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Exploring the Experiences of Teachers regarding Workplace Spirituality in Secondary Schools: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Spirituality is our inner strength and can be considered motivational power as well. Study of Workplace spirituality in organization placed as a universal and essential aspect of human experience which has led to greater recognition of its importance for psychology and educational organizations. This study focuses on the core concept of workplace spirituality and experiences of teachers regarding workplace spirituality in secondary schools. Phenomenology research design was utilized in this study. In this regard, secondary school teachers' perspectives and experiences was explored related to workplace spirituality and semi-structured interviews were used in data collection from 12 participants. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis technique. Experiences of teachers regarding dimensions of workplace spirituality (compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work and transcendence) were explored and data were analyzed to answer the research questions. The results of this study indicated that majority of the teachers perceived presence of compassion, mindfulness, transcendence and meaningful work among teachers of secondary schools. Therefore, it was found that majority of the teachers reported the presence of workplace spirituality in secondary schools. The recommendations for stakeholders are highlighted, and suggestions for future researches are discussed.

Keywords: Experiences; Spirituality; Secondary schools; Teachers; Workplace spirituality;

Introduction

The present organizations are in urgent interest of educated, resourceful, satisfied, dedicated and useful teachers for the accomplishment of their required goals. Most of the teachers are feeling stressed, get down and insecure because of the financial droop, renewal and demotivation in their organization. Every organization for these reservations in individuals sharpens them to search for spiritual presence (Hamilton & Jackson, 1998).

The spiritual paradigm acknowledged that individuals not work only with their hands, but also with their heart and spirit (Ashmos & Duchon 2000; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). It is when individuals work with their spirit they can justify a sort of importance and reason, a sort of satisfaction. It obviously means the workplace spirituality can be achieved where individuals can express themselves completely. In this way, by engaging the state of human involvement with its most spirituality level may decrease pressure, conflict, and absent mindedness. Furthermore, upgrade work accomplishment, workers' prosperity, and nature of work (Krahnke, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Karakas, 2010).

Many researchers explored that workplace spirituality can be an essential component and indicator of success and growth of organization. Numerous studies in these days are constructing such endeavor in order to get accomplishment by applying all its capability to utilize responsibility, work fulfillment and inner inspiration of workers through different workplace spirituality principles (Malik, Danish, & Ali, 2010). Researchers have analyzed that individuals with a higher level of workplace spirituality in the work environment have more advantageous, more joyful and increasingly powerful lives at work (Tischler, 1999).

There is more need for an effective approach to motivate workers' inner state and consciousness in effective work process at workplace. Therefore, at present time the

essence of human being has been exclusively discussed in organizations and management, and the notion of spirituality is developed consequently. (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Moor & Casper, 2006). Spirituality at workplace is a new area of research in management sciences, and significantly it is related to management authorities and worker's physical, social and mental stability, including organizational commitment, organizational development, and internal satisfaction at workplace (Moor & Casper, 2006).

Workplace spirituality is an experience of connectedness, contribution and involvement in performing work at workplace. It was initially activated by the awareness that each is individual motivated by an inside energy and consciousness, which elevates and nurture creativeness, sense of honesty, self-confidence, compassion, loyalty, and courage. All these traits leading to create a friendly and motivational atmosphere characterized by respect, involvement, a sense of purpose, high ethical standards, trust, acceptance, peace, encouragement, understanding, appreciation, achievement, care, helpfulness, and perspective. All these factors thus creating an environment of increasing organizational performance, success, and ultimately guiding the organization to become a popular and successful in its community and industry through appliance of fairness, creativity, vision, responsibility, cooperativeness, charity, productivity, and achievement (Aslam, Qayyum, & Sarwar, 2022; Marques, Dhiman, & King, 2005).

Study of workplace spirituality in organization placed as a universal and essential aspect of human experience which has led to greater recognition of its importance for psychology and educational organizations. A number of educational researchers and psychologists have discussed the greater importance for role of workplace spirituality among teachers, and recognized as a fundamental aspect of the development and performance of educational organizations. It has been stated that teachers have responsibility to nurture the spirituality of their own and students through their education and teaching, and improve their teaching strategies, classroom management skills with this. However, there are virtually lack of comprehensive valid measures of teachers' spirituality at workplace and there is limited empirical support for the relationship between teachers' workplace spirituality with effective teaching and success of educational organizations (Aslam, Kamran, & Begum, 2025; Cecero & Esquivel, 2007).

Spirituality refers to search meaning, inwardly power to do compromise and an inner experience of events of living through behavioral action, thought process and strength of relation with ultimate reality and super force (Aslam & Chaudhary, 2024; Karakas, 2010).

Workplace spirituality emerged as a significant aspect of organizations and an emerging and important concept of research in management sciences (Pawar, 2009). Gotsis and Kortezi (2008) described workplace spirituality as an experience of connectedness, personal participation, transcendence and happiness, observed in different theoretical aspects.

As Shahbaz and Shakeel (2012) indicated that spirituality at the workplace is a developing idea and as the working methodology of workers and the presentation of an organization is likewise being influenced. In their study a significant correlation exists between organization based self-esteem and workplace spirituality of employees.

As indicated by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) the possibility of workplace spirituality in the working environment depends on tolerating that individuals need their brains, bodies and spirits fed in important courses through the work they do. Individuals search out reason in their work past material addition and stately employment attributes.

Workplace spirituality is a kind of treatment for the issues of present day the executives and a source to get the trust among management and workers and contributed towards organizational success and performance (Brown, 2003). By coordinating the different implications and importance of workplace spirituality, Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) defines workplace spirituality as having compassion for others individuals at workplace, practicing a mindful inner consciousness in the quest of meaningful work that facilitates for transcendence of individuals.

As workplace spirituality has been defined by scholars in different ways and there is slight harmony on the meaning of workplace spirituality (Saks, 2011). Researchers relate it with various key dimensions such as sense of connection with workplace, oneself and others, meaningful work, sense of inner life, community, connectedness, organizational norms, inner-self, and personal fulfilment (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; Pawar, 2009).

Similarly, Giacalone, and Jurkiewicz (2004) projected connectedness, organizational norms, and organizational value as the dimensions of workplace spirituality. On the other hand, Liu and Robertson (2011) point out interconnection with human beings, interconnection with a super power, interconnection with nature and all living things as the dimensions of workplace spirituality. However, review of different definitions suggested that the common dimensions of workplace spirituality are compassion, inner life, mindfulness, sense of community, meaningful work and transcendence (Aslam & Chaudhary, 2021; Aslam, Mazhar, Sarwar, & Chaudhary, 2022).

The concentrate of this study is on dimensions of workplace spirituality proposed by Petchsawang and Duchon (2009), namely: compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work and transcendence.

Compassion

Compassion defined as sensations and emotions developed for others in terms of kindness, care, support, help, facilitation and relief. Compassion is consciousness, thoughts and desire to do well for the betterment of others individuals (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). Barsade and O'Neill (2014) conducted a study with 3,200 workers of different organizations. The findings of this study were indicated that the higher level of compassion among works at workplace lead to higher performance, accountability, commitment and job satisfaction of works. Furthermore, they investigated that the higher level of compassion leads to lower level of absenteeism and burnout among works. Moreover, they also found that the higher level of compassion among workers led to higher levels of engagement among workers at workplace, better teamwork and higher job satisfaction. Consequently, the higher level of compassion decreases stress and conflict among workers at workplace.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness defined as a state of awareness, realization, wakefulness, insightfulness and consciousness toward specific situation every time. A mindfulness individual is always free from irrelevant interruptions during performing tasks and is an individual who insightfulness about current situation and does not think about past and future dilemmas and circumstances (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). Mindfulness is an awareness and wakefulness of present actions and occurrence. Mindfulness enhanced stability, effectiveness, control, capability, flexibility, self-confidence, positive emotions, anticipation, self-regulation of behaviour among individuals at workplace (Good, Lyddy, Glomb, Bono, Brown, Duffy, Baer, Brewer, & Lazar, 2015).

Meaningful work

Meaningful work defined as a sense of feelings and emotions of individual on something that is liable with what they want to accomplish in life. Meaningful work gives to individual a sense of pleasure, delight and enthusiasm at their workplace. Meaningful work is a source of articulating inner self of individual at workplace (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). Meaningful work increased determination, ethical values, purposefulness, loyalty, independence, commitment, control, confront, success, mastery, capability, development, service to others, self-realization, fulfilment among workers at workplace (Fairle, 2011).

Transcendence

Transcendence defined as a sense of relation with superior and super force that gives experiences of satisfaction, happiness and enjoyment at workplace. In social sciences research transcendence is a spiritual concept and not a religious concept that comprises connectedness to ultimate reality (God) (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). The presence of transcendence at workplace increased connectedness, satisfaction, kindness, greater purpose, humanity, excitement and familiarity among workers at workplace (Lace, Haeberlein, & Handal, 2017).

Although, it was noticed that workplace spirituality has been studied in management sciences and psychology from many years. Workplace spirituality having positive contribution in work outcome, outcome variables and performance of organization. Therefore, study was to explore the experiences of teachers regarding workplace spirituality in secondary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of teachers regarding workplace spirituality in secondary schools.

Research questions

1. What is the status of workplace spirituality in secondary schools in terms of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work and transcendence?

Research methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of teachers regarding workplace spirituality in secondary schools. Phenomenology research design was utilized in this study. In this regard, secondary school teachers' perspectives and experiences was explored related to workplace spirituality and semi-structured interviews were used in data collection from 12 participants. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis technique.

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants

Participants code	Gender	Designation	Qualification	Experience (years)
P1	Male	SSE	MPhil	3
P2	Female	SESE	MPhil	3
P3	Male	SSE	MPhil	3
P4	Female	SESE	MPhil	2
P5	Male	EST	MPhil	8
P6	Male	SST	MPhil	6

P7	Male	SST	MPhil	7
P8	Male	SESE	MPhil	3
P9	Male	SST	MS	6
P10	Female	EST	MPhil	8
P11	Male	SST	MPhil	7
P12	Male	EST	MPhil	10

Note: P= Participant, N=12

Perceptions regarding workplace spirituality

The thematic analysis for the perceptions of teachers regarding prevailing state of dimensions of workplace spirituality (compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work and transcendence) is utilized.

Research Question: What is the status of workplace spirituality in secondary schools in terms of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work and transcendence?

Compassion

The compassion can be defined as “a desire for mutual caring and affirming others that leads to a responsibility in other who is not as much of beneficial”. The teachers were interviewed about current status of compassion. Teachers’ perceptions were classified into three themes: presence of compassion, lack of compassion and existence of partial compassion. The themes reflect the perceptions of teachers regarding compassion among teachers.

The teachers P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10 and P11 said that compassion was present among teachers. Presence of compassion was reflected in the statement “Teachers of my school having traits of sympathy, caring and encouraging for students and colleagues”.

Only teacher P5 said that there was lack of compassion among teachers. Lack of compassion was reflected in the statement “The qualities like sympathy, caring and affirming in teachers are very rare in these days”.

The teachers P3, P8, and P12 said that there was existence of partial presence of compassion was present among teachers. Existence of partial compassion was reflected in the statement “According to my knowledge aged teachers are less caring and kind but young teachers are more caring and supporting during instructional work”. It can be concluded that maximum teachers perceived presence of compassion and only few teachers’ perceived lack and partial presence of compassion in secondary schools.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness defined as “a state of inner consciousness that about a mind of individual is being present, not wandering with earlier time, future thinking and other disruptions”. The teachers were interviewed about current status of mindfulness. Teachers’ perceptions were classified into two themes: presence of mindfulness and limited presence of mindfulness. These themes reflect the perceptions of teachers regarding status of mindfulness among teachers.

The teachers P6, P7, P10, P11 and P12 said that mindfulness was present among teachers. Presence of mindfulness was reflected in the statement “Mind of the teachers is totally present in teaching and not wandering in past, future and other distraction during instruction”.

The teachers P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P8 and P9 said that mindfulness was limited present among teachers. Limited presence of mindfulness was reflected in the statement “There

are many teachers who are not totally connected with teaching. They are just working as teacher to kill the time till they get some other job of their interest. They are not teachers by choice, they are teachers by chance”. It can be concluded that maximum teachers perceived presence of mindfulness and some teachers perceived limited presence of mindfulness among teachers of secondary schools.

Meaningful work

Meaningful work defined as an individual experience that job is a considerable and important element for lifetime. This also builds feeling of happiness and energy in individual at workplace. The teachers were interviewed about current status of meaningful work. The perceptions of teachers were classified into two themes: presence of meaningful work and presence of partial meaningful work. These themes reflect the perceptions of teachers regarding status of meaningful work among teachers.

The teachers P2, P4, P6, P7, P9, P10, P11 and P12 said that meaningful work was present among teachers. Presence of meaningful work was reflected in the statement “In my opinion mostly teachers consider teaching as significant and meaningful component of life”.

The teachers P1, P3, P5 and P8 said that meaningful work was partial present among teachers. Partial presence of meaningful work was reflected in the statement “Some of the teachers consider teaching as significant and meaningful component of life but majority not”. It can be concluded that maximum teachers perceived presence of meaningful work and some teachers perceived presence of partial meaningful work in secondary schools.

Transcendence

Transcendence is a mystical experience and a positive state of energy, a sense of excellence, transcendence, and experiences of pleasure and happiness. The teachers were interviewed about current status of transcendence. The perceptions of teachers were classified into three themes: presence of transcendence, lack of transcendence and partial presence of transcendence. These themes reflect the perceptions of teachers regarding status of transcendence among teachers.

The teachers P2, P4, P7, P9, P10, P11 and P12 said that transcendence was present among teachers. Presence of transcendence was reflected in the statement “In my institution teachers feel energy, sense of perfection and experiences of happiness in teaching”.

Only teachers P1 said that there was lack of transcendence among teachers. Lack of transcendence was reflected in the statement “Transcendence and its quality are prevailing, but it will take much time. Current status of transcendence is pathetic. Even after completing major assignments before time, we do not feel bliss of happiness of completion”.

The teachers P3, P5, P6, and P8 said that transcendence was partial present among teachers. Partial presence of transcendence was reflected in the statement “Only few teachers feel energy, sense of perfection and experiences of happiness in teaching”. It can be concluded that maximum teachers perceived presence of transcendence and some teachers perceived presence of limited and partial transcendence among teachers of secondary schools.

Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of teachers regarding workplace spirituality in secondary schools. The results of qualitative

analysis indicated that majority of the teachers perceived presence of compassion, mindfulness, transcendence and meaningful work among teachers of secondary schools. Therefore, it was indicated that majority teachers of secondary schools reported the presence of workplace spirituality in secondary schools. Regarding status of workplace spirituality, it was found in qualitative analysis that majority of the teachers reported the presence of workplace spirituality among teachers of secondary schools.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of teachers regarding workplace spirituality in secondary schools. All the four dimensions of workplace Spirituality (compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work and transcendence) were explored through the experiences of secondary school level teachers. The principles of workplace Spirituality may work as a management tool for management authorities of educational institutions in difficult and challenging situations to take effective decision for the betterment of teachers and organizational performance. No any educational organization can survive without the practices of workplace spirituality. Therefore, there is a need for top management to take necessary actions for creating the environment of workplace spirituality in educational organization and spiritual state among teachers. This is because, it act as an essence for effective teaching and the organizational performance and success to sustain them in such a challenging, sensitive, critical and pressurized workplace environment.

The application of workplace spirituality in education system leads to create better workplaces that will attract, retain and develop best efficient teachers by providing them compassionate, meaningful work, meaningful life, transcendent and healthy working environment. Furthermore, the management of educational institutions can plan and develop teachers training programs and policies for creating practices of workplace spirituality in teachers for the success of educational institutions.

Recommendations

1. Further, it is recommended that school administration should create an environment which minimizes the demographic differences and discrimination among teachers of secondary schools for equal building of workplace spirituality.
2. Furthermore, teachers are recommended to share the daily experiences and practices of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work and transcendence in their schools for building of workplace spirituality.
3. Considering the results of this study, officials of School Education Department (SED) should arrange seminars/ conferences/workshops/training of teachers for nurturing of workplace spirituality among teachers.
4. Furthermore, it is recommended that the management of educational institutions treat teachers equally and fairly without any discrimination for building of workplace spirituality among teachers.

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