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## IMPACT OF SPIRITUALITY AT WORKPLACE ON ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

**KANIKA BHUTANI ANAND**  
**ASST. PROFESSOR**  
**COMMERCE DEPARTMENT**  
**HINDU COLLEGE**  
**UNIVERSITY OF DELHI**  
**NEW DELHI**

### ABSTRACT

*Spirituality at Workplace is concerned with an individual's meaning and purpose of work depending on inner life, meaningful work and community. It recognizes the fact that employees have an inner life, something above and beyond money which needs to be nourished for their better enactment of work. The present paper is an attempt to study how this workplace spirituality increases their performance and they start associating themselves to their workplace through commitment at various levels. We are also striving to see how meditation at work brings an insight or wisdom to employees so that they take better decision. Work takes new meaning and becomes more relevant when it is seen as a calling, a sacred duty, a service opportunity or a way to serve God, other deities, or a higher purpose. Hence, productivity and performance increases as a result of deeper meaning at work.*

### KEYWORDS

connectedness, meditation, organizational commitment, spirituality, work performance.

### INTRODUCTION

The word Spirituality has been derived from a Latin word-'spiritus', meaning vapor, breath, air or wind. (Milliman, 1994) defines it as "expressing one's desire to find meaning and purpose in his/her life whereas (Dehler and Welsh, 1994) define it as "a specific form of work feeling that energizes action".

Different researchers have postulated different definitions but the main idea is sharing some common attachment and togetherness.

Furman, Benson, Canda and Grimwood (2005) define spirituality in terms of an attitude or approach to encompassing a search for meaning, purpose and morally fulfilling relations with self, other people, the encompassing universe, and ultimate reality.

Similarly, Staude (2005), sees spirituality as a transformational process through which the different facets of life are integrated (physical, emotional, occupational, cerebral and rational). That is, spirituality involves a connectedness to oneself, others, nature and to a larger meaning or presence. It is strongly related with creativity, play, love, forgiveness, compassion, trust, reverences, wisdom, faith and sense of oneness.

Spirituality which is an important part of a person's life has two crucial elements, i.e., transcendence of self and self-gratification i.e. a belief that one's activities have meaning and values which are far more beyond the economic benefits.

Spirituality, when practiced at the professional front is known as Workplace Spirituality.

### WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality at workplace is a movement which began in 1920s. According to Ashmos and Duchon, 2000, workplace spirituality is the recognition that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work taking place in the perspective of a community.

Spirituality in the context of work is increasingly gaining prominence in business and management. There has been a paradigm shift from a mechanical dimension which values rationality and science to a spiritual dimension which values consciousness and understanding.

Introduction of spirituality at workplace makes people more attached to their organization. They experience a sense of obligation and feel committed towards the organization. As a result, they reciprocate in the form of more productivity and higher commitment. This is due to the reason that a spiritual workplace allows them to experience a sense of psychological safety. The spiritual employees feel that they are valued as human beings and feel respected. It allows them to experience a sense of some purpose, self-determination, enjoyment and belonging.

An individual working in a spiritual organization feels part of something bigger than him/ herself where the self is integrated and he is able to reconcile the several dimensions of self at work in an authentic way.

Work takes new meaning and significance when it is seen as a calling, a sacred duty, a service opportunity or a way to serve God, other deities, or a higher purpose (Paloutzian, Emmons & Keortge, 2003). Therefore, when work is seen as a calling, it becomes more meaningful and subsequent increase in productivity and commitment of employees (Paloutzian et al. 2003; Reave, 2005). As a result, productivity and performance increases as a result of deeper meaning at work, as well as how spirituality at work can provide employees a sense of meaning and purpose.

According to (Mitroff, 2003), in today's organization, people only bring their arms and brains to work and not their souls. In order to develop them as all-inclusive human being and tap their full creativity and potential, spiritual lessons need to be imparted to the employees.

Slowly and gradually, organizations' interest in this arena has also been increasing. To name a few, Hewlett-Packard, Ford, AT & T, Intel, Wal-mart, Xerox, Manhattan Bank, DuPont, etc. have created special programs to incorporate spirituality in the workplace. To their surprise, positive results have been observed.

### DIMENSIONS OF WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY

According to Milliman et al. (2003), there are three dimensions of Workplace Spirituality.

- A) Meaningful work/Individual Level: Here, the individual finds peace for his own self and feels that work gives a meaningful purpose to him/her.
- B) Sense of Community/Group Level: At this level, all employees work with each other. They feel so inter-connected that they work for a common purpose and support each other. There is some relationship between one's inner self and the inner self of other people.
- C) Value Alignment/Organization level: At this level, there is an alignment between both the employees and the organization. The employees are focused for organization's mission and goals. On the other hand, the organization cares about the employees.

### SPIRITUALITY AT WORK IS NOT RELIGION

Spirituality at workplace is not about religion or getting people follow a specific belief system. The two are often considered same but in reality, it's not true. Infact, the two should be studied as two different constructs.

Spirituality is not to be confused with religion. "It's not about converting people. It's about knowing that we are all spiritual beings having a human experience" (Laabs, 1995, p. 61).

While religion looks outward focusing on rituals, adhering to dogma, and attending church services, spirituality looks inward focusing on personal experiences, demonstrating itself through behaviors, principles, and practices. Laabs (1995) concluded "It is spirituality and not about making people believe a system or a thought system or a religious system. It's about knowing that every person has within themselves, a level of truth and integrity, and that we all have our own divine power" (p. 61).

### ORGANISATION MODEL BY ALLEN AND MEYER

It is one of the most cited model of organizational commitment developed by Allen and Meyer exhibiting the various behavior of employees towards their commitment. Although spirituality at work is gaining momentum, still there are employees, who stay with the organization, not because they are very much satisfied but due to some other factors.

On the basis of such varied behavior of employees, there are three commitment components: affective, normative and continuance.

1. **Affective component:** It recognizes those employees who have an emotional attachment towards the organization. It is likely that affectively attached employees will be motivated to make greater contributions to the organization, hence leading to lower turnover, reduced absenteeism, improved performance and increased organizational citizenship behaviors.
2. **Normative component:** It recognizes those employees who remain with the organization as they feel a sense of obligation towards it. They tend to make positive contributions.
3. **Continuance Component:** It recognizes those employees who look at the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization. They feel no tendency to contribute to the organization beyond what is needed to keep their jobs.

Each of these components differ from each other. The stronger the commitment, the stronger the intention to stay.

### WORKPLACE PERFORMANCE AND MEDITATION

It is believed that when organizations infuse spirituality at their workplace, the performance of employees increase manifold. Spirituality, in the form of frequent meditation classes at work aims to develop wisdom, i.e., it increases the capacity of employees to solve problems in a better way and with greater clarity. (Insight meditation is an ability of a person to observe the moment, acknowledge thoughts and feelings without preconception. This type of meditation leads to enhanced state of awareness, where a person having peace at mind is able to ignore distractions and take wiser actions.

The more spiritual people are, the more they practice meditation and the more they meditate, the better, they perform their work.

### FINDINGS

1. People want to realize their full potential as whole human beings, either on the job or off the job and wish to work for ethical organizations
2. They want to perform creative and meaningful work
3. They realize that making money is important but not the most important goal.
4. They feel more committed to the organization.
5. There is increased work performance and reduced turnover.
6. More spiritual organizations are the 'more profitable' ones.

### CONCLUSION

There has been a paradigm shift from a mechanistic dimension which values rationality and science to a spiritual dimension which values consciousness and understanding.

This paradigm shift recognizes that people work not only with their hands but also with their heart and spirit (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000). It is only when people work with a committed spirit, that they can find a kind of meaning and purpose, a kind of fulfillment which means the workplace can be a place where people can express their whole or entire selves.

Barrett (n.d.) argued "Successful business leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will need to find a dynamic balance between the interests of the corporation, the interest of the workers, and the interests of society as a whole" (p. 1). This can be achieved only when organizations link the company's goal of profits with the employees' goal of finding meaning and purpose in their work. Once these things are achieved, then optimal performance follows.

Meditation not only provides, individuals discover their own spiritual side, but those who are trained spiritually are able to transfer their newly learned ability and skills to their workplace, thereby increasing work performance.

Research has shown that there are numerous benefits associated with integrating spirituality in the workplace. The employees and organization together reap like results while incorporating meditation techniques along with it. This means higher profits, low absenteeism, high morale and less stress.

Last but not the least, when we are doing repetitive or monotonous work frequently, it may lead to existential sickness. Moreover, when there is lack of meaning or purpose in a particular work, employees tend to feel separated or alienated from oneself. This causes frustration and reduced productivity.

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