Workplace Spirituality and Employee Engagement; A Study on Identifying the Moderating Impact of Work From Home

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Abstract: Spirituality has been known as a central area of research in the academic world over the past few years, to bring more significance to one's workplace. By integrating the multiple meanings of workplace spirituality, this paper defines it as having compassion toward others and experiencing a mindful inner consciousness in the pursuit of meaningful work that enables transcendence. Currently, organizations are promoting a spiritual culture that recognizes that employees have a mind as well as a spirit, seek to find meaning and purpose in their work, and wish to connect with other employees and be part of the community. Due to this pandemic situation whole world and whole sectors moves towards digitalization. There was a question whether the spiritual mind set will remain the same as work in office; even the people are away from the office. With this identification, this paper attempts to identify the impact of workplace spirituality and employee engagement with identifying the moderating effect of work from home. It was found that there is a significant positive relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement in higher education academics in Sri Lanka. Same time the study identified that there is no moderating effect of work from home between workplace spirituality and employee engagement.

Key words: workplace spirituality, employee engagement, work from home.

Introduction

The entire globe is facing a huge health crisis in the forms of human death, suffering, always remembering health guidelines and finally economically unstable. It is a human, economic and social crisis. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which has been characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), is attacking societies at their core. The pandemic situation makes severe impacts on the Sri Lankan context as well. Due to a pandemic situation that started in March 2020, the

county was forced to digitalize the activities of all the organizations. During the 1st wave, the country got shocked and it was closed all operations nearly for six months from 09.03.2021 to 03.10.2021 and for the second wave from 04.10.2020 to 14.04.2021 and the 3rd wave from 15.04.2021 to 30th June 2021 the country started its operations fully on digitalization. Currently, the country practised doing routine activities without closing the whole operations even corona spread hugely. This expectation can be fulfilled through digitalization. The employees can work from home without physically attending to the work.

Spirituality has been known as a central area of research in the academic world over the past few years, to bring more significance to one's workplace. In ancient concepts, spirituality means a religious point of view. Although spirituality is often associated with the practice of religion, there is wide agreement that it is distinct from the practice of religion. A distinction is important because the workplace is considered a secular environment, particularly in western societies (Mitroff and Denton 1999, Cacioppe 2000, Hill and Ashar and Lane-Maher 2004). By integrating the multiple meanings of workplace spirituality, this paper defines it as having compassion toward others and experiencing a mindful inner consciousness in the pursuit of meaningful work that enables transcendence. Currently, organizations are promoting a spiritual culture that recognizes that employees have a mind as well as a spirit, seek to find meaning and purpose in their work, and wish to connect with other employees and be part of the community. According to the above materials in present times the concept of workplace spirituality has gained the centre of debate as it has been considered one of the ways to deal with the turbulence and pressure of modern organizations which eventually lead to better individual and organizational outcomes.

Employee engagement has been described as employees' physical, emotional, and cognitive connection with their work and represented by a dedicated, energetic, and high-performing employee (Bakker & Leiter, 2010), Saks (2011) developed a model of Workplace Spirituality and Employee Engagement. It is expected that workplace spirituality (WPS) practice will influence lecturers' engagement related to the job. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide evidence and inspire lecturers to foster workplace spirituality that will lead to higher employee engagement.

Working from home is defined as people working from their home or from another location of their choice other than the working area by payment which is provided by the employer (Sreeramana Aithal, 2015). From 2019 December onwards the whole world faces a serious health crisis named Covid -19 Pandemic which increases the use of technology in terms of video conferencing, social media and the use of more and more application software. In Sri Lanka for academic purposes ZOOM, Microsoft teams and WhatsApp applications are used by academics. This study focus on identifying whether the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement is moderated by working from home.

Literature Review.

Employee engagement

Robinson et al. (2004) define employee engagement as "a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of the business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation." West (2005) argues that when individuals feel positive emotions, they can think in a more flexible, open-minded way and are also likely to feel greater self-control, cope more effectively and be less defensive in the workplace. According to Robinson (2006), employee engagement can be achieved through the creation of an organisational environment where positive emotions such as involvement and pride are encouraged, resulting in improved organisational performance, lower employee turnover and better health. Market al. (2010) argues that employees that are not engaged are more likely to waste their efforts on low-priority tasks, fail to fully commit to tasks and will only remain with the business for a short period.

Truss et al (2006), define employee engagement simply as "passion for work", a psychological state which is seen to encompass the three dimensions of engagement discussed by Kahn (1990), and Saks (2006), a stronger theoretical rationale for explaining employee engagement can be found in social exchange theory (SET). SET argues that obligations are generated through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence. A basic principle of SET is that relationships evolve into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments as long as the parties abide by certain „rules" of exchange (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005). He argues that one way for individuals to repay their organization is through their level of engagement. In other words, employees will choose to engage themselves to varying degrees and in response to the resources they receive from their organization. Macey and Schneider (2008) looked at engagement attitudinally and behaviourally. They distinguished three broad conceptualizations of employee engagement, namely state, trait, and behavioural engagement. Sarkar (2011) opined that employee engagement is a barometer that determines the association of a person with the organization

Workplace spirituality

Ashmos & Duchon (2000) have defined workplace spirituality as the "Recognition that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work, taking place in the context of a community" Kinjerski & Skrypnek (2004) defined workplace spirituality as "the experience of employees who are passionate about and energized by their 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. (Rego and Canha, 2007). Hence, it can be considered as an internal feeling of employees toward the working environment and their work practices. Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) suggested that workplace spirituality as 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. It is about employees who view themselves as spiritual beings whose souls need nourishment at work, who experience a sense of purpose and meaning in their work, and a sense of connectedness to one another and their workplace community (Mitroff and Denton, 1999; Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Harrington et al., 2001; Milliman et al., 2003). Lloyd (1990) discovers that an organization with highly influenced workplace spirituality can outperform other organizations with either little or no workplace spirituality by 86 per cent (Desa et. al,2011).

Workplace spirituality impacts employee engagement

Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) found that spirituality will lead to a more complete feeling when they perform the task. Employee engagement also includes a sense of wholeness and completeness. For instance, engagement contains the immediate asset of all aspects such as cognitive, physical and emotional in the workplace (Kahn 1990). Rich et al., (2010) stated that engagement has a different range of construct from others and it involves narrower aspects of self. Kahn (1992) also mentioned that sense of wholeness is one of the psychological constructs that is integrated with the different aspects of self and they are associated and complete rather than incoherent.

Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) also mentioned that spirituality is one of the most significant dimensions of personality hence enhancing spirituality makes people bring their complete selves to the workplace. According to (Krishnakumar and Neck 2002; Milliman et al. 2003) the feeling of being connected with tasks as well as co-workers and other association with workers includes the component of workplace spirituality and employee engagement. Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2004), interviewed 14 professionals and found that being connected with co-workers as well as higher officials make oneself associated with work they are strongly engaged with emotional feelings.

Roof (2015) stated that the connection between spirituality as an employee's inner life reflection and engagement is grounded in how spirituality can be able to meaningfully affect engagement perceptions

linked to the psychological condition of work-related contextual factors. As pointed out by Saks (2011) there are many similarities between workplace spirituality and work engagement, for instance, feelings of being appreciated and involved, a sense of completeness and wholeness, connection and identification with the organization. Hence, spiritual feelings assist individuals to participate in work-relevant cognitive processes (Luis Daniel, 2010), as well as emotionally connected to a meaningful relationship with co-workers or supervisors and concern for other feelings (Harter et al., 2002; Luthans and Peterson, 2002). Spirituality at work is desiderated to be connected to an individual's demeanours and exerts significant effort toward their work (Milliman et al., 2003), a work situation that most likely encourages intrinsic motivation (Saks, 2006), which may escalate the possibility of them engaging in supportive development of psychological work role (Bakker et al. 2008). Finally, as noted by Karakas (2010) employees who feel spiritually empty, unconnected with their work also with co-workers and others related to work, lost and lack searching for meaning is likely related to individual frustration and burnout (Maslach et al., 2001), a circumstance essentially the opposite of being engaged. Therefore, the relationship between workplace spirituality and nurse work engagement is assumed as being:

Work from home

Working from home is having lots of use in recent years in Sri Lanka Since, the necessity was raised due to Covid-19 Pandemic. An employee can finish their work within their premises. Work will be done remotely. It depends on teleworking/telecommunicating arrangements where an employee does not require staying during business hours with their employer. To improve employee retention during the busy and stress-filled life we require some leisure time. By working from home the employee can have free access to a specific job through fewer interruptions from fellow employees in the office and communication time is also wider. As per the studies of Baruch (2001), with increasing numbers of employees working at home using the home as a working destination, it is clear that improved employee retention. It leads to increased staff motivation with less stress also. It also saves a huge expenditure towards installing a separate work office area and other facilities. A person involved in working from home can do his office work as well as home-required assignments simultaneously. Allowing employees to work from home to encourage a better work/life balance can lead to improvements in health and well-being. The system of working from home has some salient characteristics to fulfil its objectives and provide all the required services, thereby solving all problems of the stakeholders.

Furthermore, this study attempted to examine work from home as a moderator in the relationship between workplace Spirituality and Employee Engagement. Numerous studies have been conducted on employee workplace spirituality. However, the literature has several limitations. Much of the research has concentrated on describing personal spiritual experiences at work rather than on the impact that dimensions of workplace spirituality have on an individual work engagement and people's behaviours in organizations. Further, not much studies have been conducted to evaluate the moderating effect of work from home on the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement. In light of this, the current study attempts to identify the impact of Workplace Spirituality and Employee Engagement by identifying the moderating effect of workplace spirituality.

The sudden and massive disruption brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a reorientation of work, and the WFH format has become the norm rather than the exception. Although several studies have been carried out investigating the relationship between work engagement and happiness, this study is an attempt to investigate the relationship of the WFH mode during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of recent studies suggest that as people adapt to and learn new ways of working remotely, the pandemic-driven changes may have more lasting effects on the organization of work (Brynjolfsson et al., 2020). While the worldwide pandemic has prompted numerous recent studies, there is a gap in the present literature because this crisis is unprecedented and has not yet abated, so much is still unknown and unknowable. This study attempts to answer the following research questions.

1. **What is the impact of workplace Spirituality on Employee Engagement?**

2. **Is there any moderating effect of WFH in between the relationship between workplace spirituality and Employee engagement?**

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, Primary data and secondary data sources are used to measure the relationship between workplace Spirituality on Employee Engagement. Secondary data is collected from previous research studies. Primary data for the present study is collected through a questionnaire from the permanent academic staff of Higher Educational institutes in Sri Lanka. Questionnaires were issued randomly to 150 staff out of that 100 were received and used for the study. SPSS 16 is used to find the Correlation and Linear Regression. Correlation is a fundamental concept used to find the relationship between two or more variables. Regression analysis is a statistical technique used to predict the value of one variable based on other variables. For the present study, we construct the following equations.

Employee Engagement = B_0+ B_1*WPS

The Questionnaire contains 3 parts including 21 questions for measuring workplace Spirituality was developed by Ahmos and Duchon (2000), 10 questions for working from home and 16 questions for employee engagement which was developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006).

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

For this study, the following conceptual model was developed by the researchers.
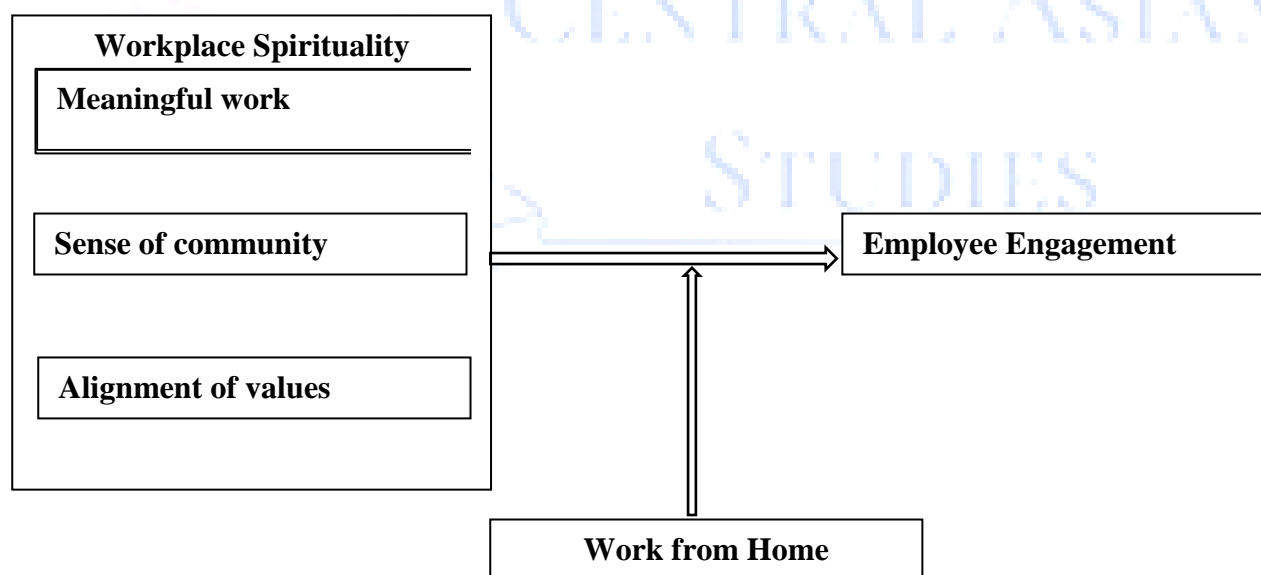
Fig-01 Conceptual Model

Data Analysis

The research data will be collected and analyzed, by using the Statistical Package for Social Science IBM SPSS statistics (SPSS) version 25.

Reliability

The reliability value of surveyed data for meaningful work is .814, Sense of Community is .808, Alignment of Values is .789, Workplace Spirituality is .712, Work from home is .776 and employee engagement is .793. If we compare our reliability value with the standard value alpha of 0.7 advocated by Cronbach (1951) we find it to be quite satisfactory. Further the scales used by us are highly reliable for data analysis.

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
MEANINGFUL WORK	16.6914	2.773	.654	.814
SENCEOFCOMMUNITY	17.0269	2.637	.535	.808
ALIGNMENT OF VALUES	17.0897	2.404	.491	.789
WPS	16.9360	2.470	.934	.712
WFH	16.9900	2.606	.521	.776
EE	16.7415	2.129	.846	.793

Correlation Analysis

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	R	Sig
Meaningful work		0.705**	0.000
Sense of Community		0.741**	0.000
Alignment of Values	Employee Engagement	0.774**	0.000
Workplace Spirituality		0.893**	0.000

Workplace Spirituality is positively associated with Employee Engagement of academics of higher education institutes in Sri Lanka. Pearson correlation between Workplace Spirituality and Employee Engagement is 0.893. This means there is a very strong positive relationship between Workplace Spirituality and Employee Engagement and significant at a 1% level. Further Meaningful work, Sense of Community and Alignment of Values are positively associated with Employee Engagement of academics of higher education institutes in Sri Lanka with the values of 0.705, 0.741 and 0.774 respectively at a 1% significant level. The results revealed that the correlation between Meaningful work, a Sense of Community and Alignment of Values and Employee Engagement is a strong positive correlation.

Regression Analysis

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error in the Estimate
1	.805[a]	.648	.637	.27539
a. Predictors: (Constant), ALIGNVALUES, MEANINGFUL WORK, SENCEOFCOMMUNITY				

In the model summary adjusted R square .637 revealed that 63.7% of the variance in Workplace Spirituality is attributed to Meaningful Work, a Sense of Community and Alignment of Values. Balance 36.3% of the variation is explained by other factors.

ANOVA						
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.125	3	4.375	57.686	.000[b]
	Residual	7.129	94	.076		
	Total	20.253	97			
a. Dependent Variable: EE						
b. Predictors: (Constant), ALIGNVALUES, MEANINGFUL WORK, SENCEOFCOMMUNITY						

As per the ANOVA table, the significance value is 0.000 (i.e., $p = .000$), which is below 0.01 and, therefore, there is a statistically significant difference in the mean values.

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.479	.317		-1.513	.000
	MEANINGFUL WORK	.473	.065	.450	7.315	.000
	SENCEOFCOMMUNITY	.282	.060	.292	4.673	.000
	ALIGN VALUES	.440	.055	.500	8.010	.000
a. Dependent Variable: EE						

(Table title: Coefficients)

As per the Coefficient Table, standardized co-efficient explains that the dimensions of Workplace Spirituality are influencing Employee Engagement. Since the independent variables are of different natures and have different units of measure so Standardized Coefficients were considered. The beta value (.473) with sig value = 0.000 shows that there is a significant impact between Meaningful Work and Employee Engagement as P-value 0.000> 0.01. It was found that the Sense of Community and Alignment of Values also significantly impact Employee Engagement.

With this, the researcher has formulated the following regression Equation.

Employee Engagement = .479 +.473 * Meaningful Work + .282 * Sense of Community + .440* Alignment of Values.

Moderation Analysis

To identify the moderating effect of work from home in between workplace spirituality and employee engagement. So the researcher runs moderation analysis in SPSS.

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.908	.284		-3.203	.002
	WPS	.950	.090	.638	10.593	.000
	WFH	.384	.067	.346	5.741	.000
2	(Constant)	-2.968	2.251		-1.318	.191
	WPS	1.550	.657	1.041	2.359	.020
	WFH	1.010	.682	.909	1.481	.142
	WPS.WFH	-.182	.197	-.828	-.922	.359
a. Dependent Variable: EE						

(Table title: Coefficients)

As per the above table, the significant value of workplace spirituality interacting with employee engagement is .359 is insignificant. So the research concludes that there is no moderating effect of work from home in the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement.

Conclusion

The main problem of the research study was to find out the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement in higher education academics in Sri Lanka. Parallel to this, the current study also tries to identify the moderating effect of work from home between workplace spirituality and employee engagement. The study found that there is a significant positive relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement in higher education academics in Sri Lanka. Same time

the study identified that there is no moderating effect of work from home between workplace spirituality and employee engagement.

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