Angelica-Nicoleta NECULĂESEI (ONEA)
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iaşi

97

SPIRITUALITY - AN ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSION

Review Article

Keywords

Workplace spirituality;
Spirit at work;
Spirituality in organization;
Models of spirituality in work;
Measuring spirituality

JEL Classification
B55, J28, Z10, Z19

Abstract

The organizations' competition for profit, but also the phenomena associated to the third wave have emphasized possible needs that can be met through rediscovery of spirituality, by individuals and organizations. Although the interest for this dimension has been manifested for some time, many aspects were not clarified, which is why we consider necessary to develop a review of the specialized literature.

INTRODUCTION

Malraux's remark (Aubin, 2003), *"The twenty-first century will be spiritual or will not be"* is extremely well known. We also have his interviews at our disposal where he does not exclude the possibility of a spiritual event on a planetary scale (Foulon, 2004). We do not know if the spiritual movement that has developed at least in the last two decades, can be considered a sign of self-fulfilling prophecy, in *Mertonian[1]* sense, or it is the reaction to failure of a dehumanized, discouraged world, devoid of the mystery of the sacred. Definitely, it can be seen as a factor that has contributed to the increased interest for the spiritual dimension of individuals' lives, including within organizations.

There are authors (Wagner-Marsh, Conley, 1999) who claim that this orientation towards spirituality could be considered the *"fourth wave"* if we were to continue Toffler's stage[2] (1980). Among the causes, we could list:

· *The increase of individualism and secularization* that reduced the role of family and church / religious institutions in the development and manifestation of human spirituality. The intensification of individualism, based on income increase, produced on one hand, a vacuum sensed by the deeply disconnected individual; on the other hand, it created the transition conditions from survival's values orientation to self-expression values orientation, as Inglehart highlighted (2006). It may seem like a paradox, but we notice an increased need for the meaning in life (following the detachment of the individual from what that sense once offered them), a need that privileges the orientation towards values that can satisfy it. The materialism, the consumerism, the exaggerated pursuit of money and power, the adjustment to external criteria for measuring personal success, the desire for uniformity and flattening the world produce an internal imbalance that triggers the desire to find a remedy.

· *Tilting the balance of power in favor of the Orient*, which led to a reconsideration of the Occident's position and to the increase of cultural interest for a world that has never fragmented the individual;

· *The search for "that something"*, the meaning, as a bottom-up reaction to global phenomena and flows (Apaduray, 1996), as this reaction is described by the cultural theory of hybridization[3] (Ritzer, 2010).

We notice that the substance of the analyzed problem is different. The above-mentioned phenomena rather describe aspects of the Western world, a world based on rationality that favors separation. The oriental perspective is an integrative one, which favors the interconnection of human dimensions (the perception of the human being in all

their needs and forms of manifestation) but also the connection of the individual with their social and natural environment, or even with the universe, in its entirety. However, the specialty literature that supports the topic covered in this article has its origins in different parts of the world, as a further proof that the interest in *spirituality in organizations* has become increasingly predominant. A Google search for different keywords is enough to come up with arguments to support this idea[4]:

· the search for "spirituality in organizations" generated about 105,000 results;
· the search for "workplace spirituality" generated about 194,000 results;
· the search for "spiritual organization" has generated about 403,000 results;
· the search for "leadership and spirituality" generated about 602,000 results;
· The search for "business and spirituality" generated about 1,950,000 results.

In addition, there are constructs that measure *spiritual intelligence* or *workplace spirituality* (see Table 1).

FROM SPIRITUALITY TO ORGANIZATIONAL SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality comes from the Latin *spirit*, which means *breath[5]*, markers of *life*. Therefore, spirituality involves anchoring in what animates the human being - which gives them the strength and impulse to seek, to seek and find themselves, to do things that contribute to their own growth and to the others' well-being – namely in matters considered significant, important and durable.

Spirituality can take mystical-religious forms, but it should not be limited or confused with them. The spiritual dimension of human life can result from any form of growth, self-development, ascension, becoming. Phipps (2012), in an attempt to provide an operational content to his study, considers that "spirituality will refer to the human desire for connection with the transcendent, the desire for integration of the self into a meaningful whole, and the realization of one's potential".

Workplace spirituality is quite difficult to define. In fact, it appears in the form of different syntagma. Specialized literature comes with variants that often give information on the cultural and / or professional origin of the author(s). Many authors argue that the organizational spirituality should be placed beyond the religious context, but there are enough studies or proposals based on mystical-religious beliefs and practices (see Karakas, 2010). Nevertheless, let us follow few proposals of this concept, for a better understanding of the above-mentioned perspectives:

· *workplace spirituality is "a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture*

that promote employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy" (Jurkiewicz, Giacalone, 2004)*;*

· *"spirit at work involves: engaging work characterized by a profound feeling of well-being, a belief that one is engaged in meaningful work that has a higher purpose, an awareness of alignment between one's values and beliefs and one's work, and a sense of being authentic; a spiritual connection characterized by a sense of connection to something larger than self; a sense of community characterized by a feeling of connectedness to others and common purpose; and a mystical or unitive experience characterized by a positive state of energy or vitality, a sense of perfection, transcendence, and experiences of joy and bliss"* (Kinjerski, Skrypnek 2006).

· the spiritual dimension of work can be regarded as *"a source of energy empowering and transforming the life of daily work"* (Ottaway, 2003).

· *"workplace spirituality is an experience of transcendence, interconnectedness, personal completeness and joy, analyzed in different theoretical frameworks"* (Gotsis, Kortezi, 2008).

Workplace spirituality involves the following from organizations (Ashmos, Duchon, 2000, Duchon, Plowman, 2005, Hicks, 2003, Fourie, 2014, Schutte, 2016):

· Recognizing that employees have an inner life, spirituality is an integral part of human life, and the self cannot be fragmented;

· Admitting that employees want to do meaningful, important work, to which they can contribute with all their being;

· Assume the commitment to create an organizational context that allows spiritual evolution and self-expression.

Among the dimensions of an organization that integrates the spiritual dimension we may mention: meaningful work, feeling of solidarity, alignment with the organizational mission and values (Milliman *et al.*, 2003). We speak, therefore, about the meaning in life, employed in the workplace, by creating the feeling that work represents an important contribution of each other, a way of self-expression, of realizing the potential, of connecting with others and with something great.

We notice that the highlighted aspects are not something new, unknown. On the one hand, motivational theories admit needs related to the spiritual dimension and describe ways of satisfying them; on the other hand, many other concepts (well-being, happiness at work, welfare workforce, corporate social responsibility etc.) refer to some characteristics considered to be part of the spiritual dimension of the organization. It should also be mentioned that the topic has been arisen in the last four decades; therefore, many connections have been made with the theories and concepts already released. Long before, Maslow (1954, 1964) emphasized the intrinsic motivation and the higher nature of human being, related to the spiritual values that are validated naturally:

- kindness, altruism, virtue, love, etc., due to their connection with self-realization and self-transcendental needs

- contribution, self-sacrifice, supreme meaning, etc. They do not need supernatural validation, and it indicates that spirituality understood in this sense can be an organizational coordinate (it has a universal character). Another researcher, Csikszentmihalyi (1990), describes *the flow state* as the state in which the person is absorbed, attracted entirely by a certain activity, focused on what they have to accomplish. Therefore, according to psychologists, human beings can be motivated by their vocation, talent, by what they feel they may achieve by fulfilling their potential, by what makes them *lose themselves*, forgetting about themselves, merging with the activity they are involved in. Work may become an *activity that generates optimal experiences* because it may provide the feeling of discovery, it may lead the individual to a new reality, things that stimulate high performance and contribute to their evolution (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). To look for "the something" that gives meaning to life and to do things with passion, with "soul" are important human coordinates, possible to achieve in the organizational environment in which much of life is spent.

MODELS OF ORGANIZATIONAL SPIRITUALITY

The models provided by specialized literature are quite different because they relate to different cultural and organizational realities. We do not intend to make an inventory of these models; we just want to provide few examples to extract dimensions that define the spirituality in organizations.

The Rhodes model (2006) emphasizes the following:

- s*ustainability*: to contribute to the world's welfare, on long term (awareness of the activity's impact in the context of limited resources);

- *the value of contribution* (*social responsibility*): managers and organizations are considered to be in the service of the employees, customers, communities;

- *creativity*: providing resources for discovering the creative potential and for exercising creativity;

- *cultivating inclusion*: enhancing life experiences, respecting different competencies, diversity;
- *development of ethical principles*: promoting growth, learning and development by creating connections between beliefs and work;
- *promoting vocation*: spiritual growth and fulfillment through work (emphasis on "inner talent", passion).

Modelul Pradhan et al. (2017)
- *spiritual* connectedness: employees feel fulfilled through the work that helps them express themselves and connect with the peers with whom they share these common feelings;
- *compassion*: empathy and caring for others;
- *meaningful work*: the importance of individual work for oneself and others; the feeling of contributing to the accomplishment of something truly valuable;
- *alignment of values*: compatibility between the basic beliefs and the values of the organization.
We are warned that the aforementioned aspects acquire other valences in the Indian context, where *karma* and other mystical-religious concepts and practices are strongly culturally embedded.

The Palframan & Lancaster model (2019) highlights the interaction between the individual and the organization, the transactions that take place to manifest the spiritual dimension
1. **organizational level** is described by:
· *context*: foundational attributes, normative expressions, and relational leadership;
· *workplace spirituality practices*: employee development, employee reflexivity, employee relations, job design, and social responsibility;
2. **personal level** implies:
· *workplace spirituality needs*: communal engagement, meaningful work, personal growth, security of self, self-transcendence, and workplace authenticity;
· *action strategies*: conscious reconciling experiences and self-adjustment.
The model takes into account, in addition to the mentioned transactions, the antecedents and the outcomes.

BENEFITS OF VALUING SPIRITUALITY IN ORGANIZATIONS

Studies indicate different benefits of organizations that integrate the spiritual dimension, among: (Mehran, 2017, Gupta *et al.*, 2014, Beheshtifar, Zare, 2013, Afsar, Rehman, 2015, Daniel, 2015, Shankar Pawar, 2009, Karakas, 2010, Palframan, Lancaster, 2019, van der Walt, 2018):
· increasing job satisfaction;
· positive influence of the attitude towards work;

· increasing organizational commitment;
· positive implications for organizational citizenship behavior;
· increasing the well-being and quality of life of the employees;
· creating a positive climate;
· stress reduction;
· stimulating creativity and innovative behavior;
· increasing work performance;
· increasing the motivation of employees by satisfying the needs of self-realization.

SPIRITUALITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS

Beyond all the positive mentioned aspects, there are problems related to the ethics of creating and exploiting the spiritual dimension of the organization.
Some vulnerabilities and temptations may arise, and they are related to the following questions (Karakas, 2010, Milliman *et al.*, 2003, Jurkiewicz, Giacalone, 2004, Kinjerski, Skrypnek, 2006):
· *In the attempt of setting a spiritual framework, sometimes by appealing to religious beliefs and practices, doesn't create actually a place for proselytism? Does not also appear the danger of invading employees' personal area?*
We mentioned that the temptation is high, the confusion between spirituality and religion could cause some people's beliefs be imposed in one form or another, leading to the destruction of the initial purpose, by limiting the manifestation of self and even more, by violating the rights of the employees and their diversity. Spirituality is *natural*, while religion is <u>cultural</u>. It is clear that in the organizational environment a religious amalgam cannot be built and this is not the purpose, actually; but respecting the differences regarding religious belonging is mandatory, as well as respecting the other forms of diversity. On the other hand, an organizational spiritual framework that relies on exploring the religious sentiment may be incompatible with the rest of the organizational culture or it may be considered intrusive.
· *Would the orientation towards organizational advantages obtained by integrating the spiritual dimension lead to feelings of manipulation and control?*
The spiritual organizational framework must be authentic. If spirituality becomes a tool in the hands of management, in order to increase profitability, employees may feel *"that something"* has been stolen. This sense drain can lead to opposite feelings.

CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical and practical aspects related to the integration of spirituality in the workplace remain problematic. There are, on the one hand, theoretical inconsistencies regarding the meaning of the utilized concepts, and the noticed differences are major. Perspectives vary between two limits: a) one that describes a particular, specific context, sometimes religiously anchored, that cannot arise general ideas, useful in other situations; b) another one that tries to rationalize, to model in a positivist sense, a reality that could be decoded into another key.

The clarification efforts should be appreciated. However, we believe that it is necessary to develop a *form* of what organizational spirituality / spirituality in the workplace signifies, so that the adapted culturally and organizationally elements constitute the *content*.

On the other hand, a careful analysis of related concepts is necessary. Are there overlaps, connections, or do some of them represent components of others? The specialized literature carries different terms with a close content, which increases the dose of ambiguity.

From a practical point of view, we can come up with an extremely useful recommendation, the one of creating an organizational framework where the manifestation of spirituality is and remains authentic. Any attempt to exploit it will only destroy it.

The subject deserves more attention from theorists and practitioners for providing clearer, less confusing or contradictory cues, possibly to be used in future research or solutions.

REFERENCES

[1] Afsar, B., & Rehman, M. (2015). The relationship between workplace spirituality and innovative work behavior: The mediating role of perceived person–organization fit. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, *12*(4), 329-353.

[2] Amram, Y., & Dryer, C. (2008). The integrated spiritual intelligence scale (ISIS): Development and preliminary validation. In *116th annual conference of the American Psychological Association, Boston, MA* (pp. 14-17).

[3] Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity al large: cultural dimensions of globalization* (Vol. 1). University of Minnesota Press.

[4] Ashmos, D. P., & Duchon, D. (2000). Spirituality at work: A conceptualization and measure. *Journal of management inquiry*, *9*(2), 134-145.

[5] Aubin, J. (2003). *Croissance: l'impossible nécessaire*. Planète Bleue Editions.

[6] Beheshtifar, M.,Zare, E. (2013). Effect of spirituality in workplace on job performance. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, *5*(2), 4.

[7] Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper and Row

[8] Daniel, J. L. (2015). Workplace spirituality and stress: Evidence from Mexico and US. *Management Research Review*, *38*(1), 29-43.

[9] Duchon, D., & Plowman, D. A. (2005). Nurturing the spirit at work: Impact on work unit performance. *The leadership quarterly*, *16*(5), 807-833.

[10] Foulon, C. L. (2004). *André Malraux et le rayonnement culturel de la France*. Editions Complexe.

[11] Fourie, M. (2014). Spirituality in the workplace: An introductory overview. *In die Skriflig*, *48*(1), 01-08.

[12] Gotsis, G., & Kortezi, Z. (2008). Philosophical foundations of workplace spirituality: A critical approach. *Journal of business ethics*, *78*(4), 575-600.

[13] Gupta, M., Kumar, V., & Singh, M. (2014). Creating satisfied employees through workplace spirituality: A study of the private insurance sector in Punjab (India). *Journal of business ethics*, *122*(1), 79-88.

[14] Hicks, D.A., 2003, *Religion and the workplace pluralism, spirituality, leadership*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

[15] Inglehart, R. (2006). Mapping global values. *Comparative sociology*, *5*(2-3), 115-136.

[16] Jurkiewicz, C. L., & Giacalone, R. A. (2004). A values framework for measuring the impact of workplace spirituality on organizational performance. Journal of business ethics, 49(2), 129-142.

[17] Karakas, F. (2010). Spirituality and performance in organizations: A literature review. *Journal of business ethics*, *94*(1), 89-106.

[18] Kinjerski, V., Skrypnek, B. J. (2006). MEASURING THE INTANGIBLE: DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRIT AT WORK SCALE. In *Academy of management proceedings* (Vol. 2006, No. 1, pp. A1-A6). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

[19] Kumar, V., Mehta, M. (2013). Scale for Spiritual Intelligence (SSI), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303880166_Scale_for_Spiritual_Intelligence_SSI

[20] Kumar, V., Mehta, M. (2011). *Gaining adaptive orientation through spiritual and emotional intelligence. New facets of positivism.* pp. 281-301.

[21] Maslow A., H. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

[22] Maslow, A. H. (1964). *Religions, values, and peak-experiences* . Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

[23] Mehran, Z. (2017). The Effect of spirituality in the workplace on organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. *International Journal of Human Capital in Urban Management*, *2*(3), 219-228.

[24] Milliman, J., Czaplewski, A. J., & Ferguson, J. (2003). Workplace spirituality and employee work attitudes: An exploratory empirical assessment. *Journal of organizational change management*, *16*(4), 426-447.

[25] Ottaway, R. N. (2003). Defining spirituality of work. *International Journal of Value-Based Management*, *16*(1), 23-35.

[26] Palframan, J. T., & Lancaster, B. L. (2019). Workplace Spirituality and Person–Organization Fit Theory: Development of a Theoretical Model. *Journal of Human Values*, *25*(3), 133-149.

[27] Phipps, K. A. (2012). Spirituality and strategic leadership: The influence of spiritual beliefs on strategic decision making. *Journal of business ethics*, *106*(2), 177-189.

[28] Pradhan, R. K., Jena, L. K., & Soto, C. M. (2017). Workplace spirituality in indian organisations: construction of reliable and valid measurement scale. *Business: Theory and Practice*, *18*, 43.

[29] Ritzer, G. (2010). *Globalizarea nimicului: cultura consumului şi paradoxurile abundenţei*. George Ritzer; trad. de Raluca Popescu. Bucureşti. Humanitas.

[30] Rhodes, K. (2006). Six components of a model for workplace spirituality. *Graziadio Business Report, 9 (2)*.

[31] Schutte, P. J. (2016). Workplace spirituality: A tool or a trend?. *HTS Theological Studies*, *72*(4), 1-5. https://gbr.pepperdine.edu/2010/08/six-components-of-a-model-for-workplace-spirituality/

[32] Shankar Pawar, B. (2009). Individual spirituality, workplace spirituality and work attitudes: An empirical test of direct and interaction effects. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *30*(8), 759-777.

[33] Toffler, A. (1980). *The third wave*. New York: Morrow & Company.

[34] van der Walt, F. (2018). Workplace spirituality, work engagement and thriving at work. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *44*(1), 1-10.

[35] Wagner-Marsh, F., & Conley, J. (1999). The fourth wave: the spiritually-based firm. *Journal of organizational change management*.

Notes

[1] An allusion to Robert Merton, the one who launched the theory that a false presentation of a situation that invokes a new behavior will make the false situation come true by acquiring that behavior

[2] *The first wave* - the agrarian society, *the second wave* - the industrial society, *the third wave* - the information society.

[3] The cultural theory of hybridization starts from the premise that there are cultural differences and the world becomes more and more pluralistically. New hybrid forms of culture arise due to the contact of global processes with local reality (Ritzer, 2010).

[4] Data specified by the search engine on November 4, 2019.

[5] https://www.etymonline.com/word/spirit.

List of tables

Table No. 1
Tools for measuring spirituality

Scale	Authors	Dimensions
Workplace Spirituality Scale (WSS)	Pradhan, Jena, Soto, 2017	Spiritual orientation (connection with work and fellowship), compassion, meaningful work, alignment of values
Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale (ISIS)	Amram, Dryer, 2008	consciousness, talent, meaning, transcendence, truth
Scale for Spiritual Intelligence (SSI)	Kumar, Mehta, 2011, 2013	purpose in life, human values, compassion, commitment to humanity, understanding of the self, consciousness
Spirit at Work Scale (SAWS)	Kinjersky, Skrypnek, 2006	exciting work, mystical experience, spiritual connection, feeling of communion, belonging

Source: own processing from the mentioned authors