Conceptualization of Workplace Spirituality in an Eastern Context[1]

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Abstract

Workplace spirituality is a complex construct and is perceived differently in different cultures and contexts. The purpose of this study was to construct the meaning of workplace spirituality from the perceptions of employees in an Eastern context, particularly Nepal, which is primarily dominated by the *Vedic* and Buddhist spiritual traditions. This study utilized the constructivist grounded theory methodology to elucidate the meaning of WPS. The analysis of data revealed that WPS is a multi-dimensional construct having nine distinct dimensions – Altruistic Motive, Interpersonal Positivity, Compassion, Inner Calmness, Duty Orientation, Sense of Collaboration, Interconnectedness, Self-Regulation, and Higher Consciousness. The emergence of these dimensions is discussed in light of the Western WPS literature and the teachings of *Vedic* and Buddhist spiritual traditions. Finally, practical and research implications are drawn and the study's limitations are highlighted.

Keywords: bhagavadgItA[3], Buddhist spiritual tradition, constructivist grounded theory, Vedic spiritual tradition, workplace spirituality

Introduction

Scholars' and practitioners' interest in spirituality not only in the field of organization studies but also in other disciplines of practice and management scholarship has grown exponentially in the last several decades. Scholars mention several reasons for these growing interests. For example, society seeks spiritual solutions to ease tumultuous social and business changes, there is a profound change in values globally (Benefiel et al., 2014), and there is a growing interest in Eastern philosophies (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Benefiel et al., 2014) in which spirituality usually forms an integrated part of life. Furthermore, scholars are interested in applying spirituality to dealing with complicated organizational problems, such as reducing employees' distrust, incivility, and deviant behaviors and enhancing their performance and well-being (Karakas, 2010, Chaudhary & Lata, 2021; Shrestha & Jena, 2021).

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[3] Harvard-Kyoto Transliteration has been used for *Sanskrit* words

The scholarly work, particularly on spirituality in the workplace context, appeared as early as 1924 in Mary Parker Follett's book *Creative Experience* (see Shrestha, 2016). After that, workplace spirituality (WPS) has emerged as an exciting field of inquiry for scholars from different disciplines such as psychology (McKee et al., 2011; Paloutzian & Park, 2014; Van der Walt, 2018), business ethics (Corner, 2009; Gupta et al., 2014; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Sheep, 2006), entrepreneurship (King-Kauanui et al., 2005; Singh et al., 2016), and religion (Fernando & Jackson, 2006; Lynn et al., 2011). However, confusions, contradictions, and controversies still exist while conceptualizing this construct. Owing to these problems, Laabs (1995, p. 63) pointed out that "defining spirituality in the workplace is like capturing an angel - it's ethereal and beautiful, but perplexing". Even after a quarter-century, Laabs's remark on WPS largely remains equally relevant, evidenced by the plethora of definitions and measurement scales available for capturing WPS in the management literature.

Past reviews of the literature on WPS (Benefiel et al., 2014; Karakas, 2010; Miller & Ewest, 2013; Mumtaz, 2017) indicate that despite numerous attempts by scholars for a more generalizable conceptualization of WPS, this issue has not yet been resolved. This could be due to the fact that much of the literature on WPS and its conceptualization has been generated in the United States (Crossman, 2015), and these conceptualizations may not account for the distinctiveness of other cultural contexts. Scholars (e.g., Krishnakumar & Neek, 2002; Sheng & Chen, 2012) suggest that people perceive work and WPS differently in Western and Eastern cultures. Some scholars (e.g., Crossman, 2015) are skeptical about the transferability of theorization and empirical outcomes of WPS across cultures. MacDonald (2011) also pointed out that there is no research evidence suggesting the applicability of the conceptualization of spirituality from one culture across different cultures and languages. He further pointed out that differences in languages and language descriptors could result in different dimensions of spirituality. Based on their review, Pargament and Mahoney (2009) call for universal and contextual approaches to conceptualizing spirituality. This may hold for WPS as well. The East, especially the South Asian sub-continent, has observed distinct spiritual traditions from time immemorial. Furthermore, in the past several decades, many faith movements like Art of Living, *vrahma kumarI*, the *ozo* Movement, Transcendental Meditation, and *vipassana* meditation that originated from India and are primarily rooted in the *Vedic* and Buddhist spiritual traditions are guiding people towards the path of spirituality (Singh et al., 2017). Similarly, many ancient Hindu scriptures like v*eda, upaniSada, bhagavadgItA* and the spiritual discourses and writings of spiritual masters like Sri Satya Sai Baba, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, and other contemporary scholars could have a direct bearing on WPS (Srirangarajan & Bhaskar, 2011). Not accounting for the influence of the Eastern spiritual traditions, discourses, and faith movements will eliminate the possibility of utilizing knowledge and wisdom generated from such traditions, discourses, and movements in understanding WPS (Houghton et al., 2016).

Nepal, a country in the South Asian sub-continent, has its people influenced mainly by the *Vedic* and Buddhist spiritual traditions. Although 81.3 percent of its population comprises Hindus, most of them are deeply influenced by Buddhist spiritual traditions and adore Buddha as a god (Ghimire, 2021). Moreover, contemporary faith movements such as Art of Living, *vrahma kumarI*, the *ozo*, *vipassana* meditation, and teachings of Sri Satya Sai Baba and Sadhguru have also had a significant influence on the lives of many people in Nepal. Therefore, we intend to conceptualize WPS utilizing the perceptions of Nepali employees working in different organizations to address two specific gaps - (a) the need for context-specific definitions and (b) conceptualizations utilizing the knowledge and wisdom generated from Eastern spiritual traditions and contemporary faith movements that currently prevail in south Asia - in WPS literature highlighted by many previous scholars. More specifically, we aim to answer a research question, "How can WPS be conceptualized utilizing the perceptions of employees who work in a cultural context dominated by *Vedic* and Buddhist spiritual traditions and are influenced by the teachings of faith movements?

Major Perspectives in the Conceptualization of Spirituality

Based on the review of literature in the diverse disciplines, Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) concluded that there are three distinct views while conceptualizing spirituality – intrinsic origin view, religious view, and existentialistic view. The intrinsic origin view suggests that spirituality is "rooted in the inside of individuals" (Gupta & Mikkilineni, 2018, p. 5). It posits that spirituality is a feeling of interconnectedness of an individual with others, which comes from inside of the individual. The definitions given by many scholars such as "oneness with all other beings" (Krishnan, 2008, p. 13); "the basic feeling of being connected with one's complete self, others, and the entire universe", and "our inner consciousness" (Guillory 2000, p. 33) represent this perspective.

In another view, spirituality is viewed from the lens of religion. For Hindus, spirituality is performing duty with utmost devotion as suggested by the *bhagavadgItA*, one of the revered scriptures of Hindus. For Buddhists, spirituality is about "hard work and devotion that enrich life and work" (Jacobson 1983, as cited in Gupta & Mikkilineni, 2018). Similarly, for Christians, it is a call for work (Gupta & Mikkilineni, 2018).

The existentialist perspective views spirituality as an individual's quest to seek answers to existentialistic questions. Definitions of spirituality such as "a personal search for meaning and purpose in life" (Tanyi, 2002, p. 506) and "personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, about the meaning and about relationship to the sacred or transcendent" (Koeing et al., 2001, p. 18) represent the existentialist perspective.

Eastern Perspectives on Spirituality

Although the South Asian subcontinent has been primarily dominated by the *Vedic* and Buddhist traditions, other traditions such as Jainism and Sikhism have also shown their significant presence in this region. As this study intends to conceptualize WPS from the *Vedic* and Buddhist perspectives, a brief discussion on these perspectives is presented below.

Vedic Perspectives on Spirituality

Given the number of scriptures available, one cannot talk about a generic *Vedic* perspective on spirituality. *Vedic* literature in its original form receives less interest as they are challenging to apply in daily life. They act as foundational principles on the existence and how to live a life while aiming for happiness and reducing pain and sorrow. Therefore, the scriptures which are more applicable in daily lives (e.g., the *bhagavadgItA*) are more used. However, they all have their roots in *Vedic* thinking, which leads to some underlying principles that are fundamental to the majority of the scriptures. Nandram et al. (2019) have highlighted five principles after reviewing the Indian philosophical landscape. The first principle is the notion of integral unity or oneness, allowing the idea that there are many manifestations of any phenomenon under study. The second one is the principle of holistic attainment of life goals which in many Hindu scriptures are described as *dharma*, *artha, kAma,* and *mokSa*. The third principle is related to embodied knowledge and the attitude of detached involvement in all actions, not expecting any fruits of one's actions.

The fourth principle is the notion that there are things beyond our control, which requires an attitude of non-doership when conducting actions. Finally, the fifth principle is the notion that all things are connected. Behind these principles, the assumptions are that everyone and everything has consciousness, that everyone and everything has a spark of Divine consciousness, and that all life is cyclic without a

beginning or an end. These assumptions are grounded in the so-called four *mahavaky*, or the four fundamental mantras of the *Rgveda*, *atharva veda*, *samveda* and *yjurveda*: Universe or consciousness is *vrahma*, the Self is *vrahma*, You are *vrahma*, and I am *vrahma*.

Other scholars have also written about several elements of the *Vedic* perspectives based on their understanding of interpretations of the *Vedic* scriptures. Although they are not referring to original sources but use interpretations, they give a sense of what scholars think is a generic *Vedic* view on spirituality. According to Gupta et al. (2012), the basic tenet of the *Vedic* philosophy lies in the oneness in creation, i.e., a single reality but its multiple manifestations. Like other wisdom traditions, the *Vedic* tradition also emphasizes the spiritual aspects of human beings (Pandey et al., 2009). Pandey and Gupta (2008) posit that contemporary thoughts such as positive/humanistic psychology, well-being literature, and positive organizational behavior as well as traditional Indian thoughts such as *svadharma* and *lokasaGgraha* have a direct bearing on WPS. *svadharma* comprises two terms – 'sva' means self and 'dharma' means the duty of an individual (Bhawuk, 2011). On the other hand, *loksaGgraha* is characterized as "binding people together, protect them to achieve the welfare of the society, and lead them on the self-realization path" (Pandey et al., 2009, p. 4).

As per the *bhagavadgItA*, *kama* (Misplaced Desires); *krodha* (Anger); *lobha* (Greed); *moha* (Infatuation); *matsar* (Jealousy), and *ahaGkar* (Megalomaniac Ego) are the six impurities, and as an individual starts making himself/herself free from these impurities, he/she begins his/her journey towards the higher self (Singh, 2017). The relationship of the self with work is explained by the *karma* theory or the doctrine of *karma yoga* that originates from the *bhagavadgItA*. *karma yoga* advocates the path of *niSkam karma*, which means performing work without excessive attachment to results (Pardasani et al., 2014). The practice of *karma yoga* leads a person to reach the ideal liberated state through work (Mulla & Krishnan, 2006).

The relationship of the self with others can be understood from *bhakti yoga* – the path of compassion to people and surrender to the supreme (Singh, 2017). l*oksaGgraha* also deals with this aspect as it is concerned with the interconnectedness or interdependence of the society to its constituent elements, including individuals (Pardasani et al., 2014). Similarly, the relationship of others with work as perceived by the self can be described through *jnana yoga* and *bhakti yoga* (Singh, 2017). Thus, the Yogic paths described in the *bhagavadgItA* and other *Vedic* scriptures can have direct implications on an individual's experience of spirituality in his/her work context.

Buddhist Perspective on Spirituality

Buddhism has been practiced as a religion, especially in China, Korea, East Asian countries, and Japan. However, scholars do not disagree that Buddhism is a philosophy despite being practiced as a religion. This could be attributed to the fact that there is no distinction between religion and philosophy in Eastern thoughts (Rodgers & Yen, 2002).

The central tenet of Buddhist philosophy is that human life is full of suffering, but one can get relieved from those sufferings and achieve happiness (Kernochan et al., 2007). Happiness or *sukha* is "a state of flourishing that arises from mental balance and insight into the nature of reality" (Ekman et al. 2005, p. 60). By practicing Buddhist virtues such as compassion, mindfulness, and letting go of the self (or no-self), one can achieve happiness (Kernochan et al., 2007). Compassion is the aspiration that all beings be free from *duHkha* (Harvey, 2000, quoted in Kernochan et al., 2007). *duHkha* implies not only the suffering but also dissatisfaction that arises either from the desire to have something that one does not have or from the dislike of something that one possesses or faces (Kernochan et al., 2007). Similarly, mindfulness, one of the eightfold paths to enlightenment, is a "state of wakefulness and focus unmixed with competing images, thoughts, or feelings" (Heaton et al. 2004, as quoted in Petchsawang, 2008, p.

16). These two important Buddhist virtues, i.e., compassion and mindfulness, are two intertwined spiritual aspects that have a direct bearing on the employees of contemporary organizations.

Workplace Spirituality: Definitions and Dimensionalities

WPS refers to the "contextualized phenomenon of spirituality" (NandanPrabhu et al., 2017, p. 1). The growth of interest in WPS over the past decades may be attributed to factors such as an individual's search for purpose and meaning and transcendent values in his/her job (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008). Despite growing interest, scholars have experienced difficulties while defining WPS. The difficulty in defining WPS is attributed to different factors. Chawla and Guda (2010) suggest that the subjective nature of WPS creates a problem in its precise definition. Markow and Klenke (2005, p. 9) suggest that perhaps it is because of the fear that providing a clear definition of WPS could lead to "dogmatic rigidity".

On the other hand, Schutte (2016) argues that the absence of a dominant paradigm for studying WPS causes problems in coming up with an agreed-on definition. As a result, there are numerous definitions of WPS available in the literature. These definitions suggest that scholars perceive WPS either as employees' experience of spirituality at the workplace or an organization's facilitation of employee experience of spirituality at the workplace (Pawar, 2008).

Milliman et al. (2003) proposed that WPS acts at three levels (individual, group, and organization) and defined it as an employee's experience of a sense of meaning in work, a sense of connectedness with others at work, and an experience of alignment with organization's mission and purpose. The most commonly cited definitions of WPS are:

> … a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promotes employee's experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003, p. 13)

> … 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 & Duchon 2000, p. 137)

Scholars agree on the multidimensionality of the construct WPS. However, there is no agreement on its dimensionality. For example, Ashmos and Duchon (2000) identified meaningful work, sense of community, and inner life as three dimensions of WPS. McKee et al. (2011) conceptualized WPS as a three-dimensional construct having meaningful work, sense of community, and value alignment as its dimensions. On the other hand, Liu and Robertson (2011) suggested three different dimensions of WPS - interconnection with a higher power, interconnection with human beings, and interconnection with nature and all living things. In the Indian context, Pandey et al. (2009) proposed *svadharma*, Other's orientation, Authenticity, and Sense of Community as four dimensions for measuring spiritual climate in the organizations. Similarly, Saxena et al. (2020) proposed *svadharma*, Other's orientation, Authenticity, Sense of Community, Karma Capital, and Gratitude as six dimensions of WPS.

Despite the diverse conceptualizations of WPS that are found in literature, scholars (e.g., Lowery et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2016; Pandey, 2017; Rathee & Rajain, 2020) noted that Ashmos and Duchon's (2000) three-component conceptualization of WPS is the most widely accepted and used conceptualization. However, these conceptualizations are the outcomes of the studies mainly carried out in the United States, and these dimensions are either completely absent, or only one or two of them are

present in the studies conducted in the East (e.g., Garg, 2017; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009; Saxena et al., 2020). This suggests a further need to conceptualize WPS in the Eastern context. Therefore, for this study, we use the context of Nepal.

Methodology

This study utilized the constructivist grounded theory (CGT) method (Charmaz, 2006, 2014) to conceptualize WPS and identify its underlying dimensions from employees' construction of the meaning of WPS from their day-to-day experience as well as their familiarity with and exposure to (i) the *Vedic* and the Buddhist scriptures, (ii) the thoughts of spiritual masters of the South Asian sub-continent, and (iii) the faith movements that originated in and spread from India.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews. Six participants took part in this study. The demographic profile of the respondents is shown in Table 1. Each initial interview took one to one and a half hours. During the interviews, the participants told the interviewer that they equally respected both religions, but all claimed that they were not religious. The participants are not experts of any faith. The aim of our study is also not to capture the perceptions of experts on specific faiths. Instead, our study was focused on the conceptualization of workplace spirituality from the perceptions of employees who are influenced by the *Vedic* and Buddhist spiritual traditions and have some exposure to contemporary faith movements.

The selection of participants was emergent as the study unfolded (purposive). With the idea of theoretical sampling, the focus was on the information-rich cases rather than the number of participants (McCann & Clark, 2003). The concept of "time sampling" was considered for the fact that more time was spent with each participant in probing and counter-questioning for confirming and disconfirming evidence. The idea of saturation has also been considered the main factor in deciding the number of participants. Following Charmaz (2000), our primary emphasis was on coming to terms (sufficiency and adequacy in terms of explanatory possibilities) with the themes that emerged through a series of interviews. The constructivist departure in grounded theory has given the visible role of the researchers who would be the active facilitator of the process of meaning-making. Unlike conventional grounded theory, the CGT method emphasizes the interactivity between the researcher and research participants, thereby hinting at the possibility of reducing the size of the "person sample".

Furthermore, Charmaz (2006), citing grounded theorists Glaser (1998) and Stern (1994), suggests that "small samples and limited data do not pose problems because grounded theory methods aim to develop conceptual categories" (p. 18). She also points out that as long as the researcher finds it sufficient to "understand and portray the full range of contexts of the study", the small sample size is not an issue (Charmaz, 2006, p. 18). Citing several authors, Cunningham and Carmichael (2017) argued that in a CGT study, if the researchers appropriately select the participants and conduct multiple interviews with the same participant, small sample size is not an issue and give an example of a study by Morse (1994) with a sample size of six. Thus, we limited the number of samples to six in our study.

The first author conducted all interviews. After completing each interview, the first author wrote a reflective memo. Two additional memos were also written – one after listening to the audio recording of the interview and the other after going through the interview transcription. The interview transcriptions were shared with study participants and asked to add if they had missed anything in the interviews. Further questions were also asked to them to have a better understanding of their perspectives.

After the completion of three interviews (along with the follow-up interviews/ interactions) with three participants, and after transcribing and doing first (initial) and second level (focused) coding, we

compared the interview codes (initial as well as focused codes) looking for similarities and dissimilarities. The examination of initial codes generated from the interviews with the first three participants showed many commonalities in the initial codes. Similarities were also found among the focused codes. Dissimilarities or different perspectives among these three participants were also observed. The codes and emerging themes from the cross-case comparison of these three interviews are shown in Table 2.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of Interview Participants

Participant	Age Category	Gender	Marital Status	Education	Work Experience	Religion by Birth
Participant 1	50-55 years	Female	Married	MPA, MBA, M Phil (Management)	More than 20 years, in three different organizations, currently a faculty at a business school	Hindu
Participant 2	50-55 years	Male	Married	MBA, M Tech (Telecom)	More than 25 years in a security agency	Hindu
Participant 3	30-35 years	Male	Single	MBA, MA (Buddhist Studies, pursuing)	3 years in teaching, currently a business school faculty	Hindu
Participant 4	30-35 years	Male	Married	MBA, BE	3 years in Civil Service	Hindu
Participant 5	55-60 years	Female	Married	PhD (Buddhist Studies, pursuing), MA Buddhist Studies, BE	More than 30 years in an international organization	Buddhist
Participant 6	25-30	Male	Single	MA (*Sanskrit, Jyotish*)	5 years in a security agency, partly involved in a local *Gurukul*	Hindu

After carefully examining the cross-comparison and the emerging themes, we were convinced that the majority of the emerging themes were primarily guided from the Buddhist perspective. The participants also focused more on spirituality in general rather than providing a detailed account of their understanding of spirituality in the context of the workplace. The following reflective memo written by the first author after cross-comparison of the first three interviews suggested that other perspectives, primarily the *Vedic* and contemporary faith movements, need to be explored to have a deeper understanding of spirituality in general and in the context of the workplace.

Emerging Themes, Moving Further

After cross-comparison of three interview codes, distinct themes began to emerge. Careful examination of the focused code helped me first group the codes of individual participants and then compare the groups with one another. This showed a clear pattern of common themes emerging from the data. Out of the eight themes that emerged, three themes which I have labeled as Altruism, Compassion, and Duty Orientation, for the time being, appeared in all three interviews. In contrast, other themes emerged only in two interviews, except one theme labeled mindfulness which appeared only in Participant 3's interview. It is too early to conclude whether these themes that have begun to emerge will appear more prominently or fizzle out. I will know only after interviewing other participants. Nevertheless, this cross-case comparison has given me an idea for further selecting the participants.....

Realizing a need to focus on getting the perspective of the persons who can better explain it from the *Vedic* perspective and try to see if some other themes also emerge while incorporating this perspective, we chose the next participant (Participant 4), who seemed to be familiar with the *Vedic* philosophy and the follower of a contemporary faith movement. The codes and emerging themes generated from his interview are shown in Table 3.

Table 2

Cross-Case Comparison of First Three Interviews and Emerging Themes

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Emerging Themes
• Helping others • Making others' lives easier • Serving others selflessly	• Sacrificing for a larger cause • Being able to sacrifice for a larger cause	• Working selflessly, working for larger group, for humanity	Altruism
	• Expressing compassion, sympathetic joy, devotion and eliminating the feeling of jealousy	• Supporting each other • Fair to all, justice to all employees, supporting environment	Collaboration
• Not harming others	• Not killing living beings • Developing a feeling of not harming others • Showing compassion	• Being compassionate toward others • Being compassionate is to love all sentient being and not to indulge in any activities that will cause any harm to them • Being kind, showing kindness to all without discrimination • and habit of accepting and stopping to resist others	Compassion
• Working selflessly	• Performing duty without expecting fruit out of it	• Supporting organization's goal, aligning with	Duty Orientation

Table 2 Contd.

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Emerging Themes
• Working to serve the purpose of the organization	• Performing duty honestly and with good intention, with purity in heart • Understanding one's responsibility • Shouldering one's responsibility honestly	organization's goal Giving hundred percent to what he/she is doing, not moving away from responsibilities	
	• Maintaining equanimity, not having up and downs, no feeling of sorrow or joy	• Moving inward and covering one's inner journey for ultimate peace, searching inner peace • Seeking equanimity • Achieving the ultimate search i.e., long term peace and ultimate happiness • Feeling of inner peace	Equanimity/ Inner Calmness
	• Understanding nature/law of nature • Working in harmony with nature • Wishing good to all living beings; doing no harm to nature • Feeling of unity; feeling of brotherhood, connection among one another, developing mental connectivity • Indicating feeling of brotherhood, cooperation and humanism • Showing respect to others including animals • Showing love to all living beings, feeling of inner joy from nature • Increasing experience of joy with connection to nature	• Not showing discriminating behavior with all living beings • Feeling of brotherhood, community, connectedness leading to peace • Connectedness among employees	Interconnectedness
• Living simple life		• Being aware of one's own action	Self-Awareness and Control

Table 2 Contd.

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Emerging Themes
• Not influenced by lavish materialistic things • Guided by values		• Doing every single work being aware without thinking of past, present, and future • Practicing mindfulness • Being mindful • Practicing to get rid of attachment, controlling anger	
	• Not having evil feelings to others, not complaining even in difficult situation, • Performing duties with the realization that all will feel same way if something hurts	• Developing positive friendly feelings for others leading to no feeling of hurt, friendly feelings towards others, no bad feelings towards others • Being truthful, not playing politics, not showing off, being simple • No feeling of hurt, no attachment, no being hurt • Developing a feeling of not being hurt, no feeling of hurt at a deeper level and being mindful • Not harming others, taking other's sufferings as one's own suffering	Interpersonal Positivity/Serving Self
		• Being mindful/ Practicing mindfulness	Mindfulness

After generating potential themes from Participant 4's interview, we were keen to explore further the meaning of WPS from a person who can further elucidate its meaning while taking into account the teachings of the Buddhist philosophy. This led to the selection of the fifth participant in this study. During the interview, when we asked her when one can attribute a workplace to a spiritual workplace or spirituality is said to exist, she said:

> *..... no or less feeling of competition. Having spirit like ....it is collaboration, it is cooperation among employees. A feeling that we will win as a team ... having such kind of feeling in the workplace ...... encouraging such feelings, boosting such feelings ... workplace should be like that. And apart from that ... in the workplace all trying to cooperate ... and a feeling among the employees how to win as a team. Not by leg pulling ... While studying Buddhism, we studied about right understanding, right concentration, right focus ... in the context of workplace may be these are about goal orientedness .... Focusing on these, isn't it? And comes the right wisdom...*

The codes and emerging themes from her interview are given in Table 4.

Table 3

The Codes and Emerging Themes from the interview of fourth participant

Codes	Emerging Themes
• Caring for the overall wellbeing – planetary, humankind, universal wellbeing	Altruism
• Helping/supporting each other, having feeling of all are team members, not competing, uplifting weak team member, not discriminating negatively	Collaboration
• Cooperating rather than competing	
• Having compassion Being kind	Compassion
• Not abstaining from one's primary role, completing assigned task fully	Duty Orientation
• Performing one's duty	
• Treating work as a supreme duty	
• Feeling that we all are part of same existence	Interconnectedness
• Being aware of one's own action	Self Awareness and Control
• Knowing about ourselves through seeking	
• Unknown dimensions being known that is within ourselves – through process of seeking	
• Seeking answer from within through spiritual practices	
• Knowing/Understanding self	
• Realizing one's own mistake and getting it corrected	
• Practicing to get rid of attachment, controlling anger	
• Being less reactive, being able to control even if thinking pattern challenged	
• Knowing other	Interpersonal Positivity/Serving Self
• Being truthful, not playing politics, not showing off, being simple	
• Not harming others, taking other's sufferings as one's own suffering	
• Not having evil feelings to others, not complaining even in difficult situation,	
• Not getting involved in back biting, not complaining, criticizing, minimizing negative collective consciousness	
• Being broad/open minded	

After generating potential themes from Participant 4's interview, we were keen to explore further the meaning of WPS from a person who can further elucidate its meaning while taking into account the teachings of the Buddhist philosophy. This led to the selection of the fifth participant in this study. During the interview, when we asked her when one can attribute a workplace to a spiritual workplace or spirituality is said to exist, she said:

..... no or less feeling of competition. Having spirit like ....it is collaboration, it is cooperation among employees. A feeling that we will win as a team ... having such kind of feeling in the workplace ...... encouraging such feelings, boosting such feelings ... workplace should be like that. And apart from that ... in the workplace all trying to cooperate ... and a feeling among the employees how to win as a team. Not by leg pulling ... While studying Buddhism, we studied about right understanding, right concentration, right focus ... in the context of workplace may be these are about goal orientedness .... Focusing on these, isn't it? And comes the right wisdom...

The codes and emerging themes from her interview are given in Table 4.

Table 4
Codes and Emerging Themes from the interview of fifth participant

Codes	Emerging Themes
• Helping needy coworkers	Collaboration
• Working in a team	
• Developing mutual trust, mutual respect, mutual help	
• Feeling of competitiveness low, having spirit of collaboration, cooperation; team work, team culture	
• No feeling of competition	
• Doing one's duty honestly with integrity	Duty Orientation
• Supporting the organization wholeheartedly in difficult situations	
• Learning to live in harmony with all	Equanimity/Inner Calmness
• feeling of sense of security, love, mutual trust among employees	Interconnectedness
• Feeling of importance of an individual's life	
• Maintaining relationship beyond normal role requirement	
• Realizing that one is responsible for his/her actions	Self Awareness and Control
• Studying/Knowing inner- self, knowing others	
• Realizing that one is the creator of his/her own happiness	
• Controlling feelings	
• feeling of sense of responsibility	
• Recognizing feeling happy is everyone's desire	
• Creating awareness that peace and happiness are within oneself	
• Controlling the self	
• Knowing/Understanding self	
• Not blaming others	Interpersonal
• Letting others live happily	Positivity/Serving Self
• Living happily and let others live happily and peacefully	
• Not harming/not making feel suffer	
• Fostering a loving environment	
• Realizing one's own mistake and getting it corrected trusting each other; knowing responsibility	
• Trusting each other; knowing responsibility	
• Making people feel happy	
• having trust/ mutual trust	

After analyzing her interview and going through the reflective memo written by the first author after interviewing her, we felt that the *Vedic* perspective on conceptualizing spirituality in the context of the workplace is somehow less represented as the majority of the participants interviewed seemed to refer to Buddhist philosophical thoughts while trying to elaborate their understanding of spirituality. This led the researcher to find a participant familiar with the *Vedic* philosophy so that the meaning of spirituality in the workplace could be further explored from this perspective. This led to the selection of the sixth participant in the study. Two interviews (primary and follow-up), answers to our follow-up questions in writing and telephonic conversations with him for clarifications led us to the generation of potential themes, as indicated in Table 5.

Table 5
Codes and Emerging Themes from the interview of sixth participant

Codes	Emerging Themes
• Helping to achieve the goals and meet objectives	Altruism
• Being cooperative	
• Doing things for the benefit of all living beings	
• Acting for the welfare of entire humanity	
• Being compassionate	Compassion
• Doing things/work from heart and with consciousness	Duty Orientation
• No feeling of anger	Equanimity/Inner Calmness
• Being calm, having purity in thoughts, being stable	
• Feeling of being connected with nature, living beings and god/sacred through love	Interconnectedness
• Stability in a person's thoughts, behaviors, actions	Self Awareness and Control
• Ability to cope up with difficult situation	
• Knowing/Controlling Self	
• Knowing the purpose of existence	
• Developing powerful consciousness	
• Being able to control anger and unnecessary excitement, being able to remain calm and being able to understand others	
• Being able to control mind	
• Developing positive consciousness	
• Showing consciousness and rising above present stage to higher level of consciousness and exhibiting change in behavior	
• Not being anxious/restless even in misery	
• Being polite	Interpersonal Positivity/Serving Self
• Making others happy even if one is suffering happily without getting angry;	
• Having positive thoughts/feelings	
• Liberating people, teaching people live peacefully	
• Feeling peace	
• Achieving goal and leading people to right destination	
• Accepting happiness and sadness as complementary to each other	

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As no new themes emerged in the analysis of the fifth and sixth interviews, we concluded that we had reached the stage of data saturation and therefore stopped going to other participants.

Findings

The emerging themes generated from the analysis of interviews suggested that WPS is an employee's pattern of experience at the workplace, which is developed when other employees in the organization exhibit certain attitudes and behaviors. These attitudes and behaviors emerged as nine distinct themes suggesting that WPS is a multi-dimensional construct having nine distinct dimensions, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
WPS Dimensions

S. No.	Dimension	Definition	Related Vedic (*bhagavadgItA*)/ Buddhist Concept
1.	Altruistic Motive	motive or desire to serve selflessly for the welfare of others and contribute to the welfare of humankind	*loksaGgraha* (verse 3.20 and 3.25) and *sarvabhUtahIte* (verse 5.25) from the *bhagavadgItA* and *metta (maitrI)*, one of the four Buddhist virtues
2.	Interpersonal Positivity	one's practice of being or tendency to be positive in attitude which is characterized by one's positive thoughts and positive friendly feelings for others, sincere attempt to be simple and truthful, and not getting involved in any activities that harms others	*adveSTa sarvabhUtAnam maitraH karuNa eva ca* - verse 12.13 of the *bhagavadgItA;* pursuing four goals of life – *artha, kAma, dharma* and *mokSa (bhagavadgItA);* doing the right *karma* leading to *nirvaNa* in Buddhist philosophy
3.	Compassion	being aware and sensitive to the suffering of others and desire to alleviate others' suffering	*dayA bhUteSU* verse 16.2 *bhAgvadgItA* and and *karunA* – one of the four Buddhist virtues
4.	Inner Calmness	a state in which one has a profound feeling of peace, maintains equanimity, and has no feeling of hurt, attachment, sorrow or joy, and experiences blissfulness	Verses 2.48 (*sidhiasidhiyoH samo bhUtvA samatvaM*) and 2.56 (*dhuHkheSvanudvignamanAH sukheSu vigataspRhH vItarAgabhayakrodhaH sthitadhI*) of the *bhAgvadgitA; upekSa* one of the four Buddhist virtues and *ksanti* one of the six *paramitas*
5.	Duty Orientation	a desire to discharge duties and to apply oneself to work with a higher sense of responsibility, total dedication, and full honesty without having much expectation of gains from his/her effort	Verse 2.47 (*karmanyewadhikAraste mA phaleSu kadacana*) of the *bhagavadgItA* and concept of *karma* in Buddhist teachings

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Table 6 Contd.

S. No.	Dimension	Definition	Related Vedic (*bhagavadgItA*)/ Buddhist Concept
6.	Sense of Collaboration	one's attitude as well as actions that focus on working collectively to accomplish a common goal and developing mutual trust and respect among team members so at to achieve the team's/organization's goals	Verse 3.10 and 3.11 of the *bhagavadgItA*
7.	Self-Regulation	one's awareness of self and ability to control one's thoughts, actions, and behaviors	Verse 6.9 of the *bhagvadgItA* and the concept of mindful awareness in Buddhist teaching
8.	Interconnected ness	one's feeling of oneness with nature and its creations or the relationship between one's inner self and that of all others including nature and its creations that makes one realize that all are part of same existence	*loksaGgraha* (verse 3.20 and 3.25) from the *bhagavadgItA*
9.	Higher Consciousness	a state of heightened awareness in which a person is not only mindful of his/her present moment but also has a deeper understanding and acceptance of the nature of existential reality, of the self as it relates with such reality, and of the generative nature of self in creating elevated life experiences	Mindfulness from *the bhagavadgItA* and Buddhist philosophies

Based on nine themes that emerged from the analysis, we conceptualized WPS as a pattern of employees' experience at work when they feel that all members of the organization exhibit altruistic motive, interpersonal positivity, compassion, and inner calmness; consider work as their supreme duty (duty orientation); have a sense of collaboration; are self-regulated and show concern not only for fellow workers but also for the entire humankind (interconnectedness); and have a deep sense of higher consciousness.

Unlike the previous conceptualizations of WPS by different scholars in different contexts that are primarily based on an individual's feelings and experiences at the workplace (e.g., Ashmos & Duchon, 2000) or the organization's facilitation of the experience of spirituality at the workplace (e.g., Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003), the present study found out that WPS is experienced at an individual level. However, this experience is constructed based on the extent to which the majority of the coworkers are perceived to demonstrate such attitudes/behaviors at the workplace. In other words, this study showed that one's assessment of the prevalence of WPS is determined by the coworkers' attitudes/behaviors (experience from the external cues) rather than his/her own feelings/experiences (experience from internal cues). The following interview excerpt of one of the study participants illustrates it:

……… service should be at the center. Helping each other, team work etc. sho,uld be focused on. Cooperation, collaboration should exist. Goals should not be individual rather team goals should be given. Feedback should be honest, and constructive, and the individual should also improve the quality of listening to such feedback.

Discussion

This study conceptualized WPS in the Nepali context, an Eastern context where the study on WPS, especially its conceptualization, has not received sufficient scholarly attention. Limited studies conducted in some such Eastern contexts (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009; Pradhan et al., 2017; Sheng & Chen, 2012) for conceptualizing WPS have utilized the pseudo-etic or imposed-etic approach. Only a few studies (Garg, 2017; Krishnan, 2007) have utilized the *Vedic* perspective while conceptualizing WPS. This study aimed to fill this gap by conceptualizing WPS from an indigenous perspective. This study revealed that WPS is perceived and experienced differently in the present study context than in the West. The dimensions are also not reproduced, although some dimensions seem similar to those in Western conceptualization. The different dimensions that this study revealed are discussed in light of the *Vedic*, especially from the perspective of the *bhagavadgItA* and Buddhist perspectives. A comparison has also been made with the existing dimensions of WPS that are most commonly found in Western literature.

Altruistic Motive

Altruistic Motive, an inner urge or drive to serve selflessly for the welfare of others and contribute to the welfare of humankind, appeared as a prominent dimension of WPS. This aspect of spirituality has been captured in the *bhagavadgItA* by the concepts *loksaGgraha* (verse 3.20 and 3.25) and *sarvabhUtahIte* (verse 5.25). *loksaGgraha* is about the welfare of all people of the society (Chakraborty & Chakraborty, 2006). It also includes an individual's concern for the social and natural environment (Pandey et al., 2016). The meaning of *sarvabhUtahIte* is also the welfare of all living beings. In Buddhist philosophy, *metta (maitrI)* is one of the four Buddhist virtues, which is basically "a love that consists in the hope, prayer, keen desire for, and joy at, the happiness of others, without passion and the seeking of reward" (Sheth, 2006, p. 816)

Interpersonal Positivity

Interpersonal Positivity is one's practice of being or tendency to be positive in attitude and behavior, which is characterized by one's positive thoughts and positive friendly feelings for others, sincere attempt to be simple and truthful, and not getting involved in any activities that harm others. Verse 12.13 of the *bhagavadgItA* - having no jealousy and engaging oneself for doing good to all living beings (*adveSTa sarvabhUtAnam maitraH karuNa eva ca*) captures this dimension of spirituality. Furthermore, the *bhagavadgItA*, posits that the purpose of human life is *mukti* or *mokSa*, the ultimate liberation of the human soul through the union of the self with the Divine (Inbadas, 2018). This is possible when one pursues persistently the four goals of life – *artha* (prosperity), *kAma* (desire), *dharma* (righteous living), and *mokSa* (release from the cycle of birth and death). When persons start following the path of *dharma* that will inherently nurture positivity inside them, which will manifest in the form of interpersonal positivity. In the Buddhist philosophy, by doing the right *karma*, one can achieve *nirvaNa* (salvation) by liberating himself/herself from the cycle of rebirth and performing good karma is a path leading to spirituality. Thus, from both the *Vedic* and the Buddhist philosophical standpoint, Interpersonal Positivity is one aspect of WPS.

Compassion

The participants in this study indicated that they characterize their workplace as spiritual when they experience that their coworkers have demonstrated Compassion. Compassion in this study can be understood as a state of being touched by the suffering of others, opening one's awareness to other's pain and not avoiding or disconnecting from it so that feelings of kindness towards others and desire to alleviate their suffering emerge, which is in line with the definition given by Wispe (1991). *dayA bhUteSU* (compassion to all living beings), which is found in the *bhAgvadgItA* (verse 16. 2) and *karunA,* one of the four virtues in the Buddhist philosophy, suggest that in the *Vedic* as well as the Buddhist spiritual traditions, compassion is one of the essential aspects of spirituality.

Inner Calmness

In the present conceptualization of WPS, Inner Calmness – a state in which one has a profound feeling of peace, maintains equanimity, has no feeling of hurt, attachment, sorrow or joy, and experiences blissfulness – was identified as one dimension of WPS. Verses 2.48 (*sidhiasidhiyoH samo bhUtvA samatvaM*) and 2.56 (*dhuHkheSvanudvignamanAH sukheSu vigataspRhH vItarAgabhayakrodhaH sthitadhI*) of the *bhAgvadgitA* have clearly highlighted this aspect of spirituality. These verses tell about maintaining equanimity, non-attachment, having no feeling of hurt, and no feeling of sorrow or joy. Similarly, *upekSa* (equanimity), one of the four Buddhist virtues and *ksanti,* one of the six *paramitas* (Buddhist practice of patience and tolerance), focus on having a calm and composed mind and facing the challenging and difficult situations in life without losing inner calmness (Wangmo & Valk, 2012).

Duty Orientation

Duty orientation emerged as an aspect of spirituality in the present study. It is a desire to discharge duties and apply oneself to work with a higher sense of responsibility, total dedication, and complete honesty without expecting gains from his/her effort. This dimension captures one of the most powerful teachings of the *bhagavadgItA* (Verse 2.47 – *karmanyewadhikAraste mA phaleSu katakana*) – the *karma* theory. It suggests that one's spirituality lies in doing his/her work with utmost devotion, honesty, and sincerity (Aravamudhan & Krishnaveni, 2015). Not only in the *bhagavadgItA,* but also in the Buddhist teaching, *karma* is considered an important aspect of human life, and performing good *karma* is a path leading to spirituality.

Sense of Collaboration

The present study identified Sense of Collaboration as yet another dimension of WPS. Sense of Collaboration is one's attitude and actions that focus on working collectively to accomplish a common goal and developing mutual trust and respect among team members to achieve the team's/organization's goals. Two verses of the *bhagavadgItA* (verse 3.10 and 3.11) indicate cooperation and collaboration as paths leading to spirituality. In verse 3.10, Lord *kRisNa* says, "by serving each other you shall prosper", and in verse 3.11 he says,

> Nourish the nature with selfless service, and it will nourish you. Thus nourishing one another you shall attain the Supreme goal" (Satpathy, 2010, p. 452). Similarly, in Buddhist tradition, collaboration is one of the important concepts contributing to expanded and purified consciousness (Marques, 2012).

Self-Regulation

In the present conceptualization, Self-Regulation is defined as a person's ability to control self and ability to control or at least influence his/her thoughts, actions, and behaviors. This aspect of WPS derived from the study can also be linked with the teachings of the *bhagavadgItA* (verse 6. 9), which teaches maintaining equanimity, i.e., not having negative or extreme positive emotions. Maintaining equanimity helps regulate one's emotions, which ultimately leads a person to self-regulate himself/herself. The Buddhist teaching also considers mindful awareness and freedom from desire and discontent – a form of equanimity – as fundamental sources of self-regulation (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012).

Interconnectedness

Interconnectedness appears as a central theme of *loksaGgraha.* It not only includes the sense of community among the employees but also encompasses the feeling of oneness with all living beings, nature, and the sacred or higher power. Moreover, Interconnectedness in the present context also includes the transcendental aspect, which has been considered a different aspect of WPS while conceptualizing it in previous studies (e.g., Petchsawang & Duchon 2009).

Higher Consciousness

Higher Consciousness also appeared as a prominent dimension of WPS in the present study. It is a state of heightened awareness in which a person is not only mindful of his/her present moment but also has a deeper understanding and acceptance of the nature of existential reality, of the self as it relates with such reality, and of the generative nature of self in creating elevated life experiences. It has not appeared as a separate dimension in the previous studies, both from the East and the West. However, in many conceptualizations of WPS both from the East (e.g., Chawala, 2016; Kale & Shrivastava, 2003; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009) and West (e.g., Howard, 2002; Weick et al., 2008), mindfulness has appeared as one of the dimensions of WPS.

   This study's definition of Higher Consciousness indicates that mindfulness is an essential aspect of Higher Consciousness. Mindfulness is a concept that has its roots in the *Vedic* and the Buddhist philosophy. According to the *bhagavadgItA*, mindfulness is a state in which all desires enter a person's mind without creating any disturbances to him/her. From the Buddhist's perspective, being mindful is not about stopping thoughts, desires, feelings, or sensations from arising in one's mind. Instead, it is one's ability to become neutral to such things. Thus, to a certain extent, the appearance of Higher Consciousness as one dimension of WPS can be better comprehended from these perspectives on mindfulness from the *bhagavadgItA* and the Buddhist teachings.

Comparison with the Dimensions for the Western Conceptualization

This study revealed that WPS is perceived differently in the Eastern context, more specifically in Nepal, than in the Western context, as most of the dimensions of WPS that emerged are not found in the Western conceptualizations. However, some overlaps appear on some of the dimensions, which are highlighted below.

   One of the important dimensions of Western conceptualization of WPS (e.g., Ashmos & Duchon, 2000) is the Inner Life. Acceptance of Inner Life is the recognition of soul in the employees. However, this dimension did not appear in the present study. The Buddhist philosophy does not recognize the existence of *AtmA* or soul, but it is an important concept in the *bhagavadgItA*. A closer examination of the Interconnectedness dimension in the present study suggests that it is not a mere connection among employees in the workplace. The connection is somewhat at a deeper level, i.e., the connections are in between an individual self and nature and the higher power or the sacred. Although the present study did

not recognize Inner life as a separate dimension, it is embedded into the Interconnectedness dimension. This conceptualization thus recognizes that employees have an inner life, and nurturing it is an aspect of WPS.

The other dimensions commonly found in the Western conceptualization of WPS are Alignment between Individual's and Organization's values and Meaningful Work. However, these dimensions did not appear in the conceptualization of WPS in the present study. This could be probably because employees who are influenced by the *Vedic* traditions, mainly the *bhagavadgItA,* and the Buddhist spiritual traditions are likely to be more focused on *niSkama karma* - performing their duties without expecting any fruits for the action - as suggested in the *bhagavadgItA* (Verse 2.38). When one is guided by the philosophy of *niSkama karma,* the work (or duty) he/she is performing will appear meaningful to him/her. Furthermore, the mindful focus on the work without any greed for the outcome will enable one to align his/her values with the organisation's values. Thus, when one is duty-oriented, he/she will find his/her work meaningful and find that his/her values are aligned with organizational values.

The conceptualization of WPS in the Western context has presented sense of community or interconnectedness or interdependence among employees as an important aspect of WPS. Sense of Collaboration and Interconnectedness appeared as two distinct dimensions in the present context. However, Interconnectedness was found to be a broader concept than what is conceptualized in the Western context.

Scholarly Contribution

The present study contributes to the evolving field of WPS in many respects. First, it enriches WPS literature by providing clear evidence that WPS is perceived differently in different cultural contexts. In the Western conceptualization, WPS is purely an individual's experience/feelings at the workplace. This study suggested that WPS is an individual experience, but it is constructed based on most coworkers' perceived attitudes/behaviors at the workplace. Though there appears to be some overlap between the dimensions of present conceptualization and the dimensions commonly found in the Western conceptualization, most of the dimensions of present conceptualization are unique. Second, it provides a context-specific definition of WPS with nine distinct dimensions. When sought in the Eastern spiritual texts, the explanation of the emergence of these as dimensions, especially the *bhagavadgItA* and relevant Buddhist literature, clearly indicated that the *Vedic* and the Buddhist scriptures provide an overarching philosophical foundation in the study of WPS.

Implications for Practice

In the past few decades, organisations have been trying to incorporate spirituality in their workplace in various forms. However, in the absence of a clear conceptualization of the construct, organizations are not clear on what exactly spirituality means in the context of their workplace. Initiation of any program, such as embracing spirituality in organizational life, may not produce desired results if the initiators are not clear about the concept they will bring into practice through such programs. The present conceptualization of WPS helps practitioners to understand the concept, which has been labeled as the most practised yet abstract and elusive one.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study revealed that the conceptualization of WPS in an eastern context, more specifically in the Nepali context, has its root in the *Vedic* spiritual tradition, mainly in the *bhagavadgItA,* and the Buddhist spiritual traditions. More specifically, the study findings suggested that the concepts like *Karma* theory, *loksaGgraha*, *svadharma*, and mindfulness e, which primarily originate from the *bhagavadgItA* and the teachings of the Buddha, provide a sound theoretical foundation for understanding WPS. Future research could be focused on conceptualizing WPS from the *Vedic* and the Buddhist perspective separately and examining the differences in such conceptualizations if any.

This study has taken a secular perspective while conceptualizing WPS. In view of the nature of this construct and the existing literature, this seems to be the mainstream approach. However, WPS may also be a culturally-influenced phenomenon, and therefore, future research can be directed towards examining it from religious, cultural, and social perspectives.

This study was conducted using the CGT methodology. This methodology advocates utilizing the researcher's own reflections as an important source of data. The interview coding as well as the researcher's reflective memos were utilized to generate themes that led to the conceptualization of WPS. This approach is highly subjective and there is a possibility of the dominance of the researcher's bias in the meaning-making process that is expected to be grounded in the data. To overcome this problem, future research can be conducted to check the dimensionality of WPS quantitatively. Other methodological approaches while collecting and analyzing the data in a similar study setting will help validate and or further refine the findings of this study.

Conclusion

This study followed a contextual approach for the conceptualization of WPS and attempted to conceptualize it in Nepali context, an Eastern context which is largely dominated by the *Vedic* and the Buddhist spiritual traditions. The findings of the study suggested that WPS is a multi-dimensional construct having nine dimensions. The *Vedic* spiritual text, especially the *bhagvadgItA,* and the Buddhist texts provided its philosophical foundations.

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