Significance of demographic variables in the study of Workplace Spirituality

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ABSTRACT

The significant contribution of workplace spirituality in bringing about various positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes has been well established through past researches. Not only in academia but in the corporate world too, workplace spirituality has started getting due recognition owing to its bottom-line effects on organizational productivity and performance. This study examined the various demographic factors and the effect they have on workplace spirituality. The findings of the research showed that females scored lower than their male counterparts did, in both the overall spirituality as well as sense of community. Furthermore, males in experience category 10 to 20 years scored more than female employees. In addition, the respondents who were affiliated to religious group scored better in SAW than those who were neither religious nor spiritual. The study enumerates the future research directions for the academicians and managerial implications for HR practitioners and higher management for formulating suitable strategies and interventions.

Keywords: Workplace spirituality, demographic variables, gender differences, Delhi-NCR

Introduction

During the recent times, the focus on individual spirit, spirituality and spiritual predilections has grown intense all around the world. Many reasons have been attributed towards this ever-increasing interest in spirituality, particularly why organizations are viewing spirituality as a cure to all the maladies. Interestingly, few decades ago, the organizations were averse to the idea of spirituality due to perceptions about its religious undertones (Pradhan et al., 2016); but today they have realized that the full potentials of an employee can only be harnessed if they are offered meaning in what they do at work (Gatling, 2015). Changing nature of work and the realization that personality of every individual incorporates a spiritual dimension, which has been mostly neglected (Parumasur & Govender, 2016); has led to intensified interest in workplace spirituality both in academia and in the corporates (Houghton et al., 2016).

As posited by Ashmos and Duchon (2000), people not only work physically but also by their hearts or spirit and through this they are able to find a kind of meaning and purpose in life. This fulfillment leads to a belief that workplace can be looked upon as a place where individuals can express their inner selves. Krahnke et al. (2003) proposed that expression of human interest at its deepest, most spiritual level may not only help in reducing negative work consequences like stress, absenteeism, turnover intention but also lead to positive outcomes like wellbeing, job satisfaction, quality of life (Karakas, 2010). The study of spirituality at workplace is thus seen as an area that can greatly assist in understanding and addressing the various managerial issues and related organizational processes (Bosch, 2009).

Gocen & Ozgan (2018) observed that organizations have started to offer spirituality training within their HRM framework realizing the positive organizational outcomes it brings. They further found that some organizations have introduced specific spiritual practices such as meditation, yoga, nature walking, spiritual text adaptations or spiritual stories to enhance the spiritual life at work. Ho et al. (2016) have posited that spiritual practices can help in mitigating mental health concerns and employee burnout.

The study is an attempt towards identifying the important factors affecting the notion of spirituality at workplace and assists the organizations and its leaders a way forward to tap into their spiritual resources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualization of Spirituality in the Workplace

Spirituality is perhaps one the most profound yet least understood stream of study till date; also each of us has a spiritual core, which is our link to this source of inner awareness. Spirituality is a special ability of an individual to experience life beyond the boundaries of the physical limitations (Swami Nisarga, 2009). The book "Spirituality at Work—The inspiring message of the Bhagavad Gita" by Menon (2016) draws its content from 162 verses of Gita and recommends an integrated practice of spirituality through 'Internal Karmayoga'; an amalgamation of work, knowledge and devotion. Furthermore, the bestseller "seven habits of highly effective people" by Stephen covey is a path-breaking attempt in the realm of workplace spirituality. It is a ready reckoner for the organization to build up their spiritual quotient. Spirituality is seen as the force which comes from inner self, much beyond the basic existence of life.

Workplace spirituality is a multidimensional construct, which involves the experiences of an individual and the interactions of the individual with others (Afsar and Badir, 2017) in the context of community, i.e., team/ organization. As Fagley & Adler (2012) posited, workplace spirituality provides an environment where employees discover their ultimate purpose in life, reinforce strong connections with their coworkers and attempt to have an alignment of one's own core values and the organizational values. Mitroff & Denton (1999) defined workplace spirituality as an attempt to find sense of purpose in life and work, to have a strong connection with others at work and to have an alignment of personal values with the organizational values.

Kinjerski & Skrypnek (2006) defined spirit at work as a multidimensional construct comprising of the following dimensions:(i) engaging work characterized by feeling of wellbeing, a belief that one is engaged in work which is meaningful, an awareness of alignment of organizational and personal values; (ii) spiritual connection which is characterized by a sense of connection to something larger than self; (iii) sense of community, characterized by a feeling of connectedness to a common purpose and others; and (iv) mystical experience characterized by a sense of transcendence, a feeling of contentment and positivity. It is this definition we would be following in our study. This definition of workplace spirituality given by Kinjerski & Skrypnek (2006) is closer to the definition we have selected for the purpose of our study. As most of the definitions have an element of alignment of self-beliefs and organizational values, we have incorporated it in our study as well.

Beneficial Outcomes of Workplace Spirituality

The literature in workplace spirituality is interspersed with the studies of its impact on various individual and organizational related variables. Kolodinsky et al.(2008) found that organizational spirituality are significantly related to job involvement organizational identification and reward satisfaction and a negative

relationship with frustration. Pandey et al. (2016; 2017) observed positive relationship of spiritual climate at workplace with creativity, enhances learnings and innovative behaviors. Gangadharan and Welbourne (2016) noted that workplace spirituality encourages resilience and helps in managing problems of emotional labour. Zou and Dahling (2017) propounded that employees having high spiritual orientation were effectively safeguarded from the detrimental effects of surface acting on subjective wellbeing.

The spirituality at work studies mostly focus at studying organizational constructs such as employee morale, motivation, turnover and absenteeism among others. Additionally, spirituality is recognized as panacea for dealing with workplace pressure (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Neal & Biberman, 2000). Therefore, public and private organizations that want to survive and compete in the 21st century should measure and enhance the spirituality of their employees on a regular basis (Marques, 2005).

Demographic Variables

The current study tries to provide evidence on the impact of demographic variables like age, gender, experience categories, education level, personal belief, etc. in context of practices of spirituality in IT/ITES and BFSI organizations in India. Coupled with uncertainty in jobs in a highly disruptive environment, Indian workplaces are gradually growing very demanding; causing great anxiety and stress in Indian professionals (ET news, 2018). Such a scenario is creating a challenging situation for the employers to deal with as it adversely affects the productivity of the organizations.

Of all the demographic variables, gender is the most often studied demographic variable in context of organizational studies. In addition, gender has been widely recognized as a fundamental element of structure, culture and practice of the organizations (Britton, 1997). Empirically too, gender has been extensively studied in social sciences to provide possible explanations for different effects on organizational outcomes.

While much work have been conducted in the context of various organizational constructs, not much work has been done in to reveal demographic based differences in perceptions of workplace spirituality, mostly because workplace spirituality is still under the exploratory phase. Kinjerski & Skrypnek (2006) in the course of her scale validation conducted t-tests to find no gender differences based on the total workplace spirituality scale and its subscales. Furthermore, the authors found no significant differences in the total SAW score for education or income. With respect to occupation, the management and professional employees were found to experience their work to be more engaging them the administrative and sales groups. On the other hand, administrative staff experiences better spiritual connection than the staff in sales, trades and technical groups. Furthermore, the authors found a statistically significant effect of marital status on SAW. They observed that the individuals who are separated, divorced or widowed reported more spirit at work than those who were single.

Tevichapong et al.(2010) found women experienced higher SAW than men, the older employees experienced higher SAW than the younger, significant differences in perceptions of SAW among employees from different sectors and those who attended spiritual/ religious practices experienced higher SAW than those who did not.

Loon Loo (2017) did an extensive analysis of workplace spirituality practices in organizations from seventeen industries. Significant difference in the spirituality practices by industries like services and trade/goods-producing industries was found. Lazar & Jeffrey (2016) found significant gender difference due to

engaging work and mystical experience at work and no differences for spiritual connection and sense of community.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:

To examine the differences in the perceptions of workplace spirituality of employees based on various demographic variables like age, gender, education level, personal belief, etc.

HYPOTHESES:

- **H**_{o1}: There exists no difference between male and female respondents in terms of their perceptions of workplace spirituality
- **H**₀₂: There exists no difference between male and female employees belonging to different industry segments in terms of their perceptions of workplace spirituality
- **H**_{o3}: There exists no difference between male and female employees belonging to different experience categories in terms of their perceptions of workplace spirituality
- H_{o4}: There exists no difference between junior, middle management and senior employees having different education levels and total number of years of experience in terms of their perceptions of workplace spirituality

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This is a descriptive study with a cross-sectional research design. The scope of this study includes professionals working in the IT/ ITES and BFSI organizations based in Delhi-NCR. The sample respondents were selected using multistage sampling. In the first stage, a list of companies operating in IT/ITES and BFSI industry segments in Delhi-NCR was obtained using CMIE-Prowess database. In the next stage, purposive sampling was used to create a sample of 15 respondents each from top ten companies chosen on the basis of annual turnover from each of these sectors. Selection of top-notch companies ensured robust and employee-friendly HR practices including the possibility of workplace spirituality as an important component. The final number of responses included in the study was 536 excluding those responses, which were incomplete or not filled properly.

Data was collected through primary sources using a survey-based questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered to the sample respondents both in form of hard copies and by creating a weblink using google docs. The respondents' anonymity was assured to elicit honest responses from them.

DATA FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Key demographic variables of respondents were examined as a first step in data screening. The sample respondents consisted of 63.1% male and 36.9 % female executives. About 44.8% respondents belonged to the age category 25 to 34 years, followed by 30 % belonging to 35 to 44 years age category. A majority of them (61.8%) were married. Regarding their education level, 60 percent of the respondents had professional postgraduate level qualifications and around 49 percent of employees had less than 10 years of working experience. This study primarily accounted for responses from individuals who were Hindus by birth (87%), and about 67% respondents declared that they were spiritual but not religious. Interestingly 61.6% sample respondents believe that organizations must have spiritual practices at work.

To test our first hypothesis that there exists no significant difference between male and female respondents in terms of their SAW, Levene's test for equality of variances was applied to bring out differences in perceptions of male and female respondents with respect to workplace spirituality. The t-test results in Table 1 show that there exists a significant difference in male and female employees regarding their total SAW score(t373.59 = 1.655, p<0.05). The male respondents (M=3.578, s.d. = 0.62) score higher than the female respondents (m=3.475, s.d.= 0.734) for SAW. The findings are contrary to what was reported byKinjerski & Skrypnek (2006) who found no gender differences on total SAW scores. However, Tevichapong et al. (2010) in their Thailand-based study found that women experienced higher SAW than men which is again in contrast with our findings where men score higher than female respondents.

Levene's Test for t-test for Equality of Means **Equality of** Construct/ **Variances Dimension** Sig. Std. Male **Female Hypothesis** Mean F Sig. df Mean Mean (accepted/ Error Diff tailed) Diff (S.D.) (S.D.) rejected) Eq 1.728 534 .051 .1028 .0595 var ass. Eq 3.579 3.476 **SAW** 6.540 .011 1.655 373.590 .058 .1028 .0621 Ho₁rejected var n. (.621)(.734)ass. Eq -.606 396.980 .545 -.0460 .0760 var n. ass.

Table1: T-test results to show differences between male and female Respondents

Further, the data was subjected to multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to test whether there are differences in the means of identified groups of subjects on the perceptions of respondents towards workplace spirituality.

Firstly we examined the overall F test, wherein Wilk's lambda tests were analysed and it was found that there was significant multivariate main effect for gender {Wilks' λ =.984, F(3, 530) = 2.93, p <.05, partial η^2 =.016} but not for industry segment. Furthermore, no significant interactive effect was found between male and female respondents belonging to different industrial segments. In a validation study by Tevichapong et al. (2010), employees working for not-for-profit organizations were found to experience higher SAW than the employees working for public and private sectors. Univariate main effects were also analysed and no significant results were found for the interactions between gender and industry segment. Thus, hypothesis H₀₂ is accepted.

Table 2: Summary of Multivariate Tests (Wilks' Lambda)

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	partial η ²
Industry Segment	.995	840	3	530	.472	.005
Gender	.984	2.929	3	530	.033	.016
Ind_segment * Gender	.986	2.537	3	530	.056	.014

Another round of Wilk's lambda tests were conducted. The results were analysed to find significant multivariate main effect for gender {Wilks' λ = .970, F(3, 527) = 5.48, p < .001, partial η^2 =.030}; experience categories {Wilks' λ = .937, F(9, 1282.7) = 3.848, p < .001, partial η 2=.021} and combined effect for gender and experience categories {Wilks' λ = .956, F(6, 1054) = 3.996, p < .001, partial η^2 =.022}

Table3: Summary of Multivariate Tests (Wilks' Lambda)

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	partial η²
Exp. Categories	.937	3.848	9	1282.73	.000	.021
Gender	.970	5.480	3	527	.001	.030
Exp_Cat * gender	.956	3.996	6	1054	.001	.022

Since the overall F test was found to be significant, univariate main effects were examined. Significant univariate main effects were obtained and results of ANOVA tests were analysed.

Table 4: Univariate ANOVA tests of SAW

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Parti al η2
Exp_categories	3.059	3	1.020	4.299	.005	.024
Gender	.033	1	.033	.138	.711	.000
Exp_categories * Gender	1.558	2	.779	3.285	.038	.012

The data results show that the F values for experience categories are significant for SAW $\{F(3, 529) = 4.3, p<.005, partial <math>\eta^2 = .024\}$. Significant F values for SAW was also obtained for interactive effect between gender and experience categories $\{F(2, 529) = 3.285, p<.05, partial \eta^2 = .012\}$. Tukey's post hoc tests shows significant differences in the perceptions of SAW only for one experience category. Respondents in the experience category <10 yearsscored less than experience category of 10 to 20 years (mean differences = -.14). Furthermore, males in experience category 10 to 20 years (M=2.941) scored more than female employees (M=2.732). Similar findings were reported by Tevichapong et al. (2010), where they reported that more experienced employees scored higher on SAW. With the above findings, hypothesis Ho3gets rejected.

Table 5: Tukey HSD Post hoc test for differences in experience categories

	Dependent		Mean Difference	Std.	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		
	Variable	I	J	(I-J)	Error	0	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
;	SAW	Less than 10 yrs	10 to 20 yrs	1400 [*]	.04560	.012	2575	0224

^{*.} The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

To test hypothesis Ho4, Wilk's lambda tests were analysed to find significant multivariate main effect for level in the organization {Wilks' λ = .966, F (6, 1002) = 2.95, p < .05, partial η^2 =.017}. No significant effect was obtained for experience categories and education level. Furthermore, no significant interactive effect was found between professionals belonging to different levels in the organization having different education level and different experience categories.

Table 6: Summary of Multivariate Tests (Wilks' Lambda)

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	partial η ²
Exp. Categories	.971	1.630	9	1219.45	.102	.010
Level	.966	2.949	6	1002	.007	.017
Education	.984	.908	9	1219.45	.517	.005
Exp_Cat * level	.958	1.442	15	1383.44	.120	.014
Exp_Cat*Education	.968	.782	21	1439.15	.745	.011
Level*Education	.967	.942	18	1417.527	.527	.011
Exp_Cat* level* Education	.983	.490	18	1417.527	.963	.006

Results for Tukey's HSD test reveal significant differences (p< 0.01) exist between all the three different levels of employees in the organization. The perceptions of workplace spirituality in the junior level employees was found to be lesser than both middle and senior level respondents. Senior level employees scored better in SAW than both the junior and middle management employees. This means that the perceptions of SAW increases with the level of in the organization.

Table7: Tukey HSD Post hoc test for differences in levels of employees in the organization

Dependent	Level of en	Mean Difference	Std.	G: ~	95% Confidence Interval		
Variable	I	J	(I-J)	Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Junior Level	Middle Management Level	1391*	.04757	.010	2509	0273
SAW	Middle Management Level	Senior Management Level	1987*	.05904	.002	3375	0600
	Senior Management Level	Junior Level	.3378*	.06431	.000	.1867	.4890

The findings confirm that although there is a difference in perceptions of SAW in the employees belonging to different levels, yet there was no difference found in the interactive effect of experience, education and levels of employment; so H_{04} gets accepted.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the differences in mean scores of demographic variables in terms of workplace spirituality and its sub-scales among the professionals from IT-ITES and BFSI sector employees based in Delhi-NCR.

IT services in India accounts for over 67 percent of the outsourcing market worldwide (India briefing report, 2018). After establishing its position in IT services, now India is evolving into a value-added destination bringing together fields of consulting services, system integration and technology-enabled business services. Similarly, BFSI sector is again riding the high growth phase in India and as such is plagued by problems like non-performing assets, corporate governance issues, frauds, etc. There are more women employed in these sectors than ever before in any other sector. Furthermore, the employees are increasingly getting concerned by issues like emotional labour, long working hours, lack of free-flow of communication, low motivation and high stress environment, etc. All such problems lead to various issues like frustration, stress, high turnover rate, health issues, etc. It has been established successfully over the past decade that workplace spirituality helps in mitigating the harmful organization outcomes like burnout, stress, disengagement of employees, lack of work-life balance, etc..

This study captured the significance of the implementation of workplace spirituality that could help HR practitioners to incorporate appropriate elements in their HRM practices to make the organizations more conducive towards positive environment. Our research findings show significant differences between males and females. Male respondent reported higher levels of total SAW scores and sense of community. This indicates that social needs plays a much more important role for men than women, which is surprising because females are supposed to be more inclined towards support of social community and family (Shambhunath, 2017). Indian women even those who are working; are still looked upon as the primary caretakers at home(Singh, 2017) and Indian men despite having working wives have still not come to terms with women spending time with office colleagues after work hours on casual meets. It must be the responsibility of employers to come up with suitable policies and practices to provide equitable environment to the women workers.

Furthermore, our analysis revealed that employees having experience between 10 to 20 years scored better on the SAW than the ones having lesser experience. In this context, it is important to understand that employees who are more experienced have better understanding of workplace nuances and generally become more disposed towards workplace spirituality. Also, employees at higher management levels in the organizations are better prepared to embrace workplace spirituality than the employees at junior and middle management level. This is because the maturity level of the higher designated employees makes it conducive for them to understand workplace spirituality and its benefits. The organizations must leverage the orientation of higher management employees to bring about positive changes in the organization because spiritual orientation can be effectively inculcated with inspired leadership (Tevichapong et al., 2010).

This study takes a step further towards observing the various demographic-based differences in the workplace spirituality scores. It is suggested, that organizations incorporate the insights from this study to enhance the spiritual orientation of employees and help them achieve superior performance and a positive frame of mind. There must be specific mechanisms related to organizational values or culture promulgated in the organizations that can facilitate employee experience of workplace spirituality. Although inculcating

spirituality in organizations may be difficult owing to vast diversity among its employees in terms of education, culture, religion, beliefs, values, etc., yet efforts to create a spiritual workplace must be carried on realizing that it's a win-win situation for employees and employers alike.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings reported in the study suggest a number of areas that deserve further investigation. In a corporate environment, the question arises as to how much liberty an employer can give to its employees to follow their individual religious practices at work without disturbing the secular environment. Indeed, quantitative analysis on such a complex and sensitive construct tells only a part of the story; as much of the multifaceted nuances of workplace spirituality remains unexplored. Nevertheless, despite the present study's limitations, it is able to provoke debates on various demographic factors significant in the implementation of spirituality at work by providing proofs to previous claims by the early researches and grounds for future research.

As the data was collected from a few select organizations based out of Delhi-NCR, which is not sufficient to generalize the findings across India. Furthermore, the selected organizations were from IT/ITES and BFSI sectors; it would be worthwhile to see the comparisons in other sectors like manufacturing, telecom, retail, etc. The study has used cross-sectional survey questionnaire method and collected data at a particular point of time; which does not tap into incremental or developmental impact of workplace spirituality. Therefore, future research may venture into longitudinal study for a better understanding of workplace spirituality and its long term effect on proposed HR benefits.

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