

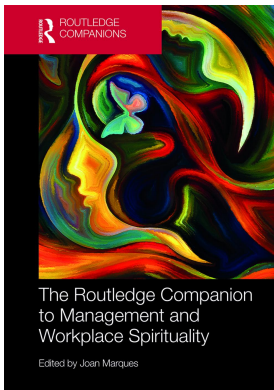
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Spirituality, Responsibility, and Integrity

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5

SPIRITUALITY, RESPONSIBILITY, AND INTEGRITY

Kemi Ogunyemi

Introduction

Spirituality, responsibility, and integrity are terms that are very closely interconnected and rely on one another for a deepened understanding. Spirituality has been defined in a variety of ways—as the image in humanity of a spiritual creator by virtue of which human beings derive dignity and, consequently, are called to solidarity and subsidiarity, and to work for the common good of all humans (Sison, Ferrero, & Guitian, 2016), or as the non-material component of human beings (Fagley & Adler, 2012; Miller, 2007; Cash & Gray, 2000; Mitroff & Denton, 1999a; McCormick, 1994) by which they make choices, as a unifying element that characterizes the human being (Staude, 2005), or as a connection with “a divine, spiritual, or some other transcendent reference point, knowable or mysterious” (Ciulla, Knights, Mabey, & Tomkins, 2018, p. 7).

Responsibility flows from the spiritual capacity to choose (Ogunyemi, 2013), since a power to make choices means that the chooser is accountable for those choices and should answer for them, while integrity is a sign that the spiritual and material dimensions of the human being in question are operating harmoniously for the person’s fulfillment, in line with the “transcendent reference point” and for the common good. If being spiritual is thus acknowledged as a foundational notion for describing human beings, then the need to preserve integrity and live with responsibility have their roots in that foundation. This chapter attempts to review extant literature on these three concepts and highlight their interconnectedness. In the process, much work showing that spirituality brings economic benefits to the organization is highlighted, but it is important to note that this is not always the case and that there are sound reasons to foster spirituality in organizations other than the economic (Brophy, 2015).

Spirituality

The word “spiritual” is of Latin origin, from the root word “spiritus” which roughly translates to a life-giving principle of an entity (Liu, 2007). This implies that the spirit animates the human being—gives life to the body—and spirituality would be the condition of having that life. It is through spirituality, that life-giving action of the spirit, that the different aspects of human life—physical, emotional, professional, and intellectual—are integrated, says Staude (2005). Going

beyond this to add an external perspective, Torrance (1994) highlighted that it is through spirituality that the person continuously engages with others and transcends self. The consciousness of being “part of something bigger than themselves” is particularly important for business leaders (Ciulla et al., 2018, p. 4). Staude focuses on the internal cohesion and harmony while Torrance dwells on external transcendence. It is interesting to note that spirituality is distinct from religion—according to Karakas (2010), the difference lies in spirituality being personal yet universal and therefore non-denominational but rather common to all human beings, whereas religion tends to be institutionalized and to have specific ways of organization and traditions to which groups of human beings adhere. A number of other scholars support this basis for distinction (Klenke, 2003; Gupta, Kumar, & Singh, 2014; Bielefeldta & Canney, 2016), while others regard religion as one of the expressions of spirituality (Litonjua, 2016; Sison et al., 2016). As a component of spirituality, most religions call for selflessness and concern for the common good in the use of individual talents and skills (Bielefeldta & Canney, 2016).

Sison et al. (2016) point out three human capabilities that the ancient Greeks found to bear witness to human spirituality—the human being inherently experiences a capacity to transcend the material world with the mind in order to reach non-material concepts (abstraction); to choose what to do and to become (freedom); and to judge choices as good or bad (conscience). These last two evidences of spirituality are closely related to the concepts of responsibility (free choices) and integrity (conscience). This is why spiritual leaders would be expected to be “more ‘homo moralis’ rather than ‘homo economicus’” (Vasconcelos, 2015, p. 195)—people who consciously chose to practice integrity, care about others, and take responsibility for their choices.

The growing interest in spirituality is evident in corporations, corporate meeting rooms, and the business world as well. For example, a growing number of organizations, including large corporations such as Intel, Coca-Cola, and Boeing, are reported to have incorporated spirituality in their workplaces, strategies, or cultures (Burack, 1999; Konz & Ryan, 1999). Popular spiritual practices have included holding Bible study sessions, Quran recitation periods, forming voluntary prayer groups, forming interfaith dialogue groups, organizing reflection sessions, offering meditation exercises, and organizing end of the year prayer sessions by government organizations. To account for the growing interest, Imel (1998) points to the decline in traditional networks of support, such as the family, which forces people to question the location of meaning, hope, and inspiration for what they will do in this world, and how they will make their living. Using this idea as a foundation, Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004) described the integrative role of spirituality in workplace as a basic need for employees’ personal growth due to the declining role of families, neighborhoods, and other societal main players.

Among the spiritual values common to people everywhere, Brophy (2015) lists compassion, interconnectedness, human dignity, profundity, and transcendence. For Chawla (2014), agreeing with Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004), there are 10—benevolence, generativity, humanism, *integrity*, justice, mutuality, receptivity, respect, *responsibility*, and trust. Two of the 10 are the focus of this chapter.

Responsibility and Spirituality

As spirituality entails connectedness to the other(s), it enhances the sense that one owes a duty toward them, can influence them for good, or is needed to do good to them (Bielefeldta & Canney, 2016). This connectedness, at times combined with compassion, thus heightens the tendency to take responsibility for the way one’s actions may affect others as well as leads to an awareness of the need for altruistic behavior. The spiritual person would try not to harm others

as well as positively do good to them. Such a person is likely to create the processes and systems around him or her with the same outlook. Testimonies from MBA students demonstrate that a deepened understanding of human spirituality changes the person's orientation in such a way as to enhance a sense of responsibility and an understanding of the need for ethical behavior (Ogunyemi, 2013).

Translating this to an organization where spirituality is fostered, the level of responsible behavior would also be enhanced. For example, an organization that is high on spirituality should be more likely to pay workers fairly and promptly and to provide them with good working conditions as well as respect their work–life balance. Leaders that are driven by spiritual values also tend to both practice and promote responsible behavior (Lecourt & Pauchant, 2011; Ogunyemi, 2013).

With regard to the responsibility of the organization toward external stakeholders, Karakas (2007) identified that some corporations incorporate spirituality into their strategies within the framework of corporate social responsibility. At the macro level, a successful market system requires the ethical and responsible operation of markets and this ethos informs the responsible corporate organization (Klein, 2007).

Integrity and Spirituality

Klein (2007) suggested that any social system fails when human relations break down and that, therefore, a successful economic system depends on the integrity of its actors. Integrity is primarily a spiritual value (Chawla, 2014; Lee, Lovelace, & Manz, 2014), like many other core values that even organizations that say they are not spiritual profess to have. Wong (2003) highlighted this connection of integrity with spirituality when he used it to describe what happens when spirituality pervades a workplace—employees subscribe to intrinsic values greater than titles, positions, and material resources; employees show integrity, love, honesty, kindness, and respect; and employees take responsibility for their actions and the social and environmental impact of these on external stakeholders. It is not surprising, then, that when spirituality is embraced or at least accepted as part of a person's workplace identity, it is easier for the person to act with moral integrity when faced by ethical dilemmas and when in various conflicts of interest situations.

According to Comer and Vega (2011), employees experience flow, as an expression of their spirituality, when they act with integrity, from which we can surmise that integrity and spirituality are mutually enhancing. A person who acts with integrity reinforces his or her spirituality, while a person who acknowledges his or her spirituality and allows it to inform workplace activity finds it easier to behave with integrity and preserve moral uprightness. In fact, Cavanagh and Bandsuch (2002) go so far as to suggest that it is only when integrity is practiced in the organization as shown in the virtues and ethical actions of the persons in it that that organization can lay claim to authentic workplace spirituality, thereby making a check for integrity a way to evaluate spirituality.

Influence of Workplace Spirituality on Business Organizations

McGhee and Grant (2008) have inferred that since the beginning of the 20th century, there has been an increasing focus on the spirit, spirituality, and spiritual phenomena, and as this focus shifted to the modern workplace, there have been numerous articles and books, both popular and academic, written to champion the role of spirituality in improving organizations, markets, and economies. At the same time, some businesses still see no place for spirituality in the

workplace and deliberately exclude it (Brophy, 2015). Yet, many scholars, for example Thompson (2000), suggest that organizations that encourage workplace spirituality improve in performance and profitability. As though responding to a question as to how this could work in practice, Burack (1999) suggests that fostering spirituality and allowing free expression of spirituality at work enables employees to feel complete and authentic at work which leads to a high degree of personal fulfillment and morale; and this in turn results in increased organizational performance. Pawar (2009) also reported a strong association between personal spirituality in the workplace and positive work attitudes such as job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment.

Again, Krishnakumar and Nick (2002) found that the encouragement of spirituality in the workplace can lead to benefits in the areas of creativity, process improvement, customer service, honesty and trust, personal fulfillment, and commitment, which will ultimately lead to increased organizational performance. It seems then that workplace spirituality is good for business. Providing a possible reason why this is so, McGhee and Grant (2008) were of the opinion that spiritual people confer their work and the workplace with the quality of connection to something greater than the material world and thus bring their spirituality into the workplace. Through this workplace spirituality, work becomes part of a bigger picture, as employees see their workplace involvement as a calling and not merely a means to an end. Within this sense of calling, they are able to incorporate the values of responsibility and integrity into their work and this is what stimulates the growth, individually and collectively, of associated values beneficial to the organization. Some of the associated values are already mentioned above—innovativeness, creativity, customer service, honesty, trust, commitment. As the awareness of the importance and benefits of spirituality for organizations has grown, it has gained in appreciation as an asset: Cash and Gray (2000) observe American corporations have moved toward a more value-expressive philosophy and tolerant culture in response to employees' requests for spiritual connection and sense of community. Following Lips-Wiersma's (2002) argument that employees fully expressing their spirituality can benefit their organizations through creativity, intuition, cohesiveness of vision, and purpose, and improved community building, this would prove to be a win-win move for any organization engaging in it.

Influence of Workplace Spirituality on Organizational Responsibility and Integrity

In studies of workplace spirituality, the organization as a community of human beings appears to be the definitional unit adopted by most scholars. Thus, in his effort to conceptualize workplace spirituality, Ruppel and Harrington (2001) considered it as an attitude of sharing and a sense of togetherness with one another within one's department as well as in the organization. This reflects the idea of human solidarity noted above as evoked by the nature of spirituality as calling for respect for human dignity and for an interest in the common good. Similarly, with a focus on how people feel and what they subjectively experience, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2004) defined workplace spirituality as the framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employees' experience of transcendence through the work process and facilitates their sense of being connected in a way that provides feelings of compassion and joy. Again, there is an implication of solidarity in the notion of connectedness in a way that entails compassion and joy. Alternatively, Ashmos and Duchon (2000) defined workplace spirituality as the recognition of an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community. This approach gives prominence to the individual flourishing of the members of the community—subjectively (inner life) and objectively (meaningful work). Thus, according to Vasconcelos (2015, p. 189), people are called through workplace

spirituality to work on “replacing the self as the source of ultimate concern with family, community, humanity, and divinity.”

Given the foregoing, it becomes clear that the power of spirituality to reduce economic crimes and workplace deviant behavior cannot be overemphasized—people actually become more confident and engage in more ethical behavior (Vasconcelos, 2015). Waddock (2006) argues corporate scandals usually have resulted from self-centeredness, greed, egoism, and selfish passion instead of caring for others. People who do not care about others are more likely to act with disregard for the good of other people around them and for the common good, thus leading not only to big scandals but a cumulative negative effect coming from internal corporate misbehavior such as theft (time and other resources), insider trading, receiving of bribes, and other kinds of misconduct. Specifically, Chawla’s (2014) study claims that this applies to salespeople’s ethical behavior both among themselves and as representatives of the organization. Due to its nature and the values embedded in it, spirituality strengthens the individual against such traits as those described by Waddock (2006)—self-centeredness, greed, egoism, and selfish passion. Thus, Oakley and Cocking (2001) recognized the role of spirituality as promoting self-regulation in the working environment; they asserted that a person’s spirituality, characterized by the degree to which they engage in and live out self-transcendence, interconnectedness, a sense of purpose, and a belief in an ultimate being, constitutes a personal constraint on unethical behavior.

The effect of spirituality on the promotion of ethical behavior in work environments continues being estimated with varied research approaches. When studying the relationship between the spirituality and ethical behavior in the workplace, Ashmos and Duchon (2000) saw spirituality as a transformative source of meaning, purpose, and a sense of community, which would lead to heightened sense of responsibility and higher levels of integrity as well. Perhaps because of this, Mitroff and Denton (1999b) believed that workplace spirituality entails the effort to derive a kind of consistency or alignment between one’s core beliefs and the values of one’s organization.

Gottlieb, Kelloway, and Barham (1998) stressed that workplace spirituality has enhanced the level of consideration for stakeholders other than the shareholders. In particular, the employees’ work–life balance is better where there is scope for spirituality in the organization—the organization tries to integrate business needs with those of employees. In the process, managers have been discovering and experimenting with new ways and methods to help employees balance work and family through flexible work arrangements that allow for spiritual expression.

Researchers have also been able to demonstrate the possibility that spirituality in the workplace could foster teamwork among employees in an organization, again because they are likely to act more responsibly in the fulfillment of their team roles and team members that have integrity are valued and trusted. Daniel (2010) found that that workplace spirituality is a central variable in developing the culture of trust, inclusion, and innovation within various workplaces. In further support, McGhee and Grant (2008) stressed that spiritual people experience the object of spirituality via their desire to overcome the egotistical self to develop authentic relationships with others, with creation, and with their ultimate concern, and as they strive to find meaning and purpose in their life. This again entails acting responsibly and with integrity. Garcia-Zamor (2003) in turn stated that spirituality provides employees with a sense of community and connectedness which in turn increases their commitment, belongingness, and effectiveness. Older research in this line (by Kriger & Hanson, 1999) had already revealed that trust is crucial in forming a sound basis for commitment and that spirituality increases commitment by establishing a climate of trust in the workplace. This is clearly good for the organization.

Workplace Spirituality and Spiritual Capital

According to Zymonik and Dobrowolska (2015), for at least three decades, spiritual capital has been considered in organizations and management studies as the fourth capital in an organization, besides material, human (intellectual), and social capital. King and Roeser (2009) also found that spirituality, apart from being central to the lives of a majority of the people across the world, strongly influences the workplaces as well. It (spiritual capital) has been identified as one of the key indicators for achieving behavior that is responsible and with integrity in a business organization.

In general, spiritual and religious practices, beliefs, networks, and institutions have a measurable impact on individuals, communities, and societies, and this impact cascades into a workplace to constitute its spiritual capital and operate as an asset to the organization (O'Sullivan & Flanagan, 2008). In some exceptional cases, workplace spirituality can be overdone (Vasconcelos, 2015), as could happen, for example, if some employees took advantage of the organization by neglecting their work ostensibly for the sake of observing some spiritual practice(s) or could be a caricature, where it exists in an external way side by side with negative values such as injustice, ethical misbehavior, intolerance, divisiveness and discrimination, and lack of respect for human dignity (Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002).

One way to ascertain true spirituality is the virtue test proposed by Cavanagh and Bandsuch (2002). They submit that:

A spirituality that enables a person to develop good moral habits (or virtue) is appropriate for the workplace. If a spirituality leads to the cooperation and motivation derived from good moral habits and virtue in a person, then that spirituality can be judged as appropriate. When a spirituality enables a person to develop good moral habits, this provides a benchmark or a positive test for the appropriateness of that spirituality.

(Italics in original)

In other words, spirituality that does not help a person to develop integrity and responsibility in the workplace is questionable.

An Important Caveat—Intrinsic Reasons

Brophy (2015) points out the danger of organizations having an instrumental approach to workplace spirituality—seeing its benefits as a driver of employee responsibility and integrity as a tool to enhance performance and profitability rather than being rooted in a real interest in employees being responsible and having integrity. Organizations that instrumentalize spirituality in this way are those who adopt it as a means rather than as an end (Vasconcelos, 2015). As employees spend most of their lives in the workplace (Vasconcelos, 2015), any organization that wishes to be ethical and humanistic should exhibit integrity and responsibility by caring for their employees and the environment in which they function and not just the money they make.

Two reasons (among others) are proffered by Brophy (2015) as to why organizations should promote spirituality—(1) to respect the freedom of their employees as an integral value; and (2) to provide an environment in which employees flourish. This latter could be considered one of the points at which the fields of workplace spirituality and the humanistic management converge. It is a fact that workplaces can be toxic and destructive—they “are not benign” (Vasconcelos, 2015, p. 184) and they can be an arena of suffering for some employees. The responsibility to minimize the likelihood of such situations devolves on the stakeholders that have greater

power. Another intrinsic reason is that spirituality increases individual resilience, as it sustains the person through successes and failures and enables him or her to manage the complexities of life including in the workplace.

Conclusion and Future Research Directions

The sense of connection that spirituality in the workplace fosters in employees helps them find greater meaningfulness in their work and leads them to self-demand in terms of integrity and responsible behavior. They are therefore more likely to engage in ethical behavior and to put in their best at work. An organization that realizes this would benefit greatly from promoting workplace spirituality. However, the reasons for promoting it should not only be the economic benefits of the spiritual capital thus generated. For the organization itself to act with integrity and responsibly, it should also prioritize and respect the employees' freedom and show concern for their wellbeing which includes acknowledging their spiritual dimension and respecting it.

Having attempted to look at the interconnectedness of spirituality, responsibility, and integrity in the workplace in this chapter, the following areas are suggested for future researchers: instrumental and intrinsic approaches to building organizational spiritual capital; impact on employees of an instrumental approach to workplace spirituality; the effect of spirituality in leadership on organizational growth and organizational health; and the mechanisms by which spirituality supports ethnomonics, inclusion and intercultural empathy, and sustainability.

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