Workplace Spirituality and Work-life Balance: An Empirical Introspection in Indian Manufacturing Industries

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Abstract With the wake of 21st century harmonizing one's personal and work life is not only challenging, but also incredibly important to lead a happier and fulfilling life. In this knowledge and information age, the present generation is in continuous search for exploring meaning in their personal and professional life and specifically they are continuously in search of job profile that may provide a sense of motivation to them. Therefore, the latest focus of organisation is to realize "work-life balance" in their corporate culture while safeguarding the "spiritual competence" of an individual professional. In this paper, the authors have tried to investigate the empirical relationship between work place spirituality and work-life balance amongst employees and executives of manufacturing Public Sector Undertaking industries in Eastern Indian sub-continent. Using purposive random sampling 206 employees and executives have been selected as the sample for this pilot study. The researchers have found a moderately significant relationship between spiritual competences with work life balance irrespective of demographic profile. The findings have suggested revitalizing both the aspects together for establishing an effective behavioural intervention in an organisational set up.

Keywords Spirituality, Spiritual competence, Workplace spirituality, Work-life balance

1. Introduction

The "myth of separate worlds" where work and life are kept as separate bordered entities no longer reigns to be true (Kanter, 1977). Hence, the capacity to bring one's whole-self or one's spirituality to the workplace has steadily ascended as a topic of concern amongst researchers. Today's organization seeks greater levels of commitment, production, and efficiency from employees, at the same time it is expected that they must begin to care for the whole person (Bell and Taylor, 2001). It is said that when an organization cultivates an atmosphere of meaningfulness, concern & recognition in its work profile, the employee concerned will feel more engaged and committed. Therefore the development and integration of HR initiatives aiming to engage professionals is a prospective area for fostering meaningful workplace which will potentially address to realize the issues pertaining to work-life balance. Many scholastic findings in this connection have advocated that employee professionals who are provided to work in a meaningful job profile use to have a greater sense of

responsibility, ownership and control of their working life (Galinsky & Johnson, 1998; Ferris & Weitzman et.al, 2001; Morris, 2008). Predominantly, professional individuals are found to be more attracted to organizations offering flexible and meaningful career paths regardless of whether the salient identities centred on other welfare amenities extended by traditional organizations (Honeycutt and Rosen 1997).

At the same time, research findings in this area has also indicated that as a result of downsizing, re-engineering and lay-offs that have occurred in last couple of decades employees are experiencing spiritual disorientation (Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004) which is creating a climate of uncertainty, chaos, and fear along with role conflict in their professional profile (Harman, 1992; Cacioppe, 2000; Kennedy, 2001). One of the major problems explored in this area is the issue of compatibility as for some corporate culture it may be a challenge to incorporate spirituality into the workplace (Mirvis, 1997; Cavanagh, et al., 2001) while addressing the balance in work-life. In this context, Mitroff and Denton (1999a) has argued that today's organizations are suffering from a deep spiritual emptiness and many work related problems in organizations are potentially resulting from this spiritual impoverishment.

There are two vital factors that are driving the work/life balance discourse; one is globalization and the other one is

about massive technological change (Gregory and Milner, 2009). Both the factors have brought increased competition among businesses, with a concomitant rise in working hours and intensity of competition among professionals disturbing their work-life. Interestingly amidst technological change empirical research has explored that the organizations with greater workplace spirituality outperformed organizations with little or no workplace spirituality by 86 percent (Lloyd 1990). Therefore, spiritual orientation at work place is a win-win feature which includes factors that may act as a stimulus for generating satisfaction from an individual towards his or her life or job where as if those factors are limited then they may result in dissatisfaction and in some case it may influence dissatisfaction towards their life.

Though the literature and interest on spirituality at work is growing rapidly; there is confusion around how spirituality can influence work life balance of a professional and at the same time the fuzziness, abstruseness and the complexity of the construct making spirituality at workplace stands as a challenging topic to investigate. Specifically the research on work-life balance is narrowly conceived and viewed especially to women workforce, who are in corporate employment and have family obligations (Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001). In the other hand, Allen (2001) has stated that there is not much of research carried out to establish clarity between organisational policy mechanisms by which the provision of work-life practices is affecting individual behaviour and organizational performance irrespective of gender. There is also scarcity of research on systematic policy evaluation and satisfaction survey to address the question of whether work-life practices are achieving their intended aims (McDonald et al., 2005).

In this connection, researchers have felt that the pooled features of both spiritual competences along with work-life balance in an organizational context need to be explored, and an empirical inspection is required some way of operationalizing the notion of their collective existence. Therefore, the purpose of this empirical study is to narrow the gap and critically review work place spirituality in the form of spiritual competence with that of the construct on work-life balance. More specifically, the focus is to check the possible ways to foster work life balance while utilizing one's ability to find meaningful work and interconnectedness. A pilot study has been carried out by researchers through using structured questionnaires on both the constructs and subsequently the influence of demographic profile has been checked through correlational study. Finally, implications and future scope of research are provided. It is expected that integrating the literature and findings of both the construct may provide new insights regarding potential moderators and mediators of the link between work-life balance and spiritual competence, and suggesting new research questions that may further enhance the understanding of how (or if) this link operates.

2. Work-life Balance vis- à-vis Workplace Spirituality

With the advent of human relations movement workplace has become the fountainhead of community for many people. However, together with the increasing importance and centrality of work in people's life, associated problems also have increased such as stress, burnout and work holism (Conger 1994). Separating work, life, family, and spirit into compartments has potentially ripped authenticity off employees; leaving them feeling unfulfilled, stressed and alienated (Fairholm, 1996; Cavanagh, 1999). However, in an organizational purview, personal and professional life balance is basically a shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports towards integrating employees' work and family lives (Thompson, Beauvais and Lyness, 1999). It has been argued that insights of work-family balance are more inclined by psychological factors such as job satisfaction which may be more relevant to employees in professional jobs (Clarke et al. 2004). Precisely, work-life balance refers to the ability of individuals regardless of age or gender, to explore a rhythm which will allow them to combine their work with their non-work responsibilities, activities and aspirations (Felstead et al., 2002).

In today's organization, professionals consider having meaningful work, good working conditions or work itself, earning, and supportive peers as the most influential factor for their stability and professional growth (Mitroff and Denton 1999). Hungelmann (1985) has stated that the assimilation of work life balance and work place spirituality predominantly supports the proposition of transpersonal (relationship with God), interpersonal (relationship with friends and family etc.), and intrapersonal (relationship with one's inner self). In this context, work life balance precisely engulfs the degree to which an individual is able to simultaneously balance the temporal, emotional, spiritual and behavioral demands of both paid work and family responsibilities (Hill and colleagues, 2001). Therefore, when an individual irrespective in workplace or in personal life if is able to recognize that their existence, achievement, and well-being at life/work depends on their mutual dependence with one's inner self, relationships with near and dear one's and above all God, they may very well move towards greater harmony and effectiveness towards their work-life. The attainment of affiliation in the context of workplace articulates that, "spirituality in the workplace is an experience of interconnectedness among those involved in the work process, initiated by authenticity, reciprocity, and personal goodwill engendered by a deep sense of meaning in the organization's work; and resulting in greater motivation and organizational excellence (Marques, Allevato and Holt 2008).

In organizational perspective with the congruence to work-life balance and work place spirituality, it is

emphasized that the employer should provide an environment and opportunity to let the individual's express different aspects of ones' being at work (Ashmos and Duchon 2000) and especially the role of HR functionaries is to explore the ways with which an individual is likely to find meaning from any work that he/she does. Subsequent to this findings, there is an observation made by Thompson (2001) on job seekers impressing that present days knowledge workers put the compensation and benefits second to working in a spirited workplace-a place where they are treated with respect, not only for what they know and can do, but also as human beings as they want to be listened to and grow, to be proud of a management team that operates with integrity, and to balance their work life with their personal life. The availability of such practices augments positive job-related attitudes, work effort and contextual behaviours by enhancing social exchange processes; as symbols of organizational concern for employees, work-life practices promoting employee interest in and obligation to the organization (Pfeffer, 1981).

To aid up this findings it has been asserted that today's organizations must begin to care for the whole employee in order to increase commitment levels, production rates and efficiencies (Bell and Taylor, 2001). Therefore it can be summed up that, nurturing organizational spirituality is imperative for a dynamic establishment, as it is a fundamental mechanism towards aligning, educating and motivating professionals towards values, objective and mission of an organization and enhancing commitment in them.

3. Interrelationship of Construct of Spiritual Competence and Work-life Balance

Nurturing spiritual competence is getting increasing focus of attention amongst corporate practitioners and academic researchers. In this context, social exchange theory states that if the employees are treated favourably by the organization, then in response employees will feel obliged to respond in kind, through positive attitudes or behaviours toward the source of the treatment which may be in the form of increased commitment and citizenship behaviour (Blau, 1964). However the fundamental objective of management is to incessantly get the work done through its human resources so as to meet the need of the stakeholders. The establishment encompassing stakeholders comprises of clients, shareholders, and employees, but it is generally observed that employee professionals often have least influence in the boardroom (Jain 2011) even still there is an appreciation of the fact that without engaged employees, neither shareholder nor client will be satisfied. In this context, long hours of demanding work environment stands to become unhealthy and dissatisfying for employees as they confuse to get the meaning behind their purpose of work and they just value their worth only for external

rewards, promotion, striving for mastery (Burke, 2006). The empirical research finding advocates that intrusion of work demands into personal life (e.g. working during the week-end) was related with reports of heightened stress and emotional exhaustion for employees affecting the health of a professional individual (Hyman et al., 2003).

In a time of rising emphasis on business ethics and work life balance; corporations are compelled to respond to the employee need for creating meaning at work (Cavanagh, 1999; Cacioppe, 2000; Pratt and Ashforth, 2003; Gull and Doh, 2004). This ascends a debatable issue on how could we determine the magnitude to which organizations are seeking validity rather than just airing their candid commitment towards propagating authentic spirituality, which is in literature beneficial to both employees and itself.

It is argued that even without a genuine commitment to achieve the practice for accomplishing spiritual competence, the usage of fostering work life balance raises genuine concerns about its use to further economic goals of organizations', and therefore, has the potential of becoming yet another management fad (Fernando, 2005). Though some research works have tried to explore the topics such as description of workplace spirituality, sources of workplace spirituality or features of an organization facilitating workplace spirituality (Milliman.J, 1999; PfefferJ, 2003; Marques J, et.al, 2005). However the studies were lacking sound theoretical and empirical base in the ways of expediting the underlying purpose behind it (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2007) and one possibility we have felt is to address the challenges of work-life balance.

4. Purpose and Significance of the Study

Keeping the research gap into perspective with its expected positive result, the purpose of this study is to examine the correlation among the factors influencing spiritual competence in the context of work place spirituality and work-life balance. As evident from the extant literature findings, this study is significant because there is still so much divergence, even controversy, in perceptions about the resultant phenomenon of work life balance while fostering spirituality in the workplace. Therefore, this empirical investigation will be a significant contribution to research on studying the variables of both the concepts collectively as almost no studies exist in this area of research and the ways which it influences management, human resources and the corporate organization as a whole.

Hence, the eventual objective we have felt is to use the established assumptions of both the constructs through ascertaining its practical implications for constructing a positive workplace environment. It is expected that this may provide an insight to human resource professionals to devise sound policies and practices that may lead to increased job performance, lower turnover rates; long term

employee satisfaction and employee retention.

5. Research Design of Spiritual Competence and Work-life Balance

As stated earlier, there is no single measure in the literature for these constructs; therefore, the present study may be considered as exploratory as well as descriptive. We have understood that exploratory designs are predominantly used for discovering new ideas/facts and hence an exploration through literature review is carried out to get an insight and understanding on building the relationship between spiritual competence and corresponding work-life balance. On the other hand, this kind of study is of descriptive in nature as a detailed and in-depth knowledge of its associated variables are getting empirically tested.

5.1. Research Questions and Instruments Used

The study will attempt to address the following research questions:

a. Is there a correlation between spiritual competence and work life balance?

b. What is the influence of demographic profile between spiritual competence and work life balance?

For the purpose of survey, we have used spiritual competence scale proposed by Singh and Premrajan, (2007) composing of (22 items) measuring the factors on service towards human being, feeling of inner peace and calm, being vision and value led, interconnectedness, respect for others, self-awareness. The internal consistency reliability is found to be .69 (service towards human kind), .73 (feeling of inner peace) and calm, .67 (being vision and value led), .62 (interconnectedness), .66 (respect for others) and .50 (self-awareness).

Work-life (W-L) balance scale proposed by Pareek and Joshi, (2010) constituting of 36 items have been used for measuring the areas of personal needs, social needs, time management, team work, compensation and work itself. The internal consistency reliability through this pilot study has found to be .72 (social needs), .63 (personal needs), .69 (time management), .77 (team work), .71 (compensation and benefits), .79 (work).

The reason for choosing these scales is that they capture the seminal definition of work life balance index and spiritual competence of an individual professional which probably may develop interventions for improving the perspectives involved in it.

5.2. Descriptions of the Sample

The sample frame/or population and the size are drawn by convenience sampling through visiting the manufacturing public sector industries of eastern Indian subcontinent and approaching the executives through HR and their respective departmental heads to undertake the survey. 254 questionnaires were distributed to respondents who are working full time as employees and executives in their present organization. 206 questionnaires were returned, with a response rate of 81.88%, and all of which are deployed for further data analysis. The sample respondent consisting of 84.13% married employees and executives and 59.13% of the respondents had worked for more than 10 years in their present establishments.

5.3. Data Analysis and Findings

All the statistical analyses were conducted via IBM SPSS Statistics 20 to test the following hypotheses below:

H1: There is a significant correlation between spiritual competence and work-life balance.

H2: There is a significant correlation between spiritual competence and work-life balance by varied age group.

H3: There is a significant correlation between spiritual competence and work-life balance by experience.

H4: There is a significant correlation between spiritual competence and work-life balance by marital relationship.

The correlational analysis for H1 shows a moderate positive relationship between spiritual competence and work life balance ($r = .458$, $N = 206$, $p < 0.01$) as the total variance explaining the model shows R square as 20.9% at $F (1, 204) = 54.03$, $p < 0.01$. The findings have confirmed that increased spirituality was positively associated with increased well-being, increased sense of meaning and purpose in life found in an empirical study with medically based life style program (James E. Kennedy et al 2003).

The correlational findings for H2 have established comparatively a better significant relationship ($r = .519$, $N = 128$, $p < 0.01$) for employees and executives with 50 and more years of age with total variance of R square change at 26.9% at $F (1,126) = 46.35$, $p < 0.01$; whereas 30-49 Years of age group has shown slightly less significant than them at ($r = .431$, $N = 36$, $p < 0.01$) with total variance of R square change at 18.6% at $F (1, 34) = 7.746$, $p < 0.01$ and employees below 30 years are far below than their counterparts at ($r = .215$, $N = 42$, $p = .171$) with variance of R square change at 4.06% at $F(1, 40) = 1.940$, $p = .171$ between spiritual competence and work place spirituality. The study in an organisational set with varied age groups supports the findings of Chalofsky's (2010) as meaningful workplace stems from the organizational culture in which the employee exists. When supervisors and co-workers show that they care and create a more open and accessible environment, workers are likely to find more meaning in it.

Varied work experience at H3 when being correlated between spiritual competence and workplace spirituality have shown the similar statistical traits with 10 Years or more experience getting a significant relationship at ($r = .537$, $N = 123$, $p < 0.01$) with a total variance of R square change at 28.9% at $F (1, 121) = 49.11$, $p < 0.01$; where as people with less than 1 years of experience with the same organization shows a differential perception at ($r = .265$, $N = 33$, $p = .130$) at R square change of 7% at F

(1,32) = 2.421, p = .130.

Correlational findings with respect to marital status has shown a slight variance between them at H4 among spiritual competence and work place spirituality with married employees and executives have been found at a positive significance of (r = .468, N = 173, p < 0.01) with a total variance of R square change at 21.9% at F (1,172) = 48.27, p < 0.01; whereas unmarried employees in the same work place has been found at (r = .417, N = 32, p = .018) and corresponding R square change as 17.4% at F (1, 30) = 6.314, p = .018. This satisfies the findings of employees who live within a family structure that does not include their off springs (Waumsley, Houston and Marks, 2010) or those who are not married yet (Association of Graduate Recruiters, 2008) can experience a low level of work-life balance than their married counterparts.

6. Summary of Findings and Suggestion

To summarize, it can be noted from the review of available literature that there is an unchecked use of the construct of workplace spirituality in organizational HR practices, and inspecting the popularity of the construct it is not illogical to assume the semblance with work-life balance. Therefore, a new direction is evolved showing the far increasing relevance of spiritual competence into work life balance.

Uniqueness of the present study was the empirical findings which has supported spiritual intelligence as the predictor for expected functional styles in organizational HR practices to foster work life balance. Hence the outcome of correlational studies with demographic profile has suggested that spiritual competence provides a valid and useful public domain on work-life balance measures. Though the ensuing study shows a moderate significance, however more work is needed on this area to enable it to validate with confidence for the assessment of work-life balance sub components. Therefore, this review has sought to draw new insights and research directions from the extant literature on work place spirituality and its relationship to organizational performance.

An important limitation of the study may be that the present study has used the questionnaire survey to measure the spiritual competence and work-life balance index of employees and executives on a relatively smaller sample of 206 employees and executives with a male dominated sample from manufacturing PSU industries of eastern India. The findings of this study may be used to make a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative study across industry sectors therefore; future research must focus on a wider sample in order to get more generalized results.

In a new world of organizations', spiritual competence and skills of an individual professional may play more crucial role to enhance one's satisfaction, health, commitment, confidence and above all maintaining work-life balance in a professional set up. Earlier studies have found that the more 'supportive' organizations shape an implicit psychological contract between the organization vis-à-vis individual and spiritual organizations are concerned with helping employees develop and reach their potentials while addressing problems created by work life conflicts (Rama Rao, 2010). Hence, it may be suggested that organization's need to provide emphasis upon their HR strategies especially employee centric welfare strategies towards deriving increased effectiveness in face of ever changing environment and mounting external pressure as careful handling of issues like spiritual competence and work life balance is expected to provide an effective buffer for facing future challenges. In this context, with the paradigm shift happening in 21st century, it is witnessed that organizations and managers are continuously discovering and experimenting with new ways and methods to help employees balance work and family, such as flexible work arrangements (Gottlieb, Kelloway, and Barham, 1998) and telecommuting (Kugelmass, 1995). Some forms of reinforcement of spirituality in the workplace include organizing optional morning prayers or yoga sessions; designing multi-faith prayer spaces; starting corporate chaplaincies, or introducing spiritual wellness and balance programs for employees (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Mitroff and Denton, 1999b).

7. Scope for Future Research

In present times, workplace spirituality occupies a prominent position in the field of organizational behavior and human resource management and even in other areas of management research as the field has spread its wing from industry to academic research to prove its significance and nurturance. In this connection, while exploring some of the related areas the researchers have sensed that the way forward for research with spiritual competence/spirituality in organizational setting appears most promising if it has a strong conceptual and theoretical grounding for developing valid measures of the construct.

Therefore, to aid the present study it is proposed that the application of spiritual competence and work-life balance must be conducted with much greater attention to the research literature, be grounded in good theory and must reject eccentric claims. The present study contributes to the existing knowledge of work place spirituality vis-à-vis work life balance by adding findings in manufacturing industries of Indian context which may potentially help to understand the relationship of these constructs in different organizations' and cultures.

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