



## WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY, AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT, AND MEDIATING ROLE OF WORKPLACE FRIENDSHIP

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### **Abstract**

*Spirituality theory refers to enhancing desire and increased activity at work, employee participation, and commitment to their organizations. Incorporating the state of spirituality with the social support theory represented by strong positive friendships at work generally enhances enthusiasm and positive results for organizations. This study explores the relationship between three dimensions of workplace spirituality (meaning of work, sense of connection, and adjustment with values) and affective commitment with the mediating of workplace friendship. Data were collected from 461 employees of 150 Egyptian charity organizations using a questionnaire. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was implemented to analyze the results. The results indicated that a sense of connection and adjustment with values were positively related to affective commitment. Workplace friendship was found to be a significant mediator in such relationships. The findings suggest that by improving spirituality in charity organizations, managers can promote employees' affective commitment and strengthen the positive friendship relations between the employees of these organizations. This study adds to the existing literature on workplace spirituality by showing how spirituality is linked to workplace friendship and affective commitment.*

**Keywords:** *charity organizations, affective commitment, workplace spirituality, workplace friendship*

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### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Many individuals feel frustrated by the lack of meaning in their public or professional lives, despite much entertainment, comfort, and technological progress. In this context, organizations should not consider work as a source of obtaining money only; the psychological and spiritual aspects of employees also should be taken into account. In recent years, spirituality has gained great interest among academics and managers, especially with the emergence of many positive results from previous studies—for example, Tischler et al. (2002), Milliman et al. (2003), Duchon & Plowman (2005), Rego & Cunha (2008), and Saadatyar et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of this aspect for the employee and the organization alike, which is seen as a fundamental change within the organizational sciences. Furthermore, workplace spirituality has a significant impact on an organization, allowing the

organization to acquire advantages by creating a social environment in which employees can succeed. Many organizations enhance the creation of this growing phenomenon because they view a humane work environment as valuable to employees, coworkers, and the corporation as a whole (Burack, 1999). Employees who work in an environment of depression and less spirituality will have low morale, increased absenteeism, high turnover, burnout, and illness related to repetitive stress, and will adopt a non-committal attitude toward the organization. On the other hand, committed employees actively participate in the organization's proposals, plans, and activities. Employees who are committed to the organization display a strong desire to stay. They also are proud to be part of the organization. An organization will gain a competitive advantage, successfully implement business plans, and achieve its goals if it has many loyal employees who are less likely to quit or be absent from work (Jeon & Choi, 2020;

Jaramillo et al., 2005). Furthermore, friendships are very much needed to bring feelings of happiness and well-being. Although friendships can mean different things to people from various cultures and communities, some friendships exist only in the workplace. Workplace friendships enhance employee engagement, and affective climate boosts productivity, confidence, mutual respect, open communication, emotional engagement, and caring. These are some of the characteristics that make a relationship successful and pleasant (Cao & Zhang, 2020). The literature focused on the relationships between workplace spirituality and attitudes of work such as increased employee engagement (Roof, 2015), job satisfaction (Palframan & Lancaster, 2019), performance (Rego & Cunha, 2008), work unit performance (Duchon & Plowman, 2005), decreased intention to quit (Gatling et al., 2016), and organization commitment (Milliman et al., 2017). Several studies tested the relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment in various dimensions; some of this work focused on affective commitment only, e.g., Milliman et al. (2003, 2017) and Saadatyar et al. (2019) found that when employees find meaning in their work and feel a part of a spiritual organizational climate, they are more committed to their organization, become more involved, and work to their greatest capacity.

Despite past studies' scientific contributions, there still is a clear gap regarding this area, which limits the concept's development, extension, and applicability, especially in different areas of application and environments (Desa & Koh, 2011). Several main points were extracted from previous studies to determine the positioning of the present study. First, despite studies indicating that spirituality conceptualization tends to be stronger than empirical evidence in the literature, this constraint persists. Similarly, Gatling et al. (2016) stated that additional evidence-based empirical studies of the role of spirituality in organizational life are needed. Second, the diversity of expressions and dimensions of spirituality are micro, macro, private, or public. There are three main perspectives for considering spirituality: personal, in the workplace, and organizational. Authors indicate workplace spirituality to be a type of organizational wisdom because of the similarities in discourse and

practice of both. Rocha & Pinheiro (2020) stated that it should be studied across religions. Third, in contrast to studies that found a positive influence of workplace spirituality on organizational outcomes, significant scientific opinion indicates a potentially harmful impact of workplace spirituality on organizations and its relationship to organizational performance (Houghton et al., 2016). Finally, the relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment has received scholarly attention (Campbell & Hwa, 2014; Gupta et al., 2014; Roof, 2015; Milliman et al., 2017; Saadatyar et al., 2019), but the role of friendship in the workplace is incomprehensible in this relationship. In other words, the mechanism of workplace spirituality and workplace friendship that can encourage affective commitment is unclear. The literature has focused on the effects of workplace spirituality on organizational commitment and other mediating variables (Rego & Cunha, 2008; Campbell & Hwa, 2014). However, workplace friendship was not one of those variables, either directly or as a mediator.

Therefore, this study assessed whether workplace spirituality can relate directly to affective commitment or through a mediating workplace friendship. To fill these gaps, the following study questions were investigated:

**Q1:** What are the relationships between the dimensions of workplace spirituality at multiple levels (meaning of work at an individual level, sense of connection at a group level, and alignment with organizational values at organizational level) and affective commitment and workplace friendship?

**Q2:** Do the proposed elements of workplace spirituality found in the literature constitute the concept of workplace spirituality in the study sample?

**Q3:** How does workplace friendship mediate the relationship between the three dimensions of workplace spirituality and affective commitment?

Following the objectives presented previously, this study makes several potential contributions. First, it contributes to the spirituality literature by confirming workplace spirituality as a fundamental antecedent to creating an affective commitment (e.g., Joelle & Coelho, 2019; Saadatyar et al., 2019). Scholars called for more research to emphasize this

relationship, especially in more applied fields (Desa & Koh, 2011). To the researcher's knowledge, no studies addressed the relationship between study variables in charity fields. Second, there have been continued calls for the development of studies focused on workplace spirituality (Dal Corso et al., 2020). Few previous studies addressed the impact of spirituality at the organizational level, and many of those studies focused only on employee attitudes. Three levels (individual level, group level, and organizational level) were examined in this study. Third, Muzaki & Anggraeni (2020) combined workplace spirituality and friendship as independent factors but did not test the relationship between them. To the researcher's knowledge, no study has illustrated how spirituality enhances building friendships in organizations. This research contributes to understanding this relationship. Finally, most of the studies and contributions on workplace spirituality have been in developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, and few studies have been conducted in other countries. Developing countries need many studies in this field to expand knowledge and enhance positive organizational results.

The main contribution of this study is its investigation of the relationship between three dimensions of workplace spirituality (meaning of work, sense of connection, and adjustment with values) and affective commitment with the mediating role of workplace friendship. This study developed a model that can be applied within the volunteer work environment, adds to the spirituality literature, and sets several practical guidelines for managers in the service sectors in general and charity organizations in particular.

## **2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES**

### **2.1 Workplace Spirituality**

Workplace spirituality is a broad research area that has earned a great of attention in the last decade by exploring how employees search for purpose, meaning, and goals (Milliman et al., 2017). According to Mitroff et al. (2009), workplace spirituality is a spiritual activity that involves

an effort to achieve a goal in life that creates strong relationships with colleagues related to the work itself and has consistency and harmony between the central concepts the values contained in the organization. Ashmos & Duchon (2000) defined it as "the confirmation that employees have an interior life that nourishes and is nourished by the meaning of work that happens in the context of connection." Kinjerski & Skrypnik (2004) defined workplace spirituality as "the experience of employees who are passionate, enthusiastic, and refreshed about their work, those who find some meaning and purpose in their work, and those who feel that they are at work themselves." Tischler et al. (2002) stated that spirituality is associated with emotions or certain behaviors and attitudes of an individual. It is a state that harmonizes with the fundamental values of all noble teachings and speaks of the existence of an identity and God (Margaretha et al., 2020).

Workplace spirituality is a multidimensional variable distinguished at the individual, group, and organizational levels. The individual level involves the meaning of work, the work group-level involves the sense of connection, and the organizational level involves adjustment with values (Milliman et al., 2003).

According to Ashmos & Duchon (2000), the meaning of work refers to a structure of compatibility to feel the powerful essence and purpose of doing work. It represents how employees interact with their regular activities. It means viewing spirituality as something enjoyable, compelling, and deep in meaning, and contributing to others to meet the needs of the individual (Palframan & Lancaster, 2019).

A sense of team connection represents the group level and refers to the behavior of employees and their interactions with colleagues. In this area, spirituality is based on the mental, emotional, and spiritual relationships of the corporate team members. The essence of this connection is the existence of broad human relationships, including support, freedom of expression, and protection. Team spirit, cooperative objectives, a sense of belonging, and a common goal are only a few of them (Rocha & Pinheiro, 2020).

Lastly, adjustment with values represents the levels of personal experience that had a good alignment between individuals' ideals and their organization's mission and goals. It relates representing the harmony between organizational values and an individual's inner life. These include broader connections and leader engagement (Milliman et al., 2003).

## 2.2 Affective Commitment

Organizational commitment is considered to be a critical factor that influences the success levels of employees in various organizations (Yavuz, 2010). According to Allen and Meyer (1990), commitment to organizations is defined as a "psychological condition which characterizes employees' relationship with the organization and reduces employees' likelihood of leaving it" (Rego & Cunha, 2008).

Allen and Meyer (1990) proposed three dimensions of commitment in organizations: (1) affective commitment, described as an engagement with the values and objectives of the organization, leads to better performance; (2) continuance commitment, the employee's view of the cost of quitting the organization; and (3) normative commitment, in which employees recognize their responsibility to stay in the organization. This study focuses on affective commitment because it has the most significant impact on essential work outcomes. Affective commitment also is considered to be an essential component of organizational commitment (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015).

## 2.3 Workplace Spirituality and Affective Commitment

Rego & Cunha (2008) mentioned that experimental and theoretical values suggest that employees' impressions of workplace spirituality help them to increase their degree of organizational commitment. Commitment has become a significant factor in management, implying that more committed individuals are more likely to devote more time to supporting the business in achieving its goals.

In addition, many previous studies focused on the connection between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment (e.g., Krishnakumar &

Neck, 2002; Roof, 2015; Milliman et al., 2003, 2017; Saadatyar et al., 2019). Workplace spirituality has a good influence on commitment. The results of Campbell & Hwa (2014) showed that there is an essential positive association between all three spirituality components and affective engagement. In short, the literature indicates that workplace spirituality contributes to employees' growth and affective commitment. Regarding the analysis of the relationship between the three dimensions of workplace spirituality and affective commitment. Geldenhuys et al. (2014) defined the meaning of work as "the level at which the employee considers their work to be generally meaningful, significant, and worthwhile." They indicated that meaningful work is essential and related to work engagement and organizational commitment at work. Meaning and commitment are crucial for optimal workplace functioning. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1a:** *Meaning of work has a positive relationship with affective commitment.*

Personnel with a strong sense of connection perceive that their workplace fits their requirements, improves their quality of life, and expects them to be responsible citizens and members of their organization. Furthermore, employees with a strong sense of connection understand the purpose and value of the organization's well-being for the collective good, and are less prone to feeling lonely and alienated, and have a commitment to the organization. This means a positive relationship between sense of connection and affective commitment (Zani & Cicognani, 2012). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1b:** *Sense of connection has a positive relationship with affective commitment.*

According to Klapper et al. (2020), previous research has revealed that managers who have congruence and clarity between their personal and organizational values have the highest commitment and organizational performance compared with those who do not. Values and person-organiza-



tional fit have a significant impact on many elements of organizational behavior. When an organization's individual and organizational values are aligned, it fosters more-favorable employee attitudes such as organizational commitment, lower turnover, and job satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1c:** *Adjustment with values has a positive relationship with affective commitment.*

## 2.4 Workplace Friendship

Workplace friendship can be defined as “the informal, voluntary, and person-related interactions among individuals in an organization” (Nielsen et al., 2000). Workplace friendship is a component of human social needs. As we spend more time at work, workplace friendship is inevitable and leads to less time connecting with other parties. Because of its positive effect on many favorable organizational and employee attitudes, such as organizational engagement, organizational success, job satisfaction, and others, workplace friendship can increase workplace sustainability. This occurs when people are experiencing difficulties; colleagues at work will provide help and assistance. Therefore, when there is a positive work environment, the integration of employees occurs, and they will be more motivated to work (Chen et al., 2013; Cao & Zhang, 2020). However, several studies of the harmful effects of workplace friendship, such as sexual harassment, nepotism, and favoritism, have been conducted (e.g., Duffy et al., 2002; Dunbar, 2004; Pillemer & Rothbard, 2018). Those studies showed that workplace friendship has an undesirable outcome at work.

## 2.5 Workplace Spirituality and Workplace Friendship

Work should be regarded as a means of optimizing utility and as a source of significance for individual identities: people do not only want to create relationships in which they can build a legitimate account for themselves with their peers, friends, and family. These reflect people's sense of self-identity, and they are influenced strongly by

workplace values and spirituality (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008). One of the components of workplace spirituality is a “sense of connection.” It has been defined as an interconnection between employees, sharing common values, vision, empowerment, responsibility, and friendship (Garg, 2017).

Petchsawanga and Duchon (2012) reviewed research evidence that shows a connection between workplace spirituality and work outcomes, such as attitudes toward work, commitment, job satisfaction, and work effectiveness as evaluated by the organization such as cooperation and teamwork.

Janik and Rothmann (2015) stated that well-established and pleasant coworker relationships lead to a stronger sense of meaning in one's work. Employees who feel cared for by their coworkers and supervisors will be appreciated, respected, valuable, and worthy. The study results showed a positive correlation between psychological meaningfulness, coworker relationships, and supervisor relationships. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2a:** *Meaning of work has a positive relationship with workplace friendship.*

Xiao et al. (2020) showed how an interpersonal trait might increase or stifle the effects of professional friendship. They discovered that when social contacts influence employees' self-concept, they are more likely to obtain relational energy from their coworkers, enhancing their interpersonal conduct. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2b:** *Sense of connection has a positive relationship with workplace friendship.*

According to Rezapouraghdam et al. (2019), the workplace is regarded as an inextricable component of human lives and a source of value where people spend copious amounts of time interacting with others, generating value and contributing to society. Workplace spirituality refers to organizational ideals that go beyond individual experiences and provide a sense of connection to employees. Spirituality in the workplace increases employees' self-transcendence.

dence values. It motivates them to participate in activities that benefit others, fostering consideration for others, a desire to serve others, and a sense of togetherness among coworkers. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2c:** *Adjustment with values has a positive relationship with workplace friendship.*

## 2.6 Workplace Friendship and Affective Commitment

Xiao et al. (2020) stated that individuals who have a work friend are not only healthier and happier, but they are also seven times more likely to be involved in and committed to their work than are those who do not. Improving great relationships between colleagues will promote a better climate; enhance members' interpersonal connections; reinforce cooperation and respect; and share value, work experience, and pleasure. Staff members who have close emotional links with their coworkers are more likely to connect with their work team and be more likely to express empathy and encourage a colleague who is having problems (Berman et al., 2002).

Previous studies have shown the positive impact of workplace friendship on affective commitment. For example, Lu (1999) stated that in the workplace, when there are supportive coworkers who help one another in a team, the team not only will have a successful and fit work environment, but the individuals' affective involvement will be increased.

Moreover, Hsu et al. (2020) reached the same conclusion: workplace friendship has a substantial relationship with affective commitment. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

**H3:** *Workplace friendship has a positive relationship with affective commitment.*

## 2.7 Workplace Friendship as a Mediator

Potgieter et al. (2018) found that career concerns were significant boundary conditions for emotional (mediation) friendship in work and job embeddedness—retention practices satisfaction.

According to numerous studies, employees with strong relationships with friends have low absences and become less likely to leave work. Furthermore, because they have a connection to their friends in a workplace that embraced, understood, and supported them at work, they also increase their commitment to the work (Morrison, 2004; Yan et al., 2021). Therefore, this study builds upon the theory of social encouragement and assumes that spirituality contributes to emotive attaches and good friendships between employees help improve the emotional involvement of employees in their team. Thus, the following hypotheses have been developed:

**H4a:** *Workplace friendship acts as a mediator between the meaning of work and affective commitment.*

**H4b:** *Workplace friendship acts as a mediator between a sense of connection and affective commitment.*

**H4c:** *Workplace friendship acts as a mediator between adjustment with values and affective commitment.*

The previous hypotheses are summarized in Figure 1.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Participants and Setting of Research

This study was conducted in 150 Egyptian charity organizations at the Al-Gharbia governorate. The researcher used a convenient sampling method to collect primary data from employees working at organizations, and the questionnaire was designed using Google forms and distributed online from 30/12/2020 to 28/1/2021. A total of 550 questionnaires were distributed, and 461 valid responses were collected, a response rate of 83.8%. The demographic characteristics of the participants are listed in Table 1.

Figure 1: Research model

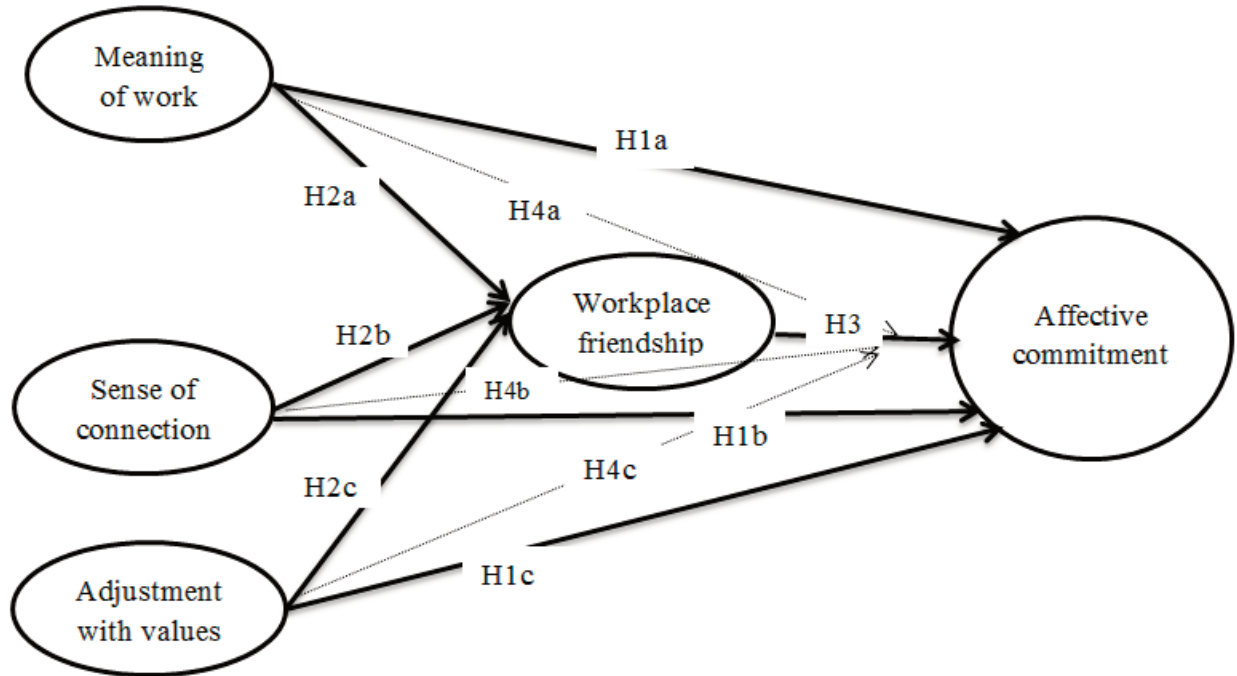


Table 1: Participants' demographic characteristics

Characteristic	Number	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	237	51.4
Female	224	48.6
<b>Age</b>		
<30 years	40	8.7
30 to <40 years	171	37.1
40 years and older	250	54.2
<b>Work experience</b>		
<5 years	40	8.7
5 to <10 years	108	23.4
10 years and more	313	67.9
<b>Education level</b>		
Postgraduate studies	4	0.9
University graduate	151	32.8
Intermediate education	263	57
Less than intermediate education	43	9.3

### 3.2 Measures

All the parameters in this research were translated from English to Arabic and then back to English. This reverse translation process, which was carried out with a bilingual Arabic to English translator, aimed to guarantee context equivalence. All variables were measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) using a five-point scale. The researcher used 18 elements adapted from Milliman et al.'s (2003) scale to measure workplace spirituality. Workplace spirituality was a multidimensional item containing meaning of work (six items), sense of connection (six items), and adjustment with values (six items). Example items included "I understand the things that give me meaning at work" for meaning of work, "In this work, I am free to express my opinions" for sense of connection, and "I feel positive about my organization's values" for adjustment with values. A 10-item scale was adapted from Nielsen et al. (2000) to measure workplace friendship (e.g., "In this charity organization, all coworkers are motivated to communicate with

each other”). Affective commitment was examined using five elements adapted from Allen and Meyer’s (1990) scale; an example item was “I really believe that the problems of this organization are my problems.”

### 3.3 Analyses

WarpPLS 7.0 software was used in this analysis. WarpPLS automatically generates images of data. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) uses specific steps; the measurement model is evaluated in the first stage by verifying the validity and reliability of the structures chosen for the analysis. It has the added benefit of resolving nonlinear relationships often found in behavioral data (Kock, 2015).

### 3.4 Validity and Reliability

Table 2 presents the correlation, mean, standard deviation, reliability, and the square root of average variance extracted (AVE). This confirms that all the items had a high level of internal accuracy. Both composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  values were greater than or equal to 0.70. The correlations between each item and other latent items were greater than the correlations between that item and other items, reflecting discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

### 3.5 Model Fits

The measurement models had acceptable fit with the data: Tenenhaus goodness of fit (GoF) = 0.785 (medium  $\geq 0.25$ , large  $\geq 0.36$ ); average path coefficient (APC) = 0.224 ( $p < 0.001$ ); average  $R$ -squared (ARS) = 0.729 ( $p < 0.001$ ); average adjusted  $R$ -squared (AARS) = 0.726 ( $p < 0.001$ ); Simpson’s paradox ratio (SPR) = 0.70 (appropriate value  $\geq 0.7$ );  $R$ -squared contribution ratio (RSCR) = 0.906 (appropriate value  $\geq 0.9$ ); statistical suppression ratio (SSR) = 1.00 (appropriate value  $\geq 0.7$ ); and nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR) = 0.70 (appropriate value  $\geq 0.7$ ).

## 4 RESULTS

The hypotheses were evaluated using path analysis between constructs, and the path coefficients are stated along with  $p$ -values. The direct path coefficients are presented in Table 3.

These results support H1b and H1c, because they show that two dimensions of workplace spirituality—sense of connection ( $\beta = 0.150, p < 0.001$ ) and adjustment with values ( $\beta = 0.269, p < 0.001$ )—have a positive and significant relationship with affective commitment. In contrast, meaning of work ( $\beta = 0.046, p = 0.161$ ) has no significant relationship and no support for H1a.

Table 2: Correlation, mean, standard deviation, and AVE square root

Factors	M	SD	$\alpha$	CR	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Meaning of work	3.93	0.75	0.932	0.947	(0.865)				
Sense of connection	3.97	0.69	0.934	0.948	0.880**	(0.868)			
Adjustment with values	3.83	0.74	0.931	0.946	0.811**	0.840**	(0.863)		
Workplace friendship	3.87	0.69	0.960	0.965	0.811**	0.851**	0.855**	(0.858)	
Affective commitment	4.01	0.71	0.929	0.946	0.757**	0.808**	0.818**	0.858**	(0.882)

Notes: The square of AVE is shown on the diagonal. M = mean, SD = standard deviation,  $\alpha$  = Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ . \*\* $p < 0.01$ .



Table 3: Path coefficients and p-values

Hypothesis	$\beta$	$p$	Support
H1a: Meaning of work has a positive relationship with affective commitment.	0.046	0.161	No
H1b: Sense of connection has a positive relationship with affective commitment.	0.150	<0.001	Yes
H1c: Adjustment with values has a positive relationship with affective commitment.	0.269	<0.001	Yes
H2a: Meaning of work has a positive relationship with workplace friendship.	0.119	0.005	Yes
H2b: Sense of connection has a positive relationship with workplace friendship.	0.378	<0.001	Yes
H2c: Adjustment with values has a positive relationship with workplace friendship.	0.440	<0.001	Yes
H3: Workplace friendship has a positive relationship with affective commitment.	0.526	<0.001	Yes

Moreover, the results support H2a, H2b and H2c, because they show that all dimensions of workplace spirituality—meaning of work ( $\beta = 0.046, p < 0.001$ ), sense of connection ( $\beta = 0.150, p < 0.001$ ), and adjustment with values ( $\beta = 0.269, p < 0.001$ )—have positive and significant relationships with workplace friendship. Lastly, the results show that the link between workplace friendship and affective commitment is highly positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.526, p < 0.001$ ); consequently, H3 is supported.

Table 4 presents the indirect path coefficients, which show that workplace friendship significantly mediates the relationship between meaning of work ( $\beta = 0.084, p = 0.035$ ), sense of connection ( $\beta = 0.086, p = 0.031$ ), and adjustment with values ( $\beta = 0.143, p < 0.001$ ) and affective commitment (H4a, H4b, and H4).

Table 5 illustrates the direct, indirect, and total relationships of meaning of work, sense of connection, and adjustment with values on affective commitment. The indirect association often is positive and significant. Thus, although there is no direct link between meaning work and affective commitment, the relationship becomes significant when mediating workplace friendship.

To assess the explanatory power of the model, the findings showed that the  $R^2$  of workplace friendship (0.796), which indicates that meaning of work, sense of connection, and alignment with values collectively explain about 80% of the difference in workplace friendship; and the  $R^2$  of affective commitment (0.662), which indicates that meaning of work, sense of connection, adjustment with values,

Table 4: Indirect path coefficients and p-values

Hypothesis	$\beta$	$p$	Support
H4a: Workplace friendship acts as a mediator between meaning of work and affective commitment.	0.084	0.035	Yes
H4b: Workplace friendship acts as a mediator between sense of connection and affective commitment.	0.086	0.031	Yes
H4c: Workplace friendship acts as a mediator between adjustment with values and affective commitment.	0.143	<0.001	Yes

Table 5: Indirect, direct, and total influence

Factors	Mediator	Dependent	Direct	Indirect	Total
Meaning of work	Workplace friendship	Affective commitment	0.05	0.063*	0.119*
sense of connection			0.15*	0.199**	0.349**
Adjustment with values			0.269**	0.231**	0.500**

\*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ .

and workplace friendship, collectively explain about 66% of the difference in affective commitment. In addition, Q2 values higher than zero were determined to predict the significance of the model; Q2 of workplace friendship (0.797) and Q2 of affective commitment (0.781) were higher than zero. In general, the results provide supportive evidence for the proposed model.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study is unique in that it discusses the relationship between workplace spirituality and affective commitment through the mediating role of workplace friendship. The findings advance the knowledge of workplace spirituality and workplace friendship, and provides empirical evidence to show the value of workplace spirituality in organizational life. The findings revealed a significant relationship between affective commitment, sense of connection, and adjustment with values. This means that a sense of connection between personal work and work environment leads to a state of participation, exchange, and commitment between individuals and belonging to the group emotionally. This finding coincides with those of many studies (e.g., Rego & Cunha, 2008; Desa & Koh, 2011; Saadatyar et al., 2019). The present study found no direct relationship between the meaning of work and affective commitment, unlike many previous studies. This may be due to the employees' low level of work engagement in charity organizations, their various motives, and the low financial returns in their organizations.

A validated link exists between workplace friendship and affective commitment. Groups in the workplace interact socially, adapt from others across activities, explain others' issues, feel empathy, and respect one another, quickly leading to affective commitment. The findings follow those of research that has shown that workplace friendship has a positive effect on employee performance (Chao, 2018).

Furthermore, the findings support the significant role of meaning of work, sense of connection, and adjustment with values in influencing workplace friendship. These results can be interpreted in

light of Schneider's (1987) statement that the theory of attachment to people similar to oneself is well accepted by cognitive psychology. According to the well-accepted affection structure, persons are drawn to groups that are considered to be compatible in characteristics such as appearance, beliefs, and community. Therefore, members considered to be an excellent fit for the group's community, beliefs, and so on are chosen. Those people who are a good match with the existing objectives and principles and its members stay in the organization longer (Duffy et al., 2002).

As a significant result of this study, the mediation of workplace friendship is positioned uniquely between workplace spirituality elements and affective commitment. This study did not prove a direct relationship between meaning of work and affective commitment. Still, with the mediation of workplace friendship, the relationship became significant (full mediation). This outcome is consistent with the argument of workplace spirituality, which is described as a belief or feeling about truth and transcendence or a personal quality (Rocha & Pinheiro, 2020). Workplace spirituality can be divided into three levels: individual, group, and organizational. Individuals act as the unit and core of the organization. Individual spirituality refers to a person's characteristics relating to his quest for meaning, purpose, and transcendence. Therefore, individual spirituality benefits such as inner harmony, commitment, a feeling of connection, and bonding with colleagues are reflected in the beliefs and attitudes of the person pursuing internal change.

Overall, this study contributes to the literature on spirituality. For researchers, the framework provides a detailed understanding of the significant role of workplace spirituality in affective commitment and the characteristics that make spirituality a more vital competitive differentiator in social service organizations (charity organizations). This study demonstrated how a sense of connection and harmony with the organization's principles contributes to a sense of emotional connection and workplace friendship as a mediator, with spiritual values suiting employees' own spiritual needs. This proof opens the opportunity for more theoretical and empirical studies around spirituality.

## 5.2 Practical Implications

From a practical viewpoint, the findings of this study demonstrated the importance of enhancing workplace spirituality as a source of effective engagement at sectors and organizations in which spirituality plays a significant function in the work, especially in the charity field. In this context, an organization should concentrate more on spiritual strength and positive peer relationships to achieve affective commitment while developing a better strategy. Spiritually driven organizations should put greater emphasis on the affective component of commitment than on others. Organizational training activities should include a spiritual plan. Leaders should understand the spiritual needs of their employees and create a friendly work environment, and should establish an organizational culture that prioritizes the collective over self-interest. Such principles enhance the link between a person's self-concept and work, the meaning of work, and the sense of belonging to a community.

The findings also explain why individuals seek the dimensions of workplace spirituality (meaning of work, sense of connection, and adjustment with values) which lead to a greater affective commitment to the organization and stronger friendships. This outcome suggests that leaders should encourage spiritual foundations and values, and should insert the work purpose into recruitment, development, and performance assessment programs. The human resource sector should be preparing employees to create major, meaningful differences in work and then providing appreciation or bonuses for their activities. These improvements in practices have an extremely high impact on charity organizations. Performance assessments need to widen criteria to include the possibility to choose personnel who adopt spiritual principles that focus on the necessity of supplying others with spiritually laced ideals.

## 5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although the contributions of this study are in line with previous studies, this study has some limitations. The first involves the use of convenient sampling (Peterson & Merunka, 2014). Al-

though data were gathered from 150 Egyptian charity organizations, the findings of this survey cannot be generalized to all Egyptian employees. As a result, future studies should implement a more complex sampling technique. Second, due to the probability of common bias, the sample covered employees from various departments of charity organizations, different shifts, multiple cities and villages, and multiple contractual types. An appropriate sample size (461 individuals) and a diverse sample comprising a wide range of participants were used. However, data should be gathered from different sources or in different periods in the future. Third, due to the cross-sectional nature of the data, this analysis was unable to determine causality. Although structural equation modeling allowed for a simultaneous test of the entire system of variables in the hypothetical model, the results still should be used with caution. Finally, incorporating additional variables that more comprehensively can illustrate the relationship between workplace spirituality, workplace friendship, and employees' affective commitment will enhance the explanatory power of the proposed model. Future studies also may investigate the influence of spirituality elements in all dimensions of commitment and the mediation of other variables in relationships.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This study emphasized the role of workplace spirituality dimensions and workplace friendship in increasing and growing employees' affective commitment. The results show that employees who have a spirit of teamwork and a state of sharing among themselves and between the characteristics and values of personal work and the organization's values, lead to higher employees' affective commitment in charity organizations. Hence, leaders in these organizations must develop plans to link all previous dimensions and employee growth.

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## EXTENDED SUMMARY/IZVLEČEK

Področje duhovnosti se nanaša na krepitev želje in večjo aktivnost pri delu, sodelovalnost zaposlenih in predanost njihovim organizacijam. Vključevanje stanja duhovnosti s teorijo družbene podpore, ki jo predstavljajo močna pozitivna prijateljstva na delovnem mestu, na splošno krepí navdušenje in pozitivne rezultate za organizacije. Ta študija raziskuje razmerje med tremi dimenzijami duhovnosti na delovnem mestu (smiselnost dela, občutek povezanosti in skladnost z vrednotami) ter čustveno predanostjo, mediirano s prijateljstvom na delovnem mestu. Podatki so bili zbrani s pomočjo anketnih vprašalnikov, ki jih je izpolnilo 461 zaposlenih iz 150 egiptovskih dobredelnih organizacij. Analiza rezultatov je bila izvedena s pomočjo modeliranja delnih najmanjših kvadratov strukturnih enačb (PLS-SEM). Rezultati so pokazali, da sta občutek povezanosti in prilagajanja z vrednotami pozitivno povezana s čustveno predanostjo. Prijateljstvo na delovnem mestu se je izkazalo kot pomemben mediator tega razmerja. Ugotovitve kažejo, da lahko menedžerji z izboljšanjem stanja duhovnosti v dobredelnih organizacijah spodbujajo čustveno predanost zaposlenih in krepijo pozitivne odnose med zaposlenimi v teh organizacijah. Ta študija dodaja k obstoječi literaturi o duhovnosti na delovnem mestu s prikazom, kako je duhovnost povezana s prijateljstvom na delovnem mestu in čustveno predanostjo.

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