



Influence of Spirituality and Emotional Intelligence on Employee Engagement

KEYWORDS

Emotional Intelligence (EI), Spirituality, Employee Engagement

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ABSTRACT Today, the discussion of Spirituality within the work place is gaining momentum. According to (Seaward, 1995) Spirituality has been characterized as a characteristic of healthy people and more recently high performing employees in the organizations. However the comprehensive framework of Emotional Intelligence based components within the organizations provide employees the necessary skills to apply their personal spiritual experience into their work. It helps them to develop strong psychological bonding towards the organization which in turn provides positive results to both the employees and the organization. The present article explores and establishes a relationship between Spirituality, Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Spirituality is often defined as an awareness of a being or force that transcends the material aspects of life (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). According to (Seaward, 1995) Spirituality has been characterised as a characteristic of a healthy people and more recently high performing employees in the organizations. Emotional Intelligence is often defined as thinking with emotion and effectively communicating the outcome of that thinking (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001; Gantt & Agazarian, 2004; Palmer & Stough, 2003; Schutte et al., 1998). Adopting this definition, therefore the effective demonstration of Emotional Intelligence at work would require an individual to simultaneously possess a high capacity of each aforementioned developmental lines underpinning the human potential. Within the workplace, Spirituality brought to fruition through the effective demonstration of Emotional Intelligence, specifically the competency of understanding the other's emotions respecting individual differences so as to create shared understanding, meaning and direction (Palmer & Stough, 2003; Salovey & Grewal, 2005). This article explores the relationship between the effective application of Spirituality and Emotional Intelligence at work and its impact on Employee Engagement.

ANCIENT LITERATURE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

If Emotional Intelligence is viewed as a mental ability (Salovey and Mayer) that involves the ability to rationally deal with emotional information and action to improve an individual's thinking and direct him towards success, then the Ancient Indian literature also focuses on self and in his journey towards success. As per ancient Indian literature, Individual should metamorphise himself to get positive thoughts and perform positive actions.

The ancient Indian literature has stressed on self, its characteristics and its relationship with the external world. Our Indian vedic literature have emphasised on 'Mind and Intelligence'. It can be learned through the literature that in all the yugas the path of attaining success has been through self effacing behaviour and perseverance, which are similar to Self Awareness and Self management clusters of Emotional Intelligence.

However, ancient Indian literature, has stressed on self, its characteristics and its relationship with the external world. Every individual has soul which is called Atman. It is in equilibrium with the external soul—Brahman (Paramatman). Few people who devote their lives for the development of others and have stood for several causes have become historical figures because they have understood the concept that Atman and Paramatman are one and same. Gandhi using his emotional intelligence led the country to Independence.

According to Bhagavat Gita, A Karma yogi is one who is free from anger, egoism and lust. He will not expect any fruit for his actions. He will not have any desire for name and fame, approbation, thirst for applause, admiration and gratitude. He will be humble and free from hatred, jealousy and harshness. He is free from crookedness, meanness, miserliness and selfishness. He will move and mix with everybody without distinction of caste, creed or colour. He will have adaptability, tolerance, sympathy, cosmic love and kindness. He will adjust with the habits and ways of others and will have an all-embracing and an all-inclusive heart. He will always have a cool and balanced mind along with the presence of mind. He will bear insult, disrespect, dishonour censure, infamy, disgrace, harsh words, heat, cold and the pain of diseases. He will have absolute faith in himself.

A person who is able to understand himself is said to be wise man and his characteristics are:

- Contentment
- Compassion
- Forgiveness
- Straightforwardness
- Calmness
- Self Control
- Dutifulness

A characteristic of a KARMA YOGI is the Outcome of High Spiritual and Emotional Intelligence.

WESTERN LITERATURE AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The Emotional Competencies (Goleman) Model

In the early 1990's, Goleman developed a conceptual

model of Emotional Intelligence which eventually led to his book, *Emotional Intelligence*. The model introduced by Daniel Goleman focuses on Emotional Intelligence as wide array of competencies and skilled that drive leadership performance. Goleman's model outlines four main Emotional Intelligence constructs.

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

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

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

Social Management- the ability to achieve outstanding performance. Goleman opined that individuals are born with a general EI that determines their potential for learning emotional competencies.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee Engagement has been defined as being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to others (Alfes, Truss *et al.*, 2010). Thus, an engaged employee is someone who thinks hard about their work, feels positive when they do a good job and discusses work related matters and improves those around them.

Employee Engagement is also defined as a positive, work-related state of mind, characterised by vigor (high levels of energy while working, willingness to invest effort in work, and persistence in the face of difficulties), dedication (sense of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge), and absorption (being happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties detaching) (Langelaan, Bakker *et al.* 2006) The above definitions of engagement derives from the work of earlier theorists such as (Khan 1990) Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002).

Emotional Engagement is a powerful connection between one's true emotions, thoughts and feelings with the job (Khan 1990) leading to feelings of enthusiasm and pride (Rich 2006). Cognitive engagement is the strong involvement of one's attention on the work tasks leading to thorough absorption and resistance to distractions.

Physical engagement is the strong involvement of one's physical energies towards a certain task, ranging from lethargy to vigorous involvement.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY, EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT-MODEL

Research has been done in the past to establish a relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement. The European-based psychologist Stiffoss-Hansen (1999), provides a definition of spirituality that crosses religious boundaries and allows for an appropriate consideration of spirituality within the context of work. Stiffoss-Hansen's suggests that spirituality could include a range of characteristics such as existentialism, connectedness, authenticity, meaning in life, holism, and self and community, as aspects of an individual's spirituality. Considering these facets within a work context, employees actively striving for connectedness and authenticity; who are considerate

and respectful of both oneself and the broader organisational community; and who utilise their role at work and within an organisation to create personal meaning and congruency, are likely to be more engaged, productive and effective (King & Dave, 1999; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Mitroff & Denton, 1999; van Dierendonck, Garssen, & Visser, 2005). However without demonstrating the capabilities underpinning effective emotional intelligence, individuals are equally likely to create work environments that are absence of trust, founded upon artificial harmony and plagued with poor individual and collective organisational commitment (Lencioni, 2004).

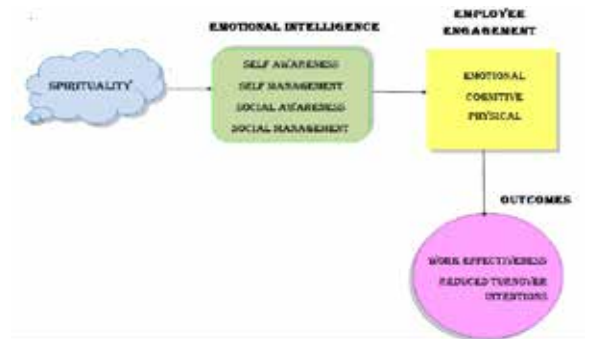


Fig: 1 Spirituality, Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement-Model

Emotional Intelligence leads to positive emotions which can increase the Employee Engagement. According to Robinson (2006) Employee Engagement can be achieved through the creation of an organizational environment where positive emotions such as involvement and pride are encouraged, resulting in improved organizational performance, lower employee turnover and better health. So this study reveals that it is the organizational environment that affects Employee Engagement. So if such an environment is created that encourages employees, then it will increase the level of the engagement and it will help in retaining the employees and will result in improving the organizational performance. Even Emotional Intelligence is negatively related with burnout. With increase in Emotional Intelligence burnout will decrease leading to increased Employee Engagement as shown in a study conducted by Schaufelli and Bakker (2004). They conducted a multi sample study on job demands, job resources and their relationship with burnout and engagement. Results showed that burnout and engagement were negatively related. So with increase in the level of engagement burnout will decrease. Burnout was predicted by job demands and job resources whereas engagement was predicted by available job resources. Burnout was related to health as well as turnover intentions whereas engagement was related to only turnover intentions. So interventions for burnout and engagement would be different. Therefore we can see that engagement and burnout are negatively related. So if we increase the level of engagement then burnout will decrease to some extent. Researches also showed that engagement is related to turnover intentions of the employees. So the turnover intentions of the employee will depend on the level of engagement.

Employee Engagement leads to better work effectiveness (Harter and Frank, 2002) and reduced turnover intentions (Lee and Shin, 2005). Harter and Frank (2002) did a meta-analysis on Business- unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes. They found generalizable relationships between

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

SUCCESS STORIES-EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE DRIVES ENGAGEMENT

In a six-month leadership development process at Komatsu, a Japanese maker of construction and mining equipment engagement increased from 33 to 70%. At the same time, plant performance increased by 9.4%. In another study by six seconds, Amadori, an Italian agro-food sector company and European supplier to McDonalds, emotional intelligence was found to predict 47% of the variation in manager's performance scores. Emotional Intelligence was also correlated with increased with increased organizational engagement with 76% of variation in engagement predicted by manager Emotional Quotient. During this period, employee turnover also dropped by 63%. The workplace climate is a driving force in how employees engage in their daily activities. Therefore if we want business success, we need to equip leaders and employees with the skills to make an environment where employees can work

effectively.

CONCLUSION

As a whole, humans have various intelligence levels. The diversity of intelligence levels owned by humans will influence their life. This includes intelligence level in terms of intellectual, Emotional and spiritual. The discussions found that the level of spiritual and Emotional Intelligence is very important and influence the employee engagement. Thus, this study theoretically contributes in establishing a comprehensive framework on better understanding the effects of spiritual, Emotional Intelligence on employee Engagement thereby contributing to the existing diversified literature in the field of organizational management.

Spirituality is something that's often debated and commonly misunderstood. Many people confuse spirituality with religion and so bring pre-existing beliefs about the impact of religion to discussions about spirituality. Though all religions emphasise spirituality as being an important part of faith, it's possible to be 'spiritual' without necessarily being a part of an organised religious community.

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