Spirituality at Workplace and Organizational Performance

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Nearest in spirituality as scholarly topics has grown in recent years. The global village someday needs a global spirit. Today people all over the world work in an organization. It is a place where people spent or invest the bulk of their time. Can the workplace be the platform where the employees derive satisfaction by releasing his/her spiritual urges? What spirituality is at workplace? How spirituality does effects the organizational performance?

The concept of spirituality draws on the ethics, values motivation, and work life balance and leadership elements of an organization. Spiritual organization is concerned with helping employees to develop and reach their potential. They are also concerned with addressing the problems created by work life conflicts. Spirituality at work is about leaders and followers, who understand themselves, feel happiness in their work find their job meaningful to them, experience sense of belongingness, connectedness to one another and their workplace community. It brings with the acknowledgement that people have both an outer life and that the nourishment of their inner life can produce a more meaningful and productive outer life that can have beneficial consequences for the organization. Therefore spirituality can provide an agenda as employees search for more meaning at work and as business leaders seek more socially responsible approaches to business and new ways to motivate and inspire workers.

[Keywords: Spirituality, organizational performance, happiness, meaningfulness, commitment]

Workplace spirituality can be defined as the "recognition that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work taking place in the context of a community" (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000, p. 137). Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) suggested a different definition, arguing that workplace spirituality is... 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. Spirituality at work is not about religion, or about getting people converted to a specific belief system (Laabs, 1995; Cavanagh, 1999). It does not necessarily involve a connection to any specific religious tradition, but rather can be based on personal values and philosophy. It is about employees who view themselves as spiritual beings

whose souls need nourishment at work, who experience a sense of purpose and meaning in their work, and a sense of connectedness to one another and to their workplace community (Mitroff and Denton, 1999; Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Harrington et al., 2001; Milliman et al., 2003). Religion divides people through dogma and the emphasis on formal structure, and excludes those who have different beliefs. Spirituality is inclusive, tolerant and open-minded (Mitroff, 2003).

There are more than seventy definitions of spirituality at work, and still, there is no widely accepted definition of spirituality (Markow and Klenke, 2005). There are indeed many possible ways to define such a complex and diverse term as spirituality at work. For example, spirituality has been defined as our inner consciousness (Guillory, 2000), a specific form of work feeling that energizes action (Dehler and Welsh, 1994), "a process of selfenlightenment" (Barnett, Krell, and Sendry, 1999, p. 563), "a worldview plus a path" (Cavanagh et. al., 2001, p. 6), "access to the sacred force that impels life" (Nash and McLennan, 2001, p. 17), and "the unique inner search for the fullest personal development through participation into transcendent mystery" (Delbecq, 1999, p.345). Laabs (1995) points out that "defining spirituality in the workplace is like capturing an angel- it's ethereal and beautiful, but perplexing" (p.63). The term "spirituality" comes from the Latin word "*spiritus*" or "*spiritualis*" that means breathing, breath, air or wind (Merriam- Webster). *Spiritus* is defined as "an animating or vital principle held to give life to physical organisms" (Merriam-Webster). This implies spirit is the life force that inhabits us when we are alive and breathing (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). Scott (1994) offers a parallel definition for spirit as "the vital principle or animating force within living beings; that which constitutes one's unseen intangible being; the real sense or significance of something" (p.64).Spirituality, as defined by Mitroff and Denton (1999a), is "the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others and the entire universe" (p.83).
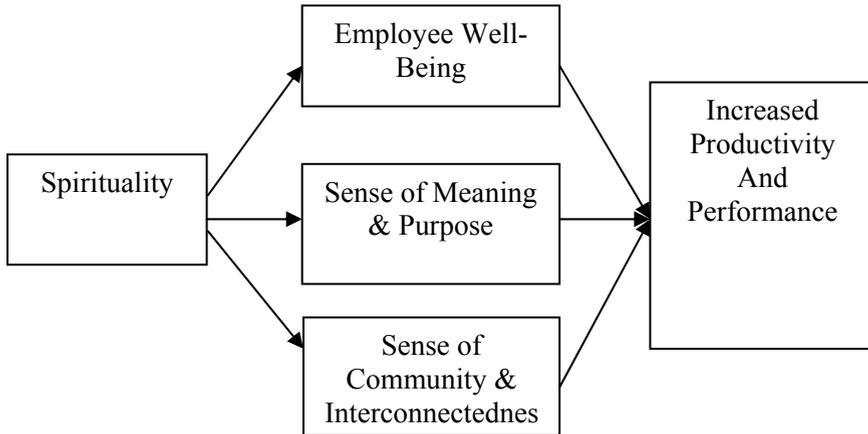
Perspectives of Spirituality

Spirituality raises a question among the employees for the meaningfulness of their work, how satisfied they are. Why they are doing this work? Where these this job leads to me? These question employees ask to themselves about their existence in their job. This leads to origin of different perspectives of spirituality in workplace.

a) *Human resources perspective*: Spirituality enhances employee well-being and quality of life;

b) *Philosophical perspective*: Spirituality provides employees a sense of purpose and meaning at work;

c) *Interpersonal perspective:* Spirituality provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community.

Therefore, the paper introduces an integrative view of how spirituality at work benefits organizations through these three perspectives. In particular, the paper notes and attempts to explain the general lack of cumulative work and the

lack of synthesis of work across these three perspectives. The interplay between these three perspectives can provide us a more comprehensive understanding of how spirituality leads to effectiveness and better performance in organizations.

Three Perspectives of Spirituality and Performance

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Employee Well-  │
                ┌──▶│     Being       │──┐
                │   └─────────────────┘  │      ┌──────────────────┐
┌──────────────┐│   ┌─────────────────┐  │      │    Increased     │
│              ││   │ Sense of Meaning│  │      │   Productivity   │
│ Spirituality │┼──▶│    & Purpose    │──┼────▶ │       And        │
│              ││   └─────────────────┘  │      │   Performance    │
└──────────────┘│   ┌─────────────────┐  │      └──────────────────┘
                │   │    Sense of     │  │
                └──▶│  Community &    │──┘
                    │ Interconnectednes│
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First perspective purports that incorporating spirituality at work a) increases employees' well-being by increasing their morale, commitment, and productivity; b) decreases employees' stress, burnout, and workaholism in the workplace. As second perspective is connected to the concepts such as the search for meaning and purpose in what employees are doing at the workplace. Providing a deeper sense of meaning and purpose for employees is important; as this enables employees to perform better and to be more productive and creative at work. This perspective contends that incorporating spirituality at work provides employees and managers a deeper sense of meaning and purpose at work. Last perspectives focus on connected to the concepts of belonging, community, and connectedness. This perspective is centered on the interpersonal relationships, collective dimensions, and social dynamics of spirituality. This perspective contends that incorporating spirituality at work provides organizational members a sense of community and connectedness; thus increases their attachment, loyalty and belonging to the organization.

Benefits of Spirituality at workplace

Spirituality may work in many ways in the organization, it enhance the morale, meaningfulness in their jobs, creativity, increased production , sense of betterment, commitment, involvement happiness in job, low absenteeism & turnover the present paper focused on these variables. Many studies showed that being spiritual in job an employee can have almost these sign in their work and the positive attitudes of employees for their job leads to increased organizational performance. Let us see how spirituality helps in boosting organizational performance.

Creativity: - spirituality can assist the individual to expand their inner creation to expand beyond normal boundaries leading to increased intuition and creativity (Guillory, 2000; Cash and Gray, 2000; Harman and Hormann, 1990). With the power of spirituality one can link his potential to extraordinary way with that of God's (Gunter, 2001). Spirituality also breeds awareness, which in turn breeds intuition in turn leads to creativity (Freahman, 1999). Thus spirituality enrichment provides to the employees will lead to happiness and satisfaction which will cause employees to be more creative (Turner, 1999).

Honesty and trust: Honesty and trust leads to better performance in the organization and also enhance the sense of co-operation among the employees. Trust plays a prominent role in decision making and better co-ordination with managers that ultimately leads to the accelerated growth and production. Spiritual leadership in organization causes the establishment of spiritual beliefs and faith in work in employees and this, as an intrinsic motivator for employees, makes them develop their abilities and, consequently, increase their responsibility (Nargesian, 2008). Especially in times of economic depression, when the company is not doing well, trust between the management and the employees play a pivotal role in the future performance of the organization. Thus spirituality develops a bond of trust among employees.

Personal fulfilment: When an individual is said is spiritual it implies he/she is satisfied with his/her job thus this gives a sense of achievement satisfaction as similar to Maslow's need hierarchy model of motivation (Burack, 1999, p. 284). Spirituality leads to the employees feeling complete when they come to work. This will result in a high degree of personal fulfilment and increased morale. This will ultimately to better organizational performance.

Satisfaction: If work content can provide people with positive spiritual experience, it will result in spiritual development. In individuals' point of view, their work will become lovable and compassionate and what previously was boring will seem as a magical tool for growth, enhancement and fostering their working life. In this situation, individuals have good feelings of positivity and effectiveness. They feel effective and this feeling of effectiveness brings joy and peace in work and the feeling of Satisfaction. In other words, content of work can positively develop spirituality in workplace (Rasgar, 2006).

Commitment: Spirituality increased commitment by establishing a "Trustful Climate" in the workplace (Burack, 1999,pp. 285). Organizational commitment is a concept that reflects the attachment of employees towards their organization. Hence the employees found conducive climate in their organization that leads a feeling of a part of the organization that enhances the commitment among the employees.

Organizational performance: It has been suggested that organization that encourage spirituality may experience enhanced organizational performance (Neck and Milliman, 1994; Turner, 1999; Thompson, 2000). According to Mitroff and Denton (1999, pp. 91)"No organization can survive for long without spirituality and soul" these citation proves that common qualities that

the spiritual enrichment brings about , like intuition and creativity, honesty and trust, satisfaction, commitment is indeed a valuable and inevitable tool for people and the organization for which they work for.

Thus enactment of spirituality is a result of positive relationships between an individual's spiritual quest and the organization's environment in which this is enacted. Individuals have greater spiritual awareness as it relates to themselves and their immediate work environment. Individuals find it is easier to assess their own spirituality than it is to assess others.

Spirituality in the workplace attempts to connect to the divine principle through the setting of a workplace and through the process of work. Giacalone and Jurkiewicz define workplace spirituality as a framework of organizational values evidenced in a culture that promotes employees experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of connectedness and joy.

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