

## SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORK PLACE AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE EFFICIENCY OF MANAGEMENT

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### Abstract

In the modern word, successful organizations have undertaken new values and approaches, and due to these values, they have achieved more morality and success. People are also deeply interested in embracing morality, not only in their personal lives, but also in their career and social life. When the society is packed with technology, communication, complication and instability, people show a tendency toward morality to fill the vacuity appeared in their lives, not only within their personal lives, but also within their career life where they spend a part of their time. Encouraging morality in work has some advantages for organizations. Morality at work results in creativity, honesty and trust, self-success, organization, commitment, and better performance of the organization. When someone feels committed to the organization s/he works for is loyal to moral and human values and respects its employees, s/he feels a kind of adaptation with the values of the organization and works for those values. The more a person is committed to morality, the more his/her creativity, mental and spiritual justice, moral and social justice, and managerial and ruling justice will be. People who have values based on theism, believe in the divine origin of the human being and in the afterlife and consider themselves as responsible and answerable before God, their existence society, and the world. This paper, in addition to giving a definition of morality, has studied morality at work from the viewpoint of different theorists, and the essence of morality from the viewpoint of religion, naturalism and existentialism, and its correlation with important managerial and organizational variables.

**Keywords:** Spirituality, Justice, Naturalism, Religious Viewpoint, Existentialism

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### **1. Introduction:**

Some recent Papers reflect the increasing attention of the world to the spirituality and learning it. Social contemporary researchers described their observations in the performed researches like this: over 50 million people are undertaking values and new approaches in their workplace now and are more spiritual and successful due to these values. The world scientific circles' attention to spirituality has led to running courses in spirituality area in management and economics departments of different universities. But what is the reason of paying attention to spirituality in the workplace?

An optimistic answer to this question can be this way: when technology, communications, complexity and instability are common in society, people seek spirituality for filling the existing gap in their life, not only in their personal life but also in their business life, namely where they spend most of their time. But, by considering investment culture governing modern communities, one can answer to this question in another way and argue that encouraging spirituality at work has advantages for the organization.

## **2- Spirituality and its importance in contemporary organizations**

It seems that the nature of work has essentially been changed. The change in the nature of work also has led to a change in the nature of organizations. People seek some meaning in work that is beyond mere economic exchanges among isolated or independent individuals. People are looking for a way to link business life to spiritual life and should have a common viewpoint and objective beyond money function for cooperating with each other in society (1).

According to Pulmer (2001), spirituality has been increasing in working environments. To emphasize his point of view, he says big companies like Intel, Wal mart, Xerox, Ford, Nike and Harley Davidson has supported spirituality in their work places. If companies and organizations meet their members' needs so that people have freedom to explain their spirituality, they can be more successful than before. Managers and employees must facilitate the transferring trend to this new paradigm through giving more meaning to relations in the work place (2). Spirituality is an element which exists in the nature of employee and is an integral part of an employee. Whether a business pays attention to the spiritual aspect of human or ignores spiritual principles, it can not destroy spirituality in human (3).

Furthermore spirituality has increasingly been under attention in organizations by (A) managers (B) staff and (C) researchers who are considering necessary communications with employees, customers and society (2).

Organizations softly changes from mere small social and economical environments to places for development of spirituality. Fundamental changes are made in the workplace and spirituality will be one of the main issues in this regard. There are many useful reasons to study the relationship of spirituality and management. One is the effect of spirituality on functions and managerial behavior and another is the perspective of work along with meaning. Spirituality at work has many advantages for management of employees and organization. Spirituality changes the nature of work. Individuals seek meaning in their work; they seek a way to link their business life to a spiritual one and to

be compatible with an insight and a goal that is beyond making money. Today managers are guides which contribute to create meaning and goal for their employees. By enjoying spirituality, managers not only can improve the workplace or organization, but also can reach a relaxation or inner satisfaction with a long happiness and provide an environment to provide co-workers and their friends with this happiness and inner satisfaction. So, organizations which provide employees with opportunities to develop opportunities, are successful than those who don't provide such opportunities (3).

Spirituality affects organizational performance positively. Creativity increase, team performance satisfaction and organizational commitment have been reported in the organizations which try to improve the spiritual development of their members (4).

Providing with spirituality, managers will not only improve efficiency in the workplace or organization, but also more importantly reach a relaxation and inner satisfaction along with a long happiness and provide an environment to be used by co-workers or their co-workers' friends. Spirituality in organizations has increased the employees' success and has led to self- flowering and job satisfaction in them. Therefore a spiritual organization improves honesty, confidence, respect, responsibility and personal stability in the workplace in addition to raising employees' satisfaction level (3).

Some consider spirituality as an internal part of humans and say spirituality is something beyond religious rules and is related to inner self-recognition which is formed regardless of people's religions (intrinsic view of spirituality). Although there is a power discourse which is derived from the soul of each person, but at the same time, this view includes a person's feeling toward his/her or others' work, so that followers of this view, have defined spirituality as a main feeling of a person, relation with himself, others and the whole world (5).

In most cases, spirituality has interaction with high human values which are referred to in the following: belief in God, loving others, perseverance, motion, endurance, piety, humility, trust in God, manhood, service, kindness, respect to

creatures, self- confidence, hoping future, acceptance, optimism, benevolence, satisfaction, thanksgiving, brevity, honesty, economy, lack of dependence, devotion, sacrifice, limiting the aspirations, loyalty (6).

### **3. Spirituality and leadership**

Spiritual leadership by motivating employees and making cultural backgrounds based on human values, educates active employees with high efficiency, committed and motivated but, another definition which approximately is more comprehensive than other definitions, has defined spirituality as follows: An attempt to raise sensitivity toward self, others and natural environment that is always looking for unity among these sensitivities and give direction toward happiness in order to be a perfect man (7).

The spiritual leadership theory has been developed based on inner motivation which is a combination of perspective, belief in achieving the goal, friendship and spiritual survival. The aim of spiritual leadership is paying attention to essential needs of followers in order to provide them with a spiritual survival. Such a leadership makes the employees understand the real meaning of their job and pay respect to their job (meaningfulness). Leadership also gives them this feeling that their job is important in view of organization and other co-workers (membership). These leaders provide employees with common point of view and values and make them powerful as a team so that their welfare level, health, profits and organizational commitment will be increased.

Popularity of spirituality in workplace is a tool that guarantees the survival of organizations against current uncertain environment. In fact, the spiritual leader makes the perspective of the future of organization unique and influences employees in a way that they believe in joining the perspective of organization and will be hopeful about the future of organization. He also increases the inner motivation of employees for more work. On the other hand, popularity of humanism makes people pay deep attention to themselves and their past life and have a good communication with others. In fact, spiritual leader is a person who by using values, attitudes and behaviors that are required for inner

motivation of a person and others, provides the organization members with spiritual survival.

Wherever they work, employees seek something beyond materialism. They are seeking meaningful and hopeful work and asking for making their life balanced. Organizations are faced with trained employees who are looking for a meaningful and purposeful work and develop workplaces with such qualities. Spirituality at work is an experience of bilateral communication and trust among people who contribute in a work process which is made by optimism and individual good will and leads to making a motivational organizational culture and increasing general performance which finally leads to permanent organizational development (8). Spirituality in the workplace is to know this fact that mutual communications, respect and recognition are not limited to ourselves and our private environment, but also concern with all persons we are working with on a systematic or random basis which not only results in more proper business conditions, but also leads to investment return growth. In the biggest part of literature, spirituality at work, is a tendency which if started by organization leaders, It will be executed successfully. Expressions like spiritual, ethical and reliable leadership all represent ways which are shown to create a spiritual and thought environment in the workplace as a responsibility of a leader. In fact, spirituality in the workplace, describes employees' experiences that their work is satisfying, meaningful and purposeful. Also experiencing spirituality in the workplace is along with increase of creativity, honesty, trust and commitment at work.

#### **4. Spirituality and its effect on organization performance and management**

Researchers believe that encouraging spirituality in the workplace would be profitable for the organization. Organizations can benefit from many advantages in their performance by using spiritual attitudes. Performed researches about spirituality has mentioned some of these advantages. Insight and creativity, honesty and trust, individual self- flowering and commitment can be mentioned as the most important advantages of spirituality in organizations (5).

Spirituality can help individuals to expand their domain of knowledge. It can increase their findings about natural frontiers of human knowledge and also their insight and creativity. The raised knowledge and boosted insight also in turn results in creativity growth. Most of spirituality-based organizations emphasize honesty and confidence as the basis of their work since establishment and these elements could be clearly observed in most commercial transactions when economy is in standstill and organizations cannot do their duties well. Trust among employees and management will play an important role in the organization performance. Trust can help to increase the organization performance through accelerating decision- making process and to improve the relationship between managers and employees.

The development of spirituality at work causes the feeling of maturity in the employees and this feeling will result in individual self- flowering in a higher degree and in turn leads to performance increase. Islam emphasizes its importance, so that we can mention working as the main source of individual self- flowering and personality independence. Briefly, spirituality is raised as a new competitive advantage in today's business and a spiritual organization can increase its performance and profit through spiritual development (3).

Spirituality can increase the commitment of employees to organization. Organizational commitment is indicative of this concept that organizations are looking for affection among employees and their work in organization. We can look at organizational commitment from two dimensions which include commitment of employees to organization and commitment of organization to customer. Commitment of employees to organization is an emotional commitment in which an employee feels dependence on organization and moves in the direction of organization goals (5).

In addition to these differences and similarities in definitions and in a general view, we can divide spirituality into three groups: spirituality from the natural point of view, spirituality from the religious point of view and spirituality from the existentialist point of view (5).

### **Nature- oriented point of view**

This point of view believes that spirituality is a concept which emanates from human insight and understanding. According to this, Goilleri says spirituality "is our inner self- consciousness" and spiritual concept rooted in something beyond our planned values and beliefs. Defining spirituality as a concept beyond religious laws and rituals is among the main characteristics of this point of view. In confirmation of this concept, Coraber (2001) believes that "spirituality avoids strict and formal reasoning of religion". The spirituality is not owned by a special group, church or religious party and it is gradual and implicitly refers to looking for feeling of inner satisfaction in human which may be done personally and without attention to his/her religion.

### **Religious point of view**

Bruce (1996) defines religion as follows: A set of beliefs, behaviors and customs that is based on a divine power's existence with unlimited optional range. Based on this point of view, defining spirituality can be different in different religions. For example Christians believe that spirituality "is a call for work". Nilver (1996) says "our work is a contribution to creation power of God which is a divine order. So working is a great duty". Indians believe that spirituality is "doing work or having the highest degree of love, interest and devotion". Trying to achieve a goal is the most important principle of Indians at work. They leave the result to God. In the Buddhist point of view, hard work, interest and devotion are tools to adjust the personal and business life of a person which finally result in the richness of the contents of life and work. The Islamic point of view about working has been mentioned in a charter named "Islamic ethics of work". Islam calls its followers for more commitment to organization, encourages cooperation and giving and receiving advice and emphasizes values like generosity and justice in the workplace.

### **Existentialism point of view**

Concepts including "looking for the meaning of work we are doing" are put in this group. Some questions which are expressed in this view are as follows:



1. Why do we do this work?
2. What is the meaning of the work we are doing?
3. To what direction does this work lead me?

The importance of these questions is determined by the problem that people are busy with repetitive and boring works. The lack of meaning at work can lead to self- alienation, frustration and finally decrease of profits.

The following picture shows how organizations can use spirituality advantages and increase their performance regardless of inner religious variety.

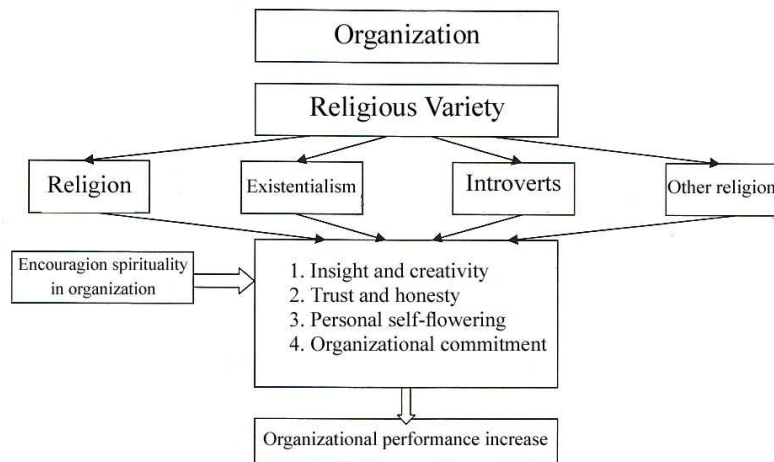


Chart2-The result of encouraging spirituality in organization (5)

## 5- Dimensions of Spirituality in the work place

Ashmas & Duchon have recently determined seven dimensions regarding spirituality in their research (2000). We choose and examine three of these dimensions due to their importance in comparison to other performed researches. These three dimensions are as follows: having goal in work or "meaningful work" (Personal level), "sense of community" (group level) and "Alignment with organization values" (organization level).

### 5-1- Meaningful work

One of the essential dimensions of spirituality in organization is a sense of meaningfulness and having purpose in work. This dimension shows the way of employees' alignment with their daily work in a personal level. Spirituality in the workplace in a personal level includes assumptions which lies in the nature of a person and has the form of a tendency for involving in activities which

gives more meaning to his/her life. From this dimension, spirituality in organizations not only results in a situation in which working is interesting and challenging, but also leads to an enthusiasm for looking for deeper meaning and goal in work.

### **5-2- Sense of Community**

This dimension of spirituality in work occurs at the group level and emphasizes agreement among employees and their co-workers. Sense of community in work is based on the belief that people often see themselves linked with others and also there is a kind of relationship among nature of people. The basis of this community is the existence of a deep sense among individuals like a sense of support and protecting the co-workers.

This dimension of spirituality includes mental communication and spiritual sense among employees in teams and organizational groups (Neal & Bennett). Freiberg & Milliman exemplify airline agency of Southwestern America for determining this dimension. The strong organizational culture governing this agency is such a powerful culture that employees of this agency consider themselves as a big family and feel commitment toward co-workers and families of each other and also to customers of agency and support each other. Imam Ali (one of the great Islamic leaders that helped the prophet Muhammad in establishing Islamic thoughts and frameworks) also invites his followers to intimacy and support. He said in a speech to his followers before starting a war: Every one of you who feels inner encouragement in himself when meeting enemy and sees fear in one of his brothers, should defend his brother against the enemy due to the dominance and brevity which God bestowed him, as he defends himself (9). He also mentions the importance of having common goal like this: "If someone is not in the way toward his goal, others' tricks will defeat him" (9).

### **5-3- Alignment with organizational values**

The third aspect of spirituality in an organization is a sense of alignment between the personal values and the mission and goals of organization (10). Alignment here occurs when a person feels the organization has high ethical values and pays attention to its employees. In this case, the person finds oneself compatible with organization values and tries in moving toward the direction of organization's goals. Malthus in explaining the importance of alignment believes that: "A person should not work for an organization which does not share its values". Imam Ali emphasizes that governmental agents should pay attention to their subordinates (in a letter to one of his commanders): "One of the rights your subordinates have is to help them and adjust their affairs" (9)

### **6- Conclusion**

Spirituality in the workplace and spiritual leadership can be considered as a minor and elementary part of the organizational development process. Researches show that spirituality affects organizational performance positively. Creativity, satisfaction, team performance and organizational commitment growth in organizations which are trying to improve spiritual development of its members has been reported. Employees expect to develop organizations which lead them to meaning or maturity. In fact, the supporters of spirituality in the workplace say all who enter the organization have unique characteristics and spirits, but all are looking for high morale and solidarity in the work place. In this respect, the role of leaders is motivating employees by using spiritual perspective and creating cultural grounds based on human values than to educate active, profitable, committed and motivated employee. Researches generally show that the more spiritual agencies are 400 or 500 percent more profitable and have a better performance. In this competitive and challenging world which big companies fight for reaching more profits and small companies fight for survival, recognizing and using spiritual tools which is cheaper than the material tools is considered a competitive and important advantage. In this respect, we can take more steps and even say that the life of organizations depends on spirituality.

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