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Article information:

To cite this document:

Badrinarayan Shankar Pawar , (2016), "Workplace spirituality and employee well-being: an empirical examination", *Employee Relations*, Vol. 38 Iss 6 pp. 975 - 994

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/ER-11-2015-0215>

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Workplace spirituality and employee well-being: an empirical examination

Workplace
spirituality

975

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Received 28 November 2015

Revised 22 May 2016

2 July 2016

Accepted 4 July 2016

Abstract

Purpose – The existing literature suggests that employee well-being is an important concern for organizations. The purpose of this paper is to carry out an empirical examination to assess whether employee experience of workplace spirituality has positive relationships with multiple forms of employee well-being.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper focussed on four forms of employee well-being, namely: emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being. It specified and empirically tested, using a survey design, four hypotheses, each proposing a positive relationship between workplace spirituality and one of the four forms of employee well-being.

Findings – All four hypotheses were supported indicating that workplace spirituality has a positive relationship with emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being.

Research limitations/implications – This paper may encourage future research to assess whether various forms of employee well-being result from specific dimensions of workplace spirituality.

Practical implications – Organizations may implement workplace spirituality for simultaneously enhancing multiple forms of employee well-being.

Social implications – As employee well-being is a matter of social concern, the findings of this study indicating a positive association between workplace spirituality and employee well-being have a social relevance.

Originality/value – To the author's knowledge, this is the first study to examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and four forms of employee well-being, namely; emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual well-being. As employee well-being is an important concern for organizations, the contribution of the study findings is that workplace spirituality implementation can simultaneously enhance multiple forms of employee well-being.

Keywords Psychological well-being, Workplace spirituality, Employee well-being, Multiple well-being forms, Emotional well-being, Social well-being, Spiritual well-being

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Employee well-being and workplace spirituality: an overview

This empirical paper focusses on two topics, namely; employee well-being and workplace spirituality. A brief overview of these two topics and the need for examining the relationship between them is outlined below.

Employee well-being refers to the quality of employees' functioning and experiences in organizations (e.g. Grant *et al.*, 2007). Employee well-being is a feature of healthy organizations (e.g. Wilson *et al.*, 2004). It has wide-ranging consequences in organizations (e.g. Ilies *et al.*, 2015a). Therefore, employee well-being is a significant topic in organizational life (e.g. Grant *et al.*, 2007) and is "one of the greatest challenges facing leaders today" (Fry and Slocum, 2008, p. 86). In light of this practical significance of employee well-being, it is not surprising that employee well-being has recently received intensified research attention. Thus, Ilies *et al.* (2015a, b, p. 827) note, "scholarly interest in employee well-being too has risen greatly in recent years" (Ilies *et al.*, 2015a, p. 827).



Employee Relations

Vol. 38 No. 6, 2016

pp. 975-994

© Emerald Group Publishing Limited

0142-5455

DOI 10.1108/ER-11-2015-0215

Similarly, Wright and Huang (2012, p. 1188) observe, “employee well-being has emerged as a very important topic in positive-based management research.”

Workplace spirituality refers to an employee’s experience of spirituality in the workplace (e.g. Ashmos and Duchon, 2000). Employee experience of meaning in work and community at work are two of the aspects included in workplace spirituality (e.g. Pawar, 2009b). Meaning in work refers to the employee experience that his/her work contributes to the larger good while community at work refers to the employee experience of connections with others in the workplace characterized by “sharing, mutual obligation and commitment” (Duchon and Plowman, 2005, p. 814). Workplace spirituality is a relatively new area of inquiry (e.g. Gotsis and Kortezi, 2008; Kolodinsky *et al.*, 2008; Sheep, 2006). It has been receiving growing attention in research and is a salient area of inquiry (e.g. de Klerk, 2005; Gotsis and Kortezi, 2008). Workplace spirituality has been found to be positively associated with employee work attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (e.g. Milliman *et al.*, 2003). More relevant to the current paper’s focus on employee well-being, workplace spirituality has been suggested to have “potentially strong relevance to the well-being of individuals, organizations, and societies” (e.g. Sheep, 2006, p. 357).

While workplace spirituality has been suggested to have an influence on employee well-being (e.g. Sheep, 2006), to the best of the author’s knowledge, the existing research has not empirically examined in a single study the relationship of employee experiences of workplace spirituality with four forms of employee well-being in the overall life context, namely; emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being. The present paper addresses this research gap. In doing so, it connects two areas – employee well-being and workplace spirituality – that have, as indicated above, received intense research attention in the recent past.

This paper

To address the above indicated research gap, this paper carries out an empirical examination of the relationship of workplace spirituality with four forms of employee well-being in the overall life context, namely; emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being. In doing so, it addresses the significant issue of employee well-being and also contributes to the literature on employee well-being and literature on workplace spirituality.

This paper is organized as follows. It first outlines the relevance of employee well-being for organizations. It then notes the likely utility of workplace spirituality for enhancing employee well-being, which suggests the need for empirically examining the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee well-being. Subsequently, hypotheses are developed specifying relationships between workplace spirituality and four forms of employee well-being – emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being. This is followed by the description of methods and results. Thereafter, the study results are discussed where the contributions to the literature on employee well-being and workplace spirituality and other contributions are outlined. Finally, the study’s limitations, research implications, and practice implications are outlined.

Relevance of employee well-being for organizations

“Well-being is a complex construct that concerns optimal experience and functioning” (Ryan and Deci, 2001, p. 141). Thus, employee well-being can be regarded as the quality of employees’ experience and functioning. Employee well-being can take various forms

such as physical well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being (e.g. Grant *et al.*, 2007). Employee well-being is of relevance to organizations because it characterizes organizational health. The definition of a healthy organization provided by Wilson *et al.* (2004, p. 567) notes, "A healthy organization is one characterized by intentional, systematic, and collaborative efforts to maximize employee well-being and productivity by providing well-designed and meaningful jobs, a supportive social-organizational environment, and accessible and equitable opportunities for career and work-life enhancement." This definition suggests that maximized employee well-being is one of the outcomes characterizing a healthy organization. Further, employee well-being can also affect employee productivity which is the second outcome feature of a healthy organization in the above referred definition.

The influence of employee well-being on employee productivity is reflected in the assessment of Grant *et al.* (2007, pp. 51-52) that "Extensive evidence indicates that employee well-being has a significant impact on the performance and survival of organizations by affecting costs related to illness and health care (Danna and Griffin, 1999), absenteeism, turnover, and discretionary effort (Spector, 1997), organizational citizenship behavior (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000), and job performance (Judge *et al.*, 2001; Wright and Cropanzano, 2000)." Impact of employee well-being on employee performance and other outcomes is also noted by Wright and Huang (2012, p. 1188) who point out, "recent applied research has suggested that employee well-being is significantly related to a number of important work outcomes, including job performance, employee retention, workplace accidents, sick days, absenteeism, absenteeism, customer engagement, quality defects, profitability [...]". The wide-ranging consequences of employee well-being are also pointed out by Ilies *et al.* (2015a, b, p. 828) who note that for employee well-being, "abundant research is available on the consequences for both workers and organizations." Thus, employee well-being is a feature of healthy work organizations and it also affects employee productivity which is another feature of a healthy organization. This indicates that employee well-being is a key aspect of a healthy organization. Consistent with this, Ilies *et al.* (2015a, b, p. 827) note, "employee well-being constitutes an important determinant of organizational flourishing." Further, employee well-being, as noted above, also has other wide-ranging consequences. These all aspects point out that it is beneficial for employees and organizations to enhance employee well-being.

Given this criticality of employee well-being for organizational health, it is not surprising that Harter *et al.* (2003, p. 206) note, "The well-being of employees is in the best interest of communities and organizations." Consistent with this, and more recently, Ilies *et al.* (2015a, b, p. 828) indicate that enhancing employee well-being "is in the best interest of both employees and employers." Similarly, Zheng *et al.* (2015, p. 621) note, "employees' well-being is critical to the survival and development of organizations around the world [...]" In a similar vein, Luthans *et al.* (2013, p. 128) observe, "prompted by the national (international) concern for the importance of building sustainable organizations [...], recent attention is being given to the well-being of today's employees."

The above discussion indicates the significance of employee well-being for organizational health (e.g. Wilson *et al.*, 2004), for organizations (e.g. Grant *et al.*, 2007; Harter *et al.*, 2003), and for employees (e.g. Ilies *et al.*, 2015a, b). However, Gavin and Mason (2004, p. 380) have expressed concerns about the recent decline in employee well-being. Given the significance of employee well-being for organizational health and organizations and concerns about the recent decline in employee well-being, it is understandable that enhancing employee well-being is "one of the greatest challenges" of the present leaders (Fry and Slocum, 2008, p. 86).

Workplace spirituality as an antecedent of employee well-being*The need for examining an antecedent of multiple forms of employee well-being*

The preceding discussion indicates the importance of employee well-being. Thus, while organizations adopt various actions for enhancing employee well-being, Grant *et al.* (2007, p. 52) note that “managerial practices often result in employee well-being tradeoffs, improving one dimension of employee well-being while undermining another. For example, research on work redesign practices shows that enriching jobs to increase stimulation and challenge typically increases job satisfaction but often causes physical strain [...]. Similarly, job rotation serves to make work more interesting by providing variety but can enhance stress and strain by placing higher demands on employees [...]” Consistent with this, a more recent study by Canibano (2013) also found that of the three innovative HRM practices of telework, communication, and participation, each had positive impact of some form of well-being while having negative impact on some other form of well-being.

It follows from the above discussion that it is important to enhance employee well-being. However, employee well-being takes multiple forms and organizational actions to enhance employee well-being may enhance some form of employee well-being while lowering some other form of employee well-being. Thus, it is relevant to see if there is any workplace feature which can enhance multiple forms of employee well-being without impairing any other form of employee well-being. The discussion below points out workplace spirituality is likely to be such a workplace feature.

Workplace spirituality as an antecedent influencing multiple forms of employee well-being

Workplace spirituality is one workplace feature which is likely to enhance multiple forms of employee well-being. An individual’s expression or experience of spirituality at workplace is referred to as workplace spirituality (e.g. Kolodinsky *et al.*, 2008; Sheep, 2006). Specifically, workplace spirituality refers to employee experiences of meaning and community in workplace (e.g. Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Duchon and Plowman, 2005). Some related terms associated with workplace spirituality experiences include transcendence (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003), calling, and membership (e.g. Fry, 2003). The existing literature suggests a requirement for spirituality in the workplace (Cavanagh and Bandsuch, 2002, p. 110) and thus workplace spirituality is “currently a salient issue in both scientific and empirical inquiry” (Gotsis and Kortezi, 2008, p. 576).

Sheep (2006, pp. 357, 372) notes that workplace spirituality has “potentially strong relevance to the well-being of individuals, organizations, and societies” and can potentially help organizations in dealing with the issue of their employees’ quality of life. Similarly, Karakas (2010, pp. 93-94) puts forth a proposition that spirituality enhances employees’ general well-being and based on a review of some literature suggests that there is “preliminary support for the argument” that adopting spiritual practices at work can enhance aspects such as employee morale and decrease work stress and burnout. Consistent with this, Vandenberghe (2011) proposed a conceptual model in which workplace spirituality, through the mediation by employees’ organizational commitment, is linked to employees’ psychological well-being. Similarly, McKee *et al.* (2011) found empirical support for the positive association of some workplace spirituality dimensions with employees’ mental well-being, healthy behavior, physical well-being, and spiritual well-being. However, McKee *et al.* (2011) did not include in their study other forms of well-being such as emotional well-being and social well-being. Thus, the above outlined conceptual views and limited empirical

evidence available in the existing research collectively suggest that it is necessary to empirically examine whether workplace spirituality can enhance multiple forms of employee well-being. This study does such empirical examination of the relationship of workplace spirituality with four forms of employee well-being in the overall life context, namely; emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being.

Potential contributions of this study

This study makes quite a few potential contributions. First, in light of the importance of employee well-being, as a feature of organizational health (e.g. Wilson *et al.*, 2004), a determinant of organizational flourishing (Ilies *et al.*, 2015a, b), and a critical requirement for organizational survival and development (Zheng *et al.*, 2015, p. 621), it is important to explore the possible actions for enhancing employee well-being. The present study responds to this requirement by examining the possible role of workplace spirituality in enhancing employee well-being.

Second, because the existing research (e.g. Canibano, 2013; Grant *et al.*, 2007) has noted that an organizational action may enhance some form of well-being while lowering other forms of well-being, it becomes important to explore whether there is any workplace feature which can simultaneously enhance multiple forms of employee well-being without lowering any other form of employee well-being. This study addresses this research requirement by hypothesizing and empirically testing the likely positive relationship of workplace spirituality with multiple forms of employee well-being.

Third, existing research has paid only limited attention to simultaneously studying multiple forms of employee well-being. For example, Vandenberghe (2011) covered only psychological well-being, McKee *et al.* (2011) measured mental well-being, health behaviors, physical well-being, and spiritual well-being, Luthans *et al.* (2013) focussed on only overall well-being and satisfactions in certain domains, Kaplan *et al.* (2014) measured only positive affective well-being and negative affective well-being, and Yoon *et al.* (2015) focussed on hedonic well-being and the meaning aspect of eudaimonic well-being. Thus, even the studies which examined multiple forms of employee well-being have covered only a few forms of employee well-being. In contrast, the present study covers four forms of employee well-being, namely; emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being. This coverage of well-being forms in the present study is comprehensive because in describing mental health, Keyes (2002) included three well-being forms of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being to which this study adds the fourth well-being form of spiritual well-being. Thus, a highly comprehensive coverage of multiple forms of employee well-being is another distinct contribution of this study.

Fourth, the two areas linked in this study – workplace spirituality and employee well-being – have been receiving considerable research attention. Workplace spirituality is a new area of inquiry (e.g. Sheep, 2006), has been drawing considerable research attention, and is a salient topic (e.g. Gotsis and Kortezi, 2008). Similarly, employee well-being has also recently come to draw considerable research attention (e.g. Ilies *et al.*, 2015a, b) and has become “a very important topic in positive-based management research” (Wright and Huang, 2012, p. 1188). Thus, this study makes another distinct contribution to the advancement of research by doing an empirical examination of some of the linkages between two areas that are salient in research and have recently received considerable research attention.

Hypotheses

This paper focusses on four forms of employee well-being – emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being – in employees' overall life, which may be referred to as the context-free (e.g. Warr, 2005) well-being or well-being in the life rather than on employee well-being in the specific context of the workplace, which may constitute context-specific (e.g. Warr, 2005) form of employee well-being. Each of the four forms of employee well-being covered in this study is briefly described below.

Emotional well-being is an excess of positive feelings over negative feelings (Keyes, 1998, p. 122). Positive affect includes feelings of placidity, comfort, and enthusiasm while negative affect includes feelings of anger, anxiety, tiredness, and boredom (e.g. Daniels, 2000). Psychological well-being refers to the realization and fulfillment of one's potential (e.g. Grant *et al.*, 2007; Keyes *et al.*, 2002). Psychological well-being is characterized by experiences such as "autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, life purpose, mastery, and positive relatedness" (Ryan and Deci, 2001, p. 146). Social well-being "is the appraisal of one's circumstance and functioning in society" (Keyes, 1998, p. 122). Specifically, social well-being refers to the "equitable and beneficial involvement in social communities" (Warr, 2005, p. 547). Spiritual well-being refers to the well-being associated with fulfillment of the need for transcendence (Ellison, 1983, p. 331). It can be viewed as the state associated with fulfillment of one's spiritual strivings (e.g. Paloutzian *et al.*, 2003, p. 134) or spiritual needs. Each of these four forms of well-being could be considered in the specific context such as the workplace or can be considered in a context-free manner in overall life. The literature notes that employee well-being in the workplace influences employee well-being in the overall life context (e.g. Gavin and Mason, 2004, pp. 379-380; Warr, 2005). Thus, in this study employee well-being in the overall life domain is regarded as being influenced by the employee experiences in the workplace and by the specific employee experiences of workplace spirituality.

Hypotheses: workplace spirituality and four well-being forms

An earlier conceptual work (Pawar, 2012) has outlined some likely relationships between workplace spirituality and various forms of employee well-being. However, the conceptual work of Pawar (2012) had three limitations. The first limitation of Pawar (2012) is that at the beginning of hypothesis specification, Pawar (2012, p. 455) noted, "The task of outlining the empirically observed or theoretically plausible relationships between workplace spirituality and employee well-being is likely to be difficult for at least two reasons. First, workplace spirituality research itself is in the early stages (e.g. Kolodinsky *et al.*, 2008). Second, empirical research in workplace spirituality has not been extensive, and more empirical research is needed (e.g. de Klerk, 2005). In light of these constraints, an attempt is made in this section to suggest some tentative relationships between workplace spirituality and employee well-being" (emphasis added). Further, toward the end of his work and while outlining the limitations pertaining to hypothesis specification, Pawar (2012, p. 459) acknowledged the limitation that "the description of well-being and of likely relationships between workplace spirituality and employee well-being are based on a very limited review of literature. As a result, the likely relationships proposed in this chapter should be regarded as tentative at best." The second limitation of Pawar (2012) is that while relationships between workplace spirituality and various forms of employee well-being were outlined in Pawar (2012), explicit and separate hypotheses were not specified. The third limitation of Pawar (2012) is that it did not examine empirical support for the

tentative relationships between workplace spirituality and employee well-being outlined by him. The present paper builds on, extends, and goes beyond Pawar's (2012) conceptual work as it addresses the above three limitations by specifying explicit hypotheses about the likely relationships between workplace spirituality and employee well-being and by carrying out an empirical examination of the hypotheses.

Three premises from the existing literature can facilitate, as outlined below, the specification of hypotheses concerning the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee well-being. First, Keyes (2002, pp. 208, 210) notes that positive mental health or subjective well-being is a constellation of three forms of well-being, namely: emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being. Keyes (2002, p. 208) uses the term subjective well-being to refer to mental health and suggests that it contains emotional vitality – reflected in emotional well-being- and positive functioning – reflected in psychological well-being and social well-being. Thus, these three forms of well-being can be regarded as indicators of positive emotional experience and positive functioning. Second, Warr (2005) suggests that research evidence indicates that work features affect employees' context-free or overall life well-being through their work-related well-being. This implies that work features impact employees' well-being in the life context. Third, workplace spirituality has been suggested to fulfill employees' basic spiritual needs through experiences termed as sense of meaning and community (e.g. Ashmos and Duchon, 2000) for which the corresponding terms, as used in Fry (2003), could be sense of calling and membership. Such needs have been referred to as "transcendent needs" in Kolodinsky *et al.* (2008, p. 465). Thus, because workplace spirituality fulfills employees' transcendent needs or needs for meaning and community, it constitutes a significant work feature. The above premises suggest that: emotional, psychological, and social well-being constitute a constellation of positive emotions and functioning, they are likely to be impacted by the workplace features, and workplace spirituality constitutes a significant workplace feature. These three premises suggest the plausibility that the employee workplace spirituality experiences of meaning and community are likely to result in employees' experience of a constellation of positive emotions and positive functioning in the overall life. This is consistent with the conceptual model of Vandenberghe (2011), which takes a limited view of well-being by including only the psychological form of well-being and links workplace spirituality to employees' psychological well-being through the mediating role of employees' organizational commitment. This is also consistent with the positive association McKee *et al.* (2011) found between the community dimension of workplace spirituality, as a mediator in the relationship of transformational leadership with employee well-being, and employees' mental well-being. Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are specified:

- H1. There would be a positive relationship between employee experiences of workplace spirituality and employees' emotional well-being.
- H2. There would be a positive relationship between employee experiences of workplace spirituality and employees' psychological well-being.
- H3. There would be a positive relationship between employee experiences of workplace spirituality and employees' social well-being.

The above three hypotheses specify the relationship of workplace spirituality with employees' emotional, psychological, and social well-being. The fourth form of well-being under consideration is spiritual well-being. Spiritual well-being reflects the

fulfillment of the spiritual needs of transcendence (e.g. Ellison, 1983; Paloutzian *et al.*, 2003, pp. 124-125). As workplace spirituality facilitates employee transcendence (e.g. Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003; Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004), there is likely to be a positive relationship between workplace spirituality and employees' spiritual well-being. This is consistent with the positive relationship between the community dimension of workplace spirituality and spiritual well-being found in McKee *et al.* (2011). Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is specified:

- H4. There would be a positive relationship between employee experiences of workplace spirituality and employees' spiritual well-being.

The above specified four hypotheses are based on the theorizing outlined in the text preceding the statements of hypotheses. In addition, some further support can also be noted, as outlined below, for the plausibility of an overall hypothesized relationship between workplace spirituality and employee well-being.

First, researchers (e.g. Garssen *et al.*, 2016; Jordan *et al.*, 2014; Lun and Bond, 2013; McKee *et al.*, 2011; Yoon *et al.*, 2016) have noted that in the existing research there is considerable evidence supporting the relationship between individual spirituality and well-being. As workplace spirituality fulfills employees' needs for meaning and community at workplace, which are referred to as transcendent needs (e.g. Kolodinsky *et al.*, 2008), the above noted evidence on the relationship between spirituality and well-being suggests a likely relationship between workplace spirituality and employee well-being. Thus, research evidence from the area of individual spirituality supports the plausibility of the four hypotheses specified above.

Second, Bakker (2015, p. 840) draws upon job demands-resources theory, which is one of the prominent approaches to the study employee well-being (Ilies *et al.*, 2015b, p. 848), to suggest that work environment of all organizations can be depicted using the characteristics of job demands and resources. Bakker (2015, p. 840) notes, "job resources are aspects of the job that have motivational potential [...] examples of job resources are autonomy, opportunities for growth [...]" Bakker (2013, p. 839) suggests that employees' work engagement is a marker of employee well-being. Further, Bakker (2013, p. 840) notes that job resources are "most likely to result in work engagement," implying a positive relationship between job resources and employee well-being. As workplace spirituality is a work environment feature (e.g. Ashmos and Duchon, 2000) and provides resources such as meaning in work because of being able to serve others through one's work and sense of community, the above noted premises from the job demands-resources theory suggest a positive relationship between workplace spirituality and employee well-being. Thus, the job demands-resources theory also supports the plausibility of the positive relationship between workplace spirituality and employee well-being hypothesized in this study.

The preceding discussion indicates two points. First, each of the four hypotheses specified in this study are individually plausible as outlined in the theorizing preceding these four hypothesis statements. Second, the plausibility of the overall relationship between workplace spirituality and employee well-being is also supported by research in the areas of individual spirituality and job demands-resources theory.

Methods

Sample and procedures

Data were collected in the year 2011 from the working participants, employed in different organizations, who came for attending an in-campus module in a distance

education executive post-graduate program at a management institute in India. Thus, the study sample is formed of employees from several different organizations. The study participants were gathered in the classrooms for attending their classes. At the beginning or end of the classes, participants were provided exclusive time for completing the study questionnaire in the classroom. The administrative support staff distributed the study questionnaires to the participants and collected the filled in study questionnaires from the participants. In total, 123 completed and usable questionnaires were received.

The sample size of 123 participants is adequate in light of the sample size requirements for the two kinds of statistical analysis – factor analysis and regression analysis – used in this study. The study performs factor analysis for the newly designed five-item spiritual well-being scale. Hinkin (1995, p. 973) notes that for a scale to be factor analyzed, “Recommendations for item-to-response ratios range from 1:4 (Rummel, 1970) to at least 1:10 (Schwab, 1980) [...]” Thus, for factor analysis, even by the conservative guideline, a sample size of 50 is required to do factor analysis on a set of five items in the spiritual well-being scale. For regression analysis, Hair *et al.* (2015, p. 171) suggest a requirement of 15-20 data points (respondents or observations) per independent variable in the regression equation. In the present study there are two independent variables – meaning and community dimensions of workplace spirituality – and hence a sample size of 113 is far more than the required sample size suggested by the above guideline. Thus, the study sample size is adequate for the purpose of statistical analysis done in this paper.

For the study sample participants, the average age was 32.44 years, 95 percent reported male gender, average of total work experience was 9.71 years, average years spent with the current organization was 3.9 years, and average years in the present position was 2.11 years. Participants held various positions such as engineer (7.1 percent), various types of managerial positions (40.2 percent), and positions such as group head and team leader (11.6 percent). Various functional departments were represented in the sample such as marketing, information technology, finance and accounting, and human resource management.

Measures

Workplace spirituality measures

As indicated above, two aspects of workplace spirituality have been usually noted in research, namely, meaning in work and community at work. These two aspects were measured by the meaning and community scales from Ashmos and Duchon (2000). The meaning and community scales have seven and nine items, respectively. For both scales, a seven-point response format ranging 1 (strongly disagree)-7 (strongly agree) was used. In the present study, Cronbach's α reliability coefficient was 0.89 for the meaning scale and 0.91 for the community scale.

Emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being measures

Emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being were measured using the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF) (Keyes, 2009). MHC-SF has a six-point response format ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (every day). The emotional well-being scale has three items and respondents are asked to indicate how often they felt certain positive emotions such as happiness. Only the presence of positive emotions and not the absence of negative emotions is covered in this scale. The psychological well-being scale has 6 items assessing different aspects of psychological well-being.

For example, one item requires a respondent to indicate how often he felt “good at managing the responsibilities” of his daily life. The social well-being scale has five items assessing different aspects of social well-being. For example, one item requires a respondent to indicate how frequently he felt “that the way our society works makes sense” to him. For all three scales, as a part of the directions for respondents, MHC-SF provides time frame options of “past month” or “past two weeks” from which the time frame option of “past month” was used in this study. About the psychometric goodness of these three scales, Keyes (2009, p. 1) notes, “the short form of the MHC has shown excellent internal consistency (> 0.80) and discriminant validity” and four-week test-retest reliabilities are 0.64, 0.57, and 0.71 for emotional, psychological, and social well-being, respectively. Keyes (2009, p. 1) indicates that the 14 items included in MHC-SF “were chosen as the most prototypical items representing the construct definition for each facet of well-being.” The Cronbach’s α reliability coefficient in the present study was 0.73 for the emotional well-being scale, 0.78 for the psychological well-being scale, and 0.80 for the social well-being scale.

Spiritual well-being measure

Spiritual well-being was measured using a scale developed for this study. Ellison and Smith (1991, p. 39) indicate that the most extensively used spiritual well-being measure is the spiritual well-being scale of Paloutzian and Ellison (1982). This scale is long as it contains 20 items and focusses on two dimensions of spiritual well-being, namely; religious well-being and existential well-being. Partly with a view to have a shorter measure and also to include a broader range of spiritual well-being aspects, a scale was developed specifically for this study to assess spiritual well-being as outlined below.

Spirituality refers to the need for transcendence (e.g. Ellison, 1983). Transcendence or spirituality is reflected in various aspects of functioning and experiences. These aspects include meaning (e.g. Ellison, 1983, p. 316) or meaning associated with rendering service to others (e.g. Fry, 2003, p. 703) or making contributions (e.g. Paloutzian *et al.*, 2003, p. 124), relationships with others (e.g. Benson *et al.*, 2003), relationship with God (Ellison, 1983), individual spiritual values (e.g. Fairholm, 1997 cited in Fry, 2003, p. 702; Kolodinsky *et al.*, 2008, pp. 466-467), and peace (e.g. Underwood, 2006). In light of the above outlined multiple likely reflections of spirituality in one’s functioning and experiences, five items pertaining to the aspects of relationship with God, kindness to others (as an expression of a spiritual value in one’s functioning), rendering service, harmonious relationships with others, and inner peace, were written and used in the spiritual well-being scale developed in this study. A seven-point response format from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) was used and the respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement as to their having the spiritual well-being experiences described in the scale items.

Principal component factor analysis was performed on the scale items and yielded two factors of eigenvalue greater than one. The first factor accounted for 45.66 percent of variance in the scale items while the second accounted for 20.21 percent of variance. However, as two of the five items had cross-loadings on both factors, a factor rotation (orthogonal: varimax) was performed because factor rotation usually simplifies the factor structure (e.g. Hair *et al.*, 2015, p. 110). The resulting rotated factor structure is presented in Table I.

As three items loaded on one and two items loaded on another factor, the implication of using one scale vs two subscales was explored. A single complete scale containing all five items and two subscales – one using three items loading on factor 1 (subscale 1)

and the other using two items loading on factor 2 (subscale 2) – were formed. The correlation between two subscales was modest (0.35) and statistically significant ($p < 0.01$) and the correlation between the single complete scale and subscale 1 was 0.895 while between single complete scale and subscale 2 was 0.73. As the single complete scale correlates very highly – correlations of 0.73 and 0.895 – with both subscales, it captures considerable variance from each of the two subscales. In light of this and given the focus of study hypotheses on spiritual well-being rather than its dimensions or subscales, a single complete scale was formed and used for data analysis. The single complete spiritual well-being scale formed using the five spiritual well-being items yielded a Cronbach's α reliability coefficient of 0.68 in this study.

It may be noted that for testing *H4* specifying a positive relationship between workplace spirituality and spiritual well-being, in addition to using the single complete spiritual well-being scale containing all five items, data analysis was also performed using two separate subscales containing items from two spiritual well-being factors. The results from the use of these two subscales, in terms of the overall support for *H4*, were similar to the results from the use of the single complete scale containing all five spiritual well-being items. Thus, the conclusion on the overall support for *H4* on spiritual well-being remains the same regardless of using the single complete scale containing all five spiritual well-being items or using two separate subscales containing two subsets of spiritual well-being items.

Results

Descriptive statistics, reliability, and correlations for study variables

Descriptive statistics, correlations between, and reliability levels for all study variables are presented in Table II.

Item no.	Item wording	Factor 1: factor loadings	Factor 2: factor loadings
1	I feel God's positive influence in my life	0.842	-0.094
2	My life provides kindness to others	0.730	0.323
3	My life provides important service to the world	0.745	0.335
4	I have harmonious relationships with others	0.107	0.840
5	My life is filled with inner peace	0.154	0.727
	Eigenvalue	2.28	1.01
	Percentage of variance extracted	45.66	20.21

Note: Orthogonal (varimax) rotation was used

Table I.
Factor analysis
results for
spiritual well-being
scale items

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Emotional well-being	3.34	1.00	(0.73)					
2. Psychological well-being	3.22	0.89	0.53**	(0.78)				
3. Social well-being	2.20	1.15	0.43**	0.57**	(0.80)			
4. Spiritual well-being	5.35	0.82	0.28**	0.47**	0.39**	(0.68)		
5. Meaning in work	5.12	1.09	0.39**	0.34**	0.28**	0.35**	(0.89)	
6. Community at work	5.27	1.03	0.26**	0.22*	0.18	0.27**	0.55**	(0.91)

Notes: Cronbach's α reliability coefficients for scales are in parentheses on the diagonal of the table.
* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Table II.
Descriptive statistics,
reliabilities, and
correlations for
study variables

As presented in Table II, the reliability levels for five of the six scales used in the study are above the minimum level of 0.70 recommended in the literature (e.g. Hair *et al.*, 2006; Hinkin, 1995). For the remaining one scale – spiritual well-being scale – the reliability level is 0.68 which is only marginally below 0.70 and quite above the lower limit of 0.60 for exploratory research suggested by Hair *et al.* (2006, p. 161).

Results for H1-H4

In order to assess support for the study hypotheses, one regression analysis for each of the four hypotheses was performed. Thus, emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being variables were formed, as is the practice, by adding the scale item scores within each scale and dividing the sum by the number of items in the scale. Subsequently, in four separate regression analyses, each of the four dependent variables – emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being – was regressed on the independent variables of workplace spirituality in order to test each of the four study hypotheses. As the hypotheses are specified for workplace spirituality as a work feature and not for its individual dimensions of meaning and community, the main focus of the discussion of results is on the independent variable of overall workplace spirituality and not its specific individual dimensions of meaning and community. The results of this analysis for each of the four hypotheses are presented in Table III.

As indicated in Table III, workplace spirituality, consisting of meaning and community, accounted for statistically significant variance in all four forms of well-being, thus supporting all four hypotheses. Specifically, the variance accounted for by workplace spirituality is 16 percent ($R^2 = 0.16$, $p < 0.001$) in emotional well-being, 13.4 percent ($R^2 = 0.134$, $p < 0.001$) in psychological well-being, 8.5 percent ($R^2 = 0.085$, $p < 0.01$) in social well-being, and 13.1 percent ($R^2 = 0.131$, $p < 0.001$) in spiritual well-being. Thus, all four hypotheses were supported.

Discussion

Contributions to facilitating organizational health and to the literature on employee well-being and workplace spirituality

The results of this study provided support for all four hypotheses as outlined in the preceding section. More specifically, as indicated in Table III, workplace spirituality accounted for statistically significant variance ranging from 8.5 to 16 percent in all four

Independent variable	Dependent variable			
	EMOWB β	PSYWB β	SOCWB β	SPIRWB β
<i>Workplace spirituality</i>				
Meaning in work	0.32**	0.29**	0.17 ^{ns}	0.25*
Community at work	0.12 ^{ns}	0.11 ^{ns}	0.16 ^{ns}	0.16 ^{ns}
R^2 (total)	0.16	0.13	0.085	0.131
F	10.11***	8.28***	5.00**	8.50***
df	2,107	2,107	2,108	2,113

Table III.
Regression analysis
results for H1-H4

Notes: EMOWB, emotional well-being; PSYWB, psychological well-being; SOCWB, social well-being; SPIRWB, spiritual well-being. β is standardized regression coefficient. ns, not significant at any of these p values. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

forms of employee well-being. These findings make a significant contribution to facilitating organizational health and to the existing literature on employee well-being and workplace spirituality as outlined below.

Contributions to facilitating organizational health. As indicated in the introductory part of this paper, healthy organizations' attributes include employee well-being and productivity (e.g. Wilson *et al.*, 2004). Thus, employee well-being is a critical aspect of a healthy organization because it is a key outcome sought to be attained in healthy organizations (e.g. Wilson *et al.*, 2004). Further, employee well-being also influences employee performance (Grant *et al.*, 2007, pp. 51-52) which is another key outcome sought to be attained in healthy organizations (e.g. Wilson *et al.*, 2004). Thus, employee well-being is an important aspect of healthy organizations. Similarly, Ilies *et al.* (2015a, b, p. 827) note, "employee well-being constitutes an important determinant of organizational flourishing." Therefore, it is not surprising that employee well-being is a concern for organizations (e.g. Harter *et al.*, 2003) and is one of the "greatest challenges" faced by the contemporary leaders (Fry and Slocum, 2008, p. 86). Thus, managers devote considerable resources for enhancing employee well-being (e.g. Grant *et al.*, 2007).

Ironically, however, managerial actions to enhance one form of employee well-being can impair another form of employee well-being (Canibano, 2013; Grant *et al.*, 2007, p. 54). Thus, availability of an organizational intervention that may simultaneously enhance multiple forms of employee well-being without impairing any form of employee well-being would help actions aimed at improving organizational health. This study's findings indicate that workplace spirituality could be one such intervention for enhancing multiple forms of employee well-being without impairing any form of employee well-being. Thus, the present study makes a relevant contribution to facilitating organizational health by pointing out the potential role of workplace spirituality, as an antecedent of multiple forms of employee well-being, for enhancing organizational health.

Contributions to the literature on employee well-being. Grant *et al.* (2007, p. 54) note "managerial practices frequently cause well-being tradeoffs by enhancing one aspect of well-being, such as psychological well-being, while decreasing another aspect of well-being such as physical well-being." Against the backdrop of this assessment of Grant *et al.* (2007), this study was based on the premise that workplace spirituality may have a positive relationship with multiple forms of employee well-being without having a negative association with any other forms of employee well-being. The findings of the present study are consistent with this premise and thus make a significant contribution to the existing literature on employee well-being. Given that employee well-being is an employee-centered outcome, this contribution of the present study is noteworthy because Van De Voorde *et al.* (2012) have indicated the need for research focussed on employee-centered outcomes of human resource management.

Contributions to the literature on workplace spirituality. Researchers have noted that there is relatively inadequate empirical research in workplace spirituality (e.g., de Klerk, 2005, p. 65) and that workplace spirituality research has recently begun "to move from a conceptual phase to a theory building-empirical testing phase" (Duchon and Plowman, 2005, p. 808). Thus, by undertaking an empirical examination of the relationship of workplace spirituality with multiple forms of employee well-being this study also addresses the need for greater empirical research in workplace spirituality. Further, Sheep (2006, p. 357) noted that workplace spirituality has "potentially strong relevance to the well-being of individuals, organizations, and societies." The present

study does an empirical examination which is relevant to this suggestion and support for the four hypotheses found in this study provides empirical evidence in support of this suggestion. Thus, this study contributes to the literature on workplace spirituality by adding to the available body of empirical research and by assessing the extent of empirical support for the suggestion in the workplace spirituality literature about the likely relationship between workplace spirituality and employee well-being.

Other contributions of this study

This study also makes two contributions in addition to those described above. First, as explained in the potential contributions section earlier in this paper, existing research (e.g. Kaplan *et al.*, 2014; Luthans *et al.*, 2013; McKee *et al.*, 2011; Yoon *et al.*, 2015) has mostly covered only a few well-being forms while seeking to simultaneously study multiple forms of employee well-being. In contrast with this limiting feature of the existing studies, the present study covers four forms of employee well-being, namely; emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being. It may be noted that in describing mental health, Keyes (2002) included three well-being forms of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being. The present study covers all these three forms and to them it also adds the fourth well-being form of spiritual well-being because it covers a well-being dimension beyond the dimensions covered in Keyes (2002). Thus, examining and demonstrating the association of workplace spirituality with a comprehensive range of employee well-being forms is a distinct contribution of this study.

Second, this study links two important areas of research which have recently received heightened research attention. While workplace spirituality is a salient area of inquiry and has been receiving notable research attention (e.g. Gotsis and Kortezi, 2008), employee well-being is also an important research area (Wright and Huang, 2012, p. 1188) which has recently attracted considerable research attention (e.g. Ilies *et al.*, 2015a, b). Linking these two salient areas of contemporary research interest and doing an empirical assessment of the link between them is another contribution of this study.

Limitations

While the study makes the above outlined contributions to the existing literature, it also has some limitations. Some of these are outlined below.

Limitations associated with the spiritual well-being scale developed. Only limited evidence on the psychometric properties is available for the spiritual well-being scale developed specifically for the present study. However, while acknowledging this limitation, it needs to be noted that the items in this scale were derived based on the relevant literature indicating various aspects of spiritual well-being. Moreover, even in this exploratory development and the first use of the scale, its reliability of 0.68 was above the lower limit of 0.60 for exploratory research suggested by Hair *et al.* (2006, p. 161) and also fairly close to the general minimum required level of 0.70 recommended in Hinkin (1995).

Limitations associated with the study sample. Some features of the study sample may limit the generalizability of the study findings. However, two relevant points may be noted here. First, this is possibly the first study to empirically examine the relationship between workplace spirituality and four forms of employee well-being. In such first or initial examination, internal validity is likely to be a more important aspect than external validity (generalizability). Second, while this study's sample features are

somewhat distinctive, the correlations found in this study (Table II) between emotional well-being and psychological well-being (0.53), emotional well-being and social well-being (0.43), and psychological well-being and social well-being (0.57) are reasonably comparable to the corresponding correlations of 0.54, 0.36, and 0.53 found in the empirical study of Keyes (2005, p. 542). The highest difference in correlations between the corresponding pair of well-being variables is only 0.07 (for the correlation between emotional well-being and social well-being). The sample in Keyes (2005, p. 539) was “a nationally representative sample of adults between the ages of 25 and 74 years” in the USA with a large sample size of 3,032 individuals. These similarities noted between the patterning of associations among this study’s three dependent variables and the patterning of associations among the same three dependent variables in a nationally representative large US sample used in Keyes (2005) may, to some extent, alleviate the concerns about the specific features of the sample in the present study.

Limitations from the potential for common method variance. As the measures of both independent and dependent variables were obtained from the same respondents, a potential for common method variance (e.g. Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003) may exist. However, the following three aspects may be noted. First, the nature of both independent variables – workplace spirituality experiences – and dependent variables – four forms of well-being – is such that the use of same source of self-reports from the respondents becomes necessary. This necessity is reflected in Spector (2006) who has indicated that for the assessment of perceptions, emotions, and attitudes, the use of self-report measures is inevitable. Second, one of the actions suggested by Podsakoff *et al.* (2003, p. 888) for controlling the common method variance is to communicate to the respondents that there are no right or wrong answers and appeal to them to respond honestly. Consistent with this, the study questionnaire cover letter had included a written statement for the study participants which indicated that there are no right or wrong responses and hence they should mark their responses honestly. Third, some literature (e.g. Crampton and Wagner, 1994; Spector, 2006) suggests that the concerns emerging from percept-percept inflation or common method variance may not be as significant an issue as some of the literature may suggest it to be. The above outlined three aspects may, to some extent, alleviate concerns about the common method variance limitation of this study.

Directions for future research

The present study suggests certain directions for future research. First, the study hypotheses were specified for overall workplace spirituality, and not for its components of meaning and community, as the independent variable. Workplace spirituality, as a block of variables including its two components meaning and community, accounted for significant variance in each of the four forms of well-being (Table III) and hence all four study hypotheses were supported. Going beyond the assessment of support for hypotheses, an examination of the specific components of meaning and community in the results presented in Table III indicated that the meaning in work component of workplace spirituality had significant regression coefficients for three of the four well-being forms but the community at work component of workplace spirituality did not have a significant regression coefficient for any of the four well-being forms. Thus, the meaning component of workplace spirituality seems to have more consistent association with the employee well-being forms than does the community component. The results of the present study indicating different levels of predictive utility of

meaning and community aspects of workplace spirituality suggest that one direction for future research is to hypothesize differential relationships between specific components of workplace spirituality and various well-being forms. However, before future research can do this, more adequate clarity on the meaning of workplace spirituality and its components may need to be attained in the workplace spirituality research because as Kolodinsky *et al.* (2008, p. 466) note, “the emerging academic literature in workplace spirituality is often characterized as vapid and in need of enhanced scientific rigor [...] as the study of workplace spirituality is still in its infancy, the concept of workplace spirituality has yet to be clearly defined.”

Second, the scale for spiritual well-being was specifically developed in this study and only a preliminary assessment of the psychometric properties of this scale in terms of its reliability was done. As the scale developed in this study incorporates several facets of spirituality or transcendence, further refinement and validation of this scale may provide a comprehensive and broadly inclusive measure of spiritual well-being. Thus, further refinement and validation of the spiritual well-being scale developed in this study is a direction for future research to follow.

Third, the study hypotheses specified positive relationships (associations) between workplace spirituality and employee well-being and the cross-sectional survey design of the study was adequate to assess the support for the associational or relational hypotheses in this study. In light of the encouraging findings from the present study, future research can explore the possibility of more explicitly specifying causal hypotheses and adopt field experimental designs to assess the likely causality between workplace spirituality and employee well-being.

Fourth, a relevant direction for future research is to replicate the findings of the present study using different samples and measures. Such future research would build on and add to the findings provided by the present study by increasing confidence in and generalizability of the present study’s findings.

Implications for practice

Employee well-being is a concern for organizations because it is an important outcome characterizing healthy organizations (e.g. Wilson *et al.*, 2004). Further, employee well-being also influences employee performance (Grant *et al.*, 2007, pp. 51-52) which, according to Wilson *et al.* (2004), is also an outcome characterizing healthy organizations. Thus, employee well-being, by itself and also through its influence on employee performance, is a critical aspect of healthy organizations.

However, Gavin and Mason (2004, p. 390) ironically note, “In recent years economic productivity has been wrung out of the average worker, in large measure, at the cost of his or her health and happiness. This trend towards pathological and dysfunctional effects needs to be reversed.” Consistent with this strong appeal of Gavin and Mason (2004) for enhancing employee well-being, employee well-being is one of the “greatest challenges” of the contemporary leaders (Fry and Slocum, 2008, p. 86). Thus, managers allocate substantial resources for improving employee well-being (Grant *et al.*, 2007, p. 51). Further, Grant *et al.* (2007) also noted that their assessment of the existing research indicates that some organizational actions for enhancing one form of employee well-being tend to impair some other form of employee well-being. Canibano (2013) also provides evidence that some HRM interventions can enhance some well-being forms while lowering some other well-being forms. In light of this, a valuable contribution of this study is to suggest that workplace spirituality implementation can improve organizational health by simultaneously enhancing four forms of employee well-being.

Some inputs on implementation of workplace spirituality in organizations are already available in the existing literature on workplace spirituality facilitation (e.g. Pawar, 2008; Pawar, 2009a). Further, there is research on resource-oriented interventions (e.g. Michel *et al.*, 2015) which may also provide some additional inputs to guide workplace spirituality implementation. Thus, managers may be able to consider various actions to implement workplace spirituality in their organizations for improving organizational health by enhancing four forms of employee well-being, namely; emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being.

The above practice implications emerge from the testing of study hypotheses. However, the study hypotheses, as outlined in the hypothesis specification part, are linked to existing literature including the job resources-demands theory. Thus, this study, by specifying literature-based hypotheses and deriving applied practice implications from the results of hypothesis testing, links theory to practice in the area of employee well-being which, is as outlined earlier, is an issue of practical significance to organizations (e.g. Harter *et al.*, 2003) and is also a salient area in research (e.g. Ilies *et al.*, 2015a, b; Wright and Huang, 2012).

Conclusion

This study, through the empirical support received for its hypotheses, pointed out the existence of a positive relationship between workplace spirituality and four forms of employee well-being. In doing so, it has contributed to the literature on employee well-being by covering, in a single study, four forms of employee well-being. The study findings that workplace spirituality has a positive association with all four forms of employee well-being addresses a serious concern expressed in the existing literature that some organizational or HRM practices enhance some forms of employee well-being but lower other forms of employee well-being (e.g. Canibano, 2013; Grant *et al.*, 2007). It has also contributed to the workplace spirituality literature by addressing the need for more empirical research and by suggesting, based on its empirical findings, that workplace spirituality can be a potential organizational intervention that can have a positive effect simultaneously on four forms of employee well-being without having a negative effect on any of these four well-being forms. While making such contributions to the existing literature, the study has also suggested multiple directions for future research that may provide fruitful research avenues for future research to pursue. In addition, it has also suggested implications for practice in terms of considering workplace spirituality implementation as a means of simultaneously enhancing four forms of employee well-being, namely; emotional well-being, psychological well-being, social well-being, and spiritual well-being.

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