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Workplace spirituality and its impact on psychological well-being of Indian women

Priya KanwarDOI: <https://doi.org/10.22271/multi.2023.v5.i4a.418>**Abstract**

Workplace Spirituality has become a common topic of discussion and research. Individuals are attempting to find meaning in their workplace, and this sense of meaningfulness can affect one's psychological well-being. In this paper, we study working women to see the impact of this workplace spirituality on their psychological well-being. Here, we would like to clarify that female homemakers are working women too. However, our focus is on women who receive monetary compensation for their work. The women were from different professions. This paper did not discriminate against transgender women and encouraged them to fill the survey too. Our data were collected from a random sample of 153 women through an online survey. Of these 153 women, 70.5% were married, 19.9% were single, 6.4% were divorced, 2.6% were widowed and 0.6% were separated. Regression analysis and Correlational analysis were done to further analyse the data. This study shows no significant effect of workplace spirituality on an Indian woman's psychological well-being.

Keywords: Workplace, spirituality, psychological well-being**Introduction****What is Spirituality?**

Spirituality is a word that is often confused with religiosity. Spirituality differs from religiosity and is something that resembles an inner calling. It exists beyond an individual's evolutionary instinct for survival. For this paper, we define spirituality as "engaging the world from a foundation of meaning and values. It pertains to our hopes and dreams, our patterns of thought, our emotions, feelings, and behaviors. As with love, spirituality is multidimensional, and some of its meaning is inevitably lost when attempts are made to capture it in a few words" (Turner, 1999) ^[1]. Spirituality can have numerous definitions in different cultures. In one, the culture may promote spirituality and encourage the people to practice the same. In other cultures, concepts like spirituality may be considered "superstitious" or looked at disdainfully. A person may choose to conform to these cultural prescriptions or may wish to rebel against the same. The permutations of these conditions will lead to unique behaviours, even in one's workplace.

The distinction between superstition and spirituality is thin, and it is arduous to determine where this line is drawn. Rituals are assuming a key place in all dimensions of life, including the workplace. Since this paper eventually converges to discuss Indian women, an example from a collectivist culture would be apt. A design scheme of Chinese origin, known as feng shui, is a ritual with attributes of superstition and spirituality (Bruun, 2008) ^[2]. It claims that placing a desk in a corner at an odd angle, with an unusual amount of natural light coming in, helps one's pursuit of spirituality (Bruun, 2008) ^[2]. It is difficult to determine whether this ritual aids spirituality or is mere superstition. The line between religiosity and spirituality is also a thin one; it is difficult to distinguish it. While spirituality may not lead to discrimination and favouritism in the workplace, one's religious belief can. One's association with a particular religion can leave one in a favourable or unfavourable position. Irrespective of religious affiliation, women are mostly in an unfavourable position in a patriarchal society. Women and men express their spirituality in dissimilar ways. Men conform to their gender roles, and it is believed that "men are interested in appropriate uses of masculine power to contribute to the advancement of humankind" (James, 1996, 5) ^[9]. They know that they are in a position of power and wish to explore this privileged spirit for "communitarian, familial and societal renovation" (James, 1996, 5) ^[9]. Their goal may be beyond their "personal gain". However, another credible explanation could be that they are feeding their saviour complex or white knight syndrome. Carol Ochs wrote that women can bring a unique perspective to the concept of spirituality due to her experiences.

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Such experiences, Ochs wrote, are her “capacity to bear and nurture children” (Ochs, 1983, 27-28) ^[13]. As feminists, we believe that such claims only reduce women to reproducing creatures. It undermines their ability to do anything other than giving birth to a child. While bearing children is very laborious and adds to a woman’s power, it is not the only thing that defines them. This reductionist approach also excludes women who are unable to bear children.

What is Workplace Spirituality?

Today, spirituality has crossed the walls of one’s home and reached the workplace. A survey by Gallup Organization in New York found evidence for this. 33 per cent of the 800 Americans claimed that work was “greatly improving” or “improving” their spirituality (Garcia-Zamor, 2003, 355) ^[6]. According to Mitroff and Denton (1999) ^[11], “workplace spirituality involves the effort to find one’s ultimate purpose in life, to develop a strong connection to co-workers and other people associated with work, and to have consistency (or alignment) between one’s core beliefs and the values of their organization”. Cavanagh (1999) ^[3] defined the concept as “the desire to find ultimate purpose in life, and to live accordingly.”

Ashmos and Duchon (2000) ^[1] defined spirituality at work as “recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community.”

Pawar (2008) ^[14] defined workplace spirituality as “employee experiences of self-transcendence, meaning, and community in the workplace and it also acknowledges that these experiences could come from various mechanisms including organizational ones.”

Employees have become demoralised and are experiencing spiritual disorientation. To overcome this disorientation, employees are seeking work that is meaningful and inspiring. They are trying to acquire new dimensions, and derive the missing satisfaction from work. Workplace Spirituality can be treated as a piece of a puzzle, in the absence of which the picture of the workplace will always remain incomplete. In this paper, we use the definition: “Workplace spirituality is a framework of organisational 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 provided feelings of completeness and joy” (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003, 13) ^[7].

This emergence of workplace spirituality is supported by Douglas Hicks’ theory of “Respectful Pluralism” which argues that the human identity cannot be disintegrated (Hill, 2005) ^[8]. All the aspects of a human being, that is, the ‘whole person’ comes to work. So, the spiritual aspect of a person is already at work, and its acknowledgement by corporations was overdue.

The reason behind the declining spiritual orientation and dissatisfaction could be the “very antisocial time” that we live in. Marian Salzman says, “Divorce is keeping people apart. Families are not spending time with each other. And to a large degree, telecommunications has become a barrier for people to interact face to face.” (Garcia-Zamor, 2003, 357) ^[6] The development of this “barrier culture” is leaving much void in a person’s life, and they are turning to their professional lives to fill the void. This was predominantly seen in the current COVID-19 pandemic. While some families were tying loose ends, other families were

becoming even more distant. Having telecommunication as the only means of communication with the outside world also tested one’s limits. The lingering aftermath of this pandemic is still visible in all domains of our lives including the very important- work domain. Situations with such overarching isolation can leave people in the quest for spirituality, and people turn to their workplace for the same. It can also be viewed as a coping mechanism where a person is trying to keep busy with work and avoid the spiritual disorientation in their non-professional life. Other factors could also include downsizing and mergers. Moreover, the advancing Artificial Intelligence is replacing the human force. Working professionals are often afraid of losing their work, leading to much anxiety and a greater need to turn to spirituality. Reducing this feeling of mistrust and cynicism is central to understanding the emotional aspect of work (Cooper, 2016, 278) ^[4].

In the corporate world specifically, the leaders realize that such dissatisfaction leads to a lack of productivity. There is an increased attempt to introduce work-and-family programs and other benefits to compensate for this dissatisfaction. Lewis Richmond pointed out that Buddha himself found enlightenment out of a “serious case of job dissatisfaction” as an Indian prince 2,500 years ago (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003, 360) ^[7]. Spirituality in the workplace can take two different forms, a personal form and an organizational one. At the personal level, a spiritual person joins an organisation that fulfils their spiritual needs. They ask spiritual questions like, “Is this place beautiful enough to be worthy of the presence of the human spirit?” before they seek employment (Cowan, 1993) ^[5]. On the other level, the organization promotes spirituality in its employees. This could improve their productivity because it connects their faith to their work ethic. A study conducted by Harvard Business School found a very strong correlation between an organisation’s corporate culture and its profitability. Over 10 years, they examined 10 companies with strong corporate cultures (spirited workplaces) and 10 with weak corporate cultures. These corporations were a part of 207 leading corporations. The organisations with a spirited culture outperformed the others by 400-500 per cent in terms of net earnings, return on investment, and shareholder value (Garcia-Zamor, 2003) ^[6].

This workplace spirituality can be applied to organisational structures, and Hicks lays down some methods to do the same. One of his norms is the “presumption of inclusion” which states that every person should be encouraged to bring their ‘whole selves’ to work (Hill, 2005) ^[8]. This would allow them to become ‘engaged in their work’ and have a ‘spiritual connection’ with it. Since Hicks recognized that such organisations are for-profit, he also laid down certain limiting norms, such as non-degradation, non-coercion, and non-establishment. Non-degradation implies that one should engage in respectful behaviour; non-coercion that a position of power should not be used to influence others’ beliefs and values. The non-establishment claims that an organisation should not endorse any particular religion or spiritual inclination (Hill, 2005) ^[8]. There are four major components of workplace spirituality, which we discuss in detail later. They are the sense of community (SoC), spiritual connection (SpC), mystical experience (ME), and engaging work (EW) (Kinjerski & Skrypnik, 2006) ^[10]. Spirituality in the workplace does increase the employees’ performance. They are seen to be

happier with increased productivity, creativity, morale, and retention. This benefits not only the employees and the organisation, but also the other stakeholders (Garcia-Zamor, 2003, 362) [6].

Models of Workplace Spirituality

Pawar (2009) [15] in his study found positive correlations between work related attitudes of organizational commitment, job involvement and satisfaction with workplace spirituality. His model is depicted in Figure 1

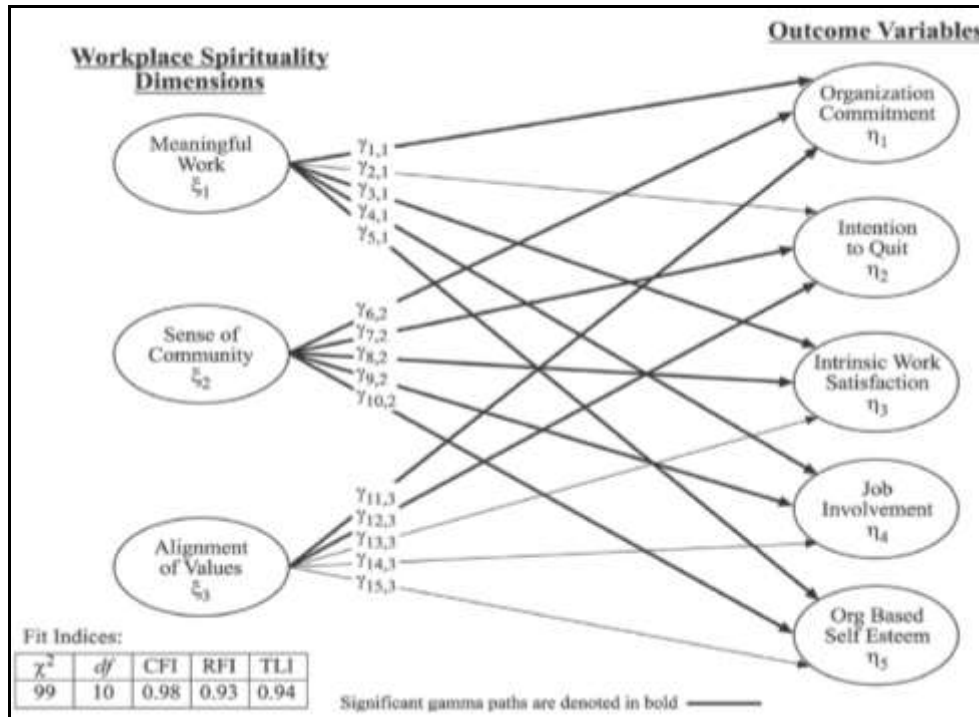


Fig 1: Models of Workplace Spirituality

Another integrative model which talks about wellbeing in context to workplace spirituality has been proposed by Vandenberghe (2011) [19]. This model shows as distinct variables the four mindsets associated with the commitment that affect work outcomes (job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, turnover, and well-being). The mindsets of commitment are portrayed as being influenced by spiritual leadership and two of its immediate consequences: sense of calling and sense of membership.

The model also shows the climate for spirituality as a distinct source through which workplace spirituality can influence wellbeing along with organizational citizenship behavior and turnover. It is shown as a moderator of the relationships of calling and membership to components of commitment and of the relationships between work outcomes and commitments as shown in Figure 2. Undoubtedly, workplace spirituality may rise out of shared norms and values that facilitate spirituality.

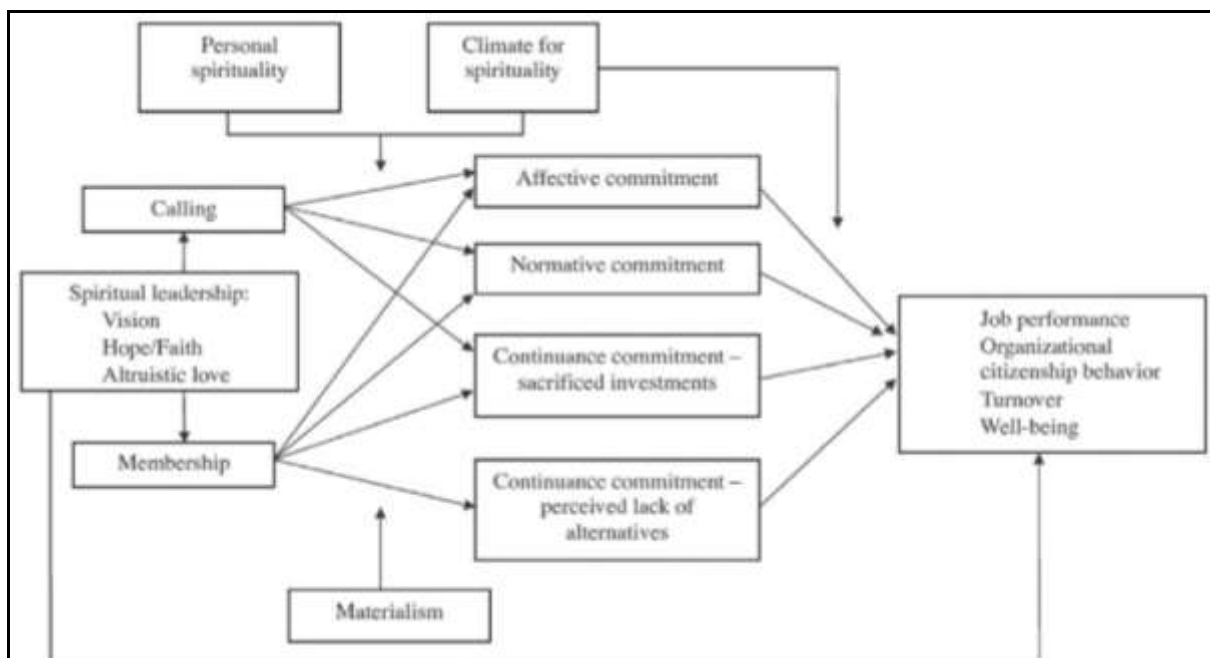


Fig 2: Relationships between work outcomes and commitments

What is Psychological Well-Being?

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional concept involving a state of equilibrium such that an individual’s mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual faculties are functioning at an optimum level; it involves the individual experiencing a sense of wholeness and well-being. Ryff (1995) [16] identifies six key dimensions of psychological well-being; they are self-acceptance, positive relationships with other people, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. The definitions of these aspects are taken from the different theories, such as those by Erikson, Buhler, Neugarten, Maslow, Rogers, Jung, Allport, and Jahoda. For example, self-acceptance is the positive attitude towards self, which has been emphasized by Maslow, Rogers, Allport, and Jahoda (Ryff, 1995) [16]. It also includes the acceptance of one’s good and bad qualities, and one’s past experiences which were described by Jung and Erikson respectively. These six dimensions produce a vast array of wellness, which includes “positive evaluations of one’s self and one’s life, a sense of continued growth and development as a person, the belief that life is purposeful and meaningful, the possession of good relationships with other people, the capacity to manage one’s life and the surrounding world effectively, and a sense of self-determination. (Ryff, 1995) [16]”

Since this paper studies women, in particular, it is crucial to spot gender differences. Research has found that women of all ages consistently rate themselves higher on positive relations with others than do men (Ryff, 1995) [16]. Women also score higher on personal growth than do men. The other four dimensions have shown no significant differences between men and women. This is interesting because research has also shown that there is a higher incidence of certain psychological disorders, such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, among women. So, women exist at a higher frequency on both ends of the spectrum. This may be because women are generally more in touch with their emotions than men, and also have a higher chance of expressing the same. While this may be seen as an attempt to further gender stereotypes, it is a serious by-product of patriarchy and toxic masculinity.

Roots in Indian Mythology

Workplace spirituality is a concept that has made its appearance in the Occidental world recently. However, one can trace its presence in Indian mythology as Karma-Yoga. Karma comes from the Sanskrit word, ‘kri’ which means doing, affairs, or activity and is inclusive of all actions that a person performs. The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit

word, ‘yuj’ which means to join (Mulla & Krishnan, 2014) [12]. Tilak’s (2000) definition of the word “yoga” is “device” or “intelligent method”. Hence, karma yoga can be defined as “a technique for intelligently performing actions” or “a technique for performing actions in a manner that the soul is not bound by the effects of the action” (Mulla & Krishnan, 2014) [12]. Karma Yoga has been talked about in the Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita or the Song of God has influenced life for generations. Karma Yoga is an Indian model of workplace spirituality which encompasses moral sensitivity, moral reasoning, moral motivation, and moral character. It has three dimensions, which have been emulated by the Western world. They are “duty-orientation, indifference to rewards, and equanimity” (Mulla & Krishnan, 2014) [12]. According to the Bhagavad Gita, the ultimate goal of an “atma” or soul is to liberate itself from the cycle of birth and rebirth. One of the ways to do this is by practicing Karma Yoga or Workplace Spirituality.

Method

Now, we know the exact meaning of workplace spirituality and psychological well-being. Since the study has been conducted in Indian society, we have also seen its relation to India’s mythology. For this paper, our objective was to study the relationship between workplace spirituality and psychological well-being in Indian women. To measure workplace spirituality, we used the scale developed by Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2006) [10]. We measured psychological well-being using the scale developed by Ryff (1995) [16].

Our data were collected from a random sample of 153 women through an online survey. Of these 153 women, 70.5% were married, 19.9% were single, 6.4% were divorced, 2.6% were widowed and 0.6% were separated. The women were from different professions. Regression analysis and Correlational analysis were done to further analyse the data.

Data Analysis

Correlational Analysis: Between Psychological well-being (PWB) and Workplace spirituality (WPS) and its four sub-dimensions (EW, ME, SoC and SpC)

- Where,
- EW = Engaging Work
- ME = Mystical Experience
- SoC = Sense of Community
- SpC = Spiritual Connection

Correlational Analysis

		Correlations					
		PWB_TOT	EW_TOT	ME_TOT	SoC_TOT	SpC_TOT	SAWP_TOTAL
PWB_TOT	Pearson Correlation	1	-.138	.075	-.067	.047	-.043
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.089	.356	.407	.561	.594
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153
EW_TOT	Pearson Correlation	-.138	1	.696**	.658**	.592**	.927**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.089		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153
ME_TOT	Pearson Correlation	.075	.696**	1	.613**	.533**	.860**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.356	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153
SoC_TOT	Pearson Correlation	-.067	.658**	.613**	1	.426**	.783**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.407	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153

SpC_TOT	Pearson Correlation	.047	.592**	.533**	.426**	1	.732**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.561	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153
WPS_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	-.043	.927**	.860**	.783**	.732**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.594	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In the correlational analysis between Psychological Well-Being (PWB) and Workplace Spirituality (WPS) along with it's four sub-dimensions, no significant correlation was found.

Regression Analysis: Here, our dependent variable is Psychological Well-Being (PWB); our independent variables are Spirit at Workplace (SAWP) and its components ME, EW, SpC, SoC.

Regression Analysis

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
PWB_TOT	198.536	19.4070	153
EW_TOT	27.562	4.6536	153
ME_TOT	18.810	3.1325	153
SoC_TOT	11.294	2.1456	153
SpC_TOT	11.392	2.1892	153
SAWP_TOTAL	69.0588	10.29195	153

Variables Entered/Removed ^a			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	SAWP_TOTAL, SpC_TOT, SoC_TOT, ME_TOT ^b	.	Enter
a. Dependent Variable: PWB_TOT			
b. Tolerance = .000 limit reached.			

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.300 ^a	.090	.066	18.7606	.090	3.664	4	148	.007

a. Predictors: (Constant), SAWP_TOTAL, SpC_TOT, SoC_TOT, ME_TOT

ANOVA ^a						
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	5157.810	4	1289.452	3.664	.007 ^b
	Residual	52090.243	148	351.961		
	Total	57248.052	152			

a. Dependent Variable: PWB_TOT

b. Predictors: (Constant), SAWP_TOTAL, SpC_TOT, SoC_TOT, ME_TOT

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	199.606	10.400		19.193	.000
	ME_TOT	3.644	1.047	.588	3.482	.001
	SoC_TOT	1.201	1.283	.133	.936	.351
	SpC_TOT	2.964	1.172	.334	2.530	.012
	SAWP_TOTAL	-1.693	.530	-.898	-3.197	.002

a. Dependent Variable: PWB_TOT

Excluded Variables ^a					
Model	Beta In	t	Sig	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance
1	EW_TOT	.b	.	.	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PWB_TOT

b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), SAWP_TOTAL, SpC_TOT, SoC_TOT, ME_TOT

This regression analysis shows us that the data is significant. It has a significance scale of 0.007. It shows that independent variables such as ME, SpC and SAWP do affect the psychological well-being. SoC had no effect, and EW was removed.

Discussion
There can be confusion about what is spirituality, superstition, and religiosity. Misconceptions about what is spirituality, and one's culture and gender influences workplace spirituality. Spirit at the Workplace has become

an important part of today's work culture, and Hicks claims that it is vital for a person to bring their "whole selves" to work. One reason for the increase in workplace spirituality is the anti-social times that we live in. Individuals who are dissatisfied with their personal lives turn to their professional lives for comfort. Finding spirituality in this professional life can be helpful for them. Moreover, it becomes easier to cope with the constant threat of losing one's employment. Research has found strong correlations between workplace spirituality and productivity. One's creativity, morale and retention increases with higher workplace spirituality. It is also interesting to find the concept of this Workplace Spirituality in the Indian Vedic texts, as 'Karma Yoga'.

Our research has been centred around workplace spirituality of Indian Women and its correlation with their psychological well-being. Our study shows no significant effect of workplace spirituality on an Indian woman's psychological well-being. No significant correspondence was found. However, the regression analysis revealed that their mystical experience, spiritual connection, and spirit at the workplace did affect their psychological well-being to different levels. Thus, it is possible that there is some correlation amongst these factors. Alterations in the method of data collection and sample may lead to different results.

Limitations, Implications and Suggestions

The general circumstances in which this research was conducted could have influenced the results. These responses were collected during a pandemic, which highly affects one's psychological well-being. Moreover, one was working from home, which has its ramifications. The respondents' relations with their physical workplace and their online workplace are different. Their responses likely corresponded more with the online setting, than the offline one.

Since our data was collected through self-report, we are aware that the individual bias of the respondents affects the data. The forms were circulated online and could only reach a limited number of people, so barriers of class and caste also existed. Moreover, there was a higher likelihood of this form reaching people in our social circle or our extended social circle. Thus, certain limitations were posed in the course of this paper.

Although this paper has not found a decisive relationship between workplace spirituality and psychological well-being, the relationship may exist. One could study these variables with a proportionate sample and the physical workplace. Psychological well-being and workplace spirituality may then vary, and give some concrete evidence. As an extension to the present study, another empirical study can also be done to study the correlation between workplace spirituality and workplace outcomes. The form of data collection can also be altered for better results. This paper encourages other researchers to study different variations of this model, and procure data on this topic. One could possibly study the correlation between workplace spirituality and psychological well-being in Indian men. Finding evidence that spirit at the workplace enhances psychological well-being can inspire Indian organizations to modify and create new rules - rules which can improve the professional world.

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