Workplace Spirituality vs. Work Life Balance: A Philosophical Approach

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 Abstract :

According to a recent survey, the current life expectancy in India is only 67.9 years and in comparison to countries like Japan, USA, China, and Malaysia we are far below the expectations. In this short span of time how much time we spend working and how much time we are left with for the ones we love, friends, family, and also our self. Is it balanced? If not, what can we change? How can one succeed in career and still live balanced live? Everyone has to realize that balance is not a destination; it is an ongoing journey. Gratitude, meditation, kindness, positivity, spiritual awakening, physical, mental, and social well-being are the keys to happiness and fulfilling life.

There are many karmic relationships in our circle of lives that need to be strengthened and also to eliminate bad relations from our sphere so that we get meaning to life and a good work-life balance. The greatest karmic connection is that with God. This connection is called Spirituality.

In this conceptual paper, the authors have tried to build the relationship between work place spirituality and work-life balance. The findings have suggested that a significant relationship between spiritual competences with work life balance exists. There is a need to strengthen a system of spiritual practice with work place activities to revitalize the organizational and personal goals.

After review of extensive literature it has been analyzed that workplace spirituality is associated with work-life balance and helps to balance the level of mental and physical work at home as well as job among employees. Researchers such as Douglas Hicks, Associate Professor of Leadership Studies and Religion at the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, University of Richmond suggest that workplace spirituality involves adherence to a particular way of thinking about self, work, and organizations. (Hicks, Douglas, 2003). Rego and Pina e Cunha (2008) in their study found that when an individual's spiritual needs are fulfilled along with other needs the person will derive greater work-life balance.

Keywords: Spirituality, Workplace spirituality, Work-life balance

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"The Gods had condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight. They had thought with some reason that there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor."
(The Myth of Sisyphus, Albert Camus)

The above writing shows the craziness of human existence. According to Camus, Sisyphus' efforts of pushing the rock up the mountain are similar to the challenges of life. He writes that even if we work really hard to achieve goals, we may achieve nothing in the end if life has no meaning. Mirroring Sisyphus' own struggles- are we living only to work, or are we working to live?

This paper reviews some important studies on spirituality at the workplace to analyze their findings on how spirituality brings balance in the arenas of work and lives of the people working in an organization and in turn their organizational performance. This may provide an insight to HR professionals to devise sound HR policies and practices that may lead to increased job performance, lower turnover rates, long term employee satisfaction, employee retention and balanced work with satisfactory personal life.

Many scholastic findings in this connection have advocated that employee professionals who are provided to work in a meaningful job profile use to have a greater sense of responsibility, ownership and control of their working life (Galinsky & Johnson, 1998; Ferris & Weitzman et.al, 2001; Morris, 2008). [1] Spirituality brings a sense of community and connectedness to the employees who increase their commitment, efficiency, effectiveness and belongingness. Human activities addressed in spirituality at workplace encompasses personal development, honesty, meaningfulness, trust, and job commitment which is concerned with the way of thinking, emotions, feelings and behavior of

Individuals.

In this context, Mitroff and Denton (1999a) has argued that today's organizations are suffering from a deep spiritual emptiness and many work related problems in organizations are potentially resulting from this spiritual impoverishment. [2] The fundamental objective of management is to incessantly get the work done through its human resources so as to meet the need of the stakeholders. The establishment encompassing stakeholders comprises of clients, shareholders, and employees, but it is generally observed that employee professionals often have least influence in the boardroom (Jain 2011) [3] even still there is an appreciation of the fact that without engaged employees, neither shareholder nor client will be satisfied. In this context, long hours of demanding work environment stands to become unhealthy and dissatisfying for employees as they confuse to get the meaning behind their purpose of work and they just value their worth only for external rewards, promotion, striving for mastery (Burke, 2006). [4]

Spirituality

Robert Bellah, Elliot Professor of Sociology, Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, describes the term "spirituality" as traditionally being "...an aspect of religious life. In its recent usage, however, spirituality is a contrast to religion, or what is often called 'institutional religion,' which means a church, a continuing solidarity community. Spirituality in this new sense is a private activity, although it may be pursued with a group of the like-minded, it is not 'institutional' in that it does not involve membership in a group that has claims on its members." (2004) [5]

The core of spirituality is believing and understanding the presence of the superior being

on one hand and knowing and understanding the humanity and its purpose on the other hand. This balance is the ultimate goal accomplishment of the quest of spirituality. Ioan Lazar, Codurata Osoian, & Patracia Ratiu (2010) defined spirituality as "the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others and the entire universe." [6]

In Bhagwat Geeta also Lord Krishna speaks to Arjuna about not a personality and social relationships, instead his sermon provides Arjuna exceptional knowledge about attaining of the sacred blessed system of internal life that involves into sublimation of the worldly human personality into the godly spiritual existence, of a supreme person who ultimately becomes one with God. Ultimately this explores all those essentials of life that have been sermonized by the Lord from the angle of spirituality and its application in running modern life for balancing [7]. Thus nurturing spiritual competence in the workplace is getting increasing focus of attention amongst corporate practitioners and academic researchers.

"Spirituality in the workplace is an experience of interconnectedness among those involved in the work process, initiated by authenticity, reciprocity, and personal goodwill engendered by a deep sense of meaning in the organization's work; and resulting in greater motivation and organizational excellence (Marques, Allevato and Holt, 2008) [8]

Work-Life Balance

People devote all of their energies to career advancement and wealth accumulation. Can they succeed in their careers and still live balanced lives? On the contrary one does not appreciate that balance is not a destination but an ongoing journey. In addition to career, the basic aspects of life—physical, mental, social and spiritual also need devoted time every day to accomplish holistic peace and prosperity.

Human relations movement at workplace has converted it into a community. However the increasing importance and centrality of work in the life of person, associated problems also have increased such as stress, burnout and workaholism (Conger, 1994). [9]

In the 21st century, harmonizing one's personal life and work life has become an incredibly challenging task to lead a happier and fulfilling life. Work life balance and employee job satisfaction are increasingly being identified as progressive indicators of a sustainable organization. Work life balance is important for the life of employees as well as employee's attitude towards the organization. A satisfied employee tends to be more productive.

Work life balance is an effective management of multiple roles and responsibilities at work, at home and in other aspects of life. In the globalization era every organization focused for higher productivity and performance from their employees which is possible if they have better work life balance. Work life balance defined as satisfactory level of involvement in multiple roles of one's life. (Baral R. and Bhargava S., 2011) [10]. The "myth of separate worlds" where work and life are kept as separate bordered entities no longer reigns to be true (Kanter, 1977) [11].

Precisely, work-life balance refers to the ability of individuals regardless of age or gender, to explore a rhythm which will allow them to combine their work with their non-work responsibilities, activities and aspirations (Felstead et al., 2002) [12].

Social exchange theory states that if the employees are treated favourably by the organization, then in response employees will feel obliged to respond in kind, through positive

attitudes or behaviours toward the source of the treatment which may be in the form of increased commitment and citizenship behaviour (Blau, 1964) [13].

In any organization treated employee positively then in the response employee will feel comfortable, improve performance and coordination to respond in kind, through positive behavior or attitude. Work life balance of the employee can be improved by taking care of factors like organizational values, ethical sense among the employee, behavior of superiors towards their subordinate in order to train talent, enhance quality of work and to keep the employees happy. (Charls R. Stoner, Richard I. Heartman and Raj Arora, 2011). [14]

There are two vital factors that are driving the work/life imbalance; one is globalization and the other one is about massive technological change (Gregory and Milner, 2009). [15]

The empirical research finding states that interference of work demands into personal life (e.g. working during the weekends etc.) was related with heightened stress and emotional exhaustion affecting the employees' health (Hyman et al., 2003). [16]

Work-life Balance v/s Workplace Spirituality

Roots of work life balance lie in spirituality. If the roots get healthy treatment, the tree will bloom and blossom. Hungelmann (1985) has stated that the assimilation of work life balance and work place spirituality predominantly supports the proposition of transpersonal (relationship with God), interpersonal (relationship with friends and family etc.), and intrapersonal (relationship with one's inner self) [17]. Therefore, when an individual is able to recognize that their existence, achievement, and well-being in personal and professional life depends on their mutual dependence with one's inner self, relationships with near and dear one's and above all God. In this

context, work life balance encompasses the elasticity of an individual's ability to simultaneously balance the emotional, temporal, spiritual and behavioral demands of both paid work and family responsibilities (Hill and colleagues, 2001). [18]

Studies show that the 'supportive' organizations creates a psychological bonding between the organization and individual. Sometimes called "spiritual organizations" are very much concerned with helping employees to develop and grow as well as tap their potentials while tackling the problems created by work life intrusions (Rama Rao, 2010). [19]

In organizational perspective with the congruence to work-life balance and work place spirituality, it is emphasized that the employer should provide an environment and opportunity to let the individual's express different aspects of one's being at work (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000) [20]

Subsequently there is an observation made by Thompson (2001) on job seekers impressing that present days knowledge workers put compensation and benefits on second priority compared to working in a spirited workplace, a place where they are treated respectfully not only for what they know and can do, but also as human beings who needs to be listened to and grow, to be proud of a management team that operates with coordination, integrity, thereby balancing their work life with their personal life. [21]

Such practices enhances positive attitudes on the job, work efforts and enhancing social exchange processes; as symbols of organizational concern for employees, work-life practices promote employee interest in and obligation towards the organization (Pfeffer, 1981). [22]

Employer have to take initiative for standards and expected practices as they relate to ethical

balancing work life as it is not a problem for employee only, it's a problem for employer as well because it affects organizational goal. (Jyoti Gaur and Aman Sharma, 2016) [23]

Very few research works have tried to explore the topics such as description of workplace spirituality, sources of workplace spirituality or features of an organization facilitating workplace spirituality (Milliman.J, et.al, 1999; PfefferJ, 2003; Marques J, et.al, 2005). These studies however lack sound theoretical and empirical base in the ways of expediting the underlying purpose behind it (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2007) and one indispensable possibility is to address the challenges of work-life balance and sorting out its solution through the mechanism of workplace spirituality.[24,25,26,27]

Employee centric welfare HR strategies may be suggested to the organizations for deriving increased effectiveness in the ever changing environment and increasing external pressure. Careful handling of issues like work life balance is expected to provide an effective buffer for facing future challenges. Spiritual competence and skills of an individual professional may play more crucial role to enhance one's satisfaction, commitment, health, confidence and above all maintaining work-life balance in a professional set up. (Lalatendu Kesari Jena, Rabindra Kumar Pradhan, 2014) [28].

Therefore it can be summarized that organizational spirituality is a fundamental mechanism for aligning, educating and motivating professionals towards values, objectives and mission of a dynamic organization and imperative for nurturing commitment in them.

In Pursuit of Work/Life Balance through Spiritual Gateway

It's a common notion among people that when they retire they will start living a balanced and fulfilling life. If started slowly and steadily, incorporating the physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects into life each day, one can find retire-less contentment in later years of life. Few spiritual practices that can help cope with office stress and dissatisfaction with current job and salary are summarized below. Common forms of spiritual reinforcement in the workplace such as organizing morning prayers or yoga sessions; designing multi-faith spaces for prayer; or introducing spiritual wellness programs for employees (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Mitroff and Denton, 1999b). [29,30]

Gratitude, Meditation, Kindness, Physical exercise, Mental well-being, Self-improvement, Continuing education, Social interaction, and Spirituality are the perfect ways to connect to our inner self, have peace of mind along with a better control over our senses, thus needs to be nurtured in order to achieve balance and find a deeper meaning in life.

Findings And Conclusion

The findings suggests that for establishing an effective behavioural intervention in an organisational set up, revitalizing both *workplace spirituality and work life balance are equally important.*

1. Emphasizes Sustainability- Spirituality seeks to contribute to the greater good in the world. It gives an understanding of sustainable growth and development which identifies potential long-term impacts or implications of actions associated with doing business and constantly reassess business decisions on individuals, societies, or the environment.

2. Values Contribution- Today's spiritual organization is deliberate in implementing a

vision that is built around contributions to the betterment of mankind. It promotes work outside of the organization that contributes to and "gives back" to society through community and volunteer service. Spiritually aware managers and businesses consider themselves servants of employees, customers, and the community.

3. Prizes Creativity- A spiritual workplace provides resources to help people to uncover their creative potential and to practice creativity within the organization.

4. Cultivates Inclusion- The spiritual organization respects and values individuals' life experiences and the lessons learned from them. Increasingly, corporations are seeing the value of their employees working together in community toward a commonly held vision.

5. Develops Principles- Organizations have begun to realize the benefits of treating the whole person by actively supporting the formulation of ethical principles that promote personal growth, long-term character development, and personal connections of faith and work development.

6. Promotes Vocation- Companies that understand workplace spirituality go beyond being supportive of learning and development by helping employees develop a sense of "calling" or identification of passion about their lives and their work. Such companies emphasize the discovery and appropriate utilization of individual giftedness and encourage employees to use their unique skills within the organization. Grounded religious faith development is recognized as an important and deeply personal part of growth for many people, one that can help them more easily recognize their vocations.

(Kent Rhodes, EdD, 2006) [31]

In this knowledge and information age, the present generation is in continuous search for exploring meaning in their personal and professional life and specifically they are continuously in search of job profile that may provide a sense of motivation to them. Therefore, the latest focus of organisation is to realize "work-life balance" in their corporate culture while safeguarding the "spiritual competence" of an individual professional. (L. K. Jena[1], R. K. Pradhan[2]) [32]. Interestingly amidst technological change empirical research has explored that the organizations with greater workplace spirituality outperformed organizations with little or no workplace spirituality by 86 percent (Lloyd, 1990) [33]. Therefore, spiritual orientation at work place is a win-win feature which includes factors that may act as a stimulus for generating satisfaction from an individual towards his or her life and job.

Researchers have long felt that both spiritual competencies coupled with work-life balance practices in an organizational context need to be explored and carried out on an extensive manner. An empirical inspection is required to operationalize the notion of their collective existence. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to critically review work place spirituality in the form of spiritual competence with the context of work-life balance. Specifically, the focus is to check the possible ways to foster work life balance while utilizing one's potential to find meaningful work and their interconnectedness.

Work life balance is highly significant because it is very much correlated with the ethical practices and spiritual management in routine working life, which increased organizational performance and shows the coordination and collaboration among the member of the organization.

After review of extensive literature it has been analyzed that workplace spirituality is associated with work- life balance and helps to balance the

level of mental and physical work at home as well as job among employees. Rego and Pina e Cunha (2008) in their study found that when an individual's spiritual needs are fulfilled along with other needs the person will derive greater work-life balance. Researchers such as Douglas Hicks, Associate Professor of Leadership Studies and Religion at the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, University of Richmond suggest that workplace spirituality involves adherence to a particular way of thinking about work, self and organizations. (Hicks, Douglas, 2003). [34]

Author of *Leadership and the New Science*, author Meg Wheatley points analogously to self-organizing, self-creating systems in nature as a way for companies to work more effectively by embracing the natural cycle of change, stability, and renewal. Thus the "spiritual" or constantly renewing nature of these processes has been construed as an important blueprint for developing workplace spirituality. (Wheatley, Margaret, 1999). [35]

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