

The Impact of Workplace Spirituality on Mental Well-being and Burnout among Secondary School Heads

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ABSTRACT

Literature is recognizing that emotionally and psychologically resilient leaders are essential for effective school management. This study examined the impact of workplace spirituality on mental well-being and burnout among secondary school heads. The nature of the research was relationship which belongs to descriptive family, cross-sectional, survey method was used to collect data from participants. The participants consisted of 294 secondary school heads of District Sargodha. Data were collected through a validated questionnaire developed by the researcher and analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, and Pearson correlation in SPSS-20. The findings revealed that secondary school heads reported high levels of workplace spirituality and mental well-being, while experiencing moderate burnout. Male and private school heads showed higher workplace spirituality and mental well-being, and public-school heads experienced higher burnout. Workplace spirituality was positively correlated with mental well-being and negatively correlated with burnout, indicating its protective role. The study concluded that fostering workplace spirituality enhances mental well-being and reduces burnout among school leaders. Based on the findings, it is recommended that schools implement spirituality-oriented leadership programs to strengthen resilience and mental health, and establish structured reflection and mindfulness practices to help heads manage stress effectively.

Keywords: Workplace Spirituality, Mental Well-being, Burnout, School Heads

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership research has started to focus on workplace spirituality because current schools require their leaders to possess both administrative skills and emotional strength and mental health abilities. Workplace spirituality refers to creating a work environment that enables employees to find purpose in their work while developing human connections and showing kindness and maintaining shared organizational values. Secondary school administrators in educational institutions must deal with numerous administrative tasks and accountability requirements and complex relationships which negatively impact their mental health and increase their risk of burnout. Modern research shows that organizations which practice spiritual values create better psychological health and higher job satisfaction and more positive workplace behaviors in their employees (Iqbal et al., 2024; Wnuk, 2024).

Existing research shows that educational administrators face two interconnected problems which involve mental health and burnout. School administrators face burnout, which medical professionals define as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization along with a diminished sense of professional accomplishment, because they must handle their extensive work duties and their ongoing requirement to make decisions. The

research shows that administrators can use spirituality as a stress management tool which helps them deal with emotional distress (Tengku Mohamed et al., 2022; Sulaiman et al., 2022). The systematic reviews show that organizations which create workplace spirituality environments experience better employee well-being and stronger organizational commitment and improved psychological health results (Aboobaker et al., 2022; Alruwayti & Sulphey, 2023).

The research indicates that secondary school heads will maintain their emotional equilibrium through their duties when they work in spiritually supportive environments. The leadership methods that educational institutions implement affect both the mental health of their staff members and the atmosphere that exists in their whole organization. The research's conducted in school environments shows that educators and leaders experience less burnout and develops stronger resilience in schools that practice positive values and spiritual principles (Ghale et al., 2025; Karaman et al., 2025). The psychological state of secondary school administrators determines the educational environment of their institutions because their mental health effects teacher satisfaction and school outcomes and student achievement. The existing international research on this topic has increased, yet there is a shortage of research that studies how workplace spirituality impacts mental health and burnout among school administrators in developing educational systems. The current research investigates how workplace spirituality impacts mental health and burnout among secondary school administrators.

Rationale

The workload of secondary school heads has increased because their job duties have expanded while their responsibilities to monitor staff and their obligations to enhance student academic results have increased. Continuous exposure to these stressors produces psychological distress together with emotional exhaustion which eventually results in total burnout. School leaders require mental well-being because their psychological state affects both school atmosphere and teacher motivation and school performance. Current educational research demonstrates that successful leadership needs both technical skills and the development of personal motivation together with common values and emotional stability through workplace spirituality (Aboobaker et al. 2022).

Workplace spirituality enables individuals to experience meaning in their work, a sense of connection with others, compassion, and alignment with shared values. Recent research indicates that supportive spiritual climates within organizations are linked to enhanced psychological well-being, greater job satisfaction, and reduced stress and burnout among both employees and leaders (Tengku Mohamed et al., 2022; Wnuk, 2024). In educational settings, such an environment can help school leaders manage professional demands by strengthening resilience, nurturing constructive relationships, and upholding ethical practices. Nevertheless, despite its growing importance, workplace spirituality remains relatively underexplored in school leadership research, particularly among secondary school heads.

Furthermore, burnout among educational heads as leaders has become an important concern with respect to research studies. Research has shown that when educational leaders are emotionally exhausted, their ability to support teachers and students is significantly reduced (Alruwayti & Sulphey, 2023). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence that explores the role of spirituality at workplace as a predictive variable in reducing burnout and improving mental well-being among secondary school heads. Therefore, this study is significant in filling the existing research gap by exploring the role of spirituality at workplace in improving mental well-being and reducing burnout among secondary school heads.

The secondary school administrators have an important leadership role in dealing with academic, administrative, and human resource issues; however, the rising workload, accountability, and emotional pressures tend to make them vulnerable to mental stress and burnout. School leaders' burnout has been

found to have negative consequences for decision-making, leadership performance, and overall school achievement. While spirituality at workplace has been recognized as a significant factor in fostering psychological well-being, meaning at work, and emotional hardiness, very little attention has been paid to its role in the mental well-being and burnout of secondary school administrators, especially in the educational context of developing nations. It has been proposed in existing literature that spiritually positive workplaces can help alleviate stress and improve the overall well-being of employees (Aboobaker et al., 2022; Wnuk, 2024); however, the empirical evidence regarding school leadership is still inadequate.

The theoretical frame work and objectives of the study are given as

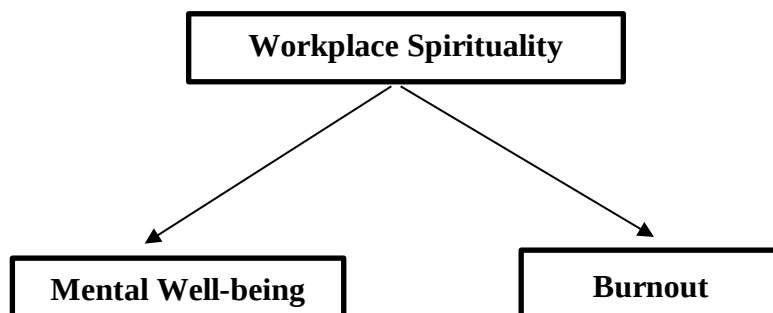


Figure: Theoretical Framework

- To examine the level of spirituality at workplace among secondary school heads
- To assess the level of mental well-being among secondary school heads
- To ascertain the level of burnout among secondary school heads
- To determine impact of spirituality at workplace on mental well-being and burnout among secondary school heads

METHODOLOGY

The research design implied in this study is quantitative, and with reference to time dimension the study was cross sectional research measuring the said phenomenon at single point of time. According to purpose of research this research is descriptive and explanatory aiming at describing the phenomenon and explaining the relationship between relevant variables.

Participants

The whole pool from which a statistical sample is taken is the population (Anwar, 2023). However, the “target population” refers to the entire individuals or objects to which the investigators are concerned in generalizing the conclusions (Chawla, & Sodhi, 2011). Current study was related to spirituality at workplace in promoting well-being, and burnout and secondary school teachers were the respondents, therefore “all the secondary school teachers working in government and private secondary schools of District Sargodha” was the target population of this study. Sampling is said to be the process of choosing a small portion from a bigger group (population) to gauge the prevalence of a larger group-related circumstance or unknown piece of information (Flick, 2015). Sample is smaller representative of large population with the same characteristics and truly representing the whole population (Neumann, 2006). Multiphase sampling technique involves the selection of sample through multiple stages, wherein the population is separated into

groups (clusters), and sequential samples are drawn at different phase. A sample of 294 heads was selected using a two-phase sampling process, including 150 from public and 144 from private schools (185 males and 109 females).

Research Tool and validation

Tool for data collection was questionnaire, because it is a popular method, initially it was pre tested to ensure reliability and validity factor. According to Babbie (2016), a research tool such as questionnaire is declared as the document comprising statements/questions and some other relevant types of items planned to collect the information appropriate for the purpose of analysis. It is a standardized data collection tool that enables researchers to collect data from respondents efficiently and systematically. A survey is a printed rundown of inquiries to which respondents should answer and record their reactions. Respondents in this survey research study were required to select from a predetermined list of options. So, in this study close ended question is being asked to relevant respondents. In this study relatively 34 numbers of statements were being asked to respondents to get relevant information.

A questionnaire was developed to survey secondary school heads spirituality at workplace, mental well-being and burn out. Questionnaire was constructed after literature review which comprised of three parts; the first was regarding the school's name and gender of respondents (Male/Female). The second part was about to measure /quantify the level of spirituality at workplace. Workplace spirituality was measured through 12 items constructed on 5-point Likert scale which was ranging from "strongly disagree to strongly agree" (scoring weight: 1-5 respectively). Third part of questionnaire was used to measure secondary school heads' state of mental well-being. With certain changes in "Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale" (Tennant et al., 2007) was utilize to assesses mental wellbeing (Tennant et al., 2007). It was a 10-items scale based on the state of individual over the past two weeks; therefore, responses were measured using five-point Likert scale having rang Scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always. Third was secondary heads burn out based on 12 items five-point likert scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Research tool validation is the process of evaluating the research instrument to confirm its accuracy and reliably in measurement. Validation is critical process in research studies to certify the data composed is trustworthy and consistent. Validation comprised of two major things, validity and reliability. Research questionnaires were validated through expert opinion (Oluwatayo, 2012). The experts were faculty members of department of education and psychology, university of Sargodha and PhD scholars/alumni of education and psychology disciplines. Experts were asked to judge whether content and language of items of the scale communicate the true meanings of social and emotional competence and students' mental health. Reliability statistics refer to a set of methods and techniques used to measure the consistency and stability of a research instrument or test over time. In other words, reliability statistics assess the degree to which a test or measurement tool produces consistent and accurate results.

Reliability Statistics		
Variables under Study	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Workplace Spirituality	12	.917
Mental Well-being	10	.908
Burn out	12	.911
Total	32	.912

In the context of above table, Cronbach's Alpha is a statistical measure of internal consistency reliability. It indicates the extent to which the items on a test or questionnaire measure the same construct or concept. In this case, including sub-scales the Cronbach's Alpha value is .912, which is considered to be a very good level of internal consistency reliability.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through self-approach. Analysis was performed using SPSS version 20, employing descriptive statistics, independent sample t-tests, and Pearson correlation.

RESULTS

The findings reveal that secondary school heads generally experience high levels of workplace spirituality and mental well-being, while burnout was reported at a moderate level.

Table 1: Analysis of Workplace Spirituality

Statement	Mean	SD
Work gives meaning and purpose	4.03	0.89
Opportunity to show empathy	4.1	0.88
Leadership encourages ethics	4.14	0.86
Opportunities for reflection	3.83	1.01
Overall Mean	4.02	0.91

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the Workplace Spirituality (WPS) construct. The findings indicate that secondary school heads perceive a high level of spirituality within their professional environment, as evidenced by an overall mean score of 4.02 (SD = 0.91). Specifically, the highest-rated item was the perception that "leadership encourages ethics" (M = 4.14, SD = 0.86), closely followed by the "opportunity to show empathy" (M = 4.10, SD = 0.88). While the statement regarding "opportunities for reflection" received the relatively lowest mean (M = 3.83), it still remains well above the neutral midpoint. This suggests that school heads generally operate in an environment characterized by ethical leadership and a sense of professional purpose.

Table 2: Analysis of Burnout

Factors	Mean	SD
Emotionally drained	3.27	1.12
Used up after work	3.4	1.1
Overwhelmed by administrative demands	3.5	1.08
Considered leaving position	3.1	1.16
Overall Mean	3.32	1.14

The assessment of professional burnout among school heads, as shown in Table 2, revealed a moderate overall mean of 3.32 (SD = 1.14). The data highlights that administrative pressure is the primary driver of exhaustion, with the statement "overwhelmed by administrative demands" receiving the highest mean score (M = 3.50, SD = 1.08). Additionally, heads reported feeling "used up after work" (M = 3.40, SD = 1.10). Interestingly, the relatively lower mean for "considering leaving the position" (M = 3.10) suggests that while leaders are experiencing significant stress and emotional drainage, their professional commitment remains intact despite the administrative burden.

Table 3: Analysis of Mental Well-being

Factors	Mean	SD
Feeling optimistic about the future	4.08	0.85
Feeling relaxed and calm	3.75	1.02
Able to deal with problems effectively	4.12	0.82
Feeling confident in professional abilities	4.18	0.8
Energy to engage fully in work role	3.73	1.05
Overall Mean	3.97	0.91

Table 3 illustrates the levels of mental well-being among the sampled secondary school heads. The data reveals a high overall level of psychological functioning, as indicated by an overall mean score of 3.97 (SD = 0.91) on a 5-point Likert scale. The highest-rated dimension of well-being was "confidence in professional abilities" (M = 4.18, SD = 0.80), followed closely by the perceived "ability to deal with problems effectively" (M = 4.12, SD = 0.82). These results suggest that school administrators possess a strong sense of self-efficacy and resilience despite the challenges of their roles. However, relatively lower mean scores were observed for "feeling relaxed and calm" (M = 3.75) and having the "energy to engage fully in the work role" (M = 3.73). This discrepancy suggests that while heads remain confident and optimistic, the high-pressure nature of school leadership may be impacting their daily energy levels and capacity for relaxation. Overall, the findings indicate a positive state of mental well-being that provides a

robust foundation for leadership, yet highlights areas where administrative stress may be beginning to manifest.

Table 4: Correlational Analysis

Variable Path	Pearson Correlation (r)	Significance (p)
WPS -> Mental Well-being	0.655**	< 0.001
WPS -> Burnout	-0.58**	< 0.001

The relational dynamics between the study variables were assessed using Pearson Correlation, as summarized in the final analysis table 4. Workplace Spirituality and Mental Well-being: A strong, significant positive correlation was observed between WPS and mental well-being ($r = 0.655$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that as the spiritual and ethical quality of the workplace increases, there is a corresponding and robust improvement in the psychological functioning and mental health of the school heads. Workplace Spirituality and Burnout: Conversely, a significant negative correlation was found between WPS and burnout ($r = -0.58$, $p < 0.001$). This statistical relationship suggests that workplace spirituality serves as a critical protective factor; as heads find more meaning and ethical support in their roles, their levels of professional exhaustion and cynicism decrease significantly.

DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to explore the nexus between workplace spirituality (WPS), mental well-being, and professional burnout among secondary school heads. The empirical evidence generated through this research offers a nuanced understanding of how the internal organizational climate of a school influences the psychological health of its leaders.

The results indicated that school heads perceive a strong sense of spirituality in their workplace ($M = 4.02$). The high scores for ethical leadership and empathy suggest that the administrative culture in Sargodha's secondary schools is not merely bureaucratic but is grounded in humanistic values. This aligns with the findings of Ashmos and Duchon (2000), who argued that workplace spirituality is not about religion, but about the "nourishment of the inner life" through meaningful work. When school heads feel that their leadership encourages ethics, they are more likely to view their administrative burdens not as mere tasks, but as a purposeful contribution to societal development.

A significant finding of this study was the high level of professional confidence ($M = 4.18$) reported by school heads. This high self-efficacy suggests that administrators feel capable of navigating the complexities of school management. However, the lower scores for "feeling relaxed" ($M = 3.75$) and "energy levels" ($M = 3.73$) provide a critical insight: while these leaders are mentally resilient and optimistic, the high-stakes nature of their roles is physically and emotionally taxing. This reflects the "resilience paradox," where leaders maintain high performance standards despite experiencing underlying symptoms of stress.

The most critical contribution of this research was the significant negative correlation between WPS and burnout ($r = -0.58$). This finding suggested that workplace spirituality serves as a "psychological buffer." As secondary school heads find more meaning in their work and experience a sense of community, the feelings of emotional exhaustion were mitigated. This is consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, where workplace spirituality acts as a vital resource that offsets the exhaustion caused by high job demands. The moderate level of burnout reported ($M = 3.32$), particularly regarding administrative

overwhelmingness ($M = 3.50$), underscores that spirituality does not remove the workload, but it changes the leader's cognitive appraisal of that workload, making it more manageable.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Workplace spirituality functions as an essential component which helps secondary school heads achieve mental health benefits while decreasing their burnout levels. Ethical leadership, meaningful work, and supportive relationships act as protective barriers against the psychological stresses of school administration. Based on these findings, it is recommended that schools develop spirituality-oriented leadership programs focusing on ethics and empathy. Institutions should implement regular reflective practices, such as mindfulness workshops, to help heads manage stress. Additionally, dedicated support systems and mentorship should be prioritized for female leaders and public-school staff to ensure equitable professional well-being.

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