Fostering Workplace Spirituality: A New Development Model

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Abstract:

In this ever-changing world business is becoming more complex. Managing the human resource, the vital force in business, is becoming all the more complex. Technological advancements in various fields on one side have presented to the mankind the never before experienced luxury and comfort. However, on the other hand, it has increased the love for material affluence. It is eradicating the spiritual values and make people dispirited. This is reflected in the business scenario across the globe by the way of decline in job satisfaction; increased employee stress and burn out; unethical corporate behaviour; workplace violence and inability to maintain work life balance. There is now an extended pressure on organizations to handle these kinds of issues related to human resource management and development. There are lots of tools for human resource development. However, the ultimate solution may be workplace spirituality.

Spirituality can be defined as an unbounded set of personal drives, behaviours, experiences, values and attitudes which are related to existential understanding, meaning, purpose and transcendence (King, 2008). Workplace spirituality is defined as a workplace that recognizes that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community (Ashmos and Duchon, 2005). When organisations foster workplace spirituality it will provide employees with a sense of purpose and meaning at work; it will also provide employees with the essence of interconnectedness with the community. Moreover, it will enhance the employee's overall well-being and quality of life.

This conceptual paper aims to present the need for workplace spirituality and proposes a theoretical model on how to develop workplace spirituality.

Keywords: *Spirituality, Workplace, Human Resource Development.*

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1. Introduction

Technological advancements in various fields has made lifestyle of the people around the world luxurious The English word 'Spirituality' is derived from the word the Latin word 'Spiritus' which means the 'non-material'. There is no approved definition of spirituality. Studies (McCarroll) of the term show a broad range of definitions with limited overlap. The paper takes up the definition of spirituality as an unbounded set of personal drives, behaviours, experiences, values and attitudes which are related to existential understanding, meaning, purpose and transcendence (King, 2008). It may also be defined asthe innate human need to connect with something larger than ourselves (Wigglesworth, 2004).

. This has in turn brought in materialism to prevail among the work folks. In this materialistic world of luxuries and comfort, managing human resource has become a challenging task. This materialistic attitude among the people has slowly

eradicated ethical values among them. Moreover, it has dispirited them. This is reflected in the business scenario across the globe by the way of decline in job satisfaction; increased employee stress and burn out; unethical corporate behaviour; workplace violence and inability to maintain work life balance. There is now an extended pressure on organizations to handle these kinds of issues related to human resource management and development.

Spirituality is beyond religions and is innate and applied in nature (King, 2008). Hence, it can be utilized in day to day activities including business. Workplace spirituality is defined as a workplace that recognizes that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community (Ashmos and Duchon, 2005). When organisations foster workplace spirituality it will provide employees with a sense of purpose and meaning at work; it will also provide employees with the essence of interconnectedness with the community. Moreover, it will enhance the employee's overall well-being and quality of life, making workplaces, more satisfying, effective and productive.

This conceptual paper aims to present the what and why of workplace spirituality and also proposes a theoretical model on how to develop workplace spirituality.

What is Workplace Spirituality?

'Spirituality' the term may sound mystical, however it is innate. It is the state of an intimate affiliation with the inner self of higher values and morality as well as recognizing the truth of inner nature of people. The idea of workplace spirituality can be described as a practice of interconnectedness, shared by all those involved in the work process. This can be initially activated by the consciousness that, each individual is motivated by an inner influence, which raises and maintains one's sense of trustworthiness, compassion, and bravery. This subsequently leads to the collective creation of a motivational workplace considered by a sense of purpose, high moral standards, acceptance, harmony and faith, thus making an atmosphere of an improved team performance and overall peace. There are several

organizations that are encouraging the development of this new trend because a humanistic workplace creates a win-win situation for both the employees and the organization. There are several organizations such as Reckit and Coleman, Wipro, Dabur and Tata Tea who have implemented the practice of workplace spirituality in their organizations.

Workplace spirituality is a spiritual culture that identifies that employees have not only a mind but also a spiritual being in them. This aspect of viewing an individual, seeks to find meaning and purposes in one's work and desire to connect with other employees. Workplace spirituality is a framework of structural ethics demonstrated in the work culture that encourages employees to get involved in their chores. A spiritual character actually helps to perform better at workplace. It provides the employees with a sense of being connected to others at work. Workplace spirituality in a way provides feeling of completeness and joy to the employees.

The need for workplace spirituality

The emergence of management thought was in the early 1900s. Several contributions relating to production, productivity and workforce were made to management thoughts and practices. However, there are no such notable contribution that emphasizes upon the overall well-being of individuals in an organization. Historical models of management had no room for workplace spirituality. Typically, organizations focused only on performing work without any feelings towards other people. Likewise, concern about an employee's inner life was not that important and it had no great part to play in managing organizations. But of late the concept is been embraced by many organizations. There may be lots of reasons why spirituality is gaining significance at workplace. However, the authors in the current paper highlights a few vital reasons for the growing emphasis of workplace spirituality.

i. Increased Stress and Burnout

Work in any organization, in the current days involves achieving targets, maintaining schedules, finalizing deals, coordinating the employees and all the more achieving profits amidst tough competition. Employees tend to get stressed in these kinds of circumstance. Workplace spirituality comes there for a rescue. It helps the employees to destress themselves and get relaxed.

ii. Multicultural Workforce

Business has no borders in today's internet world. Markets have become international. Business has to handle people from different nations and languages, making organizations a place where various cultures exist. Workplace spirituality is a thread that connects all such varied cultures by linking all beings, cultures and religions.

iii. Need for effective leadership

A multicultural workforce needs effective leadership. Workplace spirituality is a source of effective leadership. Leaders who have belief in spirituality will take ethical decisions and will be impartial. They teach their followers to be equal, truthful and impartial. Moreover, they also make the followers to work in an ethical manner.

iv. Ever increasing employee expectations

With the increasing material affluence, expectations of the employees are ever-increasing. Satisfying the expectations of the employees is a challenging task. But yet the expectations have to be fulfilled in order to retain them and make them devoted to work. Workplace spirituality teaches righteousness to employees. Thus, it plays a vital role in satisfying and calming their desires automatically.

v. Challenge of ethical behavior and social responsibility

The Indian history is full of ethical thoughts and teaches one to be wise and socially responsible. Workplace spirituality makes the employees to imbibe such thoughts and makes them and the organization socially responsible.

Workplace spirituality is a better way of thinking about self, others, work and the organization. It is all about a workplace that recognizes that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community. Growing organisational dynamics makes workplace spirituality an essential component in human resource development as it enhances the employees' work performance and provides a path towards perfection in work in a happy mode.

A New Development Model for Workplace Spirituality

The reason for the growing significance of workplace spirituality is not only that it is beyond religions and is innate. It is because it is applied in nature (King, 2008) and it can be trained. Hence, it can be utilized in day to day activities including business.

In this conceptual paper, based on the extensive literature review the authors propose a new developmental model for workplace spirituality. The business heads and HR managers may practice the following principles to make their workplace more spiritual, providing a feeling of completeness and joy to their employees.
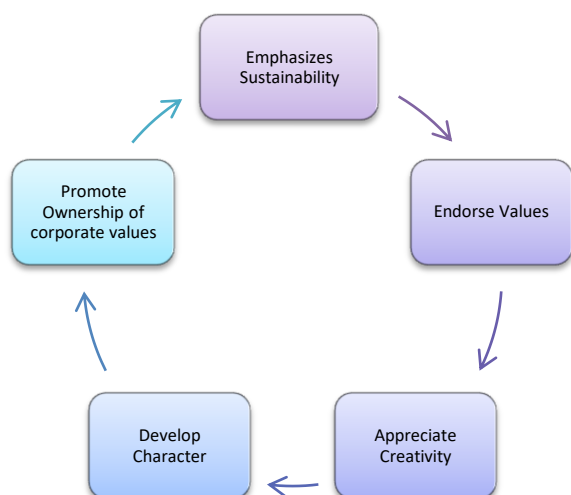
i. **Emphasizes Sustainability:** Spiritualapproachto design, production and commerce creates awareness of limited resources and promotes sustainability in the society. This greatly contributes to the sustainable development, giving more meaning to work.

ii. **Endorse Values:** Spending energy on creating a positive company culture without instilling a set of values in an organization is a waste of time and money. Company values really do have the power to drastically improve workplace spirituality. Values such as respect, integrity, proper communication, excellence in customer service etc. can be endorsed to bring in spirituality to workplace.

iii. **Appreciate Creativity:** Innovation is a part of business. Workplace spirituality appreciates creativity and embraces the employees. It encourages the employees to become more innovative in their work, which increases the overall productivity of the organization.

iv. **Develop Character:** Employees are actually the lifeline of an organization. The victory and disaster of an organization fully depends on its employees. It is indispensable for employees to develop a sense of allegiance and attachment towards the organization they work for. Employees have to learn to face challenges and difficult situations with a beam on their face. Workplace spirituality helps to deal with problems and obstacles at the workplace in a sensible and mature way. Many

organizations have now begun to realize this vitality of character development through workplace spirituality.

v. **Promote Ownership of corporate values:** Organizations may promote shared ownership of corporate values to every member of the organization. Workplace spirituality helps business heads in achieving this sharing as workplace spirituality acknowledges that one's general search for spiritual growth and fulfillment need not be separate from one's work. Through workplace spirituality organizations may lay the groundwork for spiritual development of its employees.

Conclusion

The workplace is a miniature of the world itself. A workplace should be more than a place where one spends time just to earn money. It has to be an important part of one's life, in which they develop and enrich their character. Workplace has to give numerous opportunities in which one can enrich their character and spiritual morals. Workplace Spirituality has emerged as a grassroot movement, seeking individuals to live up to their spiritual morals in the workplace. This affiliation towards spirituality can empower people and create a healthy, innovative, compassionate and productive work environment.

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