

Review

Workplace Spirituality: Sustainable Work Experience from a Human Factors Perspective

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Abstract: It is important to note that spiritual matter here is not about a religious, but a human centered view based on self-awareness, life purpose and community engagement. These three aspects of spirituality are the predominant perspective in the literature of organizational changes. These organizational changes are defining new paradigms for work relationships and impacting work environments. Some of these new paradigms are related to work motivation and job satisfaction, which are highly connected to organizational sustainability. Therefore, we choose to investigate workplace spirituality in order to move towards sustainability. In fact, there are already some reviews about workplace spirituality, and the most cited one organizes the topic in three dimensions: first, the inner life dimension that remains in self-centered matters such as identity and values; second, the sense of purpose dimension that refers to work significance perception; and lastly, the sense of community dimension that remains in connection and engagement. Okay, if we already have reviews about that, what is the point? In this review, we choose the predominant perspective on workplace spirituality to turn theoretical discussions into manageable human factors that are expressed by relationship needs at three levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal and institutional. With this new organization of the theme, we expect to support managers to perform actions focused on the type of relationship that is desired to be strengthened. From the review, we identify a total of twelve human factors organized by these three relationship levels, each one with four human factors. The main contribution of this study is a systematic review of workplace spirituality based on a human factor perspective.

Keywords: workplace spirituality; organizational changes; sustainability

1. Introduction

The technological evolution of work is being marked by a new wave of innovation and modernization in industry [1,2]. The changes observed in productive systems have solved several problems; however, they have opened space to debate new issues, such as job satisfaction and work life quality due mostly to a stressful workday focused on productivity [3,4].

From the worker point of view, maintaining productivity requires a self-motivation effort that goes beyond financial rewards [5,6]. In order to support employees in this motivational task, organizations are making efforts with different approaches [7,8]. One of these approaches has been discussed in the organizational changes literature as workplace spirituality, which was defined as “the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work than takes place in the context of community” [9,10].

This review aimed to support these organizational efforts for sustainable operations by turning the recent theoretical discussion on workplace spirituality into manageable human factors expressed by relationship needs at three levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal and institutional.

2. Materials and Methods

The research was marked by two major steps: first was the generation of spiritual human factors by a systematic literature review; after that, a theoretical model was proposed based on analyses of these human factors. The review strategy used was primarily generating a starting nucleus composed of an initial set of articles obtained from successive refinements on the Scopus database. We start from over twenty thousand publications about spirituality in general to two hundred potential articles for review. The first filter used was to limit results to “article or review” and the “business or economics” knowledge areas. At the end of this iteration, there were 842 articles. The second filter limited results to articles that have the words “workplace” and “job satisfaction” in some part of the article. With this iteration, we reached 115 articles. Finally, a third filter was used in order to retrieve some articles that have “workplace” and “job satisfaction” in their text, but were not classified in the “business or economics” areas. With this iteration, another 87 new articles were added. Thus, the starting nucleus was composed of 202 articles from the conjunction of these two samples (i.e., $115 + 87$). This process is illustrated in Figure 1.

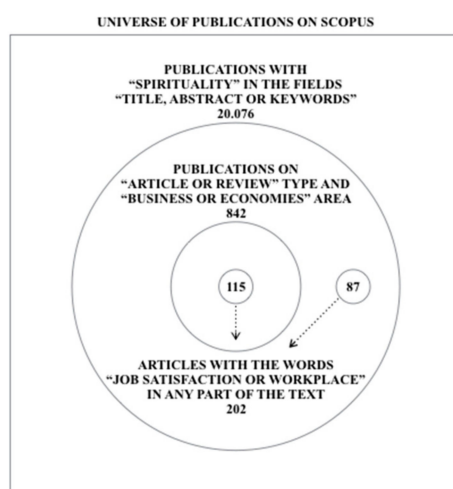


Figure 1. The starting nucleus for review; source: Scopus (accessed in November 2017).

The starting nucleus allowed the generation of the spiritual human factors. This generation process started from a selection of the most relevant articles to be reviewed. The selection was conducted by a title and abstract reading that elected 34 articles to be fully read. The criteria to select these 34 articles were full text free access and correlation to the research scope judge by the adherence of the article with the sample. These 34 articles were analyzed by coding techniques commonly applied to qualitative studies to transform texts, discourses or situations into useful data [11]. Fragments of these selected articles were highlighted, coded, categorized, grouped and decoded. All these steps are illustrated in Figure 2.

The criteria to identify text fragments that could be coded were previously parameterized by definitions or conclusions about spirituality. For decoding, the parameter used was the perspective of human necessity. The following coding methods were used:

- Holistic coding (attribute a code that conveys the central idea of a larger fragment): This was used first to extract the plurality of expressions of spiritual human factors;
- Descriptive coding (a noun that conveys the central idea of the highlighted text was alighted): This was used second to categorize the spiritual human factors. The categories used were based

on the dimensions of spirituality proposed by Ashmos and Duchon [10]. Thirdly, this coding technique was used to group the spiritual human factors by similarity and then translate them into just one resulting factor that expressed the central idea of the grouped spiritual human factors.

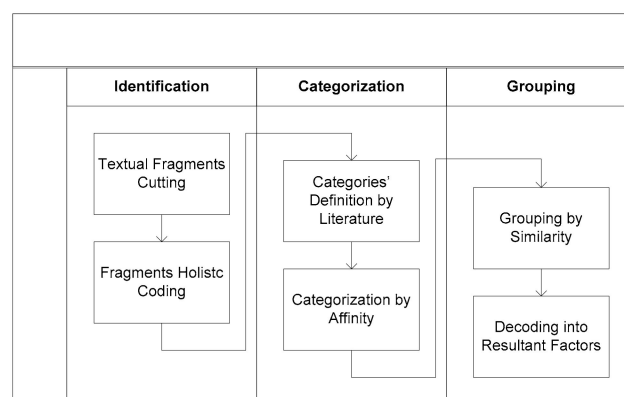


Figure 2. The spiritual human factors' generation; source: [11].

3. Results

Workplace spirituality may refer to an individual's attempts to live his/her own values more fully in the workplace or an organizational effort to support spiritual growth of their employees [12]. The literature had approached this topic through three dimensions: first, inner life or spiritual identity; second, sense of purpose or meaningful work; and third, sense of community or connection. In Table 1, the "X" marks the presence of these dimensions in previous works.

Table 1. Workplace spiritual dimensions.

Reference	Inner Life	Purpose	Community
Ashmos and Duchon [10]	X	X	X
Burack [13]		X	
Fry [14]		X	X
Giacalone and Jurkiewicz [15]		X	X
Graber [16]	X		
Guillory [17]	X	X	
Gupta, Kumar and Singh [18]	X	X	X
Karakas [19]	X	X	X
Kinjerski and Skrypnik [20]	X	X	X
Kurth [21]	X	X	X
Marques, Dhiman and King [22]	X	X	X
Milliman et al. [23]		X	X
Mirvis [24]		X	X
Mitroff and Denton [25]	X		X
Naylor et al. [26]		X	
Neal [27]	X	X	X
Neck and Milliman [28]		X	X
Turner [29]	X		
Pawar [30]	X	X	X
Petchsawang and Duchon [31]		X	X

Source: [32].

Even with the increase of contributed evidence, organizational efforts are still focused on a short locus of action based on leadership, culture and politics approaches [32]. As we are going to see in the results, we can conduct some alternative actions oriented toward specific factors to experience a linkage to ourselves, others and our environment. Despite this holistic view, it is naturally more

common to find literature studies that focus on restricted aspects of workplace spirituality such as performance, commitment, well-being, self-esteem, turnover, decision making, and so on [33–40].

The Twelve Spiritual Human Factors

The first step in the spiritual human factors' generation process is presented in Table 2. In this table, all the human factors that could be extracted from the reviewed articles were registered based on textual fragments. In each fragment, a bold clipping is marked to represent the codification system. The highlighted words unfold into the spiritual human factors. Each highlighted section corresponds to one factor linked to the holistic coding by a numerical listing.

Table 2. Spiritual human factors' generation.

Reference	Text Fragment	Holistic Code
Ahmad and Omar [41]	(1) ... employees sharing and experiencing some common attachment ...	(1) shared tasks and goals
	(2) ... having a deep sense of purpose in one's work or meaningful work ...	(2) meaning at work
	(3) ... having a deep connection to others or a sense of community ...	(3) connection to others
	(4) ... experiencing a strong sense of alignment with the organization's values ...	(4) alignment to organization
Albuquerque et al. [42]	(5) ... social identity linked to the organization ...	(5) linked self-image
	(6) ... able to provide a sense of joy ...	(6) joy at work
	(7) ... allows high quality connections ...	(7) quality of work relationships
Altaf and Awan [6]	(8) ... performing a particular task ... that results in a betterment of self and others ...	(8) evolution of yourself and/or others
	(9) ... prizes creativity, cultivate inclusion, develops principles, and promotes vocation ...	(9) continuity of work
Azad and Niknafs [43]	(10) ... interdependence between the human being and the world where we live ...	(10) interdependence in life
Baran et al. [44]	(11) ... fulfills important socio-emotional needs for workers ...	(11) attention to socio-emotional needs
Chawla and Guda [34]	(12) ... spirituality as oneness with all other beings ...	(12) coexistence and unity
Cunha et al. [45]	(13) ... values that may guide the daily actions and decisions ...	(13) values that guide actions and decisions
Daniel [46]	(14) ... theory of humanocracy ... if human needs within the organization are considered ...	(14) personality in work relationships
De Klerk J.J. [47]	(15) ... a sense of unity with the universe and the awareness of life force ...	(15) contemplation of life
Doram et al. [48]	(16) ... bring their whole selves to work, through recognition and acceptance ...	(16) weaknesses and vulnerabilities acceptance
Duchon and Plowman [49]	(17) ... be engaged in matters of importance in a context larger than economic matters ...	(17) engagement in community
Ghazzawi et al. [50]	(18) ... deity as the forces of nature ... deity as humanity ...	(18) humanity and nature recognition

Table 2. Cont.

Reference	Text Fragment	Holistic Code
Hayashi [51]	(19) ... self-actualization need ... a higher purpose for the person's own life ... (20) ... transcendence need, which represents "connecting to something beyond ...	(19) development and self-aware (20) legacy creation
Houghton et al. [32]	(21) ... being connected with one's complete self, others and the entire universe ...	(21) belonging and connection
Jurkiewicz and Giacalone [52]	(22) ... depend upon their workplaces for ... social identity ...	(22) social identity
Kessler [53]	(23) ... inspires one toward certain ends or purposes that go beyond self ... (24) ... a fundamental shift of mind ... the insight that one has gone the wrong way ... (25) ... a clear vision of the future state ... attractive and realistic image ... (26) ... the process of selling a dream ...	(23) purpose beyond self (24) flexible mindset (25) vision of future (26) ideals into images
Kinjerski and Skrypnek [54]	(27) ... profound feelings of well-being ...	(27) positive thinking
Kolodins et al. [55]	(28) ... given that the relationship between values and organizational culture ...	(28) values and culture congruence
Kumar and Kumar [7]	(29) ... live integrated lives ; who are no longer satisfied to park their faith, tradition or identity at the door ... (30) ... search for significance in everyday life, including benevolence ...	(29) individuality and its plurality acceptance (30) daily values application
Kutcher et al. [56]	(31) ... acceptance and appreciation of employees ...	(31) institutional recognition
Lazar [57]	(32) ... understanding answers to ultimate questions about life ...	(32) existential reflections
Marques [58]	(33) ... individual goodwill ; leading to the collective creation of a motivational organizational culture ... (34) ... tolerance, respect, and acceptance of other religious and spiritual traditions; promoting a pluralistic , non-coercive, and non-degrading working environment ...	(33) motivation and goodwill (34) acceptance of religious plurality and beliefs
Marschke et al. [59]	(35) ... are less likely to compromise their basic beliefs and values in the workplace ...	(35) respect for individual's beliefs and values

Table 2. Cont.

Reference	Text Fragment	Holistic Code
McCormick [60]	(36) ... harmonize his/her life with the Beyond ...	(36) life harmonization
	(37) ... life's deeper motivations and an emotional connection to God ...	(37) connection with your god
McGuire [61]	(38) ... strong values with regard to community, family, and service ...	(38) servant stance
Noor and Arif [4]	(39) ... promote individual feelings of satisfaction through transcendence ...	(39) own satisfaction recognition
Pryal and Ramkumar [62]	(40) ... employee emotional intelligence is associated positively and strongly with ...	(40) zeal for intrapersonal issues
Ramnarin and Parumasur [63]	(41) ... allow employees to reach their full potential . "If employees bring their physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual ...	(41) challenges in all individual spheres
Rego et al. [64]	(42) ... find ultimate purpose in life and to live accordingly ...	(42) ultimate life purpose
	(43) ... provides a sense of competence and mastery ...	(43) quality employment of skills
	(44) ... realize their full potential ...	(44) appropriated task level
Sani et al. [65]	(45) ... cannot go alone without the leadership support ...	(45) leadership support
	(46) ... opportunity to demonstrate various aspects of one's personality ...	(46) personality expression
Thakur and Singh [9]	(47) ... integrity, respect for people of all kinds ...	(47) kindness toward people
Van Der Walt and De Klerk [12]	(48) ... deeper connection with people, support, freedom of expression, and genuine caring ...	(48) intimate and reliable relationships
	(49) ... capacity for organizations to influence and organize meaning for their employees ...	(49) clear communication and conflict resolution
	(50) ... providing autonomy , responsibility, task significance, identity, complexity, challenge and variety ...	(50) decision autonomy compatible with task
	(51) ... being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy ...	(51) moments of fun and good humor
Van Der Walt and De Klerk [66]	(52) ... recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work ...	(52) attention to inner life
Word [67]	(53) ... a calling can help us understand the way in which work connects to individuals outside of economic need ...	(53) vocation recognition
	(54) ... job satisfaction was not directly impacted by an individual's spirituality, but through the integration of spirituality within the work ...	(54) spiritualized environment

Source: references in the table.

The second step of the spiritual human factors' generation process refers to the categorization of these factors according to spiritual dimensions proposed by Ashmos and Duchon [10]. In Table 3, the spiritual human factors are presented according to their Table 2 listing number and grouped into categories by their affinity to workplace spiritual dimensions. In this table, we can see a balance in the total of factors in each category.

Table 3. Categorization of spiritual dimensions by affinity.

Inner Life Dimension	Purpose Dimension	Community Dimension
5; 10; 12; 13; 15; 18; 19; 21; 22; 23; 24; 27; 28; 30; 32; 36; 37; 40; 52 Total of 19 Factors	2; 3; 4; 8; 9; 17; 20; 25; 26; 38; 39; 41; 42; 43; 44; 53 Total of 16 Factors	1; 6; 7; 11; 14; 16; 29; 31; 33; 34; 35; 45; 46; 47; 48; 49; 50; 51; 54 Total of 19 Factors

Source: Table 2.

The results of the third and last step of the review process are presented in Table 4. At this stage, the spiritual human factors were grouped according to their similarity and decoded in a resulting factor. At the end of this process, twelve spiritual factors were generated. For each spiritual dimension, four human factors were generated. In Table 4, the highlighted number between grouped factors represents the dominant factor that has more influence on factor description.

Table 4. Grouping spiritual human factors by similarity.

Dimension	Spiritual Factor	Description	Grouped Factors
Inner Life	Identity	Experience an integral self-awareness (i.e., physical, emotional, spiritual and social)	5; 19 ; 22
	Belonging	Experience belonging and connection with you, others and the universe	10; 12; 21 ; 37
	Values	Experience the employment, by you and your colleagues, of your values at work	13; 28; 30 ; 36
	Inner Life	Experience zeal for internal issues (e.g., feelings, beliefs and values)	15; 18; 23; 24; 27; 32; 40 ; 52
Purpose	Coherence	Experience the level of tasks appropriate for personal skills	9; 25; 43; 44
	Cohesion	Experience challenges with gradual evolution	8; 17; 38; 41
	Purpose	Experience daily engagement with a legacy that integrates with your life	2; 3; 4; 20
	Meaning	Experience alignment of your vocation and sources of job satisfaction (i.e., apply talents and qualities at work)	26; 39; 42; 53
Community	Climate	Experience a mild organizational climate (i.e., promoting autonomy, communication and cooperation)	6 ; 49; 50; 54
	Community	Experience respect for basic beliefs and values	1; 31; 34; 35 ; 47
	Connection	Experience personality in work relationships (i.e., high quality relationships)	7; 11; 14 ; 45; 48
	Environment	Experience an organizational environment open to expression of personality in an integral way	16; 29; 33; 46 ; 51

Source: Table 2.

4. Discussion

The result analyses come up with a pattern in the way that spiritual human factors can be organized. This pattern reveals that inside each spiritual dimension, the factors can be presented by the same structure based on three relationship levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal

and institutional. The intrapersonal level represents a characteristic of internal orientation about the spiritual dimension, while the interpersonal level an external orientation and the institutional level an organizational orientation. This pattern is illustrated in Figure 3, where different circles represent the arrangement of spiritual factors based on these three relationship levels. In the center of this schema, the factor that expresses the main necessity related to the spiritual dimension is presented.



Figure 3. Spiritual human factors' arrangement pattern; source: analyses.

Based on this pattern, we analyzed the three spiritual dimensions: inner life, purpose and community. The dimension of inner life is comprised of a necessity to organize existential issues such as values, self-image and belonging. The attendance to this need leads to a state of serenity generated by harmonization of these existential questions. In Figure 4a, the spiritual factors in this dimension can be observed. The inner life factor refers to zeal for internal and personal issues, for example feelings, beliefs and values. Themes such as contemplation, humanity, nature, essence, existence, truth and self-knowledge are articulated to express this spiritual need. The values factor refers to personal guidelines for behaviors. This spiritual need represents a demand of alignment between organizational and personal values. The identity factor refers to self-awareness in its entirety. This spiritual need represents a demand for understanding your self-image. The belonging factor refers to capacity for empathy, that is to establish emotional connections. This spiritual need represents a demand for self-positioning to external issues.

The dimension of purpose comprises a necessity to recognize meaning in daily actions. The attendance to this need leads to a state of serenity generated by finding justification and motivation for daily actions. In Figure 4b, the spiritual factors in this dimension can be observed. The purpose factor refers to your daily commitment with a legacy that integrates with all areas of your life. Themes such as future, quality, challenge, evolution, engagement, relevance and legacy are articulated to express this spiritual need. This spiritual need represents a demand for targeting daily actions towards a greater goal. The meaning factor refers to recognition of your contribution to others with the application of your best individual skills. This spiritual need represents a demand for usefulness and relevance at work recognition. The cohesion factor refers to a parallel evolution of professional and personal skills experienced at work. This spiritual need represents a demand for self-development and integration. The coherence factor refers to alignment between tasks' difficulty level and skills. This spiritual need represents a demand for equilibrated challenges and tasks' accomplishment.

The dimension of community is comprised of a necessity for reciprocity and respect for individuality. The attendance to this need leads to a state of serenity generated by sharing and acceptance of authenticity. In Figure 4c, the spiritual factors in this dimension can be observed. The community factor refers to respect for each individual's basic beliefs and values. Themes such as communication, autonomy, respect, gentleness, attention, support and personality are articulated to express this spiritual need. This need represents a demand for the acceptance of your identity.

The connection factor refers to empathy development through attention to personal issues in work relationships. This spiritual need represents a demand for maintaining integrity including your vulnerabilities. The climate factor refers to autonomy, communication and cooperation in professional relationships. This spiritual need represents a demand for lightness in work human interactions. The environment factor refers to freedom to express your personality in an integral way. This spiritual need represents a demand for expressing your individuality and authenticity.

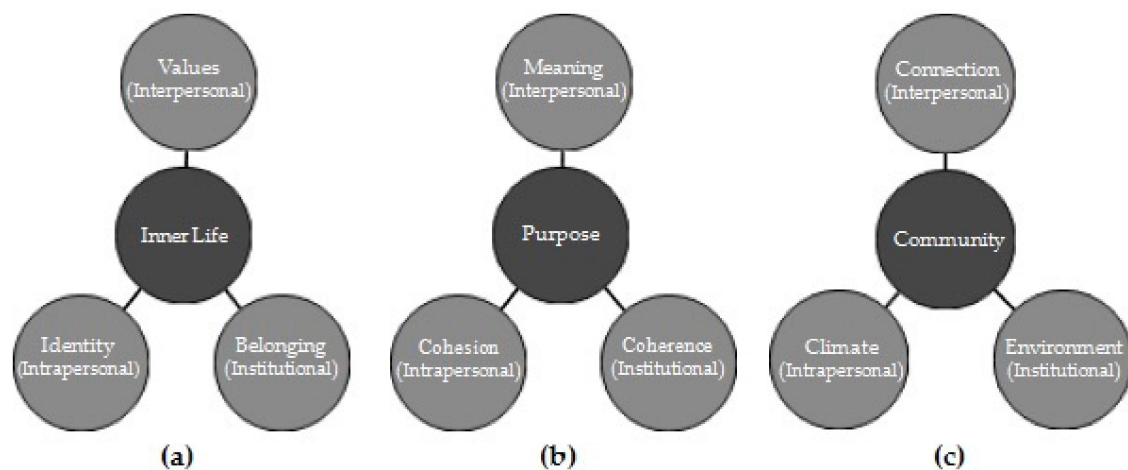


Figure 4. The twelve spiritual human factors by dimension: (a) Spiritual factors of Inner life dimension; (b) Spiritual Factors of purpose dimension; (c) Spiritual factors of community dimension; source: Table 2.

It is important to note that this review adds a new framework to the existent literature of spirituality at work. If the researcher wants to access the major theoretical developments in this area, researchers can read great reviews such as Benefiel et al. [68] that explore the history and future research agenda for the domain definitions, constructs, frameworks and models.

5. Conclusions

This literature review shows that workplace spirituality considers three dimensions: inner life, sense of purpose and sense of community. The main contribution of this review was the generation of workplace spiritual human factors from the previous literature. The inner life dimension brings four human factors: identity, values, belonging and inner life. The purpose dimension brings another four factors: meaning, cohesion, coherence and purpose. The community dimension brings the last four factors: connection, climate, environment and community.

This perspective brings a practical approach to the issue by proposing that by meeting these spiritual needs, satisfaction and work life quality can be improved. The usage of this model can also contribute to individuals and organizations in the matter of understanding that their spiritual health needs attention, as well as their body and mind. Besides that, the model expresses a pattern in the organization of spiritual human factors. This pattern was interpreted in the model by relationship levels that refer to different manifestations of spiritual needs. These relationship levels were defined as intrapersonal, interpersonal and institutional. The intrapersonal level represents spirituality manifestation in a relationship with you, while the interpersonal level represents relationships with other people, and the institutional level represents relationships with organizations.

The main application of this finding was on workplace design or work design with the aim of achieving more sustainable relationships at work. For example, the spiritual human factors' knowledge can be used in strategic planning to increase empathy in the process. The spiritual aspect on organizational changes can also support efforts to make work and its environment a better daily experience. At the team level, the attention to spiritual factors can add self-awareness, motivation

and engagement. Finally, spirituality in the workplace is therefore about fostering opportunities for personal growth, opportunities to contribute significantly to society, as well as being more attentive to colleagues, bosses, subordinates and clients. It is about meeting your needs for inner life, purpose, and community, which means a more sustainable way to live, work and grow.

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