

WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY - AN INSIGHT INTO EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION ON EXPERIENCING SPIRITUAL ORIENTATION AT WORKPLACE

Dr.Cris Abraham Kochukalam*

Neethujose*

Merlin B Joseph*

Abstract

Workplace spirituality is gaining importance in the human resource management scenario as well as general and strategic management. The relevance of this topic is highlighted with the advent of eastern philosophical management orientation in most western companies. The extension of management principles and practice with eastern orientation has been in focus for effective built up of the future organizations. Defining workplace spirituality and the various components associated with it is a useful research area that could derive training platforms as well as Human resource management system human resource development platforms in organizations. To define workplace spirituality it is necessary to model the spirituality orientation of employees in typical organizations that may be influencing the definition in a

Keywords:

Workplace;
Workplace Spirituality;
Spiritual Orientation ;
Employee perception ;
Food processing.

***Assistant Professor , Department of Management Studies, Berchmans Institute of Management Studeis , India**

larger extent. Spiritual orientation along with other identifiable variables directly or indirectly affecting it makes the definition more reliable and replicable. This study is aimed at understanding spiritual orientation from employee perspective. The study was conducted among middle level employees of Food processing organizations in Kerala.

1. Introduction

Spirituality in a relatively early literature is clearly stated as the experience with the sacred which is more subjective in nature thus spirituality presupposes certain qualities of mind. It also carries compassion, appreciation. Spirituality is ultimately defined by one as connected to a greater force beyond the true expression of oneself, superlatively expressed in their own terms as something greater than definable. This expression may confine to a true relationship with a higher power. This higher power directly or indirectly affects the doings of oneself (Armstrong, T. D, 1995). Fairness and respect at workplace and elicit the recognition experienced by an employee in the form of a whole human than mere resource for organization. (Kim and Mauborgne, 1998) A strong literature base extends the ideology that there exists a continuum between the spirituality of individual and organizations in attaining organizational effectiveness . Aligning spiritual needs at work by employees to organizational climate can substantiate the performance of the employee as well as the contribution he/she made during the time to organizational performance (Strack et al., 2002; Milliman et al., 2003; Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004) .

Benevolence shown in respect of a simple appreciation , an act of kindness and even a simple smile can endorse the sense of belonging and a feel of being considered as human beings within the organization endorsing the feel of being part of the work family also. There established a positive correlation between workplace spirituality and employee attitude, commitment and intrinsic job satisfaction as well as spirited involvement (Milliman et al., 2003)

When organizations lay emphasis on hope and happiness, workers are well-equipped to deal with work stressors (Simmons and Nelson, 2001) there by leading to organization performance. Value system prevailing in the organization and workplace attitude of appreciation and recognition among others for expressing values at work leads to identifying work not as a loaded activity but engages with enjoyment and passion making it part of one's life mission. This makes the employee more productive (Gavin and Mason, 2004) The recognition of spirituality linked workplace culture by the employee and a sense of being regarded and recognise for being part of the culture initiates the sense of long term attachment. When individuals experience organizational spirituality, they feel affectively attached to their organizations thereby experiencing a sense of loyalty and obligation and feel less instrumentally committed (Rego, et al., 2008).

Thus exploring the spirituality orientation is equally relevant in the modern organizational system is equally beneficial for the employees and the organization in transcending its effect on organizational culture and performance. Spiritual orientation is not treated as connected with religion or beliefs of oneself in any GOD but is connected to spirituality at workplace defined through value recognition and value identification. Spirituality is derived from within oneself as well as from others around. In an organization this is deep rooted in the culture as well as the value system that keeps the culture within. The connection between the individual spirituality and the organizational spirituality is intertwined in the experience received and provided in the workplace. Capturing the perception of employees towards the experience of spiritual orientation will enable modelling the workplace spirituality with more precision than now.

2. Objectives

To identify various factors that defines spiritual orientation at workplace through literature review

To identify the most relevant factors that makeup spiritual orientation at workplace based on employee perception

3. Literature Review

Spirituality is clearly defined with difference from religion and is found as encompassed within the concept of religion. Religion is considered as a larger concept than spirituality. (Brian J. Zinnbauer, 1999) a slightly different view point is in describing spirituality is the search for identifying oneself in terms of self-identity and what one must become in terms of meaning, growth and control. (Evans, C. S, 1990). Further spirituality could be understood based on three distinct yet connected constructs which are connection to something greater than oneself, holism and harmony and realization of one's potential as well as aspirations (Giacaclone, 2003).

Following Peter F Drucker's mentioning on "work spirit" in "Practice of management -1954" there had been several mentions about "spirit" of workers/employees at workplace in several literatures. "Spirit at work" is considered a striving force for achieving perception of reality whereby experiencing the underlying life -oneness(Neal J, 2003). Meaningful work and sense of community also defines the workplace spirituality (PH, 1997). Feeling of connectedness with oneself and things around including people, resources, materials and methods of work is considered to be as a first of its kind literature on systematically investigating the employee's spiritual aspirations with regard to the workplace engagement (Mitroff II, 1999). Spirituality is also considered as the holistic way of fully expressing the bodily factors, mental factors and spiritual behaviours through integration of principles and practices backed by general behaviour. This includes friendly work premises and a humanistic management with service orientation, innovation, creativity, environmental sensitivity and based on high level of work efficiency. (WA, 2000). Jobs can be for just meeting the economic needs for some and for others it may be a "calling", either way, "spirit at workplace" for each one is based on how he/she feels about what he does at the job (Thompson WD, 2000)

Inner self, meaningful work and sense of community stands a strong foundation to understand workplace spirituality better. This establishes the identification of the inner self which is further nourished by the meaningful work endorsed by the person within a community further enhances the feeling of belongingness. This experience could be defined in term of workplace spirituality. (Ashmos DP, Duchon D, 2000). Inner self refers to the employee's inner (spiritual) needs, which are as important as the physical, emotional and social needs of the employee (Duchon D, 2005) Meaningful work must go beyond organizational survival and of wellbeing of the self and the

dependents but nurture a feeling of belongingness and recognition of self as attached to what is being done. If the reason for which an individual works is grand and significant, the individual derive a feeling of wholeness or completeness by doing it (Overell S, 2008) The third dimension is sense of community, which is described as the sense of togetherness and living and sharing within the togetherness. This in an organizational context refers to the togetherness one senses while being in the department prima facie and within the work premises. In the words of Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003a) workplace spirituality is “a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees’ experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy”.

Spirituality in workplace is a universal search that occurs within oneself for the transcendent meaning in life. The desire to do work with subjectivity and purposefulness of serving a greater good for a greater community that provides for connectedness and wholeness. This connectedness and wholeness is derived while one is allowed to integrate ones inner self with the professional identity focused towards a greater good (Ashar H, Lane-Maher M, 2004).

Aspects like inner power, interconnectedness with all those involved in work process and a sense of purpose in the work environment (Marques J, Dhiman S, King R, 2005). The spirituality at workplace is also about the individual considering the work as a whole as a spiritual journey of experiences leading to possibilities of growth for the self while meaningfully contributing to the social premise. It also comprises of one’s integrity, compassion, nature of caring and support for others while also being truthful in values upheld in the work and the workplace (International Center for Spirit at Work (ICSW)

A very recent literature describes the workplace spirituality based on the study in Indian organizations has identified and explored dimensions of workplace spirituality. The three dimensions identified are Spiritual connectedness, Compassion, Meaningful work and Alignment of Values (R. K. Pradhan et al, 2017)

4. Spiritual orientation at work place

• In order to capture the perception of employees related to their experience of spiritual orientation the following statements have been framed that describes the variables that makeup the spiritual orientation at workplace.

- Experience relevance for being Spiritual at Workplace
- Experience a sense of guidance and energy from within
- Experience Joy and Happiness at Work
- Experience a Sense of Gratification out of Work
- Experience Blissful Moments at Work
- Experience superior level of work involvement
- Experience Peer Appreciation for Spiritual Values at Work
- Experience a Sense of Enlightenment for Job
- Experience an urge to remain working
- Experience Spiritual Values guide Decisions at Work
- Experience Supernatural Power catalysing Work life
- Experience High Energy and Vitality at Work
- Experience Appropriate Appreciation for Spiritual Values at Work

5. Methodology

For the purpose of this study an extensive review of literature was conducted to identify the factors forming part of spiritual orientation based on work place spirituality studies. Hence the variables are identified and listed for the study. Further the variables are recorded as suitable statements in a structured questionnaire form and are circulated among employees of major food processing brands in Kerala. The organizations were randomly selected from the entire list of organizations in the sector in the said State. A total of 326 responses were obtained and this was used for the analysis

6. Analysis

The main focus of the analysis was to rank the experience of spiritual orientation factors by identifying the mean scores at the initial level based on which this research paper is published.

Table 1 : Demographics of the respondents

Table 2 -Ranking of Spiritual Orientation Factors

Serial No	Spiritual Orientation Factors	Mean	Rank	Serial No	Spiritual Orientation Factors	Mean	Rank
1	Experience Appropriate Appreciation for Spiritual Values at Work	4.14	1	7	Experience relevance for being Spiritual at Workplace	3.9	6
2	Experience a Sense of Gratification out of Work	4.02	2	8	Experience a sense of guidance and energy from within	3.88	7
3	Experience Joy and Happiness at Work	4	3	9	Experience Blissful Moments at Work	3.88	7
4	Experience superior level of work involvement	4	3	10	Experience Peer Appreciation for Spiritual Values at Work	3.84	8
5	Experience a Sense of Enlightenment for Job	3.96	4	11	Experience Spiritual Values guide Decisions at Work	3.84	8
6	Experience an urge to remain working	3.92	5	12	Experience Supernatural Power catalysing Work life	3.82	9
				13	Experience High Energy and Vitality at Work	3.82	9

Among Spiritual Orientation factors the top-rated factors according to employee opinion are:

Appropriate Appreciation for Spiritual Values at Work (mean = 4.14)

Sense of Gratification out of Work (mean =4.02)

Joy and Happiness at Work (mean=4)

Time just goes on while at Work (mean =4)

And the least rated factors of Spiritual Orientation are:

Demographics of respondents		%	Demographics of respondents		%
Gender	Male	54	Designation	HR Manager	2
	Female	46		R&D Manager	8
				Assistant Export Manager	10
Age	<25 years	26		HR Executive	2
	25-40 years	58		Purchase Assistant	4
	>40 years	16		Trade Marketing Executive	6
				Sales Assistant	14
Marital Status	Single	52		IT Administrator	14
	Married	48		Sales coordinator	4
				Assistant Accounts	28
Department	HR	4	Billing Executive	8	
	Finance	30			
	Export	10	Experience	<3 years	48
	R & D	8		3-5 years	10
	Purchase	4		5-10 years	42
	Marketing	30		>10 years	0
IT	14				
			Education profile	Plus Two	8
				UG	54
				PG	38

Experience High Energy and Vitality at Work (mean =3.82)

Guided by a Supernatural Power about Work (mean=3.82)

Spiritual Values guide Decision at Work (mean =3.84)



7. Discussion and Conclusion

The trust areas driving the spiritual orientation at workplace is based on the experience received by the employees in appropriate appreciation for spiritual values upheld in the work. This is also closely followed by the sense of gratification derived from the work specifically from which an experience of fun and happiness is also received by the employee. More over a sense of enlightenment from the job also enhances the spiritual orientation among employees. Further research could link this study results in defining workplace spirituality factors , work life balance, work place attitude, employee behaviour , employee motivation and inspiration and many more aspects related.

References

1. Armstrong, T. D. (1995). Exploring spirituality: The development of the Armstrong. Paper presented at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association. New York, NY.
2. Ashar H, Lane-Maher M. (2004). Success and spirituality in the new business paradigm. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 13(3), 249-262.
3. Ashmos DP, Duchon D. (2000). Spirituality at work: a conceptualization and measure. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 9(2), 134-145.
4. Brian J. Zinnbauer, K. I. (1999). The Emerging Meanings of Religiousness and Spirituality: Problems and Prospects. Retrieved 2016, from <http://www.psychology.hku.hk>: http://www.psychology.hku.hk/ftbcstudies/refbase/docs/zinnbauer/1999/67_Zinnbauer_etal1999.pdf
5. Duchon D, P. (2005). Nurturing the spirit at work: impact on unit performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(5), 807-834.
6. Evans, C. S. (1990). Soren Kierkegaard's Christian psychology: Insights for counselling and pastoral care. (M. Zondervan., Ed.) Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan.
7. Frances Vaughan. (1991). Spiritual issues in Psychotherapy. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 23(2), 105-120.
8. Gavin, J. & R. Mason (2004). The Virtuous Organization: The Value of Happiness in the Workplace. *Organizational Dynamics*, 6(7), 384-395.
- 9.
10. Giacalone, R. A. (2003). Towards a science of workplace spirituality -Handbook of workplace spirituality and organizational performance . Armonk: ME Sharpe.
11. International Center for Spirit at Work (ICSW. (n.d.). Retrieved 2017, from ICSW FAQs: <http://www.cfsaw.org>
12. Jurkiewicz, C. L., & Giacalone, R. A. (2004). A Values Framework for Measuring the Impact of Workplace Spirituality on Organizational Performance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 49, 129-142.
- 13.

14. Marques J, Dhiman S, King R. (2005). Spirituality in the workplace: developing an integral model and a comprehensive definition. *Journal of American Academy of Business*, 7(1), 81-91.
15. Milliman, J., Czaplewski, A.J., & Ferguson, J. (2003). Workplace Spirituality and Employee Work Attitudes: An Exploratory Empirical Assessment. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 16, 426-447.
- 16.
17. Mitroff II, D. E. (1999). A study of spirituality in the workplace. *Sloan Management Review*, 40, 83-92.
18. Neal J, B. J. (2003). Introduction: The leading edge in research on spirituality and organizations. *Journal of Organizational Change Management* , 363-366.
19. Overell S. (2008). *Inwardness: the Rise of Meaningful Work*. Provocation Series 4: 2. London.: The Work Foundation.
20. PH, M. (1997). Soul work in organizations. . *Organization Science* , 193-206.
21. R. K. Pradhan et al. (2017). Workplace spirituality in Indian organisations: construction of reliable and valid measurement scale . *Business: Theory and Practice*, 18, 43-53.
22. Rego, A., & Pina e Cunha, M. (2008). Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Commitment: An Empirical Study. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 21(1), 53-75.
- 23.
24. Simmons, B. L. & Nelson, D. L. (2001). Eustress at Work: The Relationship between Hope and Health in Hospital Nurses. *Health Care Management Review*, 26(4), 7-18.
- 25.
26. Strack, G., Fottler, M.D., Wheatley, M.J. & Sodomka, P. (2002). Spirituality and Effective Leadership in Healthcare: Is there a Combination? *Frontiers of Health Services Management*, 18(4), 3-17
- 27.
28. Thompson WD. (2000). Can you train people to be spiritual? *Training and Development*, 5(2), 18-20.
29. WA, G. (2000). *The Living Organization: Spirituality in the workplace*. Salt lake city , UT: Innovations International Inc.