

# Spirituality in The Workplace and Employee Performance: A Literature Perspective

<sup>1</sup>Helmi Buyung Aulia Safrizal, Anis Eliyana, and Sri Gunawan

**Abstract.** *The concept of spirituality has attracted various parties to implement it in various organization sectors. Based on the results of literature review, implementation of spirituality concept in workplace brings a variety impacts on the organizational life such as increase employee commitment, increase retention of employees, increase employee satisfaction, stress reduction, and increase the productivity and performance of individuals, organizational units, and organizations as a whole. This article attempts to review the literature and discuss relationship between spirituality in the workplace and employee performance.*

**Keywords:** *spirituality in the workplace, employee performance.*

---

## I. Introduction

The era of globalization are always characterized by the rapid changes in overall economic conditions which has led to the emergence number of demands in response to the changes that occur. External environment changes so quickly also needs to be followed by internal changes so that the organization can adapt to its environment. One resources that organizations should always follow the change is human resources.

There is a new paradigm in organization life related to human resources, namely spirituality. The concept of Spirituality become important thing in the workplace Implementation of spirituality increasingly necessary. It is driven by the success of many companies in the East, especially Japan and Southeast Asia which often uses spiritual dimension in the management of the organization.

The growing interest in spirituality paradigm seen from the emergence of a variety of literature that discusses this topic and many empirical studies conducted on this topic. The Growth literature on spirituality shows different definitions of spirituality in the workplace. Various conceptual and empirical studies on spirituality shows the use of different constructs. This article attempts to review the literature and discuss the relationship between spirituality in the workplace and employee performance.

## II. Spirituality in The Workplace

Spirituality is defined variously in the literature. There are more than 70 definitions of spirituality in the workplace. There is no widely accepted definition of spirituality [1]. [2] define spirituality is “the basic feeling of being connected with one’s complete self, others, and the entire universe”. [3] define spirituality is the state of “wakefulness as its essential nature, unmixed with images, thoughts, feelings, or any other objects of perception.” [4] discuss spirituality in the workplace from the experiences of individuals and organizations working environment and define a spirituality at workplace as “feeling of

---

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Airlangga, Jl. Airlangga No. 4-6, Surabaya, Indonesia  
helmi.buyung-13@feb.unair.ac.id

inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in context of community“. [5] define spirituality at work as “a search for meaning, deeper self-knowledge or transcendence to a higher level.” Spirituality is defined as “the extent to which an individual is motivated to find sacred meaning and purpose to his or her existence”. [6] define spirituality at workplace as “aspects of the workplace, either in the individual, the group, or the organization, that promotes individual feelings of satisfaction through transcendence. To elaborate, that the process of work facilitates employees sense of being connected to a non-physical force beyond themselves that provide feelings of completeness and joy.”

The number of definitions shows that spirituality is a multidimensional phenomenon. Some researchers propose different dimensions of spirituality in the workplace. [4] identify the dimensions of spirituality in the workplace including “recognition inner life, meaningful work and community in the workplace”. [7] proposed three dimensions of spirituality in the workplace that is meaningful work, having a sense of community, and being in alignment with the organization's values and mission. Each dimension above represent three levels of spirituality in the workplace, i.e. individual level, group level and organizational level.

Although the definition spirituality at workplace differ between authors, 5 themes often used, including connectedness, compassion, inner consciousness, meaningful work and transcendence. In this article, the definition of spirituality in the workplace is about the feeling of connectedness, have compassion to others, experiencing inner consciousness in pursuit of meaningful work and allow for transcendence

Discussion of spirituality is often distinguished between religiosity and spirituality word. The word connotes two different. Spirituality is a personal, inclusive and positive, while religiosity is external, exclusive and negative [8]. A person can be spiritual but not religious. Spirituality is not defined by particular religion. Not about making someone believe a belief system or a system of thought or system of religiosity. Spirituality is about knowing that human beings are all spiritual beings having a human experience. Every person has a level of truth and integrity in its own right and has divine powers on him [9]. Spirituality is distinguished from institutional religion to be characterized as a personal, inclusive, non-denominational, universal human feelings rather than conformity to the beliefs, rituals, or the practice of certain religious institutions or traditions

Managers are often difficult to distinguish between spirituality and religion. Empirical research conducted by [2] on human resource executives and managers in the United States showed that 30% of respondents have a positive view of spirituality and religiosity, 8% of respondents had a negative view of religiosity and spirituality, 60% of respondents have a positive view on spirituality and negative view toward religion

From the literature review it can be concluded that religiosity is more directed at the attitude of a person's life based on religious values that are believed, whereas spirituality is more emphasis on the substance of the noble values of religious and tend to turn away from religion formality, although different form in other religions. [10] empirical study show that spirituality in the workplace is more significant than religiosity in affect to employee performance. Religiosity moderate the relationship of spirituality with the employee performance.

### **III. Spirituality in The Workplace and Employee Performance**

There are two opposing views on the relationship between spirituality and performance. On the one side, anti-materialist characteristics of spirituality can pose important challenges in the scientific investigation of the relationship with financial

performance. Some researchers who support this side points to the fact that there is the possibility of trapping ethics and moral concerns the question of whether the study of spirituality in the work produces better organizational performance or profitability. There are concerns about the use of spirituality as an administrative tool to manipulate employees. Spirituality should be seen as himself, is not used as a managerial tool to improve the financial performance of the company [11,12].

On the other side, some researchers argue that spirituality can improve organizational performance and research spirituality should show the relationship of spirituality to the productivity and profitability [4,6,13]. There is a lot of controversy and rejection of the role and legitimacy of spirituality and its relationship with organizational performance [6].

Implementation of spirituality in the workplace have an impact on the behaviors of employees in the organization then improve employee performance. Such behavior include increase on employee organizational commitment [7,14,15,1,16,17] increase on job satisfaction employees [7,18,17,19,20], increase on employee retention [7,17,21] and a reduction in work stress [22].

Application of spirituality in the workplace can stimulate honesty, creativity, commitment and personal fulfillment. How employee of organization perceive spirituality, influence on attitudes, beliefs, satisfaction and personal capacity to meet the challenges of the job [6]. [2] stated that an organization identifying itself as the spiritual have fewer employees that afraid to their organization, tend to compromise with the basic beliefs and values in the workplace, perceive their organization as significantly more profitable and can bring themselves complete to work significantly, especially their creativity and intelligence.

Implementation of spirituality in the workplace can be seen as an organization development approach by applying the expression value as virtue, corporate citizenship, honesty and integrity [23]. Several studies have produced findings that spirituality is correlated with employee performance, organizational performance, productivity, higher profits and success [24,2,25,26,10]

[27] proposes three perspectives relationship between spirituality with performance. The perspective includes the perspective of human resources in the form of employee well-being, the perspective of philosophy in the form of a sense of meaning and purpose and interpersonal perspective in the form of a sense of community and interconnectedness.

Spirituality improve employee well-being with moral improvement, commitment and their productivity and to reduce stress, burnout and workaholism. Spirituality support managers and employees feeling deeper significance and purpose in work when associated with a sense of meaning and purpose. Spirituality enhances employee engagement, loyalty and sense of belonging to the organization when associated with the sense of community and interconnectedness.

#### **IV. Conclusions**

The results of the literature review both conceptually and empirically demonstrated the positive influence of spirituality in the workplace on employee performance. Organizations that apply spiritual values in the workplace will make employees bring overall herself when working. Implementation of spirituality in the workplace can stimulate honesty, creativity, commitment and personal fulfillment. Spirituality in the workplace contribute to improving the performance through employee well-being in the form of increased morale, commitment and productivity and to reduce stress, burnout and workaholism, a sense of meaning and Purpose in the form of a deeper sense of significance and purpose in work and sense

of community and interconnectedness in the form of increasing employee engagement, loyalty and sense of belonging to the organization.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Markow F and Klenke K 2005 The effects of Personal meaning and calling on Organizational Commitment: An empirical investigation of Spiritual Leadership *International Journal of Organizational Analysis* **13** 1 8-27
- [2] Mitroff Ian I and Denton Elizabeth A 1999 *A spiritual audit of corporate America: A hard look at spirituality religion and values in the workplace* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers)
- [3] Heaton D P F, Schmidt-Wilk and J Travis 2004 Constructs methods and measures for researching spirituality in organizations *Journal of Organizational Change Management* **17** no 1: 62-82
- [4] Ashmos D P and Duchon D 2000 Spirituality at work *Journal of Management Inquiry* **9** 134-146
- [5] Dehler G E and Welsh M A 2003 The experience of work: Spirituality and the new workplace In *Handbook of workplace spirituality and organizational performance* (Armonk NY: M E Sharpe)
- [6] Giacalone R A and C L Jurkiewicz 2003 Toward a science of workplace spirituality In *Handbook of workplace spirituality and organizational performance* (Armonk NY: M E Sharpe)
- [7] Milliman J, Czaplewski A J and Ferguson J 2003 Workplace spirituality and employee work attitudes: An exploratory empirical assessment *Journal of organizational change management* **16** 4 426-447
- [8] Harlos K P 2000 Toward spiritual pedagogy : Meaning practise and applications in management education *Journal of Management Education* **24** 612 – 630
- [9] Laabs J J 1995 Balancing spirituality and work *Personnel Journal* **74** 9 60-72
- [10] Osman-Gani A M, Junaidah H and Ismail Y 2013 Establishing linkages between religiosity and spirituality on employee performance *Employee Relations* **35** 4 360-376
- [11] Brown R B 2003 Organizational Spirituality: The Sceptic's Version *Organization* **10** 393-400
- [12] Cavanagh G F and Bandsuch M R 2002 Virtue as a Benchmark for Spirituality in Business *Journal of Business Ethics* **38** No:1-2 pp 109-117
- [13] Garcia-Zamor J 2003 Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance *Public Administration Review* Vol **63** 3 pp 355–363
- [14] Fry L W, Vitucci S and Cedillo M 2005 Spiritual leadership and army transformation: Theory measurement and establishing a baseline *The Leadership Quarterly* **165** 835-862
- [15] Fry L W, Hannah S T, Noel M and Walumbwa F O 2011 Impact of spiritual leadership on unit performance *The Leadership Quarterly* **22** 2 259-270
- [16] Rego A, Cunha M P E and Souto S 2007 Workplace Spirituality Commitment and Self-Reported Individual Performance: An Empirical Study *Management Research: The Journal of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management* **53** 163-183
- [17] Pawar B S 2009 Individual spirituality workplace spirituality and work attitudes: An empirical test of direct and interaction effects *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* **30** 8 759-777
- [18] Clark L, Leedy S, McDonald L, Muller B, Lamb C, Mendez T and Schonwetter R 2007 Spirituality and job satisfaction among hospice interdisciplinary team members *Journal of palliative medicine* **106** 1321-1328
- [19] Chawla V and Guda S 2010 Individual Spirituality at Work and Its Relationship with Job Satisfaction Propensity to Leave and Job Commitment An Exploratory Study among Sales Professionals *Journal of Human Values* **16** 2 157-167
- [20] Altaf A and Awan M A 2011 Moderating Affect of Workplace Spirituality on the Relationship of Job Overload and Job Satisfaction *Journal of business ethics* **104** 1 93-99
- [21] Hong Y J 2012 Identifying Spirituality in Workers: A Strategy for Retention of Community Mental Health Professionals *Journal of Social Service Research* **38** 2 175-186
- [22] Chand P and Koul H 2012 Workplace Spirituality Organizational Emotional Ownership and Job Satisfaction as Moderators in Coping with Job Stress *International Conference on Humanities Economics and Geography ICHEG'2012*
- [23] Petchsawang P and M L Morris 2006 Spirituality and Leadership in Thailand Paper presented at 2006 Academy of Human Resource Development Conference in Columbus Ohio
- [24] Dehler G E and Welsh M A 1994 Spirituality and organizational transformation: Implications for the new management paradigm *Journal of Managerial Psychology* **9** 17-26

- [25] Malik M E, Naeem B and Ali B B 2011 How do workplace spirituality and organizational citizenship behaviour influence sales performance of FMCG sales force *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business* **38** 610-620
- [26] Petchsawang P and Duchon D 2012 Workplace Spirituality Meditation and Work Performance *Journal of Management Spirituality & Religion* **92** pp 189- 208
- [27] Karakas Fahri 2010 Spirituality and Performance in Organizations: a Literature Review *Journal of Business Ethics* **94** 1 pp 89–106