

# SPIRITUALITY AND EMPATHY AS PREDICTORS OF COMMITMENT IN MANAGERS OF IT COMPANIES

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the present study was to ascertain the contribution of spirituality and empathy in commitment of managers. The present research is also an attempt to investigate the relationship of spirituality and empathy with commitment of managers. For this purpose a sample of 206 managers was taken from IT companies of Delhi and NCR on incidental basis. Spirituality Scale developed by Delaney, Empathy Scale named as Interpersonal reactivity index (IRI) by Davis and Organizational Commitment Instrument devised by Balaji were administered. Separate regression analyses were run to find out the percentage of variance contributed by spirituality and empathy in commitment of managers. Results of regression analysis showed that 59% of variance in commitment of managers was contributed together by spirituality and empathy. However, in the individual analysis, only spirituality emerged as a significant predictor of commitment and contributed 75% variance in managers whereas empathy contributed only 8% of variance in managers. In correlation analysis, spirituality (all dimensions) was found to be significantly related with commitment whereas among empathy dimensions, only empathic concern and perspective taking were significantly related with commitment of managers ( $p < .01$ ), the personal distress dimension was negatively but significantly related with commitment and no relationship was found between fantasy dimension of empathy and commitment. The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings, conclusion of the study and suggestions for future research.*

**Keywords:** *Spirituality, empathy, interpersonal reactivity index, commitment*

## I. INTRODUCTION

With rapid increase in globalization and cut throat competition, the major challenge for organizations nowadays is to retain their employees and make them feel committed towards their work. Commitment is considered as a powerful tool for every company's survival and progress. Also it is important for organizations to recruit employees who are able to do their jobs well and also engage in activities that affect both individual and organizational performance positively. Commitment is an internal force that binds an individual to a course of action or target, and is often conceptualized as an attitude that reflects feelings such as attachment, identification or loyalty (Cohen, 2003). It is an ability and involvement of an individual towards their organization. Organizational commitment as a practical concept has great influence in employees' turnover and absenteeism. In effect, it is a general rule in organizational commitment that a high degree of commitment would bring about positive results for the organization. Meyer and Allen (1997) define a committed employee as being one "who

stays with an organization, attends work regularly, puts in a full day and more, protects corporate assets, and believes in the organizational goals". This employee positively contributes to the organization because of its commitment to the organization.

On the basis of multidimensional nature of organizational commitment, Meyer and Allen (1991). proposed a three-component model of organizational commitment. All three components have implications for the continuing participation of the individual in the organization. The three components are: *Affective Commitment*: Psychological attachment to organization. *Continuance Commitment*: Costs associated with leaving the organization. *Normative Commitment*: Perceived obligation to remain with the organization. Guest (1991) concludes that high organizational commitment is associated with lower turnover and absence, but there is no clear link to performance. It is probably wise not to expect too much from commitment as a means of making a direct and immediate impact on performance. It is not the same as motivation. Commitment is a broader concept and tends to withstand transitory aspects of an employee's job. It is possible to be dissatisfied with a particular feature of a job while retaining a reasonably high level of commitment to the organization as a whole. Creating commitment includes communication, education, training programmes, and initiatives to increase involvement and ownership and the development of performance and reward management systems. Spirituality and empathy are the constructs that could have significant effects on the commitment of managers. The present study attempts to identify how spirituality and empathy influence the commitment of managers.

Spirituality has been recognized as the fundamental area of research in business and academics. It signifies an individual's connectedness with the transcendent, self, others, and nature; a search for meaning and purpose in life (Meezenbroek et al, 2012; Chiu, Emblen, Van Hofwegen, Sawatzky, & Meyerhoff, 2004). The search for meaning is reflected in an individual's making sense of life and one's experiences, of seeking answers to ultimate questions about life's meaning and purpose (Chiu, Emblen, Van Hofwegen, Sawatzky, & Meyerhoff, 2004). This meaning gives hope, inner peace, and sense of direction. Taken as a whole, a testimony of one's spirituality is a "lifestyle that incorporates one's response to the picture of the sacred" (Hill et al, 2000). This lifestyle is characterized by an individual personal growth and a concern for valuing others. Also with rapid increase in global competition and economical downturn, employees are responding to a call for a deeper sense of purpose, a more significant sense of faith, and a renewed commitment to spirituality. They are more concerned with the relationship between meaning in life and meaning in work (Neal, Lichtenstein, & Banner 1999), and increasingly seeking employment that is inspiring and consequential (Mitroff & Denton, 1999b). More importantly, surveys of leaders and managers confirm the need for a workplace culture, leadership and work processes that acknowledge the whole person with emotional and intellectual needs, desires and a spirit (Kinjerski & Skrypnik, 2004; Fairholm, 1997; Mitroff & Denton, 1999b). Hence, there is the widespread belief that for companies to survive it would be helpful to seek inspiration from Above [God/ heaven] and tap into employees' spiritual resources (Wong, 2003). This search for meaning and connectedness aligns individuals with that which makes them distinctly human- their spirituality.

Empathy is the ability to see a situation from another person's perspective (Wang, 2007). It is defined as seeking to understand somebody else desires and goals. It involves the ability of individual parties to view the situation from the other party's perspective in a truly cognitive sense (Chattananon & Trimetsoontorn, 2009). The ability to be empathetic is especially important for leaders working in global organizations or across cultural

boundaries (Alon & Higgins, 2005) or for leaders getting ready for expatriate assignments (Harris & Moran, 1987; Jokinen, 2005). Social scientists feel that empathy could be a dispositional trait or a learned behavior consisting of both a cognitive and an affective dimension (Davis, 1996; Siu & Shek, 2005). The affective component involves emotional responses to the distressed target (Davis, 1996), which may include sympathy, sensitivity, and sharing in the suffering of other people (Schieman & Van Gundy, 2000). The cognitive feature involves the awareness of others' problems and emotions along with the capacity for role taking (Davis, 1996).

Davis (1994) proposed an organizational model of empathy named Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), which distinguishes between three components of other-oriented empathy and self-oriented personal distress. Empathic concern is characterized by compassion and concern, perspective taking assesses the disposition to take the other's perspective in real-life situations, and fantasy taps identification with fictional characters and other forms of role-taking in the fictional domain. Personal distress measures the tendency to experience distress and discomfort in response to negative emotions in others. Davis accepts that all these components of empathy and their interrelations should be considered when studying empathy.

Against this backdrop and looking at the importance of the above constructs in organizations, the present research aims to find out how spirituality and empathy effect commitment of managers.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Adawiyah, Shariff, Saud and Mokhtar (2011) examined the moderating effects of workplace spirituality on the relationship between soft Total Quality Management (TQM) and organizational commitment on Islamic banks in Central Java, Indonesia. The finding of the study showed that all Soft TQM dimensions, except education and training, have positive and significant influence on organizational commitment. Moreover workplace spiritual values appear to moderate empowerment and organizational commitment associations as well as customer focus linkage with employees' commitment towards Islamic banks. Khanifar, Jandghi and Shojaie (2010) conducted a research in western and eastern part of the world, which shows that the employee's perception of spiritual elements causes the prevalence of the level of commitment at work. The reason is that commitment is a central variable and shows that those who are more committed, work harder than those who are carefree and indifferent. In a study by Rego and Pina e Cunha (2008), workplace spirituality was found to be significantly predictive of affective, normative, and continuance commitment to one's employer and organization. They found that the more the workplace is spiritual-based, the more the benefits realized by organizations in terms of satisfied, committed, productive, flexible and creative workforce. Spirituality was found to negatively related to stress at work (Atkins, 2007), depression (Robertson, 2007 and Yoshioka, 2007) as well as merger syndrome. In addition, Rahayu (2007), in his study on 267 respondents of profit and nonprofit organizations in Indonesia, concludes that workplace spirituality has significant relationship with organizational commitment. In the study of Markow and Klenke (2005), organizational commitment was found to be positively related with personal meaning profile and work as calling but negatively associated to intention to quit. Raziene and Endrivilaitiene (2007) conducted a study on sample group of 158 nurses. Nurses having more empathy are more likely to develop higher occupational commitment. In addition it was found that, higher levels of empathy and occupational commitment of nurses are associated with lower emotional exhaustion. Findings of research by Rezayian and Koshtegar (2008) showed that the dimensions of emotional intelligence (emotional self-

awareness, self-management, empathy, social awareness and relationship management) as well as managing relationships showed the greatest impact on organizational commitment. Also Gholami et al.(2013) declared that, among the numerous factors affecting individual's performance and commitment, emotional intelligence and job satisfaction have a better and more significant role in increasing individual commitment in organizations.

## 2.2 Objectives

1. To ascertain the contributions of spirituality and empathy in commitment of managers.
2. To study the relationship of spirituality and empathy with commitment of managers.

## 2.3 Hypotheses

1. There would be significant contributions of spirituality and empathy in commitment of managers.
2. There would be significant relationship of spirituality and empathy with commitment of managers.

## III. METHOD

### 3.1 Participants

At the initial stage a total of 206 managers were taken on availability and snowball bases from different companies (names cannot be given because of confidentiality agreement with companies) on the basis of permission granted by appropriate authorities for carrying out the study. To minimize the effects of other variables and make it more meaningful the following inclusion criteria were taken into account while selecting the participants

- Minimum of two years of experience
- Age ranging from 28 to 40 years

### 3.2 Measures

#### 3.2.1 Organizational Commitment Instrument (OCI)

Organizational Commitment Instrument developed by Balaji (1986) was used in the present study. It consists of 15 items on a five point rating scale that measures organizational commitment and is widely used in organizational behaviour research in India. The instrument attempts to measure OC defined as “the relative strength of an individual’s identification with an involvement in a particular organization”. There are 9 positive and 6 negative items. Positive and negative item numbers are 1,2,4,5,6,8,10,13,14 and 3,7,9,11,12,15 respectively. The items are rated on a five point scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The average of scores for the statement provides the index of OC, higher score indicating stronger OC. OCQ has reasonable strong internal consistency and test retest reliability the convergent, discriminate and predictive validities were of acceptable levels. The scale exhibited a very high degree of reliability as measured by cronbach alpha of 1.00 and the cronbach alpha for the current sample is .83.

#### 3.2.2 Spirituality Scale (SS)

Spirituality Scale (SS) developed by Delaney (2003) was used to measure the spirituality of the respondents. The scale consists of 23-items with three dimensions: Self-Discovery, Relationships, and Eco-Awareness. The items were rated on 6-point likert scale with response option 1 indicating “strongly disagree” and response option

6 indicating “strongly agree”. Self-discovery dimension consisted of 4 items, relationships of 6 items and eco-awareness of 13 items. Possible scoring on the 23-item of spirituality scale ranged from 23-138. Scores indicate how important or to what extent the phenomenon of spirituality is to, or manifested by, the person. It was theorized that scores between 23-60 indicated very low levels of spirituality, 61-91 indicated low spirituality and, 92-117 indicated moderate spirituality and was also considered as a possible potential for spiritual distress, and 118-138 suggested high levels of spirituality or spiritual wellness. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the total SS was .94. and for the coefficients of the three subscales ranged from .81 to .94. Content validity index of SS was .94. The cronbach alpha calculated for the current sample for the entire spirituality scale is .83 and for the dimensions are : Self-Discovery (.59), Relationships (.49) and Eco-awareness (.81).

### 3.2.3 Empathy Scale

Empathy scale named as Interpersonal reactivity index (IRI) by Davis,(1980) was used to measure the empathy of respondents. IRI is a multidimensional scale composed of 28 self-report items designed to measure both cognitive and emotional components of empathy. The 28 items constitute four subscales of seven items each (Davis, 1980). Each of the 28 item was rated using a five point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (does not describe me well), to 4 (describes me very well). The subscale scores range from 0 to 28. The subscales of the IRI were arrived at by factor analysis and consist of 4 subscales of 7 items each: *perspective taking* (IRIpt), *fantasy scale* (IRIfs), *empathic concern* (IRIec), and *personal distress* (IRIpd). The total score on the scale ranges from 0 to 112. For each subscale, the responses were simply added to the seven items making up that scale (after first reverse-coding the negatively worded items). It uses a 0 – 4 item response format, which produces a total potential range of 0 – 112 for the whole scale, with higher scores indicating higher empathic disposition. The internal reliability of the subscales ranged from .71 to .77, and test-retest reliability from .62 to .71. The cronbach alpha calculated for the sample of this research for the complete scale is .41 and for each dimension are: Fantasy scale(.53) , empathic concern (.37), perspective taking (.36) and Personal distress (.35) respectively.

## IV. RESULTS

Regression analysis was used to ascertain the contribution of variance of spirituality and empathy as predictor variables on commitment as criterion variable.

**Table 1: Contribution of variance by spirituality and empathy in commitment of managers.**

Variables	Standardized Regression Coefficients	t	Significance
	<b>Beta</b>		
Spirituality	.751	16.55	.00
Empathy	.087	1.92	.05

$R^2 = .59$  ;  $F= 146.59$  ;  $p= <.000$

To examine the fit of the regression model and to identify the best predictors of commitment, stepwise regression was used with spirituality and empathy as predictors. In the model, spirituality and empathy served as predictor variables and commitment as criterion variable.

Table 1 shows that a total of 59% variance in commitment of managers was contributed together by spirituality and empathy ( $F= 146.59; <.000$ ). However, to make it more meaningful individual contribution of each of the two predictors were found out with the help of standardized beta coefficients. The beta coefficient shows that out of two predictor's spirituality counted significant 75% variance and empathy counted only 8% of variance in commitment of managers. Thus out of the two only spirituality emerged as significant predictor of commitment, which was significant beyond .01 level of significance.

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation of commitment, spirituality and empathy.**

		CO	EA	SD	RE	FS	EC	PT	PD
<b>Commitment</b>	<b>CO</b>	<b>1</b>							
	<b>EA</b>	.720**	<b>1</b>						
<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>SD</b>	.700**	.805**	<b>1</b>					
	<b>RE</b>	.753**	.884**	.852	<b>1</b>				
	<b>FS</b>	.085	.018	.077	.022	<b>1</b>			
<b>Empathy</b>	<b>EC</b>	.197**	.269**	.246**	.289**	.163*	<b>1</b>		
	<b>PT</b>	.328*	.310**	.210**	.342**	.040	.256**	<b>1</b>	
	<b>PD</b>	-.163*	-.265**	-.290**	-.322**	.093	-.066	-.163*	<b>1</b>

CO=Commitment, EA= Eco-awareness, SD= Self-determination, RE= Relationship, FS= Fantasy scale, EC= Empathic concern, PT= Perspective taking, PD= Personal Distress.

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 summarizes the correlation values of all the three variables. It represents correlation values between different dimensions of spirituality and empathy with commitment of managers. The results are discussed at

four levels: obtained significant correlation of dimensions of spirituality and empathy with commitment, other linkages with spirituality; then with empathy and lastly of all the constructs with each other.

The correlation table 2 revealed significant relationships among the constructs. All the dimensions of spirituality emerged as significantly related with commitment, ( $r(206) = .720, p < .01$ ) for eco-awareness, ( $r(206) = .700, p < .01$ ) for self determination and ( $r(206) = .753, p < .01$ ) for relationships, that is highly spiritual person will also be highly committed. Among the four empathy dimensions only empathic concern and perspective taking were significantly correlated with commitment of managers ( $p < 0.01$ ), the personal distress dimension was negatively related with commitment; however no relationship was found between fantasy dimension of empathy and commitment.

Other significant findings were also obtained, which were not hypothesized but are important to consider for wholesome understanding, as mentioned, among dimensions of spirituality and empathy. Significant relations were found with eco-awareness and empathic concern ( $p < .01$ ); eco-awareness and perspective taking ( $p < .01$ ); self-determination with empathic concern and perspective taking ( $p < .01$ ); relationship dimension of spirituality with empathic concern and perspective taking ( $p < .01$ ). All these results are highly significant and provide good base for future research. These results are further discussed in the light of existing literature

## Discussion

The success of an organization and the pursuit of quality depend not only on how the organization makes the most of human competencies, but also on how it stimulates commitment to an organization (Beukhof, de Jong & Nijhof, 1998; Thornhill, Lewis & Saunders, 1999). Commitment has been considered to have valuable outcomes for both employees and employers.

Greater commitment can result in enhanced feelings of belonging, security, efficacy, greater career advancement, increased compensation and increased intrinsic rewards for the individual (Rowden 2000). Regression **table-1** showed value of  $R^2 = .59$ , which explained about 59% of variance in commitment of managers contributed together by spirituality and empathy which was found to be significant ( $F = 146.59, p < .00$ ). Further in the beta table spirituality was emerged as the significant predictor of commitment counted significant 75% variance which was significant beyond .01 level of significance meaning thereby that out of two variables used in this study spirituality of managers is the sole predictor of commitment.

Our findings are supported by the study conducted by Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) & Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson (2003) who stated that by focusing on the spiritual side of a person, organizations experience an increase in the commitment level of their employees and thereby leading to a positive and progressive workplace setting. Conger (1994) also suggests that inclination towards workplace spirituality leads to a better style of leadership, hence leading to an increase in the commitment level of employees. Thus, level of spiritual inclination of a person has an impact on his/her level of commitment as well. Thereby for organizations, in order to have a committed workforce, it is necessary to tap the spiritual resources of their employees and leaders.

**Pearson correlation coefficients in table 2** shows a significant relationship between spirituality and commitment. In line with the current studies, Rego and Cunha (2007) research indicated a higher correlation between workplace spirituality and organization commitment and suggest that when people experience workplace spirituality, they feel more affectively attached to their organizations and experience a sense of obligation/loyalty to the organization. Dehaghi, Goodarzi and Arazi (2012) in their study concluded that by

improving spirituality at work climates, organizational commitment and individual and organizational performance can be promoted. Also Khanifar, Jandghi and Shojaie (2010) conducted a research in western and eastern part of the world, and found that the employee's perception of spiritual elements causes the prevalence of the level of commitment at work. The reason is that commitment is a central variable and shows that those who are more committed, work harder than those who are carefree and indifferent. In the study of Markow and Klenke (2005), organizational commitment was found to be positively related with personal meaning profile and work as calling but negatively associated to intention to quit.

Davis (1983) identified four distinguishable elements of empathy which give rise to one's overall reactivity to another. Perspective-Taking (PT) is the cognitive ability to take on the psychological perspective of another; Empathetic Concern (EC) is experiencing "other oriented" feelings of sympathy and concern for others' misfortune; Personal Distress (PD) involves one's own feelings of discomfort and anxiety in emotional social situations; and Fantasy (FS) is the tendency for one to transpose him- or herself into the thoughts and feelings of fictitious characters in books, plays, and movies. **Pearson correlation coefficients in Table 2** shows that with respect to empathy construct, among all the four dimensions of empathy i.e. PT, EC, PD and FS; only empathic concern (EC) and perspective taking (PT) were significantly correlated with commitment of managers ( $p < 0.01$ ), whereas personal distress (PD) dimension was negatively related with commitment; and no relationship was found between fantasy dimension (FS) of empathy and commitment.

Findings of the present research is supported by study conducted by Kanov et al., 2004 who suggest that empathic concern, which involves perspective taking, plays an important role in organizations by connecting the awareness of suffering to compassionate responding (Kanov et al., 2004). Sum (2015) found strong support that taking the perspective of individuals that can be negatively influenced by a product launch can indeed effectively promote de-escalation of commitment. Also, Ramlingaswami (1990) points out that in contemporary societies, stresses of one or the other kind have become a common source of threat to mental and physical health and well-being of the people, which in turn diminishes the level of commitment in employees (Tiwari, 2006).

Further findings are supported by the study conducted by Raziene and Endrivilaitiene (2007) conducted a study on sample group of 158 nurses. Nurses having more empathy are more likely to develop higher occupational commitment. In addition it was found that, higher levels of empathy and occupational commitment of nurses are associated with lower emotional exhaustion. Apart from this, the study of Rathi and Rastogi (2009) showed that there is a positive relationship between empathy and organizational commitment. The results of their study are consistent with, and supported by, some of the previous studies (e.g., Adeyemo, 2007; Humphreys, Brunsen, & Davis, 2005; Nikolaou & Tsaousis, 2002; Singh, 2004; Sinha & Jain, 2004), where a positive relationship has been observed between emotional intelligence which is an important determinant of empathy and organizational commitment. The results of the present study are in consonance with those studies.

## V. CONCLUSION

Spirituality and empathy have implications for both employees as well as for the organizations. The present research has shown that dimensions of spirituality were significantly related with commitment of managers. Also results of the study showed that among spirituality and empathy, only spirituality emerged as significant predictor of commitment of managers. With respect to empathy, perspective taking and empathic concern were

significantly correlated with commitment of managers; the personal distress dimension was negatively related with commitment; however no relationship was found between fantasy dimension of empathy and commitment.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

As we can see from our results that spirituality among managers has important implications for organizations. Also fostering spirituality in workplace results in a more committed workforce. Thereby for organizations in order to enhance the commitment of managers, it is necessary to incorporate spirituality in the workplace. Also empathy which is an important construct for creating trusting relationships is generally found to be lacking in managers. So it is necessary for organizations that they should consider some factors that have been identified to have strong impact in cultivating empathy of individuals and incorporate them in employees' development programs to improve their empathic abilities in the workplace which in turn would be beneficial both for the individual's as well as for the organizations.

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