Chapter 17
Workplace Spirituality and Transformational Leadership:
An Assessment of Their Relationship and Fry's Causal Spiritual Model

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ABSTRACT

Workplace spirituality or spirituality in the workplace is about employees search for meaning, purpose, and interconnectedness in the workplace. Similarly, transformational leadership is a leadership style that encourages a higher level of moral maturity and performance standard for followers. In this chapter, through a review of literature and propositional analysis, the authors demonstrate that transformational leadership has the capacity to drive employees towards meaning, purpose, and interconnectedness with the organization's goals and values. Researchers agree that transformational leadership inspires, motivates, and also attempts to connect with followers. Thus, while workplace spirituality is a potent ingredient in the modern workplace, transformational leadership is the driving force that actually transforms the workplace. Thus, the authors conclude by proposing that transformational leadership can potentially encourage and sustain workplace spirituality. Suggestions and recommendations for future empirical research are provided.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace spirituality is a discipline that has captured the interest of many organizations (Karakas, 2009). This search is an expression of employee's inner life; an inner life that is a part of being alive. Workplace spirituality attempts to provide a basis for this inner being through meaning, purpose, and interconnectedness. Some of the organizations that have embraced workplace spirituality include Southwest Airlines, Ford, and Tom's of Maine (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Robbins & Judge highlight that workplace spirituality is a growing interest among organizations for various reasons, such as work-life balance and the search for meaning within work. Marques (2010) suggested that workplace spirituality or the spiritual movement in and of itself has been present since the beginning of the 1990's. In the 1990's, more than 300 titles on workplace spirituality could be found in bookstores (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). According to Ashmos and Duchon (2000), this spirituality awakening in the workplace has little to do with the rules and order of organizational life, but more with meaning, purpose, community and the desire to integrate personal life values with one's professional life.

Sheep (2006) stated that "workplace spirituality is a young area of inquiry with potentially strong relevance to the well-being of individuals, organizations, and societies (p. 357). Sheep also opined that there are four conceptual convergences to workplace spirituality although research notes that there are three aspects of spirituality in the workplace, to include, environment, meaning, community and purpose. Sheep espoused the four components in the following manner:

1. **Self-Workplace Integration:** Intellectualized as an individual yearning to bring one's whole being into the workplace.
2. **Meaning in Work:** Intellectualized as the search for meaningful work, which can be perceived as the meaning of one's life converging with the meaning of one's work. Meaning in work also reflects the desire for assimilation and wholeness.
3. **Transcendence of Self:** Rising above self to become a part of a connected whole.
4. **Growth/Development:** Development of one's inner life in the workplace (Sheep, 2004; Neck & Milliman, 1994).

In the search to fulfill inner needs in the workplace, Harrington, Preziosi and Gooden (2002) claimed that spirituality at work is about spiritual beings expressing their inner needs by searching for meaningful work, as well as living in connection with other human beings because this is an essential part of being alive. The term meaningful work is described by Schlechter and Engelbrecht (2006) as having found or having discovered a reason for being, feeling, experience, or perception. Schlechter and Engelbrecht also added that workplace spirituality relates to a sense of fulfilling a higher purpose, which naturally intersects with the goals of transformational leadership. Experts of motivation claim that fulfilling a higher purpose can be considered a goal of one's existence, and may also turn out to be a form of self-expression (Mujtaba, 2014). Robbins and Judge (2009) added that organizations that are tolerable of employee expression differentiate themselves from non-spiritually based organizations. According to Robbins and Judge, Southwest Airlines is an example of an organization that has embraced workplace spirituality. "Employees at Southwest Airlines, for instance, are encouraged to express their sense of humor on the job, to act spontaneously, and to make their work fun. They allow employees to be themselves, to show emotions, and to express mood and feelings in the workplace" (Robbins & Judge, 2009, p. 572).

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