

Understanding the Impact of Workplace Spirituality on Retaining Teachers in HEIs

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of workplace spirituality on employee retention among teachers at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Workplace spirituality, encompassing meaningful work, compassion, mindfulness and transcendence, has gained prominence as a critical factor influencing job satisfaction and long-term commitment. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected from 91 teachers in self-financed and government colleges of Delhi through a structured questionnaire. The study employed (PLS-SEM) for data analysis. The findings show a substantial positive association between workplace spirituality & employee retention, implying that teachers who find spiritual fulfillment at work are more likely to stay dedicated to their institutions. The findings emphasize that a spiritually enriching work environment fosters engagement, motivation, and organizational loyalty. The current study contributes to the existing body of literature by emphasizing how workplace spirituality influences employee retention, especially in the education sector where long-term commitment is greatly influenced by intrinsic motivation and alignment with institutional values.

Keywords: Workplace Spirituality, Employee Retention, Teachers, Higher Education Institutions

1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental pillar of a nation's strength, with teachers playing a crucial role within this framework. As mentors, providers of knowledge, and role models, teachers lay the groundwork for lifelong learning by nurturing critical thinking, self-confidence, and emotional intelligence. They equip students with essential skills and inspire them to pursue their aspirations. Beyond individual development, teachers' influence contributes to cultural preservation, societal progress, and transformative change, positioning them as key architects of human potential. Recently, Workplace spirituality has emerged as a significant concept in organizational research, emphasizing the deeper values, meaning, and purpose individuals seek in their professional lives (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). It is characterized by key dimensions such as meaningful work, compassion, mindfulness, and transcendence, which collectively enhance employees' sense of fulfillment and well-being at work (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009; Pradhan et al., 2017). Research suggests that organizations fostering workplace spirituality create environments that promote employee engagement, satisfaction, and commitment, ultimately improving retention and performance (Karakas, 2010; Saeed et al., 2022). Furthermore, workplace spirituality nurtures a sense of community and shared purpose, helping employees align personal values with organizational goals (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). As organizations increasingly recognize the importance of holistic employee well-being, workplace

spirituality continues to gain attention as a vital factor influencing job satisfaction, productivity, and organizational loyalty (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006). Employee retention pertains to building a work place in which people feel appreciated, supported, and driven to stay. Retention is influenced by multiple factors, including job satisfaction, organizational culture, career growth opportunities and work-life balance (Fitz-enz, 1990; Kyndt et al., 2009). When employees feel a sense of belonging and purpose in their work, they are more likely to remain committed to the organization (Osteraker, 1999; Hytter, 2007). Beyond financial incentives, aspects like supportive leadership, professional development, and workplace relationships play a crucial role in shaping employees' decisions to stay or leave (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Karsh et al., 2005). High retention rates lead to a more engaged and productive workforce, reducing turnover costs and fostering long-term organizational success (Kyndt et al., 2009; Saeed et al., 2022). Promoting spirituality in the workplace can enhance employee retention and contribute to organizational sustainability. A greater knowledge of the interrelationships between these factors would help both people and organisations, adding to the corpus of management literature and increasing the empirical foundation of research in organisational psychology and workplace spirituality. A greater knowledge of the interrelationships between these factors would help both people and organisations, adding to the corpus of management literature and increasing the empirical foundation of research in organisational psychology and workplace spirituality.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Workplace Spirituality

A collective experiences created by the organizational environment is Workplace Spirituality. It is not merely an individual pursuit. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) propose a core concept of workplace spirituality, situating it within the community's context of nourishing an employee's inner life through meaningful work. Their work focuses on three dimensions: inner being, meaningful work & sense of community, setting the framework for future research in the topic. Expanding this perspective, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) incorporates both personal and organizational values in defining workplace spirituality. They say that workplace spirituality entails promoting transcendence through work processes that are defined by greater meaningful purpose and deeper connectivity among employees. The benefits of workplace spirituality extend beyond individual well-being. In a comprehensive literature analysis, Karakas (2010) proposed that workplace spirituality can act as a powerful catalyst. According to the author, establishing a spiritual workplace can boost employee morale, well-being and dedication and productivity levels. Organizations can create an environment where employees are not just working for financial rewards but for a higher purpose. Building on these insights, Pradhan et al. (2017), explained how workplace spirituality can make monotonous work into meaningful work. Their study found that a stronger connection is felt between personal and organizational values if employees discover a spiritual connection at work. This fosters a sense of purposeful work by matching personal values with organizational aims. Saeed et al. (2022) provided empirical evidence that spirituality in the workplace can significantly improve the efficacy of educators and administrative personnel by functioning as a positive mediator for the impacts of job engagement and employee performance.

2.2 Employee Retention

Employee Retention is influenced by a multifaceted set of criteria rather than a single determining factor. Key elements such as pay and benefits, job security, training and development, workplace culture, and organizational fairness all play a role in employees' decisions to stay or leave (Fitz-enz, 1990). This suggests that organizations must develop comprehensive retention strategies that extend beyond financial incentives to include professional development and workplace culture. Employee satisfaction plays a crucial role in retention, with three primary dimensions shaping the experience: social, mental, and physical (Osteraker, 1999). The mental aspect refers to employees' desire for flexible work assignments that allow them to apply their knowledge while preserving essential resources. The social dimension highlights the importance of workplace relationships, both within the organization and externally. Lastly, the physical aspect encompasses tangible factors such as remuneration and working conditions. When all three dimensions are adequately addressed, employees have a greater probability to be dedicated and loyal towards their organization. Beyond these factors, research shows that retention is closely linked to an employee's sense of belonging, commitment, and trust in the organization (Hytter, 2007). Employees tend to stay in a workplace where they experience a strong sense of attachment. Additionally, factors such as career growth opportunities, incentives, skill development, physical workspace & work life balance play a part in retaining of employees in the organisation. A structured approach to understanding retention identifies job satisfaction, organizational commitment and work-life balance as key predictors of long-term employee tenure (Kyndt et al., 2009). Employees who feel satisfied in their roles, align with the organization's mission, and maintain a healthy work-life balance are significantly less likely to seek employment elsewhere. These elements, therefore, serve as essential benchmarks for companies aiming to enhance retention and reduce turnover.

2.3 Workplace Spirituality and Employee Retention

The Broaden and Build theory (Fredrickson, 2013) posits that positive emotions broaden peoples' momentary thought-actions (the broadening effect), which in turn prompts growth in personal and social resources, reflected through improved outcomes like job satisfaction and lowered turnover intentions (the build effect). Positive emotions 'expand the accessible set of potential thoughts and actions that come readily to mind' (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2001) and have long-term effects on employee job attitudes and outcomes such as reduced turnover intentions, higher organizational performance, and productivity (Cotton and Hart, 2003; Siu et al., 2015). Previous research has indicated that nurturing workplace spirituality can help individuals attain their full potential and feel more intrinsically driven, thereby improving employee retention (Norouzi et al., 2018). According to self-determination theory, integrating one's own experience with that of the group promotes personal growth and a sense of belonging within the social structure (Deci & Ryan, 2000). According to this study, persons who perceive workplace spirituality are more likely to have a sense of freedom & direction in their jobs, which reduces their risk of quitting the organisation.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory provides a broader conceptual context for this study, proposing that employee perceptions of purpose and connectedness at work lead to higher employee retention

rates. Employees may feel required to repay their organisation when they have directly profited from organizational resources, both monetary and non-monetary. Employees feel fulfilled and self-actualized when organizations foster workplace spirituality through meaningful work, compassion, mindfulness, and transcendence. Therefore, workplace spirituality improves employee retention within an organisation.

3.2 The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory investigates the interaction amongst job demands, which involve constant effort and may cause stress (e.g., workload, time pressure), and job resources, which promote goal attainment and personal growth (e.g., social support, autonomy). Workplace spirituality serves as a key job resource by fostering meaningful work, reducing isolation, and enhancing motivation. Integrating JD-R theory with workplace spirituality can help organizations minimize stress, boost employee satisfaction, and improve retention.

3.4 Hypotheses

Based on the above literature review following hypothesis is proposed for the study:

H1: Compassion positively relates to Employee Retention among teachers in HEIs.

H2: Mindfulness positively relates to Employee Retention among teachers in HEIs.

H3: Meaningful Work positively relates to Employee Retention among teachers in HEIs.

H4: Transcendence positively relates to Employee Retention among teachers in HEIs.

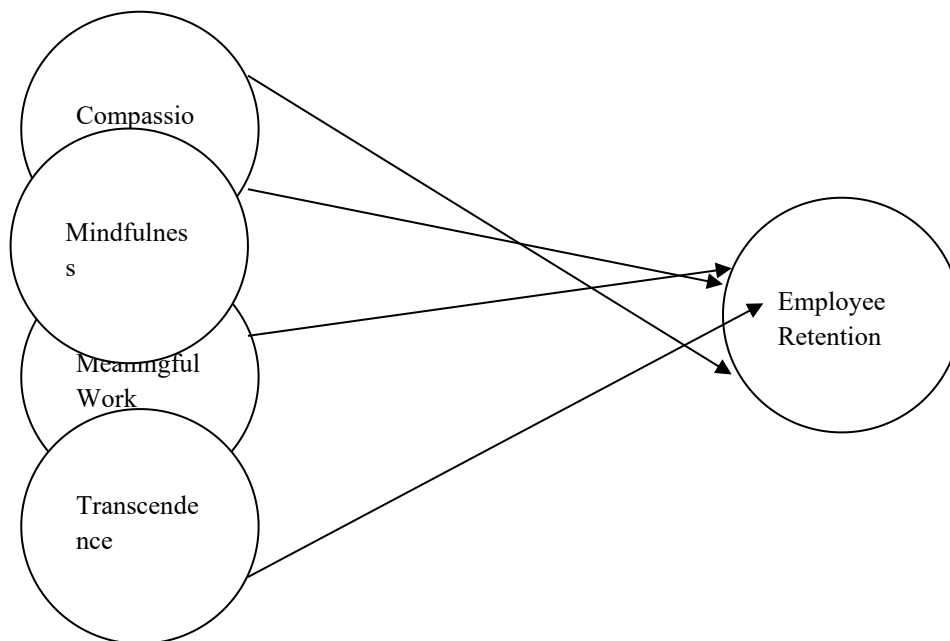


Fig 1 Conceptual Model

4. Methodology

4.1 Measurement

4.1.1 Workplace Spirituality

To assess workplace spirituality, the Petchsawang and Duchon, 2009 scale was employed. The scale measured four features of workplace spirituality i.e. compassion, mindfulness, meaningful

work & transcendence. This scale has 16 items and was evaluated with a sample from a culture centered on Eastern Buddhism. Its goal is to convey the concept of Workplace Spirituality within this particular cultural environment.

4.1.2 Employee Retention

Kyndt et al.'s 2009 questionnaire of employee retention consists of an 11-item scale. Responses are based on a 5-point Likert scale, with one meaning "strongly disagree" and five representing "strongly agree."

4.2 Sampling

The present research sample frame comprises teachers from both self-financed and government colleges in Delhi/NCR. The instructors work at colleges affiliated to Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, a State University in New Delhi, and the University of Delhi, a Central University in New Delhi. The study collected 91 answers from faculty members through Google Forms surveys. The study technique included convenience sampling. For analyzing the model, PLS-SEM was used, thus each component had weight. All constructs were examined for significance since they loaded favorably. All constructs have a Cronbach alpha greater than 0.7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.5%. (Sarstedt et al. 2020).

5. Results and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

The study was conducted in education sector from 91 faculty members. Based on gender 63.7% were male, while 36.3% were female. Most respondents 89% are below 35 years, with only a small percentage above this age group. Furthermore, 78% hold a postgraduate degree, while 14.3% have a doctorate degree. The majority 85.7% were Assistant Professors, with fewer Associate Professors 11% and Professors 3.3%. The data also showed that 72.5% have 5-10 years of experience, while only a small proportion has over 20 years. Also, most respondents 87.9% were from private institutions, with only 12.1% from government colleges.

Table 1 Respondent Demographics

Demographic Variable	Categories	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	63.7
	Female	36.3
Age Group	Below 35 years	89
	36 - 45 years	7.7
	46 - 55 years	2.2
	Above 55 years	1.1
Educational Qualification	Post Graduation	78
	Doctorate	14.3
	Other Qualifications	7.7
Current Designation	Assistant Professor	85.7
	Associate Professor	11
	Professor	3.3

Total Experience	Less than 5 years	16.5
	5 - 10 years	72.5
	10 - 15 years	5.5
	15 - 20 years	3.3
	More than 20 years	2.2
Organization Type	Private	87.9
	Government	12.1

Table 2 shows that the variance extracted values are greater than 0.5 for Employee Retention, Meaningful Work, Transcendence, Mindfulness and Compassion establishing convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Cronbach's Alpha values for Employee Retention (0.853), Meaningful Work (0.730), Transcendence (0.724), Mindfulness (0.720) and Compassion (0.710) exceed the 0.7, ensuring internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Similarly, composite reliability values for Employee Retention (0.895), Meaningful Work (0.844), Transcendence (0.828), Mindfulness (0.822) and Compassion (0.802) are above 0.70, confirming construct reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 2 Construct reliability and validity

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted(AVE)
Employee Retention	0.853	0.859	0.895	0.631
Meaningful Work	0.730	0.764	0.844	0.644
Transcendence	0.724	0.724	0.828	0.547
Mindfulness	0.720	0.753	0.822	0.698
Compassion	0.710	0.726	0.802	0.671

Table 3 Discriminant Validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion)

Discriminant validity - (Fornell–Larcker criterion)					
	Compassion	Employee Retention	Mindfulness	Meaningful Work	Transcendence
Compassion	0.819				
Employee Retention	0.270	0.794			
Mindfulness	0.263	0.535	0.836		
Meaningful Work	0.287	0.573	0.381	0.803	

Transcendence	0.445	0.428	0.268	0.579	0.740
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Discriminant validity determines whether all constructs used in the research are independent of one another. In Table 3, the discriminant validity has been studied using Fornell-Larcker's Criterion. The values explained more than 0.7 for each construct, hence it can be derived that the present study has a satisfactory measurement model (Dubey and Sahu, 2022).

To compute the p-values for the study's hypotheses, the bootstrapping approach was used using 5,000 bootstraps without sign change (Hair et al., 2020). According to the findings shown in Table 4, Compassion has a positive but moderate impact on employee retention ($\beta = 0.200$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H1. Mindfulness has a moderately strong effect on employee retention ($\beta = 0.361$, $p < 0.05$), hence supporting H 2. Meaningful Work has a statistically significant impact on employee retention ($\beta = 0.365$, $p < 0.05$), similar to Mindfulness, hence supporting H 3. Next, an imperative impact was found to be of Transcendence having the strongest positive effect on employee retention. ($\beta = 0.365$, $p < 0.05$) has a significant positive impact on employee retention, confirming H 4. This highlights the significance of having a spiritually uplifting work atmosphere which improves employee retention. A stronger feeling of purpose and connection had the greatest effect, showing that employees who find fulfillment beyond ordinary activities are more inclined to stay. Supportive and thoughtful workplace behaviors also help with retention, although with varied degrees of effectiveness.

Table 4 Direct Effect Test Results

Hypothesis Testing	Relationships on the path	Original Sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Decision
H 1	Compassion -> Employee Retention	0.200	0.214	0.049	4.056	0.000	Supported
H 2	Mindfulness -> Employee Retention	0.361	0.357	0.111	3.249	0.001	Supported
H 3	Meaningful Work -> Employee Retention	0.365	0.353	0.114	3.203	0.001	Supported
H 4	Transcendence -> Employee Retention	0.603	0.597	0.061	9.893	0.000	Supported

In table 6, the coefficient of determination for Employee Retention is 0.676, which indicates 67.6 % of the variance in Employee Retention is explained by the independent variables i.e. Compassion, Mindfulness, Meaningful Work and Transcendence. Workplace Spirituality plays a crucial role in retention of employees in the organisation.

Fig 2 Path coefficients

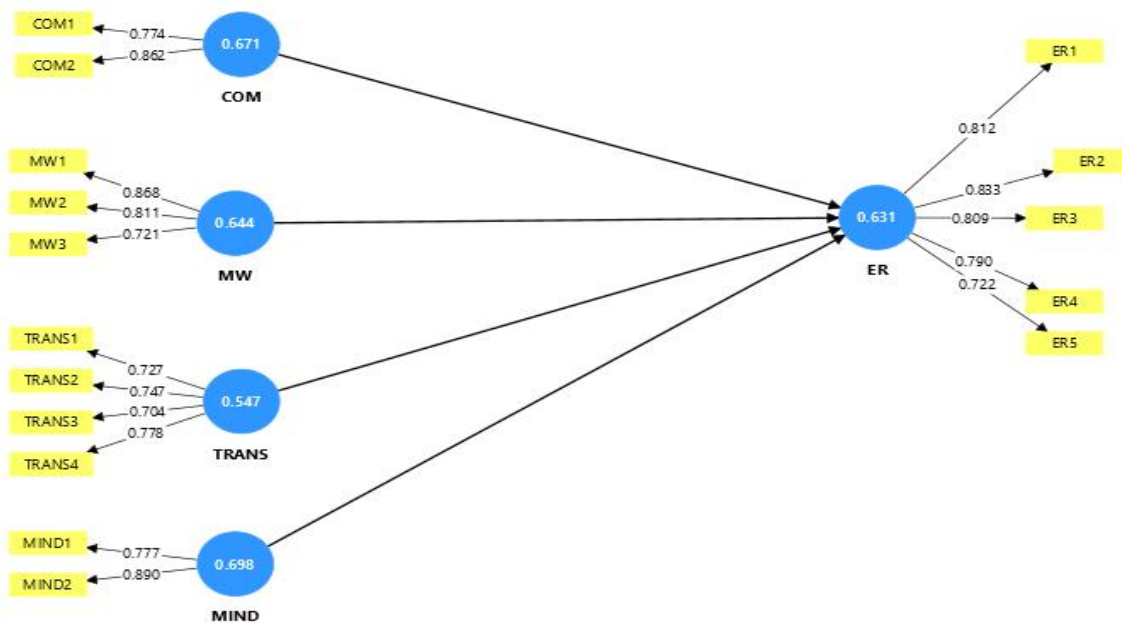


Table 6- Model Fit Measures

	R- square	R-square adjusted
Employee Retention	0.676	0.661

6. Limitations and Research Directions for the Future

The study provides critical insights about the relationship between Workplace Spirituality & Employee Retention. However, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, Workplace Spirituality is a complex concept. Although standardized instruments were used, structured surveys may not fully capture its nuances. Future research could benefit from qualitative or mixed-method approaches. Second, the sample size of 91 respondents reduces the generalization of the results. A greater diverse sample might improve applicability.

Additionally, a cross-sectional study restricts causal interpretations, emphasizing the value of longitudinal research to understand the shift over time. Finally, other potential moderators, such as demographics were not considered which could have given more comprehensive comprehension of the relationship.

Future research on Workplace Spirituality and Employee Retention can explore several directions to deepen understanding and practical application. Investigating mediating factors like job stress, work satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as moderating variables like personality characteristics, gratitude and leadership styles, may provide a more detailed explanation of this relationship. Industry specific evaluations, particularly in healthcare, IT and banking sectors can identify the most effective spirituality measures. Additionally, the growing

influence of Artificial Intelligence and technology, further presents an opportunity to explore how digital workplaces affect the association among Workplace Spirituality & Employee Retention.

7. Conclusion

Workplace Spirituality is a vital factor in shaping employees' sense of purpose, belonging, and connection to their work environment. It includes elements such as meaningful work, compassion, mindfulness and a sense of community, all contributing to job satisfaction and long-term commitment (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Pradhan et al., 2017). In Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Workplace Spirituality is especially important in fostering a positive work culture, particularly for teachers who seek fulfillment beyond financial incentives (Saeed et al., 2022). The results confirm Workplace Spirituality to have a notable positive impact on Employee Retention. Teachers remain committed to their organizations, which discover meaning, purpose at work and align with institutional values. A spiritually enriching work environment promotes engagement, motivation, and a strong sense of loyalty, underscoring its role as a key driver of teacher retention (Fredrickson, 2013; Norouzi et al., 2018). India's education industry is transforming significantly. The evolving work culture in Indian higher education institutions poses challenges for teachers. (Agarwal, 2006). Furthermore, changes in technology can lead to turnovers, dissatisfaction, demotivation, and stress among instructors (Mahipalan & Sheena, 2019). However, this study highlights the imperative role of workplace spirituality in improvising employee retention by making a setting where individuals feel valued, connected and inspired, ultimately fostering a positive and engaging workplace environment leading to retention. Organizations that create compassionate leadership, support mindfulness practices and foster an elevated culture, where employees feel linked to a greater purpose, can considerably improve job satisfaction and long-term commitment for their organizations. By integrating these factors, organizations may create a compassionate, values-driven work environment that fosters trust, holistic growth, and long-term organizational success.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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