

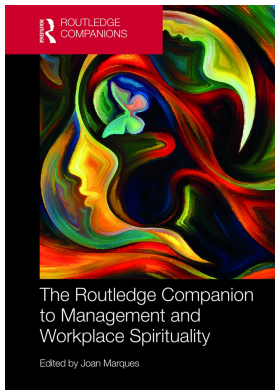
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INSTITUTIONALIZING WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY TO CREATE AN ETHICAL CLIMATE

Bekir Emre Kurtulmuş

Introduction

The modern workplace has become more stressful than ever. Stakeholders pressurize employees and management to meet their demands, even though their demands may be unethical/immoral. Nonetheless, stakeholders, from shareholders to governments, are an important consideration for organizations. There are also other factors that put immense pressure on employees in contemporary workplaces. Considering recent business scandals in different organizations across the globe there is more pressure than ever from governments and societies on the management of organizations to prevent such immoral/unethical behaviors. In response to calls from various stakeholders, organizations are required to provide ethical guidelines, codes of conduct, and official training to employees to prevent unethical behavior. In fact, business ethics has become more popular than ever among scholars (Crane & Matten, 2016) but it is questionable if this is enough to prevent such incidents.

It is difficult to establish the sort of framework that would prevent employees inclining toward unethical/immoral behavior, but the challenge is still there. Furthermore, there are not only ethical problems to solve, but there are also some internal demands from individuals to management to create a peaceful environment within organizations. Studies show that peaceful workplaces contribute positively to employees' wellbeing (Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005) and organizational effectiveness (Duchon & Plowman, 2005). Perhaps, above all, engaging in workplace spirituality may positively influence ethical behavior of employees at the workplace (Corner, 2009). Therefore, for many organizations, it has become a necessity to create and establish an ethical climate. However, challenges remain.

Therefore, organizations more and more are trying to establish ethical limitations and guidelines that would create a framework for individuals, which should be also accepted and followed by individuals. Only after this process has been established can consensus ensue and be the framework be institutionalized across the organization. However, the process is difficult to achieve. However, there is a relatively new term in business studies that would immensely help the process. Scholars are slowly embracing a new term, "workplace spirituality." The concept could provide more reasonable ethical values for individuals that could be accepted more easily by members of organizations. Despite that, the term has been neglected by scholars (Danielz, Franz, & Wong, 2000). Nonetheless, for two to three decades the term has gained importance

and there are more studies now that discuss the impact of workplace spirituality on various organizational activities both at individual and organizational levels (Houghton, Neck, & Krishnakumar, 2016).

In the same vein, another challenge is that it is a difficult process to institutionalize ethical values and norms. Creating core values for organizations depends on the established values and beliefs. However, in order for new ethical values and beliefs to be institutionalized the first thing is that they should be accepted by the majority of the members of the organizations. The more members who accept the new ethical values and beliefs would mean that that culture would get stronger. This consequently would guide the mission and vision statements and, hence, would be the main reference points for the strategic decision-making processes of organizations. Perhaps organizations would immensely benefit from workplace spirituality/spiritual traditions as they may be utilized to enhance employees' positive organizational attitudes.

The chapter will provide an answer to the question of how organizations/organization members, by practicing workplace spirituality/religion, can create or agree on an ethical climate. In that, this chapter will provide an argument on the positive role that workplace spirituality/spiritual traditions can play. The chapter will also include a discussion of the positive enhancements that workplace spirituality would bring both to individuals and to organizations. The study will provide a comprehensive meta-analysis of the issues.

Workplace Spirituality

Spirituality is one of the emerging areas of business studies and it is addressed as an important trend for organizations (Chen, Yang, & Li, 2012). Interest in workplace spirituality has been accelerated immensely in the last two decades. However, the connection to business and management studies, according to Hicks (2003), can be traced back until the late 1980s. It has become a trend in the last two to three decades because of socio-economic and cultural factors (Hicks, 2003). Historically, the field emerged from the faith at work movement—which initially began in the 19th century in the Western world as a response to the Church's lack of perceived concern toward employees' working conditions in, what can be described as, secular organizations—and workplace spirituality's foundational roots can be found in the Protestant work ethic (Benefiel, Fry, & Geigle, 2014). Even though, initially, the concept seemed irrelevant to management studies, later research showed it to be positively correlated (Benefiel, 2003). In fact, it is shown that workplace spirituality's contribution to organizational reality is more prominent than initially thought (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008).

In that, the term spirituality could be described as “our inner consciousness” and “that which is spiritual comes from within—beyond our programs beliefs and values” (Guillroy, 2000, p. 33). In addition, Mitroff (2003, p. 377) defines the term spirituality as “spirituality is not the only the intense feeling of being totally integrated as a whole person, but also the feeling of being totally connected with everything else in the universe.” It is the holistic infusion of wisdom into the management field (Steingard, 2005). Workplace spirituality was initially considered as a search for God or described as a search for ultimate being (Gupta, Kumar, & Singh, 2014). It could be identified as beliefs and values that eventually influence behavior. It might be observed and influence behavior both at individual and organizational levels (Moore & Casper, 2006). The relationship between spirituality and management encourage us to engage in the metaphysical foundation of our field (Steingard, 2005).

In this vein, research in the related literature found a relationship between workplace spirituality and different organizational activities. The majority of these works focus on positive outcomes of organizational reality (Benefiel, Fry, & Geigle, 2014) with scholars usually focusing on

organizational management and organizational leadership issues (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008). It should be noted that although there are many studies literature on the topic is still limited. Therefore there is a need for more research to be conducted in the field (Gupta et al., 2014).

Studies found that workplace spirituality has a significant influence on employees' work attitudes (Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003; Garcia-Zamor, 2003), management processes (Steingard, 2005), organizational citizenship behavior (Chen & Yang, 2012), and leadership practices, (Chen et al., 2012), and engaging with workplace spirituality reduces stress and increases organizational commitment (Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008). An organization that engages in spirituality tends to have better-performing individuals (Gordon, 1996) and there are narrower wage and status differentials between employees (Giacolone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). It is also found that "more spiritual" organizations are significantly more profitable. Therefore, if organizations would like to be "more" successful they need to be engaging more in spirituality. In this way, they could achieve competitive advantage (Mitroff, 2003). Moreover, if managers attempted to understand differing spiritual views and also encouraged all these views in the organization, this would create a positive environment for organizations and contribute to ethical consensus (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002), which is one of the main requirements for creating an ethical climate (Martin & Cullen, 2006). However, despite these positive effects, there is also an argument that workplace spirituality may cause a negative impact. Moreover, it may be also utilized for control and instrumentality purposes (Lips-Wiersma, Lund Dean, & Fornaciari, 2009) and may also mask manipulation for compliance (Tzouramani & Karakas, 2016).

Moreover, all this argument focuses on two different levels: workplace spirituality's impact can be seen both individual and organizational level. Issues discussed on these two levels are different and have various views and angles. At the individual level within organizations, workplace spirituality includes a sense of community, understanding of inner life, and meaningful work. Whereas at the organization level, workplace spirituality consists of a spiritual climate or culture that consists of the purpose, values, and vision of the organization (Houghton et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the relationship between spirituality and religion could be problematic. Steingard (2005, p. 228) suggests that both terms are categorically different. He argues that "Religion is a form (structure) and spirituality is essence (experience)." Religion is seen dividing people through dogmas and with a strong emphasis on formal structures (Mitroff, 2003). This is because we are far from realizing a consensual religion in the everyday life of the workplace. For example, the two biggest religions in the world, in terms of follower numbers—Christianity and Islam—are monotheistic (believe in only one God), whereas the third biggest—Hinduism—believes in more than one God (Steingard, 2005).

Furthermore, the first two of these religions are portray God as masculine. As such, as Mitroff (2003) discusses, formal, organized religion has little role to play in contemporary and highly diverse workplaces, as certain religions may divide people from one to another. This is despite the fact that religion can add much to employees particularly in regards to high and admired ethical values. Nonetheless, both religion and spirituality are central to individuals' identities. Besides that, there are many different religions and spiritual views. Therefore, the role of management is perhaps not to create a unify environment where one religion/spiritual view dominates, but to create an environment where individuals freely express their own beliefs and practices (Hicks, 2003). Despite the above argument, it is also claimed that broad meanings of spirituality intersect or converge with the world's five big religions—Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism (Case & Gosling, 2010). However, it is not necessary to discuss religion and spirituality in the same context. Perhaps, they are more different than initially thought.

There are three different views that strive to identify the meaning of workplace spirituality—religious views, intrinsic origin views, and the existential view (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). However, eventually from these views, two distinct camps emerged, spiritually focused and religion focused (Neal, 2013). For the proponent of the first view an individual who is spiritual does not necessarily need to be religious. A person can believe in spirituality but not necessarily to be religious. Whereas, according to the second view, religion and spirituality are so inseparably connected that would be impossible to identify one concept without the other (Houghton et al., 2016).

Business Ethic

Recent ethical scandals from various organizations in different sectors across the world have gained attention from various stakeholders. There has been growing interest in societies across the globe toward the unethical/immoral behavior of organizations. Such organizations' attitudes are not accepted and are disapproved of. However, it still happens. Therefore, it becomes clearer than ever that business ethics is crucial for organizations, not only providing legitimacy but also without which businesses cannot be successful. Studies on business ethics are relatively new.

It was after the 1990s that we started to see an increase in research focused on this topic. In fact, these studies have increased exponentially. It is not arguable any more whether businesses should have business ethics or not. It is a necessity to have ethics in business. It is not only a requirement from stakeholders but also a must for conducting a business. This is because all business activities are based on trust and, without it, there cannot be a healthy market transaction. Therefore, although some unethical business activities have been seen, this does not mean all businesses have unethical/immoral behavior. In fact, more businesses are moral and ethical than otherwise. It should be also noted that without ethics firms could not be successful. Besides, even unethical/immoral decisions are based on a sort of ethics underlying the decision (Crane & Matten, 2016).

In this context, related literature classifies ethics in two different views. First, normative ethics related to theology and philosophy that tell individuals how to behave. The second view is descriptive ethics and focuses on predicting and explaining individuals' behavior during ethical dilemmas (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005). Business ethics can be described as a "study of business situations, activities and, decisions where issues of right and wrong are addressed" (Crane & Matten, 2016, p. 5). The question of right or wrong should be answered according to morality. Hence, what should our morality be based on? Should we rely on universal or individual values? Should our company provide all the values? Perhaps, one of the main sources of morality might be an organizational culture. This would be based on values and norms that are accepted by the majority of the organization members. If more members accept the aforementioned values then it forms a stronger organizational culture. However, forming a unified organizational culture is a difficult task. Contemporary large businesses may spread across to the globe and into various departments. Ensuring the same values and norms are shared between different departments and in dispersed geography is a daunting task. There is also an issue of ensuring certain ethical/moral behavior is followed by employees. Perhaps, arguably, the answers to the above questions are ethical which is something that guides individuals' behavior, but is not something that an organization has (Pullen & Rhodes, 2015).

Corporate business ethics provide alignment with the public's request for corporations to improve their ethical standards and behaviors. Despite the fact that such practices are engaged voluntarily, these practices tend to be institutionalized within organizations. Engaging in business ethics not only gains approval from stakeholders but also helps corporations to maximize

profit (Metzger, Dalton, & Hill, 1993). Furthermore, implementing and institutionalizing ethical practices regulates ethical behavior and for this purpose an ethical code of conduct can be issued. Ultimately, the idea of engaging in corporate business ethics is that social values and the capitalist corporate system can be complementary to each other (Cederström & Marinetto, 2013). However, there are abundant works in the related literature criticizing such sentiment. Moreover, recent research strongly criticizes this idea and finds it difficult to envisage the capitalist corporate system and business ethics co-existing without any problem: perhaps it is because this is ethics with a pro-business stance (Rhodes, 2016).

Furthermore, discussions in the related literature suggest that ethics be situated and contextual in character (Kjonstad & Willmott, 1995). It is difficult to discuss ethics with a rule-based approach. To illustrate, enforcing individuals to follow moral principles sometimes ensures compliance but may not cause morally sound behavior. What it means is that ethical standards will be followed in cases of ambiguity and when there are ethical dilemmas. In these circumstances, individuals will be far from having the comfort of consensus. The problem is if an ethical decision is being made simply to follow publicly released ethical codes of conduct, then there is no need for individuals to be taking moral responsibility. In response, the argument is that ethics begins when the rule of law cannot apply or there is no established regulation (Clegg, Kornberger, & Rhodes, 2007). There is also the problem of a boundary law. Ethics starts where laws cannot apply. If the law can be applied to a situation than there is no longer ethical argument needed. Thus, organizational reality and ethical certainty may not be matched.

Following from that, one of the difficulties of organizations/individuals being moral/ethical is to be able to meet organizational practices with ethical behavior under the pressure of other needs such as being competitive or achieving profit maximization. In these circumstances, individuals may incline rather toward to the dark side. It would not be surprising to see individuals being immoral/unethical. The problem is how to prevent such behavior. Further complicating the issue is the general acceptance of such behavior into the organizational culture. If immoral/unethical behavior becomes normal, then it would be very difficult to reverse it. Eventually, such behavior would also cause negative performance in many different organizational aspects. So, is there any way to somehow institutionalize ethical/moral standards through informal means?

Ethical Climate

Employees' behavior can be regulated through formal and informal means within organizations. One of the ways of achieving that is through creating a climate that the majority of individuals accept norms, regulations, and values across the organization. More employees accept the aforementioned norms and values then ethical consensus ensues and, consequently, they becomes a framework for individuals. However, this process is complex in nature, as the aforementioned values might be difficult to share by all employees. This is because, eventually, each individual has a unique personality and culture. Besides, changing or implementing a culture/climate can happen slowly.

Scholars define the work climate as “psychologically meaningful molar descriptions that people can agree characterize a system’s practices and procedures” (Schneider, 1975, p. 474). Work climate is separated into different sub-types and there are various work climates. However, eventually, these are separated into two main groups. The first one is “aggregated perceptions of organizational conventions regarding forms of structure and procedures for the use of rewards and control”; and the second is “aggregated perceptions of the existence of organizational norms supporting values such as providing warmth and support to peers and subordinates” (Victor & Cullen, 1988, p. 102).

Furthermore, within this group of identification, there is a so-called ethical climate, which is described by Victor and Cullen (1988) as the management's behavior toward ethics within the workplace in a way that is perceived by employees. In other words, the ethical climate is described as "a descriptive map of ethical decision-making and actions within an organization based on philosophical and sociological theory" (Martin & Cullen, 2006, p. 176). Ethical climate theory is one of the strongest theoretical concepts in the business ethics literature that helps scholars to identify ethical challenges within the organizational domain. It created a framework that helps scholars to understand ethical decision-making from the perspective of philosophical and sociological theory (Martin & Cullen, 2006). Victor and Cullen (1988) created a chart that has two axes showing how they created the ethical climate system and to whom it applies. They also created nine theoretical dimensions of ethical climate typology that has, eventually, after series of surveys been reduced to five. The identified dimensions are instrumental, caring, independence, rules, and laws and code. These dimensions most consistently appear in research across the range of disciplines and provide the vast majority of data available to other scholars (Martin & Cullen, 2006).

Furthermore, this typology then created a fundamental base for the ethical climate questionnaire. It is discussed in the related literature that human beings develop moral standards through different ethical criteria and engage in different moral reasoning. This process is multistage and sequential. It begins with a fear of punishment for consequences of actions and progresses toward concern for others and concerns for humanity. Within this context, three standard ethical criteria are identified, and these are caring, self-interest, and principle. The standards also reflect the three major ethical theory school criteria, deontology, utilitarianism, and egoism (Cullen, Victor, & Bronson, 1993).

In this context, each organization and subsystem develop their own normative system and this determines whether the decision or actions taken are appropriate. These normative systems are perceived as ethical systems to employees (Victor & Cullen, 1988). There are determinants of ethical climate. These are organizational form, organization-specific history, and the existing socio-cultural environment (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). The ethical climate is a multi-dimensional concept and it is connected to various employee behavior including, but not confined to, ethical and counterproductive working attitudes (Wimbush & Shepard, 1994).

This impact of ethical climate on various organizational outcomes is identified in the related literature. The aforementioned effect is not only related to ethics but also to various organizational research and managerial issues. The relationship is not only limited to individuals but also includes organizational factors. In that, scholars found relationships between ethical climate and strategic orientation of firms (Neubaum, Mitchell, & Schminke, 2004), leadership behavior (Schminke, Ambrose, & Neubaum, 2005), organizational commitment of employees (Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003), moral distress intensity (Atabay, Çangarli, & Penbek, 2015), staff compassion in the hotel industry (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara & Guerra-Baez, 2016), customer satisfaction and financial performance (Koo Moon & Kwon Choi, 2014), some type of deviant workplace behavior (Schminke et al., 2005), and business school ethical climate and students' unethical behavior (Birtch & Chiang, 2014).

All these studies lead to a general conclusion that many organizational activities and employee behavior and attitudes are directly and indirectly influenced by the consensus that is created under the name of organizational ethical climate. So, then, how can organizations somehow create a positive consensus that would be shared by the members and would have a positive impact on both organizational outcomes and individuals?

Creating an Ethical Climate through Workplace Spirituality

Ethical scandals in various organizations in different sectors around the world received considerable attention from scholars from a range of disciplines. As more attention has been given, certain understanding is accumulated and researchers identified certain issues causing the unethical/immoral behavior of organizations/individuals. Shreds of evidence show that these misdeeds were not the responsibility of certain individuals but “rather, they emerged from freewheeling, aggressive, entrepreneurial organizational systems and cultures that allowed and even encouraged unethical behavior” (Neubaum et al., 2004, p. 335). In fact, for a certain while, scholars were suspicious that such behavior was the outcome of greedy corporate cultures (Neubaum et al., 2004).

So, then, how can certain norms, values, and perhaps traditions be established? Institutional theory answers these questions from various angles. New institutional economists create the first approach. North (1991) discusses institutions being made of formal and informal institutional frameworks. The first is created and written those who have power, particularly enforcement power. These groups of people receive power through formal ways. Enforcement power means individuals should follow the established system. Disobedience to the rules and regulations would bring formal punishment. The second consists of unwritten rules, norms, and values that are established by the members of the groups. There is no enforcement power if the norms and values are not followed.

However, punishments based on an informal institutional framework would be more severe than those for formal institutional framework. This is because the group may exclude the member who does not follow the established informal system. This could be more difficult for individuals, as humans are social beings. Being excluded from the social environment can be much more difficult for individuals than to be formally punished.

Furthermore, the new institutional theory, from organizational scientists' perspective, discusses the pressures that arise from both the internal and external environments that eventually force organizations to behave and design in similar ways. In his work, Scott (2007) identified three pillars of institutions that influence almost every interaction within an organization. These pillars are regulative pillars, normative pillars, and cognitive-cultural pillars. The first consists of formal institutions where written rules are enforced. The second, normative pillars, is created jointly by the norms and values on which some institutional theorists believe the institutions primarily rest. The third, cognitive-cultural pillars, is based on culture and includes accepted values and beliefs.

So, how could workplace spirituality be utilized to create an ethical climate? According to institutional theory in order for a certain climate to be created, it should be written and then enforced on individuals. For example, a code of conduct can be utilized for this purpose. The key point here is enforcement: to ensure individuals follow the expected behavior there should be some sort of punishment. It does not necessarily have to be harsh but should be a deterrent. This is how formal institutions can be established. The problem here is that it is enforced by the will of the one who has power, and not created by consensus of members. Such methods can be effective and enforced but may not be accepted by the majority of individuals.

The other alternative is to utilize informal means. The approach here should be completely different. There is no enforcement power. Therefore, everything should be voluntarily accepted. There are different methods that could be implemented by managers, such as: ideal and expected behaviors can be explained to employees; special reward systems that emphasize ethical/moral behavior can be implemented; special ceremonies could be announced where the most ethical/moral individual can be appraised; myths and stories can be told to employees; dress and physical

outlines can be designed. These are the methods that could be utilized to implement an ethical climate. So why and how can workplace spirituality be used?

One of the main reasons workplace spirituality is used is that it can emphasize ethicality across the organization. It can provide a peaceful environment where harmony between individuals would exist. It provides so many positive advantages. Particularly, norms and values can be based on workplace spirituality and spiritual traditions. This is an important point as these would be based on the ethical climate. It could also provide a framework for individuals. It can also be used to create a consensus. It is clear that ethical consensus requires consensus among employees. If the ethical climate based norms and values come from workplace spirituality it may be easier to accept by the members of an organization.

The problem with that is whether all the members would have similar spiritual/religious beliefs. This is a challenging question. In contemporary and diverse workplaces, employees come from different religious and belief systems. It is quite common now to see people believing in Christian, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism, or any other religion, and working together in the same workplace. Therefore, it is very unlikely that a certain religion's norms and values could be chosen to create ethical climate. It is only possible to do that in the workplace if people believe in the same religion, even sect.

However, workplace spirituality offers a very tempting alternative. It is not based on any specific religion or belief systems but appreciates the wellbeing of employees. It would be much easier for the individuals to accept certain norms and values which stem from workplace spirituality. It may help management to achieve ethical consensus much easier and, perhaps, with less resistance. Therefore, in order to achieve an ethical climate that is accepted by the majority of individuals, workplace spirituality can be utilized.

Conclusion

To summarize, ethical scandals are more visible than ever. Importantly, ongoing immoral/unethical behavior of organizations has been brought to public attention. In these circumstances, it is more apparent that there is a need for a different approach to the ongoing ethical problems. Yet, making the issue more complicated is that modern workplaces are more diverse than ever. People from the very different cultural backgrounds are working toward reaching certain goals established in organizations. This creates a dynamic environment where establishing certain ethical/moral standards is difficult.

To overcome the aforementioned challenges organizations can engage in workplace spirituality. However, certain problems also exist in this. One of the main problems is considering on which norms and values should our ethical climate be based. Considering that in the contemporary workplaces people come from the very diverse background it is a difficult challenge. Another difficulty is how to institutionalize the ethical climate. The key point here is that consensus to achieve this. This perhaps can more effectively be solved by the utilization of informal institutions, where the punishment is more severe than formal institutions and can be more effectively utilized to institutionalize an ethical climate as a framework within organizations.

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