Workplace Spirituality as a Precursor to Relationship-Oriented Selling Characteristics

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Abstract Very few studies have looked upon the construct of workplace spirituality in sales organization context. This paper integrates workplace spirituality with sales literature. The paper points out that self-interest transcendence is a common aspect in the workplace spirituality concept which emerged a decade ago and in most of the relationship-oriented selling characteristics—customer orientation, adaptability, service orientation, and ethical selling behavior. Based on the common aspect of self-interest transcendence, we propose that workplace spirituality could be a causal precursor to relationship-oriented selling characteristics. We present guidelines for future research, implications for practice and a few potential downsides of workplace spirituality in sales organization.

Keywords Adaptive selling · Customer orientation · Ethical selling behavior · Self-interest transcendence · Service orientation · Workplace spirituality

Introduction

Workplace spirituality (or spirituality in the workplace) is about the recognition that meaningful work and sense of community are essential for the spiritual growth of employees (Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Duchon and Plowman 2005). It is an emerging area of research in management. Early researchers do not pay attention to this area which can be attributed to the following reasons: (1) the general trend of secular approach to business, (2) the nature of academic enquiry is focused on readily observable behaviors rather than something elusive (Duchon and Plowman 2005). However, over the last decade there has been a growing interest among organizational researchers toward the subject of spirituality at workplace (Duchon and Plowman 2005; Fry 2003; Mitroff and Denton 1999; Pawar 2009). The reason is that organizations are now making room for the spiritual dimension, a dimension that has less to do with rules and order and more to do with meaningful work and sense of community (Armour 1998; Galen and West 1995; Lancester 1995). Organizations as diverse as Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, BioGenenex, Aetna International, Big Six accounting's Deloitte and Touche, and Law firms such as New York's Kaye, Scholer, Fierman, Hays & Haroller are practicing the values usually taught in temples, churches, and mosques (Mitroff and Denton 1999). Organizations facilitating workplace spirituality are not only reporting an increase in the inner development of employees, but an increase in profits and efficiency (e.g., Ouimet-Cordon Bleu Inc.; Cordon Bleu-Tomasso Corporation, The Body Shop, Timberland, etc.). These outcomes are also supported by the scientific studies from organizational researchers, who find that spirituality positively influence work unit performance (Duchon and Plowman 2005; Fry et al. 2011), organizational performance (Fry and Matherly 2006; Ouimet 1997), and individual well-being (Hawley 1993, Mackenzie et al. 2000; Matthews et al. 1994; Quick et al. 1997). More theoretical and empirical support is emerging on how workplace spirituality influences both individual and organizational outcomes.

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However, the sales literature has not yet integrated the dimensions of workplace spirituality into its frameworks (Badrinarayanan and Madhavaram 2008). There are several reasons to investigate the concept of workplace spirituality in sales organizations:

1. Cohen (1997) notices that around 40 % of the audience attending spiritual conventions describe themselves as sales professionals. These sales professionals are doing soul-searching at work, they want something more than money, and they want to have a meaning and purpose in their work. Badrinarayanan and Madhavaram (2008) suggest that the demanding nature of sales profession coupled with decline in the traditional forms of community may make salespersons to strive for both meaning and sense of community at work. Thus, it becomes important to investigate the concept of workplace spirituality in sales organization.

2. Salespersons are ranked very poor in public perception of ethics of occupations (Gallup 2005). Customers are tired of meeting salespersons who have a selfish concern and who behave unethically (Thomas et al. 2008). Spirituality in the workplace may result in salespersons' giving increased respect to the customers (Pandey et al. 2009), attending to their needs and behaving ethically to them (Badrinarayanan and Madhavaram 2008). In other words, spirituality at workplace may improve the quality of buyer–seller interactions which would help in building and strengthening relationships with customers. This may bring a change in the perception of people toward sales occupation.

3. There are reasons to believe that spirituality in workplace may provide success in the business outcomes to salespersons. Willingham (2006), while synthesizing his field-tested research and experience of selling in his book the Inner Game of Selling, writes that, "sales success depends on why you sell rather than how you sell" i.e., unless and until one does have a higher purpose statement, one cannot achieve heights of success. Spirituality in the workplace connects employees to a higher purpose at work (Ashmos and Duchon 2000), and thus, it may provide success to salespersons.

In this paper, we place workplace spirituality in the context of sales organization by proposing that workplace spirituality could be a causal precursor to four of the major relationship selling characteristics: customer orientation, service orientation, adaptive selling, and ethical selling. We propose these links by pointing out that workplace spirituality and the four relationship-oriented selling characteristics consists of a common element of an employee's transcendence of self-interests. This kind of study has been done in organizational literature by Pawar (2009) wherein workplace spirituality is linked to four OB concepts—transformational leadership, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational support, and procedural justice, using the common aspect of self-interest transcendence.

This paper is organized as follows. First, the literature is reviewed for defining workplace spirituality. Next, relationship selling and its characteristics are defined, and justification for the choice of four relationship-oriented selling characteristics is provided. Then, the paper points out that self-interest transcendence is a common element in each of the three dimensions of workplace spirituality and four of the relationship-oriented selling characteristics—customer orientation, adaptive selling, service orientation, and ethical selling. Subsequently, a synthesis of the preceding discussion is provided wherein we propose, based on the common element of self-interest transcendence, that workplace spirituality could be a causal precursor to relationship-oriented selling characteristics. In the end, the implications of the paper for researchers and practitioners followed by a few potential downsides of workplace spirituality in sales organization are provided.

Workplace Spirituality—Definition and Dimensions

One of the difficulties of doing research on the topic of workplace spirituality is to provide a suitable working definition to it (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003). Owing to the highly personal and abstract nature of workplace spirituality (Milliman et al. 2003), the definitions are in plenty. Mirvis (1997) idea of workplace spirituality includes notions of community and meaningful work. Mitroff and Denton (1999) in their study on workplace spirituality find that the participants understand spirituality as "the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe" (p. 83). This view is similar to the notion of inner life. Neal (2000) and Kurth (2003) explores the practice of spiritual work among selected individuals and find that it includes meaningful work in the form of service to community and natural environment, personal relationship to the divine (a constituent of inner life), sense of community. Fry (2003) includes notions of calling and membership which is similar to the meaning and sense of community (Duchon and Plowman 2005). Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) definition includes the aspects similar to the meaningful work and connection to others.[1] Milliman et al. (2003) include the aspects of sense of community and

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[1] The third dimension of workplace spirituality in the study by Milliman et al. (2003) is "alignment with organizational values," which is similar to the meaningful work and sense of community dimensions of Ashmos and Duchon's scale (2000) at the organizational level.

Table 1 Common themes among definitions of workplace spirituality

Author name with year of publication	Dimensions of workplace spirituality
Mirvis (1997)	Meaning in work and sense of community
Mitroff and Denton (1999)	Spiritual identity (inner life)
Neal (2000) and Kurth (2003)	Personal relationship to divine (inner life), meaningful work and sense of community
Ashmos and Duchon (2000)	Inner life, meaningful work, and sense of community
Fry (2003)	Notion of calling similar to meaningful work, and membership similar to sense of community
Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003)	Transcendence through work process similar to meaningful work, and sense of community
Milliman et al. (2003)	Meaningful work and sense of community
Marques et al. (2005)	Inner power, meaningful work, sense of community, and a few others
Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2006)	Spiritual connection similar to inner life, meaningful work, sense of community, and mystical experience
Pawar (2009)	Transcendence similar to inner life, meaningful work, and sense of community
Karakas (2010)	Meaningful work, sense of community, and spiritual self (inner life)

meaningful work in workplace spirituality. Marques et al. (2005) find the aspects of inner power, interconnectedness with those involved in work process, and sense of purpose in work environment, in their research on workplace spirituality. Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2006) definition of individual spirituality at work has three of the four dimensions as: engaging work (meaningful work), sense of community, and spiritual connection (inner life). Pawar (2009), based on the review of literature finds three dimensions of workplace spirituality: transcendence (similar to inner life), meaning in work, and sense of community. Karakas (2010) reviews 140 articles on workplace spirituality and organizational performance. Based on the review, the findings are that meaning in work and sense of community, are the primary drivers for the nourishment of one's spiritual self at workplace.

Three common themes appearing from the definitions as shown in Table 1 are: sense of community, meaningful work, and inner life.

Ashmos and Duchon (2000) definition comprises all the three common themes: sense of community, meaningful work, and inner self. They define spirituality at work as "the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community" (Ashmos and Duchon 2000, p. 137). Ashmos and Duchon (2000) definition comes close to being a useable definition of workplace spirituality (Hayden et al. 2008) and their pioneering work on workplace spirituality is widely acknowledged (Kinjerski and Skrypnek 2006). Badrinarayanan and Madhavaram (2008) also utilize Ashmos and Duchon's (2000) definition in their conceptual study on workplace spirituality in sales organization context. They assert that "the definition and the dimensions utilized in this paper are parsimonious and explicit enough to assist in theory development" (Badrinarayanan and Madhavaram 2008, p. 425).

Mitroff in Lund Dean (2004, p. 13) argues that "An obsession with finding a single correct, overarching definition of workplace spirituality does not respect the myriad traditions and belief systems embedded in our research arena." Hence, though there may be other ways to conceptualize the construct of workplace spirituality, we proceed with the definition provided by Ashmos and Duchon (2000).

Workplace Spirituality Aspects of Inner Life, Meaningful Work, and Sense of Community

The first dimension of workplace spirituality—inner life, refers to the viewpoint that "employees have spiritual needs (i.e., an inner life), just as they have physical, emotional, and cognitive needs, and these needs don't get left at home when they come to work" (Duchon and Plowman 2005, p. 811). This dimension of inner life is about how spiritual one is. This is reflected in the scale items for inner life in Ashmos and Duchon (2000) definition: (1) I consider myself a spiritual person, (2) Prayer is an important part of my life, (3) My spiritual values influences the choices I make, (4) I feel hopeful about life, and (5) I care about the spiritual health of my co-workers.

The second dimension of workplace spirituality—[2]meaningful work, embodies the notion that people seek meaning at

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[2] The concept of meaningful work as a dimension of workplace spirituality is different from the conceptualizations of meaningful work in job design/job enrichment literature. Duchon and Plowman (2005, p. 814) clearly states that "we draw on the job design literature to ground the notion of meaningful work but we go beyond the job design/job enrichment focus on meaningful tasks and jobs. Meaningful work is about cognitively meaningful tasks but it is also about work that creates a sense of joy (Wrzesniewski 2003), which connects workers to a larger good and to things viewed by the worker as important in life (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003)." Thus, the concept of meaningful work as a dimension of workplace spirituality is unique and attempts to makes a novel contribution to the sales literature through this paper.

work (Duchon and Plowman 2005). Meaning at work is about the feeling of alignment with a higher purpose at work (Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Duchon and Plowman 2005; Kurth 1995; Neal 2000, Overell 2008). Higher purpose is the one which is of larger importance—something which is of real worth or something which has value in the larger schema of things (Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Thomas 2009). Other characteristics of meaningful work in workplace spirituality literature are: it creates a sense of joy, connects employees to things viewed by them as important in life (Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Duchon and Plowman 2005), and involves enlivening self by the full use of one's talents and potentials (Fry 2003).

The third dimension—[3]sense of community at work, is based on the idea of living together like spiritual beings at workplace (Ashmos and Duchon 2000). It refers working together with higher values of sharing, mutual obligation, and commitment that bring people together (Duchon and Plowman 2005). Kinjerski and Skyrpnek (2006) add that sense of community not only means living in connection to coworkers, but sharing a common purpose. Similar idea about community is expressed by Chappell, the CEO of a firm, who notes that "common values and a shared sense of purpose can turn a company into a community where daily work takes on a deeper meaning and satisfaction" (Chappell 1993).

Relationship Selling and its Characteristics

There is a paradigm shift in the personal selling research. The transaction-oriented selling approach is getting replaced by relationship selling approach (Jones et al. 2005; Weitz and Bradford 1999; Peppers and Rogers 2004). Traditionally, the emphasis was on close with little thought given to the quality of the buyer–seller interactions. However, with the dramatic increase in competition combined with increasingly sophisticated customers, the emphasis in sales is moving toward relationship selling (Keillor et al. 2000). The sales research has recognized that the long term success of the business depends upon the relational approach to business

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[3] Sense of community is different from organizational identification. In organizational identification, the person identifies with the whole organization rather than with alternative targets such as units, departments, or individuals (Siegel and Sisaye 1997) whereas sense of community is about the feeling of strong trust and personal commitment to the immediate community/work unit and its members (Kinjerski and Syrpnek 2006). Another difference is that in sense of community there is a shared sense of greater purpose while in organizational identification there is a psychological congruence with goals of organization and the goals need not have a greater good. Therefore, the concept of sense of community as a dimension of workplace spirituality is unique and makes a new contribution to the selling literature in this paper.

(Dwyer et al. 1987; Weitz and Bradford 1999). Relationship-oriented selling focuses on constructs which are intended to build mutually beneficial long-term relationship with customers (Jolson 1997). These constructs develop trust and add value in the long run (Avila et al. 2006). The relationship selling literature focus on the following four constructs (or characteristics).

1. Customer orientation: Individual customer orientation is a strong and significant predictor of relationship development (Williams 1998). Individual customer orientation is the application of marketing concept at the individual salesperson–customer level and is understood as a set of behaviors to help customers make purchase decisions that best satisfy their needs (Saxe and Weitz 1982). This conceptualization given by Saxe and Weitz (1982) is widely accepted in sales research. Customer-oriented salespersons involve themselves in the difficult process of determining their clients' needs and provide assistance that best satisfies those needs (Saxe and Weitz 1982). They are committed to behaviors which build long term customer satisfaction rather than short-term self-interest (Saxe and Weitz 1982; Kelley 1992). Numerous studies have shown that high performers are highly customer oriented (Keillor et al. 1999). Salespeople who are highly customer oriented are likely to stimulate repurchases and positive word-of-mouth (Kotler 2003). Customer orientation is also positively related to outcomes such as sales performance, and job satisfaction (Hoffman and Ingram 1991; Jaramillo and Grisaffe 2009).

    It is necessary to study individual salesperson customer orientation because customer satisfaction is initiated and nurtured at the individual salesperson–customer level through the efforts of salespeople (Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995).

2. Service orientation of the salesperson: Another important characteristic of relational selling is the service orientation of a salesperson. In selling, customer orientation means that salesperson orient the sales process to satisfy customer's needs. Infact, the SOCO asks questions about satisfying customer's needs during the sales encounter. Conversely, a service orientation means that "the salesperson attempts to go beyond the limits of the dyadic sales encounter and provide the customer additional information and assistance that continues after the sales encounter" (Keillor et al. 1999, p. 103). Thus, the customer orientation construct focus on the extent to which salesperson orient the sales process to meet customer needs where as the service orientation construct takes into account the seller's willingness to engage in both selling and non-selling tasks (such as post-sales

problems) throughout the buyer–seller relationship (Keillor et al. 2000). Service orientation construct captures TLC—tender, loving care—activities of a salesperson directed toward customers in both selling and non-selling tasks (Keillor et al. 2000). Treating each buyer as if they are the only customer, devoting time to each customer irrespective of the amount of money the customer intends to spend, taking care of post-sales problems, going an extra mile for customers in both selling and non-selling tasks, etc. are some of the characteristics which describes a service-oriented salesperson (Keillor et al. 2000).

3. Adaptive selling: A sales interaction is a dyadic interplay between buyer and a seller. Evans (1963) notes that "the sales is a product of the particular dyadic interaction of a given salesman and prospect rather than a result of the individual qualities of either alone" (p. 76). Therefore, salesperson needs to adapt according to the nature of the customer and selling situation. Adaptive selling is understood as salespersons altering of their behaviors during a customer interaction based on the perceived information regarding the customer and the selling situation (Spiro and Weitz 1990; Weitz et al. 1986). Spiro and Weitz (1990) identify six characteristics of adaptive selling. These are: (1) a recognition that different selling approaches are needed in different sales situations, (2) confidence in the ability to use a variety of different sales approaches, (3) confidence in the ability to alter the sales approach during a customer interaction, (4) a knowledge structure that facilitates the recognition of different sales situations and access to sales strategies appropriate for each situation, (5) the collection of information about the sales situation to facilitate adaptation, and (6) the actual use of different approaches in different situations. These characteristics of adaptive selling insure meaningful dialogue with customers.

4. Ethical selling behavior: Ethical selling behavior is an elusive construct and clear-cut generalizations of what is considered as ethical behavior is difficult because the construct is often situation-specific (Lagace et al. 1991; Robertson and Anderson 1993). Nevertheless, most of the researchers agree that ethical selling behavior relates to widely recognized societal norms such as fair play, honesty, and full disclosure (Robertson and Anderson 1993; Roman and Munuera 2005). Consequently, ethical sales behavior can be understood as the fair and honest actions that promote the well-being of customers (Roman and Munuera 2005).

Ethical selling behavior is important to practice because customer's perception of salesperson's ethical behavior leads to trust, satisfaction, and commitment to the salesperson which further increases share-of-customer and word-of-mouth (Hansen and Riggle 2009).

Justification for the Choice of Four Relationship-Oriented Selling Characteristics

Four relational selling characteristics—customer orientation, service orientation, adaptive selling, and ethical selling behavior—chosen in this study have few features that make them a set of significant and inter-related concepts. First all the four selected variables are empirically verified, multiple times, to influence customer relationships. Customer-oriented selling is empirically verified to influence some of the dimensions of relationship quality concept, which are satisfaction with the salesperson and trust in the salesperson (Bejou et al. 1998; Wray et al. 1994; Macintosh 2007). Adaptive selling behavior positively affects four dimensions of relationship quality concept—customer satisfaction (Roman and Iacobucci 2010), customer loyalty (Omar et al. 2009), trust, and commitment to the salesperson (Park et al. 2010). Salesperson service orientation is found to positively influence four dimensions of relationship quality concept—customer satisfaction (Ahearne et al. 2007), trust and commitment in the salesperson (Ahearne et al. 2007; Sharma and Patterson 1999), and customer loyalty (Cheng and Hui 2009). Similarly, ethical sales behavior positively impacts some of the dimensions of relationship quality—customer satisfaction, commitment and trust to the salesperson (Lagace et al. 1991, Roman and Ruiz 2005; Wray et al. 1994). Second, the relational selling characteristics taken in this study will integrate workplace spirituality more extensively into sales literature by suggesting other concepts which can potentially take the role of outcomes of workplace spirituality. For instance, since adaptive selling behavior is positively linked to salesperson performance (Park and Holloway 2003; Giacobbe et al. 2006) and job satisfaction (Park and Holloway 2003), workplace spirituality through its link with adaptive selling behavior can be linked to salesperson performance and job satisfaction. Third, a considerable body of empirical research has been done on all the selected selling characteristics (customer orientation, adaptability, service orientation, ethical behavior) and even meta-analysis studies exist for three of these concepts. Thus, meta-analysis of findings has been done for customer orientation (Franke and Park 2006), adaptive selling behavior (Franke and Park 2006), and ethical decision-making (Winston 2007). Four, all four selected variables: customer orientation, adaptability, service orientation, ethical selling, have the common element of self-interest transcendence, as outlined in the subsequent sections of the paper.

Self-Interest Transcendence and Workplace Spirituality

Ashmos and Duchon (2000) definition of workplace spirituality has three components: Inner self, meaningful work, and a sense of community. These components reflect, to some extent, employee's transcendence of self-interests. Pawar (2009) in his paper on workplace spirituality provides that the two components: meaningful work and a sense of community, reflects to some extent an underlying notion of employee's transcendence of self-interests. The following discussion elaborates more on the notion of self-interest transcendence and the three components of workplace spirituality.

Self-Interest Transcendence in the Meaningful Work and Sense of Community Aspects of Workplace Spirituality

Self-interest transcendence means beyond one's narrow or economic self-interests. The dimensions of workplace spirituality—meaningful work and sense of community, to some extent reflect the experiences of self-interest transcendence. This can be inferred from various views on these two dimensions in workplace spirituality literature.

For Instance, Mitroff and Denton (1999; as cited in Duchon and Plowman 2005, p. 810) notes that "Meaning at work is about the notion that people and organizations want and need to be engaged in matters of importance… larger than economic matters." Similarly, Mirvis (1997, p. 199) note that meaning in work goes beyond business benefits and it is about the social significance of the work. In sales context, meaningful work is about the feeling of alignment with the higher purpose of serving customers (Willingham 2006). The above views are indicative of transcending one's economic or narrow self-interests. While outlining the "sense of community at work" aspect, Kinjerski and Skyrpnek (2006, p. 7) note that sense of community is characterized by "a real sense of trust and personal connection with coworkers." Similarly, Fry (2003) refers it as showing genuine care, concern, and appreciation to self and others at workplace. These views refer to matters (such as sharing, mutual care, respect, and commitment) that are above and beyond narrow or economic self-interests.

Self-Interest Transcendence in the Inner Life Aspect of Workplace Spirituality

The dimension of inner life in Ashmos and Duchon (2000) definition is about the spiritual life of workers. The inner life aspect of workplace spirituality, to some extent, reflects or is associated with self-interest transcendence. This can be inferred from the views on spirituality provided by many authors, as discussed below.

For instance, Piedmont's view of spirituality is about "individuals recognizing a synchronicity in life, and developing a sense commitment to others" (Piedmont 1999, p. 988). It has three dimensions, of which one of the dimensions is connectedness. Connectedness consists of feelings of personal responsibility toward others (Piedmont 1999, p. 996). The above views reflect, to some extent, self-interest transcendence in terms of aspects such as commitment and responsibility toward others.

In another view of spirituality, Mitroff and Denton (1999, as cited in Kale and Shrivastava 2003, p. 310) describes spirituality as "the basic desire to find ultimate meaning and purpose in one's life and to live an integrated life". de Klerk (2005, p. 69) notes that meaning in life "relates to a sense of being committed to and fulfilling a higher purpose in life". Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2004, p. 39) note, ''deeper meaning can only be realized by transcending self-interests". Similarly, McGhee and Grant (2008) offer a definition of spirituality with one of its characteristics as "seeking to transcend one's ego (self-interests)." These above views imply transcendence of narrow or economic self-interests.

Self-Interest Transcendence and Relationship-Oriented Selling Characteristics

The following discussion provides that self-interest transcendence is a common element in all the four relationship-oriented selling characteristics—customer orientation, adaptability, service orientation, and ethical selling behavior.

Customer Orientation and Self-Interest Transcendence

Customer-oriented salespersons "avoid actions which sacrifice customer interests" (Saxe and Weitz 1982, p. 344). This view reflects commitment to other's interests or collective interests and, by implication, some transcendence of economic or narrow self-interests. Saxe and Weitz (1982) suggest that customer orientation is related to concern for others dimension as opposed to concern for self dimension of the interpersonal behavior models suggested by several writers (such as Blake and Mouton 1970; Buzzotta et al. 1972; Thomas 1976). They further suggest that high customer orientation would be most closely associated with high concern for others as well as self, where as low customer orientation would be closely associated with low concern for others and high concern for self. Theoretical frameworks in the negotiation literature also support that customer orientation emphasizes joint gain over personal gain. Williams (1998) mentions that there are three kinds of negotiation behaviors: command, competitive, and coordinative. Command and competitive

negotiating behaviors stem from a zero-sum or win-lose orientation, where as coordinative behaviors stem from a win–win orientation. He adds that customer orientation corresponds to the coordinative style of negotiating behaviors, and stresses customer-focused solutions and mutual benefits. Thus, customer orientation reflect transcendence of self-interests in terms of a concern for aspects such as sharing, mutual obligation, joint gain over personal gain etc. that are beyond narrow or economic self-interests. Finally, customer-oriented salespeople not only discuss a product's pros, but also point out its disadvantages and limitations (Schwepker 2003). This shows that customer-oriented salespeople always keep a high regard for customers, they, to some extent, reflect a salesperson's transcendence of self-interests.

Service Orientation of the Salesperson and Self-Interest Transcendence

Service orientation construct captures the engagement of a salesperson in both selling and non-selling activities (Ahearne et al. 2007). Engagement in the non-selling activities is the most important characteristic of a service-oriented salesperson (Keillor et al. 2000). The non-selling activities like chasing a problem with delivery, making sure that system integrates with other systems at the buying firm, monitoring that everything is OK with the product at the buying firm, going the extra mile to help when problems arise (Keillor et al. 2000), reflect transcendence of self-interests in terms of a concern for aspects such as cooperation, sense of personal responsibility, etc. that are beyond narrow or economic self-interests.

Adaptive Selling and Self-Interest Transcendence

Weitz et al. (1986) suggest that the adaptive salespersons are unlikely to be motivated through external means. They support it with the reason that the extrinsically motivated salesperson focuses the attention on the outcomes of their work. Thus, they concentrate on achieving success in the most certain way possible which is through simple "tried and tested" ways rather than experimenting with a different approach from customer to customer. This means that adaptive selling is independent of the influence of economic or narrow self-interests. McBane (1995) suggests that adaptive selling can result from the altruistic motivation of salesperson toward the customer. This view is empirically verified by Spiro and Weitz (1990) and Giacobbe et al. (2006). These researchers find that empathic concern is a predictor of adaptive selling. Empathic concern consists of feelings for the other person and is thought to trigger an altruistic response toward the other person

(McBane 1995). Along slightly similar lines, Kim (2010) finds that emotional intelligence, which induces a greater a spirit of sacrifice and altruism by sacrificing one's personal interest for others, is an antecedent to adaptive selling. Further, one of the items in the operationalization of adaptive selling refers to sensitivity to the needs of the customers (Spiro and Weitz 1990). This item suggests that adaptive salespersons have genuine feeling of concern for others rather than having a sole preoccupation with one's own immediate or short-term self-interests (Giacobbe et al. 2006).

Ethical Selling Behavior and Self-Interest Transcendence

Ethical selling behaviors are fair and honest actions that help develop customer satisfaction and trust (Roman and Munuera 2005). In contrast to unethical selling behaviors (e.g., lying on a sales call, lying about product availability and competition, overstating the features of products, giving false answers, making false promises, withholding information, and so on), the ethical selling behaviors (e.g., providing accurate information about the product availability and competition, providing accurate expectation of the product features, not giving false answers, making true promises and fulfilling them and so on) reflect low concern for gain for oneself at the expense of the customer (Roman and Munuera 2005; Lagace et al. 1991). This view reflects commitment to other's interests or collective interests and, by implication, some transcendence of economic or narrow self-interests.

A Synthesis: Workplace Spirituality as Precursor to Four Relationship-Oriented Selling Characteristics

The discussion in the earlier parts of the paper is rooted around the definition and the three dimensions of workplace spirituality. The three dimensions: inner life, meaningful work, and sense of community, involves employee's experiences of self-interest transcendence and hence workplace spirituality can be viewed as inducing self-interest transcendence among employees (Pawar 2009). Further, workplace spirituality includes "organizational conditions or mechanisms such as culture, for inducing or helping employees to transcend their self-interests and for providing them with experiences of self-interest transcendence" (Pawar 2008, p. 251). The subsequent discussion in the preceding parts of the paper points out that the four relationship-oriented selling characteristics: customer orientation, service orientation, adaptive selling behavior, and ethical selling behavior, reflects to some extent the experiences of self-interest transcendence.

On synthesizing the above views, we can say that facilitating workplace spirituality induces or helps employees (or salespersons) to transcend their narrow or economic self-interests for others, and therefore these employees (or salespersons) will conduct with customers in a manner that goes beyond their immediate or economic self-interests. As described earlier, transcending economic or narrow self-interests is an aspect of all the major customer based relationship-oriented selling characteristics—customer orientation, service orientation, adaptive selling, and ethical selling behavior. Therefore, it is expected that workplace spirituality could be a causal precursor to the four major relationship-oriented characteristics. Moreover, it is theoretically established that perceptions of organizational conditions or mechanisms govern salesperson's behavior (Tyagi 1982; Samaraweera 2011) which means that organizational conditions (such as in workplace spirituality) which facilitate self-interest transcendence are expected to cause salesperson's behaviors which are self-interest transcending such as customer orientation, adaptive selling, service orientation, and ethical selling behavior. Therefore, we propose that workplace spirituality could be a causal precursor to the four major relationship-oriented characteristics.

Discussion and Directions for Future Research

The growing interest on workplace spirituality has drawn the attention of academic thinkers, management consultants, and corporate executives worldwide. Considerable academic research has been published in journals like Journal of Social Economics (1996, 1998), Journal of personality (1999), Journal of Organizational change Management (1999, 2002), Pfeiffer annual of training and consulting (2004), Leadership Quarterly (2005), Journal of Management Education (2005, 2006), Global Business Review (2008, 2009) etc. on various aspects of spirituality; however, the research in sales context is very scarce. This paper attempts to integrate workplace spirituality with sales literature, and toward accomplishing this objective makes the four major contributions. First, this paper draws the attention of sales researchers toward the growing importance of workplace spirituality. Big companies like Apple computers in California, Microsoft, Xerox, Prentice-hall publishing company are deriving benefits from workplace spirituality (Aravamudhan 2007), and it is time that sales organizations should also do so, especially now, when salespersons are doing soul-searching at work. By proposing testable relationships, this paper calls for research in workplace spirituality in sales organizations. Second, realizing that organizational literature is deficient of a widely acceptable definition of workplace spirituality

(Gotsis and Kortezi 2008; Konz and Ryans 1999), this paper suggests a highly suitable definition of workplace spirituality by doing a systematic review and analysis of definitions from the seminal research papers in the area of workplace spirituality. Third, recognizing that relationship selling is becoming a new paradigm in sales research (Jones et al. 2005, Weitz and Bradford 1999), this paper proposes the influence of workplace spirituality on relationship selling individual constructs. The relationships and propositions are theoretically grounded, and could be used to initiate a scholarly conversation in field of workplace spirituality in sales organizations. Fourth, this is the only study in the sales management literature which combines workplace spirituality with relationship selling individual level constructs. By doing so, this study makes a unique contribution to sales literature.

In conclusion, this paper links workplace spirituality to four significant relationship selling individual constructs. This paper adds new dimensions to research on workplace spirituality in sales organizations by proposing that workplace spirituality could be viewed as a causal precursor to relationship selling constructs. The resulting implications for future research are described below:

1. The paper covers individual level relationship selling constructs which have a common element of self-interest transcendence. There are group-level relationship selling constructs (such as team selling) which are unexplored in this study. Future research can attempt to link these group-level constructs to workplace spirituality using the concept of self-interest transcendence.

2. The conjectural relationships in this paper are theoretically grounded. Future research can empirically investigate the proposed relationships. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) scale for workplace spirituality could be utilized for empirical investigation. However, it is suggested that interested researchers can take up the task of developing workplace spirituality scale specific to sales organization context, which would help improve the quality of findings in selling context.

3. This paper builds propositions using a common element of self-interest transcendence in workplace spirituality and relationship selling constructs. By this common element, research can be extended to identify the antecedents and consequences of the concept of workplace spirituality in sales organization. For instance, some researchers (e.g., Swimberghe and Habig 2009) note that salespersons deviant behaviors are selfish behaviors intended to promote their self-interests at the expense of organization, co-worker or customer. Because workplace spirituality induces employees to go beyond their narrow or economic self-interests, one can propose that

workplace spirituality in sales organization will negatively influence salespersons deviant behaviors.

Implications for Practice

This paper provides theoretically grounded propositions based on which three major implications for the sales organizations are provided. First, knowing that relationship selling is becoming a competitive advantage in selling industry (Slater and Jolson 2000), this paper suggests that the relationship selling constructs will be influenced by the inclusion of workplace spirituality in sales organizations. Therefore, sales leaders should promote the expression of spirituality at work which would have implications for customer relationships. Second, the soul-searching of salespersons at work as noticed by Cohen (1997) indicates that salespersons are not just looking for the material benefits at work, but inner growth. This means that salespersons search for meaning in their work for motivation. Sales organizations should take notice that salespersons are looking for factors beyond economic for motivation, and therefore these organizations should incorporate mechanisms for facilitation of workplace spirituality. Third, in general, organizations are suggested to build their approach for facilitation of workplace spirituality around three dimensions: Inner life (spirituality), meaningful work, and sense of community. These dimensions are obtained by a sufficiently detailed literature review and analysis.

Potential Downsides of Workplace Spirituality in Sales Organization

Costs associated with adopting spirituality in the workplace would certainly be an issue. Any sales organization wanting to facilitate spirituality would require making massive changes at the leadership and culture level. These strategic changes will come at huge emotional and economic costs of large training and development efforts at different levels in organization (Polley et al. 2005). Moreover, there are chances that abnormally high number of salespeople will leave the organization as they feel problems with the new direction of organization (Polley et al. 2005). In that case, organization would have to bear the additional economic costs of recruiting new salespeople. Also, organizations may require developing new procedures for recruitment to insure that the potential salesperson fits with the organizational spiritual values (Pawar 2008). In addition to the efforts and costs of the hiring process, organization would require spending for the development of a salesperson for the new organizational climate (Polley et al. 2005).

Organization facilitating workplace spirituality would also like to insure the salesperson's spiritual transformation so that the desirable organizational outcomes could be achieved (Pawar 2008). Doing this may require incurring costs for the provision of financial as well as non-financial rewards to salespeople to practice those behaviors with customers which are in alignment with the spiritual culture of organization. However, monitoring the behavior of salespeople would still remain a problem as salespeople spend most of their time in field with customers. Organization may have to devise new procedures or rely on customer feedback to monitor the attitude and behavior of salespeople toward customers. All this will further increase the mental effort and economic costs associated with adopting spirituality in the workplace. Last, there is lack of empirical investigations in literature to confirm the linkage between workplace spirituality and bottom-line benefits for the firm (Polley et al. 2005). While it does not mean that spirituality has no effect on profitability, there is a need to build new models of how spirituality enhances performance of organizations. Interested researchers can examine this linkage.

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