A STUDY OF WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY, CUSTOMER ORIENTATION AND SALES ORIENTATION AMONG INDUSTRIAL AND B2B SALESPEOPLE IN GUJARAT

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The old spiritual teachings ask us to experience spirit and its delight apart from life. The new spiritual understanding is to bring spirit into every moment into life, in every act, releasing its infinite potential, and enabling us to experience the infinite delight of existence.

-Sri Aurobindo

"There is then no sacred or profane, spiritual or sensual, but everything that lives is pure and void."

- Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

Abstract

The phenomenon of Spirituality in Management has been researched and commented by academicians all over the world. Workplace spirituality having its roots in Organisational Behaviour, Business Ethics, Education and Nursing is evolving as an area of academic enquiry and has also been accepted as a legitimate domain of Management Research. The literature in Workplace Spirituality has very few studies which link the literatures of Sales Management with Workplace Spirituality.

This study aims to explore some of the consequences of Workplace Spirituality among the B2B Sales Professionals. The study proposes to understand:

- The awareness, presence and practice of the phenomenon of Workplace Spirituality in Industrial and B2B sales professionals
- What are the consequencesof this presence, awareness and practice of Workplace Spirituality among Industrial and B2B sales professionals
- What is the relationship between Workplace Spirituality, Customer Orientation and Sales Orientation among Industrial and B2B sales professionals

The review of the literature on Workplace Spirituality indicates that there are very few studies which relate the domain of Workplace Spirituality with Sales Management. This study examines the relationship between Workplace Spirituality and Sales Orientation, Customer Orientation among Industrial and B2B salespeople

Introduction

Spirituality in Management has been accepted as a legitimate domain of enquiry and research in the field of Management studies. Special issues on Spirituality in Management by leading journals related to Management studies, doctoral work by students, publication of Handbooks of Workplace Spirituality and related topics have strengthened this claim.

The Academy of Management, USA, created a MSR (Management, Spirituality and Religion) group in the academy in 2004, which focuses on Spirituality and related research in the field of Management. Several peer reviewed Management journals have come out with special issues on Spirituality in Management (see - Journal of Organisation and Change Management, Journal of Management Enquiry, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Management Education, Journal of Management, Spirituality, and Religion) and studies linking Spirituality to Management studies, doctoral work by students, publication of Handbooks of Workplace Spirituality and related topics have strengthened this claim. In this paper the author makes an attempt to link and explore the domains of Workplace Spirituality and B2B sales with the help of literature review from existing studies, an exploratory survey on antecedents and consequences of workplace spirituality among B2B salespeople. The paper attempts to create a model which explores the antecedents and consequences of Workplace Spirituality among B2B Salespeople. This model can be further refined and tested by rigorous empirical research.

Literature Review

The human relations movement, humanistic psychology advocated by Maslow, Fromm, Rogers, the Ecology movement and the business ethics phenomenon can be said to be the precursors of the rise of spirituality in Management. Neal (1999) identifies more reasons for the same:

The changing psychological contract for work;

Changing demographics and aging of the workforce;

The Millennium Effect;

Increased interest in self-help groups and personal growth;

September 11, 2001 and terrorism.

Workplace spirituality before it evolved and matured into a research topic has been discussed in the mental health, psychiatry, nursing ethics and well being literature. Specifically in Management, the Workplace Spirituality movement grew from the OB discipline. Pawar (2009) traces the roots of Workplace Spirituality in the OB concepts of Transformational leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Organizational Support and Procedural Justice as important precursors in OB to Workplace Spirituality. Aupers

(2006) argues that spirituality in public organizational life cannot be dismissed as a mere hype or the latest management fashion. Self-spirituality is a well-defined doctrine with a strong potential for socialization.

Bell & Taylor (2004) argue that Spiritual Management Development has evolved from Humanistic Psychology. They lament the fact that SMD focuses only on the individual and disregards the political, organizational aspects of inner development. Steingard (2005) proposes a preliminary model of a theory of spirituality informed management that integrates traditional and spiritual approaches to management. The model has 3 dimensions: awareness, change and manifestation. A spiritually informed management theory is discussed which is a philosophical and metaphysical framework for integrating spirituality and management. A synthesis of these diverse fields is attempted in his research.

The characteristics of spirituality in management are delineated by many authors in various ways. Ashar & Lane (2004) discuss the old and new business paradigms, defines spirituality, and provides data that demonstrate the eagerness of employees to embrace spirituality at work. As these data are based on the current study with a different population of executives, they render further significance and credibility to Mitroff and Denton's findings (1999). In addition, the article suggests a link between two concepts, spirituality and success, proposes a model of success that contains elements that fit the emerging business paradigm, and discusses the implications of the findings to management scholars and practitioners.

Marques (2005) informs us that the call for- and interest in spirituality in the workplace is here to stay, given the rising number of publications on the topic, and the many reasons that nourish this call on a global level. Although there is still a broad divergence in interpretations for the word spirituality, as well as for the phenomenon, spirituality in the workplace, there are common themes to be detected among the vast amount of available opinions and information regarding this topic.

Development of an area of enquiry into a scientific field of enquiry requires that the domain has well accepted definitions, dimensions and measures which are proven, and well known among the scholars and experts in the field. Workplace Spirituality though well

researched and widely discussed lacks in a commonly accepted definition. As Table 1 depicts the definitions do have some common dimensions like inner life, a sense of connectedness, community, meaningful and purposeful work. Table 2 depicts some of the dimensions of the definitions of Workplace Spirituality.

Table 1: Definitions of Workplace Spirituality

Definition	Source
the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of the community	Ashmos & Duchon(2000)
A framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy, page 13	Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, (2003)
Experience of employees who are passionate about and energized by their own work, find meaning and purpose in their work, feel they can express their complete selves at work and feel connected to those with whom they work, page 27	Kinjerski & Skrypnek, (2004)
Workplace opportunities to perform meaningful work in the context of a community with a sense of joy and respect for inner life	Rego et al (2007)

Source: Created by the author from literature

Table 2: Dimensions of Workplace Spirituality

Dimensions	Source
Physical, affective, cognitive, interpersonal, spiritual and mystical, page 37	Kinjerski & Skrypnek(2004)
Inner life, meaningful work & community	Ashmos & Duchon, (2000)
Team's sense of community, alignment with organizational values, sense of contribution to society, enjoyment at work, opportunities for inner life	Rego et al (2007)
Self Work Immersion, Interconnectedness, Self Actualisation	Moore & Casper (2006)

Source: Created by the author from literature

One of the sure signs that an area of enquiry is firmly established as a scientific area of discussion, especially in the positivist paradigm, is that it should have valid and reliable measures of relevant construct. Spirituality at work, after initially drawing from the

religious literature, has valid and reliable measures of its own which can be used to test various propositions related to various aspects of the phenomenon.

Though still in its nascent stage, Workplace Spirituality literature has ample number of empirical studies. These studies have used measures which have been developed by authors themselves. Most of the measures have not been validated through multiple studies and contexts.

Table 3 lists the common measures used for Workplace Spirituality.

Table 3: Measures of Workplace Spirituality

Name of the Instrument	Dimensions	No of Items	Developed by
Spiritual Climate	Meaningful work, sense of community, lokasangrah, meditative work	16	Pandey Ashish et al (2008)
Spirituality at Work	Contributing to Inner life, meaningful work, community	21	Ashmos & Duchon, (2000)
Spirituality at Work	Meaningful work, sense of community, alignment between individual and org. values, Inner life	19	Rego & Cunha (2007)
Individual Spirituality – Daily Spiritual Experiences Scale	Awe, gratitude, mercy, connectedness with the transcendent, compassionate love, desire for closeness to God	16	Underwood (2006)
Spirituality – Religiosity Measure	Relationship with God or Higher Power, Relationship with others, Relationship with Self, Religious participation and self identification	40	Neff (2008)
Spiritual Competence Scale	Service towards humankind, Feeling of inner peace and calm, Being vision and value led, Interconnectedness, Respect for others, Self Awareness	19	Singh Tripti

Source: Created by the author from literature

Current Research Gap

There are very few studies in the Spirituality literature which focus on spiritual practices of the salesperson. The domains of Sales and Workplace Spirituality have just begun to be linked by some researchers by way of conceptual and some empirical papers.

The focus remains on the salesperson and his experience of individual spirituality at work. Badrinarayan & Madhavram (2008) propose a model of antecedents and consequences of Workplace Spirituality for a selling organization, backed up by enough empirical evidence for their propositions. Porter et al (2003) propose that a state of wellness experienced by a salesperson will be positively associated with a salesperson's level of extrinsic job satisfaction. A state of wellness experienced by a salesperson will be positively associated with a salesperson's level or degree of organizational commitment. A state of wellness experienced by a salesperson will have an inverse relationship with a salesperson's propensity to leave A state of wellness experienced by a salesperson will be positively associated with a salesperson's job performance.

Chawla & Guda (2012) found that Workplace spirituality could be a causal precursor to the four major relationship oriented characteristics of Customer Orientation, Service Orientation, Adaptive Selling, Ethical Selling behavior. Their paper builds propositions using a common element of self interest transcendence in workplace spirituality and relationship selling constructs. Workplace spirituality in sales organization will negatively influence salespersons deviant behavior.

Standifer et al (2010) in his study on The Influence of Spirituality on Buyer Perception within Business to Business Marketing Relationships: A Cross Cultural Exploration and Comparison found that in US samples, no positive relationship between spirituality and trust existed but significant positive relationship was found between relationship and commitment. In Chinese samples there was a positive relationship between spirituality and trust and commitment. All 3 relational variables partially mediated the link between spirituality and trust in US samples.

However in all of the above literature none focuses on B2B salespeople and their relationship with Workplace Spirituality. The essential contribution of this paper is to expand the domain of Workplace Spirituality research by including B2B sales in its scope of investigation.

Theoretical Model

The model proposed as the antecedents and consequences of the Workplace Spirituality is depicted in Figure 1. From the literature study, focus group interviews and in-depth interviews with B2B salespeople, three antecedents of Workplace Spirituality, namely Spiritual Wellness Lifestyle, Sense of Gratitude and Long term Orientation are proposed. The consequences of Workplace Spirituality are proposed as Sales Orientation and Customer Orientation among B2B and Industrial salespeople.

Figure : 1
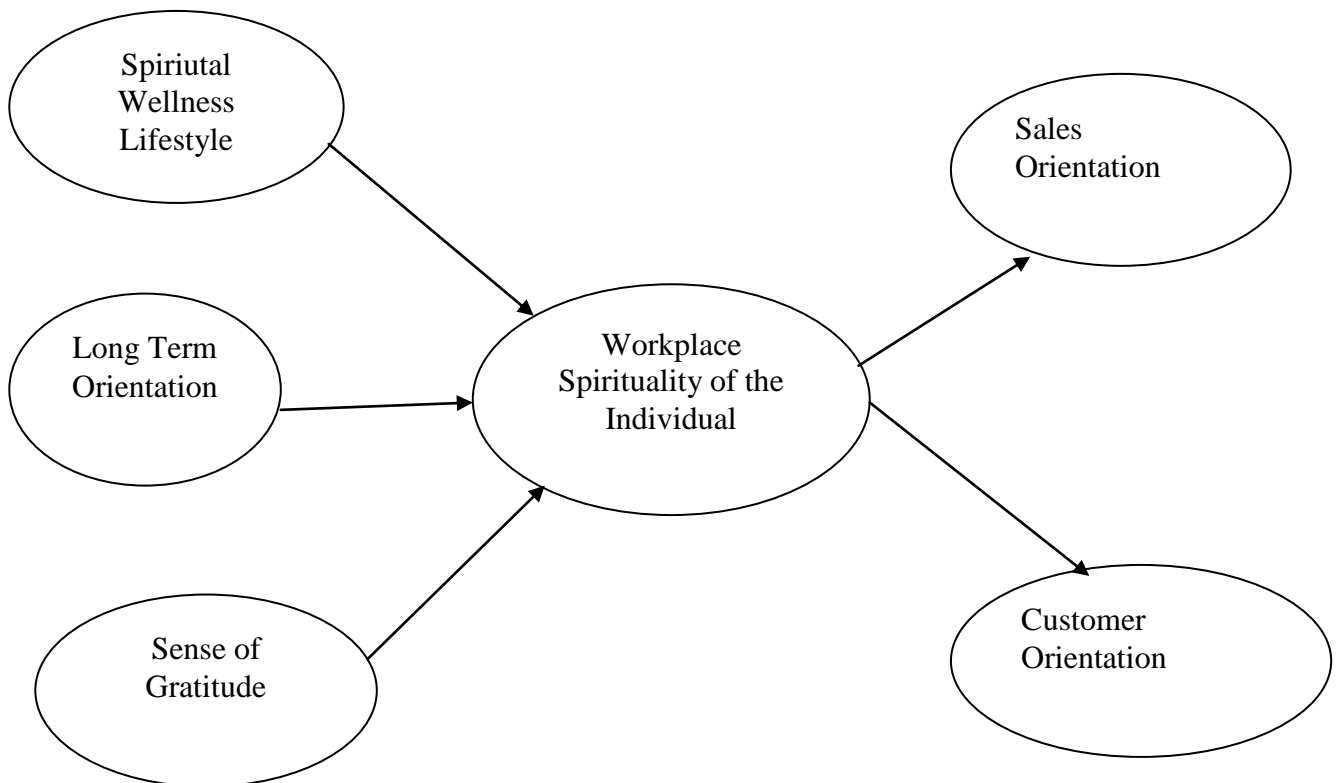
Definition of Constructs and their measures

Workplace Spirituality of the Individual

Individual spirituality has been measured with daily spiritual experiences scale (DSES). Underwood (2006, p. 2)[2] notes that DSES is designed "to measure ordinary or 'mundane' spiritual experiences . . . It measures experiences of relationship with and awareness of the divine or the transcendent . . . The 16-item scale includes constructs such as awe, gratitude, mercy, sense of connectedness with the transcendent, compassionate love, and desire for closeness to God. It also includes measures of awareness of discernment/inspiration and transcendent sense of self (Underwood, 2006, p. 2).

Spiritual Wellness Lifestyle

Spiritual wellness has been conceptualized in terms of an awareness of the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of one's health and with a lifestyle which involves prayer/meditation, exercises, family and friends support and a sense of responsibility for the work allotted to oneself. A seven item scale was developed based on the above definition.

Long term Orientation

LTO is the cultural value of viewing time holistically, valuing both the past and the future rather than deeming actions important only for their effects in the here and now or the short term. As such, individuals scoring high in LTO value planning, tradition, hard work for future benefit, and perseverance. (Bearden et al, 2006) It is measured with the help of Long Term Orientation measure developed by Bearden et al.

Sense of Gratitude

The grateful disposition as a generalized tendency to recognize and respond with grateful emotion to the roles of other people's benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains. (McCullough, Emmons, Tsang, 2002) Grateful people appear to be different from their less grateful counterparts in three interesting psychological domains: (a) emotionality/well-being, (b) prosociality, and (c) spirituality/religiousness.

People with stronger dispositions toward gratitude tend to be more spiritually and religiously minded. Not only do they score higher on measures of traditional religiousness, but they also score higher on nonsectarian measures of spirituality that assess spiritual experiences (e.g., sense of contact with a divine power) and sentiments (e.g., belief that all living things are inter connected) independent of specific theological orientation. It has been measured with a measure developed by McCullough, Emmons and Tsang.

Customer Orientation and Sales Orientation

The SOCO scale (Saxe & Weitz, 1982) was developed to measure the degree to which salespeople engage in customer-oriented selling. The scale consists of 24 statements that describe ways in which a salesperson might act with a customer or prospect, and requires respondents (salespeople) to indicate the proportion of customers with whom they act in a manner described by scale items.

The selling orientation-customer orientation scale (SOCO) scale measures the customer orientation of marketing professionals. The self assessment helps to evaluate their desire to help customers, assess their needs, offer satisfactory products, adequately describe products, and use deceptive or manipulative selling tactics.

Hypothesis

Null hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between sales professionals spiritual wellness lifestyle and spirituality at work

Null hypothesis 2: There is no relationship between long term orientation of the sales professional and spirituality at work

Null hypothesis 3: There is no relationship between a sense of gratitude of the salesperson and spirituality at work.

Null hypothesis 3: There is no relationship between sales professionals spirituality at work and customer orientation

Null hypothesis 5: There is no relationship between sales professional's spirituality at work and sales orientation

Methodology and Data Collection

A survey was carried out through the questionnaire sent to B2B and Industrial sales professionals via a link on their email ids. The responses were received in the form of a csv file and were recoded into an excel sheet. A total of 116 responses were used for the analysis. Sales professionals were people who are either working or have worked as sales executives or sales managers in the areas of business services, capital goods, material and components or raw material suppliers in B2B domain. The profile details are listed in Table 4.

Profile of the Respondents

Personal Details	Frequency (%)
Education	
Diploma	None
Graduate	33(28.4)
Post Graduate	73(62.9)
Professional Degree	10(8.6)
Age	
25 or less	23 (19.8)
26 to 30	40(34.4)
31 to 35	2(1.7)
36 to 40	23(19.8)
41-45	9 (7.8)
46 to 50	16(13.8)
51 or older	3 (2.6)
Marital Status	
Married	75(64.7)
Unmarried	37(31.9)
Separated	2(1.7)
Widowed	2(1.7)
Gender	
Males	81(69.8)

Female   35(30.2)

Years with the firm
0-2 years   56(48.3)
3-4 years   20(17.2)
5 – 10 years   23(19.8)
More than 10 years   17 (14.7)

Firm Classification
Business Services   73(62.9)
Capital Goods   9(7.7)
Component parts   13(11.2)
Raw material   21(18.1)

Table 5

Reliability Analysis

Scale Name	Coefficient Alpha Value	Number of Items
Spiritual Wellness Scale	0.649	7
Sense of Gratitude Scale	0.517	6
Long Term Orientation Scale	0.696	7
Daily Spiritual Experience Scale	0.935	16
Customer Orientation Scale	0.891	12
Sales Orientation Scale	0.893	12

Analysis and Results

Hypothesis 1 : A correlation analysis between spiritual wellness and spirituality at work of the salesperson reveals that the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient is .386 and the value is significant ($p < 0.01$) Based on the high significance of the correlation, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Correlations

		Spiritual Wellness	Workplace Spirituality
Spiritual Wellness	Pearson Correlation	1	.386[**]
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	116	116
Work Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	.386[**]	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	116	116

Hypothesis 2 : A correlation analysis between long term orientation and spirituality at work of the salesperson reveals that the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient is .329 and the value is significant (p <0.01) Based on the high significance of the correlation, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Correlations

		Workplace Spirituality	Long term Orientation
Work Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	1	.329[**]
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	116	116
Long Term Orientation	Pearson Correlation	.329[**]	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	116	116

Hypothesis 3 : A correlation analysis between sense of gratitude and spirituality at work of the salesperson reveals that the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient is .452 and the value is significant (p <0.01) Based on the high significance of the correlation, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Correlations

		Workplace Spirituality	Gratitude
Work Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	1	.452[**]
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	116	116
Gratitude	Pearson Correlation	.452[**]	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	116	116

Hypothesis 4 : A correlation analysis between customer orientation and spirituality at work of the salesperson reveals that the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient is .072 and the value is not significant (p value .220) Based on the non significance of the correlation, the null hypothesis has to be accepted.

Correlations

		Workplace Spirituality	Customer Orientation
Work Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	1	.072
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.220
	N	116	116
Customer Orientation	Pearson Correlation	.072	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.220	
	N	116	116

Hypothesis 5 : A correlation analysis between spiritual wellness and spirituality at work of the salesperson reveals that the Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient is .211 and the value is significant (p <0.05) Based on the significance of the correlation, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Correlations

		Workplace Spirituality	Sales Orientation
Work Spirituality	Pearson Correlation	1	.211[*]
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.011
	N	116	116
Selling Orientation	Pearson Correlation	.211[*]	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.011	
	N	116	116

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Discussion and directions for further research

This small exploratory study based on a small survey indicates that there is positive relationship between spiritual wellness lifestyle, long term orientation and a sense of gratitude of the salesperson with the practice of spirituality at work. The practice of spirituality at work has a weak correlation with selling orientation and no correlation with the customer orientation. Thus there seems to be some empirical support for the

antecedents of the model. The consequences of the Workplace Spirituality in terms of sales and customer orientation have weak empirical support. Being exploratory in nature the proposed model in this study can be empirically tested on a large sample of B2B and Industrial sales professionals. Studies in this domain of sales management will enrich the literature and lead to a better understanding of the boundary spanning role of sales professionals and their workplace spirituality.

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