degree.

## Results

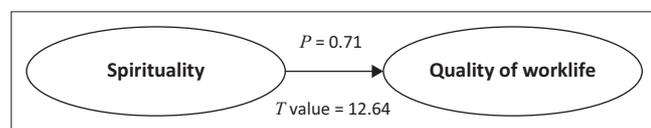
First, one sample *T*-test in SPSS software was used to estimate the present status of the statistical population in terms of the studied variables (Berkman & Reise 2011). The results of the research according to Table 1 indicate that the study population has a good status of spirituality and quality of working life (which was more than the average level of 3).

Moreover, Figure 1 and Table 2 show the test results of the research hypothesis by structural equation modelling in Linear Structural Relationship (LISREL) software. Through this method, the acceptability of theoretical models in specific societies can be tested using correlation, non-experimental and experimental data. This method provides estimates of model parameters (path coefficients and error expressions) as well as several indicators for a good fit, and using experimental data, it is possible to test the developed models as a whole and with the indicators provided to the researchers model can be improved. As the '*p*-value' is positive, and the '*T*-value' is more than 1.96, the hypothesis of the study has been confirmed.

**TABLE 1:** Test of the average status of spirituality and quality of work life in the statistical community.

Variables	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	<i>T</i>	Sig.
Spirituality	8542	4.0325	0.31260	18.9854	0.000
Quality of work life	8542	4.1354	0.28741	21.9536	0.000

SD, standard deviation; Sig., significance.



**FIGURE 1:** Structural equation modelling.

## Discussion

A significant part of our lives is spent in the form of work life. Especially in recent years, working life is no longer limited to the official working hours in the company, the store, the workshop and the factory and leaves us struggling outside the workplace and even at home in various ways and means. Therefore, if we think about the quality of our lives, it makes sense to consider the quality of our working lives as well. Given the importance of this topic, this study examines the role of spirituality on the quality of work life of employees in Indonesia. The results indicate a positive and significant relationship between spirituality and the quality of life of employees ( $p = 0.71$ ;  $T = 12.64$ ). Given this positive relationship, it is worthwhile to pay more attention to the role of spirituality in organisations.

Humans have entered a new and unprecedented era in their lives in which the world is changing rapidly. For the past 400 years, the West has distinguished between the outer world and the inner world, separating worldly activities from affairs like religion, spirituality and mysticism. In contrast, this separation has led to the de-superstition and denial of the church to Western man, mastering nature, advancing various sciences and technologies, increasing the welfare of life, the emergence of democracy, and the rule of law. Simply put, this separation has led to the rule of the rational and modernist paradigms in most parts of the world (Lockhart 2011).

Nevertheless, this disunion, separates man from many aspects of the highest aspects of his human existence. In fact, in the modern paradigm, the contribution of the human soul and inner needs is ignored. The modern paradigm deals only with the legal, political and economic framework of man and considers the inner aspects of life to be private affairs, which everyone must deal with according to their own choices. In other words, the modern paradigm has spread to the whole universe and has taken on the task of ensuring human well-being. It has abandoned large areas of human sensitivity and provided a context for human beings, especially Westerners, to feel dissatisfied and restless. Accordingly, they show a greater leaning towards spirituality, religion and spiritual rites, especially the East Asian paradigms, to fill their spiritual void. In Islam, spirituality means having the highest human values such as faith in God, respect for others, piety, service, optimism and honesty, which are universal. Spirituality in our society is based on religion, which means that the teachings of Islam shape spirituality. The source of Islamic spirituality is the Holy Quran and the hadiths and narrations of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him [PBUH]). Islamic languages have various terms for the Western world of spirituality, which include the following: inward, truth and universe of meaning, status, divine grace, the concept of moral perfection, beauty, soul and

**TABLE 2:** Research hypothesis test results.

No.	Hypothesis	<i>p</i>	<i>T</i>	Result
1	The role of spirituality in quality of work life	0.71	12.64	Significant and positive

remembrance of God. According to Muslims, the spiritual life is based on both the fear of God and His love, submission to the will of God and the search to know Him, who is the ultimate goal of creation. Islamic spirituality is related to the patterns of Islamic customs that are made by the pillars of religion. The essence of the spirituality of Islam is linked to monotheism, and at the heart of Islam is the key to understanding its various aspects.

There is no doubt that fundamental changes are taking shape in the workplaces, and that spirituality will be a fundamental issue. There are many useful reasons to examine the relationship between spirituality and management. One is the effect that spirituality has on managerial behaviour and the other is the perspective of meaningful work. Creating spirituality at work has many benefits for managing employees and the organisation. Spirituality changes the nature of work. People are looking for meaning in their work and for a way to connect their work life with their spiritual life, and to be in tune with an insight and a goal that goes beyond making money. Spirituality empowers people in their work and allows them to connect with God in all aspects of their lives; as the nature of work has changed, so has the relationship between managers and employees. In earlier periods, managers were commanders who had no role in the personal development of employees. Managers today are guides who help create meaning and purpose for their co-workers. With spirituality, managers will be able to not only improve productivity at their workplace or organisation but also significantly achieve inner peace and contentment or a long-term happiness and provide an environment for colleagues, friends and colleagues to enjoy this inner happiness and satisfaction. Therefore, the entry of spirituality is inevitable in the field of organisational studies. The closeness of the concept of spirituality with the study of behaviour and organisational resources is other fields of study which can accrue varied benefits and advantages for the management, such as increasing creativity, enhancing honesty and trust, elevating the sense of personal interaction, increasing organisational commitment, improving employees' job attitudes such as increasing job satisfaction, job participation as well as reducing the intention to leave the workplace, increasing work ethic and conscience and more motivation. All of these directly and indirectly improve the performance, profitability and effectiveness of the organisation.

## Conclusion

The truth of spirituality and its effects on improving life and happiness in this world and the hereafter has predominately occupied the minds of human beings today. Religious spirituality is, in fact, a state that is created in the individual following a continuous spiritual connection with the Creator and obedience to his commands; religious spirituality is the path humans follow in their individual life and which will cause the spiritual promotion of the relevant organisation and, consequently, society and ultimately lead to the hereafter happiness of the individual and society. In fact, focusing on spirituality can be a means to control the environment, prevent conflict, accept organisational goals and achieve

success; therefore some strongly believe that spirituality should be an important part of an organisation's programmes. Divine religions, including Islam, strive to spiritualise human life. The means introduced by Islam for man to achieve salvation is the correction and purification of the soul, which is the fruit of true faith and piety.

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### Authors' contributions

Each author participated in preparing the manuscript, that is, writing, methodology, investigation, analysis, etc.

### Ethical considerations

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### Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

### 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.

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