TITLE  Influence of Religion and Religiosity on Leadership Practices in the Workplace: A Quantitative Correlation Study

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OBJECTIVE  The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between the religion and religiosity of organizational leaders and their leadership practices.

METHODOLOGY

The population consisted of a random selection of 9,500 organizational leaders in Lebanon, over the age of 21, who had others reporting to them; they were contacted through electronic mail and invited to participate in the study. From 448 participants, a sample of 384 was selected to represent the study’s “religion” objective: Christians (N=164; 43%) and Muslims (N=220; 57%). Participants completed the Leadership Practices Inventory, the Religiosity Practices Inventory (RPI) and provided demographic information. The surveys were available in English, Arabic, or French (the three languages of Lebanon). The typical respondent was male (63.8%) but more so among Muslim respondents (63.3%) than Christians (32.7%). Typical Christian leaders were men, between the ages of 31 and 50 and supervising 1 to 5 people. On the other hand, Muslim leaders were men between the ages of 41 and 60 and supervised 6 to 25 people. Male organizational leaders dominated the sample with Christians almost evenly split among both genders and Muslim males outnumbering Muslim females by more than 2 to 1. For the overall sample, the majority of organizational leaders were 41 to 50 years old. Cronbach alpha reliability tests for the LPI survey were .88 Model, .93 Inspire, .93 Challenge, .89 Enable, and .95 Encourage for all participants; and these coefficients did not significantly vary between Christian and Islamic respondents.

KEY FINDINGS

The study found a significant relationship between religion and the five leadership dimensions and transformational leadership style (overall LPI score). No relationship was found between religiosity and the five leadership dimensions and transformational leadership style.

For Christian respondents, the leadership practice most frequently used were Enable, Encourage, Model, Challenge, and Inspire. In contrast, for Muslim participants, the order was Enable, Model, Challenge, Encourage, and Inspire. The mean RPI Indices and LPI Scores were different for the sampled leaders in both groups. The tests revealed a significant statistical difference in mean religiosity RPI Indices between Christians and Muslims. Muslims were found to have higher levels of religiosity than Christians.
Regression analysis showed religion to be a more significant predictor of leadership practices than religiosity. For Christian organizational leaders, a small but significant linear relationship was found between religiosity and leadership practices. In contrast, religiosity played an insignificant role in explaining the leadership practices of Muslim participants. The author suggests that “The findings demonstrate that once religion is determined, religiosity appears to have little or no impact on how a person may behave as an organizational leader” (p. 118).

The demographic analysis showed that gender, age, type of industry, size of organization, and number of people led did not account for any significant variance in leadership practices for either Christian or Muslim organizational leaders.

The author concludes:
This study confirmed that leadership practices were significantly complicated by religion and religiosity in a non-Western culture. With the major changes taking place in the Arab world and the religious influence on their outcomes, this study shed some light on the effect of religion and religiosity on leadership styles, practices, and perceptions in the workplace in pluralistic countries. As indicated in the problem statement, this study showed that focusing solely on cultural and social factors while ignoring the effects of religious beliefs on leadership practices in the workplace is an ill-advised strategy. Executives in multi-national organizations may use the findings from this study to develop a better understanding of how individual religious beliefs affect workplace dynamics and to predict organizational performance among employees at all levels (pp. 125-126).