

## Research Articles

## A Study of Perceived Workplace Spirituality of School Teachers

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## Abstract

Teaching as a profession demands calling and commitment beyond human's limitations. The conscious choices by teachers are leading them toward stress, burnout, and conflicts at personal and professional levels. The aim of present study is to explore the perceived workplace spirituality of school teachers. The information was collected from 243 Indian school teachers. The meaningful work, meaningful life, interpersonal relationship and working environment were extracted as main dimensions of workplace spirituality in schools. The factor structure was validated by using partial least square structure equation modeling. Workplace spirituality was discussed as a measure to overcome issues related to teaching and teachers. This research will lead the future researchers to explore and empirically verify sources of workplace spirituality in classroom settings.

**Keywords:** workplace spirituality, teacher, education, job, working environment

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The term 'spirituality' is in abstract and subjective form in the theory; but on the practical side, spirituality is highly objective and concrete in application form. It is pursuit for ultimate being (Heschel, 1955), living meaningfully (Bregman & Thiermann, 1995), existing vital force (Rayburn, 1996), ultimate truth (Wong, 1998), and individual's relation to his or her higher self (Benefiel, 2005). Mitroff and Denton (1999) described spirituality as a highly personal and intricately connected to issues such as caring, hope, kindness, love and optimism. Spiritual lack in the people's life leads them toward insecurity and confusion (Gawain, 2000). Therefore, spirituality could bring peace, stability and sustainable growth in human beings by purifying their souls. Spirituality is not formal, nor structured, and neither denominational, but rather a broadly inclusive concept that is universal (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Dehler and Welsh (1994) described spirituality as the expression of spirit behaviorally or cognitively. Spirit is an inner source of energy and spirituality is the outward expression of that source (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Most of the scholars aligned spirituality with purpose of individual life which provides meaning, inner awareness and knowledge, sense of existence and life-long results.

In the beginning of last century Hawthorne studies sowed the seed of valuing human factors in the organizational context (Önday, 2016). The continuous expedition toward better human resources management found a

milestone named as workplace spirituality. It is a new field developing its theoretical existence in individual, organizational and social context (Moore & Casper, 2006; Sheep, 2006). In context of organizational work, workplace spirituality is a set of organizational values that create feeling of wholeness and contentment (Dent, Higgins, & Wharff, 2005). Workplace spirituality provides meaningful work and aim to individuals' work life. It represents individual's connectedness with others at workplace (Conger, 1994; Mirvis, 1997; Vaill, 2000). In recent studies workplace spirituality was defined as positive mood (Shaw, 1997), spiritual values of people (Wheaton & Baird, 2002), a set of personal attributes (Amin Mohamed, Wisnieski, Askar, & Syed, 2004) and as an essence of human being existence (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Moore & Casper, 2006). The four-fundamental arena of humans i.e. body, mind, heart and soul always push them toward search for meaning. In organizations, this quest is satisfied by meaningful work. Workplace spirituality includes a concept of individual employee's association with work and observance of values in the work (Gibbons, 2000). Spirituality at work is an endeavor for finding meaning in the work life, virtuous interpersonal relationships, and harmony with organizational values (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). The individuals' inner life, meaningful work, and community are three basic pillars of workplace spirituality. Inner life relates to human self-concept, meaningful work relates to work content and community relates to the working situations (Dehler & Welsh, 2003).

Behavior thinkers and scholars tried to construct a spiritual framework for employees' spiritual growth in their modern workplaces. While, working toward this model Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003) suggested that meaningful work and shared feelings in work communities are factors influencing workplace spirituality.

Employees' feelings toward work meaning and knowledge help to support their spiritual development (Brown, 2003). Shared feelings in work communities refer to employees' interpersonal relationships with colleagues, clients and customers. This could enhance their empathetic powers and mutual inner feelings. These interpersonal relationships need care, trust, communication, and support to each other. Individuals in organization align themselves with organizational values and experience powerful feeling of integrity and solidarity with vision, mission and goals of organization. This transfer through vision and personal actions create a sense of calling and membership at workplace (Fry, 2003). In organizations people always try to find contentment, meaning for their lives through meaningful work, healthy work environment and good interpersonal relationships. This leads to rationalization of individual quest into inner life through workplace spirituality.

## Review of Literature

People anxiety and curiosity about life and death is leading them toward a trend of studying life meaning and its relevance. People started to assimilate life values and professional value of work for answering few of these questions (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Neal, 1999). On the other side, people in society are busy in their works and this means less interaction time with neighbors, families, and friends. Technological advancements, dual career marriages, changing gender role in family care increased multiple role performances in a particular life theater. Other factors like High-tech living, population migration increased the distance among people in society. All these have affected the human's social needs (Robbins, 2002). Due to these changes in work patterns it comes to be difficult to have stable jobs. People are worried and this change started reflecting on their works and lives (Neal, 1999).

In organizations workplace spirituality could be managed by looking for peace in every area of organizational life, by clarification about the concepts of fundamental texts, spiritual talks, listening to others, positive attitude and limiting the human greed (Mitroff & Denton, 1999).

Milliman, Ferguson, Trickett, and Condemni (1999) proposed four components of workplace spirituality. These four components were further discussed by Pawar (2008). According to Pawar, organization should adopt spiritual values; transfer them into business and individual plans, design the human resource management in way that it supports employees' goals and behaviors derived from these values, and reward the positive outcomes at employees' level. This organizational based approach for workplace spirituality does not only include cultural control but spiritual values also. On the other hand, individual approach to workplace spirituality is proposed by Chakraborty. This approach works on individual cognitive and experiential level of learning for individual spiritual growth. At individual level 'human values' and their continuous practice defines the spiritual effectiveness. It needs individual willingness and cultivation of spiritual values in and through organizational work values (Chakraborty, 1993). These two approaches to workplace spirituality facilitation indicate two different ways to experience spirituality at the workplace. In the first approach organization adopts the spiritual values and transfers these values into organization through various organizational processes (e.g. employee selection, performance appraisal, rewards etc.). Employees will experience this spirituality at workplace and reflect it through positive attitude and enhanced performance. The second approach, in contrast, directly affects the individual employees by inculcating human values in them and by their spiritual transformation. This leads to improved productivity through better teamwork. Reflecting back, these two different approaches can be used to implement workplace spirituality in the organizations.

Seaward (1995) suggested that individuals live in society and their values and spiritual fulfillment is reflected through their behavior. If people observe value conflict and spiritual lack in their life, their behavior will change and productivity will deteriorate considerably. The spirituality at workplace develops feelings of calling and membership in employees, and ultimately leads to employees' well-being (Fry, 2003). Workplace spirituality influences employees positively in the forms of increase productivity, honesty, loyalty, commitment, creativity, satisfaction, and high morale. The ultimate result of workplace spirituality is increased organizational efficacy (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). Long lasting effects of workplace spirituality are Satisfaction, meaningful work and connectedness at workplace (Pawar, 2008). There is also indication that workplace spirituality programs not only lead to beneficial personal outcomes such as increased joy, peace, job satisfaction, serenity, and commitment but also help to improve employees' productivity and lowers the absenteeism rate and reduce turnover rate (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). When Employees consider their organization spiritual, they become less fearful and think workplace is more humane, productive, creative and flexible (Eisler & Montouori, 2003).

The educational institutions are social spaces where people work with their epistemic tradition, disciplinary culture, local institution conditions and national tradition. In the globalized world the face of educational system is changing from monolithic symbols of cultural excellence to dynamic and coping ivory towers of knowledge management. These organizations are helping to build interpersonal relationship and social capital in the society (Hedges & Schneider, 2005). In India, ancient Guru Shishya parampara was abolished with the advent and introduction of Lord Macaulay's educational reforms (Ananthanarayanan, 2011). Currently, the educators are playing a vital role in formulation and implementation of modern education system. The workplace factors like reward system, learning opportunities, or decision autonomy are largely contributing to the teachers' commit-

ment and their meaningful contribution to the academic success (Rosenholtz, 1989). Teaching is a noble profession with obligations. Teachers' workplace situations are determining the teachers' success in this profession. Teaching as profession is a "calling" for most teachers. The self-image of teacher always remains at center with strong beliefs about the work (Eklund, 2009). This sense of calling leads teachers to do unbelievable things in adverse situations for the betterment of learners. This whole process results in stress and conscious burnout (Rudow, 1999). Eklund (2009) proposed two approaches for handling these conditions: (1) Education institutions should be a better workplace for teachers and students, (2) Teachers always keep in mind their boundaries and limitations. The first approach deals with working environment, work situations while second approach deals with finding meaningful work at workplace. These two approaches for handling educators' and their working environment can be achieved through workplace spirituality approaches discussed by Pawar (2008). The workplace spirituality in educational institutions results in higher teachers' commitment, well-being and help to cope with job burnout.

In the light of spirituality theory and its applications the objective of present study is to explore and validate the latent factors related to workplace spirituality of teachers in schools.

## Hypotheses Formulation

H1. The perceived workplace spirituality of teachers constitute underlying latent factors structure.

H2. The hypothesized workplace spirituality latent factors structure fits the data and latent factors differ significantly.

## Method

### Pilot Study

Initially, 20 statements were framed from literature (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Mirvis, 1997). The statements were checked by expert for content validity. Further, 4 statements were dropped after peer review and expert validation. The pilot study was conducted on 81 teachers from different public and private schools. At this stage the factor analysis was used for data reduction and for questionnaire designing. The variables having communalities less than 0.40 and the variables cross-loaded were excluded. Finally, in the measurement tool 12 variables were used and are given below (see Table 1).

### Measurement (Research Tool)

A structured questionnaire was developed for measuring workplace spirituality, and contributing items were rated on 5 point multiple item non-comparative Likert scale (1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree). Then, the information was collected from school teachers in North Indian state Himachal Pradesh. The 350 questionnaires were distributed. Finally, 257 questionnaires were returned by respondents. After initial scrutiny 14 questionnaires were dropped due to their incomplete information and 243 valid questionnaires were selected for information compilation.

Table 1

*Items in the Questionnaire*

Item	Variables
V1	My teaching job provides me self-recognition at my workplace.
V2	I get development and growth opportunities at my workplace.
V3	I feel autonomous to do my work in my teaching job.
V4	I feel appreciated and connected at my workplace.
V5	I feel my emotions are stable to handle work pressures.
V6	I feel motivated and satisfied life at my workplace.
V7	My work organization helps me to learn & develop leadership qualities.
V8	I influence my peers with positive attitude and care.
V9	At Work, I am willing to take responsibilities and be hard-working.
V10	My workplace emphasizes on personal experience of the teacher.
V11	I am willing to tolerate other peers and carry out honesty and equality at the workplace.
V12	At my workplace there is a culture of openness and flexible thinking.

Out of the total respondents, 88 were males and 155 were females. In the sample, 204 respondents were in the age group of less than 50 years; 146 respondents worked in public schools and 97 respondents worked in private schools. The value of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for variables in the measurement scale was 0.79.

## Results

The descriptive statistics and correlation matrix between variable are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics*

Item	M	SD	Correlation Matrix (N = 243)											
			V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	V11	
V1	3.65	1.01												
V2	3.11	0.98	.46**											
V3	3.17	0.98	.46**	.51**										
V4	2.72	1.23	.40**	.45**	.47**									
V5	3.56	0.83	.10	.19**	.10	-.08								
V6	3.83	0.76	.16*	.06	.06	-.18**	.23**							
V7	3.03	1.09	.24**	.24**	.27**	.09	.34**	.35**						
V8	4.16	0.92	.25**	.03	-.04	-.04	.08	.18**	.19**					
V9	3.68	0.75	.29**	.18**	.20**	.16*	.06	.29**	.04	.23**				
V10	3.51	0.91	.40**	.25**	.27**	.26**	-.07	.10	.13*	.15*	.28**			
V11	3.59	1.27	-.02	.12	.08	.10	.10	-.15*	.05	.18**	-.09	-.01		
V12	3.55	0.71	.15*	.26**	.20**	.20**	.32**	.02	.09	.07	.06	.20**	.26**	

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

The item V8 (I influence my peers with positive attitude and care) presented highest mean value of 4.16. While the item V4 (I feel appreciated and connected at my workplace) presented lowest mean value of 2.72.

## Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The exploratory factor analysis was used to extract the factors by using SPSS 18. In this study the ratio of sample size to variable is approximately 20:1. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was conducted to identify the patterns in raw data. The results seem to be signifying the patterns in dataset ( $\chi^2 = 627.56$ ,  $df = 66$ ,  $p < .001$ ). To check the sampling adequacy Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was used with a test value of 0.69. In the exploratory factor analysis principal component analysis extraction method was used. The Varimax with Kaiser Normalization was used as rotation method. The explored model explained 61.96 percent of total variance with 4 latent factors having Eigen values  $\geq 1$ . The variables are showing communalities from 0.49 to 0.73. The results of EFA are given below (see Table 3).

Table 3

Results of Factor Analysis (N = 243)

Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>				
Item	Factors			
	Meaningful Work	Meaningful Life	Interpersonal Relationship	Working Environment
V1	.614			
V2	.736			
V3	.786			
V4	.781			
V5		.760		
V6		.660		
V7		.711		
V8			.731	
V9			.672	
V10			.554	
V11				.832
V12				.607

<sup>a</sup>Rotation Converged in 7 Iterations.

The four extracted factors were (1) Meaningful work (2) Meaning to life (3) Interpersonal relations (4) Working environment.

- **Meaningful Work:** The first factor of the model explained 21.24 percent of variance with Eigen value of 2.54. The factor includes the variable representing recognition to self through teaching job, development avenues, autonomy and accomplishments through job. The variables loadings were from 0.61 to 0.78.
- **Meaning to Life:** The second factor of the model explained 14.57 percent of variance and had Eigen value of 1.74. The emotional stability, positivity and leadership are variables giving meaning to individual teacher's life at workplace. The loadings were from 0.660 to 0.76.
- **Interpersonal Relations:** The third explored factor represented individual employee's relationship with other staff members. It explained the 14.12 percent of variance with Eigen value of 1.69. The variables of influencing other, competition and responsibilities constitute interpersonal relationship. The factor loadings were 0.55 to 0.73.

- **Working Environment:** The fourth factor of the model constitute other's influence and working environment. It explained the 12.01 percent of variance with loading of 0.60 and 0.83.

The EFA signifies the underlying factor structure of perceived workplace spirituality the hypothesis H1 accepted. A set of four latent variables representing work, life, relationship and working environment were explored and used for structure validation.

## Workplace Spirituality Factor Structure Validation (PLS-SEM)

The structural model was validated by using PLS-SEM 2.0. The factor loadings, T-value, latent variables index value and path coefficients were determined for second order structural model of workplace spirituality. The validity and reliability of model were tested in terms of average variance extracted (AVE); composite reliability (CR) and communality values (see Table 4). The statistical values of AVE and CR for all factors represented a valid and reliable factor structure in the structural model.

Table 4

*Factors Reliability and Validity Statistics*

Factors	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability (CR)	Communality
Meaningful Work	0.5955	0.8547	0.5955
Meaningful Life	0.5364	0.7784	0.5364
Interpersonal Relations	0.4798	0.7282	0.4798
Working Environment	0.5996	0.7348	0.5996

The bootstrapping was performed to analyze the significance of factor loadings of formative constructs. The T-value is given in Table 5. PLS algorithm was used to calculate the path coefficients and latent variables index value for structural model. The factor meaningful work represented highest path coefficient ( $\beta = 0.687$ ) with a factor loading of 0.620. While working environment represented lowest value of path coefficient ( $\beta = 0.159$ ) with a factor loading of 0.199 (see Table 5). The Workplace spirituality structural model is presented below (see Figure1).

Table 5

*Path Coefficient, Factor Loadings and T-Value of Workplace Spirituality Model (PLS-SEM)*

Factors	Factor Loading	T-Value	Factor Index Value	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )
Meaningful Work	0.620	10.363	3.734	0.687
Meaningful Life	0.292	3.415	3.488	0.251
Interpersonal Relations	0.326	5.510	3.191	0.292
Working Environment	0.199	2.917	3.564	0.159



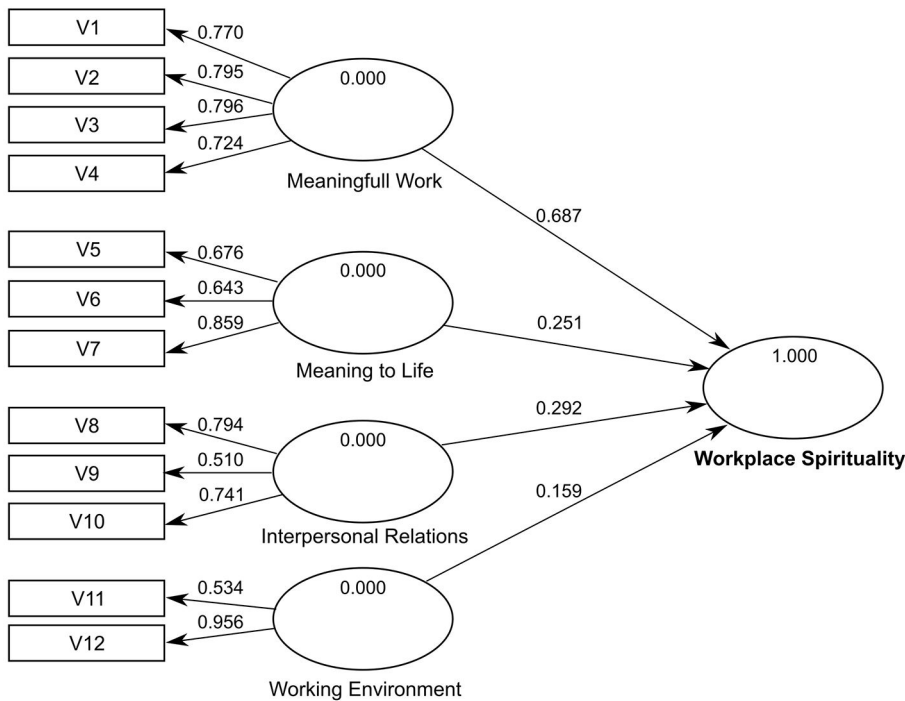


Figure 1. Workplace Spirituality Structural Model.

The results from Figure 1 are clearly showing meaningful work as a main element of workplace spirituality followed by interpersonal relations at workplace. The teachers perceived spirituality at workplace by deriving meaning out of their work roles in classrooms by self-recognition through teaching students and secondly by interacting with fellow teachers to generate sense of shared responsibility at workplace. The leadership, stability and security in work roles of teachers are generating meaningful life at workplace. The working environment was the least contributing factor in the study but showing a significant impact on the workplace spirituality of teachers. The results from Table 4 and Table 5 clearly indicated that hypothesis H2 was accepted and the model fitted the data. The factors contributed significantly different toward the perceived workplace spirituality in schools. The teachers identified their work and meaning drawn from their work as a main force contributing toward workplace spirituality.

## Discussion

### Future Scope of Study

The successful application of spirituality at workplace is promising the reinvention of charisma and values in the classrooms. This will not only help the teachers to overcome problems and challenge they are facing but also help the whole educational system. Adoption and transfer of spiritual values to classrooms will help to generate teachers' behavior full of human values; supporting the behavior and rewarding the outcome will lead to generate Spirituality at workplace though meaningful work and healthy work environment. The future researchers can check the relationship at outcomes level.



## Conclusions

In the competitive world, the workplace spirituality is providing real competitive edge to the organizations (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Regarding the outcomes of workplace spirituality, it is benefiting at individual, group and organizational levels. Workplace spirituality is not only helping individuals to find meaning of life at workplace but also increasing the organization growth and development possibilities. In the organizational context workplace spirituality benefits individual managerial effectiveness and extend these benefits to overall organizational effectiveness (Pawar, 2008). In Indian context the values and virtues teachers carry into their profession are reflection of their cultural heritage. Consequently, the roots of Indian philosophy are deeply embedded in the Vedas and Upanishads. Although, the Guru-Shishya parampara is limited to few traditional arts and disciplines of music, dance and other traditional art forms in India (Chatterjea, 1996; Prickett, 2007). In other disciplines where modern education with latest technological advancements is posing problems and challenges to teachers not only at student level but also at personal level. All these situations are leading to psychological separation of teachers from their workplace. Modern organizations are working in a dynamic environment. Globalization and technology advancements are putting immense pressure on organizations from all fronts. To cope up with these challenges organizations need to attract and retain high performing manpower (Fry, Matherly, Whittington, & Winston, 2007). This needs to create work environment in the organization that provide meaningfulness and opportunities to employees. The study clearly provided evidence that the meaningful work, meaning to life, interpersonal relationship and working environment contributing significantly toward individuals' and organizational growth. Pfeffer (2010) identified four dimensions that employees and other people seek in the organization (1) work role as per their interest that allow them to grow, provide sense of competence and perfection in their work (2) meaningful work that provide sense of accomplishment (3) positive interpersonal relationship with co-workers (4) proper alignment of different work and life roles. The present study identified the meaningful work through self-recognition, development and growth opportunities, autonomy and connectedness at workplace. In case of life meaning teachers perceived their life meaning in term of emotional stability, motivation, satisfaction and coordination at workplace. The positive attitude and sharing of responsibility resulted in coordinational relationship for fulfilling the social needs of teachers at workplace. While the environmental attributes were defined by openness and flexibility at workplace. The study showed that 'Spirituality' as a practical concept in organizations is able to answer all these assumptions and questions in a simple way. Applications of spirituality at individual and organizational level will result in the high performance, well-being, job satisfaction, higher engagement and commitment. Spirituality at workplace will give a healthy workplace for educators to overcome job stress and job burnout. The happiness, honesty and optimism through workplace spirituality will lead to more balanced work-life. The application of workplace spirituality in Indian education system leads to generate better workplaces that will attract, retain and develop best talent by providing them meaningful work, meaningful life, and healthy working environment.

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The author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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