



Workplace Spirituality in Healthcare Sector: A Conceptual Model

Shilpi Kumar^{1*}, Akansha Mer²

¹ Research Scholar, Banasthali Vidyapith, Rajasthan, India.

² Assistant Professor, Banasthali Vidyapith, Rajasthan, India

* Corresponding Author: Shilpi Kumar

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Abstract

Workplace spirituality has gained popularity in the recent years due to the changing work environment. The rising stress at the workplace has posed a challenge for the organizations to tackle with it. The rapidly changing atmosphere at the workplace has served as a motivating factor the adoption of workplace spirituality by the organizations. The goal of the current study is to propose a conceptual model of workplace spirituality in the healthcare industry and examine the various perspectives from which it has been studied. Theoretical and empirical support is emerging on how workplace spirituality impacts individual and organizational outcomes. Therefore, drawing on existing literature, a conceptual framework has been proposed to illustrate the role of workplace spirituality in healthcare organizations. The study indicates that.

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Introduction

Health epitomizes human development. The healthcare industry, or medical industry, is an extensive and multifarious sector focusing on improving human health by providing quality care. It includes numerous activities starting from pharmaceuticals to medical devices manufacturing to medical service delivery, including hospitals, clinics, and other allied activities such as medical tourism, health insurance, and biotechnology. This sector is growing at a rapid pace due to globalized expansion. Many MNCs have entered the market with their various healthcare products and services. It is a major influencer of economic growth, generating employment revenue. This industry also attracts investment in research and development, leading to innovation and technological revolution. It also contributes significantly to the national income of the nations.

Healthcare employees are burdened with intense responsibilities of ensuring quality care to patients focusing on moral behaviour. Medical field is people oriented, purpose driven which depends on emotional support (sense of community). However, a number of job demands are faced by healthcare workers in carrying out their responsibilities in this purpose driven field (Zu *et al.*, 2022). These job demands are time pressure, heavy workload, emotionally charged circumstances, feeling of isolation, ethical dilemma, multitasking demands (Taipale, 2024) ^[10] and workplace ostracism (Manninen *et al.*, 2023) ^[12]. These pressures cause emotional tiredness and burnout, negatively impacting mental well-being of the professionals and sense of fulfilment (Yamakawa *et al.* 2025) ^[11]. In light of this, workplace spirituality as defined by Ashmos and Duchon (2000), as “a meaningful work, having a sense of the community and alignment with organizational values creating a system for promoting healthcare professional’s mental health”. Workplace spirituality is a powerful tool helping employees in finding deeper meaning in their work, resulting in patient-focused and quality care while maintaining the profession’s ethics by navigating moral quandaries with ease (Moez *et al.* 2024) ^[15]. A spiritually enriched workplace boosts compassion and a sense of community by diminishing workplace ostracism. Resilience and mental well-being are enhanced by workplace spirituality (Mer, 2025) ^[14]. Studies have shown that employees practising workplace spirituality are more resilient and are less prone to stress and burnout (Mer & Viridi, 2023) ^[13]. Pawar (2009) ^[31] states that, Workplace spirituality improves work attitudes like organisational commitment and job involvement (Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Rigo & Cunha, 2008) ^[30, 34] and these work attitudes are important for boosting organisational effectiveness and productivity, and in lowering turnover intention and absenteeism.

Engaged healthcare workers improve the quality of patient care, and this can be achieved by fulfilling the mission (meaningful work) and interpersonal relationships (sense of community). These two strategies are the pillars of Workplace spirituality (Fry *et al.*, 2011)^[5].

The story of “workplace spirituality” in healthcare began in the tenure of Florence Nightingale (Reinert & Koeni 2013)^[37], but formally it gained its independent identity in the 1990s (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz; Duchon & Ploughman, 2005)^[18]. But it gained attention significantly in this area. Initial investigation revolved around individual spirituality and holistic care of patients (Batcheller *et al.*, 2013,) but gradually it shifted towards other dimensions due to changing work environment (Kerfoot, 1995; Mitroff & Duchon 1999)^[30]. Workplace spirituality has three facets i.e. “meaningful work, sense of community and inner life (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003)^[17] and acknowledge at three levels. Inner life is at individual level whereas meaningful work, sense of community and alignment between values are at group and organizational levels”.

The “inner life factor of Workplace spirituality is inherent to humans and is quite personal and varies individual to individual and is represented as emotional bonding, well-being, energy, commitment, satisfaction, energy and physical sensation. In the same way, transcendence is also an individual experience made possible by a culture-supported organisational work process (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Skrypnik & Kinjerski, 2004)^[17, 24].

Another important dimension of workplace spirituality is interconnectedness, representing the work community supporting teamwork and strengthening individual spiritual identities (Awan & Sitwat, 2014; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Albuquerque *et al.*, 2014). This “deep relationship is between their inner selves and inner selves of other employees”. The emotional, spiritual and mental bonds that exists between the team members shows the level of spirituality. The base of community lies in the stronger sense of interconnectedness among employees including concern, freedom of speech and support and for achieving this employee must have a sense of community at a broader sense and treat other colleagues and patients, clients with care and compassion (Arnold *et al.*, 2005)^[16].

Meaningful work demonstrates doing work without any intention of monetary gains and treating work as worship. This results in better organisational outcomes, which improve the quality of patient care (Milliman *et al.* 2003; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Mer & Singh, 2025)^[29, 14]. The key component of workplace spirituality is “having a deep sense of meaning and purpose in one’s work”, this allows “employees to get involved in their day to day work” in a harmonious manner with his or her own motive, desires and truths which adds significance to both of their personal and professional lives. The quest for selfless service and personal fulfilment are associated with meaningful work only. The work is considered as a ‘vocation’ or ‘calling’ in creating “greater purpose in the workplace”.

Another component of “workplace spirituality is alignment with organizational values”. When employees feel that their own beliefs coincide with the mission and objectives of the organization, exhibits workplace spirituality. This alignment demonstrates that “one’s purpose at work is larger than self”, allowing them to recognise their contribution to the society. If a patient is treated well, it not only improves patient's health but also that of family and in this way it strengthens

society's general health. Alignment addresses the values and the integrity possessed by the managers and the employees. The managers and the employees should have the “values incorporating welfare of the stakeholders and should have conscience”. An organization should prioritise benefit of its customers and employees and larger contribution to the society beyond simply making profit. Thus, if an individual working in an organization where there is a mismatch between mission and objectives of the company with self-values, then it becomes a challenge for the individual to work in it.

Thus, the essence of workplace spirituality lies in the notion when people perceive their work as spiritual path, find their profession worthwhile, feeling a “sense of belonging to the community and alignment of self-values with organizational values”. Workplace spirituality is not about “religion or holiness” but it is about developing a relationship of compassion and ethics. Numerous studies have been conducted in this field in the past twenty years.

Employers today want their workers to be creative, productive, enthusiastic, happy, and satisfied. A happy employee contributes positively to the organization. Previous research has shown that by applying workplace spirituality, stress is minimized (Milliman *et al.* 2003)^[29] because in difficult times workplace spirituality acts as a means of coping and gives inner strength to handle stress (Cash *et al.* 2000). Employees happiness, satisfaction, work life balance is enhanced by spirituality at work (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2004)^[18]. High level of burnout, stress and mental issues have been experienced in healthcare professionals. Because of the stressful work environment necessity of workplace spirituality arises so the health organizations must recognise and implement the workplace spirituality. It is crucial in healthcare sector because the patients who suffer illness and pain need care with bonds of love, emotion and compassion. Workplace spirituality has gained importance due to stressful work environments, such as long working hours, heavy workloads, over expectation, and over supervision. This creates a challenge for the organizations to make with environment stress free and happier. Workplace spirituality results in enhanced motivation, productivity, conflict resolution, individual resilience, ethical behaviour, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, collective harmony, teamwork and communication. A high degree of motivation, creativity, long term efficiency, balanced and comprehensive performance can be achieved by implementing workplace spirituality in the organizations (Milliman *et al.* 2018)^[29].

The objective of the study is to outline the occurrence of workplace spirituality in the medical field along with the viewpoints to characterize the workplace spirituality in medicine. This study provides the means to augment that workplace spirituality improve work outcomes, boost workplace happiness, low turnover, and raise productivity.

With such an important role of workplace spirituality in healthcare, comprehension of the antecedents is relevant.

Research Methodology

The research utilizes the exploratory research design and outlines the existing literature, citing workplace spirituality practices across the globe in a healthcare context. The article reviews ten articles published in scholarly journals to review their findings on how it has developed over time. The table below highlights the aim of the study and the results of the study with the country and year of publication.

Literature review

Table 1: Studies exploring workplace spirituality in healthcare

Author (Year)	Country	Aim of the study	Results	
Kinjerski & Skrypnek (2008) ^[26]	Canada	Test the effectiveness of workplace spirituality programme on organizational commitment, (reducing turnover and absenteeism) and work satisfaction	These programme enhances work satisfaction ,organizational commitment by reducing turnover and absenteeism.	Organizational outcomes
McKee <i>et al.</i> (2011) ^[28]	Canada	Test the relationship between workplace spirituality, transformational leadership, and individual well being	Transformational leadership impacts workplace spirituality and eventually individual well-being.	Employee well being
Kazemipour & Amin (2012) ^[22]	Iran	Explore the association between workplace spirituality, OCB and affective organization commitment	Workplace spirituality positively impacts OCB and affective organization commitment	Organizational outcomes
Albuquerque <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Portugal	Influence of workplace spirituality on organizational performance.	Workplace spirituality enhances teamwork which in turn increases organizational performance.	Organizational outcomes
Awan & Sitwat(2014)	Pakistan	Explore the relationship between “workplace spirituality, self-esteem and psychological well-being”	Workplace spirituality influences “psychological well-being through self-esteem”	Employee well being
Reimer Kirkham <i>et al.</i> (2012) ^[36]	Canada	Explore “workplace spirituality and leadership in scholarly writing and leadership practices”	Leadership values of healthcare professionals contribute to organizational culture enhancing workplace spirituality	Organizational outcomes
Wagner <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Canada	Examine the association between physical therapy and occupational therapy practitioner’s perception of resonant leadership, and psychological empowerment than experience to workplace spirituality, job satisfaction and OC.	Workplace spirituality is a strong predictor of job satisfaction and OC. Resonant leadership positively impacts workplace spirituality enhancing job satisfaction and OC.	Organizational outcomes.
Muhammad & Elashram (2022)	Egypt	Examine the impact of spiritual leadership on workplace spirituality	Spiritual leadership positively affect workplace spirituality	Employee well being
Basker & Indradevi (2023) ^[1]	India	Explore the relationship between “workplace spirituality and employee job attitudes”.	Positive association between workplace spirituality and employee job attitude (job satisfaction, OCB, engagement)	Employee well being
Ali & Hasan (2021) ^[39]	Pakistan	Investigate the relationship between ethical climate, and workplace spirituality	Positive association between workplace spirituality and ethical climate	Employee well-being.

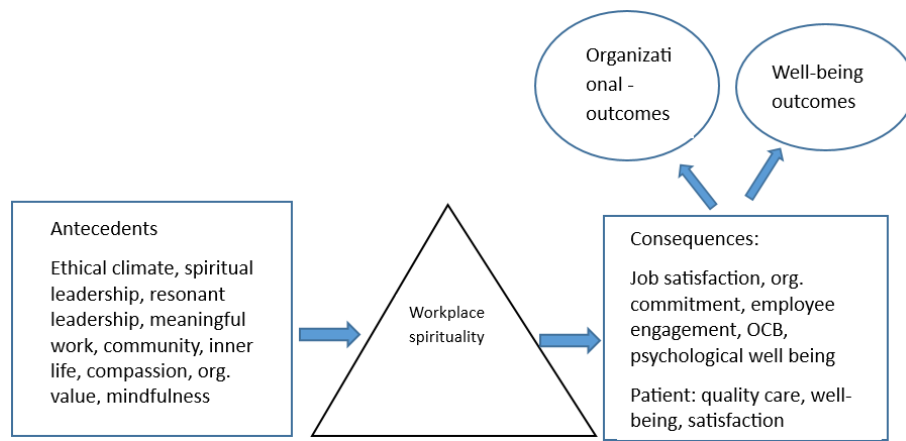
Discussion

“Workplace spirituality is a buzzword” and cannot be refuted that it has gained significance in the last decade due to growing stress in the work environment.

This research is an attempt to frame a model which serves the following goals i) Determining the organizational factors which influences workplace spirituality ii) Describe “workplace spirituality as a concept and as a phenomenon” in healthcare settings. It is an undeniable reality that workplace spirituality has drawn attention in the last few decades. (Casey, 2004; Fry, 2003; Driver, 2005; Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002) ^[5]. So, the purpose of the study is to explore the precursors and consequences of workplace spirituality in healthcare settings. What advantages does it provide in terms of a joyful and pleasant work environment? With adequate literature support, a theoretical model has been framed as shown in Figure-1

The themes which surfaced from this research by evaluating the studies can be categorised into two groups i.e., well-being outcomes and organizational outcomes with an effect on the

healthcare sector. Organizational outcomes represent the group and organizational level of workplace spirituality. Sense of community and meaningful work are crucial elements of workplace spirituality. Both these factors originate from organizational culture where Workplace spirituality enhances teamwork (sense of community), teamwork enables adoption of workplace spirituality, and workplace spirituality in turn improves organizational performance (Albuquerque *et al.* 2021), organizational commitment, and OCB (Kazemipour & Amin 2012) ^[22]. Well-being outcomes such as happiness and job satisfaction (Ismael & Oodesh 2023; Hanafi *et al.* 2021) represent the individual level of workplace spirituality. This will inculcate a feeling of dedication in healthcare professionals in providing high-quality treatment to patients. Healthcare management has a significant impact on organizational culture, which is a key component of workplace spirituality. Workplace spirituality determines “self-esteem-enhancing psychological well-being” (Awan & Sitwat, 2014).



Source: Developed for this research

Fig 1: Conceptual framework of the study

Recommendations

On the basis of conceptual framework framed in the current study, an organization should take following steps to enhance spirituality at workplace:

- The organization should introduce workplace spirituality in the workplace by some orientation programme and also make them understand with clarity that workplace spirituality is not any religion specific involving holy activity.
- A culture should be maintained by the organization where employee happiness is preferred because a “A happy worker is a productive worker”.
- For fostering sense of community feeling among employees informal communication should be encouraged.
- Mission and objectives of the organization must be clearly defined so that the trust is built among employees.
- Organizations must show spirituality through their ethical standards and values.
- Meditation, pranayama, silence (mauna) recreational activities should be made mandatory in organizations to reduce stress levels.
- Recruitment process should include value based hiring with an alignment with organizational values.
- Workshops and group discussion should be organised focussing on spiritual concepts.
- Internal rewards and acknowledgement should be provided for compassionate and ethical behaviour to employees.
- Mindfulness exercise should be encouraged in the organizations to foster spirituality in the workplace.

Conclusion

This study provides healthcare professionals information about workplace spirituality to incorporate it on an organizational level as well as an individual level. It also helps healthcare managers to improve leadership qualities in encouraging workplace spirituality. Healthcare professionals can use this study's information in self-reflection and to identify strategies for applying workplace spirituality in organizations. Although workplace spirituality is a personal experience but the employees want the workplace to exhibit workplace ideals because the workplace spirituality facets such as meaningful work, alignment with organizational

values emerges from workplace culture which is influenced by the management. Working together for a common goal predicts well-being and self-esteem which boosts productivity at work.

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