

## Spirituality at Workplace and Job Satisfaction

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### ABSTRACT:

Spirituality is not a new phenomenon but spirituality at workplace is new and it is on the conceptual stage. Recently it has got an enormous amount of attention in the field of management research, because now organizations have understood that employees are satisfied not only with Materialistic things(money), they want more than that. When people speak about work attitude, many often refer it to job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is important because it determines how employees love their work, cannot wait to get to work in the morning which latter can lead into a better performance at work and willingness to stay with the organization. A spiritual person is aroused and energized intrinsically, which leads to self actualization, personal growth, personal achievement, fulfillment, creativity, social power, and challenge. Achieving this state of existence means that the spiritual person is satisfied. This is not a static state, because the spiritual individual continually strives towards greater satisfaction through the experience of spirituality, as this need becomes increasingly stronger. The spiritually-based organization forms the platform for the individual to experience spirituality which allows him or her to experience even more satisfaction.

**Key Words:** Spirituality, workplace, job satisfaction, self-actualization and fulfillment.

### INTRODUCTION

Interest in workplace spirituality has increased steadily over the last decade of the twentieth century and into the new millennium [1]. Spirituality is the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others and the entire universe [2].

A growing number of companies are setting off on spiritual journeys. It's not about bringing religion into the office or requiring that employees chant mantras at their workstations. Rather the spirituality movement in the corporation is an attempt to create a sense of meaning and purpose at work and a connection between the company and its people. [3]

“The soul at work, is a double entendre: it is at once the individual's soul being allowed to be present in the workplace; and it is the emergence of a collective soul of the organization” [4], “Spirituality within a workplace addresses all dimensions of the organization” [5]. Not only is this study interested in spirituality in and of itself, it is concerned with spirituality as it relates to the workplace. “Thus for organizations wanting greater commitment this means opening up the business conversation to include dimensions of soul and spirit that have been traditionally left at the office door” [6] (p. 32).

There is a growing interest among corporate, academicians and researchers towards the topic of spirituality in the workplace. The benefits of workplace spirituality are many. Spirituality in the workplace relates to the bottom line of business. Research has shown that organizations that provide their employees with the opportunities for spiritual development are better in performance than others [7]. In India many companies follow the new-age principles (such as Meditation to attain

inner calmness, Purshartaa for the balance between personal and professional life, yoga for healthy and disease-free life, etc.), which have their roots in Indian ethos for the spiritual upliftment of an organization. At an individual level, spirituality at work provides job satisfaction and reduces employee burnout [8].

Individual spirituality at work is about expressing one's inner self through meaningful work and belongingness to the community at work. This definition is in accordance with conceptualization of workplace spirituality [9]. The conceptualization of workplace spirituality consists of three components: inner life as spiritual identity, meaningful work and sense of community. The scale for workplace spirituality consists of three levels of measures: individual, work unit and organization. The first-level measure consists of items which denote the employee perceptions of their individual spirituality at work.

### INNER LIFE (INNER SELF)

Inner self refers to the viewpoint that ‘employees have spiritual needs (i.e., an inner life), just as they have physical, emotional, and cognitive needs, and these needs don't get left at home when they come to work’ [10]. The inner self (spiritual identity) is about feeling oneness with others and the entire universe [11].

### MEANINGFUL WORK

The second component of workplace spirituality embodies the notion that people seek meaning at work [10]. Meaning at work is the feeling of wholeness and harmoniousness with some animating (higher) purpose that gives direction to one's work. Meaning relates to whether purpose and significance is felt [12].

## **SENSE OF COMMUNITY**

The third dimension is based on the idea that spiritual beings live in connection to other human beings and here community refers to 'the notions of sharing, mutual obligation and commitment that connect people to each other' [10].

## **BENEFITS OF SPIRITUALITY AT WORKPLACE**

Research suggests that the encouragement of spirituality in the workplace can lead to benefits in the areas of creativity, honesty and trust, personal fulfillment, and commitment, which will ultimately lead to increased organizational performance.

## **INTUITION AND CREATIVITY**

Spirituality can assist the individual to expand the frontiers of his consciousness beyond the normal boundaries, leading to increased intuition and creativity [13-15]. Spirituality has the potential to link the creative power of the human mind with that of God's [16]. Spirituality also breeds awareness, which in turn breeds intuition, and intuition in turn leads to creativity [17]. The completeness that spiritual enrichment provides to the employees will lead to happiness and satisfaction which will cause the employees to be more creative [18]. This will result in increased organizational performance and financial success [18]. Creativity in the case of spiritually enriched organizations is also encouraged through the continual improvisation in service and also in adapting to the customers' needs. The turnaround of the I Omega Corporation is a good example of how a careful analysis of the customers' needs can foster creativity and thereby lead the organization to success [13]. Intuition and creativity can be powerful tools in problem solving. Since spiritual encouragement leads to better insights and also better mental growth and development and thereby the improvement of the person as a whole, the problem solving capabilities increase [19]. Creativity is also encouraged by religions, for example, Christians believe that creativity, even in an industrial enterprise, works towards the common good of the community and the society as a whole [20]. Islam stresses creativity as a way for attaining happiness [21]. Buddhism has creativity as one of its central ideas [22]. According to Buddhist philosophy, "Creative experience is all there is" [22].

## **HONESTY AND TRUST**

Many spiritually based organizations have made honesty their prime focus [23-24]. An example of such a company is Wetherill Associates [23]. The company instituted and implemented a policy where they promised themselves and others that they will be completely honest towards their customers as well as their suppliers [23]. Also, the element of honesty or truthfulness is unmistakably present in almost all the business transactions [25]. Trust is well encouraged within a spiritually enriched company. Especially in times of economic depression, when the company is not doing

well, trust between the management and the employees plays a pivotal role in the future performance of the organization. On the contrary, distrust can lead to communication problems inside the organization, and co-operation between the employees and the management is seriously affected [24]. Trust can also lead to better organizational performance through accelerated decision making, better communication between the managers, better focus on the customer issues and greater innovation [25].

Nowhere else have the qualities of truthfulness been portrayed as they are in religious texts. For example, in Hinduism, the concept of "*Sathyamevajayathe*", meaning, the truth and only truth shall be victorious in the end, is one of the most quoted philosophies [26]. Also one of the spiritual disciplines, "yama", reiterates the qualities such as "truthfulness, non-stealing and abstinence from greed" [27] Christians believe that accountability is very crucial to the workplace and also the society as a whole. Accountability towards one another, results in better relationships and understanding, which will be helpful in defeating the ways of the evil [28]. Accountability and truthfulness towards each other is also helpful in overcoming our natural propensity for sinning [28].

## **PERSONAL FULFILLMENT**

Spirituality has been associated with Maslow's higher needs, such as "belonging and also some sense of achievement" [19]. The "economic-technological perspective" theory suggested includes this sense of personal achievement as a reason for the movement towards spirituality [29]. Others have also suggested the involvement of personal development in the movement towards spirituality [30]. Fostering spirituality will lead to the employees feeling complete when they come to work. This will result in a high degree of personal fulfillment and increased morale. This further would lead to increased organizational performance through greater financial success [18]. For example, Muslims believe that work is a major source of personal fulfillment and independence [31]. This would lead to the ultimate life-fulfillment. Personal fulfillment is also seen as a method to enhance personal development [21].

## **COMMITMENT**

Spirituality increases commitment by establishing a "Trustful Climate" in the workplace [19]. "Organizational commitment is a concept that seeks to capture the nature of attachments formed by individuals, to their employing organizations" [32]. This quality can be viewed in two different perspectives. This includes commitment of the employees to the organization and also commitment of the organization to quality and to the customer [23]. The commitment of the employees to the organization is further believed to consist of two aspects. One is "affective commitment", where emotional attachment is seen from the individual because he is able to identify with the goals of the organization, and the individual wants to help the organization in achieving its goals [32]. The second aspect

of commitment is due to the higher cost of moving to a different organization [32]. In addition to these two types of commitment there are also two main types of causal factors involved in the expression of commitment towards an organization. The first are "personal factors", which originate from the inside of the individual. This includes factors which exist before the individual joins the organization. The second factor is the "situational factor." Here the individual is confronted with experiences within the organization and his work environment [32]. This will be crucial in his commitment towards the organization. In all cases, however, trust is crucial in providing a sound base for commitment [25]. Christian beliefs have also helped executives to solidify their commitment towards their goals [20]. Islamic work ethic also views commitment to the job as a virtue [31]. Buddhism for example proposes that all individuals are responsible for their products and the responsibility for any defects caused should be owned by the individual who produces it and either sells it directly or through an agent [33].

## **ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

It has been suggested that organizations that encourage spirituality may experience enhanced organizational performance [18, 34, 35]. In fact, some research reveals that organizations that encouraged spirituality experienced higher profits and success [18, 36].

In some cases (referring to research studies), the more spirited companies outperformed the others by 400-500 percent, in terms of net earnings, return-on-investment and shareholder value [34].

From these citations, it is obvious that organizational performance and financial success can lean heavily on spiritual enrichment of the workplace. Spirituality is recognized as one of the crucial dimensions of the human personality. Therefore, if an organization encourages spirituality, then it is actually encouraging the people to bring their whole self to work [35]. This would mean a greater personal fulfillment and satisfaction and greater commitment to the work and also the organization. "No organization can survive for long without spirituality and soul"[36]. These citations and views, coupled with the previous discussions on the common qualities that the spiritual enrichment brings about, like intuition and creativity, honesty and trust, personal fulfillment and commitment, prove that spirituality is indeed a valuable and inevitable tool for the people and the organization for which they work for.

## **JOB SATISFACTION**

When people speak about work attitude, many often refer it to job satisfaction [37]. Job satisfaction is important because it determines how employees love their work, cannot wait to get to work in the morning which latter can lead into a better performance at work and willingness to stay with the organization. In addition to that, job satisfaction may reduce the

problems of high turnover, absenteeism, and poor performance at work [38].

There are many definitions of job satisfaction as provided by previous studies. Most of them agreed that job satisfaction refers to positive feeling and attitude toward their job which is caused by their perception and adaptability with the organization. Crossman and AbouZaki (2003) [39] addressed two opinions about definitions of job satisfaction in their research. First, job satisfaction as a feeling toward the job as well as attitude toward the job that might influence perception about the job itself. On the other hand, job satisfaction define as a positive emotional state resulting from the pleasure a worker derives from the job and as the affective and cognitive attitudes held by an employee about various aspects of their work. Moreover, Job satisfaction refers to the affective feeling that an individual has towards a job or position [40].

Job satisfaction is divided into overall or general job satisfaction and variety of satisfaction facets. Those studies considered job satisfaction as a global feeling about the job or as a related constellation of attitudes about various aspects [41]. The proposed variety of satisfaction facets which are satisfaction with the job itself, fellow workers, supervision, company policies, compensation, customers, and promotion and advancement opportunities [40].

## **WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AND JOB SATISFACTION**

Based upon the employee's environment, he or she either enjoys or is dissatisfied with his or her job. It is clear through research studies that the extent to which an employee is allowed and encouraged to express him or herself through spirituality is an indication, a tool of measurement, for his or her emotional and psychological state. It is important to note that to study job satisfaction is to place emphasis on the psychological process instead of the physical [42].

"Job satisfaction is simply how people feel about their jobs and the different aspects of their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs" [42]. Job satisfaction may be viewed in the over all content an employee experiences or some sort of specific, momentary satisfaction [43]. In this way, there are two types of satisfaction an employee may experience: intrinsic and extrinsic.

One study states that these two divisions in job satisfaction are clear measurements of how employees like or dislike their work; what they feel towards their tasks and their organization [44]. Extrinsic satisfaction is experienced when the organization rewards an employee for doing a good job, most likely through the

form of a raise or promotion. Intrinsic satisfaction deals more with the employees own internal feelings of accomplishment, his or her own self-actualization. Another source defines intrinsic satisfaction as “an individual’s attitudes toward elements related to work such achievement, responsibility, advancement, and growth” [45]. This form of satisfaction has closer ties to an employee’s spirituality. It has been studied and proven that intrinsic satisfaction has a deeper and a more lasting effect on an employee, keeping an employee dedicated to his or her tasks more so than extrinsic satisfaction does.

In order to simplify and organize the way job satisfaction is studied, job satisfaction is divided into several different theories: Process theory, content theories, and social identity theory [44]. Locke stated that the content theories “specify the particular needs that must be attained for an individual to be satisfied with his job” [44]. The predominate content theories are Maslow’s Hierarchy of Need theory and Herzberg’s Motivator-Hygiene theory [44]. Maslow’s theory, however, involves many factors that both directly and indirectly affect and are related to spirituality. Maslow’s theory is further divided into the categories of physiological need, safety need, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs.

Spirituality is primarily concerned with the last three categories: belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Employees who are openly allowed and encouraged to explore their spiritual self most often do not experience self-esteem problems, as they are secure with who they are in their own beliefs.

What causes job satisfaction, the situation or the person? Job attitudes were highly stable across various situations [46]. They studied the correlation of job satisfaction ratings of workers over various time intervals, controlling for changes in employers and occupations. Their findings indicate that job attitudes are more a function of the person than the situation. However, just two years later a large national probability sample was conducted [47]. This study predicted current job satisfaction from prior satisfaction, pay, and job complexity. The outcome showed that pay, status and job complexity predicted current job satisfaction over and above the effects of past job satisfaction. These results counter Staw's suggestion that job design changes will not affect job satisfaction. These contradictory results might leave some to conclude that job satisfaction may be a combination of both situational and dispositional factors. As interest and research grow, more studies point to some relationship between job satisfaction and dispositional variables.

Spiritual well-being, existential well-being and job satisfaction is measured using Ellison’s Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS) [48]. They had 200 respondents fill out the SWBS and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire Short Form. For the purposes of their study, spirituality is defined as including “searching for meaning and purpose in life, living by a set of values and beliefs, making a contribution in the world, and transcending oneself” [48]. Their results indicate that spiritual well-being, religious well-being, existential well-being and job satisfaction were linked. Interestingly, the strongest positive correlation was between job satisfaction and having purpose or meaning in life.

In 2007, Clark’s research aims to improve care for the dying, and his study examines whether spirituality is related to job satisfaction among hospice workers. 215 workers (nurses, aides, doctors, chaplains, social workers, etc.) were surveyed. They completed the JAREL Spiritual Well-Being Scale (JSWB), the Chamiec-Case Spirituality Integration and a Job Satisfaction scale. He found that spirituality more likely improves job satisfaction when the worker integrates their spirituality at work [49]. A myriad of ways is suggested to become an “enlightened” worker [50]. Their book proposes that self-awareness and connectedness with others can in fact create a better work experience. They focus on items like integrity, honesty, commitment and respect. These are the same qualities that continue to emerge in various assessments of spirituality.

Fortune magazine evaluates the notion of bringing spirituality into the workplace [51]. First, he interviews members of a group called Business Leaders for Excellence, Ethics and Justice, that promotes the idea to “work from your soul.” He then attends a business school conference that opens with Tibetan bowl chimes. And, he goes on to question faith-in-the-workplace founder, David Miller, who says God can be found in the workplace; the Hebrew word for work, “Avodah,” also means worship. Gunther contemplates what he calls the breaking of the last business “taboo” in the workplace. He wonders if spirituality on the job is just the latest fad of the baby boomer generation or if it has a lasting place in the work arena. And just what are the implications of bringing spirituality into the workplace? David Miller responds, “this is about who you are, your being, your character within the organization” [51]. And, how does this spirituality manifest itself when tough decisions have to be made? Merger expert Jose Zeilstra explains it as “encouraging executives to look up from their spreadsheets to focus on people and values, by arguing for what’s right, and by trying to act with compassion” [51]. For the people Gunther interviews, there seems to be a rather strong

belief that spirituality actually benefits the company. Gunther himself concludes that the movement may be simply driven by people who strive to find purpose and make meaning in life; he concludes that whether or not this trend will last remains to be seen.

In a study conducted within various selling organizations, the relationship between workplace spirituality showed high correlations to job satisfaction ( $r=0.651$ ). This indicates that workplace spirituality as assessed via the three concepts of sense of community, meaningful work, and inner--life explained 42% of the variance in job satisfaction scores by this sample. This study also indicated a significant relationship between the conceptualization of workplace spirituality and job commitment [52].

If spirituality is seen as an individual's perception of the spiritual values within an organizational setting, such perceptions of spirituality can be predictive of attitudinally related constructs [53]. Building on the well-established connection between individual values and organizational culture, these authors investigated the relationship between organizational level spirituality and satisfaction with work rewards [53]. Within five separate studies, sampling a total of ( $n=355$ ) full-time workers enrolled in different courses at two large universities in the United States, these authors found that organizational spirituality showed the most consistent effects on work rewards satisfaction across all five studies [53]. Specifically, organizational spirituality was consistently shown to be positively correlated to job involvement, organizational identification, and rewards satisfaction.

Within a qualitative analysis of Christian teachers in the Midwest United States, the impact of teacher beliefs, values, and understandings on the motivation to continue teaching was evaluated [54]. He identified that a strong desire for personal fulfillment, accompanied by a desire for spiritual fulfillment were the major themes identified by Christian teachers as greatest sources of motivation to continue teaching. The findings of this report indicated that teachers expressed personal fulfillment in their work through the connection and sense of belonging they felt, the ability to be able to provide direction to students, their colleagues, and administration, and finally, the sense of accomplishment and contribution they experienced as a result [54].

The spiritual dimensions identified as contributing to teachers want to remain working pertain to teachers' needs to feel whole and complete, openly practice their faith, and find purpose in teaching as a result of obedience to God's call [54]. In relation to the above themes uncovered, feelings of job satisfaction experienced by teachers (signified by the personal

fulfillment dimension) were areas where any feelings of dissatisfaction were overridden by the school environment being conducive towards the expression of these needs [54]. The school was seen as providing teachers with a sense of belonging, and the environment in which teachers were able to express themselves spiritually were major contributors to teachers being motivated to remain with their organization even though they might be dissatisfied with certain aspects of their jobs [54].

The above qualitative study provides a rich source of self-reported analysis by teachers in this school. The reliability of this study was strengthened through the emphasis placed on the standardization of notes, memos, and transcripts, as well as on the basis of this research based on grounded theory [54]. It is important now to recognize that motivation to continue employment in a religious school can be linked to personal as well as spiritual dimensions.

It is not surprising that the importance of spirituality within a faith based institution is seen as prevalent. It is however interesting to note, that according to the above research, such spirituality may be an avenue by which to evaluate teachers' motivation to continue teaching. By extension, the case can thus be made that within a faith based school, the relationship between work as a personally fulfilling task may provide teachers with a sense of belonging and responsibility to their community. The feelings of wholeness and completeness represent the spiritual dimension: as teachers feel that being allowed to practice and express their faith is also a major contributing factor towards overlooking areas where they might feel dissatisfied.

Although the physical and psychological dimensions of individuals at work have been studied extensively, the spiritual dimension has been neglected for many years [55]. Spirituality is foremost [56], multifaceted [57] and has many definitions [58]. Workplace spirituality appears to be an important aspect of organizations and a noteworthy theme of inquiry [59]. Research indicates that one's spirituality does help decrease the perception of workplace stressors and thus contributes to a sense of wellness [60]. Many business people consider spirituality as a means of increasing integrity, motivation, job satisfaction and worker's performance [61].

Spirituality in the workplace is about people who perceive themselves as spirited beings, whose spirits desire and need to be energized through work. It is about experiencing real purpose and meaning at work beyond paychecks and performance reviews. Spirituality is about people sharing and experiencing some common attachment, attraction, and togetherness with each other within their work unit and the

organization as a whole [62]. It is a continuing search for meaning and purpose in life; an appreciation for the depth of life, the expanse of the universe, and natural forces which operate it; and, it is a personal belief system [63].

Spirituality in the workplace as noted earlier has been linked to workplace benefits [64]-[66]. Although traditionally ignored in management literature, the construct now is being studied more often. Volumes of work have been dedicated to this dimension, and studies on spiritual development, personality [67], values and ethics [68] have become prevalent. Spirituality is the catalyst toward reaching self-actualization [69]; while Miles, Sledge & Coppage (2008) [66] have studied cultural and spirituality linkages.

Spirituality's relationship to culture and job satisfaction merit its inclusion here. In addition, incorporating spirituality factors into an international evaluation of job satisfaction differentiates this research from many other previous studies.

The recent spurt of scholarly articles along with several authors currently writing on the work-spirituality connection [70]-[73] reflects the interest in the relationship of spirituality in the workplace, job satisfaction and organizational commitment [74]-[75]. The need for a spiritual connection has become important to a wider audience, partly because of ongoing changes in organizational structure, which often results in feelings of insecurity regarding one's place in the system [76].

The core of spirituality is about people sharing and experiencing some common attachment, attraction, and togetherness within their work unit and the organization as a whole. [62], [77]. These research areas imply the necessity of incorporating spirituality into the workplace in order to enhance worker motivation, organizational performance, and job satisfaction [71]. Based on prior research it appears that working in an environment with leaders that support a higher purpose or spiritual sense of the individual than those who don't are more satisfied and enjoy work more [78].

## CONCLUSION

While many people think there is nothing spiritual about work and the workplace, there are many areas of working life in which spiritual intelligence can be applied and benefits can be reaped to the maximum. The literature used in this paper helps to conclude that workplace spirituality plays a significant role in establishing a strong, well understood and encouraging positive organizational culture by enhancing job satisfaction of employees. Workplace spirituality is

thus very important in every organization as it has positive impact on employee job satisfaction, job performance and on employee productivity. Also, organizational culture affects the level of organizational productivity in a positive way. Thus, workplace spirituality is important to find and utilize the deepest inner resources from which comes the capacity to care and the power to tolerate and adapt with other employees at the workplace, to develop a clear and stable sense of identity as an individual in the context of shifting workplace relationships, to discern the real meaning of events and circumstances, and make work meaningful, to identify and align personal values with a clear sense of purpose and to live those values without compromise and demonstrate integrity by example.

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