

SPIRITUALITY AT WORKPLACE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract: Spirituality in India is considered to be a private matter and often it is interpreted on religious backgrounds. Actually spirituality is something that gives meaning to one's life. Incorporating spirituality in the workplace can engage employees not only physiologically but psychologically as well. Spirituality at work is reflected by the organisation culture that is based on the core values such as trust, honesty, appreciation, innovation, care, respect and loyalty etc.

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the present scenario of workplace spirituality in Indian context, further it attempts to identify the challenges faced by Indian corporation in real implementation of the concept. In addition this study is intended to develop and suggest a framework for successful implementation of spirituality at work. For the present study exploratory research design is followed and it is based on qualitative analysis. It will briefly outline the existing literature citing workplace spirituality practices across globe specifically in India.

This study findings outlines the challenges Indian organisations are facing for imbibing workplace spirituality and the suggested model indicated that employee who experienced spirituality at work are more engaged and they are more satisfied hence resulting into more productivity and less of absenteeism and turnover. Further a more complex model can be developed citing various organisation as well as individual variable affecting workplace spirituality. This research opens a pathway to conduct an industry wise analysis of spirituality at work in Indian corporations.

Keywords: Workplace spirituality, Individual spirituality, Organisational spirituality, organisational culture, Meaningful work.

JEL Classification: M

INTRODUCTION

The Spiritual Life does not remove us from the world, but leads us deeper into it.

Henri J. M. Nouwen

Spirituality is something every-one of us possess. But most of the times it is misinterpreted and debated. It cannot be measured quantitatively, but its existence

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cannot be neglected. Many people interpret spirituality with religion. Although Spirituality is uppermost state of faith in any religion, but a person can be spiritual without following any religion. Spirituality is more of an individual practice which has to do with having a sense of peace and purpose. Spirituality explains how one feel about his or her work-whether it's just a profession or is a passion. Spirituality produces those brilliant, creative ideas you get but you have no idea where they came from. Spirituality gives birth to the values that make you who you are a person with integrity, respect for people of all kinds, loyalty. (Thomson, 2001)

Workplace spirituality involves the endeavor to uncover one's ultimate purpose in life, to develop a strong connection to colleagues and other people linked with work, and to have consistency or alignment between one's core beliefs and values of their organisation (Beheshtifar & Zare, 2013). Even studies have suggested that executives and leaders yearn for a deeper sense of meaning and fulfillment on the job rather than money and time off. It is imperative to acknowledge and recognize a person's intellectual, affective and spiritual needs, values, priorities and preferences. A deeper sense of meaning and purpose for employees is vital, as it enables employees to perform better and to be more productive and innovative (Karakas, 2010). An organisation's working environment based on strong ethical and spiritual values such as compassion, integrity, respect, harmony, trust, teamwork, and forgiveness, etc. will have a competitive edge over the others and will attract the best talents.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A thorough review of literature revealed that the workplace spirituality has different facets. Among them the two that are most talked about are individual spirituality and organisational spirituality. The literature review is highlighting different dimensions of both perspectives.

Workplace Spirituality

(Beheshtifar & Zare, 2013) defines spirituality as expressing our desires to find meaning and purpose in our lives and is a process of living out one's set of deeply held personal values. (Jurkiewicz, 2003) defines workplace spirituality as a framework of organisational 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 provided feelings of completeness and joy. According to (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004) spirituality can be viewed as individual experiences of spirituality at work. It can also be viewed as an organisation's facilitation of employee experiences of spirituality at work through organisational values which can be further incorporated through firms's culture (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Further, from the point of view of (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000) it can be viewed as a mutually nurturing relationship between individual employees' spirituality experiences and workplace features.

Facet of Workplace Spirituality

Spirituality manifest in two ways, one approach is individual spirituality, in which the employees in the organisation are having faith in the organisation they are trustworthy and they have a connection with their colleagues. Another way is organisational spirituality, in this approach organisations strives for achieving excellence. They provide a culture in which employees lives in harmony, they love their job and their personal values and objectives are aligned with organisation's mission and vision. Claude and Zamor, (2003) mentioned in one of their study that Harward Business School conducted a study on 10 companies with strong culture and 10 with weak culture drawn from 207 leading organisations. With a period of 11 years it was found that there is a strong correlation between good organisation culture and their profitability.

Dimensions of Individual Spirituality

(Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006) mentioned that conceptualization of individual spirituality at work has three dimensions as follows: engaging work (meaningful work), sense of community, and spiritual connection (inner life). According to (Karakas, 2010) spirituality provides employees a sense of connection in community, which, further, increases employee loyalty, commitment and effectiveness. (Beheshtifar & Zare, 2013) pointed out that spirituality provides employees a sense of inter-connectedness and community. (Rutte 1996) stated that an important value of ethical behaviour for a business is the development of trust. There should be a mutual trust between employees and employers as well as customers and a company. This will produce more loyal customers.

According to (Aravamudhan, 2014) the companies must understand the need to inculcate spiritual values in the organisation to engage the spirits of employees to make them stay longer. Organisation that treats its employees as a part of its community and engage them emotionally to company's mission and vision, will lead to employee motivation and loyalty that will boost organisation performance. (Rego and Cunha, 2008) argued that workplace spirituality will help employees develop a sense of affection with the organisation and would retain them for a longer period which will further reduce the staffing cost. (Rutte, 1996) mentioned that spirituality in the workplace leads to increased self-fulfilment, contentment and a deep sense of belonging. (Aravamudhan, 2014) argued that besides the massive ethical failures of corporate giants like Enron, Arthur Anderson, World com and Satyam Computers have transferred the focus on the necessity to balance profitability with ethical conduct. Profit alone cannot define success of a firm, spirituality is absolutely necessary in organisations for ensuring ethical behavior, job satisfaction, Productivity, Employee commitment and Competitive advantage.

Dimensions of Organisational Spirituality

(Fernando, 2005) argued that workplace spirituality raises reasonable concerns about its use to further economic goals of organisations, and thus has the potential of becoming a management trend in the future. (Rutte, 1996) suggested that employer must create an atmosphere in which employee creativity and innovation can be flourished. He further argued that spirituality in the workplace promotes the expression of talent which will further produce genius employees. (Badrinarayanan & Madhavaram, 2008) argued that organisations supporting workplace spirituality revitalize the employees emotionally and motivate them to be more productive. (Raelin, 2004) pointed out the findings of a Gallup survey, which concluded that “the most ‘engaged’ workplaces demonstrate compassion and commitment towards employee’s growth and development, compared with the least engaged were 50% more likely to have lower turnover, 56% more likely to have higher-than-average customer loyalty, 38% more likely to have beyond-average productivity, and 27% more likely to report higher profitability.

(Altaf & Awan, 2011) pointed out that employees suffer because of having work overload and they need to be rejuvenated, workplace spirituality can be one factor that may be utilized to overcome this issue. (Santosh Kumar Sharma, Renu Rastogi & Pooja Garg, 2013) expressed that Meaningful work, feeling of group and arrangements of qualities are basic variables to characterize viability. It has been recommended that managers must infuse the individual and group qualities and values with the organizational value system and mission. (Marschke, Preziosi & Harrington, 2009) argued that when people find meaning in their work activities and feel involved in a spiritual organisational climate, they become happier and healthier employees engaged in a collaborative manner. It will bring their entire selves to the organisation and further help to realize full potential of them. (Harrington, Preziosi & Gooden 2001) stated that more congruent employees’ values and spiritual aspirations are with the organisation, then the greater the likelihood that employees will find real meaning at work. They will be working in an environment where their spiritual needs and values are respected, thus allowing them to realize a greater sense of fulfillment. In the long run it will help to sustain business goals and energize subordinates toward superior output.

WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY PRACTICES WORLDWIDE

Medtronic Inc., the manufacturer of medical devices, every year bring a group of people who are satisfied from its products to its Minneapolis headquarters. Employees including Hundreds of scientists, engineers and factory workers meet these patients. These activities help employees to extract greater purpose and meaning in their work.

IBM, NASA, US Army National Guard, World Bank, American Express, Apple, Google, Cisco, Raytheon and Microsoft Uses various training programs, spiritual

lecture sessions, meditation and yoga classes. Similarly Yahoo, AT & T, Armani Exchange OFFER yoga and meditation classes to the employees throughout the week. SAS, a renowned software firm, has 3% staff turnover which saves them close to millions of dollars in recruitment and training expense. The mantra behind their success has been employee friendly policies and the spiritual environment which promote work life balance and stability. To name a few, a no lay-off policy, 35 hour work week, flexible working hours and a robust medical and health program for employees. Apple Computer's success can be attributed to two facts, design and simplicity. Prentice-Hall publishing company has provided a meditation room at their head quarter where employees can ease off their mental stresses.

INDIAN ORGANISATIONS PRACTICING WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY

Vardhaman group, Indian Oil Corporation, Lupin Laboratories, Yash Paper, Eicher, etc. are followed principle of making responsible citizens within their workplace. Wipro Corporation and Infosys Ltd. have devotedly promoted and practiced ethical principles in management and their success is hidden to no one, they proudly claim the largest market capitalization amongst Indian corporate. Leaders of some of India's largest conglomerates like the Future Group, ICICI, Videocon, Pearson's, UBS, HDFC Bank and Tata Global Beverages have come together along with the union ministers and "the Art of Living" renowned spiritual Guru, Shri Shri Ravishankar to lay down the foundations for corporate spirituality.

Future Group, has a practice of having chief belief officer, who leads the behaviour of the organisation, sustain a positive culture of the organisation that leads to better outcomes. Infosys and Tata group have included spirituality in their work place where employees get yoga sessions and meditation sessions to work out stress and relief themselves from their inner burden and attain mental peace. Companies such as ACC, Indian Petrochemicals Corporation, SRF Ltd, Reckitt & Colman, the Oriental Bank, Tata Tea and Tata Chemicals are some companies that have availed programs like transcendental meditation by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Wipro, Escotel, Oriental Insurance, Dabur and Vam Organics are some of the companies open to such programs. Godrej and Boyce Manufacturing have designed training programmes majorly focused on bringing 'human values' to practice at work.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the literature review and the practices adopted by corporations worldwide the following conceptual model has been proposed.

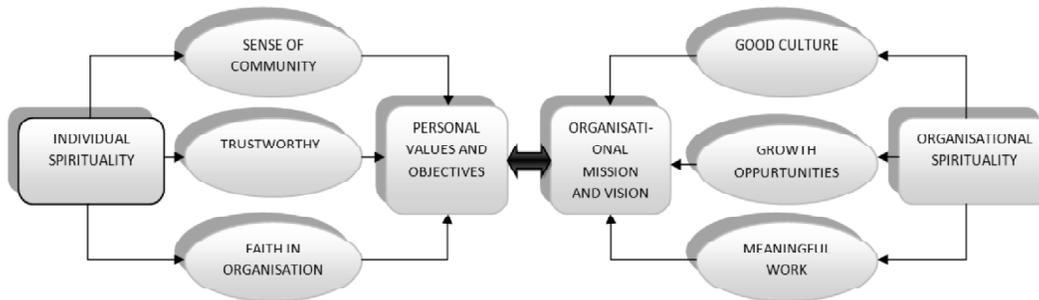


Figure 1: Workplace Spirituality Conceptual Framework.

Source: Author's own creation

RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the conceptual framework mentioned in the present paper, organisations can take following steps to introduce the workplace spirituality:

- First of all employer need to make their employee understand that spirituality is not religion specific, it is beyond it. Some orientation programmes can be designed for the same.
- They should discuss it openly and regularly as they discuss about profitability, innovation and growth etc. They can simply start with organising some events like meditation and aerobic session that can act as an initial stimulus to start the wave of workplace spirituality.
- Informal communication must also be allowed in the organisations, so that sense of community can be fostered.
- Recreational facilities, organizing events and festival can increase connectivity between employees and can boost their morale. As Google celebrates lots of festivals within the working hours that creates recognition and employee satisfaction.
- While staffing employer must ensure that the applicant's values and objectives are synchronizing with organisational objective. It can be ensured by taking certain ethical test at the time of selection as well as during the employment. This practices is adopted by HP by offering certain certifications like standard of business conduct , ethical leadership etc. through their online portal.
- Mission and vision of the organisation should be clearly defined so that employee can build trust and have faith in the organisation.
- Firms need to maintain a culture in which employee happiness is taken care of. Because happy worker will be a productive worker.

- Considerable learning and career development opportunities should be provided to the employees so that they have a focused approach towards their profession.
- Job analysis must be done to a substantial level so that employer is aware of the various duties, responsibilities and characteristics of a job. And further he can communicate it well to their subordinates, so that they can extract a meaning out of their work.
- Employers should clearly state that how individual performance is contributing to the attainment of organisational mission and vision.
- Organisation must reflect their spirituality through their values and ethical business processes and procedures so that workers remains motivated to follow the same line.

CONCLUSION

Spirituality is most talked about and least understood construct. So organisations first need to start with the fundamentals. The conceptual framework mentioned in this paper clearly demonstrate that organisation not only create a spiritual environment just by providing meditation classes or stating mission and vision statements in annual general meetings. It cannot be created by providing abundant benefits and services to employees. But employer needs to understand the aspects of individual aspects of spirituality as well. A culture can be developed in which employees feel more connected to each other. By clearly defining mission and vision of the organisation and being an ethical organisation worker's faith can be build and maintained. Providing clear growth path in organisational ladder and by empowering subordinates their trust can be won. If corporations become able to align individual's values and objectives with organisational mission and vision firm can become more productive and successful.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

For future research the conceptual model needs to be tested empirically. Industry wise comparative analysis can be done on the workplace spirituality. Further, workplace spirituality can be studies in context to other organisational variables such as emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, leadership and organisation citizenship behavior etc.

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