INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY ON WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY

M. Subramaniam[1] and N. Panchanatham[2]

[1]School of Management, Bharathiyar University, India
E-mail: musubra@gmail.com
[2]Department of Business Administration, Annamalai University, India
E-mail: panchanatham@gmail.com

Abstract

Despite the growing literature on personality and workplace spirituality, empirical studies on the influence of personality on workplace spirituality remain limited. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship, if any, between personality traits and spirituality in the workplace as applicable to the Indian context. An individual with high degree of personality is expected to be more satisfied in work and likely to experience positive and significant degree of spirituality at the workplace. In view of the positive influences of personality on spirituality in the workplace, there is a potential need for organizations to develop the personality traits of employees which would create a spiritual climate and culture at the workplace and foster the workplace spirituality. The results of the study facilitate further insight to leaders and managers on the importance of personality towards increasing the workplace spirituality which would eventually provide many positive benefits to the organizations as well as individuals.

Keywords:

Spirituality, Workplace Spirituality, Personality, Big-Five, Five Factor Model

1. INTRODUCTION

Spirituality is the development of our inner wellbeing for achieving happiness, peace and fulfillment. In the modern world, workplace spirituality has become a basic necessity for every organization and it is considered as a boosting element for employee performance. Spirituality helps to find meaning in work, a meaning that extends beyond economic gain. Some of the key spiritual values embraced in a work place context include compassion, connection, mindfulness, integrity, honesty, accountability, gratitude, trust, openness, authenticity, inner life, work life balance, meaningful work, sense of community and sense of alignment of organizational values.

Personality is the noticeable psychological differences between individuals. A personality trait refers to long term consistency in personal characteristics that are revealed in a particular pattern of behaviour in a variety of situations. Personality traits is the general predictability in individuals' thought patterns, behaviour patterns and emotional patterns. Personality is generally split into components called the Big Five, which are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (or emotionality). These components are found to be mostly consistent over time, and about half of the variance could be attributable to a person's genetics rather than the effects of one's environment.

Spirituality supporting organizations and caring workplace environments benefit from employees who are strong in personality traits, committed, productive, and also willing to engage in spirituality in the workplace. Since workplace spirituality construct covers beyond individual perspective and thinking, it is justifiable to expect personality traits to result in greater degree of workplace spirituality which reflect spiritual culture and positive environment that benefit everyone in the organization and over time contribute to organizational effectiveness. Despite these positive outcomes, research relating to personality traits and workplace spirituality is still limited especially in the Indian context. The present study, therefore, attempts to develop a conceptual framework on the subject among the banking sector personnel in India. The key question addressed in this study: "Is there a significant positive relationship between personality and workplace spirituality?"

1.1 WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY

There is increasing evidence concerning interests in workplace spirituality which has captured the attention of academicians and practitioners. In the past, spirituality and management were considered as incompatible, but now they are integrated together in the organization. Apart from improving performance, spirituality can lead to productivity improvement and better contribution to the organization. However, review of literature reveal that only very few studies have focused on personality of employees as a key factor which would influence the workplace spirituality in an organization.

Ashmos and Duchon, [1] asserted that spirituality at work, despite religious imagery, is not about religion or conversion, or about getting people to accept a specific belief system. Instead, spirituality at work is about employees who understand themselves as spiritual beings whose souls need nourishment at work. Spirituality in the workplace is a spiritual culture recognizing that employees have both mind and spirit, seek to find meaning and purpose in their work, and desire to connect with other employees and be part of a community (Subramaniam and Panchanatham, [18]). The most prominent feature of spirituality is oneness with all beings in the universe, and therefore, (Krishnan, [9]) conceptualized spirituality as oneness with all other beings. Spirituality is a psychological power which creates positive energy and positive attitude towards others and self (Sengupta, [17]). When an individual feels connected with self, others, and the organization, optimal performance is achieved, thus rendering the organization a success (Subramaniam and Panchanatham, [19]). It helps to create a unique working environment that assists employees to foster their capacities (Daniel, [3]).

Workplace spirituality being subjective in nature, there exist several definitions. However, according to (Mitroff and Denton, [14]), three dimensions such as meaningful work at the individual level, a sense of community at the group level, and alignment with organization's values at the organizational level were considered

as important. Despite the lack of clarity and agreement on an appropriate definition of workplace spirituality, Duchon and Plowman [23] concluded that most definitions of workplace spirituality incorporate the notions of meaning, purpose, and being connected to others. Adding two more dimensions namely compassion and mindfulness at the individual level, this study deals with five dimensions of workplace spirituality namely Compassion, Mindfulness, Meaningful work, Sense of community, and Alignment of organizational values. Compassion is a deep awareness and sympathy for others and a wish to relieve their suffering (Twigg and Parayitam, [20]).

A spiritual person develops an awareness of others' needs and expresses a desire to help others. Mindfulness means being aware of what you are doing while you are doing it. Mindfulness involves the effort to attend, no judgmentally, to present-moment experience and sustain this attention over time, with the aim of cultivating stable, non-reactive, present-moment awareness (Jon Kabat-Zinn, [6]). Meaningful Work is the degree to which people experience a deep sense of meaning and purpose at work. It represents how one interacts with his or her daily work at the individual level (Milliman et al. [13]). Indeed, one feels that work has meaning for him/her beyond the material rewards and also creates a sense of joy and energy at work (Duchon and Plowman [23]).

In another sense, meaningful work answers the question of why one is in the workplace by acknowledging that his/her work helps him/her to express his/her inner self (Krishnakumar and Neck [8]). The sense of community represents that people feel connected to each other and that there is some type of relationship between one's inner self with other's inner self and relates to the interaction among employees. It involves having a deep connection to, or relationships with others (Ashmos and Duchon [1]). Alignment of organizational values is when employees experience a strong sense of alignment between their personal values and their organization's mission and purpose (Milliman et al. [13]). Alignment of organizational values measures whether or not individuals experience a sense of alignment between their personal values and the larger organizational mission and purpose.

It is anticipated that a work environment which recognizes that people have both mind and soul, seek to find meaning and purpose in their work, and desire to connect with other human beings and be part of a community, would result in beneficial consequences to the individual and ultimately the organization. This phenomenon relates to workplace spirituality. According to Krishnakumar and Neck [18], the encouragement of workplace spirituality can be advantageous to individuals and ultimately the organization.

Milliman et al. [13] provided empirical evidence on the relationships between the three dimensions of workplace spirituality and selected attitudinal variables (organizational commitment, intrinsic work satisfaction, job involvement, organization-based self-esteem, and intention to quit). Spirituality describes the experience of employees who are passionate about and energized by their work, find meaning and purpose in their work, feel that they can express their complete selves at work, and feel connected to those with whom they work (Kinjerski and Skrypnek [7]).

1.2 PERSONALITY

The five-factor model of personality is intended to provide a systematic framework for personality measures in broad terms. The model enhances the "ability to compare and contrast different constructs and promises to bring clarity and order to an enterprise that was once described as a disconcerting sprawl". The model identifies the five basic dimensions that help define underlying individual differences in personality (McAdams, [11]). The five most important dimensions of personality should be incorporated into the assessment of spirituality in the workplace. These dimensions are conscientiousness, emotional stability, agreeableness, extraversion, and openness to experience (Mount et al. [16]). Each of these dimensions represents a facet of an individual's personality.

Each of the components of big five holds a set of traits that tend to occur together. Openness to experience is defined as the variety of interests to which a person is attracted and the depth to which those interests are pursued. The behavioral tendencies typically associated with Openness to Experience include being imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad minded, intelligent (Digman [4]), and having a need for variety, aesthetic sensitivity, and unconventional values (McCrae and John, [12]). Conscientiousness is defined as the number of goals on which a person is focused. It is related to dependability and volition and the typical behaviors associated with it include being hard working, achievement oriented, persevering, careful, and responsible (Barrick and Mount [2]). Conscientious individuals can perform their part of the work with a minimum of oversight (Morgeson et al. [15]). They are predisposed to take the initiative in solving problems and are more methodical and thorough in their work (Witt et al. [21]). Extraversion is defined as the level of sensory stimulation with which one is comfortable. The behavioral tendencies used to measure this factor include being sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active (Barrick and Mount, [2]). Agreeableness is defined as the number of sources from which one takes one's norms for right behavior. The behavioral tendencies typically associated with this factor include being courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, soft-hearted, and tolerant (Barrick and Mount, [2]). Neuroticism is defined as the number and strength of stimuli required to elicit negative emotions in a person. Typical behaviors associated with this factor include being anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, emotional, worried, and insecure (Barrick and Mount, [2]).

Mount et al. [16] define each of the factors and listed certain qualities associated with the factors as, 1) Openness to Experience (intellectual, curious, imaginative, cultured, and broad-minded); 2) Conscientiousness (responsible, careful, persevering, orderly, hardworking, playful); 3) Extraversion (talkative, assertive, adventurous, energetic); 4) Agreeableness (good-natured, flexible, cooperative, caring, trusting, tolerant); 5) Emotional Stability (secure, stable, relaxed, self-sufficient, not anxious, tolerant of stress).

Recognizing the need for personality among employees could be one method to improve spirituality in the workplace as personality has the potential to perform personal control which helps employees assess their behavior in the workplace (James et al. [5]). Therefore, it can be concluded that a satisfied employee who exhibits personality traits develops spirituality in the

workplace and would eventually perform better in an organization.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to explore the relationship, if any, between personality traits and workplace spirituality. Accordingly, the following hypothesis has been developed:

H1: Personality (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) has a positive significant relationship with workplace spirituality (compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment of organizational values).

1.4 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Personality
- Openness to experience
- Conscientiousness
- Extraversion
- Agreeableness
- Neuroticism

Workplace Spirituality
- Compassion
- Mindfulness
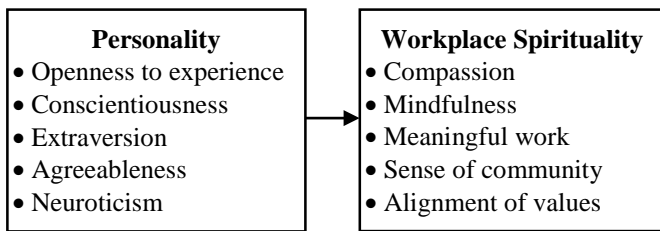- Meaningful work
- Sense of community
- Alignment of values

Fig.1. Conceptual framework of the study

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for the research is a descriptive study based on the survey. This study is mainly based on the primary data collected through the research instrument. The research instrument is a well-designed and structured questionnaire to get the knowledgeable opinions and responses of the participants with respect to the workplace spirituality (dependent variable) and the personality traits (independent variable). The study is confined to the participants chosen randomly from all the senior, middle and junior level managerial staffs of the branches of five different public and private sector banks branches situated in the city of Coimbatore, South India. This study is based on the convenience sampling approach. A total of sixty fully completed responses has been obtained after adopting a rational data collection procedure. The methodology used for primary data collection involves personal interviews, circulation of questionnaire direct as well as through email communication. The data collected are coded and entries made into the computer using excel spreadsheet software. The collected data are subjected to the test of normal distribution and found that it is near normal. Parametric tools are used for analysis. Statistical analysis is carried out according to percentage analysis and descriptive statistics. The inferential statistical analysis is carried out using Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation. The hypothesis is accepted or rejected based on the statistical analysis of the empirical data. The data analysis was performed with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The demographic profile of the respondents to questionnaires is shown in Table.1. Briefly, male respondents represented 75% of the participants, and 73% of the respondents are married. The mean age for the sample is 43 years. Among the respondents, 92% are graduates and above and 60% of the respondents are occupying senior level positions in the organizations.

Table.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Description		Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	45	75
	Female	15	25
Marriage	Married	44	73
	Single	16	27
Age	21-30	16	27
	31-40	19	32
	41-70	25	41
Education	High School	5	8
	Graduate	12	20
	Post Graduate	43	72
Status	Senior level	36	60
	Middle level	14	23
	Junior level	10	17

1.6 MEASUREMENT

Workplace spirituality measures consisted of 15 items derived from standard measurement scale, based on five dimensions viz. 1) Compassion 2) Mindfulness 3) Meaningful work 4) Sense of community and 5) Alignment of organizational values. Personality traits measurement is based on the Big Five Personality test and the scale consisted of 44 items relating to five dimensions viz. 1) Openness to experience 2) Conscientiousness 3) Extraversion 4) Agreeableness and 5) Neuroticism. The measurement is made using 5 point Likert scale which ranges from Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Results are shown in Table.2. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of questionnaires on workplace spirituality and Personality traits are reported as 77% and 61%, respectively, indicating above average level of reliability.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The demographic analysis of the collected data is carried out using statistical techniques. The t-test/one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is conducted to compare the mean scores of personality dimensions and workplace spirituality factors among the socio-demographic groups. It is noticed that the distribution is normal. It is inferred that the personality dimensions and workplace spirituality factors scores do not differ significantly with respect to gender differences. As there are no gender differences in results the combined responses for males and females are used in the data analysis. Further, it is inferred that the personality and workplace spirituality scores do not differ significantly with respect to marital status. It is found that the personality dimensions and workplace spirituality factors show significant results when compared with the age groups. Also, it is inferred that the personality dimensions and workplace spirituality scores differ significantly with respect to educational levels. Further, the results show that there is a significant difference in personality and workplace spirituality experienced

by the employees with respect to the position/level of employees in the organization.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient at 0.01 level of significance ($p \le 0.01$) is the statistical tool employed in the study to examine the contents of personality traits (independent variables) and workplace spirituality (dependent variable). Theoretical range, mean, standard deviation (SD) and Pearson's correlation coefficients (r) are calculated and presented in Table.2. The mean values of the variables range from 3.26 to 3.81. Standard deviations range from 0.23 to 0.54. Standard Error Mean value range from 0.037 to 0.085. It is observed that four of the five dimensions of personality, viz. extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience show significant positive correlation with the five dimensions of workplace spirituality ($p \le 0.01$).

Table.2. Relationship between personality and workplace spirituality-Correlation Matrix

Variable	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness to experience	Workplace Spirituality
Extraversion	1	.032	.623**	-.288	.215	.683**
Agreeableness	.032	1	.298	-.417**	.359*	.481**
Conscientiousness	.623**	.298	1	-.291	.173	.752**
Neuroticism	-.288	-.417**	-.291	1	.029	-.023
Openness to Experience	.215	.359*	.173	.029	1	.639**
Workplace Spirituality	.683**	.481**	.752**	-.023	.639**	1

*Correlation significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

**Correlation significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)

The correlation matrix in Table.2 indicates that the correlation coefficients are less than 0.80. It is inferred from the above correlation analysis that four of the 'big five' dimensions viz. extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experiences how a positive and significant relationship with workplace spirituality and its factors viz. compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment with organizational values. Hence, it is found that the personality dimensions extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience contribute to workplace spirituality. It is therefore concluded that the hypothesis that there is a significant influence of personality traits on workplace spirituality with respect to extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience is accepted.

The results of the study are comparable and consistent with the study results of Kuldeep et al. [10] and Zafar and Lou [22] with respect to the analysis of the correlation between personality and organizational citizenship behavior. Also, it is observed that some of the items are showing weak correlation. As such, the extent to which the scores of workplace spirituality are influenced by personality dimensions cannot be interpreted directly based on the correlation analysis only. Therefore, the regression analysis

was applied for the overall personality and workplace spirituality. The Table.3 indicates that personality significantly predicts workplace spirituality with R value of 1.0 which explains 45.4% of the variance in predicting workplace spirituality.

Table.3. Results of overall personality and workplace spirituality-Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R	R²	SE	F-Value	d.f	Sig.*
Workplace spirituality	Personality	1.0	1.0	0.003	45412.048	5,34	0.000

*Significant at 0.01 level

SE= Standard Error

d.f =degree of freedom

The regression analysis results indicate that personality has positive influence on workplace spirituality. Personality contributes to workplace spirituality. This means, a higher level of personality traits will lead to better performance in workplace spirituality. In other words, when employees possess a deep sense of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience, they become more satisfied in their job, act in a more collaborative manner and apply their full potential to work for their organization. Further, the employees indulge in spiritualism and the organization eventually results in increased organizational performance.

3. CONCLUSION

Given the importance of work to most people and the amount of time they spend at work, this study has provided some empirical evidence concerning individual personality and workplace spirituality. Given the dearth of studies on workplace spirituality in non-western countries, the use of Indian sample in this study has helped to address the gap in the literature by shedding some light on the dimensionality of the personality construct, and the predictive ability of these dimensions on workplace spirituality.

The results of this study reveal that personality has a significant positive relationship with workplace spirituality and the hypothesis is confirmed. It is inferred that personality contributes to workplace spirituality. This indicates that the organizations need to prepare the appropriate environment for increasing the personality traits which would develop workplace spirituality. The findings of the study provide further insight to leaders and managers on the importance of personality towards increasing the workplace spirituality which results in many positive benefits to organizations including the attitude, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, customer satisfaction and performance enrichment.

REFERENCES

[1] Donde P. Ashmos and Dennis Duchon, "Spirituality at Work: A Conceptualization and Measure", *Journal of Management Inquiry*, Vol. 9, No. 2, pp. 134-145, 2000.

[2] Murray R. Barrick and Michael K. Mount, "The Big Five Personality Dimensions and Job Performance: A Meta-

Analysis", *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 1-26, 1991.

[3] Jose Luis Daniel, "The Effect of Workplace Spirituality on Team Effectiveness", *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 29, No. 5, pp. 442-456, 2010.

[4] John M. Digman, "Personality Structure: Emergence of the Five-Factor Model", *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 21, pp. 417-440, 1990.

[5] Matrecia S.L. James, Angela K. Miles and Terry Mullins, "The Interactive Effects of Spirituality and Trait Cynicism on Citizenship and Counterproductive Work Behaviors", *Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 165-182, 2011.

[6] Jon Kabat Zinn, "Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Context: Past, Present, and Future", *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 144-156, 2003.

[7] Val M. Kinjerski and Berna J. Skrypnek, "Defining Spirit at Work: Finding Common Ground", *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 26-42, 2004.

[8] Sukumarakurup Krishnakumar and Christopher P. Neck, "The 'What' 'Why' and 'How' of Spirituality in the Workplace", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 153-164, 2002.

[9] Venkat R. Krishnan, "Impact of Transformational Leadership on Followers' Duty Orientation and Spirituality", *Journal of Human Values*, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 11-22, 2008.

[10] Kuldeep Kumar, Arti Bakhshi and Ekta Rani, "Linking the 'Big Five' Personality domains to Organizational Citizenship Behaviour", *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 73-81, 2009.

[11] D.P. McAdams, "The Five-Factor Model in Personality: A Critical Appraisal", *Journal of Personality*, Vol. 60, No. 2, pp. 329-361, 1992.

[12] Robert R. McCrae and Oliver P. John, "An Introduction to the Five-Factor Model and its Applications", *Journal of Personality*, Vol. 60, No. 2, pp. 175-215, 1992.

[13] John Milliman, Andrew J. Czaplewski and Jeffery Ferguson, "Workplace Spirituality and Employee Work Attitudes: An Exploratory Empirical Assessment", *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 426-447, 2003.

[14] Mitroff Ian and Elizabeth Denton, "*A Spiritual Audit of Corporate America: Multiple Designs for Fostering Spirituality in the Workplace*", *Wiley: Jossey-Bass*, 1999.

[15] Frederick P. Morgeson, Matthew H. Reider and Michael A. Campion, "Selecting Individuals in Team Settings: The Importance of Social Skills, Personality Characteristics, and Teamwork Knowledge", *Personnel Psychology*, Vol. 58, No. 3, pp. 583-611, 2005.

[16] Michael K. Mount, Murray R. Barrick and Greg L. Stewart, "The Five-Factor Model of Personality and Performance in Jobs that involve Interpersonal Interaction", *Human Performance*, Vol. 11, No. 2-3, pp. 145-165, 1998.

[17] Sunita Singh Sengupta, "Correlates of Spiritual Orientation and Managerial Effectiveness", *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 45-60, 2010.

[18] M. Subramaniam and N. Panchanatham, "A Study of Spirituality in a Public Sector Bank in India", *International Journal of Advances in Management and Economics*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 102-113, 2013.

[19] M. Subramaniam and N. Panchanatham, "Spirituality in Management", *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, Vol.3, No. 10, pp. 1-3, 2013.

[20] Nicholas W. Twigg and Satyanarayana Parayitam, "Spirit at Work: Spiritual Typologies as Theory Builders", *Journal of Organizational Culture Communication and Conflict*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 117-133, 2006.

[21] L.A. Witt, Lisa A. Burke, Murray R. Barrick and Michael K. Mount, "The Interactive Effects of Conscientiousness and Agreeableness on Job Performance", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 87, No. 1,164-169, 2002.

[22] Zafar Uz Zaman Anjum and Lou Fan, "Influence of Personality on Organizational Citizenship Behavior", *International Journal of Education and Research*, Vol. 2, No. 11, pp. 225-240, 2014.

[23] Dennis Duchon and Donde Ashmos Plowman, "Nurturing the Spirit at Work: Impact on Work Unit Performance", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 5, pp. 807-833, 2005.