Managers' Spirituality at Work and Transformational Leadership Style in Tehran University of Medical Sciences, 2012

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Background: In today's changing and uncertain environment, there is a need for transformational leaders. Besides, due to lack of effective leaders in organizations, identifying factors influencing managers to act as transformational managers is very important. Spirituality is one of the factors, which cause managers to act as transformational managers.

Objectives: This study aimed to investigate the association between managers' spirituality at work and their leadership styles in Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran in 2012.

Materials and Methods: This was an applied, cross-sectional and descriptive-analytic study conducted on all managers at different levels (n = 44) and a sample of 74 employees of the Vice Chancellor of Management Development and Resource Planning of Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran in 2012. Data was collected using two questionnaires evaluating managers' leadership styles and their spirituality at work. Collected data was analyzed using SPSS 16.0 by Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Linear Regression (Stepwise method). P < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results: There were positive and significant correlations between transformational leadership style and managers' spirituality at work (r = 0.364, P < 0.001) and between transformational leadership style and all dimensions of managers' spirituality at work (P < 0.05). Multiple Linear Regression showed that among the dimensions of managers' spirituality at work, only interpersonal communication had a significant effect on using transformational leadership style by managers (P = 0.001).

Conclusions: If managers' spirituality at work, especially interpersonal communication skills improves, their use of transformational leadership would be increased. Therefore, it seems necessary to employ individuals with great interpersonal communication skills and good communication with other people and colleagues, teams, formal and informal organizations as managers. Furthermore, it is recommended to continuously improve managers' communication skills to enable them to act as transformational managers.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Transactional Leadership; Laissez-Faire Leadership

1. Background

The most striking characteristic of the current era is large and continuous changes occurring in different areas (1, 2). To deal with uncertain environment and continuous changes, transformational leaders and managers would be required because transformational leadership and management enable the organization to improve its performance in a competitive, uncertain and unpredictable environment (3, 4). Leadership style is a manager or leader's continuous behavioral pattern perceived by others, and he or she uses it when working with others or doing work by others (5). Leadership styles based on a new classification are categorized into transformational, transactional and laissez-faire ones. Among these three styles of leadership, transformational leadership style has been more considered because of its desirable characteristics (6, 7). Transformational leadership style focuses on developing and empowering followers to function independently, and is a process by which leaders and followers promote each other to higher levels of morality and motivation. Transformational leaders and managers have great insights and try to make others to do extraordinary work and activities (8, 9). On the other hand, transactional leaders motivate their followers towards predetermined goals and objectives (10, 11). However, laissez-faire leadership is to free followers from being led or to avoid leading, which is the most passive style in the spectrum of leadership styles. In this style, the leader or manager avoids making decisions and shifts his or her responsibilities to others. Therefore, employees' motivation is reduced to a minimum and leader's foresight and insight is eliminated (12, 13). The present study was conducted based on the Bernard M. Bass's studies on transformational leadership.

According to his definition, four important dimensions of transformational leadership include: idealized influence (leader or manager's attributes and behavior), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (14, 15). In the recent years, many studies have been conducted on transformational leadership and its advantages. According to the results of these studies, transformational leadership increases organizational productivity, organizational performance, organizational learning and organizational commitment, employees' job satisfaction and self-actualization, collective efficacy and actualization, performance of work groups, and producing intermediate outcomes such as shared vision (16-22). Moreover, transformational leadership can decrease employees' job stress, turnover intentions, burnout, and intention to leave the organization (23-25). Therefore, identifying factors influencing managers to act as transformational managers is very important. In addition to the research performed on the advantages of using transformational leadership style in organizations, some studies were conducted on managers and leaders' characteristics, which make them act as transformational managers. According to their results, spirituality is one of the factors, which cause managers to act as transformational managers (26, 27). Spirituality has recently entered the fields of Management and Organization (28, 29) and over the last decade, spirituality concept has been adequately considered at work (30-34). Spirituality refers to trying to establish person's sensitivity to himself or herself, others and God, search for what is needed for becoming a human, and search for the perfect man (35, 36). In general, spirituality at work has been defined as trying to develop sensitivity to four kinds of communication, containing super-personal communication, interpersonal communication, intrapersonal communication and exterpersonal communication. Super-personal communication refers to person's relationships with transphysical phenomena including God, etc. Intrapersonal communication refers to person's relationships with himself or herself. Interpersonal communication indicates person's relationships with other people, and exterpersonal communication denotes person's relationships with natural and non-human environment. In this definition, being a spiritual person is determined through investigating how to establish these four relationships. In fact, being spiritual has a cross-religious concept and does not belong to any certain and particular religion (37, 38). Spirituality in organizations has some benefits for employees and supports organizational performance. Based on the results of some studies, spirituality increases employees' well-being and quality of life, gives personnel a sense of purpose and meaning at work, and gives them a sense of mutual understanding and interrelatedness. To promote one's personality, spirituality at work is the bridge between human's biological, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions and self-actualization, meaningful and purposeful work. Important achievements of spirituality at work are peace, happiness and hope which are the main components of inward satisfaction including satisfaction both in personal life and work life (39, 40).

2. Objectives

This study aimed to investigate the association between dimensions of managers' spirituality at work and their leadership styles.

3. Materials and Methods

This was an applied, cross-sectional and descriptive-analytic study conducted on managers (at different levels including top, middle and operational managers) and employees of the Vice Chancellor of Management Development and Resource Planning of Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran in 2012. All managers (n = 44) and a sample of 74 employees, selected using simple random sampling method, were studied. The sample size of employees was determined using the findings of previous studies assuming $\alpha = 0.05$, d = 4.7 and $\sigma = 20.6$. Required data on the leadership styles was collected using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which its inter-item consistency score was found to be adequate ($\alpha = 0.91$). This questionnaire has two separate forms evaluating managers' leadership style from the viewpoints of both managers themselves and their followers and employees. Therefore, the manager-related forms indicating managers' views about their leadership styles were completed by the studied managers. Besides, the studied employees completed the follower-related forms indicating followers and employees' perspectives on their managers' leadership styles. Another questionnaire developed by Abedijafari and Rastegar (41) was used to evaluate the level of managers' spirituality at work, including Spiritual Well Being Scale (SWBS), Spiritual Transcendence Scale (STS), and Spirituality Assessment Scale (SAS). This questionnaire examined four kinds of employees' communication, including super-personal communication, interpersonal communication, intrapersonal communication, and exterpersonal communication. Its reliability had been confirmed in their study previously ($\alpha = 0.92$). Five-point Likert scales were used to measure managers' leadership styles and their spirituality at work, whereby one referred to strongly disagree and five as strongly agree. Informed consent was obtained from all managers and employees participating in this study. All participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Collected data was analyzed using SPSS 16.0 by Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Linear Regression (Stepwise method). $P < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

4. Results

A half of the studied managers were male (50%). Most of 44 studied managers were in the 40-50 years age group (43.2%), married (81.8%), employed officially (90.9%), in the

10-20 years job experience group (47.7%), and had a bachelor's degree (56.8%). On the other hand, most of 74 studied employees were female (58.1%), married (58.1%), employed officially (56.8%), and younger than 30 years (67.6%), less than five years job experience (70.3%), and a bachelor's degree (51.4%) (Table 1). Transformational leadership and laissez-faire leadership styles had the highest and lowest means, respectively, both from studied managers (4.09 ± 0.38 *vs.* 2.60 ± 0.81) and employees' viewpoints (3.68 ± 0.74 *vs.* 2.47 ± 0.98) indicating that managers believed that they acted more as transformational managers, also the employees believed that their managers mostly directed and managed them transformationally. Furthermore, among the dimensions of managers' spirituality at work, superpersonal communication and exterpersonal communication had the highest and lowest means, respectively, from the viewpoints of both managers (3.98 ± 0.43 *vs.* 3.79 ± 0.42) and employees (4.03 ± 0.39 vs. 3.69 ± 0.37) (Table 2). On the other hand, unlike laissez-faire leadership style, transformational (r = 0.364, P < 0.001) and transactional (r = 0.229, P = 0.013) leadership styles had positive and significant correlations with managers' spirituality at work (Table 3). In addition, transformational leadership style had positive and significant correlations with all dimensions of managers' spirituality at work (P < 0.05) (Table 4) indicating that increase in each kind of communication would increase using transformational leadership style by managers. Furthermore, managers' spirituality at work had positive and significant correlations with all dimensions of transformational leadership style (P < 0.05) (Table 5) indicating that increase in each dimension of transformational leadership style would increase managers' spirituality at work. Finally, Multiple Linear Regression showed that among the dimensions of managers' spirituality at work, only interpersonal communication had significant association with using transformational leadership style by managers (P = 0.001) (Table 6), so that 16.5% of the variance in using transformational leadership style could be explained by interpersonal communication (R^2 adjusted = 0.165).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Studied Managers and Employees [a]

	Managers	Employees	Total
Gender			
Male	22 (50)	31 (41.9)	53 (44.9)
Female	22 (50)	43 (58.1)	65 (55.1)
Total	44 (100)	74 (100)	118 (100)
Age			
Younger than 30 years	6 (13.6)	50 (67.6)	56 (47.5)
30-40 Years	13 (29.5)	17 (23)	30 (25.4)
40-50 Years	19 (43.2)	6 (8.1)	25 (21.2)
50-60 Years	6 (13.6)	1 (1.4)	7 (5.9)
Total	44 (100)	74 (100)	118 (100)
Marital Status			
Single	8 (18.2)	31 (41.9)	39 (33.1)
Married	36 (81.8)	43 (58.1)	79 (66.9)
Total	44 (100)	74 (100)	118 (100)
Education Level			
Diploma	3 (6.8)	10 (13.5)	13 (11)
Associate degree	0 (0)	9 (12.2)	9 (7.6)
Bachelor's degreed	25 (56.8)	38 (51.4)	63 (53.4)
Master's degrees	15 (34.1)	16 (21.6)	31 (26.3)
Philosophy of doctor	1 (2.3)	1 (1.4)	2 (1.7)
Total	44 (100)	74 (100)	118 (100)
Employment Status			
Official	40 (90.9)	42 (56.8)	82 (69.5)
Contractual	4 (9.1)	32 (43.2)	36 (30.5)
Total	44 (100)	74 (100)	118 (100)
Job Experience			
Less than 5 Years	3 (6.8)	52 (70.3)	55 (46.6)
5-10 Years	4 (9.1)	10 (13.5)	14 (11.9)
10-20 Years	21 (47.7)	9 (12.2)	30 (25.4)
20-30 Years	16 (36.4)	3 (4.1)	19 (16.1)
Total	44 (100)	74 (100)	118 (100)

[a] Data are presented as No. (%).

Table 2. Managers' Leadership Styles and Their Spirituality at Work From the Viewpoints of Studied Managers and Employees [a]

Studied Samples Variables	Managers, No.	Employees, No.	Total, No.
Leadership Styles			
Transformational leadership	4.09 ± 0.38	3.68 ± 0.74	3.83 ± 0.66
Transactional leadership	3.74 ± 0.46	3.42 ± 0.52	3.54 ± 0.52
Laissez-faire leadership	2.60 ± 0.81	2.47 ± 0.98	2.52 ± 0.92
Dimensions of Managers' Spirituality at Work			
Super-personal communication	3.98 ± 0.43	4.06 ± 0.36	4.03 ± 0.39
Intrapersonal communication	3.81 ± 0.35	3.76 ± 0.29	3.78 ± 0.31
Interpersonal communication	3.94 ± 0.42	3.85 ± 0.41	3.89 ± 0.41
Exterpersonal communication	3.79 ± 0.42	3.63 ± 0.33	3.69 ± 0.37
Total (managers' spirituality at work)	3.88 ± 0.29	3.82 ± 0.25	3.85 ± 0.26

[a] Data are presented as mean ± SD.

Table 3. The Correlations Between Managers' Leadership Styles and Their Spirituality at Work

	Transformational Leadership	Transactional Leadership	Laissez-Faire Leadership
r	0.364	0.229	0.063
P value	< 0.001	0.013	< 0.499

Table 4. The Correlations Between Transformational Leadership Style and the Dimensions of Managers' Spirituality at Work

	Super-personal Communication	Intrapersonal Communication	Interpersonal Communication	Exterpersonal Communication
r	0.204	0.184	0.240	0.386
P value	0.025	0.046	0.009	< 0.001

Table 5. The Correlations Between Managers' Spirituality at Work and the Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

	Idealized Influence (Behaviors)	Idealized Influence (Attributes)	Inspirational Motivation	Intellectual Stimulation	Individualized Consideration
r	0.184	0.249	0.217	0.200	0.192
PValue	0.046	0.007	0.018	0.030	0.038

Table 6. The Effects of the Dimensions of Managers' Spirituality at Work on Using Transformational Leadership by Managers Using Multiple Linear Regressions (Stepwise Method)

Dimensions of Managers' Spirituality at Work	B	SE	Beta	P value
Constant	1.471	0.252	-	0.001
Interpersonal communication	0.384	0.126	0.430	0.001

5. Discussion

Based on the present study results, studied managers believed that their leadership style was more transformational leadership and less laissez-faire leadership. The studied employees also had the same opinion about the leadership style of their managers. Transformational leadership has positive impact on employees and followers' performance (42). Likewise, super-personal communication and exterpersonal communication had the highest and lowest means, respectively, from the viewpoints of both managers and employees. On the other hand, there were positive and significant correlations between the dimensions of managers' spirituality at work and transformational leadership style, but only interpersonal communication had an effect on using transformational leadership style by managers indicating that using transformational leadership style by managers would be increased along with an increase in their interpersonal communication. It can be due to this issue

that interpersonal communication is associated with social and psychological needs and some components such as respecting, teamwork and active listening, can result in maintaining and improving individuals' status and positions among others. Moreover, it can create a sense of responsibility and strengthen empathy, cooperation, coordination and consultation with others. Generally, interpersonal communication is the process of understanding, realizing and sharing meaning between an individual and other persons and, in most cases, it is established in formal situations and includes face-to-face communication provided verbally and non-verbally (41, 43). Interpersonal communication is developed for performing five functions, including: 1) Affinity function in which the individual seeks to join with others; 2) Information and understanding function in which the individual seeks to share information with and increase understanding of others; 3) Influence function which refers to impacting or influencing on others, the most common impact is impact on individuals' attitudes, beliefs, values and behavior; 4) Decision function, making a particular decision may be subject to communicating with others, and 5) Confirmation function in which the individual seeks to receive recognition, acknowledgement and confirmation from others. Each person in his or her interpersonal communication needs to communicate effectively and efficiently to perform the mentioned functions (31, 41, 44). There are several studies on the association between spirituality and leadership style; some of which have focused on transformational leadership style (26, 27, 45). These studies have used different scales and questionnaires for assessing spirituality. Riaz in a study to investigate the association between school principals' spirituality and their transformational leadership behavior used SWBS for measuring spirituality and MLQ Form-5X Short to measure transformational leadership style. The results of his study showed that only two subscales of transformational leadership style, including idealized influence (behaviors) and inspirational motivation, had significant associations with spirituality (46). However, in the present study, all dimensions of transformational leadership style had positive and significant correlations with the managers' spirituality at work. While a self-reported questionnaire was used in the Rias' study to measure spirituality at work, we measured the levels of spirituality by studying four kinds of communication. This can be a reason for the differences between these two study results. In the Franklin's study to investigate the effects of spirituality on servant leadership among small business entrepreneurs, SAS and Servant Leadership Profile (Revised) were used to assess the levels of spirituality and servant leadership, respectively. This study showed a negative and significant association between spirituality and servant leadership (47), which does not confirm the present study results. The differences between these two study results can be due to different leadership styles in these two studies. However, the results of Field's study

(48) showed a positive and significant correlation between managers' spirituality and their transformational leadership, so that managers with high spirituality acted more as transformational managers. Therefore, the results of Field's study are in line with the present study. Hartsfield is one of the researchers who studied the internal forces that cause managers to act as transformational managers. He used SWBS and MLQ to measure spirituality and leadership styles, respectively. The results of his study showed that spirituality had effects on managers to act as transformational managers. In addition, spirituality had influenced emotional intelligence and then both of them affected managers' self-efficacy. Consequently, caused managers to act more in a transformational manner (49). Spirituality directly and indirectly had caused managers to be transformational managers. Therefore, the results of Hartsfield's study are similar to the present study. Zwart studied the association between spirituality and transformational leadership in public, private, and nonprofit sector organizations using MLQ and SAS to assess leadership styles and spirituality, respectively. They found no significant associations between the dimensions of transformational leadership and spirituality dimensions unlike previous studies and the present one. He indicated some reasons for not finding any significant association, including differences in the tools and questionnaires used, differences in the dimensions of spirituality studied or not clearly determined participants and study population in the previous studies (50). However, as can be seen in other studies mentioned above, none of them studied the effects of spirituality at work dimensions on transformational leadership style. According to the present study, there was a significant correlation between managers' spirituality at work and their transformational leadership, and interpersonal communication had a significant effect on using this kind of leadership style. Therefore, considering the advantages of using transformational leadership, it seems necessary to increase managers' spirituality at work through training, selecting qualified managers, and some other ways. Consequently, they can more use transformational leadership style. Moreover, given the positive and significant association between interpersonal communication and using transformational leadership, it is essential to consider this kind of spirituality communication. If managers' interpersonal communication skills improve through performing abovementioned five functions, their use of transformational leadership would be increased. Therefore, it seems necessary to employ persons with great interpersonal communication skills and good communication with other people and colleagues, teams, formal and informal organizations as managers. Furthermore, it is recommended to continuously improve managers' communication skills to enable them to act as transformational managers and leaders. Therefore, it is better to strengthen managers' communication skills including intrapersonal communication (relation-

ship with themselves), interpersonal communication (relationship with others), exterpersonal communication (relationship with nature), and interpersonal communication through providing ethical and managerial training. Moreover, it is suggested further studies on the association between managers' leadership styles and their spiritual intelligence.

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Authors' Contributions

Azimeh Ghorbanian, SodabehVatankhah and Mohsen Ghorbanian conducted the study, concept and design and developed the methods. Azimeh Ghorbanian collected data. Mohammadkarim Bahadori and Ramin Ravangard analyzed and interpreted the data and wrote the primary draft of the manuscript. All the authors contributed to the revision of the manuscript, read, and approved the final version.

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