

# Workplace Spirituality: Rekindling the Humanitarian Climate to Improve Organizational Outcomes



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**Purpose-** The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between Workplace Spirituality, include “meaningful work and purpose in inner life, having a “sense of community” and being in “alignment with the organization’s values” and mission and two work-related outcomes that is intention to leave, and quality of patient care among medical professionals working in the government and private Health care organizations of India.

**Sample and Method** -The study was conducted on a sample of 253 medical professionals from a large public hospital (N=127) and a large private hospital (N=126) in north India using questionnaire method. The perceptions about workplace spirituality was measured with Scale based on Ashmos- Duchon Spirituality Scale (2000). While quality of patient care was measured by scale constructed by Kelly and Hurst (2006) and intention to leave was measured by scale constructed by Kalberg (1996). For data analysis, stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to examine how much effect independent variable had on the dependent variables.

**Finding-** Stepwise regression analysis of the data revealed that the “workplace spirituality”, emerged as a positive predictor of “quality of patient care” and negative of “turnover intentions” in both the hospitals equally.

**Implication and Value-** The study has important implications for Indian hospitals in the private and public sector which are currently facing problems of providing quality of care to their patients due to staff perceptions of inadequacy of their workplace environments and job conditions.

**Keywords:** Workplace Spirituality, Quality of patient care, Turnover intentions

## 1. Introduction

When we peeped in the history of human resource management we see that previously employees were treated as machines, and main motto of the organizations were only to increase production and materialistic benefit. This era was supposed to be the time of scientific management, during this period managers believed that only by using scientific principles of management and mathematical calculation they were able to handle employees and increased the production. But after sometime this myth was failed and they realized that it is not easy to handle employees without understanding their needs and motives because materialistic rewards are not the one and only catalyst to increase performance and decrease turnover intentions.

Furthermore materialistic rewards are capable to increase motivation of employees to perform up to a certain limit but after certain point materialistic rewards are not so influential. Hawthorne studies by Elton Mayo supported the fact that materialistic rewards were essential to fulfil the basic needs of life but fulfilment of basic needs are not the ultimate goal of human life there are various needs beyond basic surviving needs.

In fact after Hawthorne study supervisors and managers first time realized that except scientific principles there are several other ways to manage employees and there were several other incentives which give sense of completeness to human being like self-identity, self-respect, self actualizations. Therefore, the 1920s saw the emergence of the Human Relation approaches that attempt to understand and focus more on an individual’s feelings and attitude toward their job. They attempt to reject rational and mechanistic views of workers and increase the recognition that “workers are motivated by more than rationality or narrow self-interest” (Hicks, 2003).

So Hawthorne study prepared the root bed for the requirement of “workplace spirituality” in work environment. These studies pointed out that there is a strong relationship between worker’s behaviour and sentiments, that a group influences individual behaviour, and that money is not as important for worker output as group standards, sentiments and security (Robbins, 2005).

The rise of a humanistic approach within organizations encouraged firms to change their organizational structures. This movement focuses more attention on spirituality, as it is perceived as a way for workers to fulfill their quest for meaning in organizations and to bring individual talents and unique spirits to the workplace (Leigh, 1997). In addition, it is believed that this movement has enhanced our understanding of workers’ nature and of the quest for meaning in life and work that provides motivation.

## 2. Need of Workplace Spirituality

During recent years, organizations have faced various transformations in their organizational environment. In an effort to improve the important aspect of working environment of an organization HR manager implemented numerous activities aimed at building a better organizational climate. Some of these policies or activities have the purpose of creating or enhancing what is called workplace spirituality (WS).

Many corporations encourage the development of this new trend because they believe a humanistic work environment can create a win-win situation for employees, for employee's co-workers, and that it is good for the organization (Wiersma, Dean & Fornaciari, 2009). If the employees are at liberty to bring their physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual attributes to the workplace, they will become more productive, creative and fulfilled. It has also been proposed that organizations which create an environment that is responsive to their employees' sense of purpose and values will have people who are more motivated productive and satisfied (Hawley, 1993). Garcia-Zamor (2003) stated that many organizations are considering the incorporation of workplace spirituality because it can create a positive relationship between the employee and the organization.

## 3. Workplace Spirituality

The rise of a humanistic view in terms of personal growth and self-actualization within organizations encouraged firms to change their organizational structures. Alvesson (1982) named this phenomenon "humanistic organization theory," which is characterized by "its emphasis on the use of intrinsic motivation and growth of the personnel as a method for organizational growth and development. This tradition stresses the possibility of integrating humanistic values such as well-being and personal growth with management goals.

Mitroff and Denton (1999) mentioned 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. According to Wong (2003) strongly held spiritual values i.e. altruistic, love, care affection, and meaning creation lead to high organizational outcomes. The importance of work spirituality is consistently growing as the spiritual cause leads to strategic benefits to the business units.

Research ensured the fact that spirituality imparts delight full impact on the job performance, job satisfaction and turn over reduction. Accordingly, workplace spirituality can be defined as "the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community" (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

So health personnel, especially those working at the grass roots level have the feeling that their contribution to people they deal with, is likely to help larger sections of the community and society. These add meaning and purpose to their job, so medical professionals perceive their profession as a calling to serve humanity. In this study we have focused on three dimensions of workplace spirituality. These three core dimensions include purpose in one's work or "meaningful work" (individual level), having a "sense of community" (group level), and being in "alignment with the organization's values" and mission (organization level).

**Meaningful Work:** A fundamental aspect of spirituality at work involves having a deep sense of meaning and purpose in one's work, living one's dream, expressing one's inner life needs by seeking meaningful work, and contributing to others (Ashforth & Pratt, 2003). Similarly, Moore (1992) observes that work is a vocation and a calling as a way to create greater meaning and identity in the workplace. Several researchers have emphasized the importance of the activities that employees conduct in their workplaces. Meaningful work is about working on something that is important, energizing, and fulfills the employees' needs.

**Community:** Community at work is based on the belief that people see themselves as connected to each other at mental, emotional and spiritual level (e.g. "esprit de corps"). According to Naylor (1996) individuals in workplaces can find a sense of community if the following characteristic's are present in the workplace environment, sense of belonging, support, shared faith, vision, common values, empowerment, responsibility sharing, growth and development, tension reduction, education, feedback and friendship.

## 4. Alignment with Organizational Values

A third aspect of spirituality in the workplace is when individuals experience a strong sense of connection with organizational values. Alignment with organizational values involves the concept that employees desire to work in an organization whose goal is to not just be a good corporate citizen, but an organization that seeks to have a high sense of ethics or integrity and make a larger contribution than the typical company to the welfare of employees, customers, and society. Alignment with organizational values can be understood as a match between an employee's personal beliefs, values ideas and the organization's mission and purpose (Milliman, et al., 2003).

## 5. Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Outcomes

Workplace spirituality has an important effect at the organizational outcomes. Research on P-O fit has suggested that when there is a strong match between the organization and the employee, there will be a positive effect on employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction, performance, productivity, and a negative effect on turnover intention (Izzo & Klein, 1998). Komala and Ganesh (2007) studied the relationship between spirituality at work and job satisfaction of healthcare professionals. Using

a sample of doctors and nurses from a hospital they found a positive correlation between spirituality at work and job satisfaction.

## 6. Quality of Patient Care

Today quality of care means holistic care which not only provides physical, mental, psychological but also spiritual care. This is very essential for health of a patient, so it is totally depend on the hospital management and professionals to provide holistic care to patients. According to Derezotes (2006), spiritual practice is the process of healing our bodies, minds, hearts, and souls since spiritual practice will help us integrate our whole beings again. Such a process will eventually lead medical professionals to increase their awareness of love for clients and care for self (Derezotes, 2006).

Patients identified affective dispositions such as empathy, caring, and good personal demeanour as elements of quality care (Larrabee & Bolden, 1993). Good communication skills and interpersonal competence also were identified by patients as key elements of quality care because they promoted individualized care and established good nurse-patient relationships ( Radwin & Alster, 1999).

Some physicians consider medicine to be a vocation or a calling and consider themselves as instruments of a divine or higher power. Which provides them feeling of wholeness and fulfilment, so work takes new meaning and significance when it is seen as a calling, a sacred duty, a service opportunity or a way to serve God. Physicians experienced satisfaction from medicine and for their ability to facilitate healing in the lives of their patients (Olive, 1995). Therefore it becomes more meaningful and subsequent increase in productivity and commitment of employees (Reave, 2005).

## 7. Workplace Spirituality and Turnover Intention

Turnover is another variable of interest in this study. Turnover intention can be defined as the extent to which an employee is planning to leave the organization (Igbaria & Greenhaus, 1992). Researchers have used turnover intention as a reliable proxy for turnover because data is easily collected while the employee is still working in the organization (Lacity, Iyer & Rudramuniyaiah, 2008). It has been suggested that several aspects within the organization, such as a poor work environment, have a negative impact on the willingness of employees to stay and continue working for the company (Booth & Hamer, 2007).

It has been proposed that a sense of community in the organization is negatively associated with turnover intention and absenteeism (DiMeglio et al. 2005). They argued that it is very important to have an environment in which there is a sense of community and connection in order to avoid high levels of turnover.

It has also been noted that conducting meaningful activities at work can lead to more satisfied employees (Bowie, 1998). This importance of meaningful duties at work has also been proposed to be negatively related to turnover intention. For instance, Hackman and Oldham (1976) proposed that task significance, skill variety, and task identity are important determinants of meaningful work, which is an important factor for reducing absenteeism and turnover.

Workplace spirituality construct plays an important role in the desire and satisfaction to continue working in the organization. Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004) emphasized that those companies with low levels of spirituality will have employees with a low level of satisfaction as well as high levels of turnover and absenteeism. In their analysis of workplace spirituality and attitudinal job variables, they found that dimensions of workplace spirituality, such as sense of community and alignment of values, presented negative relationships with intention to quit respectively.

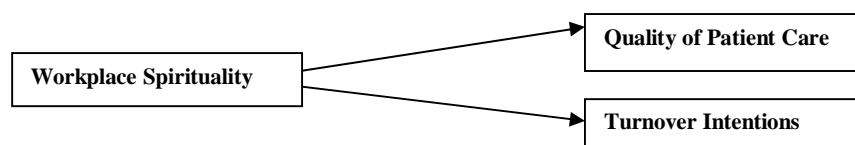


Figure 1 The Theoretical Framework Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Outcomes

## 8. Hypotheses

From Figure 1, we derived hypotheses as outlined below to test the relationship of the workplace spirituality with quality of patient care and turnover intentions.

**H1:** The greater the experience of personal purpose and meaning in one's work, the greater will be the quality of patient care provided by medical professionals and lower turnover intentions in both the hospitals.

**H2:** The greater the sense of community at work, the greater the quality of patient care provided by medical professionals and lower turnover intentions in both the hospitals.

**H3:** The greater the alignment of one's personal values with organizational values, the greater the quality of patient care provided by medical professionals and lower turnover intentions in both the hospitals.

## 9. Method

**Sample:** The sample consisted of 253 medical professionals ranging from physicians to the nursing staff. Within the sample 126 participants belonged to a private hospital and 127 belonged to the public hospital.

**Private Hospital:** Abdur Razzaque Ansari Memorial Hospital (ARAM) also known as Apollo (Ranchi) located on the Ranchi-Hazaribagh National Highway No.33.

**Public Hospital:** A Central Government Hospital known as Sir Sunderlal hospital, located in the campus of Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

### Measures

Scales used in the present study:

- Workplace Spirituality:** This scale was inspired by the scale of Ashmos and Duchon Spirituality Scale (2000) for measuring workplace spirituality in hospital consisted 28 items. The reliability coefficient of this scale was .93.
- Quality of Patient Care:** This scale was based on the dimensions of quality of patient care proposed by Kelly and Hurst (2006). Initially there were 11 items; each item was related to a specific health care service quality condition.
- Turnover Intentions:** This scale constructed by Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth (1978). The scale initially consisted of 3 items. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.97.

**Table.1.a** Presented the Correlation Analysis of Relationship between the Perception of Workplace Spirituality by Medical Professionals and Outcome Variables, that is, Quality of Patient Care and Turnover Intentions in the Public and Private Hospitals

Antecedent Variable	r with Quality of Care	
	Public Hospital	Private Hospital
Workplace Spirituality	.536**	.472**
Antecedent Variable	r with turnover intentions	
	Public Hospital	Private Hospital
Workplace Spirituality	-.345**	-.196**

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $< .01$

**Public hospital (Table. 1a)** result showed that perception of workplace spirituality by medical professionals of public hospital was found to be significantly positively correlated with the quality of patient care ( $r = .53^{**}$ ) and negatively by turnover intentions ( $r = -.34^{**}$ ).

**Private hospital (Table. 1a)** result showed that perception of workplace spirituality by medical professionals of private hospital was found to be significantly positively correlated with the quality of patient care ( $r = .47^{**}$ ) and negatively with turnover intentions ( $r = -.19^{**}$ ).

## 10. Stepwise Regression Analysis

**Table 2.a** Stepwise Regression of Quality of Patient Care with Workplace Spirituality in Private and Public Hospitals

Public Hospital (N=127)						
Predictor	R	R2	R2 Change	%	Beta	t ratio
Workplace spirituality	.536	.288	.288	29%	.53	7.10**
Private Hospital (N=126)						
Predictor	R	R2	R2 Change	%	Beta	t ratio
Workplace spirituality	.472	.223	.223	22%	.47	5.96**

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $< .01$

**In public hospital (Table 2a)** - result showed that perception of workplace spirituality by medical professionals positively predicted 29% variance in quality of patient care.

**In private hospital-** result showed that perception of workplace spirituality by medical professionals positively predicted 22% variance in quality of patient care.

**Table 2.b** Stepwise Regression of Turnover Intentions with Workplace Spirituality in Private and Public Hospitals

Public Hospital (N=127)						
Predictor	R	R2	R2 Change	%	Beta	t ratio
Workplace spirituality	.345	.119	.119	12%	-.34	4.10**
Private Hospital (N=126)						
Predictor	R	R2	R2 Change	%	Beta	t ratio
Workplace spirituality	.196	.038	.038	4%	-.196	-2.22*

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $< .01$

**In public hospital** (Table 2b) - result showed that perception of workplace spirituality by medical professionals negatively predicted 12% variance in turnover intentions.

**In private hospital**- result showed perception of workplace spirituality by medical professionals negatively predicted 4% variance in organizational commitment.

## 11. Discussion

In this study we tried to find out the impact of workplace spirituality on quality of care delivered by medical professionals and their turnover intentions. So we hypothesized that "Workplace spirituality" is likely to have positive relationship with quality of patient care and negative with turnover intentions in public and private hospitals.

Result proved our hypothesis H1, H2 and H3 correct and justified the topic of the study. Result proved that use of humanitarian virtues like mutual trust, respect, understanding, unity and integrity are those qualities which still possess their own identity and value in between scientific principles of management. Humanitarian values still dominate the modern principles of management, so we can't deny its importance in human life.

In new era of twenty first century employee looks for meaning in his work and want to develop in a holistic human beings. Therefore now top-most organizations are realizing that their most valuable resources are human resources, so their success depends only on creating organization based on unity, justice, integrity, mutual respect and service and so on. For decade's importance of these virtues have been denied in our organizations and developed a more materialistic view of man, one that ignores the deeper issues of seeking meaning in life and work. These new management virtues form the foundation of the workplace spirituality.

In this study perception of workplace spirituality by medical professionals of public and private hospitals influence quality of patient care positively and turnover intentions negatively. Studies have shown that workplace spirituality has the potential to provide employees a feeling of purpose, a sense of connection, and a sense of meaning at work (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). These characteristics of workplace spirituality motivate employees to perform their level best, so promotion of spirituality at workplace is beneficial for organizations and employees also. Organizations with stronger sense of spirituality enable employees to exercise stronger values and ethical beliefs in their workplace and empower them to show more creativity and flexibility at work (Mitroff & Denton, 1999).

Many employees in today's workplaces question themselves and their work, ask themselves about the essence and meaning of their work and search for a sense of purpose and meaning at work (Karakas, 2010). Medical profession is one of the most relevant example of this thought, because medical professionals struggle day and night to defeat death and provide life to patients so they get a divine feeling and purpose through their profession. In ancient times, healers came mainly from the ranks of monks and nurses were nuns or members of religious orders. Doctors were highly respected for their capacity to plead with God and to bring about changes in the health of individuals. Prophets like Jesus, Buddha, and others were actively involved in healing the sick. They encouraged their followers also to serve and demonstrate compassion to the sick (Graber & Johnson, 2001).

According to Campuzano and Seteroff (2009) when an employee comes to a realization that the job is not the end, but a vehicle to express spirituality, it leads to self-actualization and motivate employee to perform at a level of excellence. So when employees perceive their job as a mode to achieve self-actualization then their turnover intentions also reduce. Neck & Milliman (1994), have found that when people find meaning in their activities and feel involved in heavily spiritual organizational climates, they become healthier and happier, where they act in a more committed manner, become more engaged and are able to apply their full potential to work. Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) found that the encouragement of spirituality in the workplace can lead to benefits in the areas of creativity, honesty, personal fulfillment and commitment which ultimately lead to increased organizational performance.

## 12. Conclusion

This research can be helpful to human resource management in the development of practices and policies aimed at creating or improving spirituality in the workplace. So hr managers should keep in their mind that they will design such strategies which value human emotions and feelings for improving performance of employees. Employers should try to, trickle the mind, touch the heart and train the hand. Marques (2005) noted that establishing and developing a spiritual workplace aspect such as honesty and open communication, intensive feedback to co-workers and collaboration among employees for decision making must be maintained in organizations to improve the organizational climate and balance the harmony in work environment. So that it will enhance the creativity and productivity of employees as well as enhance inter-connectedness between them to reduce their turnover intentions.

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