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## Impact of spirituality and emotional intelligence on employee engagement

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### Abstract

Spirituality is a hot topic of research in recent times in management arena. Though the organizational researchers have intensely started exploring this area, yet very little discussion on how spiritual and religious issues might influence employee engagement. This research is an attempt to fulfil this need. Spirituality has been characterized as a characteristic of healthy people and more recently high performing employees in the organizations. However the comprehensive framework of Emotional Intelligence based components within the organizations provide employees the necessary skills to apply their personal spiritual experience into their work. It helps them to develop strong psychological bonding towards the organization which in turn provides positive results to both the employees and the organization. The present study explores and establishes a relationship between Spirituality, Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement.

**Keywords:** Spirituality, Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement.

### 1. Introduction

To endure and compete successfully in today's chaotic environment, organizations require employees to be upbeat, show idea while engaging with their role and remain committed to performing at high standards (Bakker and Leiter, 2010) <sup>[9]</sup>. Employee engagement, Emotional Intelligence and Spirituality are important concepts to consider when dealing with changes at work and improving performance. With the changing business environment and competition a state of harmony between the body, mind and spirit is lacking. But the facts imply that employees get depressed over time due to the lack of happy environment and tiredness, and after a long struggle with depression and anxiety, as Chandler Lee (2005) <sup>[11]</sup> mentioned that, in the new, modern and more productive organization, employees have reportedly feeling isolated, devalued, dehumanized, and exploited. Due to competitive environment, high expectations of the customers and other stakeholders, high frequency of interpersonal conflict, sometimes disrespectful behaviour of seniors, employees are experiencing stressful time (Shakerinia, 2010) <sup>[32]</sup>. To overcome these problems new paradigm called "spirituality movement" is emerging in organizations. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) <sup>[4]</sup> have described the spirituality movement by organization as a major transformation where organizations as well as employees are trying to find a meaning, purpose and a sense of community. A workplace which is spiritually expressed by its employees provides a competitive edge in the business. Emotional Intelligence is often defined as thinking with emotion and effectively communicating the outcome of that thinking (Palmer & Stough, 2003) <sup>[28]</sup>. Adopting this definition, therefore the effective demonstration of Emotional Intelligence at work would require an individual to simultaneously possess a high capacity of each aforementioned developmental lines underpinning the human potential. Within the workplace, Spirituality bought to fruition through the effective demonstration of Emotional Intelligence, specifically the competency of understanding the other's emotions respecting individual differences so as to create shared understanding, meaning and direction. Hence, this paper is an attempt to empirically validate the interaction between Employee Spirituality, Emotional Intelligence and Employee engagement.

### Review of Literature

Spirituality is viewed as some internal substance, a value, belief, attitude, or emotion that affects people's behaviour (Moore & Casper, 2006) <sup>[26]</sup>. Bosch (2009) <sup>[5]</sup> divides the concept of

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spirituality into two types: pure and applied. According to him, pure spirituality refers to silent, unbounded and inner experience of pure self awareness. It is devoid of customary content of perception, thoughts and feelings. On the other hand, applied spirituality refers to the domain of practical applications and measurable outcomes that automatically arise from the inner experience of pure spirituality. Emmons (2000) [14] describes spirituality as spiritual intelligence. According to him, spirituality refers to the search for the experiential elements of the sacred and ultimate meaning of life. It means a higher consciousness and transcendence. He further discusses that spiritual intelligence emphasizes the abilities that draw on such themes to predict functioning and adaptation. Amram (2007) [2] also defines spiritual intelligence as the ability to apply and embody spiritual resources and qualities to enhance daily functioning and wellbeing. According to Snyder et al 2006[34], spirituality is a positive psychological concept. They describe it as love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, personal responsibility, and a sense of harmony with one's environment. Furthermore, two of the most popular viewpoints of spirituality include the intrinsic origin view, and the existentialist perspective. As Krishna kumar and Neck (2002) [24] noted, the intrinsic-origin view of spirituality is the one which argues that spirituality is a concept or a principle that originates from the inside of an individual. Guillory's (2000)[18] definition falls within this perspective. He defines spirituality as the inner consciousness. According to him, spirituality comes from within-beyond programmed beliefs and values. Like Guillory, Brandt (1996) [6] agrees that the goal of spirituality is greater personal awareness of universal values, helping an individual live and work better and more joyfully. Further to this, he believes that spirituality is beyond the rules of religion. Brandt also argues that spirituality avoids the formal and ceremonial connotations of religion; it is non-denominational, non-hierarchical, and non ecclesiastical. Spirituality implies an inner search for meaning or fulfillment that may be undertaken by anyone regardless of religion. People see themselves as part of a trusting community, where they experience personal growth as part of their work community, where they feel valued and supported, would be a workplace in which spirituality thrives. On the other hand Emotional Intelligence is viewed as a mental ability that involves the ability to rationally deal with emotional information and action to improve an individual's thinking and direct him towards success. Goleman (1995) [17] focuses on Emotional Intelligence as wide array of competencies and skilled that drive leadership performance. Goleman's model outlines four main Emotional Intelligence constructs.

**Self –awareness-** the ability to read one's emotions and recognize their impact while using the gut feelings to guide decisions.

**Self-Management** –involves controlling one's emotions and impulses and adapting to changing circumstances.

**Social Awareness-** the ability to sense, understand and react to others emotions while comprehending social networks.

**Social Management-** the ability to achieve outstanding performance.

Goleman (1995)[17] also opined that individuals are born with a general EI that determines their potential for learning emotional competencies. Further, Employee Engagement has been defined as being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to other. Thus, an engaged employee is someone who thinks hard about their work, feels positive when they do a good job and discusses work related matters and improves those around them. Employee Engagement is also defined as a positive, work related state of mind, characterised by vigor (high levels of energy while working, willingness to invest effort in work, and persistence in the face of difficulties), dedication(sense of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge), and absorption(being happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties detaching).The above definitions of engagement derives from the work of earlier theorists such as (Khan 1990)[21] Emotional Engagement is a powerful connection between one's true emotions, thoughts and feelings with the job (Khan 1990)[21] leading to feelings of enthusiasm and pride. Cognitive engagement is the strong involvement of one's attention on the work tasks leading to thorough absorption and resistance to distractions. Physical engagement is the strong involvement of one's physical energies towards a certain task, ranging from lethargy to vigorous involvement.

#### **Need of the Study**

Spirituality and Emotional Intelligence at workplace, employee's individual spirituality and employee engagement have begun to attract the attention of business leaders, top managers and management thinkers. Several researchers have started working in this area. There are lots of conceptual contributions made by researchers in the literature. Very few studies provide empirical evidences of the concerned subject. Past researches indicate that to survive in the current century in the face of economic downturn and global competition, it is imperative for leaders and managers to tap into their spiritual resources. There is a gap in literature in examining the possible interaction between Spirituality, Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement level. Testing this relationship would lead to further growth in employee development, increased job performance, lower turnover rates, higher profits and employee retention as they relate to organizational goals and strategies

#### **Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development Spirituality and Employee Engagement**

Many researchers discuss numerous outcome of employee spirituality at workplace. Meaningfulness at work is one of the most discussed outcomes of employee spirituality in the literature. This dimension of employee spirituality represents how employees interact with their day to day work at an individual level. The expression of spirituality involves the assumptions that each person has his/her own inner motives and desires to be involved in activities that give greater meaning to his/her life and the lives of others. Researchers discuss that meaningfulness at work can be measured through facets like team spirit, job engagement and satisfaction, job turnover and creativity. Team work is based on the belief that people see themselves as connected to each other and that there is some type of relationship between one's inner self and the inner self of others It involves the

mental, emotional and spiritual connections among employees in teams or groups in the organization (Neal 2000) <sup>[27]</sup>. The essence of deeper sense of connection involves support, freedom of expression and genuine caring. And all this leads to better performance as a team. Several researchers report a significant correlation between spirituality and mental health indices of satisfaction, happiness, self esteem, hope and optimism ( Paloutzian, Emmons and Keortge 2010<sup>[29]</sup> There is growing evidence that employee spirituality results in positive individual level outcomes for employees (Churchill, Ford and walker 1979) <sup>[10]</sup>. Spirituality leads to engagement of hearts and minds of their employees towards the workplace. It has an impact over job attitudes and behavior because of its potential to promote and create high levels of employee engagement. It generates positive, fulfilling work related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption towards workplace (Saks 2006<sup>[11]</sup> found that organization that have a stronger sense of spirituality enable employees to exercise stronger values and ethical beliefs in their workplace and empower them to show more creativity and flexibility at work. Gull and Doh (2004) <sup>[19]</sup> has reviewed that spiritual consciousness makes employees to be more engaged and can work more responsibly, ethically, collaboratively and creatively when they find meaning in their work activities. Leigh (1997) <sup>[25]</sup> states spirituality starts with the acknowledgement that employees do not bring only their bodies and minds to work, but also their hearts, soul's creativity, talents and unique spirits. On the basis of above discussion, the following hypothesis is framed:-

**HYP1: Higher the Spirituality better is the Employee Engagement**

**Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement**

Research has also been done in the past to establish a relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement. Emotional Intelligence leads to positive emotions which can increase the Employee Engagement. Employee Engagement can be achieved through the creation of an organizational environment where positive emotions such as involvement and pride are encouraged, resulting in improved organizational performance, lower employee turnover and better health. So this study reveals that it is the organizational environment that affects Employee Engagement. So if such an environment is created that encourages employees, then it will increase the level of the engagement and it will help in retaining the employees and will result in improving the organizational performance. Even Emotional Intelligence is negatively related with burnout. With increase in Emotional Intelligence burnout will decrease leading to increased Employee Engagement as shown in a study conducted by Schaufelli and Bakker (2006) <sup>[31]</sup>. They conducted a multi sample study on job demands, job resources and their relationship with burnout and engagement. Results showed that burnout and engagement were negatively related. So with increase in the level of engagement burnout will decrease. Researches also showed that engagement is related to turnover intentions of the employees. So the turnover intentions of the employee will depend on the level of engagement. Employee Engagement leads to better work effectiveness and reduced turnover intentions Schaufelli and Bakker (2006) <sup>[31]</sup> did a meta-analysis on Business- unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes. They found generalizable relationships between

employee satisfaction-engagement and these business outcomes. So if we increase the level of employee satisfaction and engagement then the employees will work better and it will improve the performance of the employees and in turn will help in increasing business outcomes including profit. So if we can change the management practices that increase the employee satisfaction it may increase the business outcomes. Individuals who experience a sense of purpose in their work, who believe that they can influence the system in which they are embedding are more engaged in their work. Emotional Intelligence leads to psychological awareness when performing an organization's role. As given by Kahn (1990) <sup>[21]</sup> physical as well as psychological awareness is needed for the employees to feel engaged to the job. So the next hypothesis is:-

**HYP2: Higher the Emotional Intelligence better is the Employee Engagement.**

**Theoretical Framework**

The above research model is showing relationship between independent variables Spirituality and Emotional Intelligence and dependent variable Employee Engagement. The model is showing that Spirituality and Emotional Intelligence is positively affecting Employee Engagement, on the basis of which H1 and H2 are derived.

**Research Design**

The study was conducted with a purpose to investigate the impact of Spirituality and Emotional Intelligence on Employee Engagement. Population of the study was employees of two leading private banks of Jammu region namely ICICI bank and HDFC bank. Personally administered 5 point Likert scale questionnaire had been used to collect data. Questionnaire was comprised of 30 items, out of which 10 questions analysed Spirituality; 10 questions were related to Emotional Intelligence whereas 10 items measured Employee Engagement.

**Findings of the Study**

**Descriptive Statistics**

**Table 1** represents the mean values of Spirituality, Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement. The mean value of emotional intelligence is 4.14 that show Emotional Intelligence plays an important role in helping the managers and employees to cope with the dynamic change in the business environment. Aggregate mean value of 4.19 for Spirituality explains that spiritual orientation about life protects employees against non-desirable and non-adaptive behaviours like acting in destructive ways both at organisational level and personal level. The mean value for Employee Engagement is calculated as 4.30 depict that positive and satisfying state of mind of employees at workplace or positive feelings towards work and at the job enhances the employee as well as organisational performance.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Spirituality	4.19	.851
Emotional Intelligence	4.14	.839
Employee Engagement	4.30	.731

Table 2 shows the results of regression analysis, which demonstrate the dependence of Employee Engagement (dependent variables) on Spirituality and Emotional Intelligence (independent variable). Value of R explains the

strength of association between independent variables and dependent variables and R value lies between 0-1 (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2006). The R values near to 1 show a strong association between independent and dependent variables and vice versa. The results of the study are as following:

1-Regression analysis of Spirituality and Employee Engagement shows enhancement in overall employee engagement is due to the spirituality. The impact of Spirituality on Employee Engagement is strong and significant ( $F=36.956$ ,  $P<.000$ ) and beta value is .83. So the hypothesis is accepted.

2- Regression analysis of Emotional Intelligence and employee engagement shows change in employee engagement is due to the Emotional Intelligence. The impact of emotional Intelligence on employee engagement is positive and significant ( $F=25.244$ ,  $P<.05$ ) and beta value is .68

**Table 2:** Regression Analysis

Relationship	R	R Square	F	Sig.	B
SP – EE	.397	.157	36.956	.000	.83
EI - EE	.217	.047	25.244	.002	.68

SP – Spirituality, EI – Emotional Intelligence, EE – Employee Engagement

### Interpretation

The hypothesis 1 states that a positive relationship exists between spirituality and employee engagement. On the bases of above statistical findings it has been found that spirituality has significantly positive impact on employee engagement. Therefore the findings of the study support the hypothesis 1 and prove that employees with spirituality seek challenges that provide them with opportunities that are likely to enhance employee engagement.

The hypothesis 2 of the study states that Emotional Intelligence significantly affects employee engagement. Statistical findings suggest that the employee with positive emotions has improved and mastered their skills and abilities, which positively affect engagement and performance. It has been observed that employees complete their job assignments on time, which contributes to the overall performance of the company. On the bass of these findings we can conclude that hypothesis 2 of the study has been accepted.

### Conclusion

Competent employees are the greatest assets of any organisation. The proficiency of employees plays a vital role in the context of the diverse challenges faced by the organisations. In order to maintain and develop their competences, the employees should have an open-mind for spirituality and emotions Intelligence. This proactive approach can be generated by providing adequate knowledge about spirituality and emotional intelligence as well as motivation for the employees by fostering a supportive and favourable climate for employee engagement in the organisations. Competency of the employees has become one of the core concerns to the survival of business units. So, they need to put continuous efforts on employee engagement because engagement can facilitate behaviour change that leads to improved performance. So, spirituality and emotional intelligence is necessary for the development of skills and knowledge of engaged employee.

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