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The Impact of Religious Diversity Management Strategies on Employee Attitudes

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by

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Abstract

The following research article utilizes the four frameworks (faith-avoiding, faith-based, faith-safe, faith-friendly) discussed by previous researchers Miller and Ewest (2015) in order to evaluate the effects of religious diversity management strategies on varying employee attitudes. An evaluation of the previous research in the field of religion and its effects on management strategies with a basis in title VII laws is also addressed. Based on a sample of 300 participants, significant results in the frameworks and their corresponding variables were found. Of the four frameworks utilized the faith-friendly framework was found to be by far the most favored of all regardless of religion, while the faith-avoiding framework was displayed as the least favored. With the following findings this study encourages future research that addresses not only diversity management strategies but also strategies accommodating to title VII laws as well.

Introduction

In the past decade, the notion of religion and spirituality in the workforce has been an ever-increasing topic of debate (Chan-Serafin, Brief, & George, 2012). With Title VII laws and religion playing a role in managerial decision making, evaluating managerial strategies for spiritual diversity has never been more important (Fernando & Jackson, 2006; Miller & Ewest, 2015). Thus, this paper will follow the methodological framework set forth by researchers Miller and Ewest (2015), and compare the authors' four organizational approaches to spiritual diversity management: faith-avoiding, faith-based, faith-safe, and faith-friendly frameworks.

The importance of this research lies in the four frameworks used by Miller and Ewest (2015) as they demonstrate new ways of satisficing title VII laws via the frameworks management strategies. The main distinction between the frameworks used in this study and other frameworks or models used in previous research is that models like the spiritual leadership theory tend to be theoretical or undefined (Benefiel, Fry, & Geigle, 2014, Longenecker, McKinney, & Moore, 2004 & Lynn, Naughton, & VanderVeen, 2009). This has led some researchers to point out the clear lack of methodology or measurement tools in this field of research (Hicks, 2002).

Research on Religion at Work

Past research has shown that most people find that some sort of religion is important to them (Chan-Serafin, Brief, & George, 2012). In fact, 56% of Americans reported religion as being important to them (Chan-Serafin, Brief, & George, 2012). Because U.S. citizens work an average 47 hours a week across multiple jobs, it is then important for organizations to address the spiritual lives of their employees (Beane et al., 2017). Indeed, many religious people view

their endeavours to achieve a deeper spiritual life as being a 24/7 commitment (Hicks, 2002).

Empirical studies from Benefiel, Fry, & Geigle (2014) as well as Garcia-Zamor (2003) have

shown that including some form of religion or spirituality in the workplace improves

organizational performance, productivity, job satisfaction, sense of community, and alignment of

values.

Companies are beginning to recognize the benefit of incorporating spirituality into their

workplace (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). Researcher Garcia-Zamor (2003) states that the move toward

faith at work is seen as a "win-win" as improving employee's happiness will improve

organizational outcomes like productivity. For example, Garcia-Zamor (2003) cite a company's

policy to offer periodic 20-30 minute paid meditation breaks, which showed an increase in both

organizational performance and organizational commitment. Furthermore, the inclusion of

religion into the workplace could be seen as a competitive edge in corporations wanting to

recruit ideal employees (King & Holmes, 2012). Investigators King and Holmes (2012) go on to

state that the construct of spirituality and faith in the workplace is of growing interest among

management researchers since perceived organizational fit has been linked higher with those

showing similar values. This perceived fit would then lead to increases in job satisfaction, job

attraction, turnover and performance ratings (Benefiel, Fry, & Geigle, 2014).

Gaps In Knowledge

Though spirituality and religion in the workplace has been widely studied, investigators

like Longenecker, McKinney, & Moore (2004) have asserted that the research has failed to

provide a clear assessment of religious values in the workplace. Some believe this lack of

research is due to unclear definitions and measurement tools (Lynn, Naughton, & VanderVeen,

2009). Indeed, very little work to date has utilized a concise framework or model regarding types

of religious diversity management. An exception to this is the faith at work framework outlined

by Miller and Ewest (2015), who describe four different organizational approaches to integrating

employees' religious and spiritual lives at work while also addressing title VII laws.

Miller and Ewest's (2015) Faith at Work Framework

     Faith-avoiding. The faith-avoiding framework is often utilized when management

signals that faith and spirituality are a personal matter and do not belong in the workplace.

Religious requests by employees are suppressed and more than likely to not be accommodated.

Doing so may mean that Title VII requirements may not be met, although these organizations

may be following a Christian calendar with regards to time off from work. In this framework,

religious expression is usually associated with harassment or in some cases seen as extremism.

     Faith-based. In the faith-based framework, the requests of employees are accommodated

or promoted, yet they often appear to be in favor of one religious tradition. Title VII

accommodations are then in favor of the privileged tradition, and those not a part of the

privileged tradition often feel they can not express their religious identity at work. Employees in

the favored religious tradition are shown to have increased positive effects in organizational

commitment, productivity, job satisfaction, and job retention (Garcia-Zamor, 2003).

     Faith-safe. Faith-safe organizations accommodate according to title VII, but only as

necessitated by law. Organizational policies are designed to avoid any litigation, providing

compromise for most cases. While the organization meets employees' accommodation requests

and focuses on tolerance and understanding of those with diverse religious identities, it falls

short of truly embracing the religious identities of its employees.

Faith-friendly. In the faith-friendly approach to religious diversity, accommodation requests by employees are respected as the organization and its managers value their employees' desire to maintain their faith and religious traditions. Employers actively seek out new ways of going above and beyond what is legally required, having seen the benefits of a multifaceted workplace. As such, the organization embraces all religious traditions with equal respect and consideration given to each. This action of going above and beyond is predicted to lead to increases in employee attitudes.

Hypothesis 1: Employee attitudes (person-organization fit, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intentions to turnover) will significantly differ by organizational approach to religious diversity, with faith-friendly yielding the most positive outcomes and faith-avoiding yielding the least positive outcomes.

Method

Participants

300 participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). MTurk is an online crowdsourcing platform that enables individuals to coordinate workers to perform tasks. Past research has found that samples drawn from MTurk are typically more diverse, older, and have more work experience than the college student samples typically used in psychological research (Behrend, Sharek, Meade, & Wiebe, 2011). In order to participate in the study, participants were required to live in the United States and be over the age of 18.

Procedure and Study Stimuli

Participants were randomly assigned to read one of 20 short scenarios (Appendix A). A total of five different scenarios in which an employee made a religion-based request of their manager were created, and each of these scenarios had four different managerial responses consistent with one of the four models present in the research by Miller and Ewest (2015), for a total of 20 possible scenarios. In order to reduce participant bias, the requests detailed in the scenarios do not explicitly state to which religion to the employee belongs. After reading the scenario, participants completed a set of questions regarding their attitudes toward the fictitious organization described and a answered a series of demographic questions.

Measures

Fit. Person-organization fit, is better defined by the many propositions that employees make, along with an organization's attributes aligning with its employees. This variable was measured using the three items developed by Cable and Judge (1996) (see all outcome measures in Appendix B). For all measures in the study, participants indicated their agreement to a series of items on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (agree not at all) to 7 (strongly agree). A sample item from this measure is "my values would match those of the current employees in this organization." Reliability for this scale was Cronbach's alpha = .94.

Perceived organizational support. Perceived organizational support was measured with 10 items developed by Eisenberger (1986), and measure employee perceptions regarding the extent to which the organization values its employees contributions and well being. A sample item of this scale is "The organization would value my contribution to its well-being". The reliability for this scale was Cronbach's alpha = .90.

Supervisor support. Supervisor support was measured using an adapted version of Eisenberger's (1986) organizational support scale. A sample item from this scale is, "my supervisor would fail to appreciate any extra effort from me" (reverse coded). The scale demonstrated adequate reliability at Cronbach's alpha = .93.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured using Spector's (1994) scale of job satisfaction. A sample item from this scale is, "I would feel a sense of pride in doing my job". The reliability for this scale was Cronbach's alpha = .93.

Organizational commitment. Organizational commitment was measured with 7 items from Crossley et al. (2007). The reliability for this measure was Cronbach's alpha = .852.

Turnover intentions. Turnover intentions were measured with three items developed for the study. A sample item from this scale is, "If I worked at this company, I would often think about quitting." The reliability for this scale was Cronbach's alpha = .96.

Demographics. Participants were asked to complete a demographic survey that collected information regarding their age, ethnicity, gender, education, tenure in current occupation, and workplace position with regard to managerial duties. Additionally, any affiliation with an established religious or spiritual group was collected.

Results

Data Preparation

Participant exclusion. 313 participants completed the experiment. Of these participants, 13 were excluded due to their failure to successfully pass an attention check. The attention check was embedded in the participants' survey and required that participants chose "strongly agree"

on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (agree not at all) to 7 (strongly agree). The total number of

participants for this study was $N = 300$.

   Stimuli analysis. A one-way ANOVA indicated that the outcome variables of interest

did not differ significantly by scenario, $F(2, 295) = 0.296 - 1.73$, $p > .10$ (see Table 1). As such,

subsequent analyses collapse across scenario and compare organizational framework.

Hypothesis Testing

   To test Hypothesis 1, a series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted in order to test

whether the outcome variables of interest differed significantly by religious framework.

Person-organization fit differed significantly by framework, $F(3, 296) = 7.017$, $p < .001$, as did

organizational support $F(3, 296) = 13.142$, $p < .001$, and supervisor support, $F(3, 296) = 11.703$,

$p < .001$. Differences by framework were also significant for job satisfaction, $F(3, 296) = 9.581$,

$p < .001$, organizational commitment, $F(3, 296) = 14.496$, $p < .001$, and intentions to turnover,

$F(3, 296) = 10.04$, $p < .000$ (see Table 2). All outcome variables did indeed differ significantly

by religious framework, yielding support for Hypothesis 1.

   Hypothesis 1 stated that the faith-friendly framework would yield the most positive

outcomes. Post-hoc LSD analyses indicated that faith-friendly yielded higher scores in terms of

person-organization fit, organizational support, supervisor support, job satisfaction, and

organizational commitment, and lower intentions to turnover, than all other frameworks, all $p <$

.05. Hypothesis 1 also stated that the faith-avoiding model would yield the worst outcomes for

participants. Post-hoc LSD analyses showed that this was indeed the case, all $p < .05$.

The Influence of Religious Identity

An independent samples t-test comparing job attitudes between religious and nonreligious participants yielded compelling results. All dependent variables differed significantly by religious identification: person-organization fit, $t(298) = -2.907$, $p < .01$; organizational support, $t(298) = -2.388$, $p < .05$; supervisor support, $t(298) = -2.393$, $p < .05$; job satisfaction, $t(298) = -4.068$, $p < .001$; organizational commitment, $t(298) = -3.257$, $p < .01$. Differences in turnover intentions verged on significance, $t(298) = 1.936$, $p = .054$. Group means for each dependent variable indicated that participants who self-identified as religious, on average, had more positive job attitudes than those who self-identified as not religious, atheist, or agnostic.

In order to further explore differences between religious and nonreligious participants, a series of two-way analysis of variance were conducted to examine differences in the outcome variables of interest by framework and religious identification. All outcomes differed significantly by the interaction of religious identification and framework: fit, $F(3, 292) = 6.795$, $p < .001$; organizational support, $F(3, 292) = 3.761$, $p < .05$; supervisor support, $F(3, 292) = 4.305$, $p < .01$; job satisfaction, $F(3, 292) = 4.515$, $p < .01$; organizational commitment, $F(3, 292) = 3.381$, $p < .05$; and turnover intentions, $F(3, 292) = 4.652$, $p < .01$ (see Table 3).

Discussion

With little research looking at diversity management strategies and its effects on employee attitudes, it is easy to see why some researchers claim there is a lack of sufficient evidence in this field of research (Gebert et al., 2014, Longenecker, McKinney, & Moore, 2004, Lynn, Naughton, & VanderVeen, 2009). Yet researchers Miller and Ewest (2015) offer a way of evaluating such strategies by utilizing four frameworks designed to offer unique and different

ways of managing religious and spiritual diversity. This study demonstrated that the

faith-friendly framework designated by Miller and Ewest (2015) yielded the best employee

attitudes in terms of person-organization fit, organizational and supervisor support, job

satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions (see figure 1). The results also

indicated that faith-avoiding framework yielded the worst employee attitudes when compared to

the other frameworks. Additionally, when evaluating the differences between religious and

nonreligious participants regardless of framework, religious participants demonstrated

significantly better job attitudes than non-religious participants (see figure 2).

Limitations

With regards to any limitations involved in the following study one would be that the

research clearly relies on the four frameworks by Miller and Ewest (2015) and only them. This

may be somewhat limiting as there was no real comparison between the frameworks and say

Fry's (2003) theoretical approaches to spirituality in the workplace. This may make the

following the research seem somewhat bias towards the frameworks. Another limitation that may

have been in effect is that the study has only been implemented in the United States. This will

definitely impact the data as it is not a worldwide study and thus limiting to the amount of data

that could have been achieved. The main reason for this limitation was to set a clear and concise

goal of who are participants should be.

Implications

Thus the culmination of this research will attempt to not only solve managerial problems

by giving them a solution to religious diversity management but also show them which

framework yields the most favorability as well as growth with regards to employee attitudes.

Additionally with the inclusion of clear and concise definitions followed by example scenarios of the frameworks in action the following research is very beneficial to religious diversity management strategies. Also much of the current research in religion tends to forget addressing title VII laws, the following research does not. With this in mind managerial staff may feel confident in implementing the frameworks knowing where they place among the the title VII laws. With the notion of those identifying as religious being more affected by employee attitudes it is possible that managerial staff may approach those who identify as religious more carefully, taking a different approach when compared to someone who identifies as non religious. Lastly the following research is done in an effort to inspire more researchers to study the effects of religion in the workforce in the hopes that more clear and concise measures be taken.

Table 1. One-Way ANOVA Stimuli Analysis

	Sum Of Squares	Degrees Of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Fit	21.599	4	5.400	1.69	.152
Org. Sup.	2.183	4	.546	.296	.880
Sup. Sup.	4.674	4	1.168	.538	.708
Job Sat.	4.717	4	1.179	.666	.616
Org. Comm.	4.635	4	1.159	.524	.718
Turnover	28.734	4	7.184	1.73	.143

Table 2. One-Way ANOVA for differences in dependent variables by faith at work framework

	Sum Of Squares	Degrees Of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Fit	45.256	3	12.638	7.01	.00
Org. Sup.	64.164	3	21.388	13.1	.00
Sup. Sup.	68.371	3	22.790	11.7	.00
Job Satisfaction	46.639	3	15.546	9.58	.00
Org. Comm.	84.199	3	28.066	14.4	.00
Turnover	115.762	3	38.587	10.0	.00

Table 3. Two-Way ANOVA for Framework and Religious Identification

	Sum Of Squares	Degrees Of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Ratio	p-Value
Fit	57.002	3	19.001	6.795	.00
Org. Sup.	17.574	3	5.858	3.761	.00
Sup. Sup.	23.944	3	7.981	4.305	.00
Job Satisfaction	20.119	3	6.706	4.515	.00
Org. Comm.	18.492	3	6.164	3.381	.00
Turnover	51.187	3	17.062	4.652	.00

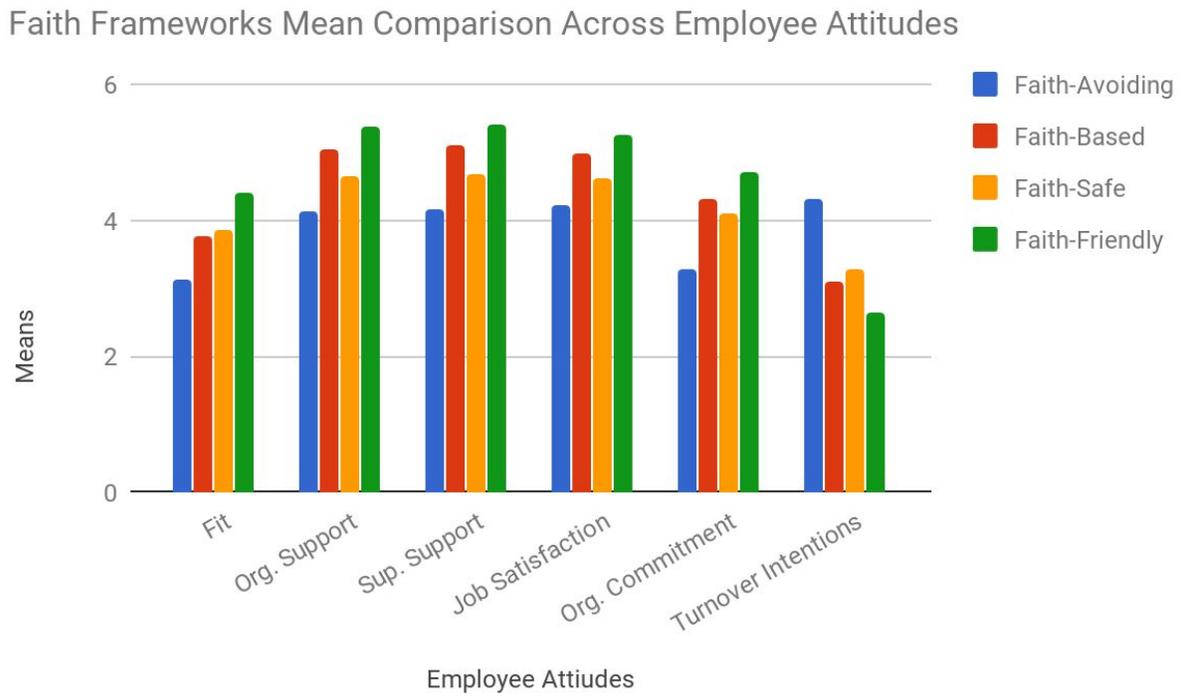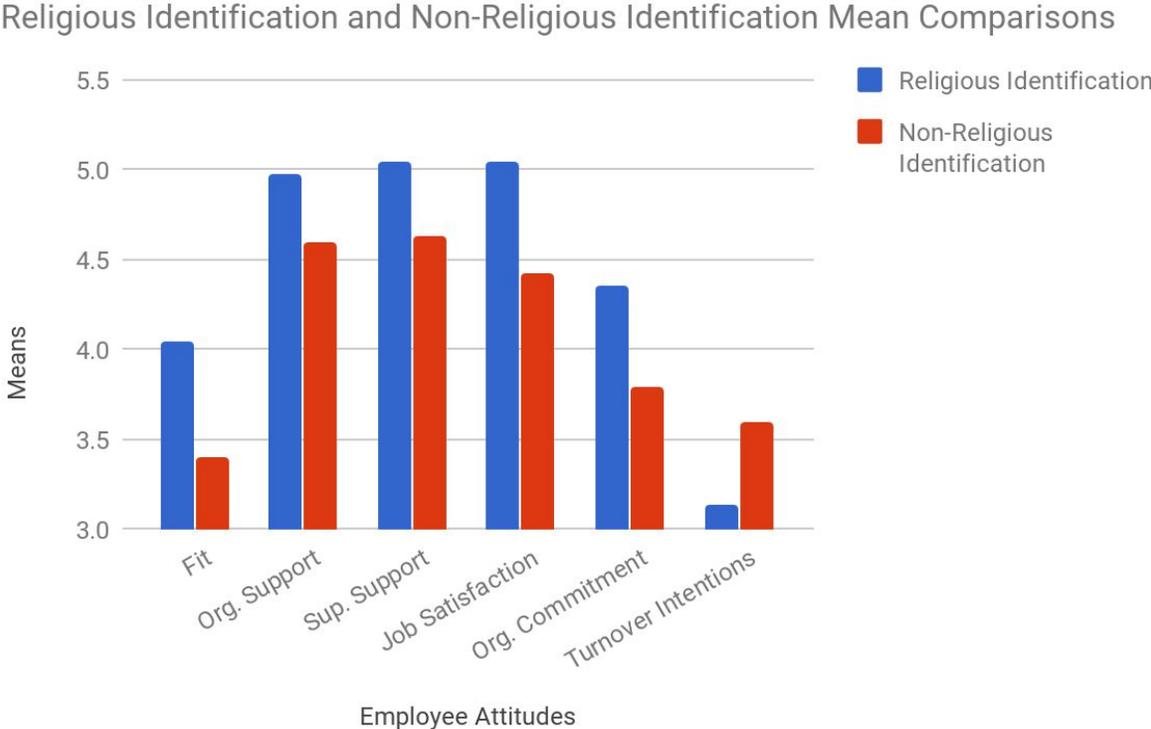Figure 1. Four Faith Frameworks mean comparison across six designated employee attitudes.

Faith Frameworks Mean Comparison Across Employee Attitudes

Figure 2. Mean comparison of religious identification with regards to the six designated

employee attitudes.

Religious Identification and Non-Religious Identification Mean Comparisons

Appendix A
Study Stimuli

Scenario 1

John asked his manager for 2 weeks off to attend an out-of-town retreat held by the clergy of his religious organization. John's manager:

- **Faith-based** - was supportive of John's request to leave under the assumption that John was a Christian.
- **Faith-avoiding -** listened to the request, but did not give him the requested time off in order to avoid other employees feeling jealous.
- **Faith-safe** - listened to the request and honored it in order to avoid a potential lawsuit.
- **Faith-friendly** - listened to his request and honored it, and also asked if he would need any future time off to attend other events.

Scenario 2

Patricia loves spending time with her family around the holidays, but recently took a new job with a company where she would not be able to take off Easter or Christmas. Patricia has decided to ask her manager if they can adopt a calendar that observes the Christian holidays. Patricia's manager:

- **Faith-based** - was supportive of Patricia's request under the assumption that Patricia was a Christian.
- **Faith-avoiding -** listened to the request, but did not give her comply to her request in order to avoid other employees feeling jealous or neglected.
- **Faith-safe** - listened to the request and honored it in order to avoid a potential lawsuit.
- **Faith-friendly** - listened to her request and honored it, and also asked if there were any other days that were not as widespread.

Scenario 3

Patrick likes to pray mid-day as a form of relaxation and rejuvenation, but there is not a designated space for him to spend this time. Patrick decides to ask his Manager if they can install a prayer room in the office. Patrick's manager:

- **Faith-based** - The manager made it clear that he would implement Patrick's idea understanding that the prayer room mainly be used for christian religious practices.
- **Faith-avoiding -** listened to the request, but did not approve of the prayer room due to it being a way more employees to take time off.
- **Faith-safe** - listened to the request and honored it in order to avoid a potential lawsuit.

- **Faith-friendly** - listened to his request and honored it, and also asked if any other potential assistance was required.

Scenario 4

Larry has worked multiple jobs as a receptionist. His last job left a lasting impression on him, and he has gotten to talking to this clients by beginning his introduction with a religious phrase. In his new job , Larry must follow the standardized dialogue that has been written for him, Larry asks his manager if he can continue to use his previous introduction dialogue. Larry's Manager:

- **Faith-based** - was supportive of Larry's request to use his previous dialogue under the assumption that Larry was a Christian.
- **Faith-avoiding -** listened to the request, but did not accept to give him the requested dialogue in order to avoid other employees feeling envious.
- **Faith-safe** - listened to the request and honored it in order to avoid a potential lawsuit.
- **Faith-friendly** - listened to his request and honored it, and also asked if he had any other ideas from his previous jobs.

Scenario 5

Jessica has been working at her company for a few months. In her cubicle, she has displayed a small sign with a Biblical verse. After seeing this Jessica's manager:

- **Faith-based** - was supportive of Jessica's display under the assumption that Jessica was a Christian.
- **Faith-avoiding -** asked her to take down the sign in order to avoid seeming preferential to Christian beliefs.
- **Faith-safe** -asked her to take down the sign in order to avoid offending other employees.
- **Faith-friendly** - allowed her to continue displaying the sign, and invited other employees to decorate their cubicles with other items important to them as well.

Appendix B
Outcome Measures

Fit (Cable & Judge, 1996)
1. I feel my values would "match" or fit this organization and its employees.
2. My values match those of the current employees in this organization.
3. I think the values and "personality" of this organization reflects my own values

Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger, 1986)
1. The organization would value my contribution to its well-being.
2. The organization would fail to appreciate any extra effort from me.
3. The organization would ignore any complaint from me.
4. The organization would really care about my well-being.
5. Even if I did the best job possible, the organization would fail to notice.
6. The organization would care about my general satisfaction at work.
7. The organization would show very little concern for me.
8. The organization would take pride in my accomplishments at work.

Supervisor Support (Eisenberger, 1986)
1. My supervisor would value my contribution to our organization's well-being.
2. My supervisor would fail to appreciate any extra effort from me.
3. My supervisor would ignore any complaint from me.
4. My supervisor would really care about my well-being.
5. Even if I did the best job possible, my supervisor would fail to notice.
6. Even if I did the best job possible, my supervisor would fail to notice.
7. My supervisor would show very little concern for me.
8. My supervisor would take pride in my accomplishments at work.

Job Satisfaction (Spector, 1994)
1. My supervisor would be quite competent in doing their job.
2. I would like the people I work with.
3. I would sometimes feel my job is meaningless.
4. My supervisor would be unfair to me.
5. I would find I have to work harder at my job because of the incompetence of people I work with.
6. I would like doing the things I do at work.
7. My supervisor would show too little interest in the feelings of subordinates.
8. I would enjoy my coworkers.
9. I would feel a sense of pride in doing my job.
10. I would like my supervisor.
11. There would be too much bickering and fighting at work.
12. My job would be enjoyable.

Organizational Commitment (Crossley et al., 2007)
1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization.
2. I would really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.

3. I would not feel like "part of the family" at my organization.
4. I would not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization.
5. This organization would have a great deal of personal meaning for me.
6. I would not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.
7. I would enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it.

Turnover Intentions
1. If you worked for this organization, how likely is it that you will actively look for a new job in the next year?
2. If I worked at this company, I would often think about quitting.
3. If I worked at this company, I would probably look for a new job in the next year.

Demographics
1. To what spiritual or religious group do you belong?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your current age in years?
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
5. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?
6. How long have you been in your current occupation?
   Which of the following best describes your current job role? Executive, Upper Management, Lower Management, I do not manage other employees

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