

Spirituality at Workplace

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Spirituality, in a narrow sense, concerns itself with matters of the spirit, a concept closely tied to religious belief and faith, and transcendent reality. In this connection, spirituality denotes mind-body dichotomy which is indicative of separation between soul and body. But Spirituality may also include the development of the individual's inner life through practices such as search for God the supernatural, a divine influence, or information about the afterlife. A sense of connection is central of spirituality - connection to a reality beyond than the physical world and oneself, which may include an emotional experience of reverence. The spiritual quest is one that emphasizes a dynamic process in which one purposefully seeks to discover his or her potential, ultimate purpose, and personal relationship with a Higher Power or Being that may or may not be called God. Spirituality is broader than any single formal or organized religion with its prescribed tenets, dogma, and doctrines. Spiritual concerns are thus separate from the concerns of any religious group and are not synonymous with those of religion.

Workplace Spirituality:

Spirituality as conceived by Stamp (1991)⁴ is “awareness within the individuals of a sense of connectedness that exists between inner self and the world”. However, Mitroff and Denton (1999)⁵ defined spirituality as “it is to be connected with your whole self, others and the entire universe.” Whereas according to Thompson (2001)⁶, it is something that we all possess but we are not aware of it, and when it is a time to do right then it comes in action. It was defined by Marques (2005)² as “An experience of interconnectedness and trust among those involved in a work process, engendered by individual goodwill; leading to the collective creation of a motivational organizational culture, epitomized by reciprocity and solidarity; and resulting in enhanced overall performance, which is ultimately translated in lasting organizational excellence” Likewise, Ashmos and Duchon (2000)⁷ defined ‘spirituality at work’ as the “recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community”.

Rojas (2002)⁸ stated that“...spirituality may be defined as a relational-ideopraxis construct. Said differently, it is thought that an outcome of

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is the consequence of relational dynamics among the divine, self and others in maintaining a congruent ideology-life style". Intrapersonal aspect of spirituality measures five relational modes of fulfillment of self, self determination, self control, discovery of self, and enrichment of self. The intrapersonal aspect explores the inner world of the individual. Interpersonal aspect measures four relational modes of partnership mode, small group mode, organizational mode and movement mode. Interpersonal mode describes the applicability of spirituality in relation to others. Suprapersonal aspect measures three relational modes of transactional mode, transformational mode and transfigurational mode (Rojas, 2002)⁸. Suprapersonal aspect is the relation of an individual with the transcendent (Walton, 1999)⁹. Ideopraxis is a factor that measures life congruence with ideology of the individual as a whole.

Rojas (2002)⁸ described the series of trends in the development of spirituality literature in the context of management. According to him the step wise development occurred in three trends. The first trend was based on a noticeable increase in the volume of published articles over the last decade showing a merge of the spirituality and management subjects. The second trend was the simultaneous surge of research endeavors across many academic disciplines. The last trend was a sample of specific management research initiatives contributing to the formalization of spirituality as a discipline within management discourse. Spirituality has been under the focus of multiple disciplines i.e. religion, health outcomes, psychological sciences, psychotherapy, substance abuse recovery, family therapy, stress management, clinical nursing, counseling, social work, education, occupational therapy, adult education, political and social sciences, curriculum development and sports. It was not long ago since spirituality gained attention of management theorists and practitioners.

A limited resource of empirical studies in spirituality and management discourse are available (Quatro, 2004 & Nur, 2003)¹⁰. Nur (2003)¹¹ stated that reasons for the lack of empirical studies, ".....First, spirituality is a difficult concept to define or measure. There are as many definitions of spirituality as studies that investigate it. There are no widely accepted operational measures for it, either. Second, despite its popularity, many potential subjects and researchers still consider spirituality too personal to be discussed and researched in for-profit organizational settings. Taboos about the mixing of church and state spill over to the mixing of faith and business. Third, spirituality, to a certain extent has been given a bad name by "New Age" gurus and practitioners whose practices are not particularly amenable to the rigor demanded by academic research methodologies". Regarding scientific inquiry into workplace spirituality, Giacalone, Jurkiewicz, and Fry identified four weaknesses which are hindering the acceptance of newly emerging paradigm

from the scientific community. They include (1) the lack of an accepted, conceptual definition; (2) inadequate measurement tools; (3) limited theoretical development; and (4) legal concerns. In order to address such weaknesses and to advance as a workplace spirituality paradigm rooted in science, three critical issues are needed to be addressed such as levels of conceptual analysis; conceptual distinctions and measurement foci; and clarification of the relationship between criterion variables.

Movement towards Spiritualizing Organizations:

A derive for the fulfillment of spiritual need is on its way as cited in Biberman and Whitty (2000)¹² “An organizational fourth wave is mounting, the spirituality based firm. The movement toward spiritualizing the organization has apparently caught on, in both theory and practice, even if not yet universally acknowledged as the wave of the future” (pg. 203). The literature provides various stimuli for this movement. Burnout is a phenomenon that has become a common issue in the modern corporations. It is a physical or emotional exhaustion that is a negative outcome of work and effects badly on productivity and performance (Hartman and Pearlman, 1982)¹³. Low motivation, frequent absence from job, depression and even use of drugs are its consequences. The stress and burnout has cost billions of dollars annually in USA alone (Beehr, 1995)¹⁴ whereas spirituality has come up as a stress coping technique (Frew, 2000)¹⁵.

Another reason might be the increasing level of uncertainty in the social, political and economic scenario of our world. Globalization weakening the joint family system in South-Asian cultures, the emergence of a strong middle class in Asian economies, 9/11 collapse of twin towers, the declining image of corporations from Godly figures to mega frauds in shape of ENRON scandal, all these incidents are making our world volatile to further changes. Furthermore, Cash et al. (2000)¹⁶ identified, “Between 1982 and 1993 (alone), four million jobs were eliminated by Fortune 500 firms. Such job cuts exacted a severe emotional toll from affected employees and families, from coworkers and managers who remained in their organizations”. Nothing seems to be immortal and corporations themselves are insecure. All these uncertainties provoke an individual to search for a ‘spiritual presence’ (Hamilton and Jackson, 1998)¹⁷. Spiritual consciousness is a probable solution to counter this fear as stated by Labbs (1995)¹⁸, “workgroups focusing on coping with the work environment by having a larger perspective on life, aiming to find voice in the workplace (p. 63) the spiritual perspective is already causing a shift in workplace values. This shift is the move from fear to cooperation in the workplace”.

Information overload is yet another issue surrounding the technologically equipped work environment of today. This third aspect is

discussed by Tofler (1971)¹⁹ in the form of a psychology theory. He identifies a psychic imbalance that is a result of high information overload. In such a condition the decoder of information loses balance between past experiences and future vision. Today information flow is at its peak and knowledge management is more critical than knowledge acquisition. This psychic imbalance causes fear among individuals resulting in various apprehensions. In a quest to return to meaning and purpose, spirituality is the cure.

The last stimulus as cited by Tischler (1999)²⁰ is the Maslow hierarchy of needs. Employees of the modern day organizations have likely covered up the physical needs, psychological needs and esteem need. Seeking higher purpose or 'the need to know' is the natural need of every human being (1971), so employees are seeking self-actualization and ultimately spirituality at their organizational setting. Contradictory to the trends of the time, he (as cited in Kaplan, 1998)²¹ concluded that the most effective of the managers used Democratic style of leadership and were internally connected with the vision of organization. Inspired by McGregor's theory X and Theory Y he finally came up with Theory Z. He stated that the people can involve in their work up to such an extent that they start self-actualization in the workplace. Theory Z is a clear alignment with the foundational concept of spiritually working in work settings. Not even that, Maslow moved to the phenomena related to peak, mystical aesthetic and emotional experiences (Koltko-Rivera, 2006)²². Being-Cognition was identified as the activity generated in brain as a result of experiences with unusual level of intensity (Koltko-Rivera, 2006)²². The Self-actualization that was a need to find self turns in self-erasing, self transcending for ultimate truth, justice and meaning of life. "The goal of identity (self-actualization...) seems to be simultaneously an end-goal in itself, and also a transitional goal, a rite of passage, a step along the path to the transcendence of identity. This is like saying its function is to erase itself" (Maslow, 1961/1999b)²³. Transcendence is defined by Maslow as (a) a sense of loss of self-consciousness, (b) a link in the chain of eternity, (c) standing for something outside one's own skin, (d) transcendence of culture thus becoming the universal man, (e) taking responsibility of oneself as an agent rather than a victim.

Today, spirituality has become the latest buzzword in modern business community as well as academia (McDonald, 1999)²⁴. "Spirituality is creeping into the office. companies like Boeing, AT&T, lotus Development and Medtronic were using consultants and programs to motivate employees and to create a strong identity or soul", as discussed by (Galen & West, 1995, pg. 82)²⁵ in an article of Business Week. There is growing and accelerated demand for spirituality in the workplace. Companies as diverse as Pizza Hut,

BioGenex and Big Six accounting's Deloitte and Touche, are admiring the lessons usually preached by religious missionaries.

The Academy of Management and International Academy of Business Disciplines have recognized spirituality as a specialize area of human resource management in 2001, as Father Tredget (HR Managers will lead, 2001) states, "Understanding the spiritual will become an important part of workplace human development. It will become part of management training and have multiple favorable outcomes. Recent polls found that American managers and leaders wanted a deeper sense of meaning and fulfillment on the job – even more than they want money and time off. Spiritual employees who work for organizations are less fearful, more ethical, and committed. There is mounting evidence that a more humane workplace is more productive, flexible and creative. Most importantly from a management, leadership, and organizational perspective, however, is the finding by Mitroff & Denton that spirituality could be the ultimate competitive advantage.

Spirituality and Organizational Outcomes:

Burnout, stress, strains and stressors have been the topics under consideration in occupational health and organizational behavior literature. Spirituality found to have a negative relation with stress at work (Atkins, 2007)²⁶, depression (Robertson, 2007 & Yoshioka, 2007)^{27, 28} as well as merger syndrome. Frew (2000)¹⁵ studied multiple levels of employees in a health department and derived the main effect of spirituality on stress through regression analysis. Anderson (2003)²⁹ took 284 employees from two pharmaceutical companies. The companies were in a pre-acquisition stage and it was found that high merger syndrome is related with low spirituality. Health professionals are mostly concerned with the physical and non-physical wellness and spirituality is a moderator (Astin, et. al., 1999; Benjamin & Looby, 1998; Landis, 1996 & Reed, 1987)^{30, 1, 31, 32}. As far as burnout is concerned, Landis (1996)³¹ found a relationship between spirituality and psychosocial adjustment. A statistically significant portion of the variance in psychosocial adjustment is explained by spirituality.

Leadership has been an area of interest since long & it is still developing in the alignment of new challenges at work places. Spirituality has a part to play in leadership and has a significant role for business leaders (Delbecq, 1999)³³ as a significant relationship has been found with self-perceived leadership (Strack, 2001)³⁴. Up to forty percent of the variance in transformational leadership was found to be explained by combined; emotional intelligence, self-efficacy and spirituality. While, Hartsfield (2003)³⁵ found that only two percent of the variability was explained by spirituality but that was significant one. The respondents were the top leaders of the respective industry. In a similar convenience based identified sample of nine leaders,

surprising results were found. Hinds (2005)³⁶ found out that spirituality was moderately but negatively related to transformational leadership. In a latest study the concept of stewardship was tested on public service workforce by Houston and Cartwright (2007)³⁷. Public servants clearly outscored for-profit workforce on all the dimensions of spirituality. Democratic style of leadership was found to be associated with transcendent experiences widely in religious neutral as well as religious affiliated universities (Dean, 2001)³⁸. In seeking spirituality factors and personality preferences of leaders, Paulison (2002)³⁹ revealed that the upper management was more spiritual than middle management. Feeling preference was adopted by highly spiritual leaders against thinking preference. It was also shown that a supportive leadership could lead to spiritual followers, too (Karasek & Theorell, 1990)⁴⁰.

Spiritually/religiously oriented organization compared to Traditional organization, is a special area of interest in spirituality research. Bradley and Kauani (2003)⁴¹ compared the spiritual culture and spirituality of faculty of three types of institutions namely; private-secular, non-secular and state owned. The spirituality of the faculty member was according to the different cultures of the campuses. An important finding was that spiritual expression was not acknowledged in these institutions as it is in the corporate world. Contrary to the above results, the faculty and staff of a religious affiliated university and religious neutral university felt no difference in the conditions provided by the organizations that foster relation with transcendent. Dean (2001)³⁷ derived that respondents do not feel significant difference in their feeling of experience with transcendence at home than to work. Organizational values if aligned with the personal values seem to lead more experiences with transcendent.

Markow (2002)⁴² came to know about the choices of employers by MBA employees where majority preferred the organizations whose goals align with their own. The comparison of more spiritual firms with less spiritual firms was also the focus of the study by Nur (2003)⁴¹. He named the spiritually guided firms as Management-By-Virtue (MBV) Organizations and others as Traditional Management Principled (TMP) Organizations. The sample was 26 firms and due to the comparison of two different set of firms it was convenience based. Multivariate analyses showed that more spiritual firms (MBV's) scored high on affective commitment, job satisfaction and citizenship behavior whereas, it has lower level of continuance commitment. The study found no correlation of Continuance Commitment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior with all other variables including spirituality.

In the works of Markow and Klenke (2005)⁴³ and Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson (2003)⁴⁴ organizational commitment was found to be positively related with personal meaning profile and work as calling where

negatively with intention to quit. While a positive relation of organizational spirituality with job satisfaction was indicated in an investigation by Van der Walt (2007)⁴⁵. In relating spirituality with performance indicators, McGeachy (2001)⁴⁶ posited that personal fulfillment led to outstanding performance that which resulted into organizational financial success. In the respect of performance, Reyes (2006)⁴⁷ and Bohr (2007)⁴⁸ proved spirituality to be enhancing academic performance in college and university students. Similarly, Fahey (2007)⁴⁹ and Federico (2007)⁵⁰ found positive impact of spirituality on operational excellence of participants from construction, accounting and manufacturing sector using correlation analysis. As regards spirituality and performance, either solid parameters of achievement are missing or only few dimensions of spirituality are correlated. As spirituality in the workplace continues to be studied and documented, the impact on businesses is increasingly clear. It gives rise to employee loyalty and increased job satisfaction in a culture that is overcome by rising stress levels, increasing competition and instability caused by downsizing and globalization.

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