

How Spirituality and Spiritual Intelligence Fuel Organizational Learning

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How Spirituality
and Spiritual

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Abstract

This theoretical review explores the interconnectedness of spirituality, spiritual intelligence (SQ), and organizational learning. We propose a novel framework that examines how cultivating these intangible factors fosters a supportive learning culture within organizations. This supportive environment, in turn, leads to enhanced knowledge creation, retention, and transfer. This focus on intangible factors strengthens organizational learning capabilities, fuelling improved performance and sustained growth. Drawing on organizational learning theory, the framework investigates how both spirituality and SQ contribute to key aspects of organizational success. We posit that spirituality promotes employee well-being and a sense of purpose, fostering a more engaged workforce. Furthermore, SQ equips individuals with the skills and mindset necessary for active learning. These combined effects contribute to leadership effectiveness by fostering a psychologically safe environment conducive to knowledge-sharing behaviours. This framework highlights how spirituality and SQ act as catalysts for a more robust learning environment. This review offers valuable insights for organizations seeking to enhance their learning capabilities and achieve a competitive edge. By recognizing the importance of spirituality and SQ, and implementing practices that cultivate these factors, organizations can create a culture of continuous learning and drive long-term success.

Keywords: spirituality, spiritual intelligence, organizational learning, workplace development

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, concepts like spirituality and SQ have emerged as significant areas of study in organizational behaviour. Spirituality, characterized by a sense of purpose, connection, and meaning, has demonstrated positive impacts on employee well-being and performance (Fry, L. W., 2013). Similarly, SQ, encompassing self-awareness, empathy, and meaning-making skills, equips individuals with leadership effectiveness and adaptability (Fry, 2010);



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(Covey, 2004). Organizational learning, defined as the process of creating, retaining, and transferring knowledge within organizations, is essential for innovation and growth (Crossan & Berrett, 2010). Limited research explores how spirituality and SQ interact to influence organizational learning processes. This article aims to bridge this gap by proposing a framework that integrates these constructs within the context of organizational learning theory. This article aims to bridge these fields by exploring the interrelationship between spirituality, SQ, and organizational learning. We propose a novel conceptual framework that highlights their interconnectedness and potential to create a thriving learning environment. By understanding how these concepts can enhance learning processes, organizations can cultivate a workforce equipped for continuous development and contribute to sustained success.

2. Literature Review:

2.1. Fostering Employee Well-being and Engagement

Spirituality within organizations can cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning for employees, leading to increased well-being and job satisfaction (Fry, L. W., 2013). Research suggests that employees who experience a sense of purpose within their organization demonstrate greater engagement in learning activities (Dutton, Edmondson, & Bryant, 2017). This heightened engagement is crucial for effective knowledge creation and transfer within the organization (Easterby-Smith, Jackson, & Popp, 2010). Furthermore, SQ plays a vital role in fostering employee engagement. Individuals with high SQ exhibit greater self-awareness, allowing them to identify areas for personal and professional development (Garg, 2017). SQ also promotes a sense of meaning-making, which motivates employees to actively participate in learning initiatives that contribute to organizational goals (Fry, 2010).

2.2. Enhancing Leadership Effectiveness and Knowledge Sharing

Spirituality, by promoting core values like trust and honesty, fosters a foundation for effective leadership (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2009). Leaders who embody spiritual values are more likely to create a safe and supportive environment where employees feel comfortable sharing knowledge and collaborating effectively (Fry, L. W., 2013). This open communication environment is critical for knowledge sharing and transfer, which are essential components of organizational learning (Crossan, M. M.; Berrett, D., 2010).

SQ further enhances leadership effectiveness by equipping leaders with strong communication and problem-solving skills (Fry, 2010). Leaders with high SQ can effectively articulate organizational goals and create a shared vision that inspires employee engagement in learning activities. Additionally, their strong problem-solving

skills enable them to navigate challenges that may arise during knowledge transfer processes (Fiol & Lydenburg, 2015).

2.3. Promoting a Supportive Learning Culture

Both spirituality and SQ contribute to the development of a supportive learning culture within organizations. Spirituality fosters core values like trust, empathy, and psychological safety (Fry, L. W., 2013). In such an environment, ideas and feel comfortable taking risks, experimenting with new ideas, and learning from mistakes without fear of judgment. This fosters a continuous cycle of learning that allows organizations to adapt and innovate (Kannan & Garad, 2021). SQ, through its emphasis on self-awareness and empathy, enhances collaboration within teams, allowing for better knowledge sharing and co-creation. Employees with high SQ are more likely to actively seek out learning opportunities from colleagues and share their knowledge for the benefit of the team (Crossan, M. M., & Berrett, D. M.).

3. The Gap and Our Contribution

While existing research has explored the independent effects of spirituality (Fry, L. W., 2013) and spiritual intelligence (SQ) (Wigglesworth & Mackey, 2014) on organizational learning, a critical gap remains. Limited research investigates the **synergistic** influence of these concepts on fostering a dynamic learning environment. This theoretical review aims to address this gap by proposing a novel conceptual framework. Our framework integrates spirituality and SQ, exploring their combined impact on cultivating a supportive learning culture and enhancing organizational learning processes. We posit that spirituality lays the foundation for a supportive learning culture by promoting core values like trust and open communication. These values create a safe space for knowledge sharing and collaboration, essential for effective learning (Gotsis, 2015). Building upon this foundation, SQ equips individuals with the skills and mindset necessary to actively engage in learning. By examining these concepts together, we offer a more comprehensive understanding of how intangible factors, like spirituality and SQ, can contribute to organizational learning and development.

4. The conceptual framework

This conceptual framework proposes a cyclical process where fostering spirituality and spiritual intelligence (SQ) within the workplace leads to a supportive learning culture, resulting in enhanced organizational learning and sustained growth (see Figure 1).

Spirituality lays the foundation for this positive cycle by cultivating a sense of purpose, meaning, and shared values within the organization (Fry, L. W., 2013); (Giacalone &



Jurkiewicz, 2009). These core values, such as trust, honesty, and empathy, create a safe and encouraging environment where employees feel comfortable sharing knowledge openly, asking questions without fear of judgment, and taking calculated risks for learning (Easterby-Smith, Jackson, & Popp, 2010). These fosters open communication, a crucial element for knowledge sharing and collaboration, both essential for effective learning (Dutton, J. E.; Soane, D. C.; Kinicki, A. J., 2017).

Building upon this foundation, SQ equips individuals with the necessary skills and mindset for active learning (Fry, 2010); (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2009). Self-awareness, a key aspect of SQ, empowers employees to identify their learning strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to seek targeted learning opportunities (Sianipar, Simatupang, & Purba, 2019). Additionally, SQ fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are crucial for effectively analysing information, evaluating new ideas, and adapting to changing learning environments (Kannan & Garad, 2021). The combined influence of spirituality and SQ leads to the development of a supportive learning culture characterized by trust, empathy, and psychological safety (Edmondson, 2019). Within this safe space, employees feel empowered to experiment, share ideas openly, and learn from mistakes (Dutton, J. E.; Soane, D.; Choi, D. Y., 2017). SQ further promotes collaboration through its emphasis on empathy, allowing for better knowledge sharing and co-creation within teams (Crossan & Berrett, 2010).

This supportive learning culture fosters a continuous cycle of knowledge creation, retention, and transfer within the organization (Easterby-Smith, Jackson, & Popp, 2010). Open communication channels and a collaborative environment encourage knowledge-sharing through activities like brainstorming, knowledge-sharing sessions, and cross-functional collaboration. Additionally, employees who are intrinsically motivated by a sense of purpose and connectedness fostered by spirituality are more likely to retain knowledge (Fry, L. W., 2013). Leaders with high SQ who model continuous learning behaviours can further encourage employees to actively retain and integrate new knowledge into their work practices (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2009).

The effective transfer of knowledge throughout the organization is also facilitated by the open communication and collaborative environment fostered by spirituality and SQ. Employees are more likely to share their learning experiences with colleagues, fostering a collective learning environment (Garad & Gold, 2019). This continuous learning and development lead to a more skilled and adaptable workforce, contributing to improved employee performance (Fenwick & Bierema, 2016). Furthermore, a culture of continuous learning fosters creativity and innovation, allowing the organisation to adapt to changing market demands (Kannan & Garad, 2021). This innovation and improved employee performance contribute to long-term organisational success (Carmeli, Carmeli, & Tishler, 2010).

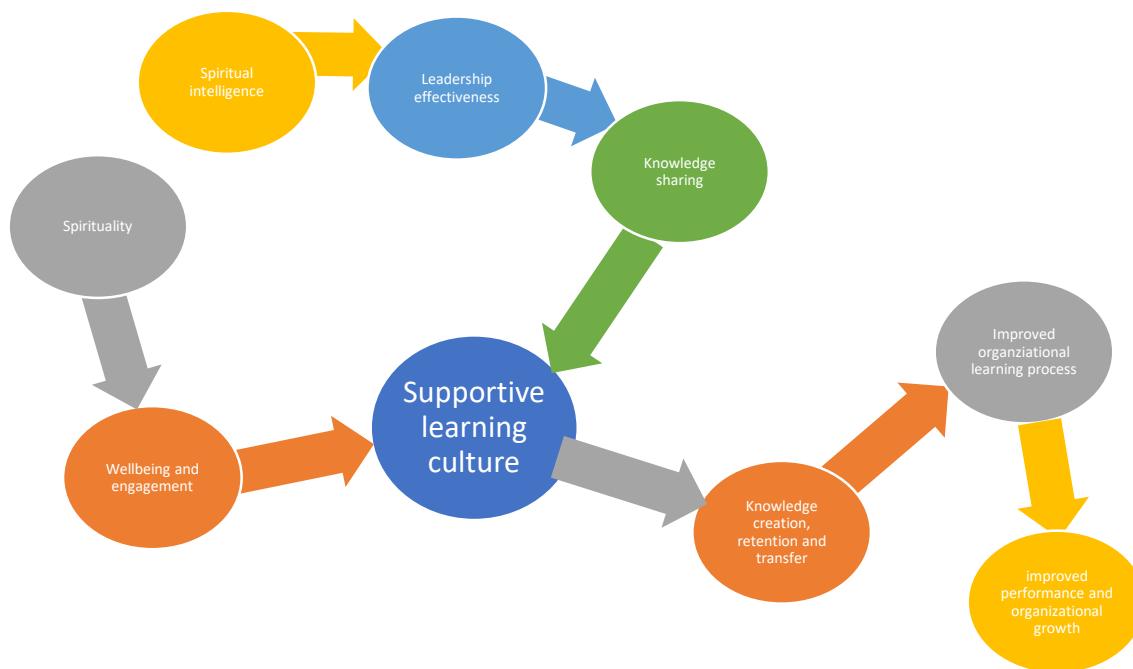


Figure 1

Spirituality and spiritual intelligence (SQ) within the workplace lead to a supportive learning culture, resulting in enhanced organizational learning and sustained growth.

5. Theoretical Framework

This framework explores how spirituality and Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) contribute to a supportive learning culture within organizations, enhancing organizational learning capabilities. The ever-changing market landscape characterized by intense competition and rapid technological advancements necessitates continuous learning within organizations (Kannan & Garad, 2021). Organizational Learning (OL) has emerged as a critical concept for knowledge-oriented organizations seeking to thrive in this dynamic environment (Easterby-Smith, Jackson, & Popp, 2010). OL refers to the process of acquiring, distributing, integrating, and applying knowledge within an organization (Argote & Fahrenkopf, 2006). It equips organizations with the ability to adapt to changing environments, navigate uncertainty, and improve efficiency (Fiol & Lydenburg, 2015). Social interaction and observation play a crucial role in knowledge acquisition within organizations (Abougazia, 2024). Individuals learn by observing the behaviours, attitudes, and values of others in their work environment (Bandura, 2008). A supportive learning culture, characterized by shared values, open communication, and a sense of community, fosters knowledge sharing and learning (Garad & Gold, 2019).



Spirituality promotes core values like trust, honesty, and empathy, which align well with the principles of a supportive learning culture (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2009). A shared sense of purpose, often fostered by spirituality (Fry, L. W., 2013), creates a context conducive to learning. Employees who observe colleagues upholding these values are more likely to adopt them themselves, creating a positive reinforcement cycle for learning (Bandura, 2008). Additionally, spiritual values cultivate a more psychologically safe work environment (Fry, L. W., 2013). This psychological safety encourages active participation in learning activities and open knowledge sharing without fear of judgment (Edmondson, 2019). Building upon this foundation, SQ equips individuals with the necessary skills and mindsets for active learning. Self-awareness, a key component of SQ (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2009), allows individuals to identify their learning strengths and weaknesses (Covey, 2004). This self-awareness empowers employees to take ownership of their learning journeys and actively seek development opportunities aligned with their goals (Abougazia, 2024).

Furthermore, SQ fosters critical thinking skills essential for effective learning (Crossan, M. M.; Berrett, D., 2010). Individuals with high SQ can effectively analyse information, identify problems, and seek solutions (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2009). These critical thinking skills enable employees to actively engage with new knowledge and apply it to real-world situations, enhancing the effectiveness of learning initiatives (Garad & Gold, 2019). Empathy, another key aspect of SQ, encourages knowledge-sharing and collaboration (Covey, S. R., 2004). Individuals with high empathy can understand and appreciate the perspectives of others, fostering stronger team connections (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2009). This sense of connection creates a more collaborative learning environment where individuals feel comfortable sharing knowledge and experiences, accelerating the overall learning process (Easterby-Smith, Jackson, & Popp, 2010).

This framework posits that organizational learning is a dynamic process influenced by the interaction between individuals and their environment. Spirituality shapes the organizational environment by promoting core values that influence learning behaviours. SQ equips individuals with the skills and mindsets necessary to actively engage in learning activities within this supportive environment. This interconnectedness between spirituality, SQ, and a supportive learning culture fosters an integrated approach to organizational learning, leading to enhanced innovation and improved performance (Crossan, M. M.; Berrett, D. M., 2010).

6. Discussion and Implications:

Our proposed framework sheds light on how spirituality and SQ act as powerful catalysts for organizational learning. By fostering employee well-being and engagement, these qualities enhance leadership effectiveness and promote a supportive learning culture. This translates into a more robust knowledge creation, retention, and

transfer process within the organization. As a result, organizations cultivate stronger organizational learning capabilities, leading to increased innovation, improved problem-solving, and enhanced performance and growth (Kannan & Garad, 2021).

This research underscores the importance of cultivating a work environment that nourishes both spirituality and SQ. Organizations can achieve this through initiatives that promote a sense of purpose and meaning in work. This can involve fostering a clear mission statement that resonates with employees or providing opportunities for employees to contribute to a larger cause. Additionally, encouraging open communication and collaboration, through regular team meetings or feedback sessions, can build trust and psychological safety. Furthermore, leadership development programs that emphasize values-based leadership and effective communication skills can further empower leaders to create a learning-conducive environment (Abougazia, 2024).

Our conceptual framework highlights the potential for spirituality and SQ to create a dynamic and thriving learning environment within organizations. By nurturing these concepts, organizations can cultivate a workforce equipped for continuous learning and adaptation in today's rapidly changing business landscape. However, it is crucial to acknowledge potential challenges. Integrating spirituality into the workplace requires careful consideration of diverse employee beliefs and cultural backgrounds. Organizations should avoid imposing specific religious practices and instead focus on fostering a sense of purpose and meaning-making that is inclusive of all employees (Abougazia, 2024). Similarly, measuring the impact of SQ remains a complex task. Further research is needed to develop reliable and valid methods for assessing SQ within organizational settings.

7. Conclusion

This theoretical review has shed light on the interconnectedness of spirituality, spiritual intelligence (SQ), and organizational learning. We have proposed a novel framework that highlights how fostering these intangible qualities can cultivate a supportive learning culture. This supportive environment, characterized by shared values, open communication, and psychological safety, empowers individuals with the skills and mindset for active learning. Consequently, organizations can harness the potential of SQ and spirituality to cultivate a more innovative, adaptable, and successful workforce. Future research can build upon this framework by empirically assessing its propositions and investigating potential moderating factors, such as organizational culture and industry type. Additionally, exploring the practical implications of integrating SQ and spirituality into organizational development strategies would be valuable. By recognizing the significance of these intangible resources, organizations can unlock a path towards sustained success in today's dynamic business landscape.



8. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This theoretical review lays the groundwork for further exploration of the interplay between spirituality, SQ, and organizational learning. While the proposed framework offers a valuable starting point, it acknowledges limitations. Firstly, the study relies on existing literature, highlighting the need for empirical testing to validate the framework's applicability in diverse organizational settings. Secondly, the framework does not account for potential moderating factors such as organizational culture or industry type. These factors may influence the strength of the relationships between spirituality, SQ, and learning outcomes. Thirdly, the cross-cultural dimensions of spirituality and SQ require further investigation. Understanding these nuances is crucial for multinational organizations seeking to foster a global learning culture.

Future research can address these limitations by pursuing other avenues. One direction involves empirical studies that employ quantitative or qualitative methods to examine the causal relationships proposed within the framework. Additionally, researchers could investigate the influence of national culture on the effectiveness of fostering spirituality and SQ in the workplace. This knowledge would be particularly valuable for global organizations navigating diverse workforces. Furthermore, future studies could explore the potential mediating or moderating effects of other variables on the proposed relationships. For instance, research could examine how leadership style or team dynamics influence the impact of spirituality and SQ on knowledge sharing or knowledge creation within organizations. By addressing these limitations and pursuing these future research directions, we can gain a deeper understanding of how spirituality and SQ can be leveraged to cultivate vibrant learning cultures within organizations. This, in turn, can empower organizations to build a more innovative and adaptable workforce, leading to sustained competitive advantage in today's dynamic business environment.

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