

# Influence of Workplace Spirituality in Workplace Counselling Practices

R.G.O.D. Jayathilake

Department of Public Administration, Uva Wellassa University

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## ABSTRACT

Counselling can have an abundant impact on people's lives. Trained professionals in counselling offer a huge relief for the hard moments of individuals and families. Workplace counselling is beneficial for the balance between work life and family life. Today some counsellors integrate spirituality into counselling to enhance the effectiveness of counselling. Nowadays, workplace spirituality is a trend in most organizations. Spirituality is a powerful psychological thing in-universe. One of the elements that influence workplace counselling is workplace spirituality. Therefore, this research paper aimed to identify the workplace spirituality in workplace counselling of machine operators of the apparel industry in BOI Pallekale Sri Lanka. Qualitative research approach was adopted for this research paper and the data collected through in-depth interviews from 10 respondents including managerial level employees and counsellors of the factories. Research themes have been derived from First-level analytical coding approach and thematic analysis was used in analysis of collected qualitative data. The empirical findings revealed that workplace spirituality has a significant and positive impact on workplace counselling of machine operators of the apparel industry in BOI Pallekale Sri Lanka. Along with these research findings, future researchers can investigate more depth into this paper including other sectors and they must focus on other factors which mediate and/or moderate effects of workplace spirituality under many other research themes. This research paper will help to researchers and academics also to understand the concept of workplace spirituality and its impact on workplace counselling in the apparel sector of Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:** Machine Operators, Workplace counselling, Workplace spirituality

## INTRODUCTION

In today's fast company world, there's nearly no organization that's free from an excessive amount of anxiety rising out of assorted work connected problems like managing deadlines, meeting targets, lack of your time to satisfy personal and family commitments or mourning and disturbed thanks to some personal drawbacks. Several companies have integrated counselling services and creating a section of their culture that they're providing services of worker counselling to their staff (Mwenze, 2018). Workplace counselling is beneficial for the balance between work life and family life (Nurhafizah & Nubailah, 2018). Workplace counselling helps employees to work by reducing their stress, conflicts of family life as well as work life, heavy workload etc. According to McLeod & Henderson (2003), because of the workplace counselling employees become more satisfied and it will increase performance, productivity, and reduce absenteeism, turnover through positive attitudes. Nowadays spirituality is a trend in most human beings. Spirituality is a powerful psychological thing in universe (Hickson, et al., 2000). Hence the workplace spirituality is becoming an emergent concept. Positive spiritual place or moods of employees could act as a precursor to the enhancement of their performance (Do, 2018). As a result, many cooperation's such as World Bank, Ford, Nike, Apple and Shell oil have embraced and incorporated employees' spirituality in their workplaces. Another major reason is employees spending significantly more time at work than their previous generation (Osman-Gani, et al., 2013).

Apparel industry plays a major role in development of the Sri Lankan economy. Many researchers have identified that there is a positive relationship between Apparel Industry and Economy of Sri Lanka. Therefore, the Apparel industry can make an impact on economy of Sri Lanka (Embaldeniya, 2017). The intention of encouraging the exports Sri Lankan government has created free trade zones such as Katunayake, Biyagama, Koggala, Pallekale etc. In BOI Pallekale Sri Lanka also there are different garment factories who provide lots of job opportunities for people. Majority of females and males work as machine operators in this trade zone. And also they work under many pressure. Today there is a high labor turnover of machine operators. This is one of the major issues faced by apparel industry because of machine operators (Weligamage & Karunanayake, 2016). There will be health problems, dissatisfied employees, lower the concentration on work life as well family life (Nishanthi & Thalgaspitiya, 2015). To get rid of these issues it is better to provide relief to them.

Although counselling is essential for machine operators in the apparel industry, especially machine operators in the apparel sector have to face lots of issues in their lives because of their job, there is a poor perception of spirituality and counselling in the Sri Lankan context. And also, spirituality is a trend in human life to develop their lives. Therefore, **the main purpose** of this research paper is to find whether workplace spirituality impacts workplace counselling of machine operators in the apparel industry, BOI Pallekale, Sri Lanka and how cultural and religious diversity impact perception of workplace spirituality.

## METHODOLOGY

This research conducted in qualitative method. Qualitative method based on the interviews.

### Study Context

To investigate the underlying research questions on impact of workplace spirituality on workplace counselling of machine operators of apparel industry in BOI Pallekale Sri Lanka response to the themes of Purpose & meaning of work, Community support, Mindful and spiritual practices and Faith and loyalty. This research has been undertaken for over two weeks and engaged with machine operators, managerial level employees and counselling officers. The data collection followed the method of in depth interviewing and the process resulted in 10 interviews with self-selected and the permitted managerial level employees and counselors Interviews were in BOI Pallekale.

### Participants and Data Analysis

3 HR Managers, 2 Assistant HR Managers, 2 Production Managers and 3 counsellors were interviewed by the researcher. Data collected from interviews analyzed through thematic analysis. The following tables represent the respondents' profiles and themes and codes used by the researcher.

Table 1-Themes and codes

Themes	First level codes
<b>Purpose &amp; meaning of work</b>	Purpose and meaning of the employees' work for themselves as well as others.
<b>Community support</b>	Support from the employees in the organization.
<b>Mindfulness and spiritual health</b>	Mindful and spiritual practices in the workplace help to enhance the spirituality within organization.
<b>Faith &amp; Loyalty</b>	Ways and reasons that create the faith of employees towards the organization. The employees' loyalty towards the organization

Source: Author Developed

Table 2-Sample Profile

Code No: of Employee	Job Position	Work Experience in current organization
HM-1	HR Manager of Garment Factory – A	06 Years
HM-2	HR Manager of Garment Factory – B	04 Years
HM-3	HR Manager of Garment Factory – C	03 Years
AHM-1	Assistant HR Manager of Garment Factory – A	02 Years
AHM-2	Assistant HR Manager of Garment Factory – C	01 Year
PM-1	Production Manager of Garment Factory – B	06 Years
PM-2	Production Manager of Garment Factory – C	08 Years
C-1	Counsellor of Garment Factory – A	02 Years
C-2	Counsellor of Garment Factory – B	01 Year
C-3	Counsellor of Garment Factory – C	03Years

Source: Author Developed

## DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

### Purpose & meaning of work

Meaningful work means that people should feel that work which he/she is doing is significant to them. After identifying spirituality in the workplace employees wanted to engage the jobs that offer meaning or purpose to their life. This study emphasizes the purpose and meaning of the employees' work on themselves as well as others.

Under this, the purpose of the interviewer is to identify and get an understanding about the purpose and meaning of work employees as well as others and to find whether there is an impact of workplace spirituality on workplace counselling. 8 out of 10 participants said that there is purpose and meaning of employees' work. C-1 and C-3, counsellors of two garment factories stated that some employees have purpose and meaning of their work, but some employees don't think so. And 9 out of 10 respondents stated that there is a significant positive impact of purpose and meaning of their work on workplace counselling. One production manager stated that there is not any impact of purpose and meaning of the employees' work on workplace counselling.

### Community support

This means employees should have deep connection with others and interconnectedness with others (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000).

The purpose of the researcher is to identify the nature of community support and to find out whether there is an impact of community support on workplace counselling. According to all the respondents they have mentioned that there is a good community support within the factories. In their point of view machine operators feel the workplace as their family, and there is good mutual care among employees. And, according to the participants, all of them agreed that there is huge support from employees of the factories for the workplace counsellors.

### Mindfulness and spiritual health

Mindful practitioners attend in a nonjudgmental way to their own physical and mental processes during ordinary, everyday tasks. Mindful practitioners attend in a nonjudgmental way to their own physical and mental processes during ordinary, everyday tasks.

Under this researcher wanted to identify the mindful and spiritual practices in the workplace and the impact of them on the workplace counselling. All the participants mentioned that there are spiritual practices in their factory in order to reduce the stress of the employees and enhance the quality of their inner life. According to them there are lots of practices like meditation sessions, monthly breathing activities, bodhi pooja, etc in order to refresh employees' minds. And all the participants have certified that mindful and spiritual practices hugely impact on workplace counselling nowadays. Since today spirituality is a trend in the workplace.

### **Faith & Loyalty**

This means the quality of being faithful in your support of someone or something. Faith means encouragement to act with purpose.

Under this theme researcher's purpose is to identify the Ways and reasons that create the faith and loyalty of employees towards the workplace and to identify the impact of faith and loyalty of employees towards the factory on workplace counselling. According to the participants they try to create an environment that enhances the faith and loyalty of employees towards the workplace. They have taken different actions for that. Like attractive remuneration packages, welfare facilities, incentives, etc. 8 of 10 respondents stated that there is an impact of faith and loyalty of employees towards the factory on workplace counselling. One Assistant HR Manager and one Production Manager have stated that they don't have an idea about the impact of faith and loyalty on workplace counselling.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **Purpose & meaning of work**

According to most managers and counsellors stated that purpose and meaning of work of employees' impact on workplace counselling. Since there is a good purpose and meaning of work machine operators have a purpose and meaning for their lives also. Therefore, they live and work happily and joyfully (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). When there is a good purpose and meaning of their work as well as in life organization can enhance the effectiveness of the workplace counselling also (Mwenzé, 2018).

1. Purpose and meaning of the employees' work for themselves as well as others: According to Ashmos & Duchon (2000) meaningful work dimension assumes that employees value their work for reasons beyond their remuneration. If there is purpose and meaning for work of employees, it will create happiness for others. This will lead to their job productively. Through that we can satisfy employers, owners, customers etc
2. Impact of purpose and meaning of the employees' work on workplace counselling: To enhance the effectiveness of workplace counselling we can enhance the meaning of life within the people. From that we can enhance the happiness of people then it will positively impact on workplace counselling (Bella, et al., 2018). Even though there are heavy work schedules like night shift employees are happy when there is a purpose and meaning of employees' work. Then it will affect workplace counselling as well (Biswakarma, 2018).

### **Community support**

When there is good community support it will positively impact on workplace counselling. This means employees should have deep connection with others and inter connectedness with others (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

1. Nature of the community support within the organisation: According to all respondents there is a good community support within the three factories. Employees feel like the factory as their family. When there is good community support there are effective and efficient employees (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Bella, et al., 2018; Dean, 2017).

2. Support from the employees in the organization towards workplace counselling: Findings of Dean (2017) has mentioned that when there is good mutual care among employees it will affect the counselling in the workplace also.

### **Mindfulness and spiritual health**

Meditation sessions, yoga sessions, breathing activities, pirith chantings, monthly dharma deshana, bodhi pooja, seela samadhana are organized by the garment factories. These things support people to relax their mind and help to make their body healthy. Mindfulness and spiritual practice are the dimensions of spirituality. Spirituality effect on peoples' attitudes, behaviours and expectations for their survival (Cornish, et al., 2014).

1. Mindful and spiritual practices in the workplace: When it comes to spirituality, they do different activities such as religious practices, chanting pirith, bodhi pooja, monthly dharma deshana, etc. From these things we can enhance the happiness, satisfaction and productivity of employees (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).
2. Impact of Mindful and spiritual practices in the workplace for workplace counselling: All respondents have mentioned that there is a significant impact of Mindful and spiritual practices in the workplace for workplace counselling. Therefore, there is a significant impact of Mindful and spiritual practices in the workplace for workplace counselling. According to the research findings of Dean (2017) and Ashmos & Duchon (2000) spirituality effect on psychological therapies also.

### **Faith and loyalty**

People should have a motive to achieve their purpose. According to past literature faith is believing that suffering is short term (Purdy & Dupey, 2005).

1. Ways and reasons that create the faith and loyalty of employees towards the workplace: Participants have mentioned different ways that they use to enhance the faith and loyalty of employees towards the workplace. According to past literature there are different ways for enhancing the employee faith and loyalty like, transparency of relationships, appreciation, check ins, etc (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).
2. Impact of faith and loyalty of employees towards the factory on workplace counselling: According to the respondents except 2 participants others emphasized that there is an impact of faith and loyalty of employees towards the factory on workplace counselling. But others said that there is an impact. Because if employees have a faith or trust on the workplace, they are willing to tell their grievances to the workplace and they willing to get counselling as well.

### **CONCLUSION**

Two important variables, i.e., workplace spirituality and workplace counselling were considered in this study. It is statistically and through interviews proved that workplace spirituality positively and significantly impacts on workplace counselling, through spirituality we can address the minds of employees. Thus, it is recommended that any organization that wishes to enhance the workplace counselling, needs to properly execute workplace spirituality with the right policies and procedures.

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