

Workplace Spirituality as a Predictor of Psychological Well-Being

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ABSTRACT :

The dawn of 21st century has heralded with the development of 'workplace spirituality' as a valuable construct among organizational and management researchers especially working in the emerging area of positive psychology, however, there is a dearth of empirical studies in this newly developing area. Realizing this empirical gap, the paper aims to examine the impact of workplace spirituality and its three dimensions (meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment of personal values with organizational values) on psychological well-being and its six dimensions in a sample of two hundred twenty four (224) Indian managers. Data has been collected through questionnaire based surveys. Correlation and regression analysis has been carried out. The findings divulge the fact that when employees experience spirituality at workplace, they feel autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance which in turn determine their psychological well-being.

Keywords: Workplace spirituality, psychological well-being, positive psychology, management.

INTRODUCTION :

The recent spurt of scholarly views and articles published in reputed international journals like Journal of managerial psychology, journal of management enquiry, journal of organizational change management and journal of management, spirituality, and religion establishes the fact that workplace spirituality has received scant and sporadic attention in synchronic management research. It has been also observed that there is a continuous and burgeoning scientific interest among management researchers to investigate the role of spirituality from bewildering array of angles in determining organizational performance (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2010). In spite of growing popularity and world-wide attention the concept 'workplace spirituality' is still in its infancy and neophyte stage because of certain issues:(1) the lack of an accepted conceptual definition (2) inadequate measurement tools (3) limited theoretical development (4) legal concerns, that have stood as impediments to the development of workplace spirituality as a scientific discipline in mainstream management discourse (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2010; p.5). The first and foremost issue is

related to its conceptualization and definition from multiple perspectives which sometimes generate debate among management researchers and scholars. Nevertheless, the most popular and worldwide acknowledged conceptualization and definition of workplace spirituality comes from Ashmos and Duchon (2000) who argue that “a workplace can be considered to be spiritual when it recognizes that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community”. Further, they also emphasize that spirituality is not confined to only individuals rather it encompasses group and organization as well. Another marked and remarkable contribution comes from Giacalone and Jurkewicz (2004) who define spirituality “as a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote 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”. Moreover some synchronic studies define spirituality as “employees' experience at workplace which includes several remarkable aspects such as sense of meaning, community, and transcendence” (Pawar, 2009), and “as the impact of personal spirituality on the everyday thoughts, behaviors and interactions of employees” (Tombaugh, Mayfield, and Durand, 2011).

Another marked issue which has hampered the progress of 'workplace spirituality' as a mainstream research agenda in management discourse is its overlapping nature with the construct 'religion'. However, scholars have always attempted to distinguish spirituality from religion. For instance, Krishnakumar & Neck (2002) argue that spirituality is a concept or a principle that originates from the unfathomable and uncanny world of the psychological reality of an individual and goes beyond the prescribed rules of religion. Further, it has also been viewed that religion divides people through dogma and the emphasis on formal structure, and excludes those who have different beliefs and therefore, spirituality is inclusive, tolerant and open-minded (Mitroff, 2003). Nonetheless, in the current paper spirituality has been confined within the context of workplace without any religious orientation because “imbuing religion into workplace spirituality can foster zealotry at the expense of organizational goals, offend constituents and customers, and decrease morale and employee well-being” (Fry and Cohen, 2009).

Another variable which has been considered in the present paper is psychological well-being. Within the behavioral sciences in general and occupational health psychology in particular, there has been a specific focus on the

importance of well-being, both physical and mental health, in affecting success in many life domains including the workplace. Though, it is difficult to define psychological well-being in concrete terms because of its subjective perception and complex notion (Rathi and Rastogi, 2007), two schools have contributed significantly in defining it. The first school defines well-being from hedonic perspective and argues that well-being comes from experiencing as much joy as possible and avoiding pain and discomfort (Kahnemon, Dioner and Schwarz, 1999). The notion of “hedonistic” approach suggests that an individual strive for maximization of pleasure (positive affect) and minimization of pain (negative affect), and the goal of life is to experience maximum pleasure (Bentham, 1789). In contrast, another school defines well-being from eudemonic perspective and states that essence of well-being is more than pleasure and joy (Ryff, 1989a, 1989b). The eudemonic approach emphasizes on true happiness leading a virtuous life and realizing human potential is the ultimate human goal (Aristotle, 1947). The above mentioned differences between hedonic and eudemonic well-being have also been noted by some scholars in recent times. For instance, Dierendonck and Mohan (2006) argue that the hedonic well-being is more related to feeling relaxed, happy, and without problems, whereas eudemonic well-being is related to feeling challenged and to activities that offer the opportunity for personal growth and development. Further, it is a well established fact that in modern competitive corporate world there is a dire need to establish a perfect balance between personal and professional domains of life in order to have happy and satisfied life and therefore, in the present study, the construct psychological well-being has been considered from the perspective of life satisfaction which encompasses the pursuit of meaningful and developmental goals of one's domain of life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a corollary rise in interest in the scientific study of workplace spirituality, its antecedents, and consequences, which is visible in relevant and available literature. For instance, Researchers have reported the positive relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational variables like employee attitudes (Millman et al., 2003, Crawford et al., 2009), self-esteem (Crawford et al., 2009), organizational commitment (Nasina and Doris, 2011; Malik and Naeem, 2011; Usman and Danish, 2010), job satisfaction (Noor and Arif, 2011), quality of life (Karakas, 2010), leadership effectiveness (Abdullah et al., 2009), job involvement, organizational identification, and work satisfaction (Kolodinsky,

Giocalone, and Jurkiewicz ,2008), work unit performance (Duchon and Plowman,2005). Apart from workplace spirituality, psychological and employee well-being is another area which has received significant attention by behavioral scientists in recent times, however, Research is lacking in the area of well-being from management point of view (Baptiste, 2008). Though, some scholars argue that workplace spirituality promotes psychological well being (Fry, 2005; Karakas, 2010; Zellars et al., 2010), a clear empirical substantiation has been lacking in mainstream management research (McKee, 2008). Therefore, the current study is an attempt to fill the lacuna and the absence, located somewhere in previous researches by exploring the relationship between workplace spirituality and psychological well-being in a sample of Indian managers with the following objectives and hypotheses.

OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the relationship between workplace spirituality and psychological well-being and its dimensions.
2. To analyze the impact of workplace spirituality on psychological well-being and its dimensions.

Hypotheses

1. Workplace spirituality has positive and significant relationship with psychological well-being and its dimensions.
2. Workplace spirituality has significant bearing on psychological well-being and its dimensions.

METHOD

Sample

A survey has been conducted to examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and psychological well-being. Three hundred (300) managers have been selected through convenient and purposive sampling. These managers are working in Indian public sector organizations. Three hundred (300) questionnaires have been personally distributed to these managers and they have been given a brief introduction about workplace spirituality and psychological well-being. Two hundred twenty four (224) completely filled-up questionnaires have been returned showing the response rate of 74.67%. Mean age of the sample is 39.97 years(minimum age=24, maximum age=58) and mean of total work experience is 15.27 years(minimum=02 years, maximum=36).

MEASURES

The basic purpose of the study is to explore the relationship between workplace spirituality and psychological well-being. To serve the purpose, both the constructs workplace spirituality and psychological well-being have been measured through questionnaire based survey method.

Workplace spirituality has been measured by adapting twenty four items from Ashmos and Duchon's (2000) spirituality scale. Although, the scale consists of seven dimensions, only three dimensions (meaning in work, sense of community, and alignment of personal values with organizational values) have been considered to measure workplace spirituality in the current study. The most plausible reasons for considering these three dimensions of workplace spirituality are: (1) these three dimensions have been recognized as important ones in previous studies (Millman et al., 2003). (2) A small number of scholars have conducted empirical studies using one or more of the abovementioned dimensions of workplace spirituality (McKee, 2008). Moreover, it has also been argued that the abovementioned dimensions are important to measure workplace spirituality in organizational context because these dimensions indicate employees' involvement in spirituality at workplace (Neal and Bennet, 2000). Meaning in work includes seven items, sense of community includes eight items, and alignment of personal values with organizational values includes nine items. All the items have been rated on a 1-7 likert type scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 7 indicating strong agreement with the statement. Scores have been calculated by summing the responses of the items. Total score of workplace spirituality refers to sum of scores of its three dimensions. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale is 0.91. The value of Cronbach's alpha is beyond the prescribed limit 0.7, which indicates that the scale is reliable (Nunnaly, 1978).

Psychological well-being has been measured with the help of psychological well-being scale developed by Carol Ryff (1989 b). The scale consists of 54 items which represents six dimensions of psychological well-being namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relation with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Each dimension consists of 9 items. All the items have been rated on a 1-6 likert type scale, with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 6 indicating strongly agree with the item or statement. Scoring has been done by summing the responses of items. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale has been found to be 0.81 in the present study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To fulfill the objectives of the study, initially correlation coefficients have been obtained between overall workplace spirituality and psychological well-being. Further, correlation coefficients have also been found between dimensions of workplace spirituality and dimensions of psychological well-being.

Table 1: Pearson correlation between workplace spirituality and psychological well-being on overall basis (N=224)

VARIABLES	PWB
WPS	0.62**

Note: ** significant at $p < 0.01$ level; WPS=workplace spirituality, PW=psychological well-being.

Table 2: Pearson correlation between dimensions of workplace spirituality and dimensions of psychological well-being (N=224)

VARIABLES	AU	EM	PG	PR	PL	SA
MW	0.40**	0.55**	0.54**	0.53**	0.36**	0.46**
SOC	0.39**	0.30**	0.37**	0.46**	0.22**	0.27**
AOV	0.51**	0.39**	0.49**	0.55**	0.28**	0.42**

Note: ** significant at $p < 0.01$ level; MW=meaning in work, SOC=sense of community, AOV=alignment of personal values with organizational values, AU=autonomy, EM= environmental mastery, PG =personal growth, PR= positive relations with others, PL= purpose in life, SA= self -acceptance.

Though, the Pearson correlation indicates that workplace spirituality and its dimensions (meaning in work, sense of community, and alignment of personal values with organizational values) have positive and significant relationship with psychological well-being and its dimensions, it cannot be interpreted directly as an index of the extent to which scores on psychological well-being are influenced by workplace spirituality and its dimensions. Therefore, regression analysis has been applied.

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Table 3: Results of standard regression to predict psychological well-being on the basis of overall scores of workplace spirituality

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R	R ²	S.E.	F-Value	df	beta
PWB	WPS	.62	.38	20.76	135.64**	1,222	.62

**Significant at .01 level. PWB=psychological well-being, WPS=workplace spirituality.

Table 4: Stepwise regression analysis for the prediction of dimensions of psychological well-being, with the independent variable as dimensions of WPS and dependent variable as dimensions of PWB, (N=224).

Variables	R	R ²	SE Mean	F-Value	df	Beta
D.V. Autonomy						
MW	.40	.16	4.93	41.07**	1,222	.40
MW, SOC	.49	.24	4.71	34.08**	1,221	.30, .30
MW, SOC, AOV	.54	.30	4.53	30.76**	1,220	.21, .01, .42
D.V. Environment Mastery						
MW	.55	.30	4.71	95.82**	1,222	.55
MW, SOC	.57	.32	4.66	51.90*	1,221	.50, .14
D.V. Personal Growth						
MW	.54	.30	5.07	92.64**	1,222	.54
MW, SOC	.58	.34	4.93	55.89**	1,221	.48, .22
MW, SOC, AOV	.61	.37	4.81	43.11**	1,220	.41, -.01, .32
D.V. Positive Relationship with others						
MW	.53	.28	4.81	85.75**	1,222	.53
MW, SOC	.61	.37	4.81	65.94**	1,221	.43, .33
MW, SOC, AOV	.64	.40	4.09	49.51**	1,220	.36, .12, .30
D.V. Purpose in Life						
MW	.36	.13	4.71	33.87**	1,222	.36
MW, AOV	.39	.15	4.67	19.61*	1,221	.30, .15
D.V. Self Acceptance						
MW	.46	.21	5.08	60.04**	1,222	.46
MW, SOC	.48	.23	5.04	32.75*	1,221	.42, .13
MW, SOC, AOV	.53	.28	4.89	28.31**	1,220	.34, -.14, .38

Note: **Significant at .01 level; *Significant at .05 level.

DV=Dependent Variable; MW=meaning in work; SOC=sense of community; AOV=alignment of personal values with organizational values.

Table 3 indicates that workplace spirituality significantly predicts psychological well-being with calculated R as .62 ($F=135.64^{**}$, $p<.01$, $\beta=.62$) and explains 38% of variance in predicting psychological well-being.

Table 4 represents stepwise regression analysis, which has been used for the prediction of dimensions of psychological well-being, with the independent variable as dimensions of workplace spirituality. The three dimensions of workplace spirituality were entered as predictors, and it has been found that MW has significantly predicted autonomy with the calculated R as .40 ($F=41.07^{**}$, $p<.01$, $\beta=.40$) and explains 16% of variance in the prediction of autonomy. Similarly, MW along with SOC has significantly predicted autonomy with the calculated R as .49 ($F=34.08^{**}$, $p<.01$, $\beta=.30$) and explains 24% variance in the prediction of autonomy. Further, it has also been found that MW, SOC, and AOV has jointly predicted autonomy with the calculated R as .54 ($F=30.76^{**}$, $p<.01$, $\beta=.42$) and explains 30% variance in the prediction of autonomy. On the whole, we can say that AOV is the strongest predictor of autonomy with the calculated beta value as .42.

MW has significantly predicted environmental mastery with the calculated R as .55 ($F=95.82^{**}$, $p<.01$, $\beta=.55$) and explains 30% variance in prediction of environmental mastery. MW along with SOC has significantly predicted environmental mastery with the calculated R as .57 ($F=51.90^{*}$, $p<.05$, $\beta=.14$) and explains 32% variance in predicting environmental mastery. MW has been found strongest predictor of environmental mastery.

MW has significantly predicted personal growth with the calculated R as .54 ($F=92.64^{**}$, $p<.01$, $\beta=.54$) and explains 30% of variance in the prediction of personal growth. Similarly, MW along with SOC has significantly predicted personal growth with the calculated R as .58 ($F=55.89^{**}$, $p<.01$, $\beta=.22$) and explains 34% variance in the prediction of personal growth. Further, it has also been found that MW, SOC, and AOV has jointly predicted personal growth with the calculated R as .61 ($F=43.11^{**}$, $p<.01$, $\beta=.32$) and explains 37% variance in the prediction of personal growth. On the whole, we can say that MW is the strongest predictor of personal growth with the calculated beta value as .54.

MW has significantly predicted positive relationship with others with the calculated R as .53 ($F=85.75^{**}$, $p<.01$, $\beta=.53$) and explains 28% of variance in the prediction of positive relationship with others. Similarly, MW along with SOC has significantly predicted positive relationship with others with the calculated R as .61 ($F=65.94^{**}$, $p<.01$, $\beta=.33$) and explains 37% variance in the prediction of positive

relationship with others. Further, it has also been found that MW, SOC, and AOV has jointly predicted positive relationship with others with the calculated R as .64 ($F=49.51^{**}$, $p<.01$, $Beta=.30$) and explains 40% variance in the prediction of personal growth. On the whole, we can say that MW is the strongest predictor of positive relationship with others with the calculated beta value as .53.

MW has significantly predicted purpose in life with the calculated R as .36 ($F=33.87^{**}$, $p<.01$, $Beta=.36$) and explains 13% of variance in the prediction of purpose in life. Similarly, MW along with AOV has significantly predicted purpose in life with the calculated R as .39 ($F=19.61^*$, $p<.05$, $Beta=.15$) and explains 15% variance in the prediction of purpose in life. On the whole, we can say that MW is the strongest predictor of purpose in life with the calculated beta value as .36.

MW has significantly predicted self-acceptance with the calculated R as .46 ($F=60.04^{**}$, $p<.01$, $Beta=.46$) and explains 21% of variance in the prediction of self-acceptance. Similarly, MW along with SOC has significantly predicted self-acceptance with the calculated R as .48 ($F=32.75^*$, $p<.05$, $Beta=.13$) and explains 23% variance in the prediction of self-acceptance. Further, it has also been found that MW, SOC, and AOV has jointly predicted self-acceptance with the calculated R as .53 ($F=28.31^{**}$, $p<.01$, $Beta=.38$) and explains 28% variance in the prediction of self-acceptance. On the whole, we can say that MW is the strongest predictor of self-acceptance.

The results (Table 3) indicate that on overall basis, workplace spirituality (WPS) has significant and positive association with psychological well-being (PWB) and can be considered as one of the important factors which determine psychological well-being of employees. The most plausible reason for such kind of results may be attributed to the fact that workplace spirituality has much positive psychological impact on employees attitudes and behavior (Millman et al., 2003, Crawford et al., 2009), which makes them psychologically well.

It is also evident from Table 4 that Autonomy (AU), which is one of the dimensions of well-being, has been strongly predicted by AOV (alignment of personal values with organizational values), which is the dimension of workplace spirituality. The most possible reasons for such type of result may be (1) when there is value congruence, employees feel more involved in their jobs, develops positive attitudes towards their organization and job and experience psychologically rewarded. (2) when there is value congruence, employees make themselves able to think and act in their own ways; set their own work-pace, supervise their own activities, regulate behavior from within; evaluate self by personal standards and feel themselves empowered and autonomous.

Table 4 also reveals that other five dimensions of well-being (EM, PG, PR, PL, and SA) have been strongly predicted by MW (meaning in work), which is one of the dimensions of workplace spirituality. The plausible reasons for such type of results may be: (1) When work become meaningful employees experience intrinsic motivation, as a result they feel a sense of work flow. During this flow they develop a sense of mastery and competence in managing the work which further leads to a tendency to manage work related external activities and environment factors. (2) The employees who perceive their work meaningful; sees themselves as growing and expanding; are open to new experiences; have sense of realizing their potential; experience improvement in self and behavior over time; and have a feeling of continued development and personal growth. (3) Meaningful work not only gives a sense of enjoyment at workplace but it also has spillover effect on other domains of employees, which includes their human relationships as well. Therefore, there is high possibility that when employees become happy with their work, they rarely go in frustration and stress and enjoy warm, satisfying, and trusting relationships with others. (4) Meaningful work creates a sense of directedness not only in professional life but also in personal life. In such a case employees belief that life has some purpose, aims and objectives, that can be fulfilled through the work. (5) When employees find their work meaningful they develop a sense of self actualization by fulfilling their life purpose (beyond salary, economic benefits and cash) through their work, and when purpose crosses the economical boundaries there is high possibility that employees develop an attitude of acknowledging and accepting multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities which overall results into self-acceptance nature. In summary, the above mentioned results clearly indicate that workplace spirituality is an important indicator of psychological well-being, which is in line with the previous findings (Arnold et al., 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

Workplace spirituality is a growing field of interest, not only in popular literature, but also in top tier conferences and management meetings. Organizations are also moving towards work arrangements that can be described as spiritual. However, it appears that many scholars find it difficult to move from a conceptual view of workplace spirituality to a practical and empirical view. Through the rigor of empirical research, this study has made some progress towards dealing with spirituality in the workplace on a practical level by exploring the relationship between workplace spirituality and psychological well-being in a sample of Indian managers. At macro level the study divulges the fact that workplace spirituality can

be recognized as an important predictor of employee's well-being. The study also highlights the role of meaningful work, sense of community and alignment of values as critical factors in determining employees' autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, which in turn determine their psychological well-being. Therefore, it is suggested that organizational leaders should try to inject spirituality in organizational vision, mission and policies in such a way that managers can realize true meaning in their jobs, experience community feeling and align their personal values with organizational values, which would not only lead to better psychological and mental health of managers but shall also bring rich dividends in many spheres of their life resulting in an all-round organizational development. In spite of the potentially ground breaking nature of this research the present study has certain limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the sample selected for the study involves only managers working in public sector Indian organizations; therefore, generalization of the findings may not be done until sample includes managers from private sectors as well. Second, data has been collected from a small sample having few female employees therefore; future research may be done in a large sample including male and female in equal ratio. Nevertheless, the study has provided an impetus for further exploration of nexus between workplace spirituality and psychological well-being in other public and private sector organizations including service, software, and manufacturing. Future researchers are encouraged to establish workplace spirituality as a new frontier of management research by conceptualizing and measuring it through qualitative and quantitative lens.

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