



## Examining the Influence of Workplace Spirituality on Organizational Commitment: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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### Abstract

Management scholars' heightened attention toward exploring organizational commitment has unveiled several novel antecedents contributing to the cultivation of affective, normative, and continuance commitment among employees. One frequently cited antecedent is workplace spirituality. This paper analyzes insights from a systematic review of 30 empirical studies conducted over the past 15 years across diverse industries, examining the association between organizational commitment and workplace spirituality. Recent studies affirm a positive correlation between workplace spirituality and affective commitment, as established by various researchers. While normative commitment exhibits a comparatively weaker linkage to Spirituality, there is a discernible positive trend among employees in Asian countries characterized by collectivist cultures, such as India. The study also underscores that different dimensions of workplace spirituality affect employee commitment to their tasks. Moreover, the research identifies a bidirectional relationship between these variables and their subcomponents. This paper provides a concise overview of the research developments in organizational commitment and workplace spirituality, shedding light on the potential for further research endeavors that can advance the knowledge base in this domain.

**Keywords:** Workplace Spirituality, Organizational Commitment

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of organization-employee fit is a compelling theme in contemporary management discussions. Organizations are revisiting their HR policies to address the higher-order needs outlined in Maslow's hierarchy. Notably, there is a noticeable paradigm shift in job design, transitioning from fulfilling monetary and physical needs to satisfying psychological needs.

An organization is a collective effort wherein individuals come together to achieve a common objective. The pivotal component of any organization is its people—its employees. In the organizational structure, a group of employees orchestrates accomplishing tasks through collaboration with their peers. This cascaded delegation of responsibilities is instrumental in the realization of organizational objectives. Consequently, the sincerity and commitment demonstrated by employees towards their organization and work significantly impact the organization's destiny.

This literature review seeks to explore studies that have examined the relationship between various dimensions of workplace spirituality and organizational commitment. However, before delving into the review, one must comprehend key terminologies: workplace spirituality and organizational commitment.

"Through engagement in work, individuals seek to find purpose." According to Mitroff's studies, Spirituality is characterized by inclusivity, tolerance, and an open-minded approach. The pace of human evolution and the substantial improvement in quality of life have been remarkable, albeit accompanied by the challenge of adapting to these changes. Over the past three decades, every aspect of our lives has been profoundly transformed, from home environments to workplaces.



This evolution encompasses changes in communication, learning, earning, problem-solving, and overall thinking. The resulting era is commonly called the modern era, marked by incremental advancements in various dimensions of life. The acceleration of modernization has necessitated flexibility to cope with these rapid changes. It is theorized that aligning the mind, heart, soul, and body can contribute to the enhanced success of organizations. However, Payne notes that Western philosophy has historically maintained a separation between the practical external world and the internal realm of Spirituality, expressing concerns about their integration.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Workplace Spirituality

"The longevity of any organization is contingent upon the incorporation of spirituality and soul," as stated by Mitroff and Denton in 1999. Workplace spirituality is regarded as a profoundly personal and philosophical concept, seemingly paradoxical when juxtaposed with the traditional perception of the workplace. The workplace is often viewed as incompatible with spirituality, commonly associated with conflicts, intense competition, apathy, political maneuvering, self-interest, power dynamics, and extended working hours.

In contrast, Spirituality is fundamentally concerned with defining life's purpose, values, and principles. It constitutes an attitude—a way of life. Unlike the term "religion," which can evoke concerns of inflexibility, exclusivity, and proselytizing within the workplace, Spirituality is more focused on the practical application of one's beliefs in day-to-day activities.

A socially responsible business demonstrates an understanding of its impact on both the environment and society, reflecting a spiritual sensitivity in its operations. Integrating spiritual practices within an organization fosters a sense of wholeness, interconnectedness, and deeper values among stakeholders. It represents a concerted effort to explore the ultimate purpose of existence and cultivate a more profound connection.

According to Mitroff and Denton (1999), workplace spirituality is characterized by aligning an individual's core beliefs and values with those of the organization, fostering a sense of connection with co-workers and associates. Ashmon and Duchon posit that each individual possesses an inner life requiring nourishment, a need met through meaningful work within a community context. Workplace spirituality encompasses the promotion of more humanistic and amicable work environments. Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) suggest that individuals are willing to practice Spirituality in the workplace without causing offense or resentment.

A spiritually oriented workplace is expected to facilitate personal and collective transformation while remaining attuned to its environmental impact. According to Word (2012), the spirit in the workplace is fundamentally tied to an individual's perception of their job, distinguishing between a mere occupation and a profound "calling." Ashmos and Duchon (2000) emphasize three critical dimensions out of seven of workplace spirituality:

- (a) Inner self: Encompassing the employee's inner spiritual needs, including physical, emotional, and social dimensions.
- (b) Meaningful work: The employee's capacity to derive meaning from their work beyond mere sustenance or organizational survival.
- (c) Sense of community: Involves living in connection with others, fostering an attitude of sharing and a sense of togetherness.

Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) assert that workplace spirituality serves as a cultural interface grounded in organizational values, aiming to facilitate employees' experience of transcendence through their work and foster a sense of connection with others for fulfillment and happiness.



### **Organizational Commitment**

Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) delineated commitment as "The willingness to expend personal, temporal, and psychological resources on behalf of a particular domain." However, their conceptualization of organizational commitment is "The extent to which an individual identifies and involves themselves with their organization and is unwilling to leave it."

Meyer and Allen (1991) further expounded on organizational commitment, identifying three distinct components: affective commitment (AC), denoting an employee's identification and involvement with the organization; normative commitment (NC), implying loyalty derived from a sense of obligation toward the employer; and continuance commitment (CC), reflecting attachment to the workplace based on perceived costs associated with leaving the job.

AC becomes prominent when employees perceive that the organization values and supports them. It is fortified and manifested through social recognition, interactions, and the day-to-day operation of social capital in the workplace. NC is instilled when employees internalize the organization's norms and values through daily engagement and socialization. Workplace socialization results in employees receiving tangible and intangible benefits, motivating them to reciprocate and internalize the organization's values and norms.

CC underscores the employee's recognition of the costs associated with remaining with or leaving the organization, with commitment hinging solely on this calculated assessment (Rego & Cunha, 2008).

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Workplace Spirituality**

Spirituality has the potential to positively influence individuals' behavior from an intrinsic perspective (Heaton et al., 2004). It guides employees to seek meaning in their lives, consequently contributing to their career development (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Additionally, Spirituality involves selflessness and the ability to share, fostering common bonds, attraction, and a sense of togetherness among colleagues within work units and the organization. This suggests that companies excelling in engaging the hearts and minds of their workforce inherently cultivate a sense of Spirituality in the everyday work environment. Several empirical researchers propose that workplace spirituality should be acknowledged as a fundamental area of research in both management and academia (Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Petchsawang & Duchan, 2009; Daniel, 2010). Enhancing Spirituality in the workplace is viewed as a strategy to attract and retain employees and cultivate a spirited and motivated workforce. Workplace spirituality serves as a tool to foster an atmosphere of trust within an organization, reducing fear among employees (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). Garcia and Zamor (2003) argue that introducing workplace spirituality in organizations can create a new culture of trust and result in more satisfied employees. Such practices also stimulate innovation, creativity, and a friendly atmosphere. Empirical findings by Kazemipour and Amin (2012) reveal a positive significant relationship between workplace spirituality, organizational citizenship behaviors, and affective organizational commitment. Naimon (2013) researched workplace spirituality and incivility ideas among employees, finding correlations with work satisfaction, job stress, and an organization's overall environment.

This perspective aligns with the argument presented by Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003), asserting that Spirituality in the workplace serves as a potential gateway for individuals to perceive themselves as spirited beings whose aspirations can be invigorated through satisfying and challenging work profiles.

Therefore, reengineering the workplace environment is essential to address these psychological needs and become the primary source of inner and outer nourishment.



Workplace spirituality has experienced a resurgence in the Western world, while in the East, the notion of Spirituality in the workplace has been prevalent for the past 3500 years.

### **Workplace Spirituality and Organisational Commitment**

Ke, Zhang, Yan, and Fu (2017) conducted a study involving 239 Chinese university teachers to examine the impact of workplace spirituality on employee engagement. The findings revealed a positive influence of workplace spirituality on the engagement of university teachers, with professional commitment partially mediating this relationship.

Shikhii Fini and Abmal (2017) explored the correlation between happiness, organizational Spirituality, and organizational commitment among 105 male teachers in Iran. The study identified a strong association between happiness and organizational commitment.

Gao-Urhahn et al. (2016) conducted a longitudinal analysis investigating the changes in affective commitment to the organization over time. The study, involving 1004 individuals from different organizations in Korea, indicated an overall increase in affective commitment over time. Furthermore, a positive reciprocal relationship between affective commitment and income level was established, illustrating an individual accumulation of affective commitment over time.

Pradhan and Kesari (2016) conducted a field survey on executives in India's public and private sector banking industries. Their regression analysis highlighted emotional intelligence as a potential moderator between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment.

Mousa and Alas (2016) focused on 200 Egyptian primary school teachers who perceived low commitment to their jobs. The study revealed significant correlations between meaningful work and a sense of community with various approaches to organizational commitment.

Campbell and Hwa (2014) explored the relationships among workplace spirituality, organizational commitment, and job performance based on a sample of 376 academic staff at Universiti Sains Malaysia. The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between all dimensions of workplace spirituality and normative and affective commitment. However, a negative relationship was observed between the sense of enjoyment at work and contribution to the community with continuance commitment.

Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) discussed various facets and benefits of implementing Spirituality in the workplace for employees and organizations. They suggested that Spirituality improves employee and organizational performance, enhancing overall productivity. Additionally, organizations embracing Spirituality are characterized by lower absenteeism and improved psychological well-being (Daniel, 2010).

Gulhar S. et al. (2023) examined the relationships that female academics at higher education institutions found between eco-spirituality, organizational commitment, and employee engagement. The study findings show that eco-spirituality impacted organizational commitment, and employee engagement was impacted by organizational commitment. It was determined that these two correlations were significant. Furthermore, the results of the study show that eco-spirituality and employee engagement are related in both direct and indirect ways. Although relationships have never been the subject of a study before, the research's conclusions demonstrate that they do exist. Regression analysis was used to study employee spirituality, organizational commitment, and employee engagement. When examining the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, we also considered the correlation between the two data sets. The reliability of the construct item was investigated.

Aboramadan, M., & Dahleez, K. A. (2021) viewed the study as a model of how workplace spirituality affects job performance through the mediation effects of work engagement, affective commitment, and organizational trust. The model was viewed through the lens of the social exchange theory. The analysis method used in the quantitative research was structural equation modeling. Two hundred-seven faculty members from the Palestinian



higher education sector provided the data that was gathered. Affective commitment, organizational trust, and work engagement all significantly mediated the relationship between academic staff members' job performance and workplace spirituality. There were two unique aspects to the research. First, the effect of workplace spirituality on job performance was the subject of very few studies; organizational performance was given more attention in spirituality literature than the variable. Second, examining the idea in a non-Western academic setting contributes to the body of research on workplace spirituality.

### Discussion

When employees experience workplace spirituality, they tend to develop an affective attachment to their organization. This leads to a sense of obligation and loyalty towards the organization, fostering affective rather than instrumental commitment (Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008). Research by Vandenberghe indicates that the relationship between continuance commitment (CC) alternatives to turnover is influenced by personality traits such as risk aversion and negative affectivity. However, a climate for Spirituality emphasizes values like integrity, respect, and trust, which are essential for the organization-employee relationship, thereby promoting normative commitment (NC). NC tends to be stronger in collectivist countries (Fischer & Mansell, 2009), suggesting that spiritual practices emphasizing "Oneness" may enhance employees' NC. Sreejesh and Tavleen (2011) posit that affective commitment develops when employees identify with and derive their identity from their association with the organization. Ethically sound organizations are more accepted in Indian society, leading to the speculation that employees associated with such organizations develop a sense of pride and more profound affective commitment. Continuance commitment arises when employees perceive no alternatives but to remain in the current organization. According to Milliman et al. (2003), different dimensions of workplace spirituality affect an employee's commitment to their tasks. Based on Herzberg's two-factor theory, workplace spirituality is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Meaningful work, alignment with organizational values, and a sense of belonging contribute to improved self-efficacy and active engagement, fostering employees' love for their jobs and enhancing their professional commitment. Individuals with high workplace spirituality believe their work is more meaningful, leading to a greater willingness to express themselves in the work environment and increased loyalty to their occupation. This heightened enthusiasm and devotion to professional activities result in a lifelong commitment to pursue their careers.

### Scope for future studies

Drawing upon the consensus derived from the abovementioned findings, the concept of Spirituality in the workplace is a significant mechanism for cultivating work commitment. While numerous studies have explored the relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment, few have delved into how long-term experiences contribute to the development of organizational commitment, especially affective commitment within individuals. Current research either concentrates on the initial employment stages of individuals or is confined to specific organizational contexts. To supplement existing evidence, examining the development of organizational commitment over an extended period (beyond ten years) within a cohort of employees and comparing it to those who have completed their initial year of employment could be insightful. Additionally, exploring how both employee work experiences and workplace spirituality jointly stimulate various dimensions of organizational commitment, particularly in service organizations, would be valuable. In sectors such as healthcare, education, civil services, and the armed forces, where the essence of Spirituality in the workplace is presumed to exist, it is expected that professionals in these fields are effectively committed to delivering their services. However, these presumptions warrant scientific scrutiny. Furthermore, it is crucial to identify which



components of workplace spirituality significantly influence affective and normative commitment toward the organization. Empirical investigations are essential to determine whether these variables collectively enhance the performance and efficiency of a business establishment.

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