# WOMEN'S GLASS CEILING BELIEFS AS MEDIATORS IN THE RELA-TION BETWEEN WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AND SUBJECTIVE SUCCESS

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## ABSTRACT

Objective: To determine whether glass ceiling beliefs mediate the relationship between workplace spirituality and subjective success among women managers serving in Banks in India.

Method: Data was collected from 500 women managers serving in 3 public sector, 3 Indian private sector and 4 foreign banks in India. Structural Equation Modelling was run to determine the relationship among the constructs.

Result: It was found that Workplace Spirituality significantly predicted Subjective Success. Additionally, two glass ceiling beliefs viz., denial and resilience mediated the relationship between workplace spirituality and subjective success.

Conclusion: Organisations must employ workplace spirituality interventions to im-prove the subjective success of women.

Originality: The findings offer a novel perspective on improving women's chances of career advancement by enhancing workplace spirituality. This is the first in-depth study to focus on the mediating effect of glass ceiling beliefs and study the percep-tion of women regarding the glass ceiling in Banks in India.

## INTRODUCTION

Women officers comprised 11% of the workforce in banks (Khandelwal, 2010) and less than 3% of the executive cadre in banks (Bandyopadhyay, 2013). Since banks have a pyramidal structure, very few women rise to the top. According to Manisha & Singh (2016), female bankers lead imbalanced personal and professional lives, face harassment, unfair treatment from bosses, and discrimination in promotions leading to job insecurity. Women also experience more career interruptions than men due to family reasons (Beblo & Wolf, 2002; Hayter, 2014; Cebrìan & Moreno, 2015). 70% of women believed that men in senior roles halt the progress of women in banks (Institute of Leadership & Manage-ment, 2012). This quagmire that most working women accidently stumble upon is called the 'glass ceiling' (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986). It refers to the difficulties faced by women when advancing in their careers.

While some gender scholars, sociologists, policymakers and practitioners argue that gender inequality could be eradicated through individual focused initiatives like changing people's perception about women, a recent study by Wynn (2020) suggested that organisational initiatives are more rewarding. Wynn (2020) found that 84% of the executives in a tech company in Silicon Valley relied on bringing about long-lasting behavioural change through individual-focused initiatives such as unconscious bias training and gender sensitisation workshops. These were unsuccessful because they reinforced harmful gender ideologies and made employees more conscious of the gender differences. On the contrary, organisational initiatives that focused on changing structures and processes were more beneficial because they enhanced objectivity, fairness and transparency. This suggests that organisa-tions must focus on improving the culture rather than changing employees' attitudes, beliefs or behaviour.

Researchers suggested that workplace spirituality contributed to favourable organisational culture. Ashmos & Duchon (2000) defined workplace spirituality as "…a recogni-tion that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work, taking place in the context of a community." Seibert, Kraimer & Liden (2001) de-fined subjective success as "an individual's subjective evaluation of the present achieve-ments compared to his personal goals and expectations". Numerous researchers identified the four most important indicators of subjective success namely, career satisfaction (Judge et al., 1995; Boudreau, Boswell & Judge, 2001; Ng et al., 2005; Judge & Hurst, 2008; Abele, Spurk & Volmer, 2011 in Smith, 2012a), work engagement, physical well-being, psychological well-being and job happiness (Carr, 1997; Clark, 1997; Armstrong-Stassen & Cameron, 2005; Burke, Burgess & Fallon, 2006; Orser & Leck, 2010 in Smith, 2012a).

Previous theories linked workplace spirituality with career satisfaction (Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson, 2003), work engagement (Saks, 2011), physical & psychological well-being and job happiness (Karakas, 2010). Numerous studies found a positive associa-tion between workplace spirituality and job satisfaction (Usman & Danish, 2010; Gupta, Kumar & Singh, 2014; Hassan, Nadeem & Akhter, 2016), work engagement (Danish et. al., 2014; Singh & Chopra, 2016; Pradhan & Jena, 2016), physical & psychological well-being (Kumar & Kumar, 2014; Pawar, 2016; Khatri & Gupta, 2017) and subjective well-being or happiness (Wen-chi, Jia & Hui-mei, 2015; Yaghoubi & Motahhari, 2016). In conclusion, workplace spirituality through its sense of community, enrichment of inner life and meaningful work enhanced subjective success. This led to the first hypothesis:

**H1:** Workplace spirituality has a significant and direct effect on subjective success.

Unfortunately, technology has led to a loss of organisational spirituality (Khan, Khan & Chaudhary, 2015 in Hassan, Nadeem & Akhter, 2016) resulting in increased stress, absenteeism and organisational politics (Lee & Zemke, 1993; Leigh, 1997; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Nasina, Pin, & Pin, 2011; Neal, 2000 in Hassan, Nadeem & Akhter, 2016). The gender discrimination could be attributed to a loss of

spirituality. In addition, research on workplace spirituality is in its nascent stage and its effects on organisational outcomes are inadequately examined (Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson, 2003; Duchon & Plowman, 2005) leading to the second hypothesis:

**H2:** Workplace spirituality has a significant and direct effect on acceptance (H2a), resignation (H2b), denial (H2c) and resilience (H2d).

Smith (2012a) surveyed women executives in Australia using a self-designed 38-item scale named Career Pathways Survey that measured four glass ceiling beliefs namely, acceptance, resignation, denial and resilience. Acceptance is the negative belief that women prefer other life goals such as family involvement than developing a career. Resignation is the negative belief that women suffer many more negative consequences than men when seeking career advancement. Denial is the positive belief that men and women face the same issues and problems in seeking leadership. Resilience is the positive belief that wom-en can overcome barriers and break glass ceilings. It was found that the glass ceiling beliefs significantly predicted career satisfaction, work engagement, psychological well-being and job happiness.

**H3:** Acceptance (H3a), resignation (H3b), denial (H3c) and resilience (H3d) have a significant and direct effect on subjective success.

Since workplace spirituality promotes positive self-beliefs and eradicates negative beliefs, it can be said that workplace spirituality predicts glass ceiling beliefs among women. In other words, workplace spirituality leads to higher subjective success among women through its effect on glass ceiling beliefs. Although numerous studies

established the effect of workplace spirituality on subjective success, no study so far explored the mediating role of glass ceiling beliefs in this relationship. This led to the fourth hypothesis:

**H4:** Acceptance (H4a), resignation (H4b), denial (H4c) and resilience (H4d) mediate the relationship between workplace spirituality and subjective success.

To shed more light on this, a cross-sectional study was conducted. Data was collected through questionnaires from 500 women managers serving in largest public, Indian private and foreign banks in north India. Data was analysed using structural equation modelling and mediation analysis.

## METHODS

### Research Approach

The public-sector banks, Indian private sector banks and foreign banks were selected for the study as they had similar hierarchical structures. To limit the scope of the study, the number of banks chosen was 10. Therefore, 3 public-sector banks, 3 Indian private-sector banks and 4 foreign banks in the order of largest assets were selected. The study was con-fined to at least two states/union territories in all five zones of India (North, South, East, West and Central). Hence the results can be extrapolated to the whole of India.

A total of 500 questionnaires were returned, 367 through offline survey while 133 through online survey. The final sample comprised 44.6% junior managers, 37% middle managers and 18.4% senior & top managers. In terms of age, 25.8% were below 30 years, 30.4% were in the age group of 31 to 40 years, 23.6% in the age group of 41 to 50 years and 20.2%

were above 50 years. The sample consisted predominantly of public-sector bank employees (N = 218, 43.6%). 28.4% were employed in Indian private sector banks while 28% in Foreign private sector banks. In terms of highest educational qualification, 67.2% were postgradu-ates while 32.8% were graduates. Majority of the respondents were married (N = 310, 62%), 37.4% were unmarried and 0.6% were separated/widowed. The representation of each state/union territory in the sample was approximately proportionate to that in the population.

## Design

The study used a quantitative, descriptive, and diagnostic research design. Cross-sectional data was used due to limited availability of data regarding banking sector for scholarly research and vulnerability of longitudinal data due to attrition. Rindfleish et al. (2008) suggested that cross-sectional data is appropriate under circumstances where re-spondents are highly-educated (knowledgeable) and the study is descriptive in nature or strongly rooted in theory. Primary data comprised the data gathered via questionnaires from women managers serving in the banks under study. Secondary data comprised annual re-ports of the banks under study, books and journal articles in online research databases. Due to unavailability of sampling frame for the banks, exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling method was employed. To account for regional variations, all the states were pro-portionately represented in the sample.

## Materials

**a.** Workplace Spirituality: The Spirituality at Work Scale (SAWS) developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) was used to measure workplace spirituality. SAWS (cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.84) comprises 21 statements that measure three dimensions namely, community (7 items; cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.86), meaningful work (7 items; cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.86) and inner life (7 items; cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.80).

**b.** Glass Ceiling Beliefs: Career pathways survey developed by Smith, Crittenden & Caputi (2012b) was used to measure the four glass ceiling beliefs namely, resigna-tion (10 items; cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.71), denial (10 items; cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.81), resilience (11 items; cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.70) and acceptance (7 items; cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.72). The scale comprised 38 items of which 7 items were negatively worded. The reliability (cronbach $\alpha$) of the overall scale was 0.78.

**c.** Subjective Success: Subjective success reflects in four variables as given below. Standardized scales were used to measure each of the dimensions.

**i.** Career Satisfaction: To measure career satisfaction, the career satisfaction scale (CSS; Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Wormley, 1990; cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.90) was used. It comprises 5 items that measure satisfaction with career success, career goals, income, advancement of goals and advancement of new skills.

**ii.** Work Engagement: The 9-item Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES-9; Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006; cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.80) was used to meas-ure work engagement. It had three dimensions, vigour (3 items), dedication (3 items) and absorption (3 items).

**iii.** Physical & Psychological well-being was measured using the short form (12) health survey (SF-12; Ware, Kosinski & Keller, 1996; cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.87). Three items measuring

psychological (emotional) health and three items measuring physical health were adapted from the scale.

**iv.** Job Happiness: The 4-item subjective happiness scale (SHS; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; cronbach $\alpha$ = 0.94) was used to measure the job happiness. One item was negatively worded.

Five-point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used be-cause it increased response rate, response quality, reduces respondents' 'frustration level' (Babakus & Mangold, 1992; Sachdev & Verma, 2004) and is easy to read (Dawes, 2008).

## DATA ANALYSIS

In the first stage of analysis, descriptive analysis was run and the means, standard devi-ations and frequencies were computed for all the constructs. In the second stage, EFA was run to rediscover the underlying latent structure (Froman, 2001), since the socio-economic status, industry, culture, language and psychology of the respondents was different from that of the population using which the scales were developed leading to 'meaning shift' among respondents. In the third stage, CFA was required to confirm the proposed theoreti-cal context of the study. CFA is to be run on a data set different from EFA (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). For this purpose, the dataset comprising 500 responses was split into 2:3 for EFA and CFA respectively. In the fourth stage, regression analysis was run to determine whether there is a relationship among workplace spirituality, glass ceiling beliefs and sub-jective success. In the final

stage, mediation analysis was performed to determine the medi-ating effect of glass ceiling beliefs in the relationship between workplace spirituality and subjective success.

## RESULTS

Once the data was found free of errors, outliers and missing values, EFA was run. A to-tal of 36 items were deleted as they did not show acceptable loadings and 48 items were re-tained. The results of CFA showed that the two main constructs namely, workplace spiritu-ality and subjective success loaded significantly on their respective sub-constructs.

The model fit was also attained as GFI =0.815, RMR = 0.086, SRMR = 0.078, RMSEA = 0.051, PClose = 0.270, AGFI = 0.793, NFI = 0.913, TLI = 0.957, CFI = 0.960, CMIN/DF = 1.790 were in the acceptable range. Overall, the unidimensionality, convergent validity, construct validity, discriminant validity, reliability (AVE, CR, MSV and MaxR(H)) were attained. Moreover, the data was found to be normally distributed as the absolute skewness values for all items were less than one.

All mean scores for sub-constructs of workplace spirituality were high. The mean scores for denial and resilience were high while those of the negative beliefs i.e., acceptance and res-ignation were low. The mean scores for sub-constructs of subjective success were also high.

Once the preliminary analyses were completed, the answers to the research questions were sought. First, it was investigated if workplace spirituality, glass ceiling beliefs and subjective success are related using Structural equation modelling as shown in Figure 1.
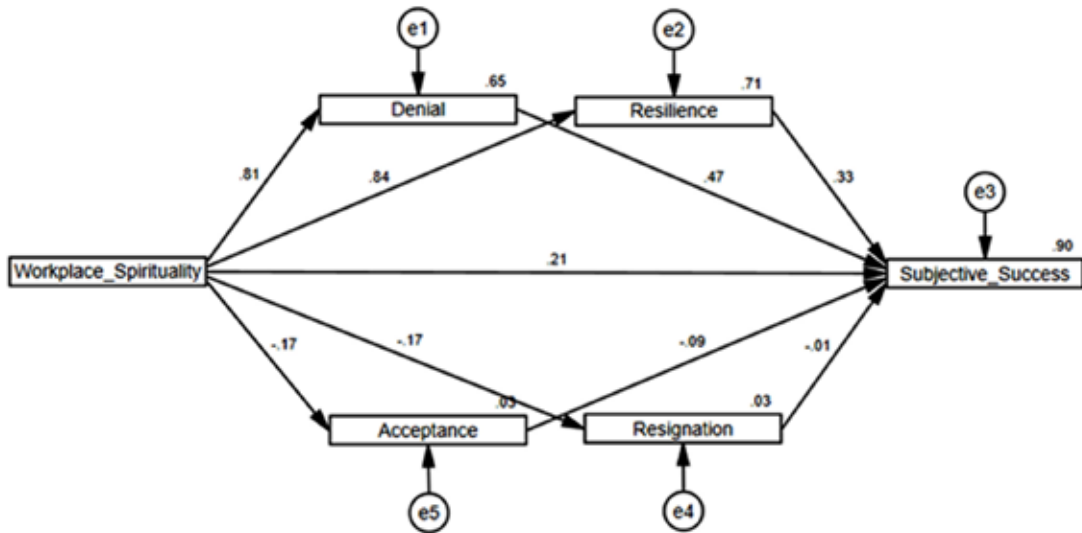
*Figure 1: Standardized Path Coefficients in the structural model.*

Source: Author's work

The output in figure 1 indicated that 90% of the variance in subjective success was estimat-ed by the five constructs in the model namely, workplace spirituality, acceptance, resigna-tion, denial and resilience. Also, 3% of acceptance, 3% of resignation, 65% of denial and 71% of resilience were measured by workplace spirituality. The output in Table 1 illustrates the standardized regression path coefficients for the respective paths and their significance.

**Table 1: Standardized Regression Path Coefficients**

| Construct | Path | Construct | Estimate | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Acceptance** | <--- | Workplace_Spirituality | -0.166 | Significant |
| **Resignation** | <--- | Workplace_Spirituality | -0.169 | Significant |
| **Denial** | <--- | Workplace_Spirituality | 0.807 | Significant |
| **Resilience** | <--- | Workplace_Spirituality | 0.843 | Significant |
| **Subjective_Success** | <--- | Workplace_Spirituality | 0.210 | Significant |
| **Subjective_Success** | <--- | Acceptance | -0.089 | Significant |
| **Subjective_Success** | <--- | Resignation | -0.013 | Not Significant |
| **Subjective_Success** | <--- | Denial | 0.472 | Significant |

| Subjective_Success | <--- | Resilience | 0.327 | Significant |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Source: Author's work

The results showed that the direct effect of workplace spirituality on acceptance, resignation, denial, resilience and subjective success was significant. The effect of acceptance, denial and resilience on subjective success was also found to be significant (See Figure 1 and Table 1).

Second, it was investigated if the four glass ceiling beliefs namely, acceptance, resig-nation, denial and resilience mediated the relationship between workplace spirituality and subjective success. The results indicated that acceptance and resignation were not mediators in the relation between workplace spirituality and subjective success. On the contrary, the mediation analysis of denial and resilience revealed that both mediated the relationship be-tween workplace spirituality and subjective success. However, the mediating effect of deni-al and resilience was partial because the direct effect of workplace spirituality on subjective success was significant even after the mediators entered the model.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In the present article, it was investigated whether workplace spirituality, glass ceiling beliefs and subjective success are related. Secondly, it was examined whether glass ceiling beliefs mediated the relationship between workplace spirituality and subjective success. In line with hypothesis 1, it was found that workplace spirituality explained 21% of the vari-ance in subjective success. Pursuant to hypothesis 2, the results showed that workplace spir-ituality affected acceptance, resignation, denial and resilience. In conformity with hypothe-sis 3a, 3c and 3d, it was found that acceptance, denial and resilience significantly predicted subjective success. Inconsistent with hypothesis 3b, the results showed that resignation did not significantly affect subjective success. The mediation analyses results showed quite good congruence with hypothesis 4c and 4d, suggesting that denial and resilience mediated the relationship between workplace spirituality and subjective success. Further, contrary to hypotheses 4a and 4b, it was found that acceptance and resignation did not mediate the rela-tionship between workplace spirituality and subjective success. A possible interpretation is that workplace spirituality through spiritual values such as tolerance, justice, equality, and fairness created an equitable and harmonious work climate which facilitated the positive glass ceiling beliefs i.e., denial and resilience. As women develop positive beliefs regarding their career advancement, they experience higher satisfaction, engagement, well-being and happiness.

The findings offer a novel perspective on improving women's chances of career ad-vancement by enhancing workplace spirituality. In addition, this is the first in-depth study that has examined the glass ceiling beliefs among women bank managers in India. Overall, the findings of the study suggest that workplace spirituality can create an equitable and in-clusive work environment.

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