

Workplace Spirituality and Women Career Advancement among Women Academic Leaders

Shubham Kumar, Pradeepika

University School of Management, Kurukshetra University,
Thanesar, Haryana 136119, India

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Workplace Spirituality,
Women Career Advancement,
Women in Leadership,
Spiritual Orientation
Meaningful Work

Kata Kunci:

Spiritualitas kerja,
Kemajuan karir wanita,
Wanita dalam Kepemimpinan
Orientasi Spiritual
Pekerjaan yang bermilai.

This empirical study aims to delve into the intricate connection existing between workplace spirituality and the advancement of women's careers within the realm of higher education institutions situated in India's National Capital Region (NCR). The study encompasses a comprehensive survey of 177 women faculty members, and its methodology involves the application of standardized scales to gauge workplace spirituality and women's career advancement. The research outcomes highlight a noteworthy and affirmative correlation between workplace spirituality and the advancement of women's careers. In particular, the findings underscore the pivotal role of spirituality as a predictor of career progression for women in the context of higher education institutions. This study not only underscores the significance of nurturing workplace spirituality but also its pivotal role in promoting gender equity and fostering the professional growth of women within the distinct milieu of educational organizations.

Corresponding author:

Shubham Kumar
shubhamkumarusm17@kuk.ac.in

SARI PATI

Studi empiris ini bertujuan untuk menyelami hubungan yang kompleks antara spiritualitas di tempat kerja dan kemajuan karier wanita dalam ranah lembaga pendidikan tinggi yang berada di Wilayah Ibukota Nasional (NCR) India. Studi ini mencakup survei komprehensif terhadap 177 wanita berprofesi dosen tetap fakultas, dan metodologinya melibatkan penerapan skala standar untuk mengukur spiritualitas di tempat kerja dan kemajuan karier wanita. Hasil penelitian menyoroti korelasi yang signifikan dan positif antara spiritualitas di tempat kerja dan kemajuan karier wanita. Secara khusus, temuan tersebut menegaskan peran penting spiritualitas sebagai prediktor kemajuan karier bagi wanita dalam konteks lembaga pendidikan tinggi. Studi ini tidak hanya menekankan pentingnya membina spiritualitas di tempat kerja tetapi juga peran kunci dalam mempromosikan kesetaraan gender dan memajukan pertumbuhan profesional wanita dalam lingkungan organisasi pendidikan yang berbeda.

Copyright © 2024 by Authors,
Published by IRJBS.

This is an open access article under
the CC BY-SA License



INTRODUCTION

The late and early twenty-first centuries have witnessed a growing interest in the role of spirituality in the workplace, prompting researchers to delve into its impact on employees and organizations. This increasing curiosity has led to a quest for rational and logical investigations into workplace spirituality, aiming to define its constructs and understand its significance better. Scholars such as Deshpande (2012) caution against dismissing workplace spirituality, as it has gained a prominent presence in the contemporary business environment. At its core, workplace spirituality reflects a framework of values and a corporate culture that embodies inner life, openness, care, interaction, respect, humility, compassion, and transcendence from the organization's perspective. For individuals, spirituality at work involves conscious awareness and the manifestation of one's spirituality within the work environment, seeking meaning and purpose in life through a multidimensional approach.

Research on workplace spirituality has identified various dimensions that contribute to its understanding. Milliman et al. (2003) highlighted three dimensions of workplace spirituality: the sense of community, meaningful work, and alignment with organizational values. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) explored workplace spirituality through the lenses of searching for life's meaning or purpose, fostering a sense of community, and cultivating connections with others. Furthermore, Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) emphasized the significance of workplace spirituality as a catalyst for cultivating an enriched workplace culture characterized by honesty, trust, creativity, personal fulfillment, and employees' commitment to organizational goals. Building on this notion, Pandey, Gupta, and Kumar (2016) identified and approved four constructs of workplace spiritual climate in Indian companies: Swadharna (meaningful and meditative work), Lokasangraha (concern for the welfare of others), authenticity, and a sense of community. The concept of Swadharna involves two elements, namely meaningful work and meditative work. Meditative work refers to the

experience of being completely absorbed in one's work, losing a sense of self, and becoming one with the task at hand.

Amidst the growing recognition of workplace spirituality, a distinct challenge remains for women in the business world. Women often encounter discrimination and face social and economic penalties for deviating from stereotypes (Rudman et al., 2012). Research on women in India's educational sector, especially teachers, has confirmed the difficulty for women to break through the glass ceiling and attain top-management positions (Basu, 2015). However, recent studies have shed light on the coping mechanisms and personal resources women employ to navigate the challenges of leadership. Workplace spirituality emerges as a supportive factor in maintaining work-life balance among women executives in India's IT sector (Paul et al., 2016). In Ghana, female entrepreneurs have been found to invoke spirituality to address personal and work-related challenges (Reid et al., 2015).

Moreover, spirituality has been identified as a significant component of women's leadership, serving as an external manifestation of their internal drive and emotional intelligence (Marques, 2008). Sherman (2002) emphasizes spirituality as a fundamental weapon for women to survive corporate culture effectively. Women utilize spirituality as a coping mechanism to confront stressors arising from discrimination, lack of opportunities, and exclusion from informal networks in the workplace (Bacchus and Holley, 2004). In the academic sector, spirituality enables women to exhibit strength and courage in the face of adversity, providing them with a sense of purpose and calling in their work, which further enables them to be more effective leaders (Ngunjiri, 2016). Despite the growing acknowledgment of spirituality's significance in women's career advancement, the literature fails to provide rigorous investigations into the origins and components of spirituality as enacted by women leaders. Further research on the typology of spirituality and paths utilized by women could contribute to the devel-

opment of unique leadership models for women.

In light of the above considerations, the present study seeks to empirically examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and women's career advancement in the context of higher education institutions in the National Capital Region (NCR). By exploring the dimensions of workplace spirituality and their impact on women's career progression, this research aims to provide valuable insights that can support gender equity within educational organizations.

Workplace Spirituality

In recent years, the concept of workplace spirituality has garnered significant attention in management literature. Scholars have sought to define and understand spirituality's relevance in organizational settings from both individual and organizational perspectives. Workplace spirituality can be seen as a manifestation of inner values and a corporate culture that promotes open-mindedness, care, respect, compassion, and a sense of community. For individuals, spirituality at work involves conscious awareness and the expression of one's spirituality within the work environment, seeking a multidimensional approach to finding meaning and purpose in life.

Numerous researchers have investigated the dimensions of workplace spirituality and its potential impact on employee well-being, engagement, and organizational performance. For instance, Milliman et al. (2003) identified three dimensions of workplace spirituality, which include the sense of community, meaningful work, and alignment with organizational values. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) explored workplace spirituality through the lenses of searching for life's meaning or purpose, creating a sense of community, and fostering connections with others.

Moreover, Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) emphasized the significance of workplace spirituality as a pathway to cultivating enriched workplace cultures,

characterized by honesty, trust, creativity, personal fulfillment, and commitment to organizational goals. Other researchers such as Pandey, Gupta, and Kumar (2016) have extended the understanding of workplace spirituality in an Indian organizational context, identifying constructs like Swadharma (meaningful and meditative work), Lokasangraha (concern for the welfare of others), authenticity, and a sense of community.

Workplace Spirituality and Women's Career Advancement

Studies have consistently highlighted the barriers and challenges women face in their professional journeys. Gender discrimination, stereotyping, and work-life balance issues are just a few of the obstacles women encounter. Basu (2015) reported that women in India's educational sector, especially in the role of teachers, find it difficult to break through the glass ceiling and attain top-management positions.

However, recent research has delved into the interventions and resources women employ to cope with these challenges. In a study by Paul et al. (2016), workplace spirituality positively influenced work-life balance among women executives in India's IT sector. Similarly, Reid et al. (2015) found that female entrepreneurs in Ghana turned to spirituality to address personal and work-related challenges.

Spirituality in Women's Leadership

The intersection of spirituality and women's leadership has also become an intriguing area of research. Sherman (2002) pointed out that spirituality serves as a fundamental tool for women to navigate corporate culture effectively. It helps many women confront stressors arising from discrimination, lack of opportunities, and exclusion from informal networks in the workplace. Spirituality, as supported by many researchers (Bass, 2009; Marques, 2008), is not merely about emotionality but a sense of purpose, interconnectedness, and trust.

The literature on women's leadership has emphasized the significance of emotional intelligence and authentic expressions of leadership for women. However, there remains a gap regarding rigorous investigation into the origins and components of spirituality as enacted by women leaders. Research by Karakas (2009) in Turkey identified nine spiritual anchors pursued by managers. A similar typology of spirituality and paths utilized by women leaders could contribute to the development of unique leadership models for women.

METHODS

Sampling

The target population for this study consisted of women faculty members working in various higher education institutions located in the National Capital Region. To ensure diverse representation, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants from different types of universities, including state public universities, central universities, state private universities, and deemed universities.

Approximately 200 women faculty members were approached to participate in the study. To collect data efficiently and reach a larger sample, an online survey method was adopted using Google Forms. The questionnaire was designed to gather information on workplace spirituality dimensions and women's career advancement. Before administering the survey, informed consent was obtained from each participant to ensure that ethical considerations were met.

Instruments

For the measurement of workplace spirituality dimensions, this study applied a scale adapted from Pradhan et al. (2017). The scale included three subscales: spiritual orientation, compassion, and meaningful work. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with each statement on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale has been widely used and validated in previous research, ensuring the

reliability and validity of the data collected.

To assess women's career advancement, a scale with ten items from Verma (2020) was utilized. The scale aimed to gauge the perceived progress and achievements of women faculty members in their academic careers. Similar to the workplace spirituality scale, respondents rated their responses on a Likert-type scale.

Demographic Overview

The study's participants represented a diverse group of women faculty members across different age groups and work experience levels. Approximately 19 percent of respondents were below the age of 40, indicating a younger segment of the faculty population. The majority of respondents (44 percent) fell within the age category of 41–50 years, followed by 27 percent within the age range of 51–60 years. The remaining 10 percent were above the age of 60 years, showcasing a smaller cohort of senior faculty members. Regarding work experience, 29 percent of the participants had 5–10 years of experience, while 31 percent fell within the category of 11–15 years of work experience. A significant portion of the faculty (30 percent) had been employed for 15–20 years, indicating a seasoned group of educators. Additionally, 10 percent of respondents reported having more than 20 years of work experience, representing a group of highly experienced faculty members. Furthermore, the study encompassed women faculty members from various types of universities, reflecting the diversity of higher education institutions in the National Capital Region. Among the respondents, 40 percent were affiliated with state public universities, 25 percent with central universities, and 20 percent with state private universities. The remaining 15 percent were associated with deemed universities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive and Inferential Statistics

Descriptive statistics of four variables of study—spiritual orientation, compassion, meaningful work, and women's career advancement—are discussed.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Spiritual Orientation (SO)	177	3.47	.753
Compassion (CP)	177	3.22	.792
Meaningful work (MW)	177	3.98	.503
Women Career Advancement (WCA)	177	3.26	.666

Source: Primary Data

Table 2. Matrix and Cronbach's Alpha Values

Variable	SO	CP	MW	WCA
SO	(0.76)			
CP	0.177	(0.74)		
MW	0.146	0.164	(0.77)	
WCA	0.747**	0.656**	0.631**	(0.80)

Source: Primary Data

Note: Cronbach's alpha is in parentheses, **p<0.05

Table 3. Multiple Regression Result

Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient β	Standardized Coefficient β	t-value	VIF
Constant	2.839			
Spiritual Orientation	0.778	0.883	9.02**	1.94
Compassion	0.829	0.858	7.53**	3.23
Meaningful Work	0.793	0.799	6.13**	2.87

Source: Primary Data

Note: **Significant at the 0.05 level

The correlation matrix provides insight into the association of these variables.

Table 1 provides the mean values and standard deviations for both dependent and independent variables. The value of standard deviation shows that the respondents' view varies considerably across the sample. The mean value across independent variables is greatest for meaningful work (mean = 3.98), while the mean value is smallest for Compassion (mean = 3.22). For the dependent variable, i.e., women's career advancement, the mean value is 3.26.

Table 2 represents the correlation matrix and Cronbach's alpha values. Any values greater than 0.70 of Cronbach's alpha are considered reliable. The correlation matrix shows that, although independent variables are correlated, the correlation between them is not significant. Thus,

all of these variables could be taken as unique and different dimensions of workplace spirituality. It is also reported that the correlation between nearly all independent and dependent variables is significant, indicating that an increase in the value of workplace spirituality will lead to a corresponding increment in the values of the dependent variables.

Hair et al. (1998) suggested that the value of VIF must be smaller than 10 to avoid a crisis of multicollinearity. Table 3 asserts that all values of VIF are in accordance with the criteria set by Hair et al. (1998). Thus, data do not suffer from any issue related to multicollinearity. According to the findings, the value of the standard coefficient β is greater than zero; thus, all three dimensions of workplace spirituality are predictors of women's career advancement. t-value states that all the independent variables are significant predictors of dependent variables.

Table 4. Result of Standard Regression (Overall workplace spirituality)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R	R ²	F-value	Significance
Women Career Advancement	Workplace Spirituality	0.79	0.62	52.42	0.039

Source: Primary Data
 Note: Significant at the 0.05 level

Table 4 asserts that workplace spirituality is a statistically significant predictor of women’s career advancement. Nearly 62 percent of variations in women’s career advancement are explained by workplace spirituality.

This study assessed the impact of workplace spirituality on women’s career advancement using multiple regression analysis. Three dimensions of workplace spirituality were examined: spiritual orientation, compassion, and meaningful work. The results revealed significant positive relationships between workplace spirituality and women’s career advancement.

Spiritual orientation emerged as a robust predictor of women’s career advancement ($\beta = 0.883, p < 0.05$). Women who reported a higher level of spiritual orientation were more likely to experience career advancement opportunities within higher education institutions.

Similarly, compassion demonstrated a significant positive association with women’s career advancement ($\beta = 0.858, p < 0.05$). Faculty members who perceived a compassionate work environment were more likely to advance in their careers.

Meaningful work also exhibited a strong positive correlation with women’s career advancement ($\beta = 0.799, p < 0.05$). Women who found their work to be meaningful and fulfilling were more likely to progress in their professional journeys.

Overall, the workplace spirituality construct significantly predicted women’s career advancement ($R^2 = 0.62, F\text{-value} = 52.42, p < 0.05$). Approximately 62

percent of the variation in women’s career advancement could be explained by workplace spirituality.

The findings emphasize the importance of fostering workplace spirituality to support women’s career growth within higher education institutions. Institutions that prioritize spirituality, compassion, and meaningful work are more likely to create an inclusive and empowering environment for women faculty members to thrive professionally.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study adds to the literature on workplace spirituality and women’s career advancement, particularly in the context of higher education institutions. It sheds light on the potential role of workplace spirituality in promoting gender equity within educational organizations. By fostering a culture of workplace spirituality that includes values like compassion, meaningful work, and spiritual orientation, institutions can create an environment that supports women’s career growth and well-being.

The findings of this study have practical implications for organizations and leaders. Recognizing the impact of workplace spirituality on women’s career advancement can lead to more inclusive talent management strategies. Organizations could benefit from implementing workplace spirituality programs that encourage a sense of community, personal fulfillment, and a deeper connection between employees and their work.

Moreover, understanding the ways in which spirituality positively influences women’s careers can help organizations develop supportive policies and initiatives to benefit them. Flexible

work arrangements, mentorship programs, and opportunities for personal development could enhance women's career trajectories and foster a diverse and inclusive workplace culture.

In conclusion, the research on workplace spirituality and women's career advancement highlights the potential of spirituality in promoting women's professional growth and well-being. By exploring and nurturing workplace spirituality, organizations can cultivate an environment that values diversity, empowers women leaders, and fosters a sense of purpose and commitment among employees. Future research in this area can delve deeper into the mechanisms through which workplace spirituality impacts women's career trajectories and identify specific strategies to integrate spirituality into organizational practices.

CONCLUSION

The study empirically explores the relationship between workplace spirituality and women's career advancement in the context of higher education institutions in the NCR region. The findings suggest that workplace spirituality plays a crucial role in supporting women's career progression and advancement. The results indicate that when organizations foster a culture of workplace spirituality, which includes

elements like spiritual orientation, compassion, and meaningful work, women's career advancement is positively impacted. This aligns with previous research, which has also emphasized the positive effects of workplace spirituality on employee well-being, commitment, and performance.

The paper contributes to the existing literature by focusing on women's career advancement in the academic sector, specifically in higher education institutions. This work adds to the understanding of how workplace spirituality can be a valuable factor in promoting gender equity and inclusivity within educational organizations.

Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of recognizing and nurturing workplace spirituality in organizations to support the career growth and development of women. By promoting a culture that values spirituality and its positive impact on employees, organizations can create an environment conducive to women's career advancement and overall well-being. Future research in this area can further explore the specific mechanisms through which workplace spirituality influences women's career trajectories and identify strategies to enhance workplace spirituality in various organizational settings. ■

REFERENCES

- Ashmos, D. P., & Duchon, D. (2000). Spirituality at work: A conceptualization and measure. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 9(2), 134–145.
- Bacchus, D. N. A., & Holley, L. C. (2004). Spirituality as a coping resource: The experiences of professional Black women. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 13, 65–84.
- Bass, L. (2009). Fostering an ethic of care in leadership: A conversation with five African American women. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 11, 619–632.
- Basu, S. (2015, December 1). Glass ceiling intact for women in academia. *Economic Times*, pp. 1-19. Retrieved May 12, 2016, from <http://epaperbeta.timesofindia.com/Article.aspx?eid=31818&articlexml=SORRY-STATE-GLASS-CEILING-INTACT-FOR-WOMEN-IN-01122015001041>
- Deshpande, A. (2012). Workplace spirituality, organizational learning capabilities, and mass customization: An integrated framework. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 7(5), 3-18.
- Fry, L. W. (2005). Introduction to the Leadership Quarterly Special Issue: Toward a Paradigm of Spiritual Leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 16, 619-622.
- Fry, L. W., Hannah, S. T., Noel, M., & Walumbwa, F. O. (2011). Impact of spirituality on unit performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22, 259-270.
- Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., & Tatham, R. L. (1998). *Multivariate data analysis*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Karakas, F. (2009). Spirituality and performance in organizations: A literature review. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 94, 89-106.
- Krishnakumar, S., & Neck, C. P. (2002). The 'what,' 'why,' and 'how' of spirituality in the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 17(3), 153–164.
- Marques, J. (2008). Spirituality at work: Internal growth with potential external challenges. *The Journal of Quality & Participation*, 31, 24-27.
- McCormick, D. (1994). Spirituality and management. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 9(6), 5–8.
- Milliman, J., Czaplewski, A. J., & Ferguson, J. (2003). Workplace spirituality and employee work attitudes: An exploratory empirical assessment. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 16(4), 426–447.
- Ngunjiri, F. W. (2016). 'I am because we are' – exploring women's leadership under the Ubuntu worldview. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 18(2), 223–242.
- Pandey, A., Gupta, R. K., & Kumar, P. (2016). Spiritual climate and its impact on learning in teams in business organizations. *Global Business Review*, 17(3S), 1S–14S.
- Paul, M., Dutta, A., & Saha, P. (2016). Improving organizational effectiveness through workplace spirituality and organizational citizenship behavior: A conceptual review. *Globsyn Management Conference 2015*, 1, 79.
- Pradhan, R. K., Jenar, L. K., & Soto, C. M. (2017). Workplace spirituality in Indian organizations: Construction of a reliable and valid measurement scale. *Business: Theory and Practice*, 18, 43–53.
- Reid, M., Roupni, D., & O'Leary-Kelly, A. M. (2015). Spirited women: The role of spirituality in the work lives of female entrepreneurs in Ghana. *Africa Journal of Management*, 1(3), 264–283.
- Rudman, L. A., Moss-Racusin, C. A., Phelan, J. E., & Nauts, S. (2012). Status incongruity and backlash effects: Defending the gender hierarchy motivates prejudice against female leaders. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(1), 165–179.
- Sherman, R. (2002). The subjective experience of race and gender in qualitative research. *The American Behavioral Scientist*, 45, 1247–1253.
- Srinivasan, V., Murty, L. S., & Nakra, M. (2013). Career persistence of women software professionals in India. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 28(4), 210–227.
- Tomer, G., Xanthakos, S., Kim, S., Rao, M., Book, L., Litman, H. J., & Fishman, L. N. (2015). Perceptions of gender equality in work–life balance, salary, promotion, and harassment: Results of the NASPGHAN Task Force Survey. *Journal of Pediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition*, 60(4), 481–485.
- Verma, S. (2020). Examining the new dimensions of career advancement of women employees. *Global Business Review*, 21(3), 869–881.