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SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE – A CHANGE MANAGEMENT STUDY

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ABSTRACT

A lot is expected today from young MBA graduates. In the current business environment organizations are expecting the younger generation to work in very challenging situations and handle them with lot of maturity. With the success of sports psychologists and spiritual gurus in coaching our cricket teams, youngsters are looking at their icons, to emulate their mental attitude towards success. Many Organizations are expecting these young candidates to adopt to this dynamically changing business environment. This paper looks into the need for spiritual intelligence in our younger generation. Specific examples towards development of a stable and well grounded mental attitude are studied from Indian scriptures and its relevance to management students towards adoption is considered. A study was conducted with MBA students and results of the correlation to spiritual intelligence and their employability are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Spiritual Intelligence, Indian Ethos, Change Management.

INTRODUCTION

The world is dynamic and changing at a very fast pace today. The market place today is demanding lot more from management students. Companies are looking at young graduates to ramp up very fast inside the organization and provide excellence in their performance at workplace. They expect management graduates to be very creative, challenging the existing rules in the organization and provide solutions for the organization to be agile. The "Recruit, Train and Place" model is getting obsolete and focus of most organizations today is shifting to a ready-to-hire administration model. This poses some new challenges to our Young generation, as the skills expected for employability are very different. The organizations are expecting their new employees to come with a mature and tough mental attitude.

This is comparable to the scenario we have in the sports arena. The icons for our youth are the sport stars. The expectations are very similar in sports and young athletes are expected to perform well very quickly and maintain their performance for a long time. The focus of most of the athletes is on mental conditioning and strength, the soft areas, in addition to basic skill and aptitude in the sport. When an athlete feels they have a degree of self-mastery with their mind-body connection, it serves to motivate them in continued efforts towards increased performance.

In Indian sports there are many examples of success and challenges overcome by cricketers like Sachin, Dhoni, Sehwag and other athletes like Leander and Saina. A lot of these athletes today are using very unique approaches, like yoga, meditation and motivational talks by spiritual gurus towards this mental conditioning. Today their approach is studied very closely by management graduates and applied to the workplace context.

Approaches and examples from the Indian scripture of Gita are studied towards enhancement of Spiritual intelligence. A study is also conducted to understand the relevance of Spiritual intelligence towards enhancing employability of young graduates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective performance in the workplace can be captured by cognitive intelligence, academic qualifications or hard technical skills. More than 25 years ago, Harvard professor of education, Howard Gardner challenged the hegemony of Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and in doing so dismantled the prevailing monolithic view of academic intelligence. In its place he helped establish an egalitarian vision of human capabilities, with the multiple intelligence approach. (Gardner 1983). Practical intelligence has been described as an individual's ability to find the best fit between themselves and what the environment demands of them. In essence, practical intelligence (PI) is the context-specific knowledge acquired experientially and which is needed to solve practical problems and succeed in everyday working life (Sternberg and Hedlund 2002). Practical Intelligence is not only related to performance. It accounts for aspects of performance that traditional measures of IQ apparently cannot account for it. Therefore PI helps to explain why some people are more successful in the real world than others who have equal or higher cognitive intelligence. In mid-1990s, Daniel Goleman revealed findings in neuroscience and psychology that stressed the importance of Emotional Quotient (EQ). This makes us aware of our feelings and that of others. It gives empathy, motivation, compassion and an ability to respond skillfully to pleasure and pain. Goleman argued that EQ was a basic requirement for the use of IQ. Dana Zohar and Ian Marshall introduced a new dimension to human intelligence and coined the term "SQ" for Spiritual Intelligence Quotient". While rational, logical thinking gives one's IQ, and the associated habit-bound, pattern recognizing emotive thinking gives one the EQ, the creative, insightful, rule-making, rule breaking thinking with which we reframe and transform our previous thinking gives one the SQ. King and DeCicco(2009) developed a Spiritual intelligence Self-report Inventory (SISRI). This consisted of 4 components

1. Critical Existential Thinking (CET): the capacity to critically contemplate meaning, purpose, and other existential/metaphysical issues (e.g., existence, reality, death, the universe); and to come to original existential conclusions or philosophies; also the capacity to contemplate non-existential issues in relation to one's existence (i.e., from an existential perspective).
2. Personal Meaning Production (PMP): the ability to derive personal meaning and purpose from all physical and mental experiences, including the capacity to create and master (i.e., live according to) a life purpose.
3. Transcendental Awareness(TA): the capacity to identify transcendent dimensions/patterns of the self (i.e., a transpersonal or transcendent self), of others, and of the physical world (e.g., holism, non materialism) during normal states of consciousness, accompanied by the capacity to identify their relationship to one's self and to the physical.
4. Conscious State Expansion (CSE): the ability to enter and exit higher/spiritual states of consciousness (e.g. pure consciousness, cosmic consciousness, unity, oneness) at one's own discretion (as in deep contemplation or reflection, meditation, prayer, etc.).

In the Indian context, Bhagavad Gita is considered as the most precise text for any consideration of spiritual intelligence. David Wolf (1998) made a psychometric analysis of the three gunas and developed the vedic personality inventory (VPI) an instrument that assesses the validity of the three guna constructs. Charles Choi Hoi Hee (2007) applied perspectives from Bhagavad Gita towards development of a holistic approach to business management. Venkat Krishnan (2001) studied the characteristics of transformational leadership and why Indian philosophical approaches are needed in management. Mulla and Krishnan (2006) identified the dimensions of Karma-Yoga using a contemporary version of the Gita (Gandhi, 2001). They also further studied its relationship with empathy

(2008). The need to study cultural aspects in an Indian context and application of Indian ethos in managing people was revealed in our earlier study conducted in 2009 and 2011.

In chapter 2 of Bhagavad Gita, a concept of *Sthithatprajna* is very nicely described. *Sthithatprajna*, can be explained as a person who has an even mind which is neither elated by joy nor dejected by sorrow, a person who is emotionally stable. He is a person, who is able to think through the actions is a very dispassionate manner. This is a very useful concept in the context of our study, as this is the precise nature of the mind that is required in today's context to manage various situations.

GITA – THE PROFILE OF A PERFECT PERSON

The Bhagavad Gita, is one of the best handbooks covering all the aspects of spirituality. Chapter 2 of Gita highlights the characteristics of perfect person and gives many examples to describe these characteristics. A study was done of this chapter and the examples described were studied for their relevance in the modern managerial context.

The ultimate purpose of all spiritual pursuits is to control and still the mind. It is the mind which has projected this illusory world of multiplicity. The basis of the entire world is only "thought", which again is based on past impressions (*Vasanas*). The *vasanas* have accumulated through repeated actions motivated by desire.

The qualities or characteristics of a *Sthitaprajna* have been described in detail from verses 55 to 71 of Chapter 2. For development in the spiritual or material world, a combination of "steady intellect" and a "contemplating and visionary" mind is essential.(verse 56)The mind should be tuned to not get affected by joy or sorrow. Also this mind should have freedom from desire, fear and anger. This is also very essential while making business decisions, as extreme emotions will affect taking a rational decision. A realized person has been compared with tortoise (verse 58). He engages himself in the world using his six faculties, the five senses and mind. As soon he feels the lure of temptations he withdraws within, like a tortoise, under the stronghold of intellect. A lot of emphasis is laid in controlling and managing the senses. Verses 62 and 63 describes how this process affects a person. Pondering over sense objects, one gets attached to them. Attachment breeds desire, from desire anger is born. Anger leads to delusion, from delusion the memory gets clouded. Once the memory is clouded, the intellect is destroyed. This ultimately destroys the individual completely. In verse 67, this state of mind is compared to the way a boat is drifted away into water with strong winds. In contrast verse 70 gives the example of an ocean. An ocean which, filled from all sides with water entering it, remains still. Similarly, we should develop in such a way that our desires should lead to peace and not a desirer or desires.

These concepts described in Indian ethos are closely related to the concept of Critical Existential Thinking, personal Meaning Production and Transcendental Awareness. Some aspects described in Gita are more comprehensive and describe the foundational aspects required to achieve the above components.

Understanding this process of the human mind is very essential for all students, as this is the foundation process to strengthen an individual internally. This leads us towards a development of a calm mind and steering it in the right direction towards making rational decisions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A study was conducted amongst final year MBA students in a reputed college in Bangalore to understand the various aspects of spiritual intelligence and their correlation to employability.

A structured questionnaire was designed and administered for data collection. A purposive and judgmental sampling was used. We implemented this approach because the data being sought could only be sourced from Gen Y individuals and colleges were a good source of this information. Questionnaires were distributed to participants physically. The primary reason for choosing this approach to administrated questionnaire was efficiency in data collection for measuring specific variables of interest. All statistical analysis was conducted using PSPP Software.

Measures

A questionnaire was designed to collect the job status and their spiritual intelligence. A 24-item five-point interval scale for measuring Spiritual intelligence was readily available from DB King (2010). This Spiritual Intelligence Self-report Inventory (SISRI) 24 questionnaire was seen proven and used by many researchers hence we used the same questionnaire. We added a few additional questions to check their job status.

The Spiritual intelligence measures 4 main Components, as described earlier, namely , Critical Existential Thinking(CET), Personal Meaning Production(PMP), Transcendental Awareness(TA), and Conscious State Expansion(CSE).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A test was performed to check for the correlation between job status and the spiritual intelligence. The correlation was also done for all the components in spiritual intelligence, in order to understand whether any specific component had higher statistical significance to employability. The job status was collected for students based on the campus interviews conducted at the college. It must be noted that this only indicates the initial preference for candidates, as most students may finally get a job after their exams.

Results Summary

The survey results were analyzed. Thirty four candidates, in the age group of 22 to 25, all final year MBA students were contacted for the survey. All the candidates were made aware of spiritual intelligence in their change management class, and this survey were conducted at the end of the semester. PSPP software was used for statistical analysis. The Pearson correlation coefficient results are shown in figure (1).

FIGURE 1: CORRELATION RESULTS FOR PEARSON COEFFICIENT FROM PSPP

Correlations

		JOB_STATUS	CET	PMP	TA	CSE	TOTAL
JOB_STATUS	Pearson Correlation	1.00	.44	.25	.42	-.06	.36
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.01	.16	.01	.75	.04
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34
CET	Pearson Correlation	.44	1.00	.57	.33	.41	.74
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.01		.00	.06	.02	.00
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34
PMP	Pearson Correlation	.25	.57	1.00	.50	.56	.84
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.16	.00		.00	.00	.00
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34
TA	Pearson Correlation	.42	.33	.50	1.00	.33	.74
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.01	.06	.00		.06	.00
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34
CSE	Pearson Correlation	-.06	.41	.56	.33	1.00	.74
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.75	.02	.00	.06		.00
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34
TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	.36	.74	.84	.74	.74	1.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.04	.00	.00	.00	.00	
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34

Source: Survey results

Critical Existential Thinking (CET) and Transcendental Awareness (TA) are the two major components that have a good correlation to job status for students. Also the Significance value is less than 0.05 for CET and TA. This indicates they are statistically significant.

These components relate to a "grounded" personality, a person who understands his environment well and understands the reason for his existence. Also transcendental awareness relates to a capacity to identify the relationship to one's self and to the physical world. These 2 components seem to be valued higher than other components. Also Spiritual intelligence in general, that includes all four components also have a fair correlation to their job status. The significance value is also less than 0.05, which indicates it is statistically significant.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The results do indicate the significance of spiritual intelligence in employability for our younger generation. There is a need to incorporate this as a part of the formal study. The statistical study indicates good statistical significance for Spiritual Intelligence with employability aspects with a positive correlation.

In the current dynamic and challenging environment, there is an expectation from management graduates to show a strong decision making capability. In addition, a cool, calm and mentally tough state is essential for a stress free life. Spiritual intelligence directly addresses these aspects of calmness, cool mind and mental toughness. Hence this correlation is in the expected direction between spiritual intelligence and employability. Two components, namely Critical Existential Thinking (CET) and Transcendental Awareness (TA), have a good statistical significance.

The results overall seem encouraging to consider the element of Spiritual intelligence. Also this aspect has been very well addressed in an Indian ethos and the profile of a perfect person has been well described in Gita. Such aspects from Indian ethos can be considered for its applicability in management domain for further study.

LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations that are acknowledged with this research.

First, because the study adopts purposive sampling, the findings from this study need a validation on a larger scale with a probabilistic sample before it can be generalized. Second, the data collection method used was very structured. This approach did not allow the opportunity to identify measure and test other significant variables that may be associated with Spiritual Intelligence and job factors. Third, self-reporting on a questionnaire is subjective rather than objective. Finally, respondents may have underestimated or overestimated their level of Spiritual intelligence and their approach in Interviews for their jobs, producing respondent bias.

This study has been conducted primarily to understand their ability to find a job on the campus and its correlation to spiritual intelligence. Their academic performance and other factors of their soft skills and analytical skills have been kept outside the scope of this study.

Despite these limitations, which are common in most social research, the design and methodology was considered adequate.

AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

This study does highlight the need for studying the rich, ancient Vedic literature that is a part of the basic cultural life in India. There are elements like sthithatprajna that can be considered for further study in the modern management context. These elements in Indian philosophies help us study in a more holistic manner, to address the areas of people development in an Indian Context.

Spiritual intelligence is a growing domain of study today and many Indian philosophies seem to address this domain. Future studies on applying spiritual intelligence to various other management issues like change management and change resistance in an Indian context may also be considered, while managing the younger generation.

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