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# THE EFFECT OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP ON REDUCING COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOR APPLYING ON THE STAFF IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AT NINAWA GOVERNORATE

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to investigate the effect of Spiritual leadership on reducing counterproductive work behavior, and to quantify the effect of spiritual leadership dimensions on counterproductive work behavior dimensions. It relied on a survey list of 383 individuals distributed to the staff in the department of education at Ninawa governorate and 282 questionnaires were valid for analysis. The research found a negative significant effect of spiritual leadership on counterproductive work behavior, and a negative significant effect of some dimensions of spiritual leadership on dimensions of counterproductive work behavior.*

**Key words:** Spiritual Leadership, Spirituality, Counterproductive work behavior

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Counterproductive work behavior is one of the most important issues facing organizations these days (especially local units) due to their negative impact on them in general, which are those behaviors that are voluntarily and deliberately performed by workers that aim to harm organizations, colleagues or clients (Huang et al., 2017). (Spector et al., 2006) indicated that the term counterproductive work behavior has been taken up by researchers under multiple names, including (deviant work behaviors, aggressive behaviors, deviation, and revenge). These behaviors caused enormous financial losses that had devastating effects on organizations ((Tian et al., 2014), where a study (Roxana, 2013) found that the losses of organizations in the United States of America amounted to more than 50 billion dollars annually due to counterproductive work behavior, Also, some estimates indicated that

between 33% and 75% of employees were related to one of the counterproductive work behaviors, and a study (Fine et al., 2010) also concluded that these behaviors are responsible for up to 30% of all business failures.

The growing counterproductive work behavior that has caused many failures and breakdowns of organizations has stimulated the emergence of a new leadership theory, namely Spiritual leadership (Sholikhah et al., 2019), which is the type of leadership that aims to research employee well-being depending on the provision of psychological needs that help create vision and values consistent with the organization and achieve development for the highest level of efficiency, and human development (Chen & Yang., 2012). Mubasher, et al., (2017) considered spiritual leadership to be one of the modern leadership styles and classified it as a fifth generation of leadership generations that should be available in organizations. Spiritual leadership includes motivating and inspiring workers through a vision and corporate culture based on altruistic love, creating vision and congruence of values, achieving empowerment, promoting higher levels of employee well-being, and excellence in performance (Fry et al., 2010).

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1. Spiritual Leadership**

The term spirituality refers to the word “soul” which is derived from the Latin word “Spiritus” which means breathing (Karadag, 2009). Spirituality refers to the human soul, which is the part that is fulfilled through self-expression in action. The assured intangible power of life in the soul (Salehzadeh et al, 2015), and (Chatterji & Zsolnai, 2016) indicated that Spirituality is the ability to transcend the physical limits set by time and space, and it also includes the ability to think, search for meaning, and adhere to values and morals. .

The definitions of spiritual leadership varied according to the researchers, each from his own point of view, so we find that (Zakkariya & Nimitha., 2020, Sholikhah et al., 2019, Yang et al., 2019) defined spiritual leadership as a set of necessary values, attitudes, and behaviors. To motivate oneself on the one hand, and to motivate others on the other hand to show their abilities and skills. Wagner (2018) defines spiritual leadership as the informal leadership theory of organizational transformation designed to create a learning organization with intrinsic motivation, as the goal of spiritual leadership is to create vision and congruence of values across strategic and individual levels and ultimately to promote higher levels of organizational commitment and productivity.

Averin (2018) noted that spiritual leadership includes the values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to fundamentally motivate the self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through advocacy and membership, which necessitates creating a vision and establishing an organizational social culture based on altruism.

Mubasher et al., (2017) stated that the purpose of spiritual leadership is to benefit from the basic needs of both the leader and his followers for spiritual survival, by belonging to achieving the vision of the organization.

As stated (Lean, 2012), spiritual leadership is achieved when a manager motivates the subordinates and helps them discover the inner moral force that connects them with others and directs their actions within the organization.

Among the studies reviewed by the researcher, it was found that many studies such as (Zakkariya & Nimitha, 2020; Sholikhah et al., 2019; Mahyarni, 2019; Averin, 2018; Abdul Wahid & Mustamil, 2017; Kaya, 2015) dealt with three dimensions of leadership. The

spiritual is (vision - Hope / faith - altruistic love), and this is what the researcher called for to address it as follows:

### ***Vision Vision***

There should be a clear vision of what the organization would like to be in the future, and strive hard to create this future (Mubasher et al., 2017). Vision also refers to the shape of the future as the individual sees it, either implicitly or explicitly, and how to reach and achieve this vision (Gunduz, 2017, Zakkariya & Nimitha., 2020). (Averin, 2018) pointed out that the vision is a powerful motivational force that energizes and motivates employees to work by giving meaning to work, shedding light on the direction of change, coordinating ideas, opinions and actions of organizational members, and simplifying countless decisions participating in organizational processes.

### ***Hope/faith***

Hope is the expectation of the realization of desired things while faith is the belief that fulfillment will occur, and they together represent a firm belief in something for which there is no evidence (Wagner., 2018). And hope is the desire that is accompanied by the expectation of achievement, and faith adds certainty to hope, and assures that what is required will be fulfilled, hope / faith establishes conviction in the vision and mission of the organization, and Spiritual leadership assumes that hope / faith in the organization's vision makes followers look to the future with optimism and have the desire. In terms of performance and a positive expectation of what is to come, this motivates them to exert more effort through self-motivation (Mubasher et al., 2017).

Averin (2018) believes that hope is a person's ability to create pathways and motivate himself to use those pathways to achieve desired goals. Hope is not an emotional state of inspiration, but a cognitive process closely related to a person's self-efficacy, which is based on the individual's belief in the individual's ability to initiate and persevere until the task is accomplished.

Hope is also the values, attitudes and behaviors that prove that what is desirable and expected will be achieved, and hope increases with increasing faith and certainty (Ghashghaeizadeh et al., 2015). Hope makes individuals ready to do more and endure difficulties in order to achieve their goals (Fry et al., 2010).

### ***Altruistic love***

It is intended to provide the person with the needs of others according to his needs (Mubasher et al., 2017). It is also the feeling of complementary and harmony that results from care, concern and appreciation for oneself and others (Gunduz, 2017).

Averin (2018) also added that the power of love is undeniable. It works to overcome the power of fear, anger, pride, and a sense of failure, and produces inner peace, joy, and serenity. In combination with hope / faith and vision, it becomes an engine for organizational growth and leads to increased organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, unit performance, productivity and organizational commitment.

Leaders and followers who show genuine care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others through love and altruism lead to their sense of membership and belonging (Fry et al., 2010).

## **2.2. Counterproductive Work behavior**

Grijalva & Newman (2015) defined counterproductive work behavior as selective behaviors that violate regulations and threaten the well-being of the organization or its members (such

as theft, late attendance at the organization, exchange of confidential information to the organization, and abstention from efforts).

Dwivedi et al. (2016) view counterproductive work behavior as avoidance and sabotage while displaying abusive behavior and overtly practicing negative actions.

Huang et al. (2017) explained that counterproductive work behavior refers to behaviors that harm, or aim to harm, organizations or people in organizations.

Szostek (2017) defined counterproductive work behavior as those deviant, retaliatory, or aggressive behaviors or wrong behaviors that harm the goals and rules of the organization.

Seriki et al. (2020) defined counterproductive work behavior as voluntary behavior in which the employee violates important organizational standards and principles, thus threatening the safety of the organization and its members.

From a review of previous studies, it was found that most of them focused on five basic dimensions, which are the dimensions established by (Spector et al., 2006) and include (abuse against others, theft, production deviance, sabotage, withdrawal) and can be dealt with in some detail as follows:

### ***Abuse against others***

Abuse against others consists of harmful behaviors directed at co-workers and other actors who are either physically or psychologically harmed by making threats, bad comments, ignoring people, or restricting a person's ability to function effectively (Spector et al., 2006).

Bruursemaa et al., (2011), suggests that abuse against others consists of physically or psychologically harmful behaviors directed at others in the organization, ranging in severity from ignoring an individual to hitting or pushing someone. The assault on others is either physical or psychological (Spector & Fox, 2010). Physical assault is more severe and includes the use of weapons, shoving, punching or trapping co-workers or even sexual harassment (Anjum & Parvez, 2013).

ALSO, (Naghshbandy & Malgharani, 2015) added that positive social performance can be used as an aid to interpersonal relationships, as it can prevent anti-work and other direct negative behaviors towards individuals. Eschleman et al. (2015) also argue that work stress increases counterproductive work behavior such as directing verbal abuse to co-workers.

### ***Production deviance***

Spector et al. (2006), defines production deviance as intentional failure to perform job tasks effectively and in the way they are supposed to. Also, Anjum & Parvez, (2013) believes that the production deviance is a failure to perform job tasks effectively in the way they are supposed to be completed, and thus the employee intentionally affects the effectiveness of the organization by slowing down the quantity and quality of its work. Bibi et al., (2013), noted that production deviance are behaviors that destroy the production process.

The production deviance is caused by insufficient technology, an unsuitable environment, heavy workload, leaving early, taking excessive breaks, and deliberately slowing down (Szostek, 2017). Anjum & Parvez, (2013) added that this is a dangerous dimension of Counterproductive work behavior, because it intentionally affects organizational performance and increases problems facing organizational success.

### ***Sabotage***

Sabotage refers to the destruction or mutilation of the property and physical assets of an organization or business owner (Spector & Fox, 2010). They are employee behaviors that are

intended: reducing the productivity of the organization, and the deliberate destruction of assets, production deviance and sabotage, two types of behaviors that mean failure to perform the job, and the intentional destruction of something (Spector et al., 2006). Iqbal & Hassan, (2016), added that sabotage includes destroying the company's property and equipment or taking them home intentionally and illegally. Sabotage destroys and deforms the employer's physical property and deliberately wastes the organization's property (Bruursemaa et al., 2011, Ansari et al., 2013). Production deviance is considered to be less severe than sabotage, and sabotage occurs mainly due to proxy aggression, frustration and anger (Kwak, 2006).

### ***Withdrawal***

Withdrawal consists of those negative behaviors that reduce the amount of work time beyond what is required by the organization (Spector et al., 2006), and these behaviors include coming to work late or leaving the workplace early, being absent from work, and taking breaks longer than officially permitted, Absence is the primary form of withdrawal, which occurs due to psychological disturbances, pressures, social customs, cultural conflicts and individual differences, withdrawal is the behavior through which an employee tries to avoid the situation rather than harming the organization and its members. Jawahar & Stone, (2015) pointed out that employees 'feeling of decreased organizational justice in its dimensions (distributional, procedural, information and transaction fairness) leads to the individual leaving work early and absenteeism. The withdrawal is also the behavior that reduces the time the employee works to be less than what the organization requires (Szostek, 2017).

### ***Theft***

Galperin described theft in 2002 as a counterproductive work behavior that compels an individual to breach regulations (Spector et al., 2006), and theft can take many forms such as fraud and cash seizure (Kwak, 2006). Theft is also the appropriation of assets or physical or in-kind property of the organization or co-workers (Anjum & Parvez, 2013). Theft results from economic need, job dissatisfaction or injustice and is seen as a form of assault against the organization (Szostek, 2017).

The researcher conducted an exploratory study on a facilitated sample of 40 individuals from department of education at Ninawa governorate aiming to find out the employees 'level of awareness of each of Spiritual leadership and the availability of counterproductive work behavior. The study revealed the existence of manifestations of workers' perpetration of many anti-work behaviors that would impede the achievement of the directorate's goals. The role of spiritual leadership in reducing the spread of counterproductive work behavior was not clear. In light of the results of the exploratory study, the researcher can formulate a research problem in: Increasing the prevalence of counterproductive work behavior among the surveyed sample .

This study therefore sought to examine the effect of spiritual leadership on counterproductive work behavior by applying on the staff in the department of education at Ninawa governorate. The following specific objectives were established:

- 1- Determine the nature of the relationship between spiritual leadership and counterproductive work behavior.
- 2- Study the nature of the impact of spiritual leadership and its dimensions on abuse against others.
- 3- Measuring the impact of the spiritual leadership and its dimensions on production deviance.
- 4- Measuring the impact of the spiritual leadership and its dimensions on sabotage.

### **3. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

The following sections provide reasoning for set forth hypothesis development. There are numerous studies linking spiritual leadership with the variables counterproductive work behavior.

Several studies have examined the relationship between spiritual leadership and Counterproductive work behavior, either directly or through some of its dimensions. We find that a study (Mahyarni, 2019) found that spiritual leadership stimulates job satisfaction in employees and reduces counterproductive work behavior.

Leweherilla (2017; Iqbal & Hassan, 2016; Ahmad & Omar, 2014) concluded that there is an inverse relationship between spirituality in the workplace and counterproductive work behavior. Also, Kaya (2015) showed that there is an inverse relationship between spiritual leadership and counterproductive work behavior from while supporting internal personal values, the study (Abdul Rahim et al., 2014) concluded that spiritual leadership is positively correlated with reducing counterproductive work behavior, and Matrecia et al., (2011) concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between spiritual leadership and reduction. Cynic behavior within the organization, which limits the counterproductive work behavior of the organization. Based on the above, the research hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

- 1- There is a negative significant effect of spiritual leadership on counterproductive work behavior.
- 2- There is a negative significant effect of the dimensions' spiritual leadership on abuse against others.
- 3- There is a negative significant effect of the dimensions' spiritual leadership on production deviance.
- 4- There is a negative significant effect of the dimensions' spiritual leadership on sabotage.

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1. Population and Sample**

The study population is represented by the staff in the department of education at Ninawa governorate in the Republic of Iraq, and the number of the research population reached 32,387 workers as of May 30, 2019 (by reviewing the personnel records of the department of education at Ninawa governorate). The sample size of 383 individuals was determined at an error rate of 5% and a confidence level of 95%, depending on (Saunders et al. 2009: p. 219). The researcher drew the sample in a systematic random manner from the research population .

#### **4.2. Data Collection Procedure**

In the study we used a survey research method to investigate effect spiritual leadership on counterproductive work behavior. Choosing a survey data collection supports the quality of data gathering for a purpose of research. The statements assessed by using Likert scale of five points scale. Confidentiality and the rights of withdrawal were observed.

#### **4.3. Measurement**

- 1- The independent variable: Spiritual Leadership

It was measured using a scale (Fry, et al., 2010), and it consists of three dimensions: vision, hope / faith, altruistic love.

- 2- The dependent variable: Counterproductive work behavior

It was measured using a scale (Spector et al., 2006). It has five dimensions: abuse against others, production deviance, sabotage, withdrawal, theft. But, the researcher only studied three dimensions due to their suitability in application to the chosen sample, namely abuse against others, production deviance, sabotage.

#### 4.4. Validity and Reliability

The researcher used Cronbach's Alpha to test the reliability of measures of all variables (Spiritual leadership and its dimensions, and Counterproductive work behavior and its dimensions).

**Table 1** Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's alpha
Spiritual leadership	0.929
vision	0.905
Hope/faith	0.732
altruistic love	0.865
Counterproductive work behavior	0.907
abuse against others	0.922
production deviance	0.881
sabotage	0.765

The analysis in table 1 suggests that the Cronbach's alpha values for all the study variables (dependent and independent) exceeded 0.7 thresholds. This indicates that the instruments employed were reliable enough to conduct the study and to make a conclusion.

### 5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research used mean and standard deviation to summarize data collected. Simple regression, and multiple regression stepwise were also adopted to assess the effects between the variables.

#### 5.1. Descriptive analysis of spiritual leadership and counterproductive work behavior, and their sub-dimensions

Table 2 shows means and standard deviations of spiritual leadership and its dimensions, counterproductive work behavior and its dimensions, as follows:

**Table 2** Means and standard deviations of the research variables

Variable	Means	Standard deviations
Spiritual leadership	3.035	1.285
vision	3.086	1.286
hope/faith	3.059	1.114
altruistic love	3.036	1.257
Counterproductive work behavior	3.171	1.243
abuse against others	3.317	1.293
production deviance	3.113	1.143
sabotage	2.985	1.122

It is clear from Table 2 that mean of spiritual leadership reached 3.035, which means that the concept of spiritual leadership is available among the staff in the department of education at Ninawa governorate in the Republic of Iraq with a medium degree. It is also clear from the table that means of dimensions' spiritual leadership fall between (3.036) to (3.086). Vision got

the highest average and it was 3,086, while altruistic love got the lowest value, reaching 3,036, while hope/faith got 3,059, respectively, this reflects the availability of the dimensions of spiritual leadership among the staff in the department of education at Ninawa governorate with a degree greater than mean.

It is also evident from the table that the average Counterproductive work behavior as a whole was 3.171, which means that the concept of Counterproductive work behavior was available among workers in the Nineveh Directorate of Education with a medium degree, as it was evident from the table that the dimensions of Counterproductive work behavior recorded relatively high averages, so abuse against others obtained the highest average. It was 3,317, sabotage got the lowest average of 2.95, and production deviance got 3,133. From the above, the convergence of the averages of the concepts that refer to the responses of the vocabulary of the study confirms the consistency of those concepts as dimensions expressing counterproductive work behavior that the sample's vocabulary may show towards the staff in the department of education at Ninawa governorate .

## 5.2. Hypotheses Testing

1. This part discusses the results of the statistical analysis related to determine the type of relationship between spiritual leadership and counterproductive work behavior, as follows:

**Table 3** Results of a simple regression analysis of the impact of spiritual leadership on counterproductive work behavior

Independent	B	F	Sig.	R <sup>2</sup>
spiritual leadership	-0.544	507.257	0.000	0.320

Table 3 data indicate that the regression model was significant, as the value of F (507.257) was significant at the level of 1% of significance. The direct effect coefficient was proven to be significant, with a value of -0.544, which is a negative significant effect . The value of R<sup>2</sup> was (0.320), which means that spiritual leadership explains 32% of the changes that occur in counterproductive work behavior, and the remaining 68% is due to the influence of other factors that did not appear in the model.

2. The effects of spiritual leadership dimensions on abuse against others.

**Table 4** Results of multiple regression analysis by (Stepwise) of the effect of spiritual leadership dimensions on abuse against others

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Beta	T	Sig.
abuse against others	hope/faith	-0.466	4.694	0.000
	altruistic love	-0.443	3.738	0.000
(R <sup>2</sup> )				0.388
F				151.668
Sig.				0.000

Table 4 data indicate that the calculated F value of the model reached (151.668), and the significant value reached (0.000), which means high morale of the model, and from the model it becomes clear that there are a significant effects of two dimensions of spiritual leadership on abuse against others. Also, the value of R<sup>2</sup> for the model reached (0.388), which indicates that the dimensions of spiritual leadership explain (38.8%) of the change that occurs in the dependent variable abuse against others. The model also excludes vision from the spiritual leadership dimensions from influencing abuse against others.



3. The effects of spiritual leadership dimensions on production deviance.

**Table 5** Results of multiple regression analysis by (Stepwise) of the effect of spiritual leadership dimensions on production deviance

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Beta	T	Sig.
production deviance	hope/faith	-0.562	8.209	0.000
	vision	-0.409	5.688	0.000
(R <sup>2</sup> )				0.347
F				202.775
Sig.				0.000

Table 5 data indicate that the calculated F value of the model reached (202.775), and the significant value reached (0.000), which means high morale of the model, and from the model it becomes clear that there are a significant effects of two dimensions of spiritual leadership on production deviance. Also, the value of R<sup>2</sup> for the model reached (0.347), which indicates that the dimensions of spiritual leadership explain (34.7%) of the change that occurs in the dependent variable production deviance. The model also excludes altruistic love from the spiritual leadership dimensions from influencing production deviance.

4. The effects of spiritual leadership dimensions on sabotage.

**Table 6** Results of multiple regression analysis by (Stepwise) of the effect of spiritual leadership dimensions on sabotage

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Beta	T	Sig.
sabotage	altruistic love	-0.461	2.104	0.036
	vision	-0.388	2.093	0.037
(R <sup>2</sup> )				0.481
F				75.074
Sig.				0.000

Table 6 data indicate that the calculated F value of the model reached (75.074), and the significant value reached (0.000), which means high morale of the model, and from the model it becomes clear that there are a significant effects of two dimensions of spiritual leadership on sabotage. Also, the value of R<sup>2</sup> for the model reached (0.481), which indicates that the dimensions of spiritual leadership explain (48.1%) of the change that occurs in the dependent variable sabotage. The model also excludes hope/faith from the spiritual leadership dimensions from influencing sabotage.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Results demonstrate that there is a negative effect of spiritual leadership on counterproductive work behavior. That is, the more effective spiritual leadership, the lower the intensity of counterproductive work behavior, and thus the correctness of the first hypothesis can be accepted. This result is in agreement with the study (Mahyarni, 2019; Leweherilla, 2017; Iqbal & Hassan, 2016; Ahmad & Omar, 2014) where the study found a negative effect of spiritual leadership on counterproductive work behavior. The researcher believes that the previous result reflects the possibility of limiting the increase and spread of counterproductive work behavior through the style practiced by the leader, the fact that Spiritual leadership can greatly affect the behavior of subordinates, as these behaviors cannot be absent in any case, but leaders strive Spiritual leadership, in turn, leads to the generation of confidence in the leader for the subordinates, and the leader's pursuit of providing the right atmosphere for work

and keenness on achieving benefits for subordinates encourages interaction and keenness to provide better performance and higher productivity and thus is reflected in their interest in Their performance and their behavior towards the organization and towards others, and to continue to reduce and limit the number and spread of these negative behaviors.

It was found that there was a negative effect of hope / faith and altruistic love on abuse against others, as well as a negative effect of vision and hope/faith on production deviance, and there was a negative effect of vision and altruistic love on sabotage. The researcher explains the effect of hope / faith and altruistic love in abuse against others to the fact that the leader, as a representative of the organization, moves quickly and insists on solving problems, and workers share ideas and put them into practical implementation, and easily negotiate with subordinates and work to establish social relations among all workers, and spread confidence in them. As the trust that is generated in the subordinates and their love for their leaders naturally affects the personality and behavior of the subordinates, all of which leads to a reduction in the behaviors associated with abuse against others, whether directed at the organization or coworkers. Also, the leaders' use of creative thinking, exploiting opportunities, encouraging members, appreciating their achievements and spreading confidence in them, this could affect sabotage behavior that individuals accept from wasting resources, damaging equipment and property, and improving their behavior within the work towards the organization.

This study recommends that for organizations to Take into account the availability of spiritual leadership skills as one of the necessary requirements for occupying leadership positions such as holding personal meetings to learn the way of thinking and clarity of values for the employee nominated for an interview. And setting the leadership capabilities of individuals as one of the requirements for promotion to leadership positions, in order to help provide indicators of the possibility of these individuals succeeding in practicing their leadership duties, and to reduce counterproductive work behavior for the directorate's employees. Commanders should keep up on the field with a watchful approach that helps reduce sabotage and production deviance. With attention to strengthening the social aspect and relationships between colleagues to reduce abuse among them by providing recreational trips and seminars with each other, and participating in cultural forums and evenings prepared by the Directorate. And work to provide a charter that contains the directorate's rules.

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