

Leadership Effectiveness and Workplace Spirituality – Employees Perspective

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Abstract

The paper aims to explore the concept of leadership effectiveness and workplace spirituality from the employee's perspective. A review based on the constructs of the study – workplace spirituality and leadership effectiveness is concentrated and discussed. Secondary data is used. Review of past relevant literature has been analysed for the study. The emergence of workplace spirituality as a major management concept in the past decade is emphasised. Workplace spirituality researches have contributed towards spirituality, relationship of spirituality with religion and spirituality as an independent construct without any orientation towards religion. Leadership effectiveness has a strong literature base analysed with various management concepts. Yet the study pertaining to workplace spirituality and leadership effectiveness are minimal. Spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality and other management dimension have been analysed in western countries. This context has received less attention in India. However the leadership effectiveness assessed from the employees who are spiritual is a new entry into the area of workplace spirituality. The assessment concentrates on bringing out the effect of workplace spirituality on leadership effectiveness through the employees perspective. Conclusively the paper aims to show that a study on leadership effectiveness based on workplace spirituality is congruent and has a positive impact on work outcomes of the employees.

Keywords:

Leadership effectiveness, Spirituality, Workplace Spirituality

Introduction

Workplace spirituality has managed to garner sufficient attention from research point of view in recent times. The pace of research into workplace spirituality had been slowly increasing from past till now. There are lot of theoretical examinations and few empirical evidences discussing workplace spirituality. Previous researchers in spirituality had discussed about its connection with individuals in terms of religious beliefs, values and practices. Spirituality has its emergence from quality of life (QOL). The term spirituality has been mentioned in

research (George et al., 1820) but not considered much in the research aspect. Though there was a mention of spirituality even then, its research value started to take baby steps in the 19th century which took longer leaps in 20th century. Though initially, spirituality was considered as a part of religion, later in course of time researchers focussed on spirituality as an independent attribute contributing to various positive workplace attributes like organizational performance, organizational commitment, work outcomes, team effectiveness and spiritual leadership. There are researches oriented towards spirituality as a non-component of religion but of the inner values and connectedness towards work. Recently there is a worth mentioning increase in spectacular research being done to implement workplace spirituality in various organizations. Though ample research has been done on analysing workplace spirituality and leadership theory in western regions, concentration to the subject from Indian researchers is negligible. Review discussions support and acclaim that workplace spirituality and leadership effectiveness go hand in hand for better performance of the individual as well as the organization. Workplace spirituality in research aspect has been discussed in different facets focussing on the work outcomes, organizational commitment, and organizational performance by Indian researchers (Pawar, 2008; Chawla & Guda, 2013). Still leadership and workplace spirituality together has not been much explored. The main research study by the author proposes to bring out the impact of workplace spirituality on work outcomes based on leadership effectiveness assessed from employee's point of view. Dimensions of workplace spirituality have been researched quite intensively. Spiritual leadership has its own share contributing to research. Leadership effectiveness from employees' perspective in a spirited workplace has no much research attention. The employees' perspective has to be analysed to understand leadership effectiveness as employees are the people who work to materialise the concepts of a leader. Such effectiveness tends to show a higher positivity in a spiritual workplace and hence the research is required in this context. The base idea evolved from the review work of Reave (2005) discussing spiritual values and practices and leadership effectiveness, by reviewing around 150 articles for the purpose.

Spirituality

Initial research on spirituality focussed on the positive effect of spirituality on physical/mental well-being of an individual. But beyond these, there is a spirituality connected to the inner being of a person. Peck (2006) said awareness of spirituality comes is incremental in nature, which provides learning all through the life and individuals experience the joy of spirituality.

Spirituality as A Part of Religion

Quite a lot of research writings view spirituality in a religious perspective. Argument of Elmes & Smith (2001) supports that empowerment in place of work has a well-built spiritual foundation rooted in Puritan and Christian ethics, accentuating that rigid effort, living right, and performing for others direct to a person's opulence and organizations enhancement. Gibbons (2000) asserts that spirituality is something inseparable from prehistoric religious customs, as it is vital to many people. Researchers in leadership have concentrated on spirituality a lot and have fallen short to acknowledge religious differences (Hicks, 2002). Certain managements perceive to include religious and/or spiritual constituent to handle sudden event's happening within an organization. Such organizations preferably inculcate religious principles into businesses by positioning God prior to work. They trust this positioning can logically assist the workers to handle sudden (Pratt, 2000).

Spirituality Different from Religion

Spirituality is found to have impact without being linked with religion is a fact supported and proven by lots of research carried out in the past decade. Workers tend to look at themselves as spiritual beings at work, seeking spirit to feel nourished and to acclaim a sense of purpose and meaning, and to feel the sense of connectedness to one another and to their workplace community. Spirituality is defined as being moral and emotional, which feels a selfless pleasure of one's position in the creation, one's spirit, and the role of a God (Bierly et al., 2000). Dent, Higgins & Wharff (2005) observed that organized religions offer ceremonies, customs, and practices, which could serve as a medium to attain spirituality. Attending ceremonies lack spirituality but can consider a person as being religious. Research shows that an increasing number of persons are improving their spirituality outside traditional, organized religion (Elkins et al., 1988). According to Giacalone & Jurkiewicz (2003), definition of spirituality restrains transcendence and connection; it does not overtly recognize religion as a primary factor to workplace spirituality. Majority of the research work recommend that spirituality can be considered different from religion. Few researchers argue that spirituality is different from religion. Few other researchers put forth that people can be a part of religious practices/institutions without experiencing spirituality. And similarly people can experience spirituality even when away from religious circumstances. Mohamed et al., (2001) argues that religion has negative implication of being dictatorial, parental and the main requisite is unconditional obedience. But for numerous people spirituality means, self-governing, being independent and visualising sentient progress in life either inclusive or exclusive of religion.

Workplace Spirituality

Ashmos & Duchon (2000) defines “Workplace spirituality as a workplace that recognizes that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community”. Leaders can improve the performance of employees by fostering the spirit at work is a valid implication understood by this definition. Likewise employees can yield to the betterment of oneself as well as to the work unit and to the organization in a workplace which entertains the practice of spirituality. Though there is a view of workplace spirituality as being profoundly personal and philosophical, most of the academic arguments support that spirituality entails a spirit of completeness, inter-connectedness at work, and insight of values (Gibbons, 2000). Mitroff & Denton (1999) define that “Workplace spirituality involves the effort to find one's ultimate purpose in life, to develop a strong connection to co-workers and other people associated with work, and to have consistency (or alignment) between one's core beliefs and the values of their organization”.

Leadership Effectiveness

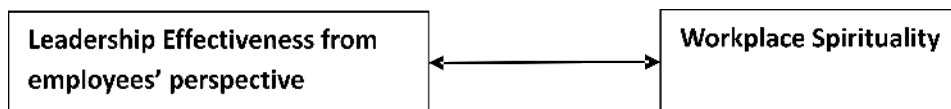
In several cases of leadership effectiveness, spirituality is found to bring out the embodiment of spiritual values such as uprightness, and in the dissent of spiritual behaviour such as expressing care and concern. According to Jurkiewicz & Giacalone (2004) workplace spirituality is “a map of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected in a way that provides feelings of compassion and joy”. The effectiveness of Leadership has been measured in many ways by several researchers. Indeed, Stogdill (1974), and Bass & Stogdill (1990) catalogued and interpreted almost five thousand studies of the concept and found great variance in its definition. Burns (1978) captured the problem most vividly in a statement still widely quoted today: “Leadership,” he said “is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth”. It can be illustrated that ethical behaviour is required to demonstrate spirituality, but spirituality is not required to demonstrate ethical values and practices. Bowers & Seashore (1966) stressed the fact that leaders should concentrate on dimensional behaviour of employees in addition to direct reports. Leader needs to pay

attention to direct reporting, maintaining managerial goal, added attention to emphasise managerial goals, clarity of goals, ability to provide individual support to employees to work better and achieve their objectives, and facilitate followers (subordinates) to interact effectively to enhance efficiency, create a feel good factor and better teamwork effort (Cooper, 2012).

Workplace Spirituality and Leadership Effectiveness

The term and understanding of the term spirituality and leadership had been researched a lot, yet lacks a perfect definition, due to which the progress in the conceptual path is slow (Fry & Smith, 1987). Combination of both the terms confuses the researchers in using the terms independent of one another. In consideration of the term spiritual, it's more oriented towards the individual but considering the term leadership, it manifests more towards particular group conducts (Drath & Palus, 1994). In addition, when two different concepts are pooled, the newly formed concept may generate definitional redundancy and direct the research to handle perplexing constructs of leadership research. Of all the numerous definitions put forth on leadership, Cashman (1998) imposes leadership as a starting point for testing it's linkage with the definition of workplace spirituality defined by Giacalone & Jurkiewicz (2003). Workplace spirituality is defined as a “workplace that recognizes that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community”. This definition, based on deep-seated spiritual needs, has connotations for how leaders can improve work unit performance by fostering the spirit at work. Bennis & Nanus (1985) assert that leadership is the normal term of a completely integrated individual and Cashman (1998) portrays leadership as the dependable articulation of one-self that generates value. Understanding the leader to exert an enhanced work outcome from the employees is success of the spirited workplace. Fry & Smith (1987) suggested acquaintance between leadership and workplace spirituality can be enhanced by testing for similarity and eventuality. Based on the link observed from the literature reviewed the following conceptual map is proposed.

Figure 1 - CONCEPTUAL MAP



On the road to development of model following the theoretical research suggestions, the research considers spirituality in a context that doesn't consider religion. If religion is considered there could be lot of restrictions based on the religious practices of different religions, which makes it difficult to generalize the context of workplace spirituality. There is numerous research works catering the success of spiritual leadership. The focus of this paper concentrates on the workplace spirituality of individuals and their perception towards effectiveness of their leaders.

Discussion

Konz & Ryan (1999) feel that a major part of research has concentrated on describing personal spiritual experiences at work. Though personal spirituality experiences need to be researched intrinsically, it's equally vital to understand the potential positive and negative impact of workplace spirituality on employee work outcomes (King & Nicol, 1999). The studies which have dealt with this topic of employee attitudes often simplistically assume that spirituality at work always has a positive impact (Gibbons, 2000), rather than formally postulating and empirically testing for these relationships. But to some extent more employees tend to be spiritual when considered without relating to religion. Leadership can attain higher effectiveness if the followers, in term of working individuals/working environment are expected to follow workplace spirituality. And the leadership effectiveness from less or non-spiritual working individuals/working environment can be assessed to notify the existence of differences. Conclusively the map developed has tried to bring out the literature support to proceed in line of conception of the idea to study the relationship between workplace spirituality and leadership effectiveness.

Conclusion and Implications

Leadership can attain effectiveness meticulously and seek progress on work outcomes if workplace spirituality exists. Corporate organizations are progressively integrating spirituality, to craft a better work environment for their employees. The aim of this paper was to extend a conceptual model focussed to understand the impact of workplace spirituality on the employees to assess effectiveness of leaders. It proposes that if employees recognise spirituality at work, finding meaning at work, having a prosperous inner life, satisfactory work unit, caring co-workers within the corporate organization will have an effect on leadership effectiveness. This paper adds to the research field to some extent as it tends to analyse the leaders effectiveness through employees perspective in a firm which practices workplace spirituality.

So far, the majority of research about spirituality at work has focused primarily on the individual level. Second, the article

reveals important information about understanding the effects those spiritual workplaces can have on employees to follow the leaders. Organizations that focus primarily on success of leaders can have a better understanding about the implications and effects that workplace spirituality can have on their employees, and they can improve or develop an organizational environment by implementing programs aimed at boosting the attributes of employees.

Scope for Future Research

With regard to the implications for future research, other outcomes for measuring leadership effectiveness from employees such as motivation, organization based citizenship behaviour, organizational commitment, cooperation or communication could be incorporated. Also, the model presented here does not establish that openness, answerability and responsibility (overall leadership effectiveness) felt by employees are the only factors encountered in those organizations that promote spirituality at work. Future research could investigate other attributes that might play an important role with regards to leadership effectiveness. It would be interesting to see if different cultures present different or similar attributes and how they affect leadership effectiveness. Future research could also have a scope in assessing spiritual entrepreneurship and conditions for workplace spirituality in such entrepreneurial firms.

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