

Effect of Spirituality on Human Performance - A Myth or Reality?

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Abstract

There are many researches conducted in the area of factors influencing human performance in various industries. Many improvement projects using lean and six sigma techniques have been applied in the past to overcome the problem of human errors. Factors can be broadly classified into Individual and Organisational. The topic of human performance has been heavily researched in industries such as Nuclear, Aviation, Healthcare etc...Studies have been conducted depending upon the type of tasks considering Physical Quotient, Intelligent Quotient and Emotional Quotient. However, the effect of human task performance as a result of Spiritual Quotient is a very unique study and first of its kind. This paper aims to test if the ultimate knowledge of spiritual intelligence has any influence on the human performance. A controlled experiment was conducted. The dependent variable is Accuracy of the transaction processed with independent factors as Gender and Spiritual Intelligence. It was a 2² experiment, i.e. 2 factors (Gender and SQ) and 2 levels (male/female and high/low). 63 MBA students (41 males and 22 females) of a Business School were involved in this experiment. They were asked to fill up a 24 items questionnaire on Spiritual Intelligence. Later they were asked to perform a task to understand their performance. The task involved reading a passage and entering data both numeric and alphabetic into a standard template. The participants were given sufficient time as per the industrial standards just to simulate the work environment pressure. There were 59 fields of data entry and the performance was calculated by measuring the accuracy of data entry. That is, the ratio of number of fields entered correctly to the total number of fields to be entered. (defects per opportunity). The results show that human performance is significantly related to Spiritual Intelligence irrespective of the Gender.

Introduction

Human performance has been studied relating to intelligence and physical ability depending upon the type of work performed. It is very obvious for any researcher to study and understand the factors including mental and physical capabilities as the job requires such abilities. This topic has been researched from various perspectives from psychological, economical, organisational points of views. The effect of spirituality on performance came

to our thought when we wanted to look at factors beyond conventional viewpoints. There is always an argument especially in Asia and now very much in the western world now if a strong spiritual inclination can lead to higher performance levels.

Literature Background

Definition of Spirituality

Traditionally spirituality has been linked with religious beliefs. Science of spirituality refers to an organisation is committed to meditation and service as a way of life. A report by BBC news magazine by Tom De Castella titled “Spiritual but not religious” on 3rd January 2013 refers to the survey by Pew Research Centre suggesting in the US, one fifth of the people are not affiliated with any religion but 37% of them consider themselves as spiritual but not religious. Spirituality has got nothing to do with religions. Zohar (1997) refers to spiritual intelligence as the need of the human being to understand oneself. Smith (2006) refers spirituality as a feeling rather than being rational or logical.

Growing Importance to Spirituality at Work

In today's highly competitive world every organisation is looking for differentiating itself from others and sustain the advantage they have. They have started realising that merely considering the emotional and rational intelligence and skills of people does not suffice and only a stronger orientation towards meaningful existence and purpose of the organisation and its people can overcome today's complex problems. Watkins (2003) argues that organisation has started to recognise the importance of the value of a person as a whole more from a spiritual perspective rather than just the required skills for the job. Neal (2001) refers to the increasing emphasis shown by organisations at the workplace. Between 1999 and 2001, there had been more than 200 journal articles published on the topic of spirituality as estimated by Kale and Shrivastava (2003). There were a number of companies that have started incorporating spiritual practices in their system of organisation development. Many Business Schools and Management Journals have now started accepting and recognising spirituality as an area of study and research.

Srivastava and Misra (2012) states that people would want to see value and meaning in their life and work and making a difference to others. Spirituality is the ultimate level of intelligence without any religious bias to help one understand self. Neal (2001) states especially in the period of downturn economic trend, people were demotivated and started looking beyond conventional materialism into meaning and purpose of life. In his research work in Britain, Taylor found that there was a significant decrease in the personal commitment to employers.

Stress at work leading to various health problems have increased in the recent times. This has also made people to think on the concepts of yoga and meditation at workplace. If more than eight hours is spent at work place and especially in the IT / ITES industry with stretched working hours, there is a need for the organisations to look for methods and practices to relieve stress. Work life balance has become the order of the day and in the white collared segment and administrative type of work, the need for healthy life and not just wealthy life is imperative for the organisations to achieve excellence. Several corporates in India have opted for the program on Achieving Personal Excellence (APEX) by the Art of Living foundation. Conger et al. (1994) refers to the workplace being seen as community rather than the neighbourhoods. When more and more people reach self – actualisation state their need for spirituality also increases as mentioned by Maslow (1994).

Impact of Spiritual Intelligence

Victor et al in their model refers to high Spiritual Quotient leads to happiness, serenity, good self-esteem and harmonious and loving relationships. Rotimi (2008) statistically investigated the estimates of emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence on the conflict resolution behaviour in Nigeria. Conor et al. (2011) in their article states how emotional labour is impacted by the emotional experience and spirituality. They also indicate the direction of research especially with the omission of spirituality and religion impacting emotional labour. Soebyakto and Ming (2012) conducted an experiment to investigate the driver of personal quality of corporate managers in Indonesia as a result of their intelligent, emotional and spiritual quotients. The study found that most of the managers had a good standard on EQ and SQ.

Campuzano and Seteroff (2010) proposes a new spiritual business organisation model which would resolve issues of decreasing profits and employee turn-over. Evren Ayranci (2011) in a study with top managers in Turkey found that a combination of emotional and spiritual intelligences does not play a significant role on the financial performances of the organisation however individually they had some effects.

There are a number of studies conducted to prove higher emotional intelligence leads to a better performance. Khokhar and Khush (2009) indicated that a better quality of work performance is achieved through higher emotional capabilities.

Azizi and Zamaniyan (2013) studied the influence of spiritual intelligence on the vocabulary learning strategies. They found a significant relationship between the spirituality and cognitive and social strategies. Gupta et al. (2012) believe that workplace spirituality based on Indian ethos is practical and effective in shifting the organisational

culture from a simple economic focus to a socially responsible entity, though it may take time. They refer to 4 waves of civilisation with first being agriculture focussed, second being industrialised society, the third being information and technology driven and the fourth wave in the 21st century based on spiritual inclination.

Relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement is of great interest for us since it has been proven that employee engagement leads to a better performance. Saks (2011) provides a comprehensive model directly relating three dimensions of workplace spirituality namely Transcendence, Community and Spiritual values with extended concepts of maintenance and Generalisation of employee engagement and indirectly related to three psychological conditions namely meaningfulness, availability and safety of employee engagement from Kahn's (1990) model.

Relationship between workplace spirituality and organisational commitment has been empirically studied by Rego and Cunha (2007). They found that when people are oriented towards spirituality at workplace their attachment towards the organisation increases along with a sense of obligation. Their experiment involved five dimensions of workplace spirituality namely community, alignment with organisational values, societal impact, work enjoyment and inner life.

Purpose of Study

We wanted to check if Spiritual Quotient (SQ) and Gender have any influence on human performance. There are many theories and models relating Spiritual Quotient and Employee commitment, satisfaction and hence the performance. We felt the need for a direct relationship study between spirituality and task performance.

Research Questions

1. Does high Spiritual Quotient lead to higher performance by individuals?
2. Does gender difference with high Spiritual Quotient influence the performance?

Method

It was a 2² experiment, i.e. 2 factors (Gender and SQ) and 2 levels (male/female and high/low).

		Gender	
		Female	Male
Spiritual Intelligence	High	Accuracy	Accuracy
	Low	Accuracy	Accuracy

63 MBA students (41 males and 22 females) of Amrita School of Business were involved in this experiment. We selected the first year students immediately after joining the academic year. They were asked to fill up a 24 items questionnaire on Spiritual Intelligence with a 0 to 4 point scale. After 2 days the same set of students were asked to perform a task to understand their performance. The task involved reading a passage and entering data both numeric and alphabetic into a standard template in MS Excel. The participants were given sufficient time as per the Industrial standards just to simulate the work environment pressure. There were 59 fields of data entry and the performance was calculated by measuring the accuracy of data entry. That is, the ratio of number of fields entered correctly to the total number of fields to be entered. (defects per opportunity). The following were the instructions provided to the participants.

Instructions for the participants:

- a. Read a passage (pdf file titled “ Bihar economy”) and enter the data in a format (Excel file titled “Data entry form non std final”) provided
- b. 5 minutes for reading the passage
- c. 7 minutes for entering data into the Excel file
- d. No field should be left blank
- e. After completing the task, please save the Excel file in which you entered your data in the same folder E: Common / 'name_task1'

For the purpose of assessment of Spiritual Intelligence, King (2009) SISRI – 24 questionnaire was used. The instrument has already been validated with two studies with Exploratory factor analysis and Confirmatory factor analysis with Cronbach's alpha at 0.920 and Standardised alpha at 0.922. The studies conducted by King concluded that Spiritual Intelligence was more related to intrinsic religiosity.

Analysis

The results of the accuracy were compared against their respective Spiritual Quotient. First a General linear model (Analysis of Variance) was done to understand if any particular factor plays a significant role on accuracy. The SQ score was split into Low and High with 48 as threshold since the maximum score possible was 96. Since SQ plays a significant role, a

simple linear regression model was run on two groups (SQ Low and SQ High) using Minitab.

The output of Minitab is provided below:

General Linear Model: Accuracy versus Gender, SQ

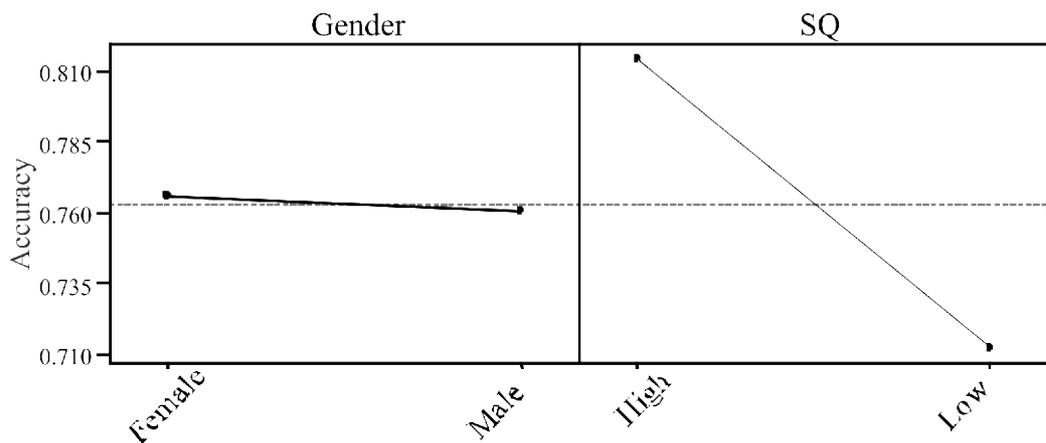
Factor	Type	Levels	Values
Gender	fixed	2	Female Male
SQ	fixed	2	High Low

Analysis of Variance for Accuracy, using Adjusted SS for Tests

Source	DF	Seq SS	Adj SS	Adj MS	F	P
Gender	1	0.000027	0.000336	0.000336	0.06	0.814
SQ	1	0.162680	0.162680	0.162680	27.16	0.000
Error	60	0.359353	0.359353	0.005989		
Total	62	0.522060				

Term	Coef	SE Coef	T	P
Constant	0.76303	0.01024	74.49	0.000
Gender				
Female	0.00243	0.01024	0.24	0.814
SQ				
High	0.051063	0.009798	5.21	0.000

Main effects (Gender and SQ on Accuracy)



The regression equation is

$$\text{Accuracy}_L = 0.415 + 0.00707 \text{ SQ score Low}$$

Predictor	Coef	SE Coef	T	P
Constant	0.41461	0.09083	4.56	0.000
SQ score	0.007066	0.002144	3.30	0.003

$$S = 0.06467 \quad R\text{-Sq} = 28.7\% \quad \text{R-Sq(adj)} = 26.1\%$$

Analysis of Variance

Source	DF	SS	MS	F	P
Regression	1	0.045434	0.045434	10.86	0.003
Residual Error	27	0.112911	0.004182		
Total	28	0.158345			

The regression equation is

$$\text{Accuracy}_H = 0.467 + 0.00587 \text{ SQ score High}$$

Predictor	Coef	SE Coef	T	P
Constant	0.46744	0.07009	6.67	0.000
SQ score	0.005867	0.001177	4.99	0.000

$$S = 0.05950 \quad R\text{-Sq} = 43.7\% \quad \text{R-Sq(adj)} = 42.0\%$$

Analysis of Variance

Source	DF	SS	MS	F	P
Regression	1	0.088039	0.088039	24.86	0.000
Residual Error	32	0.113305	0.003541		
Total	33	0.201344			

Results

We found that Gender ($p=0.814$) does not have big impact whereas SQ ($p=0$) does play a role in accuracy of performance. The study results prove that **42%** and **26%** of the variation in Accuracy are explained by the variation in SQHigh and SQLow respectively.

Conclusion

The experiment was conducted with students and hence generalisability may not be possible in the industrial scenario. However the experiment proves that Spiritual Quotient does have an impact on the human performance irrespective of the gender. The experiment focuses on the mental work here in this case administrative work rather than physical work and hence we may conclude that the spirituality connects well with the mind.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is further scope for research understanding Spiritual Quotient in conjunction with Intelligent Quotient and Emotional Quotient and study human performance. Also most of the literature background relates to the studies done in Asian countries which are spiritually and religiously oriented. A longitudinal research studying the variables for longer periods of time may also help strongly establish the effect of spirituality on human task performance.

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