

# IMPACT OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS ON WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO IT INDUSTRY

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this paper is to empirically explore the potential relationship between professional ethics and workplace spirituality among the employees working in IT companies. This research treats professional ethics as a dependent variable in order to assess its impact on workplace Spirituality. The primary data for the study was collected through a standardized questionnaire. Sample consists of 128 employees working at different level in the organisation selected through convenience sampling technique. Correlation and regression were carried out for analysis of data with the help of SPSS. The results showed that that there is no significant relationship between the professional ethics and workplace spirituality. In the end suggestions are offered for future researchers.*

**Keywords:** *Ethics, Professional Ethics, Spirituality, Workplace Spirituality.*

## INTRODUCTION

Professional Ethics is a set of standards which describe the professional behaviour that is expected in all fields of work. The underlying philosophy of having professional ethics is to make the persons performing in their jobs to follow the sound, uniform ethical conduct. Codes of professional ethics are often established by professional organization to help and guide member or staff in performing their job function according to consistent ethical principle.

Ethics are often confused with morals but there are key differences between the two. Morality is something that defines the difference between the goodness or badness of a thing or rightness and wrongness of a particular thing and living according to that. On the other hand, ethics is a kind of a philosophy of how such morality guides the individual and group behaviour. Morals, when violated, are not punishable by law whereas ethics once violated are punishable by the statutory body of such profession. Similarly, morals are not enforced but ethics are enforced. In a globalized world, Professional ethics are becoming more important at the workplace. As professionals become more specialised in their professional occupation, professional bodies have increasingly been busy developing, revising and refining professional codes of ethics. The underlying philosophy of having professional ethics is to make the persons performing in such jobs to follow the sound, uniform ethical conduct. It helps a professional to choose from the alternative what they should do when faced with problems.

Professional ethics are fundamental to any profession or business. Organizational endeavours ceaselessly to be in the quest for its objectives and goals while profiting the employees

in working up their high abilities. In this way, the adherence to high professional ethics of an employee can be particularly contributory to the amazing accomplishments of business objectives being turned out as arranged and proposed. Some of the important components of professional ethics that professional organizations necessarily include in their code of conduct are integrity, honesty, transparency, respectfulness towards the job, confidentiality, objectivity etc

## Workplace Spirituality

Workplace spirituality has emerged as a movement in the workplaces and as an important construct in academia during 1990s and early 21st century. Worldwide, this construct has received increased academic attention over the last years. It has emerged as a new field of inquiry because many researchers integrate spirituality into an organisational context with the argument that spirituality not only influence individuals but also significantly affects the organizational and managerial field.

According to McCormick (1994) spirituality as an inner experience an individual has that can be evidenced by his or her behavior.

According to Lee et al (2014), workplace spirituality is a multidimensional construct that encompasses individual, the organization, and the interactions of individuals within the organization. Researchers also used this term synonymously as spirituality at work, organizational spirituality, spirit at work, and spirituality in business, organizational spirituality, or the spiritual paradigm. The concept of spirituality draws on the ethics, values, motivation, work/life balance, and leadership elements of an organization.

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Although the study of spirituality in the context of the workplace still appears to be in the stages of its development. Several empirical studies consistently confirm significant correlations between spirituality and positive work outcomes. If the employees are allowed to bring their spiritual attributes to the workplace, they will become more fulfilled. Spiritual organizations are concerned with helping employees develop and reach their potential. They are also concerned with addressing problems created by work life conflicts (Rama Rao, 2010).

Different researcher used different factors that determine workplace spirituality at workplace i.e. – mindfulness, meaningful work, interconnectedness sense of community, organizational values, compassion inner life and transcendence (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009). Meaningful work implies that the work should be such that employees see meaning in their lives through work, which ignites their spirit and engages their soul interconnectedness means the employees need to experience a feeling of belongingness and attachment to the place of work. They need to be told that they “belong” to the place of work and they can be as at ease with themselves at work as they are in their personal lives. They should be made comfortable sharing their emotions at work (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Compassion in organizational culture manifests when treating employees with utmost care is the foremost motive of the management, even higher in value than making profits (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009)

Workplace spirituality is intended to interconnect past experiences and develop trust among employees in a way that would lead the organization into a better and productive environment. Due to the absence of spirituality in the workplace, the organizational environment becomes challenging which would create hurdles and issues.

According to Ananthram (2017), Religiosity and religious-based spirituality could promote unethical behaviour .Being in touch with spiritual principles and values helps to stimulate the moral imaginations of individuals and can provide depth of understanding of the many ethical problems that arise in business

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

From the literature review researchers have developed their understanding on the linkage between professional ethics & workplace spirituality and a detailed analysis of the same is provided in the following paragraphs.

Minon (2017) conducted a study on Workplace Spirituality, Work Ethics, and Organizational Justice as Related to Job Performance among State University Educators found that the educators’ work ethics and organizational justice were positively and significantly related to their workplace spirituality. Their organizational justice was positively and significantly related to their work ethics. On the other hand, the educators’ workplace spirituality and work ethics were

positively but not significantly related to job performance while their organizational justice and job performance were negatively and not significantly related. Work ethics and organizational justice were factors found to predict the educators’ job performance significantly. Workplace spirituality, however, was not a significant predictor of job performance.

According to Baker et al (2015), in their research on “Is workplace spirituality associated with business ethics?” found that results showed that spirituality, as measured by the Spiritual Transcendence Scale (STS), did not correlate significantly with measures of ethical perception, their ethical judgment ethical intention or perceived moral intensity. However they also emphasized that Conceptual link between spirituality and business ethics appears to be plausible and empirical investigations that may inform the literature on the potential relationships between ethics & workplace spirituality are just starting to emerge.

Paul & Saha (2015), conducted a study on “Workplace Spirituality–The Essence of Modern Business Organizations” to discuss about the effect of spirituality on workplace, various spiritual approaches shaping the modern organizations that will help employees with personal disorders and other work-related problems. Spirituality draws on the ethics, values, motivation, work/life balance, and leadership elements of an organization. The unique characteristics that differentiate a spiritual organization from others are: strong sense of purpose, focus on individual development, trust and openness, employee empowerment and toleration of employee expression. Spiritual approaches shaping the modern workplace are: God-centred, Ethical, Existential and Buddhist approach. Some recommendations for incorporating spirituality at workplace are: Employee assistance program (EAP), Meditation breaks, listening to spiritual music, honing spiritual skills for better job performance, setting up of a spiritual fund, Taking risks to open one’s spiritual self, Bereavement programs and Leadership practices. Mood chart’ is a new evolving concept as a part of Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) to enhance workplace spirituality. It is a chart that shows the deviations of mood levels over time and has information on our mood, hours of sleep, and medications. Thus, organizations that encourage workplace spirituality experiences improved organizational performance and profitability. Index terms are Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Mood chart, organizational performance, spiritual approaches workplace spirituality.

Kumar & Sabarirajan (2014) conducted a conceptual study on “Impact of work ethics in the role of spirituality”. They suggested that Workers exhibiting a good work ethic in theory should be selected for better positions, more responsibility and ultimately promotion. Workers who fail to exhibit a good work ethic may be regarded as failing to provide fair value for the wage the employer is paying them and should not be promoted or placed in positions of greater responsibility. In other words, the development of workplace spirituality can transfer ethics

and social justice into values, rather than a set of external restrictions imposed by regulations concerning moral standards.

Mohammad & Abdullah (2012), conducted a research on 'Company's Spirituality Enhances Employees' Ethical Behaviour: Reality or Myths' and found that the company has its own spirituality, but weakly related to the employees' ethical behaviour. They further suggested that weak relationship is due to the different understanding of some respondents towards the meaning of spirituality

Corner (2009), conducted a study on "Workplace Spirituality and Business Ethics: Insights from an Eastern Spiritual Tradition" to extend existing conceptual research on the relationship between workplace spirituality and business ethics through the experiential knowledge provided by yoga masters regarding the yoga's codes for social interaction. A model is proposed to develop that further explicates the relationship between workplace spirituality and business ethics through insights gained from yoga masters practicing the yamas and they suggested that enhanced spirituality improves ethical outcomes. This general relationship has been articulated in the workplace spirituality literature but specific spiritual constructs that may interact with particular ethical outcomes are scarce. From their literature review they also found that Ethical outcomes from the business ethics/workplace spirituality are: understanding of ethical problems, creativity in ethical decision making and ability to envision outcomes beyond the self.

Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) defined four dimensions of workplace spirituality (WPS) i.e. compassion, Mindfulness, Meaningful work, Transcendence. Compassion means empathy or care for the suffering of others, often including a desire to help. Mindfulness is defined as a state of inner consciousness in which one is aware of one's thoughts and actions moment by moment. It is about a person's mind being present, not wandering with past, future thoughts or distractions. Meaningful work basically reflects the extent to which employees experience a sense of meaning and purpose in their work. It is one's experience that his/her work is a significant and meaningful part of his/her life, the meaning is beyond the material rewards and creates a sense of joy and energy at work. Transcendence is an important dimension of WPS is whether employees can interpret their work practices and their organizations' operations in sacred terms.

Ghee & Grant (2008) conducted a study on Spirituality and Ethical Behaviour in the Workplace: Wishful Thinking or Authentic Reality. They tried to find out the link between individual spirituality and ethical behaviour in the workplace. They contend that spirituality forms an internalised general regulative ideal, based on four common aspects of spirituality: self-transcendence, interconnectedness, meaning and one's ultimate concern, that governs what individuals perceive and value and how they act. These moral values practiced over time become virtues. They found that Spiritual persons are likely to be ethical persons. Such individuals are likely to be of significant benefit to their organisation.

Maclagan (2003) noted that managerial decisions to facilitate workplace spirituality present dilemmas to organizations that will likely meet with welcome by some stakeholders while producing resistance by others due to conflicting ethical priorities inherent in the ethical climates typology. Thus, organizations positively influence workplace spirituality.

Jurkiewicz (2002), conducted a study on 'Right from Wrong: The Influence of Spirituality on Perceptions of Unethical Business Activities' to assess the relationship between individual spirituality and perceptions of unethical business activities. Analysis indicated that degree of individual spirituality influences whether an individual perceives a questionable business practice as ethical or unethical. Jurkiewicz also suggested that workplace spirituality can be combined with multiple ethics, and be integrated into work and personal values by reducing regulations and standards of formal ethics.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (a) To find out the relationship between Professional ethics & workplace spirituality.
- (b) To analyse the impact of Professional ethics on workplace spirituality.

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a statistically significant relationship between professional ethics & workplace spirituality.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** There is a statistically significant impact of professional ethics on workplace spirituality.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study Professional ethics considered as independent variable and workplace spirituality is considered as the dependent variable to check the impact of one on another. Both primary & secondary data have been used. Primary data has been collected through a questionnaire. Secondary data was collected through journals; research papers and articles. Questionnaires were adapted from previously published research and were molded according to the present culture of the organization. A questionnaire consisting of two sections related to the professional ethics & workplace spirituality. For measuring WPS, a scale developed by Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) was used. This scale is a multi-dimensional scale, with four dimensions (compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, and transcendence) and 21 items. Out of 21, four items assessing compassion, six items assessing mindfulness, seven assessing meaningful work and five assessing transcendence. Scale of professional ethics consists of 17 items. The sampling technique used for the research is convenience sampling. The sample size for data collection was 128. Sample includes employee working IT sector. Data analysis has been done with the help of SPSS software by using correlation & regression analysis technique

## RESULT & ANALYSIS

### Demographic analysis

Table 1 depicts the demographic analysis of the respondents. It shows that out of total 128 respondents, 59 are male and 69 are female. According to the age wise category of respondents there were 23 respondents' lies between the age group of 20-25 years, 67 respondents were from the age group of 26-30 Years, 30 respondents were from the age group of 31-35 years, 3 respondents were from the age group of 36 to 40 years, 5 respondents were between the age group of 41 to 45 years.

### RELIABILITY ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE

Cronbach's alpha value for professional ethics is 0.863 and for workplace spirituality is 0.738. In both the cases it is more than 0.6 which indicates that there is internal consistency in the questionnaire.

## HYPOTHESIS TESTING

### Hypothesis 1

Table 2 indicates that there is a weak positive relationship ( $R = 0.124$ ) between professional ethics and workplace spirituality. But as  $p$  value = 0.164 which is more than 0.05 level of significance Therefore, we accept our null hypothesis and reject our alternate hypothesis from which we can conclude that there is statistically no significant relationship between professional ethics & workplace spirituality .

### Hypothesis 2

As there is no significant relationship found between professional ethics and workplace spirituality, we can conclude that there is no significance to find the impact of professional ethics on workplace spirituality.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents**

S.No	Variable	No of respondents
Gender		
1	Male	59
2	Female	69
	Total	128
Age		
1	20-25 years	23
2	26-30 years	67
3	31-35years	30
4	36-40 years	3
5	41-45 years	5
	Total	128

**Table 2: Relationship between Professional Ethics and Workplace SpiritualityCorrelations**

Correlations		
		Workplace Spirituality
Professional Ethics	Pearson Correlation	.124
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.164
	N	128

## DISCUSSION

The present research was carried out to examine the relationship between professional ethics & workplace spirituality. Our result showed that there is no significant relationship exist between professional ethics & workplace spirituality among employees working in IT sector which is in tune with the result of Baker et al (2015), But against the finding of other researchers like corner (2009), Mohammad & Abdullah (2012), Kumar & Sabarirajan (2014) Minon (2017) etc, who claimed that there

is significant relationship exist between ethics & workplace spirituality. Gull and Doha (2004) argue that spirituality can be the basis for ethical conduct in business. Where spirituality is absent, there is a lack of understanding that we are deeply connected.

The deviation in result turn out differently may be because of the characteristics of the populations or perhaps there were other factors that we did not control that could explain our findings. Many researchers claimed that there are less empirical

evidences found to comment on the relationship between professional ethics & workplace spirituality. Therefore there is a need of more empirical researches to explore the relationship between two to reconcile these differences. It is suggested that future researchers should study a different population or look at a different set of variables. They can also consider other range of independent variables, mediating and moderating variables to study workplace spirituality. They can also examine more complex models to find joint effects of variables on workplace spirituality and individual spirituality. They may consider further studies to know the different Strategies to increase workplace spirituality. They may identify different factors that disrupt workplace spirituality.

Though the study is adding up value in the industry, further polishing is required. Time and resource constraints were unavoidable; therefore only one sector was noticed. This study focused on limited dimensions of professional ethics & workplace spirituality which makes the researcher bound to see the concept only in that specific area, hence limiting the scope of the study, as there are many dimensions to it.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper brings the fresh perspective to the emerging field of research in management-”Workplace spirituality”. The implications of the research give further direction towards generating more empirical evidence with regard to managing spirituality at work.

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