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**WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT. AN  
EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL  
ORGANIZATIONS**

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## I. ABSTRACT

The study investigates spirituality in the workplace and attempts to examine the relationship on how the concept and practice of workplace spirituality influences employee engagement in Non-Governmental Organizations. The respondents consist of employees of NGOs from Vellore (India) and Katmandu (Nepal). The data have been analysed through Structural equation modelling. The study has found that direct effect on employee engagement. The aspects of spirituality in the workplace also have a significant impact on employee engagement in the workplace. But sense of community doesn't have any meaning in employee engagement. The study provides new sights to the NGO employees for effective engagement to their social work involvement through the spiritual virtues at workplace. In the last part of the article, practical implications, study limitations and suggestions for future researchers were discussed.

## II. INTRODUCTION

An important phenomenon in business today is an emphasis on the workplace spirituality and its connection with employee engagement in organizations. Although spirituality in the workplace is considered a highly personal and metaphysical concept, it includes a sense of wholeness, connectedness in the workplace, and deeper ideals for the organization's participation and dedication. Spirituality in the workplace involves the effort to find one's ultimate purpose in life, to develop a strong connection with co-workers and

other people associated with work, and to have consistency (or alignment) between one's core beliefs and their organization's values.

The sense and practice of spirituality in the workplace is believed to increase the concentration, focus and direction of employees. Accordingly to Ashmos and Duchon, 2000, p. 137, the workplace spirituality can be defined as “the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community”. In line to this definition stated above, this study aims to assess the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement in the context of Non-Governmental Organizations. The NGOs are the organizations that basically require employee interconnectedness, commitment and sense of belongingness to foster greater impact for the community in particular and society at large. In this light, the employees’ ability to perform and make an impact plays a vital role in the organization. It is important to note that spirituality in the workplace for some people involves a religious connotation while it does not for others. In fact, traditionally, faith has been embedded in much of the interest in spirituality. For many others, however, spirituality at work today does not entail a link with any particular religious practice but is focused on their own personal values and ideology.

In order to carry out this study and assess the impact of workplace spirituality in employees’ engagement in their job in Non-Governmental Organizations, the data with respect to employees’ values and their spiritual wellness and intrinsic motivation and how does it translates to improved work engagement are being collected from six NGOs from India and three from Nepal. This gives a fair assessment on how employees of NGOs take into account the various aspects of workplace spirituality and how does it impact their engagement, thereby leading to higher performance in the organization. Therefore, in order to study the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement, an analysis is being captured from the point of view of three dimensions namely “meaningful work” at individual level, “sense of employee connectedness” at group level and “alignment with organizational values” at organizational level.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

There are over 70 interpretations of workplace spirituality, but the concept of workplace spirituality is still not widely accepted (Kinjerski&Skrypnek, 2004; Markow&Klenke, 2005). 'The idea of organizational spirituality is like seeing an angel— it's ethereal and majestic, yet perplexing' (Laabs, 1995). Duchon. D and Plowman. D.A. (205) analyzed "work unit" spirituality and explored the possible relationship between work unit spirituality and work performance. The research was conducted in a broad Southwestern United States healthcare network. The outcome of this study revealed that quality in the work unit is higher when workers feel they are engaged in meaningful work. Similarly, when workers feel part of a community, the quality of the work unit is higher. The results of this study showed a correlation between work unit spirituality,

work unit quality, and leadership attitudes towards spirituality, given the importance of work for most people and the amount of time we spend at work. It is time for organizational researchers as well as corporate leaders to pay attention to the value of producing meaningful work and promoting people-to-work relations and taking the issue of spirituality in the workplace seriously.

Clark, L et.al on (2007) examined the prevalence of spirituality among hospice interdisciplinary teams and whether spirituality is related to job satisfaction and the relationships between spiritual belief, integration of spirituality at work, self-actualization and job satisfaction. Jarel Spiritual Well-Being Scale, the Chamiec-Case Spirituality Integration and Job Satisfaction Scales were used for the study. Multiple regression and structural path modeling methods were applied to explain the path relationships involving all four variables. Structural path model revealed that job satisfaction is more likely to be realized through a model that transforms one's spirituality into processes of workplace spirituality and self-actualization. Integrating Hospice IDT members spirituality at work with and enhancing self-actualization significantly enhances job satisfaction.

According to Milliman, J (2003) empirical examination of the workplace spirituality relationship with five prevalent employee attitudes variable organizational commitment, individual intent to quit, intrinsic work satisfaction, work involvement; and OBSE with a sample from the health care sector with a significant proportion of respondents being female. These are the first empirically based observations of the relationships between the workplace spirituality and these variables of organizational behavior. The study of the structural equation also shows that the dimensions of spirituality are strongly related to the dimensions of the five job attitudes. The analysis in the fully specified model indicates that meaningful work was significantly associated with four of the five variables of job attitude (the exception being the intention to quit), sense of community was significantly associated with all five of the outcome variables, and alignment with organizational values was significantly associated with organizational commitment and intention to quit. These results provide empirical support for the proposed relationship between these dimensions of spirituality in the workplace and employees attitudes.

Jurkiewicz, C.L & Giacalone, R.A on (2004) has found that theoretical assumptions about as to how spirituality in the workplace has a significant positive impact on the performance of the company and also increases the efficiency of the organization. The research body has been reviewed and analyzed and a subsequent organizational spirituality values structure has been developed, providing the basis for empirical testing. A discussion was highlighted on the considerations and theories involved in future research. Although spiritual environments are beneficial to all, the relationship is moderated by internal and external factors. At the individual level, personal-job issues that affect performance (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, 2000) where individuals hold different spiritual values to those of the organization. Externally, changes in economic conditions (such as

unemployment and inflation) influence spirituality-related values (Inglehart, 1990) and can moderate the impact on performance of workplace spirituality.

De Klerk, J.J. et al. (2007) examined the relationships between a person's sense of meaning in life, with variables of career orientation, biographical variables, dedication to work and motivation to work. The researchers found significant correlations between sense of meaning in life, positive work orientations, career involvement, and work motivation. Their results pointed to a spiritual source of motivation and dedication to work, a more profound origin than covered by existing theories of motivation. Commitment and motivation can also be representations of meaning in one's life. This research enhances practical understanding of spirituality in the workplace.

According to Tombaugh, J. R., Mayfield, C., & Durand, R (2011), preliminary evidence labeled spiritual expression at work (SEW) for a new conceptualization and measure of workplace spirituality. While the current literature focuses on addressing the spiritual needs of workers, religious interpretation refers to the effect of personal spirituality on employees' daily feelings, attitudes and interactions. The authors believed that value-based definitions of workplace spirituality represented only the passive voice of spirituality in the workplace. The active voice of spirituality in the workplace included a demonstrative expression of spirituality such as a nature walk, meditation, or prayer. Spirituality in the workplace is thus seen as an integration of beliefs that influence spiritual experiences and practices.

Freda van der Walt & Jeremias J. de Klerk (2014) determined the relationship between spirituality in the workplace and a positive work-related attitude, i.e. job satisfaction. A cross-sectional analysis with a sample of 600 white-collar workers was performed, drawn from two organizations in South Africa in different industries. The study focused specifically on white-collar workers, because work centrality and meaningful work seem to be more important to them (De Klerk et al., 2006, 2009; Morse & Weiss, 1955; Orzack, 1959). This research revealed an important relationship between the spirituality of the workplace and job satisfaction. In the absence of significant correlations between biographical variables with either workplace spirituality (except organizational type and age) and job satisfaction, it can be assumed that the relationship between workplace spirituality and job satisfaction does not depend on the biographical context. This result indicates that companies that adhere to and uphold spiritual values are likely to create an atmosphere in which workers will be happy with their work. This result deepens social spirituality, organizational spirituality, and job satisfaction comprehension. We bring new insights into the important role that spirituality plays in the workplace context.

Bilal Afsar & Maryam Rehman (2015) tried to fill this gap in the literature on employee's workplace spirituality on his/her innovative work behavior (IWB). To understand the psychology of workplace spirituality, this research examined longitudinally the relationship between workplace spirituality and IWB and the

effect of perceived person-organization on this relationship. Data from 448 subordinates and 79 superiors were obtained from Thailand's two knowledge-intensive industries. Study results suggest that employee spirituality in the workplace is positively linked to both self and supervisor ratings for creative practices, and perception of perceived Person-Organization fit serves as a partial mediator between spirituality in the workplace and IWB. Such findings suggest that the workplace spirituality experience of an employee influences his / her perceived Person-Organization fit, which in turn helps to engage him / her in more regular display of IWB.

Fachrunnisa, et.al (2014) explored the role of creative process engagement between leader-field workers community in improving job satisfaction and field workers performance. This study was conducted in a government office in Indonesia, which is responsible for successfully implementing a national family program in one area. The researchers examined the role of organizational spirituality and creative process involvement based on the theory of spiritual leadership to improve job satisfaction and performance. Results indicated that spirituality in the workplace and participation in creative processes are requirements for job satisfaction that contribute to employee performance. The research endorsed the notion that the relationship between spiritual leadership and creative process involvement and job satisfaction was mediated by the spiritual well-being.

According to Pawinee Petchsawanga & Dennis Duchon on (2012) made two research studies that explored how an organization could promote more productive work practices by promoting the expression of the spiritual identity of its workers in the Eastern context. Study 1 showed that people who practiced meditation regularly have higher spirituality scores in the workplace than those who do not practice meditation regularly. Study 2 recorded a quasi-experimental study where people practiced meditation on insight. The data did not reveal a direct effect of meditation, but spirituality has to do with the quality of the work. In addition, meditation practice is also found to partly mediate the relationship between the spirituality of the workplace and the quality of work.

Iyer, R. D. on (2018) examined the relationship between some aspects of workplace spirituality and job satisfaction among female nurses in India. The theory that was used here is Watson's Transpersonal Caring Healing theory. The variables are sense of community, meaning at work, Inner life and organizational values. Data was collected through a questionnaire which was mailed to a random sample of 600 nurses of private hospitals in Mumbai. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient and multiple regression analysis were used to analyse the data. The study revealed that sense of community and organizational values were significant predictors of job satisfaction among nurses.

Qaisar Iqbal, Noor Hazlina Ahmad, Basheer Ahmad on (2018) Provided empirical evidence of the correlations between perceived job characteristics

and workplace spirituality with environmental sustainability within the field of small and medium-sized businesses. This research investigated the effect on environmental sustainability through organizational spirituality of perceived job characteristics (employment identification, role significance and task variety). Data was obtained from 400 employees working in New Delhi, India, and Islamabad, Pakistan, from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The results showed that perceived task attributes have a positive influence on the spirituality of the workplace. It is concluded that spirituality in the workplace often significantly mediated the relationship between perceived job characteristics and environmental sustainability. The study concerns the understanding of different work characteristics and environmental sustainability from the point of view of workers in small and medium-sized companies to impart perceived job characteristics as important factors to address environmental sustainability challenges in the competitive market.

### **EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT:**

Employee engagement is a renowned construct for researchers and practitioners. There are number of definitions on employee engagement. The first and foremost the construct was defined defined by Kahn (1990) as “preferred self and as connects to organisation members selves to their work roles”. Employee express themselves in their work with three different categories as physically, cognitively and emotionally in their job performance. Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined engagement “as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (p. 74). Engagement has also been observed by several authors as his/ her work identified by encircling aspects such as (a). vigor indicates as high levels of energy, enthusiasm and resilience, (b) dedication indicates that (deep relationship with one’s job involvement significance of motivation and challenge), and (c) adsorption indicates (giving full involvement with one’s work task). According to Kahn (1990) engagement specified the inner spirit or spiritual presence of employees when he performs his organisation responsibilities.

Most commonly when employees are engaged in their responsibilities, they are devoting their hands, head, and heart (Rich et al. 2010). When employees are occupied and are performing the task it indicates that they are psychologically present with attentive, connected, integrated and focuses on their performance.

### **Relationship between Workplace Spirituality and Employee Engagement**

Workplace spirituality and employee engagement are independent topic on their own. They both has similar relationships with definitions and dimensions and it leads to connect several aspects such as a sense of completeness and

wholeness Milliman et al. (2003). Most of the academicians opined that spirituality is a sense of wholeness and completeness and that indicates being a complete integrated person (Pfeffer 2010). The complete indicates the spiritual oneself and it expresses the spirit of “entire “person at workplace such as more focused and productive performer Duchon and Plowman (2005). Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) Enhancing the spirituality will lead to the more complete feeling when they perform the task” (p.158).

Employee engagement also includes a sense of wholeness and completeness. For instance, engagement contains the immediate asset of all aspects such as cognitive, physical and emotional in the workplace (Kahn 1990). Rich et al., (2010) stated that engagement has different range of construct from others and it involves narrower aspects of self. Kahn (1992) also mentioned that sense of wholeness is one of the psychological construct that is integrated with the different aspect of self and they are associated and complete rather than incoherent.

The concept of wholeness has relationship with both workplace spirituality and employee engagement. Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) also mentioned that spirituality is one of most significant dimensions in personality hence enhancing spirituality makes people to bring their complete self to workplace. According to the (Krishnakumar and Neck 2002; Milliman et al. 2003) the feeling of being connected with task as well as co-workers and other association with workers includes the component of workplace spirituality and employee engagement. Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2004), interviewed 14 professionals and found that being connected with co-workers as well as higher officials make oneself associated with work they are strongly engaged with emotional feelings.

Workplace spirituality and employee engagement has several common relationships with job related outcomes. For instance (Krishnakumar and Neck 2002) has listed few such as creativity, honesty, trust and personal fulfilment. Correspondingly people who are more engaged with their task are said to be more creative, high performer and are passionate with their job.

## **RESEARCH GAP**

Numerous studies have been conducted on employee workplace spirituality. However, the literature has a number of limitations. Much of the research has concentrated on describing personal spiritual experiences at work rather than on the impact that dimensions of workplace spirituality have on individual work engagement and people’s behaviours in organizations. Further, not much studies have been conducted on the subject matter with respect to the employee of Non-Governmental Organizations.

In light of this, it is felt vital that the employees of NGOs fosters wholeness and remain connected through the practice of workplace spirituality, which should ultimately improve their performance, commitments and achievement of organizational goals. It is with these phenomena that a closer emphasis and

analysis on rigor and critical thinking on workplace spirituality and employee engagement is felt important to understand on how its relationship contributes towards employee ability to perform better with the sense of wholeness, connectedness at work, and deeper values in NGOs.

### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:**

Based on the review of literature and research gap analysis, the objective of the present study was developed as

- To examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement among select NGO Employees.
- To study the impact of various dimensions on workplace spirituality among select employees of NGO.
- To study the impact of various dimensions on employee engagement among select employees of NGO.

### **METHODS:**

#### **Sampling**

The total sample size for the research consisted 140 individuals from both countries. The sample techniques for the study was non-probabilistic. The total sample for Nepal consisted of 65 individuals. Managers and area coordinator, Field officers, public relations officers, project coordinators, Voluntary workers and Promotion managers. For the India, the total sample consisted of 75 individuals. The sample consisted of part time fundraising voluntaries and full-time employees in NGOs Project managers, Field staffs and Marketing staffs.

The survey administered in both ways in person and returned directly to the researchers during project meeting and field visits also collected through the online forms by sending emails. Out of 200 return rate 60 were unusable due to missing variable and unanswered questions. Approximately 58 percent of the sample is over the age of 35. The sample is 58 percent of male and 42 percent of female. The respondents have worked in their current organization less than 4.5 years. 44 percent respondents have less than 2 years of experience. The participants work in the following job roles in their organization Area coordinators 56 percent and 26 percent of fundraising voluntaries 19 percent project coordinators and 22 percent of field staff and 17 percent other.

### **MEASURES:**

Workplace spirituality was measured with 12 items using organization's values survey scale of Ashmos and Duchon (2000) and the sense of community scale from Milliman et al. (2003). Employee engagement was operationalized through 12 items selected from Rich et al. (2010).

### **DATA ANALYSIS:**

Whereas, there is a consent on the suggestion sample size for structural equation modelling (SEM) (Sivo Fan, Witta, & Willse, 2006), Existing literature studies have proposed a critical sample size of minimum 150 (e.g. Garver & Mentzer, 1999; Hoelter, 1983). Based on the thumb rule, sample size of this study provides adequate statistical power for data analysis.

#### **Discriminant, construct and convergent validity:**

Reliability is defined as scale consistently shows the construct is measuring (Leong, Hew, Ooi and Lin, 2011). Cronbach's alpha value must be greater than 0.70 (Bernstein and Nunnally, 1994). The construct reliability based on calculation of actual loadings of every construct must be greater than the 0.70 and average variance extraction must be greater than the 0.50. Construct validity is to measure the scales what is intended to measure (Hew and Leong, 2011). Convergent validity is defined as the validity in which the ability of constructs to give the same result. The convergent validity must be manifested if the following threshold has been present. All composite reliability must be greater than 0.70. All factor loadings must be greater 0.50 and all the average variance extraction must be greater than 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981)

**Table-1 Construct Reliability and Validity**

<b>L at en t V ar ia bl es</b>	<b>Cro nba ch's Alp ha</b>	<b>Co mp osi te Rel iab ilit y</b>	<b>Averag eVarian ce Extract ed (AVE)</b>
A o V	0.8 35	0.8 90	0.670
E E	0.9 41	0.9 49	0.610
M W	0.8 29	0.8 86	0.660
So C	0.7 97	0.8 69	0.626
w ps	0.9 01	0.9 17	0.681

**Table :2 Discriminant Validity by (Fornell and Larcker (1981) method**

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**Note:** Bold values along with the diagonal are the square root of the average variance extraction.

**Examination for hypothesis in the structural Model**

<b>Regression Path</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (STD EV)</b>	<b>T Statistics ( O/S TDE V )</b>	<b>Supported</b>
AoV -> EE_	0.091	5.159	Yes
MW -> EE_	0.077	4.574	Yes
SoC -> EE_	0.084	0.529	No
wps -> Engagement	0.038	19.148	Yes

### **Examination the structural Model**

From the above table No: 3 Path analysis on the basis of t-statistics was used to verify the hypothesis significance. From the SEM it has found from that Aov (Alignment of organization Values) (t-statistics 5.159) has influence on (Employee Engagement) EE. Meaningful work (t-statistics -4.574) has influence on EE. Sense of Community (SoC) t-statistics 2.0882) not supported. The workplace spirituality has influence on employee engagement t-statistics (19.148). Hence the dimension of workplace spirituality except Sense of community has significance on employee engagement.

### **Limitation and future research:**

The study is limited to few employees of Non-Governmental Organizations. Considering the population (employees in various NGOs), it is felt that the sample size is still small. The larger sample size would have provided wider options for use of different statistical tools that produce more validated and reliable results. The concept of spirituality is taken as that of religious practice in the workplace. However, it is felt that these two aspects could be studied in separate sense with different variables and measurements. In future study can test different constructs with workplace spirituality as moderator or mediator further the study generalizability.

### **Conclusion and Implication:**

The study on the workplace spirituality and employee engagement in the context of NGOs revealed that that exists a positive relationship between Workplace spirituality and Employee Engagement. The practice of workplace spirituality has created the positive impact on the performances of the employees in the NGOs. The relationship of computed variables such as meaningful work, aligning of values, have contributed positively for the engagement of the employees in their respective work places. However, the sense of community does not have any influences on the employees' engagement at their respective work places but rest of the constructs as defined in the study brings positive relation on the quality of work and committed to the work by engagement of the employees. It is presumed that such relationship could help to provide better services with higher level of commitment and attachment to the work and the organizations by the employees. The practices of work place spirituality creates a positive work environment to all the employees with high level of social harmony and bonding. So the employees are highly supportive to each other for meeting the goals of the organizations. Moreover, the employee's commitment and their inner values are closely associated with the workplace spirituality and employees' engagement to their respective works. The employees of NGOs have positive attitude towards their work through the practice of workplace spirituality leading to higher engagement in work itself. Thus, higher level of employee engagement could help to improve their productivity and organization's overall efficiency as well.

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