Workplace Spirituality and Toleration of Employee Expression – An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Workplace Spirituality has become a basic need for every organisations and especially Information Technology (IT) organisations. Workplace Spirituality is not viewed as organized practices but it is the recognition of that taking place in the community of the organisation. This study is an effort to understand the factors of workplace spirituality. It also finds out the organisations' toleration of employee expression and the relationship between workplace spirituality and toleration of employee expression. The study was carried out by selecting five IT organisations in Chennai city, India. Primary data was used for the study and it was collected with the help of a structured questionnaire. The responses were collected and analyses were done based on the objectives to be achieved. The study revealed twelve factors of spirituality which was then grouped to three factors. It is also evident from the study that there is a positive significant relationship between workplace spirituality and toleration of employee expression.

Introduction

Workplace spirituality is evolving in every organisation. It is recognized in one form or the other. The concept of workplace spirituality is not seen as a part of religion but with aspects beyond religion. It is derived from ethics, values, motivation, work-life balance and leadership elements of an organisation. These elements along with the personal values of an individual at work constitute workplace spirituality. Many organisations have started giving importance to workplace spirituality as it tends to boost to employee performance. One dimension of workplace spirituality is toleration of employee expression. This is a state where an organisation's culture encourages employees to be themselves and allows them to express their views and opinions, thoughts and feelings without any fear.

Information Technology (IT) organisations are demanding more from their employees. The high pressure due to globalization and competition has also been a reason for stress among the employees. This has made the employees sometimes to be violent and even sometimes not abide by the norms of the organisation. This brings down their performance. When organisations recognize the importance of employees' expression and tolerate them to a

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greater extent, there can be changes seen in the personal and organisational development. Organisations should provide a forum where employees can be freely able to express their views and opinions. This can be implemented when organisations identify the importance of workplace spirituality.

Review of Literature

Workplace Spirituality has always been seen a religious aspect. However, the majority of researchers in the field of workplace spirituality agree that spirituality and religion have commonalities but are not the same (Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Marques, 2005; Mohamed,Wisnieski, Askar, & Syed, 2004; Salopek, 2004; Whitmore, 2004). For this study the definition given by Howard (2004) is considered. Spirituality encompasses the way an individual lives out his or her sense of interconnectedness with the world through an ability to tap into deep resources. It's about knowing that every person has within themselves, a level of truth and integrity, and that we all have our own divine power (Laabs, 1995).

There are four elements of workplace spirituality that are defined by researchers. The first element is that employees find both meaning and purpose in their work and feel that their organizations are true communities (Butts, 1999; Gull & Doh, 2004; Kale & Shrivastava, 2003; Looby & Sandhu, 2002; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Turner, 1999). Second, organizational members find that there is a congruency with personal and company values and that their organizations are optimistic and focused on ethics, virtues, and principles that provide them with a deeper level of motivation (Butts, 1999; Harrington et al., 2001; Kale & Shrivastava, 2003; Looby & Sandhu, 2002; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Turner, 1999). The third element concerns connectivity and an integration with members' inner self and the outside world. As such, employees are capable of being genuine and experience authenticity in their lives (Gull & Doh, 2004; Harrington et al., 2001; Kale & Shrivastava, 2003; Mitroff & Denton, 1999;Turner, 1999). The fourth element enables personal and human development to the extent that members of the organization have the opportunity of reaching their highest potential (Butts, 1999; Gull & Doh, 2004; Turner, 1999).

Organisations also should follow spirituality in order to empathise with employees. An organisation is said to be spiritual when it possesses certain characteristics. According to Robbins and Judge (2007), the characteristics of Spiritual Organizations are: (i) Strong sense of purpose (ii) Focus on individual development (iii) Trust and openness (iv) Employee empowerment (v) Toleration of employee expression.

Objectives

For the purpose of the study, the following objectives are framed:

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1. To list the factors of workplace spirituality in selected IT organisations and group them to innovative factors

2. To find the level of toleration of employee expression in selected IT organisations

3. To assess the relationship between factors of workplace spirituality and toleration of employee expression in selected IT organisations

Research Methodology

The research was carried out to analyze the workplace spirituality factors and its importance in promoting toleration of employee expression. A sample size of 370 employees was taken from selected IT organizations in Chennai. The respondents for this study comprises of software engineers from the selected organisations. The samples were selected at random.

Primary data was collected for the purpose of the study. A well structured questionnaire was used and pilot study with 110 employees from the IT organizations in Chennai. Likert's five point scale was used to measure the items. Mail responses and also responses in person were collected. Reliability tests were conducted using Cronbach Alpha test and all the scales had coefficient Cronbach Alpha greater than 0.7.

Three hundred and seventy (370) questionnaires were distributed and three hundred and fifteen (315) were received in usable condition. Data Analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The demographics of the respondents were analysed using descriptive Statistics. One sample t test, factor analysis and correlation were used to test the research hypotheses. All statistical tests were performed at 1% significance level.

Limitations

An extensive survey could not be done as time was the major constraint. The research was done in selected IT organisations and the results of the research cannot be generalized for the entire industry. There are chances for biased information given by the respondents

Results and Discussions

The descriptive statistics of the respondents are represented in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of IT employees

Particulars	Classification	Number of EmploSyees	Percentage
Age	Less than 30 Years	149	47.30
	30-35 Years	113	35.80
	Above 35 Years	53	16.90
Gender	Male	182	57.70
	Female	133	42.30
Years of Experience	Up to 5 years	124	39.30
	6-10 years	146	46.50
	Above 10 years	45	14.20

(Source: Primary data)

It is observed from the table 1 that 47.30% of the employees are in the age group of less than 30 years, 35.80% of the employees' fall in the age category of 30-35 years and the remaining 16.90% of the employees are in the age group of above 35 years. It is observed that most of the employees (47.30%) working in IT organizations are in the age group of less than 30 years.

Table 1 also shows that 57.70% of the selected employees are males and the remaining 42.30% of the selected employees are females. This shows that majority of the selected employees (57.70%) working in IT organizations are men.

It is observed from the table 1, 46.50% of the selected employees are having 6-10 years of experience, 39.30% of the selected employees are having total experience of below 5 years and the remaining 14.20% of the selected employees are having total experience of more than 10 years. It is observed that majority of the employees (46.50%) working in IT organizations is having experience between 6 to 10 years.

The assignment of numerical values in Likert five point scales for each variable creates co-variances and the variables in the same domain. These co-variances and co-efficient of correlation are useful statistical parameters to group likely variables to form an innovative factor. This is achieved through Factor Analysis by Principal Component Method. It reduces the numerous variables into major factors; each factor comprises likely variables with

nearest co-variance and correlation value. In this study factor of Spirituality of employees working in IT organizations has been identified. Spirituality of employees comprises of twelve variables. Based on the responses given by the selected employees, factor analysis with principal component method with vari-max rotation was adopted to group the variables in to factors. Twelve variables are reduced into fewer factors by analyzing correlation between variables (spirituality of employees in IT organizations). In this case twelve variables are reduced in to three factors which explain the much of the original data. From the cumulative percentage column, the three factors extracted together accounts for 65.99% of the total variance (information contained in fifteen variables). The three factors evolved with their components are represented in the table 2.

Table 2: Initial eigen values of spirituality of employees working in IT organizations

Factors	Initial Eigen values		
	Eigen Value	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.203	49.38	49.38
2	2.936	9.36	58.74
3	1.291	7.25	65.99

Table 3 shows the factor scores of Spirituality of employees working in IT organizations.

Table 3: Factor scores of spirituality of employees working in IT organizations

Factor	Statements	Factor Scores
Factor1: Purpose and Spirituality beliefs	Find strength in faith or spiritual Beliefs	0.814
	Life lacks meaning and purpose	0.756
	Seek meaning and purpose in the workplace	0.702
	Believe there is a spiritual part in you that will exist forever	0.625
	Passionate about work all the time	0.527

	Feel connected to a higher power	0.725
	Believe in a higher power	0.695
Factor 2: Connection with higher power	Important to receive guidance from a higher power	0.602
	Believe there is a connection between spirit and the higher power	0.564
	Activities in order to connect with a higher power	0.513
Factor 3: Connection with others	Feel connected to other people in the Workplace	0.612
	Believe there is a connection between spirit and the higher power	0.584

From table 3 it is inferred that factor 1 is a combination of five variables such as "Find strength in faith or spiritual Beliefs", "Life lacks meaning and purpose", "Seek meaning and purpose in the workplace", "Believe there is a spiritual part in you that will exist forever" and "Passionate about work all the time" which is named as Purpose and Spirituality beliefs factor.

Factor 2 is a combination of five variables such as "Feel connected to a higher power", "Believe in a higher power", "Important to receive guidance from a higher power", "Believe there is a connection between spirit and the higher power" and "Activities in order to connect with a higher power" which is named as Connection with higher power factor.

Factor 3 is a combination of two variables such as "Feel connected to other people in the Workplace" and "Believe there is a connection between spirit and the higher power" which is named as Connection with others factor.

Finding strength in faith or spiritual Beliefs, connected to a higher power and other people in the Workplace are considered as the major attributes that raise the spiritual levels of the employees in IT organizations.

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Level of Toleration of Employee Expression in IT organization

One sample t-test was used to test the level of Toleration of employee expression in IT organization. Toleration of employee expression in IT organization was measured by ten variables. To test the significant difference between the mean value of the variables measured under Toleration of employee expression in IT organization against the test average response of 3 (mean score). The following null hypothesis was framed:

$H_0 1$: The level of Toleration of employee expression in IT organizations does not differ significantly.

Table 4
t-test for level of Toleration of employee expression

Statements	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Express your feelings in the organisation	3.66	0.905	19.63**	<.001
Thoughts can be shared in the organisation	3.70	0.856	22.18*	<.001
Free to talk without any guilt in the organisation	3.70	0.866	21.93**	<.001
Able to be yourself in the job	3.73	0.810	24.22**	<.001
Act spontaneously in your job	3.70	0.793	23.91**	<.001
Allowed to share humour at your workplace	3.80	0.878	24.59**	<.001
Free to express your emotions in the workplace	3.63	0.957	17.83**	<.001
Make the work fun and enjoy doing it	3.77	0.849	24.47**	<.001
Organisation allows you stand and raise voice for a cause	3.66	0.951	18.86**	<.001
Able to talk out your problems in the organisation	3.63	0.969	17.67**	<.001

** significant at 1% level

Table 4 shows the results of t-test for variables measured under Toleration of employee expression in IT organizations and average score. From the table 4, t-values for level of Toleration of employee expression in IT organizations 19.63, 21.93, 24.22, 23.91, 24.59, 17.83, 24.47, 18.86 and 17.67 are significant at 1% level and 22.18 is significant at 5% level. This shows that there is significant difference between the mean responses given by the employees towards Toleration of employee expression in IT organizations and the test average score (=3). Further the mean values of the variables under Toleration of employee expression in IT organizations, Express your feelings in the organisation (3.66), Thoughts can be shared in the organisation (3.7), Free to talk without any guilt in the organisation (3.7), Able to be yourself in the job (3.73), Act spontaneously in your job (3.7), Allowed to share humour at your workplace (3.8), Free to express your emotions in the workplace (3.63), Make the work fun and enjoy doing it (3.77), Organisation allows you stand and raise voice for a cause (3.66) and Able to talk out your problems in the organisation (3.63) are

above the test average score. Allowed to share humour at your workplace is the vital factor of Toleration of employee expression. Make the work fun and enjoy doing, Free to express your emotions in the workplace, Able to talk out your problems in the organisation are considered as important factors of Toleration of employee expression in IT organizations. Hence from the above analysis it is concluded that Allowed to share humour at your workplace is the most important factor for the level of Toleration of employee expression in IT organizations.

Relationships between Toleration of Employee Expression and Factors of Spirituality in IT Organization

To test the significant relationship between Toleration of employee expression and factors of Spirituality of employees in IT organizations, Bi-variate correlation was applied to ascertain the significant relationship between Toleration of employee expression and factors of Spirituality. The following null hypotheses were framed:

H_02: There is no significant relationship between Toleration of employee expression and (a) Purpose and Spiritual beliefs (b) Connection with higher power (c) Connection with others in IT organizations.

Table 5: Relationship between Toleration of employee expression and factors of spirituality

	Toleration of employee expression
Purpose and Spiritual Beliefs	r =.533**
	p <.001
Connection with higher power	r =.598**
	p <.001
Connection with Others	r =.581**
	p <.001

** significant at 1% level

Table 5 shows that there is positive significant correlation exist between Toleration of employee expression and Purpose and Spiritual beliefs (r =.533). Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant relationship between Toleration of employee expression and Purpose and Spiritual beliefs" is rejected. This shows that Purpose and Spiritual beliefs

improves Toleration of employee expression by 53.3%.

Significant positive relationship is observed between Toleration of employee expression and Connection with higher power (r =.598). Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant relationship between Toleration of employee expression and Connection with higher power" is rejected. This shows that Connection with higher power improves Toleration of employee expression by 59.8%.

There is positive significant correlation exist between Toleration of employee expression and Connection with others (r =.581). Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant relationship between Toleration of employee expression and Connection with others" is rejected. This shows that Connection with others improves Toleration of employee expression by 58.1%.

Conclusion

Workplace Spirituality and Toleration of employee expression are two important aspects that an organisation needs to develop. This study aimed to study the factors of workplace spirituality and group them into innovative factors. It was found that twelve factors of workplace spirituality were grouped into three innovative factors. Finding strength in faith or spiritual Beliefs, connected to a higher power and other people in the workplace are considered as the major attributes that raise the spiritual levels of the employees in IT organizations. The study also tried to find the level of toleration of employee expression in the selected organisations and also assess the relationship between workplace spirituality innovative factors and toleration of employee expression. It is evident from the study there is a positive correlation between the two variables. Thus it can be concluded that workplace spirituality promotes toleration of employee expression and it is a scope for the betterment of the organisation.

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