

Expressing religious identity at work good for staff wellbeing

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When employees are provided with a supportive environment to express their religious identity in the workplace they experience increased wellbeing and work more efficiently, according to a new research review

from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

The report, published in the Human Resource Management Journal, comprises a literature review of 53 publications on [religious beliefs](#) and the workplace. It finds that employee wellbeing, productivity, citizenship behaviour and commitment to an organisation are enhanced when employees' beliefs and work duties are compatible and they are supported to express their beliefs.

The authors write, "Religious and occupational identities can be highly congruent when the values and norms attached to these identities converge, when work roles promote the expression of religious identities and where organisational policies and practices support that expression."

However, the researchers found these benefits are reversed when employees are not provided with a supportive environment or are required to perform tasks that are incongruent with their religion. For example, when pharmacists with religious beliefs are asked to prescribe abortion-related drugs.

Although there are some circumstances where conflict arises between an individual's religion and their work tasks, the researchers found [religious identity](#) to be a net benefit to contemporary organisations—through increased productivity for example. They argue more can be done to enhance these benefits and reduce any tension.

With 68 percent of the population of England and Wales holding religious beliefs, the researchers outline actions organisations can take to support their employees. These include creating a tolerant psychologically [safe environment](#) and developing strategies staff can use when their [personal values](#) are challenged, so these events can be anticipated in advance and appropriate responses set out.

Study co-author Ilka Gleibs, from the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science at LSE, said, "Our review highlights the important connection between religious identity and workplace behaviour. Organisations that support their employees to express their religious identity (amongst other parts of their [identity](#)) and be authentically themselves in the workplace will often see the benefits of this policy in their outcomes."

More information: YingFei Héliot et al. Religious identity in the workplace: A systematic review, research agenda, and practical implications, *Human Resource Management* (2019). [DOI: 10.1002/hrm.21983](#)

Provided by London School of Economics (LSE)

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