

Effects of Spiritual Training on the Personal and Professional Growth of Employees – A Study in Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd.

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Abstract

The study intends to measure the effectiveness of spiritual training programmes conducted in POWERGRID. With the commitment and involvement of 9800 strong and professionally qualified human resources, POWERGRID is responsible for transmitting bulk power within and across the country. To enhance the personal and professional well being of its employees, a series of spiritual trainings were conducted in which 310 employees have participated across the organization during 2010 and 2011. After a gap of 8 to 12 months, a structured questionnaire containing various personal and professional development variables was circulated and data from 188 respondents were collected and analyzed. The results reveal that their health, behaviour and relationship with the colleagues were improved after attending the programme. The study results suggest that such programme should be extended to other employees as well. The paper concludes that spiritual training programmes plays a vital role and it is useful in two dimensions namely individual and organization, as both are complimentary to each other.

Introduction

Studying spirituality in workplace is a new phenomenon. It has now become an interesting subject of discussion and research for many scholars and corporates. In the recent past, people see spiritual growth as an important part of their life, as it can have effect not only in their personality but also on their professional growth. Spirituality in the workplace may manifest itself in several ways, but mainly at two different levels: the personal and the organizational (Claude and Zamar, (2003). It is a vital and large topic which means different to different people. Some merely see it as growth opportunity and some others view it as a way of life, and yet others term it as part of their religions ritual. Many corporations today emphasize more of spiritual quotient (SQ) apart from intelligent quotient (IQ) and emotional quotient (EQ). There were many definitions given by many spiritual gurus and scholars at different times. Yet, the topic is elusive. Nevertheless, in the context of spiritual training being offered in POWERGRID, the philosophy can be classified into personal and professional and its effects on the employees can be examined.

POWERGRID Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a leading Navratna Public Sector Enterprise under Government of India, is responsible for transmission of bulk electric power within and across the regions. It has about 9800 employees posted in 132 substations across the country. The organization has also ventured into telecom and consultancy. The wide geographically located transmission network demands high level of commitment, dedication and hard work from its employees. The highly qualified technical professionals in the organization are dedicated in building and maintaining India's Power transmission network. They are constantly under pressure to achieve their targets. In order to enhance the competencies of employees, POWERGRID has been organizing programmes with the target of 6 mandays in a year. The programmes are in the area of functional, managerial and behavioural. As a part of this employee development strategy, a need was felt to provide spiritual growth training to them, so that it helps them in improving their performance. The programmes have considerable spiritual contents. Yoga and meditation are integral part of these programs. During the year 2010 and 2011, about 290 employees were trained by Art of Living Foundation in a programme titled '*Achieving Personal Excellence (APEX)*' and by Isha Foundation in a programme titled '*Inner Engineering*'. It is therefore felt necessary to find out whether these programmes have served its purpose. In this backdrop, a study is initiated to assess the impact of the above training programmes conducted by these organizations in different sub-stations of POWERGRID.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the effects of spiritual training on the personal and professional growth of employees in POWERGRID.
2. To understand and report employees opinion on spiritual training in POWERGRID.
3. To suggest measures that helps the improvement of training quality in the organization.

Conceptual background:

Organizations believe that humanistic work environment creates a win-win situation for both employees and the organization. If members of an organization are happy, they will be more productive, more creative and more fulfilled (Jean and Zamar, 2003). It is seen that workplace spirituality is a growing concern for increasing number of organizations, employees, and job seekers. In today's tumultuous business landscape, many numbers of people are looking to the workplace to fulfill their spiritual needs, while organizations are finding positive work outcomes associated with a workplace that augments workers spiritual fulfillment. There is to date, however, little research concerning the relationships between culture, individual differences, and workplace spirituality (Winters Moore 2005). Organizational spirituality has now become one of the accepted areas for academic research (Poole, 2009). According to Andrew Kim (2003), quality of life consists of many things

such as health, economic resources (income and wealth), social support, education, employment and working conditions, political and legal rights and housing. In fact health, financial stability, job satisfaction, a happy marriage, loving relationships and good interpersonal relationships are important elements of well being of individual. While spirituality mainly aims to bring well being among human beings, it also searches for inner self among themselves. The following paragraphs will explain various aspects and definition of spirituality, as given by the authors in different times.

Business leaders in corporate world today are facing daunting challenges of great complexity. To meet these challenges, they need multiple resources including those that of spirituality offer (Silva, 2007).

Work place spirituality has been defined as a 'framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy (Carole and Robert, 2004).

Llyod (1990) in his article maintains that organizations high in workplace spirituality outperform those without it by 86%. Further such organizations reportedly grow faster, increase efficiencies and produce higher returns on investments. Such organizations are also high in motivation.

Spirituality is about acknowledging that people come to work with more than their bodies and minds; they bring individual talents and unique spirits. For most of the twentieth century, traditionally run companies have ignored that basic fact of human nature. Now they explore spiritual concepts such as trust, harmony, values and honesty for their power to help achieve business goals (Legh, 1977 in Claude and Zamar, 2003).

How does spirituality affect the goal of every business, which is to make a profit? A Harvard Business School study examined 10 companies with strong corporate cultures (spirited workplaces) and 10 with weak corporate cultures, drawn from a list of 207 leading corporations. In 11 year period, the researchers found a dramatic co-relation between the strength of an organization's corporate culture and its profitability.

Lee's study demonstrates that stronger religiosity generally has a positive impact on levels of satisfaction. Indeed, those identifying themselves as deeply religious and not so deeply religious were found to be more satisfied with life than those identifying themselves as slightly religious (Lee W 1991).

Most strong and good families have religious and spiritual basis. Most family researches found that religion or spirituality is important to make strong families (Vela, 1996). In a

study of 14 strong families of various religious and nationalities revealed that the main spiritual and religious teaching for them was love.

According to Chung (2009), spirituality has been studied in relation to psychological factors in health for the past decade and has been found to promote positive effect while possibly benefiting health. However, multiple dimensions of spirituality need to be examined systematically, before much can be concluded regarding the influence of spirituality on health.

Background of Training Programmes

To provide personal development opportunities, two programmes were planned. Achieving Personal Excellence (APEX) and Inner Engineering are two programmes being offered by Art of Living Foundation and Isha Foundation respectively. APEX programme, as the name suggests, a programme designed to achieve excellence in oneself. APEX program helps the participants to harness timeless wisdom, innovative processes and advanced management techniques to create workplace that nurtures leadership, enhances creativity, inculcates team spirit among participants and boosts productivity. *“Motivation comes from the outside. Inspiration comes from within”*. You can motivate a person, but that motivation is short-lived. Inspiration, on the other hand, can last a whole lifetime. - H. H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Every successful Corporate House knows the importance of maintaining and upgrading facilities and equipment to obtain optimum performance levels. Many companies, however, fail to give an equal amount of attention to their most precious resource – their employees. With increasing competition and pressure to do things in a cheaper, better and faster way, the quality of an employee's life is often overlooked.

When problems of stress and conflict in the workplace are not remedied, employees grow frustrated, or feel overwhelmed, and this leads to problems like greater absenteeism, decreased motivation, limited creativity and deterioration in morale. Unless employees are centred and balanced, a company's economic growth, and true potential cannot be fully realized. Some of the unique features of APEX programme are: It guides a way to journey within us, it is for knowing and developing oneself, it encourages the feeling of self awareness, belongingness and commitment to oneself. It also helps a person to be aware of his mind and body and makes one connect oneself. It guides one to maintain individuality and still be successful, and facilitates us to learn how easy our life can be, if certain guidelines are followed.

Similarly, the Inner Engineering programme is a unique programme propounded by Satguru Jaggi Vasudev of Isha Foundation. Inner Engineering is offered as an intensive program for personal growth. The program and its environment establish the possibility to explore the

higher dimensions of life and offers tools to re-engineer one's self through the inner science of yoga. Once given the tools to rejuvenate, people can optimize all aspects of health, inner-growth and success. For those seeking professional and personal excellence, this programme offers key for meaningful and fulfilling relationships at work, home, community and most importantly, within one's self. The approach is a modern antidote to stress, and presents simple but powerful processes from yogic science to purify the system and increase health and inner well-being. Programme components include guided meditations and transmission of the sacred Shambhavi Maha Mudra. When practiced on a regular basis, these tools have the potential to enhance one's experience of life on many levels. In fostering understanding of their interiority, participants gain powerful tools to cope with the hectic pace of modern life and move into a new plane of living and working. Inner engineering empower participants to begin experience their lives to the fullest potential.

Study Method

Keeping in view the above background and objective, data was collected from primary sources especially those employees who have attended programmes such as Achieving Personal Excellence (APEX), and Inner Engineering during 2010 and 2011. The secondary resources such as study material and circulars issued on the matter have also been used to supplement the data. A questionnaire with three sections consisting of demographic variables, use and impact of training, and employee's opinion was prepared and distributed to respondents. The variables included in the questionnaire are: practice, health, state of mind, situations and environment, participation by others (colleagues/friends) and other suggestions by participants. The respondents are those employees who have attended above training programmes in the organization. Therefore, purposive sampling technique is adopted to collect the data. The data was collected telephonically and in some cases through personal interviews as well. The collected data has been analyzed using descriptive statistics. The strength of relationship between two variables are also reported and analyzed.

Results and Discussion

As per the study objectives, the variables related to effect of spiritual training has been rated as per the values given by the respondents. Table.1 given below indicates the rating of variables by respondents. It can be seen that predominant number of respondents have felt that they are feeling happier and more peaceful than before, as the mean score obtained for this variable is 4.09 out of 5. The respondents in general have felt that there is a positive sign and impact due to their participation in the programme. However, the score for positive change in them after attending the programme is lower than other variables as the score is 3.40.

Table 1. Rating of Variables Related to Effects of Spiritual Training

S.N.	Variables	Mean Score	Mini.	Max.	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
01	I am more healthier now than before	3.95	2	5	.715	.052
02	I feel I am more energetic than before	3.94	1	5	.725	.053
03	I find that I am spending less money than before on my health	3.59	1	5	.900	.066
04	I am overall happier and more peaceful than before	4.09	1	5	.844	.062
05	I feel I am more affectionate towards people around me than before	4.07	2	5	.672	.049
06	I feel I am able to handle situations better than before	4.06	2	5	.694	.051
07	People have remarked positive change in me	3.40	1	5	.966	.071
08	I feel other employees should also attend this programme	4.71	3	5	.466	.034

In order to find out the relationship between designation and the frequency of kriya being practiced by respondents, the questions pertaining to their practice during last 8 months have been obtained. The results from the data are presented in the Table 2 as given below.

Table 2: Association Between Designation and Frequency of Practicing the Kriya After Attending the Programme

S.N.	Designation	Frequency of Practicing the Kriya After Attending the Programme				
		Never	Less than 5 times a month	Once a week	2-3 times a week	Almost Every Day
01	Workmen	8	1	4	5	2
		40.0%	5.0%	20.0%	25.0%	10.0%
02	Supervisors	3	2	1	1	1
		37.5%	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
03	Executives	40	30	30	33	27
		25.0%	18.8%	18.8%	20.6%	16.9%
Total		51	33	35	39	30
		27.1%	17.6%	18.6%	20.7%	16.0%

Chi-Square = 5.195 at 8 degree of freedom . P value: 0 .737.

It can be seen from the above table that there is no association between designation and frequency of practice of kriya as the P value arrived from chi-square test is more than 0.05 with 8 degree of freedom. It can be concluded that the frequency of practice of kriya is not depending upon the level of designation of respondents. It means, irrespective of level or position in the organization, the employees practice yoga kriya as per their comfort and convenience.

POWERGRID has imparted the spiritual development training in almost all the regions. Participants have represented from across the designations. It is important and relevant to find out the impact of training region-wise and see how far the participants practice the skills that were imparted from the training. To report the relationship between regions and the frequency of practice of kriya, we have arrived the results from the cross table 3 as presented below.

Table 3. Association Between Regions and Frequency of Practicing the Kriya After Attending the Programme

S.N.	Regions	Frequency of Practicing the Kriya After Attending the Programme (Percentages in Brackets are within Regions)					Total
		Never	Less than 5 times a month	Once a week	2-3 times a week	Almost Every Day	
01	NR-I	4(23.5%)	2(11.8%)	3(17.6%)	4(23.5%)	4(23.5%)	17(100.0%)
02	NR-II	10(33.3%)	6(20.0%)	5(16.7%)	6(20.0%)	3(10.0%)	30(100.0%)
03	ER-I	3(17.6%)	2(11.8%)	3(17.6%)	7(41.2%)	2(11.8%)	17(100.0%)
04	ER-II	4(22.2%)	2(11.1%)	5(27.8%)	3(16.7%)	4(22.2%)	18(100.0%)
05	WR-I	2(13.3%)	6(40.0%)	2(13.3%)	4(26.7%)	1(6.7%)	15(100.0%)
06	WR-II	10(38.5%)	1(3.8%)	7(26.9%)	3(11.5%)	5(19.2%)	26(100.0%)
07	SR-I	8(29.6%)	1(3.7%)	4(14.8%)	7(25.9%)	7(25.9%)	27(100.0%)
08	SR-II	1(11.1%)	1(11.1%)	3(33.3%)	1(11.1%)	3(33.3%)	9(100.0%)
09	NER	3(23.1%)	8(61.5%)	0(.0%)	2(15.4%)	0(.0%)	13(100.0%)
10	CC*	6(37.5%)	4(25.0%)	3(18.8%)	2(12.5%)	1(6.2%)	16(100.0%)
Total		51(27.1%)	33(17.6%)	35(18.6%)	39(20.7%)	30(16.0%)	188(100.0%)

*Corporate Centre.

Chi-square P value .035 with 36 degree of freedom

It can be seen from the above table that there is an association between region and the kriya practice by respondents since the p value from chi-square test is .034 with 36 degree of freedom, which is less than the accepted significance level of 0.05. It reveals that the

respondents from different regions are independent of their way of practice that they have learned from the yoga programme. Irrespective of the region in which they belong, the pattern in which they practice does not vary.

Table. 4. The Association Between Gender of Respondents and Frequency of Practicing the Kriya After Attending the Programme

S.N.	Gender of Respondents	Frequency of Practicing the Kriya After Attending the Programme (Percentages within Bracket are within Gender)				
		Never	Less than 5 times a month	Once a week	2-3 times a week	Almost Every Day
01	Male	46	25	33	35	29
		(27.4%)	(14.9%)	(19.6%)	(20.8%)	(17.3%)
02	Female	5	8	2	4	1
		(25.0%)	(40.0%)	(10.0%)	(20.0%)	(5.0%)
	Total	51	33	35	39	30
		(27.1%)	(17.6%)	(18.6%)	(20.7%)	(16.0%)

Chi-square p value is .060 with 4 degree of freedom.

Similarly, how far the gender has influenced the way in which they practice kriya has been examined. It is important to find out the above, because at times, female employees are oriented towards spirituality more than male counterparts. The results as arrived have been presented in a cross tabular form as given in Table 4. It can be seen from the above that gender does not have any influence over the spiritual practice, as the p value of chi-square test is above 0.05. It is found that irrespective of their gender, they practice the kriya as per their convenience.

Reliability Analysis: The data collected are subjected to reliability test before the same are further analyzed. The reliability of coefficient (cronbach's Alpha) is 0.791, which is an accepted figure of reliability of data. The value of cronbach's Alpha was collected in respect of all the 8 variables.

Opinion of Respondents on the effectiveness of Training Programme: It has been observed in general that a majority of the respondents feel healthy after attending the programme. Further, most of the respondents spend less money on their health, and their energy level have gone up considerably due to the regular practice of kriya. While collecting opinion of respondents, we have also approached their reporting officers about the impact of the spiritual training programmes conducted in the organization. It is observed that most of the reporting officers have noticed positive and qualitative changes on their subordinates, after

attending the programmes as mentioned below:

- a) **Work efficiency:** Employees have become more energetic, taking more initiatives in work and they have drive for performance.
- b) **Behaviour at Work Place:** Employees are affectionate towards their peers, they show respect to their seniors and they encourage and motivate their subordinates.
- c) **Change in health:** Employees are feeling healthy and fit, become less stressed, and have become cheerful and happy.
- d) **Managing situations:** Employees are able to handle situations better and they complete their tasks in time.

It is further found that those reporting officers who have mentioned the above, have recommended to impart programmes to other employees as well. However, some of the superiors have maintained neutral on the change of behavior of their subordinates, and yet few have declined to comment. The following are considered to be the key take-aways from the programme:

- a) Living in the present moment
- b) Accept situation and people
- c) Be in harmony with oneself
- d) Awareness about difference between responsibility and duty
- e) Sensitivity towards each other
- f) No presumptions about any person
- g) Elimination of stress, nervousness and depression
- h) Team spirit and being compassionate towards fellow workmen
- i) Breathing properly
- j) Communication is the best way to make or break things
- k) Sources of energy are: awareness, food, breath and rest
- l) Seven levels of existence are: breath, intellect, body, mind, memory, ego and self
- m) Three types of listening are: intellectual listening, awareness listening and emotional listening

In order to achieve the above, the respondents have learnt and practiced the methods such as relaxing breathing exercise, energizing breathing techniques (ujjayi breathing), sudarsan kriya-experiencing the vision of oneself, meditation/relaxation and three types of pranayama and various Asanas.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the results, it has been observed that programme was proved to be effective to most of the participants. However, it was observed that 26.9% of the participants did not practice the kriya from the day of completion of the programme. This

may be due to their poor memory about the sequence of breathing technique, non-interest and non availability of time. Nevertheless, in order to improve the effectiveness of the programme further, the following suggestions were given by the respondents:

1. Conducting a refresher course in every three or six months, either in office or outside the office
2. The regular follow up course to be organised atleast once in a month
3. The duration of course was found to be less. It can be extended to 4-5 days
4. It is further suggested that the programme should be conducted away from city and office premises, preferably at the Ashram itself
5. The food offered during the programme should be light and the eatables like coffee, tea should be avoided
6. This programme should be extended to all the employees
7. Before sending the employees for the programme, they should be given a brief within POWERGRID, so that they are mentally prepared to attend the programme

Limitations

The purposive sampling procedure decreases the generalization of findings. In this study the findings could be subject to other interpretations. Since the opinion of employees is subjective, it may be seen as personally biased. Moreover, since the data is being collected after more than 6-12 months from the date of completion of programme, the respondents might recall from memory which some time may not provide desired results.

Conclusion

The study is being conducted as a part of the action research initiative of the organization. The study results will be useful in two dimensions. Firstly, to understand the utility of such spiritual training in organization and on the other hand to learn from the study experience, so as to extend such action research to other area of training programmes conducted in the organization.

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