Spiritual Leadership and Spiritual Climate

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Abstract

Spirituality and its relationship to leadership in the workplace is a compelling issue for management practitioners and researchers. The field of study is still in its formative stage and as such is marked by differences in definitions and other similar characteristics of an emerging field. Much of what has been written on this subject has appeared in general, rather than academic publications and consequently may lack rigor. The model proposed here revolves around the fact that in an organization, there can exist various types of climate, like, safety climate, innovation climate, sales climate, etc. Here, I have focused on spiritual climate of teams fostered by a spiritual aspect of leadership in an organization.

Keywords- Spirituality, Spiritual leadership, Spiritual Climate.

Introduction:

The term "spirituality" comes from the Latin "spiro", "inspiratio" (breath), with a meaning close to the sanskrit " atma", or the Greek " pneuma" (Lazar, 2004). What is spirituality in business? Some say that it is embodying one's personal values of honesty, integrity, and good quality work (Giacolone, 2004). For others, it is participating in spiritual study groups or using prayer, meditation, or intuitive guidance at work ((Marques, et al., 2007). And for some, it is making their business socially responsible in how it impacts the environment, serves the community or helps create a better world (McLaughlin, 2009). Be that as it may, there lies an enigma in what the word "spirituality" relates to, in the work environment.

Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between four sub-variables related to spiritual leadership (meaning/calling, membership, inner life/spiritual awareness and concern for larger social and natural environment) at the leader level and three work-related variables (harmony with self at work, harmony in work environment, transcendence) to assess the climate of the unit or work-group at the team level. Four variables of spiritual leadership are drawn from the work of Fry (2003) and spiritual climate assessment was done based on conceptualization and an inventory developed by Pandey, Gupta, Arora (2009a). This research is conducted on the sample of employees working in manufacturing and service organizations across diverse industries in India.

The secondary purpose of this study is to provide organizations with new management principles regarding Spiritual Leadership and Spiritual Climate variables. With this knowledge, administrators in business organizations could implement and apply these principles in managing their employees. The identified predictors might be used to prevent high attrition-rate and impaired quality of work life and in the process may increase job satisfaction.

Research Questions:

The research questions are as follows:

• The main research question is "Do the self perceived Spiritual Leadership variables (meaning/calling, membership, inner life/spiritual awareness and concern for larger social and natural environment) predict

the three work-related variables (harmony with self at work, harmony in work environment, transcendence) associated with Spiritual Climate of the team?"

• The second research question is "How does team members' perception of leaders spirituality at work affect team climate?"

Distinction between variables

☐ Spiritual Leadership comprises the "values, attitudes and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so they have a sense of spiritual well-being through calling and membership". (Fry, 2003)

☐ Spiritual Climate is the "collective perception of the employee about the workplace that facilitates harmony with 'self' through meaningful work, transcendence from the limited 'self' and operates in harmony with social and natural environment having sense of interconnectedness within it" (Pandey, et al., 2009b)

Theoretical, definitional and conceptual foundations of Spiritual Leadership and Spiritual Climate:

Spiritual Leadership:

What is spiritual leadership? Wolf (2004) defined spiritual leadership as "building an environment of respect, ethics, values and integrity" (p. 23).

The purpose of spiritual leadership is to tap into the fundamental needs of both leader and follower for spiritual well-being through calling and membership, to create vision and value congruence across the individual, empowered team, and organization levels and, ultimately, to foster high levels of organizational commitment and productivity. Operationally, spiritual leadership comprises the values, attitudes and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so they have a sense of spiritual well-being through calling and membership. (Fry, 2008, p. 133)

Spiritual leadership is moving leaders from managing employees to inspiring employees, a critical component of transformational leadership (Amram, 2005; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002). Spiritual leadership integrates transformational and servant leadership with spiritual, ethical, and values-based leadership models into a combination of core competencies, skills, and learned techniques to provide a model of behavior for the spiritual leader (Den Hartog et al., 1999; Dent, Higgins & Wharff, 2005; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Reave, 2005; Ryan, 2000). "Spiritual leadership starts with the leader's own ethics and integrity" (Reave, 2005, p. 663), which would be demonstrated to the organization in both word and deed (Argyris, 1966). Research has shown that a person who is guided by good moral habits and virtuous personal values displays integrity (Argyris, 1966; Caldwell, Hayes, Karri, & Bernal, 2008; Cavanaugh & Bandsuch, 2002; Parry & Proctor-Thomson, 2002).

The organizational benefits of spiritual leadership include increased organizational performance (Lloyd, 1990), intrinsic employee job satisfaction and involvement (Fry, 2003), higher employee performance resulting in improved customer service (Duchon & Plowman, 2005), and higher rates of return on investments (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004). The inspirational and/or transformational effect of spiritual leadership can result in positive moral behavior of the members of the organization (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Dvir et al., 2002). For the stakeholders of the organization, the impact of a spiritual organizational culture translates not only to the integrity of the organization but also to the financial returns from improved performance and customer satisfaction.

Spiritual Climate:

Spirituality of employees is reflected in work climate (Pandey et al.,2009a) Research has shown that organizations with spiritual climate that provide their employees with the opportunities for spiritual development are better in performance than others (Konz & Ryan, 1999). In India many a company follow

the new-age principles (such as Meditation to attain inner calmness, Purshartaa for the balance between personal and professional life, yoga for healthy and disease-free life, etc.), which have their roots in Indian ethos for the spiritual upliftment of an organization. At an individual level, spirituality at work provides job satisfaction and reduces employees burnout as found in the case of health care professionals (Komala & Ganesh, 2007).

Spirituality is different from Religion. While religion can be the exclusive preserve of the religious (devout), spirituality is under nobody's monopoly. He who gives a glass of water to quench the thirst of another is spiritually more evolved than those who chant their scriptures with their eyes closed on the giant agony of our world (Agnivesh, Swami, 1999). The problem with us today is that we have too much of religion but little of spirituality (Agnivesh, Swami, 2003). Research on the topic 'Spiritual Climate' is still in its early stages.

Fundamentally, organizational climate refers to perceptions of organizational practices and procedures that are shared among members (Schneider, 1975), and which provide an indication of the institutionalized normative systems that guides behavior (Schneider, 1983). An organization's climate regarding spirituality forms the spiritual character of the organization, by providing the environmental cues that guides spiritual behavior. Decisions of founders and other top leaders in the early stages of the organization's lifecycle have a profound impact on the development of an organization, and lead to the creation of strategies, structures, climates, and culture (Schein, 1992, Schneider, 1987). Additionally, leaders throughout all stages of the organization's life cycle and all organization levels continuously shape the organization's climate by providing meaning to policies and practices through the manner in which they enact the organization's goals and strategies (Wimbush and Shepard, 1997). The actions of direct leaders provide an immediate indicator of appropriate behavior.

Climate regarding spirituality:

Schneider's (1975) definition of organizational climate as " psychologically meaningful molar [environmental] descriptions that people can agree characterize a system's practices and procedures" prevails as one of the most widely accepted definitions (p. 474). In essence, organizational climate pertains to the "shared perceptions of the way things are around here" (Reichers and Schneider, 1990, p. 22), which become social norms and expectations that guide behavior in a particular setting (Schneider, 1983). Organizations have multiple types of climates (Schneider, 1975), addressing different facets of the environment such as safety (Zohar, 1980), customer service (Schneider and Bowen, 1995) and spiritual (Pandey et al., 2008a).

For the purpose of this study the below-mentioned key variables of spirituality in organizations were identified. These variables embrace the three conceptually converging streams being identified in the 'spirituality in management' literature and their parallel notions in the Vedantic literature (Pandey et al., 2008b). The variables of meaningful work, hopefulness, and authenticity are related to 'harmony with self'; sense of community and respect for diversity are related to 'harmony in work environment' and meditative work, and Loksangrah are related to 'transcendence' aspect of workplace spirituality (Pandey et al., 2008b).

Distinguishing spiritual climate from related constructs :

Spiritual climate as a construct is different from related constructs of employees' engagement, ethical climate, and service climate.

Though engagement is akin to spiritual climate in terms of deeper involvement in work and a feeling of connectedness at workplace, the two are different in terms of level of construct and contributing factors of the construct. Firstly, employees' engagement covers both individual level variables like role clarity and learning opportunity, as well as dyadic level construct like appreciation; and collective level construct like enabling environment. In contrast, spiritual climate is purely a collective level construct. Secondly, sense of contribution to the larger social and natural environment, authenticity, meaningful work are constituting variables of the spiritual level climate which are not the part of employees' engagement construct (Pandey et al., 2008b)

Spiritual Climate is also different from ethical climate. While the latter involves rule, law, and code along with caring and independence (Victor and Cullen, 1988) and in that sense bear semblance to spiritual climate, the scope of the spiritual climate construct put it close to the spiritual aspects of the workplace, unlike ethical climate which focuses on ethical temperament of people creating the organizational climate (Pandey et al., 2008b)

Spiritual climate is also distinct from service climate (Schneider, 1994) in that the latter captures the managerial behavior and branch administration, while the former goes beyond the behavior and captures both employees' experience of work and work group and does not include administrative aspects (Pandey et al., 2008b).

Finally, spiritual climate construct is also distinct from 'spirituality in management' construct proposed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000). However, conceptualizing spirituality at workplace as climatic construct and inclusion of Loksangrah, (concern for social and natural environment), authenticity, concern for family - extend the scope of the spiritual climate construct (Pandey et al., 2008b) from its existing conceptualization as earlier put forth by Ashmos and Duchon (2000)

Sampling

• The target population comprised of senior, middle and junior-level managers, both males and females, in Indian manufacturing sectors comprising of steel, automotive fluids, FMCG, pharmaceuticals as well as service sectors spread over the States of Maharashtra, West Bengal, Bihar and Assam, in India. Altogether 24 organizations were surveyed comprising a convenience sample of 150 managers and team-members.

• Within the said organizations 44 teams were identified, the members of these teams being direct-reportees, males and females, of both Generation X and Generation Y, of such managers mostly Baby-boomers and Generation Xers. Each manager had 3-4 members in his/her team.

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Methodology/ Data Collection Method

• This was a hypothetico-deductive study using a cross-sectional survey design intended to examine the influence of perceived spiritual leadership on harmony with self at work, harmony in work environment, transcendence as experienced by team-members, at the above places. Data were collected through a cross-sectional, self-administered questionnaire, and also through online survey. The questionnaire results have been kept confidential. Surveys in certain cases were also anonymous: respondents did not include their name or any other individual identifier on the online survey. The process of the study started with the researcher (the author) presenting the aims of the study to each manager and his/her team-members. This comprised of a summary of the study, including the hypotheses and areas of interest, and an emphasis on the confidential and voluntary nature of the questionnaire that was left for them to fill at their convenience. In some cases, responses were personally collected after few days. In other cases, the responses came in through postal-mail.

• The researcher personally visited all the companies included in the survey, met the concerned managers and their respective team-members to find out for himself through observation and questioning the managers' perceived spiritual leadership profile and their respective team-members' notion about the prevailing spiritual climate as fostered by their managers' spiritual leadership.

• The questionnaire on Leadership Reflections was the instrument used to discern spiritual leadership of managers

• The questionnaire on Spiritual Climate Inventory was the instrument used to assess spiritual climate of teams

The Leadership Reflections instrument reflected spiritual leaders agreement and importance of current status versus desired status of workplace.

The Spiritual Climate Inventory helped to assess the climate of the unit or work group where the respondent worked. The questions represented different dimensions of the organizational climate.

In most of the cases, initially the subject was requested to sit comfortably in a calm and cool room. Rapport was established with the subject so that the subject was free from any doubts or uncertainties about the survey. Next the questionnaire was administered in person. Standard instructions to fill up the questionnaire were given. Once he had answered all the questions, the questionnaires were collected back and feedback analyzed.

Nature of respondents:
% of men & women: in estimation,75% men and 25% women
Related characteristics:
tenure:> 1year in the organization

Post:
33.33% top-management: General Managers and above.
33.33% :middle-management: Regional Managers to Senior Managers.
33.33%: junior-management: Supervisors/Officers/Executives to Area Managers.
Industry: Mix of various sectors: across:-pharmaceuticals,engineering,steel,education,automotive fluids,consultancy-firms,financial markets,bank, power,FMCG(Fast Moving Consumer Goods),service,retail and software Industry

There is a significant positive correlation been Reputation and Spiritual climate(r=.663, p<0.005, two tailed). However Reputation is not emerging as significant association with perceived Leaders Agreement (r=.070) but there is a minimal positive association with perceived Leader's Importance (r=.24) which indicates the desired importance of reputation as an aspect at workplace and personal life. Research supports that the reputations of leaders typically are positively related to trust (Whitmeyer, 2000). Specifically, possessing a good reputation increases the likelihood that leaders will be trusted by their followers. An outcome of this trust is that followers will be more likely to make positive attributions of the intentions of their trusted leaders (Tyler & DeGoey, 1996).

FINDINGS

Summary of Data Analysis

Spiritual leadership is conceptualized as a phenomenon of leading wherein designated leader upholds a certain approach towards work and her team members which influences her conversation with them and style of work that has generative affect on team climate. Spiritual leadership is assessed through leadership reflection on the aspects of finding meaning and purpose at work, promoting a sense of community at work, having inner life and supporting team members to have so and doing work as an opportunity to serve larger social and natural environment. Leaders' reputation and Team climate responses are aggregated team-wise and subjected to regression and correlation with spiritual leadership score of respective team leaders.

Results

For spiritual climate inventory the data adequacy was checked with KMO test, value of which is 0.734. Value higher than 0.5 is an indication the data is sufficient for factor analysis. The significant level of

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicates the rejection of null hypothesis that the variables are correlated. Spiritual climate inventory explained 68% variance on the given sample and its reliability coefficient (Chronbach's Alfa) value for was 0.852 and Leaders reputation scale was 0.66. We used AMOS with maximum likelihood estimation (Arbukle & Wothe, 1999) to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis on the eight spiritual climate variables to examine whether proposed variables constitute one construct. To assess whether the observed covariance matrix fit the construct model, we used the comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), and the standard root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Results showed that the hypothesized sevem factor model fit the data well and that the higher order spiritual leadership construct could be used for hypothesis testing ($\chi 2$=1122.601; df=300; pb.001; CFI=.97; NFI=.94; IFI=.97; RMSEA=.067).

Table 1. Spiritual Climate measures

Variables	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4
1. Spiritual Connection to Work of Leader (Leaders Agreement)	4.92	0.46				
2. Spiritual Connection to Work of Leader (Importance for Leaders)	5.16	0.56	0.47			
3. Leaders Reputation as Spiritual (finds spiritual fulfilment at work)	3.24	0.28	0.086	0.294	**0.66**	
4.						
5. Spiritual Climate of Team	3.55	0.35	-0.047	0.031	0.65	**0.85**

Table 1 displays means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables for the group level, and coefficient alphas for the scales. Hypothesis 1 predicted that leaders' self perceived spiritual connection to work would be positively related to spiritual climate whereas Hypothesis 2 suggested that spiritual connection to work of the leadership would be positively related to reputation of a leader being spiritual. The results show that the self perceived spiritual connection to work as expressed in terms of finding meaning and purpose at work, promoting a sense of community and working with intent of contributing to social and natural environment is not associated with spiritual climate of the teams. Leaders reputation and self perceived spiritual connection to work is also not significantly associated. Thus, Hypotheses 1 and 2 are not supported by our data.

In the present research we hypothesized the leader's reputation as a mediating variable so we examined the mediating effects of leader's reputation with perceived leadership agreement and leadership importance and spiritual climate.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the positive relationship between leaders' reputation and spiritual leadership?? and the spiritual climate of the team. There is a significant positive correlation between reputation of leader as spiritual and Spiritual climate(r=.663, p<0.005, two tailed) of the teams. Regression model for hypothesis is as follows

Table 2. Various other measures

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	B	Durbin-Watson
1	0.552	0.305	0.280	0.297	0.552	1.937

However Reputation is not emerging as significantly associated with perceived Leaders Agreement about spiritual leadership (r=.070) and there is a minimal positive association with perceived Leader's Importance (r=.24) about spiritual leadership.

Table 3. Correlation and Regression of Spiritual Leadership and Spiritual Climate (Multiple-Linear Regression was employed)

		Spiritual Climate	Leaders Agreement	Leaders Importance	Reputation
Spiritual Climate	Pearson Correlation	1	-.128	-.123	.663
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.501	.519	.000
	N	30	30	30	30
Leaders Agreement	Pearson Correlation	-.128	1	.467	.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.501		.009	.713
	N	30	30	30	30
Leaders Importance	Pearson Correlation	-.123	.467	1	.240
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.519	.009		.202
	N	30	30	30	30
Reputation	Pearson Correlation	**.663**	**.070**	**.240**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.713	.202	
	N	30	30	30	30

Interpretation of Results:

Thumb rule for Cronbach's alpha: value of Cronbach's alpha greater than 0.65 is desirable for factor analysis. Cronbach's alpha value here is 0.852, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is an index used to examine the appropriateness of factor analysis. High values (between 0.5 and 1.0) indicate factor analysis is appropriate. Values below 0.5 imply that factor analysis may not be appropriate.
In the results, the KMO measure is 0.734 which means factor analysis is appropriate.

Bartlett's test of sphericity is a test statistic used to examine the hypothesis that the variables are uncorrelated in the population. In other words, the population correlation matrix is an identity matrix; each variable has no correlation with the other variables (r = 0). In my results, Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant (since p-value=0). This means that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix. Factor analysis may be useful with the data.

Discussion on Findings:

The findings of this study indicate the importance of reputation as a determinant of spiritual climate of teams. Reputations of leaders typically are positively related to trust. Specifically, possessing a good reputation increases the likelihood that leaders will be trusted by their followers. An outcome of this trust is that followers will be more likely to make positive attributions of the intentions of their trusted leaders
In other words the findings suggest that reputation iof a leader affects the team climate but self perception of a leader may be grossly disjointed with his or her reputation. A stark discrepancy between leaders self perception and subordinates' perception about the leader may result in lack of trust and communication in the long run. Leaders self awareness and openness to feedback is important to bridge the gap between his or her self perception and reputation. The findings indicate the role of self awareness of a leader and

importance of the channels and possibilities of open communication between the leader and other team members. Enhanced self awareness make a leader more open to see his or her areas of improvement and the possibility to put in effort in the direction to fill these gaps.

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