Workplace Spirituality and Its Relationship with Employee Outcomes

*J Vishnu Prasanna
**Dr.C. Madhavaiah

*Research Scholar, Department of Management, Pondicherry University, Karaikal Campus
**Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Pondicherry University, Karaikal Campus

Abstract

The concept of workplace spirituality (WS) has gained importance in the last years. The purpose of this study is to conduct empirical research in automobile industry in order to investigate the relationships between individual spirit at work and three employee work attitudinal variables (job satisfaction, organizational identification and psychological well-being) and three organizational outcomes (in-role performance, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), and turnover intentions) further examine causal relations among these organizational behavior variables with a longitudinal design examine three employee work attitudes as mediator variables between individual spirit at work and three organizational outcomes and explore the potential antecedents of organizational conditions that foster employee experienced individual spirit at work .Data were obtained through 2 organizations. The results were greatly supportive for the direct structural model and partially supportive for the fully mediated model. Moreover, there were different findings across self report and supervisor rating on performance and OCB models. Additionally, the antecedent conditions that fostered employees experienced individual spirit at work and the implications of these findings for research and practice are discussed with this study.

Keywords: **Individual spirit at work, work attitudes, organizational outcomes, antecedent conditions of individual spirit at work.**

1. Introduction

During recent years, organizations have experienced important transformations in their organizational environment. Structural changes, downsizing, and layoffs in companies have created environments in which employees experience low self-esteem Several organizations have faced difficulties building important aspects of an organization such as a community among employees, a connection between the organization and employees' values, and an organizational atmosphere in which the employees can demonstrate their capacity.In an effort to improve organizational environments, managers have implemented numerous activities aimed at building a better organizational climate. Some of these policies or activities have the purpose of creating or enhancing what is called workplace spirituality According to Caudron (1997), "employees are no longer content with just a paycheck and good benefits; they want meaning and passion. Here is how fulfilling work can add up to more productive, happier employees and perhaps a healthier environment.

3. Literature Review

Ashmos and Duchon (2000) also stated that WS involves a sense of community. They defined WS 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" An explanation of each dimension becomes relevant for the purpose of understanding spirituality in the workplace.

Inner life

The workplace has become a place for employees to express aspects of their personality,find a sense of meaning and bring their whole selves (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Fairholm,1996). Workplaces have become an important element of employees' lives. Inner life

can be defined as "the feeling that individuals have about who they are, what they are doing and the contributions they make" (Vail, 1998, p. 218).

Meaningful work

Several researchers have emphasized the importance of the activities that employees conduct in their workplaces. Morse and Weiss (1955) conducted a study in order to explore the meaning of work. They found that most surveyed men believed their job served functions other than merely earning a living. More recently, Bowie (1998) looked to Immanuel Kant in order to achieve a better understanding of meaningful work. According to Kant work can be considered meaningful if it is entered freely, allows the worker to have autonomy and independence, develops her/his rational capacities, provides sufficient wages, supports the moral Development of employees and is not paternalistic.

Sense of community

Community can be defined as "a partnership of free people committed to the care and nurturing of each other's mind, body, heart, and soul through participatory means" Naylor, Willimon and Osterberg, 1996, p. 42). Community also means having a sense of belonging, a shared faith that is presented among individuals (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Alignment with organizational values

Organizational alignment is "the degree to which an organization's design, strategy, and culture are cooperating to achieve the same desired goals" (Sender, 1997, p. 23). He also argued that the alignment can be understood as a distance between ideal and real elements that are part of the organization. This alignment can also be viewed as a relationship between the employee and the organization. Milliman et al. (2003) stated that alignment with organizational values is about working in an organization with a sense of ethics and integrity.

Workplace Spirituality and employee Outcomes

WS has an important effect at the organizational, team and individual level Burack,1999; Daniel, 2010; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). According to Kolodinsky et al. (2008), impact that WS has on employees can be viewed as a relationship between the individual and the organization. They referred to this association as a person-organization fit (P-O fit). This concept relies on judgments of congruence between an employee's personal values and the organizational culture (Cable & DeRue, 2002).

WS and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction can provide managers with important information about whether employees are satisfied or dissatisfied with the activities they conduct in the Organization. According to the Conference Board, which is a global research association, job satisfaction is a relevant variable for those organizations that aim to understand their employees (Gibbons, 2010). In their annual job satisfaction survey conducted in the US in 2009, it was found that only 45% of respondents were satisfied with their job. The results showed a significant drop from the survey conducted in 1987 in which 61% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with their job. Studies have found that when employees feel satisfied with their activities at work they show positive intentions to stay in the organization (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003b; Kramer & Schmalenberg, 1991a, 1991b; Randolph, 2005).

WS and turnover intention

Turnover is another variable of interest in this research. Studying and analyzing turnover can uncover important information for those organizations that aim at having a stable workforce, reducing organizational costs and obtaining information about the conditions in which employees conduct their work-related activities (Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2002; Mobley, 1977; Porter & Steers, 1973). Several researchers have highlighted the costs that turnover has on organizations. According to Cascio (2007) there are

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three categories of costs in the turnover model: separation costs, replacement costs and training costs. He noted the importance for organizations to select and retain the right employees.

WS and organizational commitment

Organizational commitment is also relevant to those organizations that would like to know the actual commitment that their employees have toward the firm. Organizational commitment has been defined as "the strength of an individual's identification with an involvement in a particular organization" Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974, p. 604).Porter et al. (1974) stated that commitment is characterized by three factors. The first one is about having a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organization's goals and values. The second factor involves a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization.The third is about having a desire to maintain organizational membership.

WS and individual innovative behavior

Innovative behavior is another important element within organizations. Innovative behavior can be considered a useful weapon when organizations face important changes (Mumford, 2000; Runco, 2004). Mayfield and Mayfield (2004; 2008) remarked on the importance of analyzing and finding ways of generating creativity within organizations. They noted that an organization's competitiveness depends on knowledge workers who have the capacity to innovate. Individual innovative behavior can be defined as "the intentional creation, introduction, and application of new ideas within a work role, group, or organization, in order to benefit role performance, the group, or the organization" (Janssen, 2004, p. 202). Janssen (2004) claimed that individual innovation behavior occurs in three stages: idea generation, idea promotion to potential allies, and idea realization.

Findings

• This study makes important contributions to the emerging body of research on workplace spirituality. First, it confirms the effect that WS has on employee outcomes such as job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. Also, it takes into consideration new variables such as individual innovative behavior.

• The objective was to test if workplace spirituality has a significant relationship with the generation and implementation of ideas. Second, this research is unique in the sense that it studied differences of perceptions of workplace spirituality from employees.

• Generally, results show that workplace spirituality has an important relationship with all employee outcomes. In this line, this research found results consistent with previous studies (Milliman, et al., 2003; Rego & Cunha, 2008; Rego, et al., 2007). With respect to job satisfaction, results suggest that those organizations that are high in spirituality can have more satisfied employees.

• Moreover, those organizations that would like to increase the satisfaction of their workforce can implement practices aimed at building a better environment within the firm.

• Regarding turnover intention, the results were the opposite of what was hypothesized. It was expected that there would be a negative and significant relationship between workplace spirituality and intention to change jobs.

• Theory had suggested that those organizations characterized by having a sense of community, where employees can express their inner life, where they conduct meaningful work and where there is a match between the organization's and the employee's values would have employees with lower intention to change jobs With respect to affective organizational commitment, the hypothesis was supported.

• That is, workplace spirituality and affective organizational commitment are positively related. This result agrees with the literature, which states that employees can be more emotionally attached to the organization if they perceive aspects of spirituality in their

workplaces, such as sense of community and a common set of values, as well as an ability to express their inner life and conduct meaningful activities at work.

• For individual innovative behavior, results showed a positive and significant relationship between the two constructs. This means that workplace spirituality practices can help in building an atmosphere in which employees can express, develop and implement their ideas. This implication can be helpful for those organizations that invest time and money for research.

Conclusion

The concept of workplace spirituality has been discussed and analyzed in present research. As noted before, there has been a lack of empirical research focusing on the impact that workplace spirituality has on employee outcomes (Rego & Cunha, 2008). This study presented a model that was tested. This study also tries to present the applicability of management practices that can help create or enhance workplace spirituality. Results were consistent in terms of equivalence, and measurements were consistent. As mentioned in the discussion section, only the relationship between workplace spirituality and turnover intention presented a relationship different to what was hypothesized. Another objective of this study was to test if there was a difference in perception of workplace spirituality. Results showed that there is a significant difference in employee perceptions in Automobile industry.

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