

Research Paper

Workplace Spirituality and Employee Engagement: Understanding Gender Differences among School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the presence of gender differences between male and female school teachers on various dimensions of workplace spirituality and employee engagement. The workplace spirituality was examined on four dimensions such as compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work and transcendence, whereas employee engagement was assessed on three dimensions including cognitive engagement, emotional engagement and behavioral engagement. The data of 100 teachers working in different government schools was collected using a structured questionnaire employing the convenience sampling technique. The statistical results find no significant gender-based difference in terms of workplace spirituality and employee engagement. Besides, a significant positive correlation also found between these variables. It was concluded that the spiritual values incorporation at workplace could promote employee engagement with the workplace environment. Maintaining a balance between spirituality in workplace environment will be crucial in enhancing the sense of belongingness to their profession.

Keywords: *Workplace Spirituality, Employee Engagement, Gender*

Organizations operate through various psychological, social and behavioral factors that are dynamic in nature. Both organizations and their employees are greatly affected by these factors. Recently, workplace spirituality and employee engagement are two of the emerging factors that have caught the attention of researchers. A verity of definitions has been reported regarding the concept of spirituality depending on the context. Typically, spirituality refers to the individual experiences of the quest for finding the deeper meanings and purpose of life. It represents the realization of connection with human beings, nature and even God. However, owing to the experiential nature, logical explanation of the concept of spirituality is difficult as it involves extending one's inner self to establish connection with a greater being than oneself. The spiritual aspect of life comprises of meaningful existence, self-realization and interconnectedness with other people. Mitroff and Denton (1999) defined spirituality as a manifestation of the individual quest for living a meaningful and integrated life. In many circumstances, work serves as the greatest vehicle through which people can achieve meaning, satisfaction, fulfillment and interconnectedness with other people (Krishnani, 2023). Reave (2005) pointed out that employees adopting a

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spiritual view in relation to their professional engagements tend to regard their work as sacred or service to someone else. It enhances the importance placed on work, thus increasing commitment levels and improving productivity. Further, the research indicates that spiritually inclined people possess qualities like honesty, bravery, compassion and kind behavior in their workplaces (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002).

Workplace Spirituality

Workplace spirituality is the term used to refer to the kind of organizational atmosphere where workers find themselves deriving meanings from their jobs, forming strong personal relationships, and finding harmony between their personal beliefs and the organization's values. The key features include compassion, mindfulness, transcendence, meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment with organizational values. Organizations can significantly benefit from the inclusion of spirituality in the workplace especially considering the highly competitive and contemporary demanding work environment. One of the main reasons why there is increasing emphasis on this topic in organizational studies is because of the issue of work-life balance that many organizations face (Dandona, 2013). Additionally, scholars have also attributed the increase in interest in spirituality to organizational and societal changes that create feelings of uncertainty and lack of security (Hayden, Barbuto, & Goertzen, 2008). According to Krishnakumar and Neck (2002), incorporating spiritual elements in an organizational environment leads to the creation of a better organizational culture characterized by trust, honesty, creativity, and dedication towards common organizational goals. Many organizations that foster spiritually rewarding activities in the workplace end up benefiting their workers as well as themselves. If workers feel that their needs on the spiritual level are recognized by their organizations, they will be inclined towards having more positive attitudes towards their organizations (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Fry, 2003). Going further the basic aspects of workplace spirituality, some researchers like Pandey, Gupta, and Kumar (2016) included other aspects such as Swadharma which referred to meditation and meaningful work, Lokasangraha – showing care for others, authenticity, and creating a community within the workplace.

Employee Engagement

According to Kahn (1990), employee engagement referred to the psychological presence of employees while undertaking their professional responsibilities. In other words, the term engaged employees meant the level to which individuals were involved in their jobs and psychologically attached to their professional responsibilities. Kahn stated that engaged employees used physical energy, cognition, mental power, and emotions while undertaking their professional responsibilities. According to Rich et al. (2010), employees who were engaged were always involved in using their hands, head, and hearts while executing their tasks in organizations. Unlike other employees who just performed their tasks as mandated, engaged employees were usually fully involved in the processes. It was evident from their psychological attachment and deep engagement with work-related activities. The importance of employee engagement could not be ignored as it played a role in individual, organizational, and even corporate success. First, highly engaged employees tended to be energetic and enthusiastic in what they were doing. Second, they showed greater involvement and willingness to invest in achieving organizational objectives. Third, engaged employees experienced pride, passion, excitement, inspiration, and meaningfulness in work. Fourth, they lost sense of the passing of time while working due to full involvement in their work (Kumari & Ubnare, 2023). The idea of employee engagement was related to the

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concepts of social exchange. The theory proposed that employees were motivated to exhibit favourable job behaviours when they perceived organizational support. Organizational support involved the provision of adequate compensation, positive workplace climate, benefits, and other types of resources including emotional support. Therefore, in most situations, employees reciprocated their appreciation for organizational benefits by demonstrating better performance.

Workplace spirituality is another organizational factor that is vital for employee engagement and performance. Spiritual organizations ensured that employees felt the sense of belongingness, internal satisfaction, and harmony with organizational values and goals. Employees who believed that they were part of something bigger than themselves had greater chances of exhibiting better performance. In recent years, employees' engagement is considered an essential measure of their work behaviors and performance in organizations. This phenomenon can be observed in academic environments. Universities are increasingly becoming interested in engaging their faculties in activities that enhance innovation, research, and development of the organization (Margaretha et al., 2021).

Workplace Spirituality and Employee Engagement

Many scholars have studied different dimensions of workplace spirituality and their impact on employees' welfare, organizational success, and engagement (Kumar & Pradeepika, 2020). According to Milliman et al., there exist three primary dimensions of workplace spirituality such as meaningful work, community spirit, and values alignment (Milliman et al., 2023). Altogether, these dimensions show how employees feel connected, fulfilled, and aligned with organizational values. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that spirituality has positive results for employees and organizations. Collins and Porras (1994); Heskett et al. (1997); Grant (1998); Komala and Ganesh (2007); Pawar (2009) proved that work environment spirituality might have positive impacts on both employees and organizations. In particular, employees working in a spiritual environment report higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and interrelations, and organizations have opportunities to improve their productivity and organizational harmony.

While discussing spirituality, most scholars speak about positive outcomes. Nevertheless, some researchers highlight possible risks arising from spiritualization in organizations. As Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) note, the use of spirituality in the organizational context can cause negative consequences if it is related to religion and spirituality is employed only for managerial purposes (to increase productivity, for example). In this case, employees are unlikely to receive any positive effects from spirituality; on the contrary, it will make them feel manipulated and deceived. It means that the practice of spirituality in the organizational context depends greatly on organizational culture. For employees to derive any benefits from spirituality, they need an ethical and supportive working environment that allows authentic participation. Otherwise, the positive impact of spirituality cannot be achieved. As Duchon and Plowman (2005) state, employees who possess inner consciousness or spirituality while performing their tasks tend to be more productive and emotionally connected with their work organizations. In particular, they suggest that organizations that recognize and foster spirituality among employees are more likely to achieve high work engagement and productivity compared to those that neglect such factors.

Apart from this, employee engagement is also associated with inner involvement in work activities. Rich et al. (2010) define employee engagement as a process during which

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employees become deeply involved in their work and contribute their entire personality to it. Similarly, Kahn (1990) says that engaged employees manifest themselves physically, psychologically, and emotionally in the course of work performance. Disengagement involves the opposite process – emotional and mental separation from work. Thus, engaged employees feel focused and involved in their job functions, whereas disengaged employees tend to withdraw mentally from their responsibilities.

Gender Differences in Context of Workplace Spirituality and Employee Engagement

Some researchers have proposed divergent perspectives concerning the impact of gender on perceptions and experiences of workplace spirituality. Employee engagement, on the other hand, can determine the nature of interactions between employees of organizations. Workplace outcomes, in turn, depend on organizational processes facilitated by interactions among organizational members. Although considerable research has been conducted in relation to workplace spirituality and employee engagement, few studies have examined gender-based differences in both these constructs. First of all, spirituality at work seems to depend on personal characteristics as well as social interactions of the individual in question. Females tend to be emotionally expressive, and such a difference can affect attitudes and behaviors of women and men in the workplace (Meyers, Levy, & Maheshwaran, 1991).

Research reveals that women and men have different emotional sensitivity, motivation, and expressiveness at work (Berandi & Guptil, 2008). Bookemeier and Lacy (1987) found out that both men and women have a preference for significant work that offers opportunities to feel accomplished. In accordance with Gender Socialization Theory, males and females understand and assess their surroundings based on different expectations, values, and experiences (Smith & Rogers, 2000). This is likely to lead to differences in perception and experience of spirituality in organizational settings. As Kanwar (2023) suggested, men and women seem to express their spirituality in different ways. Along the same lines, Carol Ochs pointed out that women can add some uniqueness to spirituality due to their special social roles and life experiences. Chandra and Kumar (2025) also noted that demographic variables, including age and gender, play a role in experiencing spirituality in professional environments. Recent findings of Yadollahpour et al. (2024) showed that females in the position of medical interns reported higher levels of compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue. In order to promote spiritual well-being, it is necessary to create a spiritually supportive environment that is emotionally sensitive to gender-related differences.

Most studies provide strong support to the idea that workplace spirituality and employee engagement positively impact employee wellbeing and organizational effectiveness. Both concepts correlate with enhanced performance, commitment, interpersonal relations at work, and career satisfaction. There is still a lack of empirical evidence when it comes to the gender differences related to workplace spirituality and employee engagement, especially in education and teaching.

This study will explore the existing gender differences in terms of four dimensions of workplace spirituality, including compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, and transcendence, as well as three dimensions of employee engagement, which include cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement. Additionally, the study will explore relationships between these variables among school teachers. Thus, the objectives of the current study are:

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- a. To examine the gender difference in terms of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioural engagement among school teachers.
- b. To examine the association among variables of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioural engagement among school teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Sample: The population selected for this study consisted of school teachers working in different government schools of Chapra, Siwan and Gopalganj districts of Bihar. Convenience sampling technique was used to select participants from different government schools. Approximately 140 teachers were approached to participate in the study out of which 100 finally responded.

Table No. 1. Demographic Overview of the Participants (N=100)

S. N.	Name of Demographic	Mean (S.D)	f (%)
1.	Age	45.63 (6.47)	
2.	Year of Experience	9.63 (5.66)	
	Gender: • Male • Female		52 (52.00) 48 (48.00)
3.	Family Background: • Rural • Semi Urban • Urban		78 (78.00) 21 (21.00) 1 (1.00)
4.	Marital Status • Married • Unmarried		97 (97.00) 03 (3.00)

Here, S.D.=standard deviation; f = Number of Participants; % = Percentage of participants

Instruments

For the measurement of workplace spirituality variable, this study adapted the scale of Petchsawang and Duchon (2009). This twenty-two items scale consist four dimensions of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence. Respondents were requested to rate their agreement with each statement on a Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale has been widely used and validated by other researchers, ensuring the reliability and validity of the data collected. To assess employee engagement, a twelve-items scale from Shuck, Adelson and Reio (2017) was adapted. The scale consists the dimensions of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, behavioural engagement. Similar to the workplace spirituality scale, respondents presented their responses on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Procedure

To collect data efficiently a survey questionnaire was designed to gather information containing workplace spirituality dimensions of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence and employee engagement dimensions of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, behavioural engagement. Before administering the survey, informed consent was obtained from each participant to ensure that ethical considerations were met. Out of 140 questionnaires distributed to the participants, 100 participants returned duly filled

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questionnaire. Overall, 52 male participants and 48 female participants responded in the study.

RESULTS

Descriptive analysis along with calculation of 't' ratio was exercised for understanding the gender differences on various dimensions of workplace spirituality and employee engagement. Further, descriptive analysis along with calculation of correlation coefficient 'r' was also executed to see the correlation among various dimensions of workplace spirituality and employee engagement.

Table No. 2: Showing the responses of Male and Female teachers on the variables of Compassion, Mindfulness, Meaningful work, Transcendence, Cognitive Engagement, Emotional Engagement, and Behavioral Engagement.

Name of the Variables	Male		Female		t (df)	p	Cohen's 'd' (LB: UB)	
	M	SD	M	SD				
Compassion	14.44	2.71	14.14	2.73	.54 (98)	0.58	.109	(-.284: .501)
Mindfulness	21.34	4.14	20.37	4.50	1.12 (98)	0.26	.225	(-.169: .618)
Meaningful work	24.92	4.49	23.06	5.29	1.90 (98)	0.06	.380	(-.017: .775)
Transcendence	17.34	3.72	15.93	3.75	1.88 (98)	0.06	.377	(-.020: .772)
Cognitive Engagement	14.13	2.59	13.64	2.38	.97 (98)	0.33	.196	(-.198: .589)
Emotional Engagement	14.21	2.40	13.56	2.72	1.26 (98)	0.20	.251	(-.140: .641)
Behavioural Engagement	14.00	2.72	12.70	2.86	2.31 (98)	0.02	.463	(.064: .859)

Here, M= Mean, SD = standard deviation, df=degree of freedom, LB = lower bound limit, UB= upper bound limit.

An independent sample 't'-test was conducted to compare the gender difference in reference to compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioural engagement. Table No. 2 displays that gender wise there was no significant difference on the variables of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioural engagement. The gender wise differences were minimal on the variables of compassion, mindfulness, cognitive engagement and emotional engagement. However, the gender wise differences were greater on the variables of meaningful work, transcendence and emotional engagement in comparison to other four variables mentioned above but not highly significant.

Table 3: Showing descriptive statistics and Correlation coefficients among variables of Compassion, Mindfulness, Meaningful work, Transcendence, Cognitive Engagement, Emotional Engagement, and Behavioural Engagement.

S.N.	Name of Variables	N	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Compassion	100	14.30	2.71							
2	Mindfulness	100	20.88	4.32	.77**						
3	Meaningful work	100	24.03	4.95	.69**	.77**					
4	Transcendence	100	16.67	3.78	.63**	.71**	.76**				
5	Cognitive Engagement	100	13.90	2.49	.57**	.55**	.61**	.59**			
6	Emotional Engagement	100	13.00	2.57	.28**	.35**	.39**	.40**	.55**		
7	Behavioural Engagement	100	13.38	2.87	.31**	.43**	.37**	.42**	.56**	.64**	

N, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation coefficients. **significant at the level of 0.01

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Correlational analysis was executed to find the correlation among compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioural engagement. Table No. 3 shows that there was positive correlation among the variables of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioural engagement. This indicates that the above-mentioned variables are positively associated with one another. The compassion variable displayed greater correlational value of ($r = .77$, $p < .01$) with the variable mindfulness. Similarly, compassion displayed minimal correlation ($r = .28$, $p < .01$) with the variable emotional engagement.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the gender wise differences in the experience of workplace spirituality and employee engagement among the school teachers. For accomplishing this study, the school teachers of Chapra, Siwan and Gopalganj districts of Bihar were selected as potential samples. The workplace spirituality of these teachers was measured using the adapted version of Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) scale which incorporate four dimensions of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence and employee engagement was measured using adapted scale of Shuck, Adelson and Reio (2017) that consist three dimensions of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, behavioral engagement. An independent sample 't'-test was exercised to see the gender wise differences in the experience of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement.

The result highlighted that gender wise there was no significant differences on the workplace spirituality consisting dimensions of compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence. The results are not in coherence with gender socialization theory of Smith and Rogers (2000) which proposes that males and females tend to regard their work environments with different attitudes and expectations. One of the possible reasons for this might be that these teachers have not experienced the spirituality at their workplace nor the organization motivates their employees for adopting the practice of spirituality at workplace. The results are also inconsistent with views of Kanwar, (2023) which postulates that women and men express their spirituality in dissimilar ways. In our study it was found that women and men expressed their spirituality in a similar way on the workplace. One possible explanation might be that these employees are treated in such a manner that their phenomenology regarding practicing spirituality at workplace remained unaltered.

Similar results were found for employee engagement variable also that consisted the dimensions of cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioural engagement. It was observed that there was no significant difference between male and female on engagement dimensions. This displays that workplace spirituality and employee engagement are highly correlated variables. As per social exchange theory, the employees tend to view their job positively if they feel that they are receiving additional benefits from their employers. This feeling leads higher job satisfaction and paves the platform of better employee engagement. One such aid that could generate the sense of belongingness can be through the promotion of practicing spirituality at workplace.

Finally, it was also observed that there was positive correlation among compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, transcendence, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioural engagement. This connotes that workplace spirituality and

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employee engagement are interlinked and go hand in hand. The strong association also indicates that where workplace spirituality is high, employee engagement tends to be high and organization that doesn't foster the spirituality at workplace may experience lower levels of employee engagement. Thus, our findings are consistent with the study of Burack (1999) that suggests that spirituality increases the commitment by creating an environment of trust in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

In this era of globalization where technical advancement is rapid, meaningful work will provide greater satisfaction to the employees. One of the means to add meaning to their work could be promotion of spirituality to workplace. Apart from investing time and energy in task completion, the employees should be given some time to carry their preferred spiritual practices. This may enhance the loyalty, responsibility and engagement towards their work and management must consider rewarding the beneficial spiritual practices. Better employee engagement will lead into greater employees physical, emotional, and cognitive connection with their work.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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