

A Synergistic Model for Developing a Committed Workforce in Dynamic Organizations

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Abstract

Organizations today are transforming fast to strategically adapt with the changes in the external environment. The paradigms of organizational cultures have thus expanded to embrace those factors that have evolved in response to organizational changes. This study argued that spiritual and learning organization practices are elementary and implicit part of organizational culture of such dynamic organizations. Therefore, such practices may better explain the very nature of individual's psychological attachment with a dynamic workplace. This study seeks empirical evidence from previous studies and proposed a conceptual framework explaining how learning organization practices and spiritual integration at work contributes towards organizational commitment. The framework will also seek possible connection of learning organization and spiritual integration at work as both constructs have been evolving separately with less attention on how they can be related. This study discussed the practical implications and suggests future directions to elaborate as well as to refine the proposed model.

Keywords: dynamic organizations, spiritual integration, learning organization practices, organizational commitment

INTRODUCTION

Organizations today are more dynamic as 21st century has been an era of information, changing technologies and globalization. For better adaptability and stability to external changes, organizations will unconsciously adapt and eventually demand employees to be more competent at work. Work itself is ought to create opportunities for learning and development, and build mastery (Pfeffer, 2010). Skilled professionals in general and highly skilled professions in particular now seek for opportunities to learn and grow in and through organizations (Mubarak et al., 2012). To better cope with external challenges, organizations are transforming into learning hubs and incorporating learning organization practice. Such practices focuses on developing systems and structures that are rather adaptable and highly responsive to change (Dodgson, 1993), offer opportunities to express complete self (Garvin, Edmondson & Gino, 2008), while enhancing individuals' learning capacity and ensuring people involvement through shared learning practices (De Villiers, 2008).

Nevertheless, such psychological attachment of a workforce is indispensable for optimization of human capital, successful implementation of corporate strategies, achievement of organizational goals and sustaining a competitive edge (Desa & Koh, 2011). Yet, the workforce satisfaction in modern era has been materialistic in nature which

dichotomizing material and spiritual lives and thus, generating spiritual inadequacies among individuals (Chia, 2012). Inevitably, organizations today must nurture a culture that explicates the connection of both material and spiritual demands of individuals for total satisfaction at work. Thus, dynamic organizations must address both learning and spiritual needs of its members. Offering innate opportunities for both spiritual and professional enhancement may strengthen the bond among organizations and its members. Subsequently, this sparks the need of sustaining organizational membership to influence employee decisions to stay attached with their respective organizations. However, previous work offered fewer understandings in learning organization practices and spiritual integration at work, which could foster organizational commitment. Besides, studies have widely ignored a possible connection on learning organization practices with spirituality at work, as the constructs had been evolving mutually exclusive with less emphasis on how they may be related. To address these inadequacies in organizational research, this study proposed a relational model of workplace spirituality, learning organization practices and organizational commitment.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Today, organizational success depends on the way it stimulates people and transforms them into a committed workforce. Researchers have thus evidently associated organizational commitment with a number of imperative individual and organizational outcomes. These include increased belongingness, job satisfaction, efficacy, job security, career progression, tenure, rewards, compensation, training cost, retention and organizational goals (Azeem, 2010). Meyer and Allen (1991) assert that employees may want to stay, are obliged to stay or forced to stay with organizations. However, an affective organizational commitment is mostly defined as employees' degree of involvement with their respective organizations (Balay, 2012). It is subjected to the acceptance of values as well as the goals of the organization with substantial belief therein; readiness to put significant effort on the part of the organization; and a substantial need of sustaining the organizational membership (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979).

Literature argues that all work related factors may explain the psychological attachment of employees with their respective organizations. Accordingly, all factors defining individuals' personal interest and values at work are antecedents of organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Therefore, learning organization practices and spirituality at work are among the key antecedents of organizational commitment. Facilitating learning at work to build competency can empower individuals and opportunity of manifesting spiritual self i.e. a true-self engages people at work. Both factors foster internalization to facilitate a change and thus stand elementary to a dynamic organization.

Organizational change is rendered effective when incorporated internally. Furthermore, learning organization practices can contribute through developing people for organizational change. A learning organization is active enough in creating, acquiring and transferring information from one organization to another. This type of method can connect amongst all organizational members, which allow them to modify their behaviors and venture on new knowledge and insight (Garvin, 1993; Garvin et al., 2008). A learning organization

endeavors to enrich its members, infusing competency and capitalizing their experiences (Ionuț-Cosmin, 2009). It enhances people's capability to learn, modifies and defines organizational structures, individual's mind set, culture and design of jobs while ensuring people's involvement and incorporating a culture of shared learning (De Villiers, 2008).

The term is defined as a place characterized by continuous enhancement of people potential for generating the results they actually desire (Senge, 1990). Thus, it emphasizes greatly based on their continuous learning, improvement and transformational capacity (Watkin & Marsick, 1996). The learning organizational conception is developed based on the theoretical foundation of organizational learning with a methodological and action oriented approach towards learning process and practices within an organization. Such organizations are characterized by a culture that reinforces a learning atmosphere; a system of encouraging learning and development through recognition of individuals learning needs and facilitation of learning processes; and a structure to ensure assistance and implementation on learning activities (Armstrong & Foley, 2003).

Nevertheless, the spirituality at work is increasingly integrating in today's organizational culture. The idea reflect a desire for spiritual integration at work in order to satisfy spiritual selves through transcendence and therefore seeking a personal meaning, connection with community and spiritual development through work/workplace integration (Chamiec-Case, 2009). The concept of spirituality is evolving and a variety of factors needs to be considered to suggest its complete operational definition (Underwood, 2011). Spirituality at work may be identified as an essence, i.e. the individual's fundamental nature sparking motivation towards potential for development and transformation of self, and also as a dimension by seeking meaning and the relationship with God, transcendent or ultimate truth (Carroll, 1998). It is the integration of personal spiritual values at work (Kolodinsky et al., 2008) and to some extent different from spirituality, as personal spirituality is restricted to workplaces (Altaf & Awan, 2011).

Workplace spirituality has been studied as a uni-dimensional as well as a multiple dimensional concept. However, acknowledging the extensively personal aspect of spirituality, a multiple dimensional approach is vital for sufficient manifestation of numerous aspects that may be associated with spiritual dimensions at work (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008; Hardt et. al., 2012). The notion may be interpreted from an individual perspective as the spiritual experience of people at work and through organizational role in facilitating the spiritual experience of its people (Pawar, 2008) These will subsequently bring improvements and increases productivity within an organization (Hashim, 2012). It may be classified as exploratory in nature as it has been established based on theoretical, philosophical, cultural/religious and scientific modes as well as consequential. By focusing on individual and organizational, the outcome will be reflected in spiritual interaction with their workplace (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008).

Learning Organization and Organizational Commitment

Although the concept of a learning organization was first associated with organizational commitment by Ulrich and Von Glinnow (1993), it could not get researcher's attention for 15 years. Most of the work on identifying this relationship was conducted within the last few years. According to Massingham and Diment (2009), organizational commitment could be an input for incorporating change through learning, as well as an outcome of attitudinal change which resulted from learning in organizations. The dimensions of leadership; people empowering, inquiry and dialogue; and system connectedness has significantly predict organizational commitment (Dirani, 2009). Atak (2011) observed that emotional and forced nature of commitment can affect the learning organization practices. It was suggested that in this era of information and technology, organizations need to develop employees' commitment and observe the aspects of recruitment practices to aim towards a learning organization. Empirical review reflected that team learning, empowerment of people, connection with environment and strategic leadership has the strongest positive relation where as the dimension of inquiry and dialogue is most weakly associated with organizational commitment. (Wahba, 2013; Aghaei, ziaee and Shahrbanian, 2012). Much of the empirical evidences observed in the education sector are inconsistent and depended too much on demographic features of organizations (Balay, 2012, Wahba, 2013).

Workplace spirituality and organizational commitment

Studies within the last five years depicted that workplace spirituality, are enticing as an organizational commitment. This is because people yearn and aspire for a more meaningful work, harnessing their complete-self/potential at work, developing holism, spiritual discouragement of unethical practices and opportunities of spiritual richness for employees in an organization (Rego & Cunha, 2008). Marschke (2008) also asserted that if employees feel that their spiritual beliefs are to be valued at work, their work performance can improve as they can be more motivated at work which leads job satisfaction through relationship of trust and commitment within their organizations. On the contrary, if the organization lack this purpose/spirituality, many people may develop a negative perception about their job and commitment with respective their organizations (Marschke et al., 2009). The popular empirical studies in this context reflect that intrinsic religiosity, community/connection, alignment with organizational values, meaningful work, inner-life, completeness and enjoyment are significantly related to the employee's organizational commitment (Rego & Cunha, 2008; Pawar, 2009; Affeldt & MacDonald, 2010). However, results have shown to be inconsistent (Nasina & Doris, 2011; Cherati, Mahdavi & Rezaeian, 2013). Thus, workplace spirituality must be explored with other disciplines (Geh & Tan, 2009; Deshpande, 2012) in order to understand its practical application at work (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

Employees will quest for a meaningful work, harnessing their complete-self/potential at work, develop holism, spiritually discourage unethical practices and seek opportunities of

spiritual richness through organizations (Rego & Cunha, 2008). Organizational commitment may be conceptualized as an effective response for individuals on analyzing individual-organizational work interactions (Joo, 2010). This indicated that basic human nature must be considered in so that work and life are integrated (Pfeffer, 2010) because it can be the opportunity to satisfy spiritual self at work. This approach may effectively attach and involve other employees. A desire for spiritual satisfaction through work may spur on experiencing transcendence and colligating people at work (Fry & Matherly, 2007). Such employees will search for meaningfulness in work; seek a sense of connection; and spiritual growth. Harmonization of individual spiritual values with organizational values and the spiritual experience thereof may induce an affective relationship of trust and belief. This will foster positive sentiments and a moral bond with an organization. Employees would keep intact with such organizations to avoid spiritual dissatisfaction associated with leaving such workplaces.

H1: A significant relationship exists between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment

While organizational commitment is an input for incorporating change through learning, it may be an outcome of attitudinal change as a result of learning in organizations (Massingham & Diment, 2009). Learning organization practices may be an important and an implicit motivational factor for individual's growth in and through organizations. Learning practices that are reinforced through a supportive leadership can psychologically empower people and further their attachment within the organization (Naqvi et. al., 2011). Moreover, for psychological attachment and involvement of employees, it is important to be aware of an organizational atmosphere that offers psychological safety at work, where individuals may express their work potential. A supportive learning environment dictates that it is psychologically safe, appreciate differences, open to the ideas that are newly generated and provide time to review the work processes (Garvin et al. 2008). Such a working environment will nurture employees to have a positive attitude, develop a sense of responsibility and will be considered as an implicit reward for employees that would prolong their attachment with respective organizations. Hence it is proposed that:

H2: A significant relationship exists between learning organization practices and organizational commitment

Opportunity to learn is also a spiritual experience and spiritual people tend to seek more meaningfulness in life (Mahoney & Graci, 1999). Nevertheless, employees tend to seek involvement and development through a meaningful work. Surviving in a society considered not possible especially for individuals who search for meaning, a purposeful life and a connection thereof is kept apart from learning processes (Miller, 2000). It is necessary for an organization to effectively keep these components intact as an integral part of a work community. This may elevate spiritual experiences and promote spiritual integration. A supportive learning climate is one of the prime components of a learning organization. It promotes collaborative learning through developing a learning community, which may also foster a sense of connectedness for spiritual integration. Spirituality at workplace as part of an organizational culture, may significantly influence group effectiveness (Denial, 2010),

and therefore promote a quality inter-relationship among community at work. Thus, a learning environment and spirituality at work would reinforce each other through a learning community. While a high-quality relationship may directly relate with learning behavior of individuals, such experiences may also indirectly link with learning behavior through prevailed psychological safety at work (Carmeli, Brueller, & Dutton, 2009). Hence it is proposed that:

H3: A significant relationship exists between workplace spirituality and learning organization practices

CONCLUSION

The theoretical foundation and empirical evidence from previous works establishes these models which propose a linear relationship between workplace spirituality, learning organization practices and organizational commitment. Since previous works based on the proposed relationships is yet in infancy, this model will address these inadequacies as well as a direct future research in this area. An empirical work thereof may engender insightful conclusions and support management through better understandings on employees' values and behavior at work, attracting the right spiritual fit, enhancing learning and spiritual experiences through work and retaining a competent and committed workforce. Literature review has established an important role of spiritual and learning organization practices in psychological attachment of employees. Thus, organizations must allow room for spiritual and learning organization practices. A deliberate effort for incorporating a culture of openness, appreciation, manifestation and reflection of true/spiritual self as well as knowledge sharing may allow individuals to adapt to changing environments and thereby developing and sustain a competitive edge. Future research may further elaborate this model adding more dimensions to constructs and seeking connection with outcomes associated with organizational commitment like job performance, organizational citizenship behavior and employee turnover. The proposed linkage with workplace spirituality is suggested to be analysed in different religious context as well as the magnitude of individual spirituality at work, which may vary accordingly.

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