

## **THE IMPLICATIONS OF WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AND WORKPLACE ATTITUDES ON JOB PERFORMANCE: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

**CHIYEM LUCKY NWANZU<sup>♦</sup>**

Department of Psychology, Delta State University,  
Abraka, Nigeria.

### **ABSTRACT**

Workplace spirituality is widely acknowledged to associate in a desirable direction with valuable work attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and employee involvement. These work attitudes are also widely reported to relate in a desired manners with the various dimensions of job performance. However, these different accounts are not contextualized. Different journals, periodicals, books and other related materials represent various accounts of the role of workplace spirituality. This paper reviewed the studies and brought the various account together within the context of the relationship between workplace spirituality and workplace attitudes and the implications on job performance. The significance of this approach is that bringing together the dominant findings in a single document may make them appealing and convincing for adoption and application by organizational practitioners. The linkage between the variables was theoretical and evidenced-based. Spiritual leadership theory and affective event theory offered support for the pattern of relationships that is revealed in several empirical studies.

**Keywords:** Affective event, Job performance, Spiritual leadership, Workplace attitudes, Workplace spirituality

### **Abstrait**

Il est largement reconnu que la spiritualité en milieu de travail s'associe dans une direction souhaitable à de précieuses attitudes au travail telles que la satisfaction au travail, l'engagement organisationnel et la participation des employés. Il est également largement rapporté que ces attitudes au travail sont liées de la manière souhaitée aux différentes dimensions de la performance au travail. Cependant, ces différent comptes ne sont pas contextualisés. Différentes revues, périodiques, livres et autres documents connexes représentent divers comptes du rôle de la spiritualité en milieu de travail. Cet article a passé en revue les études et rassemblé les différent scomptes dans le contexte de la relation entre la spiritualité et les attitudes au travail et les implications sur le rendement au travail. L'importance de cette approche est que le fait de rassembler les résultats dominants dans un seul document peut les rendre attrayants et convaincants

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<sup>♦</sup>**Address of corresponding Author:** Chiyem Lucky Nwanzu, Department of Psychology, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. Phone: 08063417246; Email: [nwanzuchiyem@gmail.com](mailto:nwanzuchiyem@gmail.com)

pour adoption et application par les praticiens de l'organisation. Le lien entre les variables était théorique et fondé sur des preuves. La théorie du leadership spirituel et la théorie des événements affectif sont soutenu le modèle de relations révélé dans plusieurs études empiriques.

**Mots-clés:** événement affectif, rendement au travail, leadership spirituel, attitudes au travail, spiritualité au travail

## **INTRODUCTION**

Human relations theory of organization is valued for recognizing the contributions of human factors along with structure in effective functioning of the organization. However, while the theory addressed factors such as employee motivation, and morale, it neglected spirituality, a core ingredient in human existence. Moore and Casper (2006) presented spirituality as the drive to discover a sustainable, real, meaningful, holistic and deep understanding of the existential self and as it interconnects with the sacred and the transcendent. Spirituality differs from institutionalized religion as it is personal, comprehensive, non-denominational, universal human feeling, not adherence to the beliefs, rituals, or practices of a specific organized religious institution or tradition (Karakas, 2010). Unlike religion that divides people through doctrine and the emphasis on formal structure that keeps out those with different beliefs (Rego & Cunha, 2008), spirituality is inclusive, tolerant, and open minded. Clearly, this perspective presents spirituality as a necessity for religion but no other way round. Identifying the characteristics of spirituality that distinct it from religion is necessary for purpose of positive job performance. Aside workplace spirituality, job performance which refers to behaviour or actions that are relevant to the goals of the organization (Campbell, 1990) is also well documented to be influence by workplace attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

This paper is a review of studies that examined relationship between workplace spirituality, workplace attitudes and job performance. The main argument of the paper is that workplace spirituality is a valuable tool for enhancing workplace attitudes and by implication job performance. The paper seeks to achieve field recognition and acceptance for workplace spirituality by establishing its desirable outcomes on workplace attitudes and by linking the latter to job performance. The explanations here are both theoretical and evidenced-based; a feature that distinct the present review from similar others (e.g. Karaka, 2010) that largely adopted philosophical explanations.

## **Statement of the Problem**

In the extant literature, workplace spirituality is widely acknowledged to associate in desirable direction with valuable employee attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and employee involvement (Ali, 2015; Kazemipour, Mohamad & Poureidi, 2012; Van Der Walt, & De Klerk, 2016). The above cited variables are also widely reported to relate in a desirable manner with job performance. However, the empirical evidence only exists in fragmented forms on pages of books, periodicals, journals and other related materials across the globe. In other words, there is absence of both narrative and meta-analytical reviews on relationship between workplace spirituality and workplace attitudes. In the scattered form the evidence is unorganized to convince practitioners about the value of workplace spirituality as it relates to workplace attitudes, and by implication job performance. The neglect by researchers to package in saleable

form results from their studies accounts largely to why practitioners do not adopt and apply research findings. The non-adoption of research findings by organizational practitioners means waste of resources on the side of researchers and lack of evidenced-based knowledge for organizations to flourish. Lack of flourishing organizations has implication for the society.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper is a review of related literature on the relationship between workplace spirituality and workplace attitudes, and the implications of the relationship for job performance. The studies cited covered different time period, but the design remained cross-sectional as the studies were drawn at one point in time using Google search engine. The sample therefore was based on convenience. The review was narrative, not meta-analysis as no statistical manipulations were carried out on information collected from the sampled studies.

### **Workplace Spirituality**

Spirituality which was traditionally relegated to the personal or religious domains of an individual's life is increasingly coming into focus in the workplace. The concept of workplace spirituality is well articulated by several scholars. For instance, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, (2010) referred to workplace spirituality as the aspects of the workplace, either in the individual, the group, or the organization that promotes individual feelings of satisfaction through experience that is beyond ordinary. It is the recognition that people have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community (Ashmos&Duchon, 2000). Organizations that promote a spiritual culture recognize that people seek to find meaning and purpose in their work and desire to connect with other human beings as part of a community (Robbins, & Judge, 2013). Workplace spirituality represents individual's effort to seek out his/her ultimate purpose in life, have strong connection with coworkers and others within the work setting and experience alignment between his/her core values and beliefs and that of the organization.

Workplace spirituality is a relatively recent introduction in organizational behavior literature, but with a number of models. These models include compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, and transcendence (Petchsawang, &Duchon, 2008), condition for community, meaning at work, inner life, block of spirituality, personal responsibility and positive connection with others, contemplation, work unit community, positive work unit values, organizational values, and individual and organizational values (Ashmos, &Duchon, 2000), engaging work, sense of community, spiritual connection and mystical experience( Kinjerski, 2013), interconnection with a higher power, interconnection with human beings, interconnection with nature and all living things (Liu & Robertson, 2011), the family, the workplace, the authority, the community and the self. (Khasawneh, Alrjoub& Al Zawahreh, 2010). The models represent various ways of thinking about workplace spirituality. These number of models and their associated constructs demonstrates wide spread interest in the variable. Many corporations are now explicitly using the word "spirituality" in their internal and external memo literature (Singhai, 2010), and are initiating and encouraging spiritual activities such as employees observing morning devotion before commencing the day's work.

### **Workplace Attitudes**

Attitude refers to relatively stable feelings or beliefs that are directed toward specific persons, groups, ideas, jobs, or other objects (Landy & Conte, 2013). There are beliefs and feelings that predispose individual to respond in a particular way to objects, people or events (Robbins & Judge 2013). Therefore, work attitudes are evaluations of one's work that express one's feelings toward, beliefs about, and attachment to one's work (Judge, & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Attitude has three components that covered cognitive, affective and behavioral, and it could be negative or positive. In organizational behaviour literature, a number of workplace attitudes have been identified and explored. However, this review is limited to five workplace attitudes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, employee involvement, employee engagement and organization-based self-esteem) that have received extensive theoretical and empirical efforts with existing body of knowledge.

### **Job Performance**

Job performance refers to behaviour or actions that are relevant to the goals of the organization (Campbell, 1990). It is sociable actions, behaviour, and outcomes that employees engage in or bring about that are related to and contribute to organizational goals (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). Employee performance is widely discussed as a three dimension construct that cover task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviour. Task performance entails the accomplishment of duties and tasks that are specific in a job description (Murphy, 1989). It is an individual's proficiency with which he or she performs activities which contribute to the technical activities of the organization (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002), and it is expressed in work quantity, work quality, and job knowledge among others. Other labels sometimes used for task performance include job-specific proficiency, technical proficiency or in-role performance (Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt, Schaufeli, De Vet, & Van der Beek, 2011).

Contextual performance refers to individual behaviour that supports the organizational, social and psychological environment in which the technical activities are carried out (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). Contextual performance includes behaviors such as helping coworkers and making suggestions about how to improve work procedures. Other labels used for contextual performance include extra-role behaviour, pro-social organizational behavior and organizational citizenship behaviour. Counterproductive work behavior refers to employees' voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and threatens the well-being of the organization, its members, or both (Landy, & Cuonte, 2013). Such behaviour includes dishonest, sabotage and absenteeism. Researchers such as Viswesvaran, Schmidt, and, Ones, (2005) have observed that the separate dimensions of job performance related to the general factor and to each other.

### **Workplace Spirituality and Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction expresses the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs (Spector, 1997). In South Africa, Van Der Walt, and De Klerk (2016) studied 600 white-collar workers, chosen from two organizations in different industries and observed positive relationship between workplace spirituality and job satisfaction. In Pakistan, Hassan, Madeem, and Nisar (2016) reported that workplace spirituality has a significantly positive relationship with trust and that trust significantly mediates the impact of workplace spirituality on job satisfaction. Fatima, Naz, Chughtai. and Khawaja (2017) reported from a survey of public and private banks in

Pakistan that workplace spirituality is a strong predictor of job satisfaction and that while intrinsic values has a positive moderating effect in the relationship extrinsic values has a negative moderating effect. In India, Madhan (2016) reported that workplace spirituality is positively related to job satisfaction and innovative behavior and that gender has a moderating effect in the relationship

### **Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment refers to the extent employees are dedicated to their employing organization and willing to work on its behalf, and the likelihood that they will maintain membership (Jex& Britt, 2008). Rego and Cunha (2008) examined the relationship between workplace spirituality dimensions (team's sense of community, alignment with organizational values, sense of contribution to society, and opportunities for inner life) and organizational commitment and reported that the five spirituality dimensions explain 48, 16, 87 percent of the unique variance of the affective, normative and continuance forms of commitment respectively. The researchers concluded that when people experienced workplace spirituality, they feel more affectively attached to their organizations, experience a sense of obligation towards their organization, and feel less instrumentally committed. In Kerman, Iran, Kazemipour, Mohamad and Poureidi (2012) reported that workplace spirituality has a positive influence on nurses' organizational citizenship behaviour and affective commitment, while affective organizational commitment mediated the impact of workplace spirituality on organizational citizenship behaviour. In Egypt, Mousa and Alas (2016) reported that while workplace spirituality dimensions of meaningful work and sense of community had a strong effect on affective, continuance and normative commitment, organizational value dimension had weak effect on the organizational commitment dimensions.

### **Workplace Spirituality and Job Involvement**

Job involvement refers to the degree to which a person identifies himself/herself (psychologically) with his/her job, actively participates and considers his/her perceived performance level important to self-worth. In Asia, Huang and Lin (2014) examined the relationship between workplace spirituality and job involvement under merger and acquisitions circumstance and observed that workplace spirituality was positively related to job involvement, and that perceived organizational support had a moderating effect on the relationship. In Pakistan, Ali (2015) study the impact of workplace spirituality on job involvement of employees of hospitality sector and observed that workplace spirituality (team's sense of society, alliance between individual and organizational principles and opportunities for inner life, sense of gratification at work and sense of role to society) positively impact job involvement.

### **Workplace Spirituality and Organization-based Self-esteem**

Organization based self-esteem refers to the degree to which an individual believes himself or herself to be capable, significant, and worthy as an organizational member (Pierce, Gardner, Cummings & Dunham, 1989). Crawford, Hubbard, Lonis-Shumate, and O'Neil, (2008) studied the relationship workplace spirituality has with variables that covered intrinsic work satisfaction, job involvement, intention to quite, organization based self-esteem and organizational commitment within lodging setting and observed significant relationship between the presence of

workplace spirituality and the various employee attitudes and behaviour. Drake (2011) remarked that workplace spirituality not only had strong correlation with organization based self-esteem, it proves to be a highly significant predictor of the outcome.

### **Workplace spirituality and Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement refers to an individual's involvement with, satisfaction with, and enthusiasm for the work he/she does. Engaged employee express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance (Kahn, 1990; Robins & Judge, 2003). Danish, Saeed, Mehreen, and Shahid (2014) investigated spirit at work and employee engagement in banking sector Pakistan using 168 participants and reported that reward system is a key factor to enhance the performance of employees and that positive relationship exists between spirit at work and employee engagement. In India, Pradham and Jena (2016) reported among others that workplace spirituality was significant predictors of employee engagement.

### **Workplace attitudes and Job Performance**

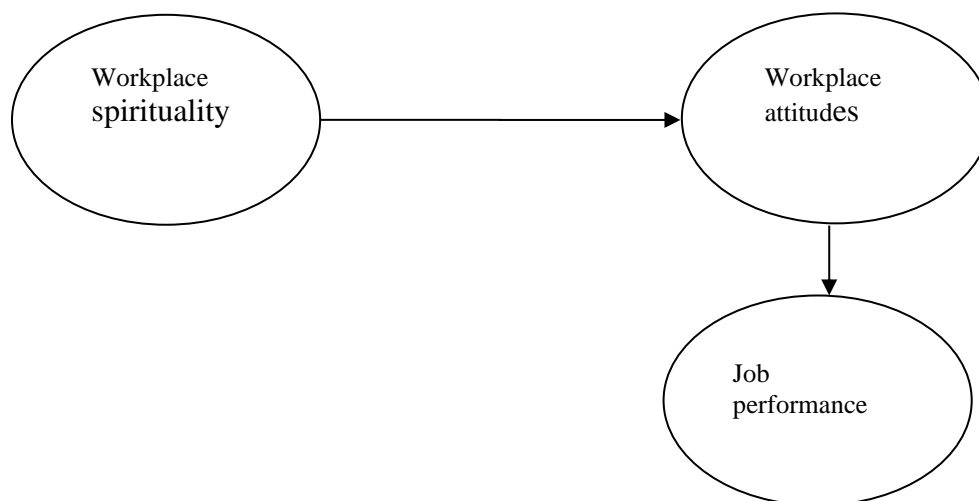
Several studies have identified a number of work attitudes with desirable implication for job performance. In Sri Lanka, Pushpakumari (2008) in a study on the relationship between job satisfaction and employee performance of professionals, managers and non-managers from twenty private sector organizations covering five industries observed that positive correlation exists between job satisfaction and employee performance. In Mashhad, Iran, Talasaz, Saadoldin and Shakeri (2014) observed direct positive correlation between job satisfaction and the total score of job performance, and a direct relationship between job satisfaction and the quality of educational performance, care performance and communicative performance in a sample of midwives working in healthcare centers.

In Iran, Memari, Mahdiah and Marnani (2013) investigated the relationship between organizational commitment and employees' job performance with 153 participants and observed a positive relationship between the two variables. In Faisalabad, Nasiri, Goraya, Arshad, Nasir and Cheema (2011) investigated the impact of job involvement on job performance in banking industry with 48 participants and reported significant positive relationship between the variables. In Pakistan, Chughtai (2008) reported that job involvement positively impacted on in-role job performance and organizational citizenship behaviour, and that organizational commitment partially mediate the job involvement-performance relationship. In another study on the relationship between incentive motivator, organization - based self-esteem and employee performance in private banking sector in Pakistan, Hameed, Moqbool, Alhor, Ijaz and Hassa (2013) observed positive and significant impact of the variables on employee performance. In addition, organization based self-esteem was found to perform a mediating role in the association among incentive motivators and employee performance. Rich, Lepine and Crawford (2010) investigated the effects of engagement on job performance with 245 firefighters and their supervisors and reported that engagement moderates relationship between value congruence, perceived organizational support and core self-evaluation, and two job performance dimensions: task performance and organizational citizenship behaviour. In United Kingdom, Shantz, Alfes, Truss, and Soane (2013) reported that employees who hold jobs that offer high levels of autonomy, task variety, task significance and feedback are more highly engaged and, in consequence, receive

higher performance ratings from their supervisors, enact more organizational citizenship behaviour, and engage in less deviant behaviour.

Literature on relationship between workplace spirituality, workplace attitudes and job performance are growing enormously, but has three critical features that relate to this review and are worthy of discussion. First, studies cited in this review are all correlational. Implication of this is that results from the studies cannot be discussed in terms of causal relationship. It is well discussed in the literature that correlational studies do not possess the potential to identify direction or cause-effect relationship. However, the value of correlation in cause-effect relationship is well expressed. Hage and Meeker (1988) remarked that although correlation does not prove causality but when the values of two factors are consistently associated, there is evidence that supports causal relationship. Hair, Aderson, Tatham, and Black (1998) noted that even though correlation by itself does not imply causation, it is non-the-less required in other for there to be causal relationship. Carlsmith, Ellworth and Aroson (1976) remarked that converging evidence from a large number and variety of correlational studies, all of which provide support for the same general theory, can ultimately satisfy scientists about causal relationships.

Second, as noted earlier workplace spirituality has numerous models and different scales developed on it. Models aids research processes and activities such as data collection, but numerous models on a variable imply lack of a general theory on the variable, a situation that act as impediment to scientific advancement. The availability of multitude of measuring scales on workplace spirituality and their adoption in studies imposed some difficulties in comparing and accumulating findings from various studies on workplace spirituality. Third, there is dearth of studies on moderator and mediator in the relationships. Moderator and mediator are variables that could change the direction and magnitude of, or explain the relationship between two variables. Because relationship between variables is not usually direct, it is of necessity to examine the role of intervening variable in any tested relationship. Knowledge of how other variables impact a given relationship is of practical importance as such information would guides decisions on when and in what condition a particular relationship exists between variables.



**Figure 1:** Linking workplace spirituality, workplace attitudes and job performance

So far, evidence that has been offered to establish that workplace spirituality has desirable effect on workplace attitudes and by implication job performance was solely research-based. At this point, two theories (spiritual leadership theory and affective event theory) that offer explanations for the relationships are presented.

### **Spiritual Leadership Theory**

Leadership is a process that includes influencing the task objectives and strategies of an organization, influencing people in the organization to implement the strategies and achieve the objectives, influencing the group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of the organization (Jex, & Britt, 2008). Spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003) proposes that leadership that creates a vision where organization members experience a sense of calling that life has meaning, established organizational culture where leaders and followers have genuine care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others would foster higher levels of organizational commitment, job satisfaction and productivity.

The theory proposed that the various aspects of spiritual leadership behaviour have the potential of resulting in a sense of membership, being understood and valued among employees. Proposal of the theory has gained some empirical support. For instance, Usha (2015) examined nature of relationship spiritual leadership has with quality of work life of the employees (work life balance, health and well-being, job satisfaction, management support, co-worker support and welfare scheme) and organizational performance (new business, repeat business, return on investment, profit after tax, customer satisfaction and employee turnover) and observed that the framework suggests that each one of the spiritual leadership, quality of work life and organizational performance components positively affect each other.

### **Affective Event Theory (AET)**

Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) propounded the affective event theory which proposed that workplace events cause emotional reactions on the part of employees, which then influence workplace attitudes and behavior. As proposed in the theory, work environment (everything surrounding the job, e.g. the variety of tasks, degree of autonomy, and job demands) creates work events that can be “hassles”, “uplifting” or both. Hassles (e.g. colleagues who refuse to carry their share of work, conflicting directions from different managers, and excessive time pressure) induce negative emotions, while uplifts (meeting a goal, getting support from a colleague, and receiving recognition for accomplishment) induce positive emotions. *Workplace spirituality is an uplift event as “it is recognition of the inner life of employees”. As uplift event, workplace spirituality according to the theory induces some forms of emotions and behaviour such as job satisfaction, commitment and performance in employees.*

In a test of the theory, Grandey, Tam and Brauburge (2002) reported that negative affectivity related to negative emotional reactions at work. Negative emotional reactions were associated with intention to leave the job and positive affectivity directly related to job satisfaction.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR PRACTICE**

Although workplace spirituality is well reported to have direct positive relationship with job performance, the position of this paper is that workplace spirituality impact job performance through the mediating role of workplace attitudes. Workplace spirituality is a healthy



organizational variable and should be facilitated in organizations to complement the various factors that enhance positive workplace attitudes and job performance. However, workplace spirituality should not be used as administrative tool to manipulate employees, and it should not represent or be dominated by any religion. The various criticisms on workplace spirituality could be addressed by accommodation of spiritual requests, respect for diversity, openness and freedom of expression, and acknowledgement of employees as whole persons

### **LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE REVIEWS**

With reference to theories and empirical studies this literature review points to the desirable influence of workplace spirituality on workplace attitude, and implication of the relationship for job performance. However, the review has some limitations. First, this paper is qualitative review. Qualitative reviews essentially involve combination and discussion of results from studies on variables of concern, but it does not integrate and subject the results to rigorous statistical analysis. It is therefore recommended that meta-analysis (quantitative review) be conducted on relationship between workplace spirituality and workplace attitudes as it involves pooling and statistically analyzing data from multiple studies to arrive at one combined answer. Second, a range of search engines is available, but for this review only Google Scholar was explored. Information available through Google search engine is enormous and inclusive, but it not exhaustive. Therefore, future review should explore other search engine such as yahoo.

In addition, the present review is limited to influence of workplace spirituality and workplace attitudes, it will also be of practical value to have a review of how workplace spirituality relates with positive workplace behaviour and counterproductive workplace behavior. Therefore, future reviews should extend to those relationships.

Studies on relationship between workplace spirituality, workplace attitudes and job performance are biased towards correlational design which does not identify cause-effect relationship. Therefore to enable causal interpretation of the results, future studies should explore experimental and longitudinal design. Finally, this review was not exhaustive of workplace attitudes. Therefore, future review should include attitudes such as organizational support and organizational justice.

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