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MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring the effect of workplace spirituality on job embeddedness among higher secondary school teachers in Ernakulam district

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Abstract: The quality of education is determined by the quality of the teachers. As teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of shaping and guiding the future citizens of a nation, it is essential for them to be involved and committed toward their job. This brings out the importance of retaining teachers in their job. The concept of workplace spirituality (WPS) brings in the very feeling of being connected to the workplace, which, undoubtedly helps them to remain attached to the job. The study tries to understand the relationship between WPS and job embeddedness (JE) among the higher secondary school teachers in Ernakulam District. WPS was measured using the scale adapted from Milliman et al. and JE was measured using the scale developed by Mitchell et al. A sample size of 105 was selected using simple random sampling method. The study found a satisfactorily good level of WPS and JE among the respondents. The result of the study also shows a significant positive relationship between WPS and JE.

Subjects: Technology; Social Sciences; Arts & Humanities

Keywords: education; workplace spirituality; job embeddedness; teachers

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Workplace Spirituality is becoming more openly recognized as an integral part of work. People view workplace not only as a means of earning money, but as a place where they can survive as well as be fully alive. For an organization to sustain, it requires people who can express their whole self and also build the relationship with their co-workers. This very feeling makes the individual more comfortable in the work setting, thereby increasing the chances of remaining in the job. All the factors that lead to the retention of employees are collectively known as job embeddedness (JE). The study tries to understand the relationship between WPS and JE among higher secondary school teachers. The results of the study indicate a positive relationship between the two constructs. This suggests that as WPS increases, individuals feel more attached toward their work and workplace, thereby making them remain in the organization.

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1. Introduction

Education plays a vital role in refining and improving the choice and quality of lives, augmenting social and economic productivity, and also instigating the process of empowerment. Education not only helps in the development of intellectual skills and knowledge but also in the effective growth and development of the economy. Teachers take the role of parents in the school. They, undoubtedly, influence the formative years of the students. They are vested with the utmost responsibility of molding the future citizen of the country. They influence the formative years of the students. Teachers are the most fundamental resources for improving student learning and molding them into efficient and responsible individuals. Retaining teachers are an important aspect as far as the organization and the community, at large, are concerned. It is important to pay attention to the aspect of teacher retention. There are various factors that might collectively play a role in deciding whether to stay or leave an organization. The study of these factors, known as job embeddedness (JE), throws light on all the different facets of retaining the employees. JE theory focuses on factors that encourage an employee to remain with an organization (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008). JE represents a broad constellation of influences on employee retention. Understanding the various factors that contribute to the retention of the school teachers is crucial as they are conferred with the responsibility of educating the youth, who in turn become leaders of the future.

JE uses three factors that are considered from both an internal and external perspective to explain people's connections to their organizations and roles. The need for being connected to their work and the community, at large, contributes to the embeddedness of the individuals in their job. Workplace spirituality (WPS) helps in understanding this aspect. WPS recognizes that employees have both a mind and a spirit and seek to find meaning and purposes in their work, and the need for remaining connected to others. The aspects of WPS give an insight into the individual's pursuit of meaning and purpose in their work, the desire to connect to other people and the desire to be part of a community. The notion of WPS, thus, acts as one of the imperative factors that lead to the retention of the employees in their job.

The study tries to understand the effect of WPS on JE among the higher secondary school teachers in Ernakulam. The study also focuses on understanding the level of WPS and JE among the teachers.

2. Review of literature and hypotheses

2.1. Workplace spirituality

The construct of WPS has been gaining traction in the recent times. It is increasingly becoming a matter of interest to organizations because of the numerous benefits it offers. WPS assists in building the individual as well as the organization capacity. According to Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003), WPS is "a framework of organizational values that is evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy". Poe and Courter (1995) have highlighted "the importance to people of finding deeper meaning in their lives (also their working lives) and the concomitant obligation of management to take care of their employees' needs in this regard". WPS is the concept of experiencing a sense of belonging, connectedness to one another and their workplace community.

Ashmos and Duchon (2000) have also pointed out that WPS involves a sense of community. According to them, WPS is "the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community". WPS is, in fact, a highly personal and philosophical construct. But, Gibbons (2000) have the fund that many researchers have acknowledged that spirituality involves a sense of wholeness, connectedness at work, and deeper values. WPS is considered to be a construct that is used in the context of experiences of individuals (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000), organizations (Izzo & Klein, 1998), and both individuals and organizations (Gibbons, 1999; Guillory, 2000). From the organization point of view, WPS refers to an

organizational culture supported by leadership and business practices that are socially responsible and value-driven, that acknowledges the contributions that employees make and that supports the personal spiritual development and well-being (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Guillory, 2000; Mitroff & Denton, 1999).

2.2. Job embeddedness

The theory of JE is considered to be a relatively new perspective, focusing on factors that encourage an employee to remain with an organization (Holtom et al., 2008). It consists of a collection of psychological, social, and financial factors that have an impact on employee retention (Yao, Lee, Mitchell, Burton, & Sablynski, 2004).

JE is a concept that expounds how well a person is socially enmeshed within their organization (Granovetter, 1985). It reveals the employees' decisions to participate broadly and directly in the functioning of the organization. JE is, in short, a retention construct (Cho & Son, 2012).

JE comprises three dimensions: fit, links, and sacrifice.

2.2.1. Fit

Ng and Feldman (2009) describes the organizational fit as "the degree of similarity or compatibility between the individual and organizational culture, overlap between the individual abilities and organizational demands, and match between individual interests and organizational rewards". According to Felps et al. (2009), "fit is the individual's perceived compatibility with the organization and with the community. The fit is defined as an employee's perceived compatibility or comfort with an organization and with his or her environment". According to the theory, an employee's personal values, career goals, and plans for the future must "fit" with the larger corporate culture and the demands of his or her immediate job (e.g. job knowledge, skills, and abilities) We posit that the better the fit, the higher the likelihood that an employee will feel professionally and personally tied to the organization. Poor person–organizational fit, employees are likely to leave the organization. A person's fit with the job and organization relates to attachments to the organization.

2.2.2. Links

Links are the formal or informal connections between a person, institutions, or other people (Lee, Mitchell, Sablynski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001). JE theory proposes that a number of links attach an employee his or her family together, that includes co-workers and non-work friends, groups, and the community in which he or she lives. The greater the number of links between the individual and the web and the more important those links is, the more a worker is bound to the job, the supervisor, and entities in the organizations such as teams (Lee et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001).

2.2.3. Sacrifice

Sacrifice refers to the ease with which the links can be broken upon quitting work or moving to another home or community. It is the perceived cost of material and psychological benefits that would be given up upon leaving the job or community (Ng & Feldman, 2009). It is the opportunity cost of turnover, which is the perceived cost of physical or psychological convenience sacrificed when leaving a current job. Sacrifice is the perceived cost of material or psychological benefits that may be forfeited by leaving one's job. Leaving an organization likely promises personal losses (Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, & Gupta, 1998; Taunton, Boyle, Woods, Hansen, & Bott, 1997).

2.3. WPS and JE

The very feeling of being connected with the co-workers and the community (link) makes an individual remain in the current job. The construct of WPS also postulates the desire of the individuals to be connected with the others in the organization as well as the community. The greater the number of links between the individual and the more important those links are, the more a worker is bound to the job, the supervisor, and entities in the organizations such as teams (Lee et al., 2004; Mitchell

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Figure 1. Proposed model of the study.
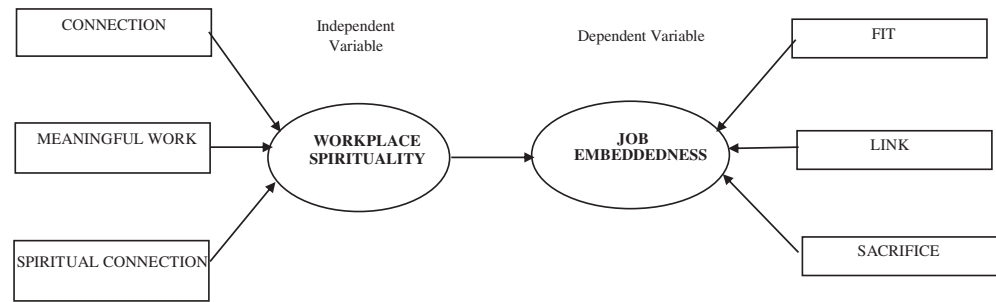
et al., 2001). An employee's perceived compatibility or comfort level with the organization and surrounding environment is also an important element in deciding the embeddedness of the employee. It means individuals and organizations attempting to live their values more fully in the work they do (WPS). This calls for the link-minded attitude of the individual and the organization. Compatibility between the employee's and the organization's goals, personal values, as well as more immediate job-specific factors such as job knowledge, demands, skills, and abilities are the important factors that enable an employee to remain with the current job. Lee et al. (2004) and Mitchell et al. (2001) suggests that the better the fit with the organization and the surrounding community, the stronger the ties with the organization (Figure 1).

2.4. Objectives of the study

(1) To understand the level of WPS and JE among the teachers.
(2) To study the relationship between WPS and JE.
(3) To analyze the effect of WPS on JE.

2.5. Hypothesis

H_0: There is no correlation between WPS and job embeddedness among the teachers.

H_1: There is correlation between WPS and job embeddedness among the teachers.

3. Methodology and sample

The research design of the study is descriptive in nature. The total number of CBSE higher secondary schools was taken, and using simple random sampling, a few schools were selected. The questionnaire was administered to 105 higher secondary school teachers. A five-point Likert scale was used for the study in which, 1 = "strongly disagree", 2 = "disagree", 3 = "neutral", 4 = "agree", 5 = "strongly agree". Items were coded in a way that high scores equate to high levels of the construct of interest. WPS was measured using the scale adapted from Milliman, Ferguson, Trickett, and Condemi (2002). JE was measured using the scale developed by Mitchell et al. (2001).

4. Data analysis and discussion of results

4.1. Reliability analysis

The reliability of the two constructs was checked. The Cronbach's alpha was found to be very high for both the constructs, which indicates a high level of reliability (Table 1).

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Table 1. Reliability analysis		
	Cronbach's alpha	**No. of items**
Workplace spirituality	0.830	15
Fit	0.708	6
Link	0.613	6
Sacrifice	0.806	6

Source: Data analysis.

4.2. Level of WPS and JE

The study attempted to find out the level of WPS and JE among the respondents. All the respondents whose score was above 75% were considered to be having high levels of WPS and JE.

Table 2 shows that the level WPS and JE among the respondents are quite high as they have a score of above 75%. As they are connected to their workplace, they tend to be attached to their organization.

4.3. Factor analysis

In order to find out the various factors of WPS, factor analysis was attempted and the result is shown below (Table 3).

The result of the factor analysis shows that there are three dimensions of WPS. The three dimensions were found to be as follows.

4.3.1. Factor 1

(1) I experience a real sense of trust and personal connection with my co-workers.
(2) I share a strong sense of purpose and meaning with my co-workers about our work.
(3) I feel like I am part of a community at work.
(4) I feel that I and my co-workers are connected with each other due to the existence of shared responsibility.
(5) I see a connection between my work and the larger social good of my community.

The above statements are related to the feeling of connection with co-workers and community. The factors were, thus, named as the *connection*.

4.3.2. Factor 2

(1) I experience a match between the requirements of my work and my values, beliefs, and behaviors.
(2) I am able to find meaning or purpose at work.
(3) I experience my work joy in work.
(4) The work I do is connected to what I think is important in life.
(5) I am passionate about my work.

Table 2. Level of WPS and JE			
Constructs	**Mean**	**Std. dev.**	**Sig.**
WPS	4.41	0.240	0.000
JE	4.04	0.431	0.000

Source: Data analysis.

Table 3. Rotated component matrix	Component		
	1	**2**	**3**
I experience a real sense of trust and personal connection with my co-workers	0.801		
I share a strong sense of purpose and meaning with my co-workers about our work	0.739		
I feel like I am part of a community at work	0.679		
I feel that I and my co-workers are connected with each other due to the existence of shared responsibility	0.673		
I see a connection between my work and the larger social good of my community	0.659		
I experience a match between the requirements of my work and my values, beliefs, and behaviors		0.744	
I am able to find meaning or purpose at work		0.675	
I experience my work joy in work		0.619	
The work I do is connected to what I think is important in life		0.569	
I am passionate about my work.		0.556	
My spiritual beliefs play an important role in everyday decisions that I make at work			0.689
I experience a connection with a greater source that has a positive effect on my work			0.621
I experience moments at work where everything is blissful			0.605
At times, I experience an energy or vitality at work that is difficult to describe			0.578
My spirit is energized by my work			0.572

Source: Data analysis.

All the above statements are related to the feeling of performing work that a person considers as a significant and meaningful part to his/her life. The factors were, thus, named as *meaningful work*.

4.3.3. Factor 3

(1) My spiritual beliefs play an important role in everyday decisions that I make at work.

(2) I experience a connection with a greater source that has a positive effect on my work.

(3) I experience moments at work where everything is blissful.

(4) At times, I experience an energy or vitality at work that is difficult to describe.

(5) My spirit is energized by my work.

The statements are related to the sense of being connected to a higher power. The factor was named as *the spiritual connection*.

4.4. Correlation of WPS and JE

According to the theory of WPS, people feel connected to their co-workers and the organization and a congruence between their values and the values of the organization. They feel a sense of fulfillment in the job. All these factors are an indication to the fact that, since they feel a part of the work system, they tend to remain in their job, which provides them with meaningful work and which matches with their system of values and beliefs. This study, thus, tries to prove the relationship between WPS and JE, which has not been attempted in any of the available studies (Table 4).

The result of the correlation analysis shows a significant positive correlation between WPS and JE. The dimension meaningful work shows a strong correlation with the fit. The study throws light on the fact that an increase in WPS positively affects the intention of the employees to stay with their

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Table 4. Correlation of WPS and JE		Fit	Link	Sacrifice
Connection	Pearson correlation	0.477*	0.391*	0.444*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Meaningful work	Pearson Correlation	0.643*	0.581*	0.535*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Spiritual connection	Pearson Correlation	0.556*	0.429*	0.491*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: Data analysis.

*Signifies that the correlation value is significant.

organization. There is an existence of WPS among the higher secondary school teachers, leading the direction toward an increased level of JE, which will give many advantages to the organization. Researchers have found that there is a significant relationship between WPS and mental health indices of life satisfaction, happiness, self-esteem, hope and optimism, and meaning in life. "WPS was also found to have a have positive effect on employees in form of increased job, serenity, job satisfaction and commitment, reduction in workers/employees absenteeism, turn over and increase in organizational productivity (Fry, 2003, 2005; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003); improvement in employees attitudes of commitment to the organization, work satisfaction and job involvement (Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003) and positive effects on personal well-being and job performance" (Neck & Milliman, 1994).

4.5. Effect of WPS on JE

The study also focused on understanding the effect of the three dimensions of WPS, namely, connection with the co-workers and community, meaningful work, and spiritual connection, on the various dimensions of JE. The result of the regression analysis yielded the following result (Table 5).

The dependent variables are fit, link, and sacrifice and the independent variables are connection, meaningful work, and spiritual connection. The significance value from the table shows that the dimensions of JE(fit, link, and sacrifice) are influenced by the three dimensions of WPS, namely connection, meaningful work, and spiritual connection.

Table 5. Effect of WPS on JE	Fit			Link			Sacrifice		
	B—unstandardized coefficients	Beta—standardized coeffecient	Sig	B—unstandardized coeffecient	Beta—standardized coeffecient	Sig	B—unstandardized coeffecient	Beta—standardized coeffecient	Sig
Constant	−1.835		0.956	−0.510		0.179	−1.842		0.114
Connection with co-workers	0.402	0.261	0.003	0.201	0.131	0.064	0.062	0.030	0.004
Meaningful work	0.550	0.431	0.000	0.281	0.221	0.000	0.474	0.277	0.012
Spiritual connection	0.409	0.298	0.001	0.551	0.405	0.131	0.756	0.411	0.005
R^2	0.548			0.360			0.363		
Significance (ANOVA)	0.000			0.000			0.000		

Source: Data analysis.

The R^2 value shows that 54% variation in the dimension fit is explained by the three independent variables. All the variables significantly influence fit. From the standardized coefficients, it is seen that major variation in fit was caused by the dimension meaningful work ($\beta = 0.431$) followed by spiritual connection ($\beta = 0.298$) and connection with co-workers ($\beta = 0.261$).

This points out to the fact that a person who perceives his/her work to be meaningful, will find himself to be a perfect match for the work as well as the organization. "Meaningful and challenging work experiences have become increasingly important to individuals in the last few decades". According to Strack, Fottler, Wheatley, and Sodomak (2002), "many employees look for the satisfaction of their spiritual needs, i.e. to be unique, to commune with something greater than themselves, to be useful and to perform work that is meaningful, to be understood by others, and to understand how they fit into a greater context". It is an established fact that when a job matches the individual's self-concept, the individual will perceive the work to be meaningful.

The value of R^2 shows that only 36% variation in the dimensions link and sacrifice is explained by the three dimensions of WPS. Meaningful work was seen to have the significant influence on link and connection with co-workers was seen to have a significant influence on the sacrifice.

According to Biby (2001), "employees consider jobs that are more interesting, emit feelings of accomplishment, promote helpfulness and contribute to people's lives to be critical in achieving meaningful work". Several research has found that, "fulfillment, autonomy, satisfaction, engagement, working relations, and learning have been identified as important in a meaningful job" (Chalofsky, 2003; Rosso, Dekas & Wrzesniewski, 2010; Seligman, 2008; Steger & Dik, 2012). "Since people spend many hours at work, it becomes the environment in which they engage in goal-orientated activities, and aim to find meaning and also feel connected to their colleagues and the organization as a whole" (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003). Being connected to the co-workers and workplace will increase the intensity of the perceived feeling of loss once they leave their organization. This will make them remain in the organization, thereby leading to a great decrease in the turnover.

5. Conclusion

The constructs of JE and WPS are very essential for the success of any organization. The study has proved a positive relationship between WPS and JE and has provided a wide scope for further research. WPS helps the employees to improve their connection with their work setting and to find sense and meaning in their work and life. This helps them to remain attached to their job and makes them stay in the job. Organizations must pay attention to strengthening the construct of WPS which will help employees to remain embedded in their job.

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