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# Role of spirituality in job satisfaction: An empirical study

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**Abstract**
The spiritual orientation of an individual affects his/her perceptions, disposition, orientations, and behavior at work and in life. Workplaces have changed drastically over the past few years and practitioners and academicians both are searching for unexplored sources of job satisfaction and performance. Spirituality has managed to emerge as an unusual new phenomenon in organizational behavior as a mode to increase employees' motivation and satisfaction apart from organizational effectiveness. There's a growing interest in the positive impacts of spirituality at work among employees, employers, and thinkers equally. This study examines the impact of the spiritual inclinations of an individual on job satisfaction in addition to the on-the-job factors and disposition. Regression analysis of responses from 456 doctors working in private and public sector hospitals and dispensaries in Delhi identified the belief in spirituality as a significant predictor of overall job satisfaction, in addition to predisposition and satisfaction on intrinsic factors with the highest impact of predisposition with 39% contribution followed by intrinsic satisfaction with 26% contribution and belief in spirituality with 16% contribution towards overall job satisfaction at *p-value* less than.01.

**Keywords:** Job satisfaction, spirituality, disposition, intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction

## 1. Introduction

For most traditional management thinkers and practitioners, spirituality is a concept that is incongruent with the theories and practices of organizational behavior and management. The concept of spirituality is probably inconsistent with the rationale and logic that form the core of management theories and principles, or even if it is not, at least no scientific rationale or proof is there to emphasize its relevance in the fields of organizational behavior and management. Surprisingly, still, the concept of spirituality has managed to emerge as an unusual and new phenomenon in organizational behavior as a mode to increase employees' motivation and satisfaction as well as organizational effectiveness (Pierce and Gardner, 2002) [26]. There seems a growing interest in spirituality at work by employees and employers at all levels and in all areas of organizations (Robbins and Coulter, 2002) [28], and many thinkers have expressed their views about the positive impacts of spirituality in the workplace (Delbecq, 2000; Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Cacioppe, 2000; Conlin, 1999; Braham, 1999) [12, 2, 8, 10, 6]. The term "workplace spirituality", though new, is now not unfamiliar to those practicing in the fields of organizational behavior. Spirituality in the workplace implies acknowledging that all employees are spiritual beings who live by a set of core values. It's not about organized religious practices, rather, it's a "recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community" (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000, p. 139) [2].

People, spiritual in nature, seek greater personal connection to the pursuits on which they worked. Though not very comfortable with the concept initially, many organizations have now instituted wellness models for the health and development of their employees that encourages not only personal and professional development but also spiritual growth, in anticipation that they will result in more satisfied, productive, and creative employees. Some view spirituality in the workplace as an experimentation on empowerment discourse (Elmes and Smith, 2001) [13]. In some organizations, spirituality is expressed through meditation time at the beginning or end of the day to ease the transition from workday to home or vice versa. In some other organizations, employees are encouraged to incorporate spiritual values in work groups and teams, which makes the teams more cohesive, and sensitive to other members' approaches and perspectives. Some focus more on ethics and community as a way of addressing the spiritual needs of both their employees and the community it serves.

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This helps organizations in understanding how their decisions affect the external environment. Viewing the organization as a part of the world as a whole emphasizes the interrelatedness of business and society (Conlin, 1999) [10].

Due to the growing recognition of spirituality in organizational behavior and the recommended positive outcomes associated with it for employees and organizations, it's worthwhile to empirically test the impact of the spirituality of individuals, particularly on their job satisfaction. Job satisfaction, as known, is a major topic in organizational behavior. It exerts an important influence on action and behavior in organizations and relates closely to the quality of working life. It is one of the criteria by which organizations are evaluated. It is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experience (Locke, 1976) [20]. This positive assessment or feeling seems to occur when work is in harmony with the individual's needs and values. It reflects the extent to which an individual is gratified by or fulfilled in his/her work (Moorhead and Griffin, 1995) [23]. It is one of the most important human dimensions, which strongly influences an organization's success as well as an individual's performance at work. From an economic point of view, job satisfaction is important for its perceived influence on productivity and performance. Although no strong 'direct' link has been found between satisfaction and productivity in the earlier research, some recent evidence indicates that such a relationship does exist (Judge, Throsen, Bono, and Patton, 2001) [17]. When an organization is managed in a way that employees can satisfy their individual needs by achieving organizational objectives, they exert full effort on the job. Further, positive or negative attitudes toward work may exert powerful effects on many forms of organizational behavior. It is more directly related to a person's mental and physical health, absenteeism, turnover, sabotage, union activities, and many other negative reflections, which may have serious implications for the effectiveness and performance of the individuals and organizations. Dissatisfaction among employees may also seriously hamper the organization's ability to attract qualified employees. Moreover, the more dissatisfied the workforce is, the more frequent and widespread these consequences are. As an effect, most modern managers now recognize that the satisfaction of employees at work is important and the organization's performance should be measured in human dimensions as well as in terms of return on investment, market share, and so on (Vecchio, 2000) [30]. 'Employee satisfaction' is indeed a veritable cornerstone of human relations and gathers the continuous attention of researchers for exploring the factors underpinning this important variable. This study is an attempt to examine the spirituality angle of the antecedents of job satisfaction.

## 2. Review of research

Besides motivating employees to live their values at work and be more involved in their organizations, spirituality, particularly in the workplace, has other related benefits. Gugnani and Chauhan (2022) [14] studied the impact of workplace spirituality on job satisfaction and suggested that the work should be united with the spiritual outlook of the workers. Bella *et al.* (2021) [4] identified the reproducible qualitative measures of workplace spirituality, such as identity, values, coherence, purpose in work, and investment which might be transformed into job satisfaction. They also identified the workplace spirituality factors that are not generating job satisfaction. Belwalkar, Vohra, and Pandey (2018) [5] investigated the interrelationships of workplace spirituality, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior in bank employees and found job satisfaction to be the mediating factor between the other two variables. Hassan, Nadeem, and Akhter (2016) [15] examined the impact of workplace spirituality on job satisfaction mediated by trust in University employees. Using multiple regression techniques, the researchers found a positive relationship between workplace spirituality and job satisfaction with significant mediation by trust between employees. Walt and Klerk (2014) [31] conducted a cross-sectional study of white-collar workers and found a positive relationship between workplace spirituality and job satisfaction. Lips-Wiersma (2002) [19] found that spirituality influences career purpose, sense-making, and coherence, and inspires four purposes 'developing and becoming self', 'unity with others', 'expressing self', and 'serving others'. Some studies reported by Conlin (1999) [10] and Mitroff and Denton (1999) [22] claimed that when companies implemented programs that used spiritual techniques for their employees, productivity improved and turnover was significantly reduced. Also, employees who worked for organizations they considered spiritual were less fearful, less likely to compromise their values, and more able to commit to their jobs. It also maximizes personal potential (Nathan, 1997) [25]. As Robbins and Coulter (2002) [28] suggested, practicing spirituality – in whatever way they are comfortable with – provides employees with a sense of calm, belonging, connection, fulfillment, and meaning. The benefits also include a shift from a competitive environment to a more collaborative team-oriented workplace promoting creativity and innovation, reducing turnover of key employees due to greater satisfaction, and helping the employees to communicate better with others, a key to success in the fast-paced modern world. All of these combined factors help organizations to reach their peak performance, which benefits not only the organization and its employees but the community as a whole (Laabs, 1995). Chakraborty (1995) [19] strongly recommended the concepts of the 'spirituo-technical mantra' and 're-spiritualization of work place' and suggested that many problems in the workplace, including that of reduced productivity, can be solved by focusing on the intrinsic and spiritual aspects of work. Beegam (1992) [3] also found some evidence of higher job satisfaction among those teachers who were high in their spiritual orientation.

Research on job satisfaction has primarily focused on the situational and dispositional sources of job satisfaction as important sources of it. Research review reveals that workplace spirituality also affects job satisfaction. However, a person's spiritual orientation is not given much attention in job satisfaction research. To fill this gap in job satisfaction research, this study hypothesizes that the spiritual orientation of an individual could be an important source of that individual's job satisfaction and can provide new insights into the unknown aspects of job satisfaction. Spirituality has been defined for this purpose as the belief in the supreme power or universality and its goodness. Connectivity is an important aspect of spirituality as spiritual persons try to be in harmony with the universe. In every human being, there seems to be a spiritual dimension, a quality that goes beyond religious affiliation that strives

for inspiration, reverence, awe, meaning, and purpose even in those who do not believe in God (Murray and Zentner, 1989) [24]. As meditation is employed as an important technique for pursuing spirituality, it also has been tested in the study for its relationships with overall job satisfaction and its components.

## 3. Research methodology
### 3.1 Research Objectives
The objective of this study is to examine the impact of spirituality on the job satisfaction of an individual. It's hypothesized that spirituality has a significant impact on overall job satisfaction. To segregate the impact of spirituality from the impact of situational and dispositional sources, the intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction and the disposition of respondents towards satisfaction have also been examined.

### 3.2 Research Design
The study has been designed as a causal study to explore the possible relevance of spiritual orientation in explaining overall job satisfaction. The effects of intrinsic and extrinsic job factors and disposition on the overall job satisfaction of an individual have also been examined for a complete assessment of the relationships and effects.

### 3.3 Sample
A random sample of 456 doctors working in different hospitals and dispensaries in Delhi has been selected. Doctors as the subject of the study have been deemed fit for the reason that spiritual values and skills are increasingly recognized as necessary aspects of clinical care and the medical profession and in many health organizations they are practiced by the doctors during the process of healing of patients, which is also visible in the reports by the World Health Organization (Cullliford, 2002) [11]. Though still not a priority in healing by the majority of doctors, it is visualized that spirituality may provide reciprocal benefits to the doctors in the form of increased job satisfaction and morale, low burnout, and less stress at work. As spirituality has always been a sacred dimension of the medical profession, the doctors have been chosen for the study to investigate the impact of their spiritual orientation on their overall as well as intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction.

### 3.4 Assessment Tools
Data has been collected through the personal administration of a well-designed questionnaire. The respondents have been requested to answer questions on their demographics, overall satisfaction, intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction, predisposition, and spiritual orientation. The Brayfield and Rothe inventory (1951) [7] has been used for computing the overall satisfaction of doctors, consisting of 18 questions on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A low total score indicates dissatisfaction with the work and a maximum score represents satisfaction. To measure intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, Porter's Need Satisfaction Questionnaire (1962) is adapted with a 26 items version. Respondents were asked to provide two ratings for each item on a scale ranging from 1 to 7 for (a) how much that variable is there and (b) how much it should be. The satisfaction/dissatisfaction score has been computed by subtracting the score on (a) from the score on (b). This produced a 13-point scale with a range of satisfaction scores

for an individual factor of –6 to +6 including 0, where the high scores represent high dissatisfaction. Dispositions of the respondents have been computed by adapting the scale suggested by Aamodt and Raynes (2001) [21] comprising 36 different questions on positive affectivity, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1 to 5. The inventory produces a collective measure of disposition toward satisfaction in life in general and in work in specific in a way that a high score represents a high disposition to be happy and satisfied on the job. The spiritual orientation of the respondents has been measured by asking a direct question on spirituality on a five-point scale ranging from 1 to 5. Lastly, a question has been asked to the respondents on the frequency of meditation on a scale of 1 to 4. The reliabilities of these inventories, tested using Cronbach's alpha, are found reasonably good and are reported in table one.

### 3.5 Data Analysis
Correlation, multiple regression, and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) techniques have been applied to test the propositions hypothesized at .05 and .01 levels of significance.

## 4. Results and Discussion
Table 1 shows the summary statistics for key variables of the study with the reliability measures of the scales used.

**Table 1:** Means, standard deviations, and alpha scores of the key variables

| Variable | Mean | Standard Deviation | Alpha |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall job satisfaction | 3.7318 | .5609 | .87 |
| Intrinsic satisfaction | 1.5042 | .9923 | .89 |
| Extrinsic satisfaction | 1.7141 | 1.0323 | .79 |
| Predisposition | 3.7148 | .4090 | .89 |
| Belief in spirituality | 3.8728 | .9313 | - |
| Meditation | 1.9561 | .9482 | - |

**Source:** Compiled by author from SPSS output

The results, as shown in table 1, indicate that the respondents are fairly satisfied at their work. The mean score for overall job satisfaction is 3.73 (SD =.56), representing a moderate amount of job satisfaction on a five-point scale ranging from 1 to 5. The mean scores for intrinsic satisfaction and extrinsic satisfaction are 1.50 (SD =.99) and 1.71 (SD = 1.03) respectively on Porter's need satisfaction scale that ranges from –6 to +6. As both the scores are positive (the positive scores on Porter's need satisfaction scale denote job dissatisfaction on the job factors), they show that the respondents are slightly dissatisfied with both the intrinsic and extrinsic job factors. However, the level of dissatisfaction is slightly higher in the case of extrinsic factors. The results also indicate that on average the respondents are high on their predisposition to be satisfied with work as the mean score on the Core Self Evaluation scale (with the range of 1 to 5) appeared to be 3.71 (SD =.40). The respondents are also high in spirituality as shown by their mean score of 3.87 (SD =.93) on a scale of 1 to 5. The mean score for frequency of meditation (M = 1.95, SD =.94), however, shows that most of the respondents rarely meditate. Correlation analysis has been conducted to further explore the significant relationships among overall job satisfaction, intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, predisposition, belief in spirituality,

and meditation, the results of which are presented next.

**Table 2:** Correlations (Pearson's r) of overall job satisfaction with other key variables

| Variable | Overall job satisfaction |
|---|---|
| Intrinsic satisfaction | -.342** |
| Extrinsic satisfaction | -.305** |
| Predisposition | .446** |
| Belief in spirituality | .198** |
| Meditation | .185** |

**Source**: Compiled by author from SPSS output
** Significant at.01 level

As table 2 shows, all key variables are significantly correlated with overall job satisfaction at 99% level of confidence and there is less than one percent chance that such relationships would hold in the population due to sampling error. The table also shows that the predisposition of respondents is most strongly correlated with overall job satisfaction (r =.446, $p<.01$), followed by intrinsic satisfaction (r = -.342, $p<.01$), extrinsic satisfaction (r = -.305, $p<.01$), spirituality (r =.198, $p<.01$) and frequency of meditation (r =.185, $p<.01$). The correlations suggest that the respondents who, by nature, are more inclined towards satisfaction, more satisfied on intrinsic and extrinsic factors, have spiritual orientations and meditate more are more satisfied on their work. Thus, as presumed earlier, situational job factors, predisposition, and spiritual orientation, all are found strongly correlated with overall job satisfaction. An attempt has also been made to identify the relationships between predisposition, belief in spirituality, and frequency of meditation with intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction. Table 3 presents the significant correlations among these variables.

**Table 3:** Correlations (Pearson's r) of intrinsic satisfaction and extrinsic satisfaction with other key variables

| Variable | Intrinsic satisfaction | Extrinsic satisfaction |
|---|---|---|
| Predisposition | -.180** | -.182** |
| Belief in spirituality | | -.111* |
| Meditation | -.150** | -.213** |

**Source**: Compiled by author from SPSS output
* Significant at.05 level
** Significant at.01 level
**Note:** Only significant correlations are reported.

Table 3 shows that predisposition is significantly correlated with both intrinsic (r = -.180, $p<.01$) and extrinsic satisfaction (r = -.180, $p<.01$), implying that the respondents who are more positive to be satisfied are also less dissatisfied and more satisfied on both intrinsic and extrinsic job factors. The strength of the relationship is almost the same in both cases. Belief in spirituality is correlated significantly with only extrinsic satisfaction (r = -.111, $p<.05$), which shows that with an increase in spiritual orientation dissatisfaction with extrinsic factors reduces and satisfaction improves. Meditation is significantly correlated with both intrinsic satisfaction (r = -.150, $p<.01$) and extrinsic satisfaction (r = -.213, $p<.01$). The results also show that the relationship between meditation and extrinsic satisfaction is the strongest among all reported correlations. As the frequency of meditation increases, dissatisfaction with intrinsic and extrinsic factors also reduces, and satisfaction with these factors improves, and this is stronger in the case of extrinsic factors. Though correlation analysis

indicated several statistically significant relationships among the key variables, it hasn't been sufficient to suggest the variables that regress on overall satisfaction and also their relative importance in determining overall job satisfaction, for which a step-wise linear multiple regression analysis has been conducted. The regression analysis helped in isolating the independent variables that are capable of explaining the maximum variance in overall job satisfaction and also in identifying their individual contributions toward overall job satisfaction. The independent variables tested for this purpose include predisposition, intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, belief in spirituality, and meditation. The results of the multiple regression analysis are produced in table 4.

**Table 4:** Determinants of overall job satisfaction (N = 456)

| Independent variables | Dependent variable: Overall job satisfaction | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Beta | Simple r | t - values |
| Predisposition | .390 | .446 | 9.709 |
| Intrinsic satisfaction | -.261 | -.342 | -6.500 |
| Belief in spirituality | .160 | .198 | 4.039 |

Multiple R =.543
R² =.295
Adjusted R² =.290
**Source**: Compiled by author from SPSS output

The results, shown in table 4, re-emphasize the importance of dispositional and situational sources in determining overall job satisfaction. The regression model is capable to explain 29% of the variation in overall job satisfaction through its three predictors included in the model. 39% variation in overall job satisfaction is due to dispositional factors and 26% variation is because of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with intrinsic job factors. As hypothesized, spirituality also emerged as an important source of overall job satisfaction as 16% of the variation in overall job satisfaction is due to the spiritual orientation of the respondents, which is a reasonable share and can not be ignored. The corresponding t – values are significant at.01 level of significance and also suggest similar findings. Extrinsic satisfaction and meditation however have not appeared in the resulting combination of regressing variables. The results of regression analysis reemphasize the importance of the spiritual orientation of an individual in determining the satisfaction from work along with the personality and job sources.

The result of One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), conducted to test the significance of the R² value produced by the regression model, is shown in table 5.

**Table 5:** Analysis of variance of the regression model

| Model | Sum of squares | Degree of freedom | Mean square | F | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regression | 42.226 | 3 | 14.075 | 63.029 | .000 |
| Residual | 100.939 | 452 | .223 | | |
| Total | 143.165 | 455 | | | |

**Source**: Compiled by author from SPSS output
Note: Predictors: (constant), predisposition, intrinsic satisfaction, belief in spirituality; Dependent variable: overall job satisfaction

The significance of F-value in table shows that the R² value of.295 is statistically significant at 99% level of confidence and thus not simply due to the sampling error.

## 5. Conclusion

Considering the importance of their human resources as a strategic source of excellence, an increasing number of organizations are now engaging themselves in efforts of providing their employees with a motivating, psychologically healthy, and satisfying work climate. Research shows that managers are now concerned with and planning for revitalizing the corporate culture, and defining corporate philosophy/values that are closely connected to managing the morale and satisfaction of people (Mills and Balbaky, 1985) [21]. Spirituality is fast emerging as an area that is of interest to many organizations and managers all over the world. Despite this increasing interest, there is not much scientific evidence about the benefits of pursuing spirituality by individuals in organizations. The present study has been undertaken to find out the impact of the spiritual orientation of individuals on their overall job satisfaction. It measured the overall satisfaction, intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction, predisposition, spiritual orientation, and frequency of meditation amongst 456 doctors working in Delhi. The study investigated the impact of the spiritual orientation of the respondents, along with the effect of dispositional and job factors, on overall job satisfaction.

The results have led to several interesting and important findings. Overall job satisfaction is found significantly correlated with both intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction, the relationship being stronger with intrinsic satisfaction. It's also strongly correlated with disposition, belief in spirituality, and meditation, the strongest association being with disposition. The finding is consistent with the similar findings by Judge *et al*. (1998) [16] and Rode (2004) [29], who discovered similar high relationships between overall job satisfaction and predisposition. As Judge *et al*. (1998) [16] suggested, such persons start at a higher platform and do not limit themselves to extrinsic factors only. They value their work and see more intrinsic worth in it. Spirituality and meditation have also been found significantly correlated with overall job satisfaction. As Culliford (2002) [11], Robbins and Coulter (2002) [28], and Laabs (1995) suggested, spirituality imparts a sense of belongingness, calm, fulfillment, and meaning in individuals that help in reducing stress and burnout, and improves morale among employees. All of these are conducive to high levels of job satisfaction. More spiritual respondents are also less dissatisfied with extrinsic factors. They are complaining less about extrinsic factors. A very strong correlation (r =.432, *p*<.01) has also been found between spirituality and meditation. As meditation has also been found significantly associated with overall job satisfaction, intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, and predisposition (r =.133, *p*<.01), it may be concluded that the respondents who are meditating more frequently are more satisfied with their work. They are also less dissatisfied with intrinsic and extrinsic job factors and do have a more positive mindset, all of which are further significantly associated with overall job satisfaction. Though overall job satisfaction has been found to correlate with all five key variables (i.e. intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, predisposition, belief in spirituality, and meditation), the multiple regression analysis indicated that they all are not influencing or contributing to overall job satisfaction. The analysis isolated predisposition, intrinsic satisfaction, and belief in spirituality as the predictors of overall job satisfaction, with the highest impact of predisposition with 39% contribution followed by intrinsic satisfaction with 26% contribution and belief in spirituality with 16% contribution. Thus, the hypothesis of the study that spirituality significantly affects overall job satisfaction has been proved true by the results. The results have also proved that predisposition is the strongest predictor of overall job satisfaction, while intrinsic satisfaction also affects overall job satisfaction. Thus, the study provides empirical evidence that spirituality is not a fad, it reimburses the individual at work at least with higher work satisfaction. The implications of this for organizations are that they are also benefited from this improved level of job satisfaction in the form of less burnout, less turnover, less substance misuse, better morale, and so on.

Though spirituality in the workplace is now nurtured and promoted by many organizations, it has always been an important aspect of the medical care profession. The study provides evidence that it has benefits for the providers of health care services too in the form of improved job satisfaction. Other service organizations or business organizations have not been included in the study and might be undertaken as the subject of future research. Not only this, the present study has investigated the impact of spirituality only on job satisfaction. There are other associated benefits of spirituality also in the form of less burnout, low wastage, less turnover, etc. That might also be investigated by organization behavior researchers in the future. Meditation has not appeared as a predictor of overall job satisfaction, but it was significantly associated with overall job satisfaction. Further research might be conducted on the impact of meditation on overall and facet satisfaction by taking a larger or different sample. The present study successfully unveiled the relationship between spirituality and overall job satisfaction promoting the path of future research in this direction.

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