



AN EXPLORATION OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Managing stress at workplace is of utmost important in any organization. The area has gained momentum since in this era of competition every organization is facing issues related to work life balance. It becomes imperative to reduce stress. One effective way to reduce stress is through the practice of spirituality. A lot of research has been done to explore what spirituality is all about. Yet a major gap exists in linking spirituality with stress. Though there are strategies available for reducing stress, yet spirituality offers great benefits in handling stress at workplace. In research, it was found that ergonomics play vital role in improving employee performance. On aspect in ergonomics is related to the wellbeing of employees. Stress management comes under the domain of employee well-being. Many organizations are actively participating in inculcating the culture of spiritualism, particularly to cater to the needs of employees of the organizations. The purpose of this study is to examine the literature available in context of workplace spirituality and stress management. This research will investigate the potential buffering effect of spirituality on organizational stress management methods. Empirical studies have shown that spirituality is positively related to well-being of individuals. But when it comes to be applied in organizations, management find its implementation difficult. This research focuses on use of content analysis as a qualitative measurement of determine the frequency of linkage between stress management and spirituality.

Keywords: *momentum, work life balance., spirituality, ergonomics, Empirical studies, potential buffering, content analysis,*



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Review of Literature

A brief review of literature of spirituality is mentioned as follows:

The turn of the period adage a flare-up of investigations on spiritual intelligence. Emmons (2000) demarcated Spiritual intelligence as exploration of substantiation of spiritualism which can help in problem solving and to achieve justified means. In another explanation, King (2008) considers spiritual intelligence to be a muster of psychological capacities based on ample and illustrious aspects of life. In his credence, spiritual intelligence comprises the four components of transcendental awareness, expansion of conscious states, production of personal meaning and critical existential thinking.

Theory of multiple intelligence given by Gardener reveals that there are many measurement criteria of human intelligence structure. Gardener (1993) believes that religiosity and spirituality are correlated. Emmons (2000) presented the proof of spiritual intelligence as spirituality which contains interconnected capacities. In his work, he projected spirituality as a category of intelligence. He also supports the fact that there is model of spiritual intelligence which consists of four components. It is now establishment of biological confirmation to support the theory that spiritual intelligence exists (Hammer 2005; Newberg and Walden, 2010). Long before this confirmation was given, Michael Persinger (1996) and Ramachandran (1999) discovered the presence of God Spot in brain. The 'God Spot' is a range in the mind that works as an in-built spiritual center positioned in the interior of the connections of neurons in the temporal lobes. This study leads to the conclusion that human beings are conditioned naturally by our brain to think spiritually. A large number of researchers believed in presence of spiritual intelligence. Mayer (2000) stressed that abstract reasoning and coping spiritually are encompassed in spiritual intelligence. The model of spiritual intelligence prescribed by Emmons was additionally supported and extended by Noble (2001). He explained the presence of diverse skills which are spiritual in precise. This also comes under the domain of spiritual intelligence. He mentioned the fact that his work agrees with Emmons (2000) tagging spiritual intelligence as an inborn human capability. Nobel further argues that spiritual intelligence continuously attempt to capture all the spiritual experiences throughout the life span of human psychological development. Further, Vaughan (2002) believes that spiritual intelligence is a talent for insightful understanding of existential concerns and questions. He also extended it to express multiple levels of consciousness- the awareness about our existence. Vaughan believed in existence of spiritual intelligence which is present in all human beings.

Horton's (1950) notions of God, located along a gamut stretching from atheism, humanism, Monotheism, Theopantism, to complete Pantheism was mentioned by Fry (2003). He states if God is not present; one will have no sense of calling or membership; everything is considered to be evil, hopeless, and rooted in sorrow, distress, despair, and calamity. According to Fry (2003) everything is God; everything is good and rooted in joy, peace, serenity.

According to Howell (2004) there are seven steps under domain of spiritual intelligence: awareness, meaning, evaluation, being centered, vision, projection, and mission.

Recently, Amram (2007) commenced grounded theory approach to inspect spiritual intelligence. He mirrored the belief that spiritual experiences and spiritual intelligence are

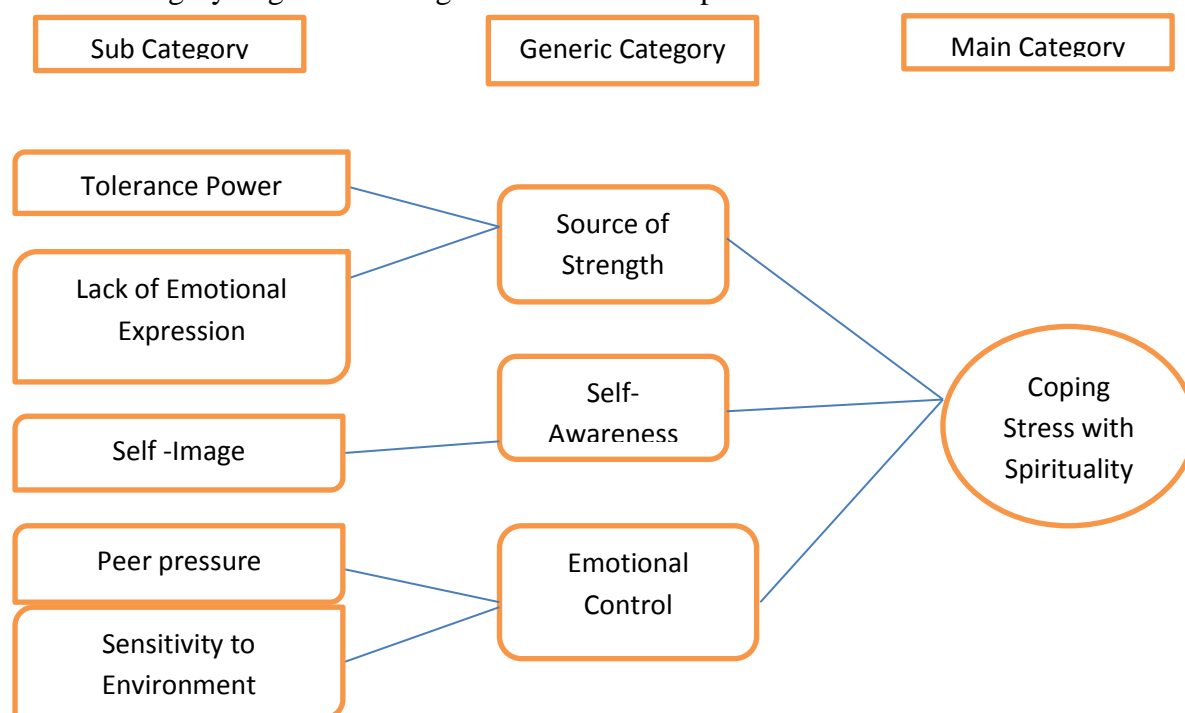
different concepts. He acknowledged seven main themes relating to intelligence. He largely demarcated these proportions as manifestation of lived spirituality.

Coming on to stress management, the following literature has been explored.

The need to explore the area of workplace stress in different organization with different cultural settings is highlighted by Burke's (2010) editorial contribution on well being across cultures. He argues that there is a gap in knowledge developed about stress and influence of ethical values of organizations in coping with it. Although the stress management literature has made significant contributions in exploring the psychological dimensions to stress (Mackie et. al., 2001), it treated broader contextual and cultural issues as background factors (McHugh, 2002) and consequently, underplay or simply sidestep the significance of ethical values on workplace stress (Burke,2010). The organizational literature and theory suggest that stress may be dependent upon an organization's structure and culture (Schuler 1977). Organizational culture is composed of values, as well as patterns of behavior, beliefs and assumptions. Ethics prevailing in the organization are part of these shared values and artifacts. Many researchers have tried to identify the factors which inhibit stress in the employees. Identification of these factors can help in developing strategies which can reduce the stress levels of employees by creating depletion effect.

Research methodology

Since the analysis was based on exploration of literature review available on the related subject, content analysis was used to gauge an idea about what factors carry a connection between the measured variables. Preliminary content analysis was done in order to identify the variables. This research study pertains to the identification of variables that causes and influences stress and spiritual mechanism to cope with workplace stress. We further divide them into category to generate categorization matrix as presented below:



A lot of factors were extracted from the literature in order to develop this classification matrix. The process was to first identify the literature related to spirituality and stress. The literature was then sorted out chronologically to identify the gaps in the field. Once sorting out was done, next step is to categorize the data and develop themes and sub themes. Some of the factors were clubbed in order to derive categorization matrix.

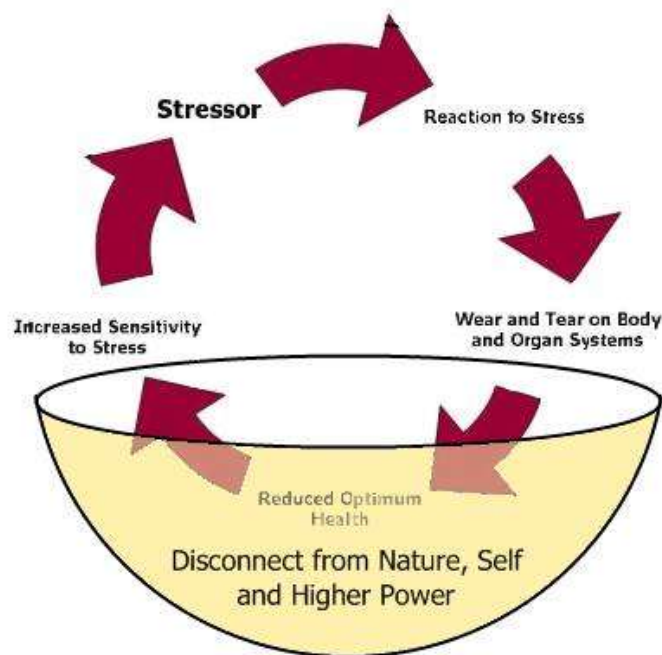
Tolerance power is crucial as a part of our day to day life to combat stress. Stress is perceived when environmental demands exceed the individual resources. Role-stress occurs through perceived mismatch between the expectations of the role and the accomplishment (Lambert 2001). The anger when we face something which is detested leads to adverse result not only for the consequences but also to our health. The meditation and yoga which comes under the domain of spiritualism are key answer to control stress. The brain which controls the body is having controller in form of meditation and yoga. Meditation in any form is the best medicine to control nervous system. Meditation mingled with yoga is more powerful weapon to fight all the exposures being faced in day to day life. Having a weekly yoga practice helps to calm the mind and strengthen the body. People who do yoga are also likely to notice things like a greater ability to focus and make higher moral decisions. Meditation from the ancient time has been an inspirer for perfection in the body and keeping away from any type of stress, when we meditate our mind, heart and soul catch the rhythm which a healthy body needs for performing at the best level. It fulfills the required stamina and connects us to spiritualism for the peace of mind amid good thoughts and philosophy of life in the spiritual and objective directions (Koenig, 2009). If combined with visualization, it can change one's whole response to stressful demands. Meditation is a useful and practical relaxation technique for managing stress. The idea behind meditation is to consciously relax body and focus the thoughts on one thing for a sustained period. In meditation, new patterns of thinking come to the surface and develop as we experience a new view of the universe, a vision of unity, happiness, harmony and inner peace. Negative tendencies vanish and mind becomes steady. Realizing the importance of spiritualism in dealing with stress has become the need of the hour. Therefore, this study helps in identifying the relationship between stress and spiritualism so that it can be explored further and new strategies can be formulated to improve organizational efficiency and reducing workplace stress.

Discussion

On the basis of literature analysis, many studies reported that their spirituality provides them with a source of strength (Hill, et al., 2003). In substance, religion is cited more than any other coping mechanism in these studies (Pargament, Keonig& Perez, 2000). Spiritual coping

has also been associated with lower rates of depression, better physical and mental health, and lower mortality rates.

In order to combat workplace stress, it is necessary to work on self-awareness dimension of spirituality. Also emotional self-control will help in stress related to performance and peer pressure. Emotional control will provide a balance to defend stress caused by environmental issues pertaining to our surrounding. A critical review of the literature would indicate abundant evidence to support that spirituality as a coping mechanism in times of extreme stress and day to day hassles. Religion and spirituality are positively correlated with coping with stress.



Source: Julia Raymut's Reconnect with yourself spirit and nature

The categorization matrix developed based on a few selected research papers devised that stressors at workplace can easily be managed once a spiritual culture is implemented in the organization. This spiritualism can be incorporated by conducting yoga and meditation sessions at workplace, practicing self-awareness games, focusing on development of employees etc. on the basis of the study, we could identify some spiritual experiences to combat stress at workplace:

1. Prayer and meditation
2. Changing life patterns
3. Mindless to mindfulness practice
4. Nurture Creativity
5. Self-awareness (Introspection)

6. Look for grace
7. Creating the culture of optimism

Conclusion

It is recommended that decision makers have to provide their employees with a social and psychological counseling and guidance in form of giving them spiritual experiences to reduce stress for their better performance and development. It has been extracted from the literature that spiritual people can make better use of spirituality in order to deal with stress at workplace. Organizational responsibility lies on implementing the culture of spiritualism across the nook and corner of the workplace.

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