



## WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY FOR AN EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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### **Abstract**

*In the dynamic and turbulent business environment, Organisations are required with employees who are physically, emotionally and cognitively engaged at their workplace. In earlier research findings, it has been observed that highly engaged employees go beyond their job descriptions and put their discretionary efforts to fulfill their job roles and responsibilities. Organizations should thrive at most to maintain the engagement level among employees. In this context, the emerging concept 'Workplace Spirituality' has got great importance, which improves the employees' inner life, meaningfulness at work. The present study has been conducted to test empirically the relation between workplace spirituality and Employee Engagement. The study has stressed on the theoretical as well as practical aspects of these two constructs. Results of the study revealed that there is significantly positive relationship between Employee Engagement and Workplace Spirituality.*

**Keywords:** *Workplace Spirituality, Employee Engagement, Meaningfulness at work, inner life.*

### **Introduction**

In the dynamic World economy, having a high performing workforce is essential for growth and survival for each and every organization. The creative pool of employees serves as the irreplaceable, intangible asset for an organization. Competent workforce of an organization can become an uncopied competitive advantage. This can be possible only when organization has continuous engaged employees. Employee Engagement is the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs and committed to the organization and put discretionary effort in to their work. Engaged employees are motivated to do more than the needed. One more perspective about the Engagement is that all about employees' feelings about and the perceptions towards senior management and immediate management. Maintaining Employee Engagement at desirable standards has become a challenging task for the organizations. Many research works suggest the drivers of Employee Engagement like mutual respect, communication, opportunity for development, valued and being treated fairly, recognition etc...

Organizations are paying more concentration on both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects that are related to employees. Contemporary management is concentrating on employees' happiness and fulfillment in whole. The reason is, employees will be coming to the workplace with their hearts and minds and psychological stable employees are as important as intellectually stable employees. To have physically, psychologically and intellectually stabled employees, spiritual health is required along with physical and mental health. The concept of Workplace Spirituality gain great importance in this context. Spirituality is a state or experience that can provide feeling of understanding, support, and inner wholeness. Spirituality is the process of personal transformation and can also refer to any kind of meaningful activity or blissful experience. Spirituality is an inner path that enables a person to discover the essence of his being and is experienced as a source of inspiration and orientation in life. Spirituality has great role to play in work life which brings harmony, increase in the efficiency of employee along with inculcating practices of integrity, honesty, service, respect and trust worthiness. Spirituality at workplace can also lead to productivity and profitability as well as employee retention, customer loyalty.

Many research works have been conducted on both above mentioned constructs independently and in combination but still the relationship requires empirical investigation as the concept is in infancy stage. There is a great increase in interest to uncover the relation between Employee Engagement and Workplace spirituality. The present study is designed to explore the relation between Employee Engagement and workplace understanding of both the constructs with the support of past research works.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Employee Engagement**

Employee Engagement is an integral for successful organizations. Engaged Employees are satisfied and feel a sense of attachment to their job, and even every aspect of their life. They promote best in the organization and work towards its success. Employee Engagement drives performance by improving retention, customer loyalty, productivity, safety, and ultimately profitability. Now we will discuss about the literature reviews on the concepts with various perspectives. The first mention of Employee Engagement appears in an Academy of Management journal article – 'Psychological conditions of personal Engagement and disengagement at work' (Khan 1990). He explained personal Engagement as the simultaneous



employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in the task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence and active full role performances. Khan pointed that the domains of meaningfulness, safety, and availability were important to understand Engagement. Definition of Employee Engagement given by Khan (1990) is as follows.

'The harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in Engagement people employee and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances Cognitive aspects of Employee Engagement concerns about employees beliefs about the organization, its leaders and working conditions. The emotional aspects concerns about how employees feel about each of those factors and whether they have positive or negative attitude towards the organization and its leaders. The physical aspects concerns the physical energies exerted by individuals to accomplish their roles. According to Khan (1990), Engagement means – psychologically as well as physically present when occupying and performing an organizational role. After this, Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) have conceptualized on employees' burnout. Maslach et al (2001) conceptualized Employee Engagement as positive anti-thesis to burnout. They defined Employee Engagement as 'a persistent positive, affective state characterized by high level of activation and pleasure'. According to Maslach et al, six sources of work life lead to either burnout or Engagement – work load, control, rewards and recognition, community and social support, perceived fairness and values. They argued that job engagement is associated with a sustainable work load, feeling of choice and control, appropriate recognition and reward, a supportive work community, fairness and justice, and meaningful and valued work. May et al (2004) findings support Maslach et al (2001) notion of meaningful and valued work being associated with Engagement. Research study has been conducted between Employee Engagement, satisfaction, and business outcomes (profit) at business unit level by Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002). It was the one of the first study that established a linkage between profit and Employee Engagement. Harter (2002) defined as 'Employee Engagement refers to the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work.

Empirical Research has been conducted on Khan's (1990) conceptualization of Employee Engagement domains-Meaningfulness, safety, availability by May, Gilson, and Harter(2004). The academic research has been conducted to conceptualize and test antecedents and consequences of Employee Engagement by Saks (2006). In this research, Saks(2006), considered Job Engagement, organization Engagement in to separate two types of Employee Engagement and also believed that Employee Engagement developed through Social Exchange Model. The definition given by Saks is 'a distinct and unique construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components associated with individual role performance'. Macey and Schneider (2008) conceptualized that Employee Engagement develops from Trait Engagement, State Engagement, and Behavioral Engagement. Trait Engagement can be defined as-'inclination or orientation to experience the world from particular vantage point'. Psychological state Engagement is defined as an antecedent to behavioral engagement (satisfaction, involvement, commitment, and empowerment). Behavioral engagement in terms of discretionary efforts.

The approach of Employee Engagement discussed by Robinson et al (2004), stresses the importance of 'feeling valued and involved' as a key driver of Engagement. organizational environment where positive emotions such as involvement and pride are encouraged, resulting in improved organizational performance, lowering employee turnover Organizational health and workplace well being. The model for Engagement implies that the foundations of Engagement lies in polices to recruit and retain workforce and to promote health, safety, and well being and workplace well being is driven by commitment and job satisfaction which in turn are determined by number of factors. Most often Employee Engagement been defined as Emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (Baumruk 2004, Richman 2006, Shaw 2005).

Many professional societies and consulting groups eluded their claims to expertise in the Employee Engagement concept with their own strategy and frame work. These groups encourage organizations to conduct surveys in order to maintain their efficiency and performance at utmost standards. The Gallup consulting has provided extensive research evidence on foundation aspects of Employee Engagement. It has provided evidence for the statement that Employee Engagement vary across occupations, industries, and globally by conducting Employee Engagement Index surveys in many countries (Australia, china, Japan, New Zealand, and Singapore). International Survey Research (ISR), the international Research consultancy, conducted survey across world's ten largest economies ( Australia,Brazil, Canada, that one size does not fit all. The global Work force survey conducted in 2005 by consultancy firm Towers perrin. The survey also indicated that on a country by country basis, the percentage of highly engaged, moderately engaged, and actively disengaged varied considerably. The Institute for Employment studies (IES) has conducted Research Work. It offers definition as 'Engagement is a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to nurture, maintain and grow engagement which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee'.



'Engaging for success' - a report published in 2009 by Macleod and Nita Clarke has been highly influential in the sphere of employee relations. In their extensive report, they identified a series of positive outcomes associated with Engagement-both for employees and employers. They also highlight the factors that were 'commonly agreed to lie behind successful Engagement approaches'. They called these as Enablers of Engagement. Those are- Strategic narrative-engaging managers-employee voice-Integrity. The chartered institute of personnel Development (CIPD) survey conducted by Truss et al suggests that strengthening Employee voice can make a difference to organizational performance. According to this, measure of engagement incorporates three engagement dimensions-Emotional or Affective, Intellectual or cognitive, and social engagement. The main drivers of engagement in this study are Meaningful work, voice, senior management communication style, and vision, supportive work environment, person-job fit, line management style. American society for training and development commissioned a study in association with Dalecarneige training to look at Employee Engagement. ASTD defined Engagement as 'Employees who are mentally and emotionally invested in their work and in contributing to their employer's successes. (Czarnowsky 2008). In 2006, SHRM'S major publication on Employee Engagement and commitment (conceptual study) offered few research based solutions for developing Employee Engagement (vance 2006).Engaged Employees leads to higher customer satisfaction and generate increased revenue (Vance 2006, Wagner&Harter 2006). Aon Hewitt- a HR consulting service defines Engagement as the psychological state and behavioral outcomes that lead to better performance.

### **Literature review of Workplace Spirituality**

Spirituality is a state or experience that can provide individuals with direction, meaning, support, inner wholeness and also provide the feeling of understanding, connectedness.

Ralph waldo Emerson (1803-1882), was a pioneer of the idea of Spirituality as a distinct field.Many authors have conceptualized the concept of Spirituality in distinct ways as follows.McKnight (1984), defines Spirituality as a motivating power of life, an energy which inspires an individual to a particular ending or a self transcendent purpose. Cavanaugh, (1999) defines Spirituality is an energy, meaning, purpose and awareness of life. These definitions are mainly pointing at the inspiring energy or power which conducts people to a particular purpose. This inspiring power gives meaning and purpose to their life. According to these definitions, Spirituality acts as a stimulant in one's life. Myers (1990) defines Spirituality as continuous search for meaning and purpose of life, awareness of profound value of life, extent of world, existing natural forces and individual ethical system. Mitroff, a management professor of south California University mentions that Spirituality is the passion to live on its basis. According to Hinnells (1995), Spirituality is an attempt to foster sensitivity towards oneself, others or a he challenge to find what is required to become human and a discovery for complete humanity. Many researchers and authors have conducted an empirical research and conceptualized the Workplace Spirituality as follows. There are several researches, which suggest that organizations that pay more attention towards ethical and spiritual aspects reap both financial and non financial benefits.

Spirituality at workplace involves a sense of wholeness, connectedness at work, and deeper values. It is a concept integrity and solidarity in work and understanding the profound values in work (Gibbons,2000). Workplace Spirituality refers to the efforts involving to find one's ultimate purpose in life, to develop a strong connection to co-workers and other people associated with work, and to have consistency between one's core believes and organizational values. It is an attempt to search and find the ultimate meaning of life and work life, to communicate between individuals, their colleagues and other people who contribute to the work, also, harmony or unity between individuals' fundamental believes with their organization's values (Mitroff and Denton, 1999). According to Myers, Spirituality at work is an inspiring and understanding of work values, life, and extent of world, natural environment beings and personal belief systems. Spirit at work is a distinct experience characterized by cognitive features, interpersonal dimensions, spiritual presence and mystical components (Kinjerski and skrypnek). Workplace Spirituality can also be defined as 'The recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of the community'(Rego and Pina ecunha 2008). Bell and Tylor (2001) believes that Workplace Spirituality cannot be divorced from its wider societal context and suggests that Spirituality is a way in which more holistic views of life can be expressed. Sheep (2004), conceptualized in four themes – a self Workplace integration, meaning in work, transcendence of self, personal growth or development of one's inner self at work. Ashforth and Pratt (2003), suggest three dimensions to Spirituality at Work – Transcendence of self, holism and harmony and growth. Aburdene (2007) believes Spirituality at work is a greatest mega trend and more meaningful work environments. It is an evidence that organizations looking to develop values and sense of purpose that moves beyond traditional profitability. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) identified three components of Workplace Spirituality. Those are Meaningful work (individual level), Sense of community (group level), Alignment with organization values (organizational level). These dimensions are likely to be associated with employees work attitudes and behaviors. Meaningful work involves a deep sense of meaning and purpose in work. It represents how individual interacts with his daily work at



individual level. Sense of community relates to the interaction among employees. It involves having deep connection to relationships with others. Alignment with organizational values means employees experience a strong sense of alignment between their personal values and their organization's mission and purpose. Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003) identified the relationship between Spirituality and employee work attitudinal variables. This study attempts to provide some of the first empirical support that there is a positive association between Spirituality at work and employee job outcomes. Sadaghiani (2012) presented an empirical study on the effects of Spirituality in different levels of individual, divisional, and organizational. The results of survey clearly indicated that Spirituality performs a significant contribution on work performance in all different levels. Krishna Kumar and Neck (2002), in their paper explore that various perspective of Spirituality at Workplace and developed a framework referred to as 'Individual based Spiritual freedom model'. Mirvis (1997) defines Workplace Spirituality with the notions of both the community and meaningful work. Thomas (2000) believed that Spirit at work is all about how one feels about one's job. Harrington preziosi and Gooden (2001) considers Workplace Spirituality involves an attitude of sharing and a sense of togetherness with each other both within their departmental as well as in the organization. According to Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003), Workplace Spirituality is a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes. Employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in that provides feelings of completeness and joy. Marques, Dhiman and King (2005) in their definition of Spirit at work mentioned aspects like inner power, inner connectedness with all these involved in the work process and a sense of purpose in the work environment. Beyer(1999) firmly believed that meaning in work and belongingness to community nourishes the inner life of individual and provides their work a spiritual dimension. Fry (2003) stated that in order for organizations to be able to adapt to today's rapidly changing environment and become learning organization, they should rely on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation. Fry argued that while in the past, many organizational theories emphasized on extrinsic motivation (which means compelling individuals in to a task or behavior by providing what they need to survive (money)), their needs to be a shift to intrinsic motivation as a driving force of individual behavior organization. Even Fry defined intrinsic motivation as 'interest and enjoyment of an activity for its own sake'. International center for Spirit at Work(ICSW,2006) has defined Spirituality at Work as 'Spirituality in the Workplace is about individuals and organizations seeing work as a spiritual path, as an opportunity to grow and to contribute to society in a being true to themselves and others. It means individuals and organizations attempting to live their values more fully in the work they do'. Komala and Ganesh (2007) in their empirical study of health care professionals find that Spirituality at Work is positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to employee burnout.

## Methodology

**Objective:** To explore the relation between Employee Engagement and Workplace Spirituality and to test its significance.

### Sampling procedure Measuring instrument

A Survey has been conducted to examine the relationship. A sample of 100 teaching faculty of under graduate level who are working at Government educational institutions have been selected through convenience and purposive sampling. The mean age of the sample is 43.12 years and Average of total experience of the sample is 15.12. To explore the relationship between two variable questionnaire based survey has been conducted. Questionnaire has been distributed with the brief introduction about the topic. Out of 100, completely filled 82 questionnaires have been collected. Workplace Spirituality has been measured by adopting Ashmos and Duchon's (2000) scale. There are nearly 7 dimensions among these, 3 dimensions - Meaningful work, sense of community, Alignment with Organisation Values are considered which constitute 21 items as these are considered as an important outcomes of Spirituality at Workplace. All the items are rated on five point likert scale in which 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree. The cronbach's alpha of scale is 0.91 which is beyond prescribed limit 0.7(Nunnally 1978) that indicates the reliability of the scale. Employee Engagement has been measured through GallupQ12 questionnaire. The scale consists of 12 items which measures the employees' engagement at workplace. All these are rated on 5 point likert scale with 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree.

## Analysis

To achieve the objective of the study, correlation coefficient has been obtained by applying Karl Pearson coefficient of correlation formula. Hypothesis testing has been conducted to test significance of correlation. For this purpose null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis are as follows.

The null hypothesis is often labeled as  $H_0$ , written as

$$H_0: \rho = 0 \text{ (null hypothesis)}$$

Null hypothesis states that population correlation parameter(  $\rho$  ) is zero.

Null hypothesis states that there is no relation between workplace spirituality and Employee Engagement.

The alternative hypothesis is often labeled as  $H_1$  or  $H_A$ , written as:

$$H_1: \rho \neq 0 \text{ (Alternative hypothesis)}$$



Alternative hypothesis states that population correlation parameter is not zero.  
Alternative hypothesis states that there is relation between workplace spirituality and Employee Engagement

### Descriptive Statistics

The total score of both the constructs that have been to calculate correlation are as follows.

Total sum of responses of Workplace Spirituality(X) : 6112. Sum of deviations from Average(dx): 68. Square of the deviations(dx<sup>2</sup>): 14332.96.

Total sum of responses of Employee Engagement(Y) : 3452. Sum of deviations from Average(dy): 17.2. Square of the deviations(dy<sup>2</sup>): 4386.

The product of the deviations(dx\*dy):5688.24

From the above values correlation coefficient of both the constructs is r : 0.717

### Inferential Statistics

Hypothesis testing can be conducted through t-test(two-tailed). We can quantify the amount of confidence that a researcher should have in rejecting the null hypothesis that the correlation in the population is zero (i.e., H<sub>0</sub> = 0) by computing t-value which is an inferential statistics.

$$t = \frac{r}{\sqrt{1-r^2}} \times \sqrt{n-2}$$

T-value is derived from the data of sample of participants in the study where 'r' is the correlation in the sample and 'n' is the number of participants in the sample. The probability of 0.05 has been selected as a criterion for determining the confidence to reject the null hypothesis. The level of confidence that has been accepted to reject the null hypothesis is =0.05.

After calculating observed t value is 13.026.

Critical t-value has been identified from t-distribution table with degree of freedom n-2 i.e; 80 is 1.990 for =0.05

### Results

It is clear from both observed and critical values of 't' that observed value is more than critical value. We can interpret the results as follows:

- The correlation in the population is significantly different from zero with the confidence level of 95%. It means that there is less than 5% chance that population correlation is zero.
- In the population from which the sample was drawn, the two variables are probably associated with each other.
- As the observed t-value is positive and more than critical t-value at =0.05, then we can conclude that two variables are positively correlated.

### Conclusion

Employee Engagement measures the employee involvement at work cognitively and emotionally. Workplace spirituality concentrates on employees' inner life and also develops positive energy and positive attitude towards self and others. The results of the study reveal that there is a positive correlation which can be recognized workplace spirituality as a positive predictor of Employee Engagement. Therefore it is suggested that organizational leaders should try to inject spirituality in organizational culture in such a way that managers can realize true meaning in their jobs, experience community feeling and align their personal values with organizational values, which in turn will lead to better performance at work.

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t-distribution table Alpha values				
	0.10	0.05	0.01	0.001
Df				
1	6.314	12.706	63.657	636.619
2	2.920	4.303	9.925	31.599
3	2.353	3.182	5.841	12.924
4	2.132	2.776	4.604	8.610
5	2.015	2.571	4.032	6.869
6	1.943	2.447	3.707	5.959
7	1.895	2.365	3.499	5.408
8	1.860	2.306	3.355	5.041
9	1.833	2.262	3.250	4.781
10	1.812	2.228	3.169	4.587
11	1.796	2.201	3.106	4.437
12	1.782	2.179	3.055	4.318
13	1.771	2.160	3.012	4.221
14	1.761	2.145	2.977	4.140
15	1.753	2.131	2.947	4.073
16	1.746	2.120	2.921	4.015
17	1.740	2.110	2.898	3.965
18	1.734	2.101	2.878	3.922
19	1.729	2.093	2.861	3.883
20	1.725	2.086	2.845	3.850
21	1.721	2.080	2.831	3.819
22	1.717	2.074	2.819	3.792
23	1.714	2.069	2.807	3.768
24	1.711	2.064	2.797	3.745
25	1.708	2.060	2.787	3.725
26	1.706	2.056	2.779	3.707
27	1.703	2.052	2.771	3.690
28	1.701	2.048	2.763	3.674
29	1.699	2.045	2.756	3.659
30	1.697	2.042	2.750	3.646
40	1.684	2.021	2.704	3.551
60	1.671	2.000	2.660	3.460
70	1.667	1.994	2.648	3.435
80	1.664	1.990	2.639	3.416
90	1.662	1.987	2.632	3.402
100	1.660	1.984	2.626	3.390
120	1.658	1.980	2.617	3.373
140	1.656	1.977	2.611	3.361
160	1.654	1.975	2.607	3.352
180	1.653	1.973	2.603	3.345
198	1.653	1.972	2.601	3.340
	1.645	1.960	2.576	3.291