



Investigat

the Role of Religious Commitment in Social Responsibility

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Abstract

With respect to wide changes in business environment and the specific importance related to the social performance in organizations, it is expedient to deal with strategies of relationship among social organizations with the society. Social responsibility of organizations is called to a group of activities carried out voluntarily by capital owners and economic corporations as an efficient and useful member in the society. In fact, it includes a group of tasks and commitments that should be undertaken by the organization to keep and protect and help for a society in which it acts. In addition, commitment to religious elements is one of the factors that affect way of interaction among individuals in occupational and social groups. Therefore, the present study has been conducted in order to analyze role of religious commitment in social responsibility. For this purpose, 1,500 employees from 55 organizations (including production and servicing sectors such as bank, insurance and education) were selected as the studied population. The needed data were collected, using standard questionnaires and analyzed by the statistical software. Data analysis showed that religious commitment might have positive and significant impact on improvement of social responsibility in the studied organizations. Hence, given the results of this study, directors of organizations may be benefitted from the positive effects by improving religious commitment elements in individuals. The positive outcomes of religious commitment and strengthening social responsibility not only affect improving organizational reputation in the society, but also will eventually be led to attraction of extra-organizational investors and satisfaction of employees in the given organization. Thus, it is expedient to pay due attention to this factor.

Keywords: Religious commitment, Religion, Community, Social responsibility, Social organizations



Introduction

Today, duties undertaken by an organization against community may be beyond only economic domains with which organizations are related. As one considers a field not specifically economic, businesses are exposed to a group of rights and responsibilities relating to the community that encloses them so that they do not allow them to focus only on economic management to achieve their objectives (Nowroozi, et al, 2014). Similarly, during the past fifty years, researchers of organizational psychology and management have mentioned inter-organizational relations as a way toward organizational excellence and removal of barriers and challenges and excellence ways of organization by personnel have been emphasized by organizational psychologists beyond formal

relations (Ghobadi and Gholami, 2017). The financial and moral collapses in certain well-known organizations throughout the world that occurred during recent years have directed the attention of researchers toward studying moral virtues and values. Organizations have been placed, inter alia, under conditions that they have to define proper and improper actions to keep their reputation (Shekari, 2014). Social responsibility is one of the foremost effective factors on social performance and plays a key role in reactions of customers to organization. As the organization pays more attention to dimensions of its social responsibility, the customers and society react better to it and as a result social performance of organization is improved (Omidi, et al, 2016). Social responsibility is called to a group of activities done voluntarily by capital owners and economic corporations as an efficient and useful member in the society. In fact, it includes a group of tasks and obligations should be done by organization to keep and preserve and help for the society in which it acts (French, 2016).

Today, fast and unpredictable changes occur in the society out of the paramount ones. They can be referred to as the effects of global competitions, development and spreading information technology, demographic features of human forces and customers (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). Similarly, nowadays organizations have also been obliged to conducting other activities, rather than doing their traditional tasks where these activities meet expectations of society: they are referred to as 'the social responsibility of the organization'. Ethics noticeably influences in activities of humans and organizations, requiring them for suitable performance, commitment, and responsibility. The social responsibility has been known as important points for philosophy of existence in organizations. Attaching important to social responsibility by organizations may also improve satisfaction in extra-

organizational beneficiaries to legitimate organization in addition to following with probability for enhancement of organizational commitment. Social responsibility of enterprises emphasizes in responsibility and accountability as the basis for behavior of an organization in the society and it is subject to way of responsible business with wealth production. The corporate social responsibility may reduce direct costs and increase productivity in personnel and improves corporate competitive image. The importance of social responsibility and observing it by organizations may enjoy positive outcome for performance of organizations so that it significantly impacts organizational commitment of personnel. The reason given by social responsibility pros is that the organizations can obtain long-term profits and benefits thereby and with multiple ways resulting from it, while social responsibility cons oppose it because social responsibility may prevent from basic and major economic role in trade and according to their viewpoint, social responsibility is nothing more than superficial pretension organizations treat it. (Carroll, 1991)

The social responsibility is deemed as a responsibility for the prospective director and the managers of our time. It should not only deal with traditional tasks, but it should know the social as well as general dimensions of their professions and be aware of the effects of their organization on the environment. This is because it is obvious that any decision made by a director may affect the fate of other social organizations within a continuum trend.

The social responsibility of organizations reveals itself in the fact that some methods are based on ethical values and respect for the personnel, community, and environment. These responsibilities are planned for this purpose in that they convey sustainable values for community and generally for the shareholders. The field related to the business method

or procedure covers one of the most dynamic and challenging subjects to which directors of enterprises are exposed today. Today, it is no longer sufficient for directors to do tasks such as planning, organizing, and control and thereby to regard their own task as effective, but responding to the needs of the community and complying with the requests of citizens as well as the internal and external customers of their organizations are included in their more important tasks. The conditions in the modern world and the modern business spaces may require directors of leading organizations and enterprises to play a role more active and efficient by far in the international and globalized markets so that to focus their efforts to creating value for all their beneficiaries and reaching a certain type of balance among social and economic and environmental sectors of their business. Overall, social responsibility of enterprises may present some methods whereby organizations may be expected to do them in their business environment, so that they could meet various expectations of their society, being commercial, legal, moral and social expectations. This is because such organizations are obliged to fulfill great responsibilities concerning social, economic and environmental fields vis-à-vis their personnel, shareholders, customers, government, providers, and other beneficiaries (Mophatlane, 2007).

The religiosity and spirituality positions have been addressed in various organizations. They have growingly been done by directors, supervisors, personnel and researchers as a requisite for interactions between organizations with personnel, customers and society in recent years (Lavasani et al, 2008). Overlooking religious topics and spirituality may be ascribed to organizational life by adopting a secular approach; incorporating spirituality in an organization enables its personnel to take more integrated outlook toward

their organization, family, and community. While there are several senses of spirituality in workplace, a great number of them cover the significance and correlation dimensions in the business. Spirituality in business denotes training the subjects to acquire sensitivity and give importance to establish efficient relations of an individual to her/ his presence before (and relation with) God. It will also pertain to oneself, others, and the workplace to give meaning to and making it purposive and integrated and in line with occupational flourishing in the business. Likewise, religious commitment means having religious endeavor (Shojaei Zand, 2005), so that it can exert desirable effect on the individual's approach, tendency, and actions. On the other hand, fair behavior and commitment to the assigned tasks are also some of the cases emphasized in all divine religions. The Islamic religion is assumed to be one of the main and constructive elements of culture in the Iranian community, hence an important factor and a key variable in the formation of changes (as well as transformations). Thus, one can assume religious commitment to be one of the relevant factors in and for feeling social responsibility. It follows that the present work tends to analyze the role of religious commitment in social responsibility in Iranian organizations.

Literature Review

Religious Commitment

As a perfect and universal religion, Islam meets variable and various human needs at any time and includes appropriate rules and regulations for all his/ her relations and positions. Of course, it does not mean for any subject with specific and prevalent titles it has stipulated a certain order today, but there are some generalities, bases, and principles in Islam

from which the related order can be extracted for almost any subject.

Religion is a spectrum. As such, on the one hand, it includes an instrumental concept for the individuals; on the other hand, it is a type of concept which proves to be a main motive for life with its internal value. The internal religion comprises of motivational aspects for the person, without any need to other incentives (Zahedi and Moradi, 2017). Spirituality and religion, which are sometimes jointly expressed as spiritual health and religious performance, usually overlap. As a result, both of them present some frameworks thereby people can perceive meanings of high goals and values of their lives.

Whereas spirituality is assumed to be a sense of awareness of existence, or a force beyond materialistic aspect of life, hence creating a deep feeling of unity and linking with universe as well as looking for new levels of concept beyond all practices, religion per se tends to refer to everyday rites, e.g., prayer and fasting. A great majority of spiritual people are religious, but not vice versa. In other words, spirituality is one of the important formative factors for individual behaviors in society and family (Narimani, et al, 2015). With respect to individual differences, what may create comfort and sedation for a certain group of people may not prove effective for the others. Thus, praying, recital of spiritual books, and attending religious rites are just some sources of spiritual encouragement for some religious people that enjoy them in that they may undergo lesser despair when their lives are exposed to stressful situations (Porzour, et al, 2015).

Religious commitment refers to thinking, feeling, and a mode of behavior in accordance with beliefs and instructions of a religious system. To put it differently, it represents the position of religion in individual and social life, observance of values and commitment to beliefs in everyday life,

performance of religious rites, and participation in activity of religious organizations. According to certain studies, a set of beliefs, instructions, prohibitions, and values, phenomenon of religion is considered as one of the foremost psychological supports that can provide meaning of life at any moment of lifetime and also release the individual from suspension and absurdness by means of providing interpretive support (Askari and Sadeghi, 2013).

Social responsibility

Social responsibility of an organization is a concept addressed by organizations that exert its effect on expediency and interests of society. It is achieved through responsibility against the impacts of their activities on consumers, providers, personnel, shareholders, society, and environment in all operational space. The social responsibility of enterprises is an excellent business approach that considers the social impact of an organization on society either internally or externally (Samy, et al, 2010). It mainly aims to come up with gathering all sectors (including public, private and voluntary ones) and having them to cooperate with each other so that a coordination of economic expediencies with environment can be attained, a step forward that leads to success, growth, and stability of business. The social responsibility of enterprises tends to determine how much companies are related to the goals and needs of the society wherein they exist and to what extent it may influence the society's goals and needs. All social groups are willing to perform certain practices and role, can lead to an active social role, or to be capable of transforming the society gradually. Social responsibility includes a variety of tasks and obligations done by an organization that maintains

the society on the right track. It is not voluntary to get support from external environment, yet it may be assumed as an important part of the business process (Xie, et al, 2017). Social responsibility is also one of management obligations for the sake of public comfort in addition to protecting and developing organizational interests and benefits.

Social responsibility is a task given to organizations and cases. In short, it includes environmental non-pollution, non-discrimination in employment, not to commit immoral acts, giving the right and required information to the consumer or consumer about quality of products, and achieving positive involvement in the lives of people as a collection of tasks and obligations carried out by organizations to protect and to help their respective community. In addition, organizations are responsible for preventing from pollution of environment by discrimination and in employment affairs, ignoring meeting the needs of their personnel in producing hazardous products that may threaten and damage public health, and to try for improvement of social norms accepted by social welfare by allocation of financial sources. The social responsibility aims to act in such a way not to damage the community, for organizations may greatly affect the social system (Alvani and Ghasemi, 1998).

Whereas social responsibility with its moral nature and social responsiveness or their uncertain limits may not act as effective factors to protect the social expedience of the organizations, they resort to break certain governmental operation. In our time, almost in a great majority of countries, governments have acted as a regulating bodies to concretize the social responsibility of organizations, and the government presents a manual for action by directors through some certain general policy, and sets parameters which measure their performance, implies public procedure, policies, and ideals,

and finally requires the organizations to observe them and to provide the right means for their proper performance. The government is expected to present both guide and criterion for managerial behaviors by the aid of public policy that is a tool in the hands of government to realize social requests and guarantee for doing of them (Alvani, 2009). The aim of social responsibility is that since organizations mainly impact the social system, they should act in such a way no damage would harm the community. Likewise, there is some difference between managerial ethics and social responsibility in terms of this point that both relations are based on observance of ethical values and the relevant principles in society such that providing organizational goals by directors will materialize in the form of organizational macro subjects and ethics related to personal behavior of both directors and the personnel. An organization fulfills its social commitment when it carries out its legal and economic duties and nothing more, based on which organizations may act to improve their social status more, to prevent from those activities that could worsen the social status quo, and, finally, to be socially responsive toward paying attention to their potential in practice and making efforts for meeting the requests and expectations of their society (Alvani and Ghasemi, 1998).

Any organization can be responsive to the given problems after taking several steps. The new everyday jobs should be of a learned character, and modern occupational policies and plans should accordingly be designed. An organization may start from certain phases for responsiveness, including the policy adopted which is the first phase of social awareness. At this step, the organization is capable of observing some parts in its surrounding environment that asks for its responsiveness. In this case, if the top management of the organization determines a general path regarding social issues,

the response will thereby be given to meet the intended social need. When a social problem is known and a general policy is specifically adopted to it, the organizations should learn how to tackle with the existing problem and how to adopt the new policy subsequently; at the same time, in order to achieve the desired full social responsiveness, it is necessary for the organization to internalize a new set of social policies and to define the general economic approach, as governmental partners and other social institutions and organizations would go by. It is also argued that the organization shall act to solve the problems and issues relevant to its mission and to improve and upgrade the quality of public life.

There are some reasons to agree with social partnership. By social partnership, it is meant changing public needs and expectations, moral commitment, preservation of limited interests, attaining better social environment, keeping long-term benefits, prevention from spreading public rules and regulations, balancing among responsibility and power, systematic mutual dependence, helping to solve the problems, and arriving at public improvement. According to some authorities, an organization acts bilaterally as an open system and receives freely the related inputs from the society and presents freely the outcome of its effort to the society. Researchers argue that there should be open, respectful, and transparent relations among organization and society. The organizations are exposed to several problems in the path toward assuming and performing their social responsibilities. Amidst these problems, there remain uncertain limits of this responsibility. In addition, no clear and certain guidelines have been presented to the directors in order to realize the goals of social responsibility. This issue has remained ambiguous and uncertain within a range of social ethics. Another problem of social responsibility is the competitive environment that

exists outside the organizations. If leading organizations only try to realize social responsibility, they will not be surely able to compete with other organizations in this contest field. In fact, those organizations, which attach importance to social responsibility, fulfill all of their legal obligations and also ethical commitments. Such organizations do this task when it is demanded from them. And, at the same time, the rule of law is the lowest assumed level to which an organization can be socially responsive; it has been interpreted and defined by the legal system in the society. The rules governing the society denote their social life regulations, and thereby there is a general perception of what a society expects from the members of social organizations and institutions to convey it to them. In this case, being responsive more than what law requires for legal agreement may not cover providing various aspects of social responsiveness. As many leading organizations voluntarily assist in principle the needy people, they have exhibited a social responsiveness strategy more than their mere responsibility (Alvani and Ghasemi, 1998).

In line with the conceptual background and supported by the extensive literature review, the following model and hypothesis are developed:

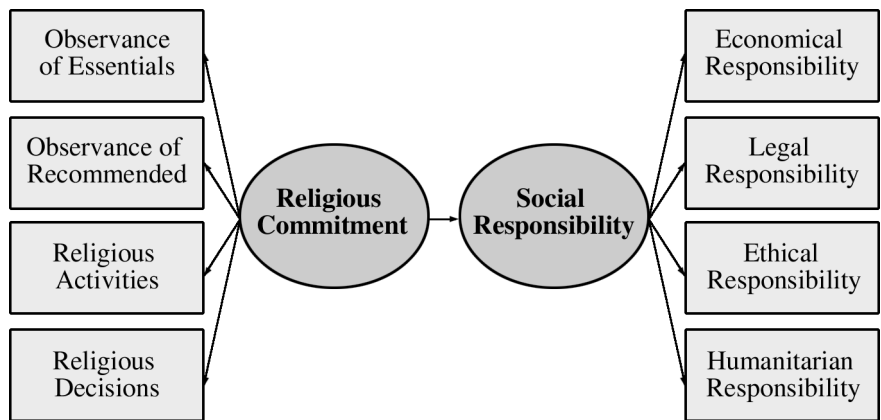


Figure 1: Research Proposed Model

H1: Religious Commitment has a significant Role in social responsibility.

Methodology

A quantitative research method is used for the current study. As the research initially studies whether or not religious beliefs effect people's interaction with the environment, the design of the study is explanatory (Sekaran, 2006). The study also aims to study the role of religious commitment in the realm of social responsibilities. Therefore, a descriptive type of research method has been used in this study. A descriptive study attempts to describe, explain, and interpret conditions of the present situation concerned (Creswell, 2002; Sekaran, 2006). The nature of the study's research design is cross-sectional. After identification of the scales, the questionnaires were distributed among the participants of a selected number of managers and personnel in Iran. Finally, the relationship between research variables was analyzed, using confirmatory factor analysis techniques and structural equation modeling.

The data collection method of this research study is based on surveys and conceptual modeling, while the structure of the survey method used is empiricist plus the source of information is the individuals' perceptions of objective reality (Meredith, et al., 1989). Therefore, since the aim of this study is to empirically examine the religious commitment and social responsibility, the survey method was chosen as an appropriate method for data collection. As Meredith et al. (1989: 300) observed, individuals' perception of object reality is the source of information, hence the questionnaire method is chosen as the most appropriate method for data collection. The survey of this study was conducted among

1,500 managers and personnel of 55 organizations (including manufacturing, bank, insurance, education industries) in Iran. Further, according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the minimum number of the sample size was determined as 306 people. Therefore, a total of 325 questionnaires were distributed among the respondents in 2020, with 312 usable questionnaires returned. The results of the descriptive statistics methods indicated that 73% of the respondents of the study are male, whereas 27% are female. Further, the majority of the respondents (52%) are between the ages of 30-35, and 43% of them are more than 35 years old. Moreover, 5% of the respondents are less than 31 years old.

Two Persian questionnaires were used to test the hypothesis of the study. All scales were 5-point Likert scales ranging from totally disagree to totally agree (ranked from 1 to 5). The 20 items scale developed by Najafi, et al. (2006) was used to measure 4 dimensions of “religious commitment” (i.e., observance of essentials, observance of recommended, religious activities, and religious decisions). Further, the 20-item scale developed by Carroll (1991) was used to measure the four dimensions of “social responsibility” (i.e., economical responsibility, legal responsibility, ethical responsibility, and humanitarian responsibility).

Content validity methods were used to examine the validity of the questionnaire. Content validity was used for evaluating the validity of the questionnaires. As Zareei, et al. (2014) indicated, content validity ensures that all aspects and elements that can reflect the intended content are available in that measurement. Therefore, for testing the content validity, after devising a framework for the questionnaire, the authors asked 5 professors to modify it, if needed. Thus, all items were first pretested for face validity among professors. The professors were then asked to evaluate the items for

readability, word clarity, and the general adequacy of the items for the concepts measured. The professors commented all implemented criteria and confirmed it. Subsequently, for reliability evaluation Cronbach's alpha was utilized (Momeni and Qayum, 2007). According to Hair, et al. (2006), the value of alpha ranges from 0-1, and if the value is more than 0.7, then it will be confirmed. In the current study, the reliability of all variables was more than 0.70, indicating that all scales demonstrated good reliability (Table 1).

Table 1: The summary statistics of survey

Factors	Number of questions	Mean	Chornbach's Alpha
Observance of Essentials	5	4.6859	0.73
Observance of Recommended	5	4.6335	0.72
Religious Activities	5	4.5602	0.74
Religious Decisions	5	4.5079	0.75
Religious Commitment	20	4.5968	0.82
Economical Responsibility	5	4.3717	0.73
Legal Responsibility	5	4.3822	0.78
Ethical Responsibility	5	4.4398	0.76
Humanitarian Responsibility	5	4.3455	0.74
Social Responsibility	20	4.3848	0.83

Results

In this study the role of religious commitment in social responsibilities was tested using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique. Therefore, for the purpose of the this study, for testing the hypothesis, the structural model applying four dimensions of religious commitment and four

dimensions of social responsibilities was performed. Figure 2 and Table 3 also summarize the hypothesis test results in terms of path coefficients (standardized solution) and t-value, assessed by the SEM technique.

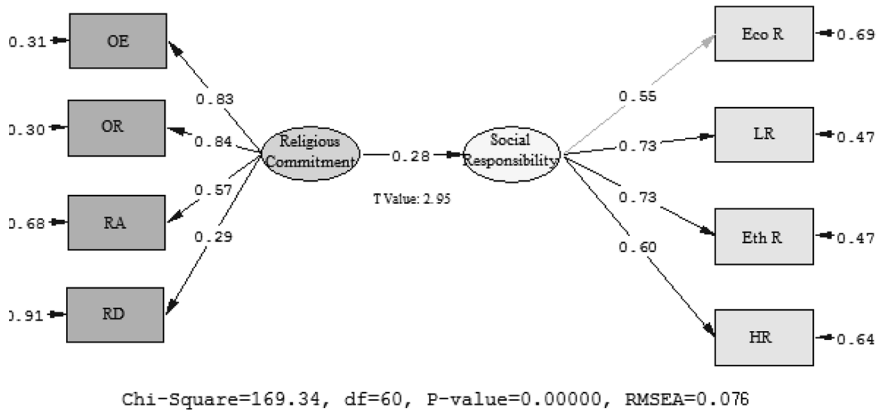


Figure 2: Structural Equation Model of Study

According to Kline (1998), fitness’s indices showed good fitness of the structural model, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Fitness indices of structural equation model

Fitness indices	Measure of Index	Principle
Chi-square/df	2.8223	< 3
P-value	0.000	< 0.05
RMSEA	0.083	< 0.10
GFI	0.92	> 0.9
AGFI	0.90	> 0.9

Table 3: The results of the hypotheses test

	Hypothesis	Path coefficients	T-value
H1	Religious Commitment → Social Responsibility	0.28	2.95

Discussion and conclusions

This study has been conducted to analyze the role of religious commitment in social responsibility in a selection of Iranian organizations. To this end, 1,500 directors and employees were selected as statistical population in this investigation. The standard questionnaires were distributed among the statistical population for data collection. The collected data were analyzed by SPSS and LISREL software. The research findings suggest that religious commitment of organizational personnel may have a positive and significant impact on social responsibility ($p = 0.28$; $T\text{-value} = 2.95$). They also suggest that improving relevant parameters of religious commitment in the personnel will be followed by social responsibility in the organization.

Although the concepts of spirituality and religion are closely related, they are not necessarily the same. By definition, spirituality includes divine mode, quality, behavior or reality. Spirituality is a concept, sense and form of existence relating to ideas, beliefs and concepts that give meaning and direction to life and helps it tackle with life challenges and perceive life events. On the other hand, religion has been defined as an individual or internalized system concerning beliefs and worshiping. In other words, religions are more exclusive versions of spiritual expression. Religions and ideological belief systems have their own specific customs, symbols, and communities. Several studies have shown that regular involvement in systematic religious activities, e.g., performance or recital of prayer, will be positively related to many positive outcomes, e.g., personal and group health. Experts in this field regard religion as a variable that should be taken into consideration in studies, for as the individuals are more religious, it is expected from them to be more

present on the social scene and to establish more effective relationship with other persons and environment by resorting to religious beliefs. Social responsibility is one of the resulting manifestations in social organizations.

Socially, responsibility means both humans and organizations should behave morally and with sensitivity toward social, cultural, and environmental issues. Upon mentioning 'social responsibility', the social responsibility of organizations usually comes to mind. Hence, organizational social responsibility refers to a collection of tasks and commitments that an organization finds itself bound to fulfill to protect the society and to spend the resulting profit from its activities in social and cultural areas for the people and related personnel; this is to take a responsible attitude and to go beyond the minimum legal requirements and commitment toward proper rules that can be executable for all businesses (at any size). Trying to establish social responsibility may help the personnel, organizations, and government to come up with progress, business, and society positively. Social responsibility implies that the personnel and/or other dynamic social organizations should perceive the problems of peers in any circumstances and to try to solve their problems. In other words, organizations should pay attention to their own social responsibilities vis-à-vis their community members, plus trying for realization of the expectations of their shareholders and beneficiaries. This type of social relationship results in improvement of empathy and sympathy between organizations and citizens and the social relations among individuals.

The social responsibility of organization falls far beyond the framework of legal requirements in which organization acts. Based on this premise, enterprises exceed from their historical role that is earning profit, tax payment,

employment of personnel and rule of law; they will play an essential role in realization of wider social goals. Of course, it should be noticed that business dependence on social responsibility is proportional to the type of work and size of economic unit; nonetheless, because of the benefits and value that social responsibility creates for any business in an organization, it requires utilization of this factor in various sizes of any economic unit. Thus, social responsibility covers all enterprises and organizations. In this regard, as great-size enterprises become more sensitive and aware of their ethical and environmental principles, the small-size enterprises will be also more resolute to follow and be related to them further, thereby to attract trust from their customers and community.

Overall, it can be deduced that those enterprises which are more committed to their obligations and tasks grow more respected by the public than other enterprises and organizations that may rather overlook their social responsibility. In other words, the public outlook in a community regarding an enterprise is directly related to its corporate social plans to fulfill the expected duties as well as the customers' awareness of the plans and projects concerned.

The enterprises and organizations may achieve a reasonable status in the public by voluntary and benevolent aids to charity and non-profit institutions as well as through effective participations in these centers. Next, by giving information to people concerning the aids and participations, the enterprises and organizations can enjoy more opportunity to achieve popularity among them. In fact, as an enterprise can come up with more positive and beneficent measures in the society, it can also establish more relationship with its customers, leading to its enjoyment of more credit.

It is natural that any employee likes to work for an enterprise, which has a relatively good social status and acceptance and to

give constantly good and positive news to the audience about that company in social media. Subsequently, consented and happy personnel will be also positive and useful outcomes for the enterprise: this cycle will contribute to a corporate reputation and productivity. The relevant investigations and studies show a noticeable percentage of the personnel's feeling a sense of consent and satisfaction with fulfilling their corporate social responsibility, plus their getting a sense of more responsibility toward carrying out their business tasks. On the other hand, as enterprises indicate and carry out their sense of responsibility concerning the society by doing benevolent and voluntary activities, they will have more chance to attract diligent and responsible personnel. It can be mentioned that those enterprises, which enjoy more benevolent and humanitarian manifestation in the community, will have more applicants to occupy their existing job positions. It follows that the enterprise may act more systematically and produce more, a phenomenon that will result in raising the company's level of productivity.

Furthermore, investors that spend their capital on an enterprise naturally like to ensure this fund is used in appropriate cases and even the profit of that fund will be returned to them. This does not mean that they should be able to show they also properly do their social responsibility in relation to the community. As enterprises allocate their budget to voluntary and benevolent activities and encourage their personnel to do such activities, they announce this important message to the investors that they not only think about their own profit, but they also appreciate the community concerned. Thus, investors are also more inclined to supporting the enterprises that show certain belief in being committed to their obligations vis-à-vis the personnel, society, and audiences. They even leave a positive impression on their

surrounding community.

With respect to the above-said explanations, social responsibility not only exerts positive effects on the environment in which an organization is operative, but also it impresses its internal aspects of organization, e.g., personnel, beneficiaries, and shareholders. As demonstrated by the results of this study, the sense of religious commitment in the directors and personnel of an organization might be one of the factors that might lead to some improvement in the effective relationship of organization with its surrounding environment. To conclude, it is suggested to other researchers and interested individuals in this field that to identify and investigate the effective factors on social responsibility in their studies and to give more development to the results of the present study so that the personnel, organizations, and communities would be able to benefit from their findings.



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