

IMPACT OF ISLAMIC MYSTICISM ON WORK BEHAVIORS: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Every business venture seeks to improve its profits by increasing its productivity. Employees play an important role in enhancing the performance of their workplaces by displaying positive work attitudes. The focus on employee happiness for greater productivity in Western literature has received tremendous attention over the past few decades. However, it is important that they ignore the religious context of employees' happiness. Islam is a comprehensive way of life that guides its followers in all circumstances. What is impact of Islamic mysticism on work behaviors of employees? The narrative and analytical method of research is used to find out the impact of spiritual values of Islam on work people. To understand the effects of Islamic spirituality on employees' work attitudes, a standardized analysis of Western management and Islamic literature is presented. Islamic spiritual practices provide the basis for creating a holistic work environment to enhance worker performance. Adherence to Islamic spiritual values reflects the worker's commitment and dedication to work. The results of the study are helpful for future research on the topic and provide guidelines for policy makers, especially organizational management experts.

Keywords: Organization, performance, Islam, Mysticism, Work values.

INTRODUCTION:

A work environment that is conducive to employee happiness is an important factor in increasing employee performance.¹ Positive work behaviors bring job satisfaction, motivation and commitment to work, which ultimately leads to greater productivity.² It is argued that the maximum level of individual satisfaction helps employees improve their performance.³ More

contented employees are more successful at their job with increased energy to accomplish assigned tasks.⁴ Job satisfaction in the workplace is widely studied in the West because of its importance in organizational performance. The literature available on the subject points to a number of contexts in which employee job satisfaction is studied in Western perspective. However, its Eastern socio-cultural perspective is an undiscovered area of study. Religion shapes the social behavior of people in Eastern countries and especially in the Islamic world. Business organizations do not operate in space. Employees are human beings with emotions and feelings. It is clear that religion and social beliefs are important factors in shaping one's personality. Monir Tayeb says religious values are used in the workplace as a cultural tool for employees. For this, religion plays a key role in defining the work behavior of people. It is obvious that work behaviors can be refined with the help of religious aspirations.⁵

Current literature points to a positive correlation between employee happiness and organizational productivity. Grant *et al.*⁶ and Page & Vella-Brodrick proved that employee happiness is a multifaceted trend.⁷ The effects of weak mental health indicate deviation from work, low productivity and low ability to make well-timed decisions.⁸ The popular literature on job satisfaction focuses primarily on employee mental health and work engagement. It highlights a considerable search for satisfaction and happiness in the workplace, but the spiritual aspect of individual happiness is seldom highlighted.⁹

The Eastern concept of contentment, well-being and happiness is deeply rooted in one's inner self. A study of human resource management concludes that religion influences human psychological patterns.¹⁰ Religion plays an important role in increasing happiness and contentment. The highest levels of personal satisfaction are found primarily in religion. Religion plays an important role in determining the behavior of its followers.¹¹ The studies have shown a positive link between Islamic religious principles of Islamic spirituality and employee happiness and job satisfaction.¹² Recent studies have called for more research into the context of Islamic spirituality and its potential effects on work behaviors such as, employee performance, job satisfaction, and happiness. In order to disseminate organizational ideas in an Islamic context, it is necessary to study the aforesaid relationship in order to examine its general application with diverse cultures. The aim of the present research is to fill this research gap and provide Islamic elements of spirituality and its potential impact on employees' work behavior.

The basic research question of present study is whether Islamic mysticism shapes up human work behaviors to increase job satisfaction? Does Islamic spirituality improve employee performance? To answer these research questions qualitative, narrative and comparative methodology of research is used. An extensive review of the literature on Islamic spirituality seeks to answer the research questions. The article begins with a brief introduction to

the research issue, a description of the modern concept of spirituality in the context of the workplace and employee happiness. The concept of Islamic mysticism is briefly described in the next section. Furthermore, some important elements of Islamic mysticism are highlighted and their potential impact on employee performance is brought to light. The whole discussion ends in the last part of the article.

MODERN THOUGHTS ON SPIRITUALITY AND WORK BEHAVIORS:

Spirituality is complex term that can be perceived through different angles. Exact meanings of spirituality are determined by the context in which it is being used. Different peoples, cultures and positions describe spirituality differently. Some consider it a religious reference and some do not. From a religious point of view, this is an internal phenomenon of the self.¹³ Moxley sees spirituality as a human behavior that unites all the faculties in them.¹⁴ Frek describes spirituality as a combination of attributes such as self-knowledge, love, selflessness, progress, acceptance, positivity and forgiveness.¹⁵ Adding these attributes, Taylor says that creativity, energy, flexibility, communication, partnership, respect, and seeing oneself are also part of spirituality. Mitroff and Denton argue that spirituality is about completeness.¹⁶ There are four dimensions to spirituality in the faith perspective; firstly, relationship with oneself, secondly, with others, thirdly, with nature and the environment, and fourthly with higher powers. However, Turner concludes that spirituality is not an organized religion. It is the basic feeling of being connected with one's whole self, others and the whole universe.¹⁷ This definition of spirituality connects it with other aspects.¹⁸ Marquis *at el*, describes spirituality in terms of being driven by internal (human self), external (organizational) and cohesive (human / organizational) factors. Finally, there are three main approaches to spirituality; internal theory, religion theory and existential theory. Those who see spirituality as an inner quest for perfection and a combination of human attributes understand that spirituality has nothing to do with religion. For him, spirituality is a combination of moral values, a sense of giving and serving, and a sense of community service. In this context, the spirituality of the workplace is defined as " a recognition that employees have an inner life with nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work, taking place in the context of a community".¹⁹

In traditional management models, employees were seen as insensitive and impervious creatures. Similarly, work organizations were seen as the best performers without incorporating emotions into the work environment. However, in the management literature, the awareness of the spirituality of work is gaining popularity in order to understand the work ethic of the employees. Employees need to be provided with important elements of spirituality in the workplace so that their work behaviors are in tune with these spiritual qualities. Now it is envisaged to work in a place where work and spirituality go hand in hand to make the work environment productive

for individuals as well as for the business organizations.

Islam is a religion that urges its followers to live a purposeful life and to participate in worldly affairs with full vigor. It encourages its followers to earn a living through hard work and passion. Furthermore, it leads to a balance between the needs of the body and the soul. The next part of the article sheds light on the essence of Islamic spirituality in order to understand its salient features so as to create an environment of work in which both work and expression fulfill the need for deep soul and spirituality of an individual.

DISPOSITION OF ISLAMIC MYSTICISM:

The word "mysticism" is used to describe the concept of spirituality. The synonym for spirituality in Arabic language is "Rūhaniyyah". It is derived from the word "rūh" which is used in various places in the Quran. Rūh is mainly used in two different senses. At one instance it is used for Angel "Gabriel" and on the other, it is used for "breath, peace, tranquility, determination, human soul or spirit". The Qur'an says:

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتَهُ وَنَفَخْتَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعْوَا لَهُ اسْجُدُوا 20

"So when I have rectified it and breathed into it of My spirit, then fall down prostrate before it".

When Allah Almighty completed the creation of "Adam" (the first man) while 'breathing His Soul' into it, He ordained the angels to prostrate before him. man when Allah completes the creation of Adam and "breathes his soul" into it. Imam Fakhr-ud-Dīn Rāzi argues that it shows the creation of man is complete with only two things: first his righteousness and then his soul. 21 The above mentioned verse and similar verses of the Holy Qur'an show that man is a two-dimensional being. The physical build is a material component and the soul is Divine or Angelic element of human personality. Islam fulfills the needs of both the components of man. Islamic teachings that deal with the development and purification of the soul (spirit) are called Islamic mysticism or Islamic spirituality.

Islamic mysticism refers to the deific closeness, which describes the inner self of man. It has to do with the moral highness, perfection and sense of beauty of human souls. There are three major aspects of Islamic spirituality. The first aspect refers to the knowledge, understanding, control and proper use of the inner man. The second aspect of Islamic mysticism is perception of Allah and the entire Universe. And finally the third attribute of Islamic mysticism development of self. In sum the Islamic mysticism refers to "knowing one's true and internal personality, acquiring the knowledge of one's Creator and refining one's personality on the basis of this knowledge." 22 It leads one towards the spiritual purification and growth of his personality through the realization of "Tauhid" (oneness of Allah), the fulfillment of "His love" through obedience to His Messenger (SAW). This goal is achieved by incorporating in one's life the virtues that were present in the personality of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) with full perfection. 23

Islamic perception of mysticism does not prevent man from participating in worldly undertakings. In Islamic thought and civilization there is no separation between this world and the hereafter. Islam believes in performing good deeds in this material world to earn salvation in the hereafter. The salvation in the hereafter cannot be achieved by giving up the material responsibilities. ²⁴ It is not only permissible but also the duty of Muslims to enjoy the worldly life to the fullest. It is important to note that in Islamic conception of mysticism, the participation of one in worldly affairs does not affect his spiritual growth. ²⁵

Islamic notion of mysticism call for his believer to live and work in this world and give himself the best account he can. Spiritual progress is achieved in Islam by cultivating positive moral attitudes such as; truth, gratitude, patience, humility, and much more. Such moral values promote good behavior with others and help to avoid bad behavior. All these positive qualities of human personality provide beauty and perfection in human affairs. It leads to perfection and excellence in every endeavor of life. The pursuit of love of Allah and the concept of accountability in the Hereafter makes the whole life of a Muslim a purely spiritual affair. In the context of work values, Islamic spirituality promotes wholeness, splendor and precision in one's work. ²⁶ These values of one's personality lead to better performance and increased productivity. Islamic mysticism incorporates many values related to work such as intention, sincerity, honesty, responsibility, etc., which are important in enhancing one's performance and efficiency. The next part of the study sheds light on the Islamic work values.

MODULES OF ISLAMIC MYSTICISM AND THEIR IMPACT ON WORK BEHAVIORS:

Incorporating Islamic spiritual values into the workplace is of paramount importance in today's world. Today, dealing with ethical issues in the workplace is a major challenge. Islamic spiritual values can play an important role in dealing with issues such as lying, deception, and theft. ²⁷ These undesirable behaviors in the workplace negatively affect employee performance. Adherence to Islamic spiritual values in the workplace leads to positivity in the work environment which in turn increases productivity and efficiency. ²⁸ There are three essential elements of Islamic mysticism from which religion of Islam is formed. In the absence of any element the religion will be annihilated. These modules of Islamic mysticism are derived from the well-known saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW). It is narrated on the authority of Hazrat Umer (R.A):

عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ إِذْ طَلَعَ عَلَيْنَا رَجُلٌ شَدِيدٌ بَيَاضَ النَّيَابِ، شَدِيدٌ سَوَادِ الشَّعْرِ، لَا يَرِي عَلَيْهِ أَثَرَ السَّفْرِ، وَلَا يَعْرِفُهُ مِنَّا أَحَدٌ، حَتَّى جَلَسَ إِلَيَّ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ، فَأَسْنَدَ رُكْبَتَيْهِ إِلَيَّ رُكْبَتَيْهِ، وَوَضَعَ كَفَّيْهِ عَلَيَّ فَخَذَبَنِي، وَقَالَ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ! أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِسْلَامِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: الْإِسْلَامُ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَتَقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ، وَتُؤْتِيَ الزَّكَاةَ، وَتَصُومَ رَمَضَانَ، وَتَحُجَّ الْبَيْتَ إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا. قَالَ:

صَدَقْتُ. قَالَ: فَعَجِبْنَا لَهُ يَسْأَلُهُ وَيُصَدِّقُهُ! قَالَ: فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ. قَالَ: أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ، وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ، وَكُتُبِهِ، وَرُسُلِهِ، وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ، وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْقَدْرِ خَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ. قَالَ: صَدَقْتُ. قَالَ: فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِحْسَانِ. قَالَ: أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ
تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ. قَالَ: فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ السَّاعَةِ قَالَ: مَا الْمَسْئُولُ عَنْهَا بِأَعْلَمَ مِنَ السَّائِلِ. قَالَ: فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنْ أَمَارَتِهَا؟ قَالَ: أَنْ تَلِدَ
الْأُمَّةَ رَبِّهَا، وَأَنْ تَرَى الْخِفَاةَ الْعُرَاةَ الْعَالَةَ رِعَاءَ الشَّيْءِ يَتَطَاوَلُونَ فِي الْبُنْيَانِ. ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ، فَلَبِثْتُ مَلِيًّا، ثُمَّ قَالَ: يَا عَمْرُؤُ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ مِنَ
السَّائِلِ؟ قُلْتُ: اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ. قَالَ: فَإِنَّهُ جِبْرِيْلُ أَتَاكُمْ يُعَلِّمُكُمْ دِينَكُمْ. مُتَّفَقٌ عَلَيْهِ وَهَذَا لَفْظُ مُسْلِمٍ²⁹.

Hazrat Umar bin Khattab (RA) narrates that one day we were present in the service of Holy Prophet (SAW). Suddenly a man came to our party, his clothes were very white, his hair was deep black, no effects of travel were visible on him and none of us even recognized him. At last the man sat down in front of the Holy Prophet (SAW) with his knees bent and he placed both his hands on his thighs and said: O Muhammad Mustafa! Tell me: What is Islam? He said: Islam is that you bear witness that there is no God but Allah, and that Muhammad (SAW) is His Messenger and that you should establish prayer, pay Zakat, fast Ramadan and perform Hajj to Baitullah (Who is able to do so). He replied: You have told the truth. Hazrat Umar (RA) says that we were surprised that he asks questions and confirms himself. Then he asked: Tell me about faith? The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: Faith is that you believe in Allah, the angels, His books, His Messengers and the Day of Resurrection and believe in good and bad destiny. He said: You have spoken the truth. Then he asked: Tell me about Ehsan? The Prophet (SAW) said: The virtue is that you worship Allah Almighty as if you are seeing Him, and if you cannot see Him, then know that He is surely seeing you. He said: Now tell me about the (event) of the Hour. The Prophet (SAW) said: The one who is asked does not know more about this issue than the questioner. Well then tell the signs of the Hour. The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: The signs of the Hour are that the maid will give birth to her mistress and the poor shepherds with bare feet and bare body will be proud of the lofty palaces. Then the man left. Hazrat Umer (RA) says that I stayed for some time, then the Holy Prophet (SAW) said: O Omer! Do you know who asked these questions? I said: Allah and His Messenger (SAW) know best. He said: It was Gabriël who came to teach you your religion.

This hadith is famous in Islamic literature as "Hadith-e-Gabriel". This saying of the Holy Prophet (SAW) has very important place in the collections of hadiths. It is known as representative of entire religion and especially Islamic mysticism. In the form of questions and answers Angel Gabriël presented a guiding line to understand and explain the elements of religion. In our present study three questions related to the nature of religion of Islam are taken into account.

The first question asked by Gabriël was about faith. The Prophet stated the pillars of faith in response to this question. The pillars of faith are: faith in Allah, faith in His Angels, faith in His Books, belief in His Messengers, belief in the Last Day of Judgment and belief in Destiny and

belief in Resurrection after death. The second question of Gabriël was about Islam. In response to this, the Holy Prophet (SAW) stated the pillars of Islam, which are: to testify the faith in Allah and His Messenger, perform obligatory prayers, fast in the month of Ramadhan, Pay Zakat and perform pilgrimage to the Baitullāh who can afford it. Then his third question was what "Ehsān" is? The Prophet (SAW) said: The Ehsān is that you worship as if you are looking at Allah, and if this condition is not attained, then at least it should be invoked that He is looking at you.

Form this hadith it is evident that religion of Islam consist of three essential components. If one component is missing it will make the whole entity incomplete. Imān, Islam and Ehsān are three components of entire shariah. For this reason each Muslim tries to be perfect in faith, follows the commandments of Allah and adopts goodness in behaviors with all its degrees. The first thing to look at is faith. All faiths are the height of human morality and the purification of man from inside. All the elements of faith keep the believer connected with Allah. The constituents of faith keep man in check and force him not to transgress the limits of Allah. With true faith it becomes easy for every person to follow all the ordainments of Islam. It means, stronger the faith of a person, the stronger he will be in preserving the rules of Islam. Thus, faith and Islam (to practice the orders of Allah and His Messenger in public and private) are interconnected and inseparable..

The third element of religion of Islam is 'Ehsān'. The scholars of Islam also call it the process of purification. It means to work and strive for benevolence in all fields of life. Faith is the foundation on which the belief of a Muslim is based, and from Islam the outward appearance and action of a Muslim is described, while benevolence beautifies the heart and condition of a Muslim. Through Ehsān, the effects of both faith and Islam reach the heart and soul. When the outward and inward appearance of a Muslim becomes one and there is perfect unity and harmony in outward and inward appearance, then the heart becomes light and its inwardness begins to shine with light. The world of the heart is transformed into a spiritual state. In fact, faith, Islam and benevolence all belong to the same source and the same center. It is as if each of them is incomplete without the other. Thus, without faith, Islam is incomplete, and without Islam, faith is impossible to fulfill, while without benevolence, both faith and Islam remain imperfect.

Imān, Islam and Ehsān have a profound effect on the attitudes of workers. An individual's intent determines the quality of his actions. Simple activities permitted in a Muslim's life can have religious significance if he performs them with the intention of pleasing his Lord. For example, the daily food of a Muslim can be considered 'worship' when it is not only a matter of satisfying the physical hunger, but also reflects God as the provider. The bridge between a Muslim's worship and a simple, permissible act is the purity of his intention in his actions. In the context of the workplace, intention plays an important role in many aspects. According to Muslim belief, striving for

halal (legitimate) earnings is a form of worship. A Muslim worker intends to work hard to avoid begging and seeking financial help from others. He expects his earnings to be spent in legitimate sources. Sustaining one's family, providing for one's dependents and spending part of one's earnings in the way of Allah. To achieve these noble goals, a Muslim worker strives to do all his work with enthusiasm, passion and full energy. Moreover, a Muslim performs his duties with the intention of benefiting his organization, maximizing its profits and working for its betterment through his efforts.

In the context of workplace, Ehsān leads to the pursuit of perfection and the beautification of one's work. Ehsān on the one hand leads to having good moral values and on the other hand gets rid of bad attitudes.³⁰ It motivates people to be the best, perfect and best in their work. This practice refers to the completion of assigned tasks with accuracy and competence. It is a universal concept and can be applied to any workplace. It has more personality traits like determination, sincerity, honesty, etc., which are necessary to improve one's performance. It is stated in the Holy Qur'an that Allah loves the benefactors. Therefore, it is argued that performing the work with full dedication and diligence is the means of attaining "Love of Allah". It is a wonderful inspiration, which compels Muslims to work with more zeal and determination to gain the pleasure and love of Allah. Some of the salient traits of a practicing Muslim employee are discussed below:

Itqān (Attainment of Perfection):

In fact, perfection belongs to Allah Almighty alone. However, man can do his best to achieve the best level in his performance.³¹ Islam advocates perfection which is possible through the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the efficient performance of one's duties. According to Islamic law, a person who does not perform his duties in the manner prescribed by his employer is considered a fraud in his work. Islamic mysticism demands that work be done with skill and expertise. One must make it sure to complete the assigned task perfectly. This includes avoiding shirking and adopting best practices at work. .

Al-Khauf (Fear):

The fear mentioned in Islamic mysticism is related to the fear of displeasure of Allah. Imam Abu Qasim Al-Qushāirī narrates that the fear of Allah is a whip by which Allah straightens the wicked from His door.³² Fear of God creates awareness of accountability and divine judgment.³³ In the context of work behaviors the fear of Allah creates an atmosphere in the mind of a Muslim that Allah is watching over all his deeds. The realization of Allah's care and concern for the Hereafter improves one's performance. A change in a person's mental state increases their level of performance. With this concept of "Divine Administration", everyone performs his duties very carefully and responsibly.³⁴

Sabr (Patience and Endurance):

Patience is a multifaceted component of Islamic spirituality. Patience is the highest level of belief and for all Muslims is one of the most anticipated virtues.³⁵ It regulates human behavior and acts as a tool to control emotions. In performing jobs an expression of patience in times of pain and suffering makes one's able to be patient in making wise decisions and reduces the chances of making mistakes. This feature of Islamic spirituality enables man to avoid hasty decisions.³⁶

Sidq (Truthfulness):

Truth is paramount in moral values.³⁷ is manifested in personal thought, thought and action. Adherence to the truth establishes a realistic outlook on life and sincerity rather than hypocrisy.³⁸ It is not permissible for any organization operating under Islamic guidelines and principles to lie or deceive in order to gain some benefit. Fraud, deception and exploitation of the innocence of others are strictly forbidden in Islam.³⁹

Ikhlaṣ (Sincerity):

Obedience to God's commands in daily life creates a sense of sincerity in the process of being aware of His care and fear of His love and wrath. Spirituality is actually the first step towards sincerity in action. Islam needs its followers to be sincere in every aspect of life.⁴⁰ Muslims are expected to perform their duties in all areas of life with sincerity and honesty as there is no room for lies and deception in Islam. Sincerity is manifested in honesty and truth in word and deed. Sincerity is manifested in the way a person performs a task to the best of his ability. This kind of attitude is the best way for the organization to show its loyalty and gratitude and love.⁴¹ Sincere efforts to enhance the value of the organization result in higher performance of the people which leads to a more successful organization.⁴²

Īta'at (Respect for authority):

Respect for authority and obedience is a cornerstone of the Islamic spiritual structure. In Islamic mysticism obedience means obedience to Allah and His Messenger (SAW). This obedience is absolute and does not change with the change of time and place. This is a strong relationship with Allah and His Messenger (SAW). It is the religious duty of all Muslims to obey all the legal and reasonable orders of those in authority among themselves. Obedience to the commands of men who invest with authority in Islam is not only due to administrative principle but also its importance as a Divine invitation. In the work perspective, respect for authority is a basic requirement of the division of labor. The ability to take work from others and get it done on time is a fundamental principle of organizational behavior. The administrative process works on the assumption of the consent of subordinates to follow the instructions of seniors. Believers are obliged to follow the rules of management with consent and sincerity.⁴³ Islamic spirituality strengthens the spirit of obedience in the minds of believers.

CONCLUSION:

In Islam, mysticism refers to the presence of a relationship with Allah that affects one's self-esteem, sense of meaning, and relationship with others. It includes beliefs, rituals, and daily routines. Islamic spirituality is a means of gaining nearness to Allah and achievement of personal value. It engenders valuable values in Muslims that influence its social behavior. Islam commands its followers to work with full vigor and to the best of their ability. The essential attributes of Islamic spirituality, such as good intentions, benevolence, attainment of perfection, patience and endurance, sincerity and respect for authority, etc., have a positive effect on the way Muslims work. When these qualities are used in the workplace, an atmosphere of peace and security is created. Employees' performance and efficiency are multiplied by the concept of being seen by a 'Higher Entity'. Employees work with more enthusiasm and energy with their inner motivation. Achieving God's love and seeking the rewards of this world and the hereafter makes them more responsible and useful employees. From the above discussion it can be inferred that the elements of Islamic spirituality can be an encouraging motivation for those who work. It is up to policy makers and human resource management experts to use this aspect of spirituality to improve employee performance and organizational productivity and to implement human resource policies that facilitate employee spiritual growth.



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