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## **Towards Spiritually Powered Organizations: A Review on the Effect of Organizational Aesthetics on Building Workplace Spirituality**

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### **Abstract**

An unprecedented number of scientific studies have been published to explain how to enhance organizational effectiveness by recognizing its key predictors to stimulate the performance of firms. But, optimizing the performance in any organization is still an unaddressed challenge. If the rational antecedents in an organization are unsuccessful to address this issue, scholars must examine the non-rational aspects of people and organizations to find a sustainable solution. Workplace spirituality is such a non-rational aspect in a firm that could increasingly grab scholarly attention in recent decades. This conceptual paper investigates the predictors of workplace spirituality from an aesthetic point of view at work because existing literature in this domain mostly involves exploring the associations of its potential organizational outcomes rather than digging deeper into its predictors. A notable record in literature proves that aesthetical interventions in organizations can have a significant influence on improving the spirituality of employees at work, but the association between organizational aesthetics and workplace spirituality is largely ignored. On the other hand, the literature in organizational studies mostly allows the logical components as envisioned predictors of organizational outcomes such as organizational effectiveness, productivity, citizenship behavior, and employee engagement, whereas alternatively, scholars in aesthetics strongly believe that the spiritual aspect at work significantly determines positive organizational outcomes as previously said. However, the question of what drives workplace spirituality remains unaddressed. Hence, this paper attempts to answer that question with reference to the workplace spirituality theory by drawing major contributions from organizational aesthetic theory and organizational learning theory. The initial conceptualization was built by summarizing the existing literature in a systematic way. Six hypotheses were developed in the conceptualization by bringing three (03) antecedents on workplace spirituality from the perspective of organizational aesthetics. The conclusion of this conceptualization can be found in the latter part.

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## 01. Introduction

It is ambiguous that food, clothing, and shelter are sufficient for a meaningful life of a human being (Alyona, Tursun, Akmaral, & Saira, 2016) because humanity is prioritized over anything else. This influence has extended the management academia shift from non-human-centeredness to human-centeredness (Neathery, Taylor, & He, 2020). Spiritual values vested by aesthetics at work become more crucial (Dehaghi, Goodarzi, & Arazi, 2012) though the academia is still biased to commitment, productivity, efficiency, citizenship behaviour, and engagement (Garg & Saxena, 2020).

Pascale, Milleman, and Gioja (2000) state that human resources should be managed by newly inspired and insightful rules with intensified knowledge, not by outdated ones, because employees at the modern workplace require responsive and sensible value creation and sense-making from contemporary organizations (Hansen, Ropo, & Sauer, 2007; Dangmei & Singh, 2017). However, this need has not yet been adequately addressed due to less scholarly attention, so the artistic approach to management has not yet been foreseen and validated for addressing employee-related issues at work (Milliman, Gatling, & Kim, 2018).

Not all problems confronted by organizations are explicitly declared but some have been. Therefore, organizational aesthetics deserve to find worthwhile solutions for these hidden issues discretely (Dangmei & Singh, 2017). From that viewpoint, it can be ascertained that organizational aesthetics have greater possibilities to uncover profound solutions for devastating performance-related issues in institutions (Dangmei & Singh, 2017). Since the literature holds that aesthetics have a great impact on uplifting the spiritual component of organizations (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007), it is worthy to investigate how aesthetics relate to spirituality at work.

Furthermore, aesthetics play a significant role in the development of individual and organizational knowledge through a cognitive process (Dangmei & Singh, 2017). This cognitive process of knowledge development is largely influenced by mood, emotions, and feelings (Strati, 2008). Hence, this concept is not only incorporated with aesthetic labour (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007) but cultural and cognitive adjustment of employees and organizations. On the other hand, Wasserman and Frenkel (2011) conceptualized that layout, colours, zoning, and shapes in office space impact the employees' mental healthiness and affect the acceptance of the authority of their supervisors (Polat & Öztoprak-Kavak, 2011).

Meanwhile, a growing body of literature bears witness that organizational learning can determine workplace spirituality (Pandey, Gupta, & Gupta, 2019). Thus, organizational learning has a dual impact on organizational aesthetics and workplace spirituality, which can be conceptualized as a mediating predictor in this domain, but literature with such connotations is rare to find (Pandey et al., 2019).

Organizational sciences are evolving grounded on environmental dynamism so that yesterday's knowledge and strategies cannot ensure tomorrow's success (Senge, 1990).

Therefore, it is important to come up with a different paradigm to treat contemporary organizational issues intensified by learning and creativity (Antunes & Pinheiro, 2020). Having a more specific view on the employees' work-related issues, it is seen that employees still suffer from 'traditional' workplace issues which the academia has been exerting to address for the last six decades (AIA Insurance, 2018; 2019).

Table 1 indicates some tagline health indicators of working populations in Sri Lanka and the rest of Asia (including Australia). The indicators do not give a healthy outlook of the employees because the Sri Lankan working crowd is still suffering from stress, depression, less physical activity, loss of healthy diet, and many financial concerns. Thus, it seems that for the modern management philosophy is still very hard to address the work-related issues of employees which critically require a paradigm shift in management (Antunes & Pinheiro, 2020).

Table 1: Workplace Health Indicators in Two Consecutive Years

Indicator	Sri Lanka		Asia	
	2019	2018	2019	2018
[1] Working days lost per employee per year	47.9	53.2	69.2	73.8
	Days	Days	Days	Days
[2] Work engagement: low engaged	10.3%	8.3%	14.9%	13.2%
[3] Insufficient physical activity	58.6%	32.7%	60.5%	42.0%
[4] Not eating a healthy diet	88.9%	91.5%	85.6%	87.9%
[5] Smoking at work	13.6%	12.8%	8.1%	9.2%
[6] Exceeding alcohol guidelines	1.9%	1.1%	1.7%	1.3%
[7] Sleeping less than 7 hours per night	46.4%	46.4%	49.0%	50.1%
[8] Moderate or severe symptoms of depression	15.0%	12.9%	6.8%	6.4%
[9] 1 or more work related stress factors	56.1%	59.5%	49.8%	49.6%
[10] Employees with financial concerns	30.9%	33.6%	21.5%	20.8%
[11] Average age	32.0	32.5	35.6	35.9
	Years	Years	Years	Years

These recent indicators demonstrate the fall of the employee at work (AIA Insurance, 2019). The career advancement of employees may be effective but it is unable to answer these practical issues at work. Further, academicians, medical practitioners, and medical scholars are still unable to address the stress and depression of employees with permanent solutions (Garg & Saxena, 2020). Hence, a new dimension is needed to solve the typical workplace issues (Silingiene & Skeriene, 2015). Hence, it is motivating to find a sustainable solution from work-related psychometric indicators, such as workplace spirituality.

Since there are unaddressed areas in workplace spirituality that can be made up by connotating, respectively, organizational aesthetics, organizational learning, and aesthetic leadership to the organizational aesthetics theory (Strati, 1999; 2000), organizational learning theory (Sullivan & Nonaka, 1986), and aesthetic leadership theory (Hansen et al., 2007; Polat & Kavak, 2011), the present study aims to conceptualize those predictors to address the problem of what predicts the workplace spirituality in the aesthetic dimension of organizations?

Below research questions are derived to address the highlighted gap.

1. What is the impact of organizational aesthetics on workplace spirituality in an organization?
2. What is the impact of organizational aesthetics on organizational learning in an organization?
3. What is the impact of organizational learning on workplace spirituality in an organization?
4. What is the mediation impact made by organizational learning between organizational aesthetics and workplace spirituality in an organization?
5. What is the impact of aesthetic leadership on workplace spirituality in an organization?
6. What is the moderated impact made by aesthetic leadership on the relationship between organizational learning and workplace spirituality?

The purpose of this study is to conceptualize the antecedents of workplace spirituality in the reflection of organizational aesthetics. Six (06) research questions were drafted in order to empirically address based on this conceptualization. However, this empirical part is not addressed by this paper as this demarcates only the conceptualization. The next immediate part of this study, the review of literature involves critically studying the prevailing knowledge with regard to the antecedents of workplace spirituality in a systematic way. After this review, the conceptual framework is presented with the hypotheses which are built based on a critical evaluation of the literature. Subsequently, the methodology part is discussed with the purpose of performing the empirical study after this conceptualization. Finally, the conclusion of this conceptual paper is discussed.

## **02. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Organizational Aesthetics**

#### *2.1.1. Defining organizational aesthetics*

Aesthetics have been defined with a wider variety, ranging between visually-driven aspects and spirituality-driven aspects (Mei-Ju, Huang, Pin-Chen, Yang, & Chen-Hsin, 2014). Primarily, organizational aesthetics are defined as the knowledgeable admiration of beauty including art as an object and performance, and other forms of creative expressions dealing with feelings and judgments in an individual's appreciation of the arts (Buschgens et al., 2019; Shrivastava et al., 2018). It is a sensory means of grasping reality, understanding instincts, and making decisions (Bjerke et al., 2007; Strati, 1999; Wang et al., 2013). Also, it is meant to be the science of expression by being identical in every form of appreciation, intuition, or imaginative synthesis (Lu, et al., 2020). Thus, it is a concept of harmony, beauty, and order in the material world (Toufani et al., 2017). As said by Swilley (2012), aesthetics is not only about visual appearance but also about the five senses of human beings, acting stimuli in respect of both cognitive and emotional responses.

#### *2.1.2. Theoretical Underpinning of Organizational Aesthetics*

The literature does not show an enriched theoretical grounding of organizational aesthetics. However, Strati (2010) has introduced 4 fields of it: images relating to organizational identity, physical space of the organization, ideas such as the manager as an artist and the

beauty of social organization, and how management can learn from artistic form and content. Also, the need of developing a perfect aesthetic dimension of work by connoting 4 major qualitative methodological approaches, namely, the archaeological, the empathetic logical, the aesthetic, and the artistic, has been emphasized (Strati, 2009; 2010).

In the first approach, the researcher representationally holds an aesthetically oriented archaeological sense of different organizational cultures. In the second approach, the researcher is required to plunge themselves into the organizational context to explore representations of aesthetics. The researcher finds artifacts subject to sensory perceptions and aesthetic judgments. In the third approach, the researcher should activate his/her own sensory perceptions and aesthetic judgments to realize the organization quotidian. The fourth approach acknowledges that researchers should re-arrange arts for aesthetic inquiry and aesthetic representation by adding 'playfulness' to the organizational aesthetic knowledge (Statler, 2006; Strati, 2010).

### *2.1.3. Measurements of Organizational Aesthetics*

Due to the difficulty of measuring aesthetic emphasis quantitatively, most scholars rely upon qualitative research design. However, Lu et al. (2020) used a survey instrument to investigate customers' satisfaction and loyalty with 17 attributes of aesthetics. All items are asked with Likert-type questions ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. This scale had been configured exclusively for the referred research project but was validated afterward as a standard instrument. Furthermore, Choi (2019) used 3 reflective measures to scale aesthetic experience: self-expansion, meaning, and active discovery. Meanwhile, Johnson (2019) has applied a measurement scale with a 360-degree coverage of organizational aesthetics as a combination of 3 aesthetic scales: scale of aesthetically pleasing workplace, perceived workplace aesthetics, and aesthetically pleasing visual elements questionnaire.

## **2.2. Organizational Learning**

### *2.2.1. Defining Organizational Learning*

Organizational learning is viewed as a dynamic process of knowledge at individual, group, and organizational levels. It is able to incorporate dynamic capabilities into the internal processes of the organization (Antunes & Pinheiro, 2020). Moreover, it is defined as a science of creating, retaining, and sharing in an organization (Bhasakara & Filimonau, 2021) which engages in the forward and backward movement of knowledge among different levels in organizations (Deshpande, 2012; Huber, 1991). Hence, the socio-cognitive approach of organizational learning suggests learning initiates when individuals share their own mental models with other members at work to resolve these cognitive conflicts (Wiewiora et al., 2020).

### *2.2.2. Theoretical Underpinning of Organizational Learning*

As Lalani et al. (2020) expressed, organizational learning should be understood in terms of organizational learning theory, the process by which organizations improve and build knowledge capacity through experiential or planned learning activities (Carroll &

Edmondson, 2002; Lalani et al., 2020). However, it is based on the knowledge creation theory as well (Nonaka, Byosiere, Borucki, & Konno, 1994). Both theories were born from the great theory of learning (Bolles, 1975). There are many learning theories, such as computational learning theory (Kearns & Vazirani, 1994), cooperative learning theory (Sharan, 1990), and educational learning theory (Bereiter, 1990) in the lens of organizational sciences. However, the 2 most relevant organizational learning theories are knowledge creation theory and organizational learning theory.

### 2.2.2.1. Knowledge Creation Theory

As initially conceptualized by Nonaka, Byosiere, Borucki, and Konno (1994), it describes that the knowledge of an individual is for personal sensitivity and experience, and is the ability to define a situation and act accordingly (Antunes & Pinheiro, 2020). With that, the theory connotes the popular-two types of knowledge, explicit and tacit knowledge, where the knowledge is created through a process of conversion of socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (Erden, Von Krogh, & Nonaka, 2008; Nonaka, Toyama, & Konno, 2000; Antunes & Pinheiro, 2020). The theory outlines the SECI model (Erden et al., 2008) illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: The Knowledge Creation Process through Conversion of Knowledge

Step in the Process	Key Meaning	Interpretation
Socialization	Tacit-to-Tacit	Process of sharing tacit knowledge through observation, imitation, practice, and participation.
Externalization	Tacit-to-Explicit	Process of enunciating tacit knowledge into explicit concepts. Tacit knowledge is extremely internalized.
Combination	Explicit-to-Explicit	Process of integrating concepts into a knowledge system.
Internalization	Explicit-to-Tacit	Process of embodying explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge.

The process of knowledge conversion grabs special attention in this conceptualization with regard to the predictor of organizational learning, because, as much of the literature posits, the knowledge conversion process through this SECI model provides an evidence-based groundwork to demonstrate *how* the knowledge is created in organizations which can be ultimately conceptualized as organizational learning.

### 2.2.2.2. Organizational Learning Theory

Professor Chris Argyris further configured the work developed by Bolles (1975), particularly to the business context, and named it the organizational learning theory (Argyris, 1995). It emphasizes learning in an organization takes place at 3 levels, individual, group, and organizational and it captures the learning existing in all those levels (Argyris & Schon, 1997). Further, learning takes place when there is a match between the intentions and consequences of learners (Argyris, 1995).

According to this theory, learning occurs whenever errors are detected and connected (Argyris, 1995). There are 2 ways to rectify these errors: to change the behavior called

single-loop learning and to change the underlying programs (context) with the behavior of the learner constant called double-loop learning (Argyris, 1980; 1982; 1990; 1993; 1995). Further, if actions are altered without altering the underlying programs that individuals use to generate their actions, the corrections will either fail or will not persevere (Argyris, 1982; 1995). Thus, both single-loop and double-loop learnings are essential for organizational learning.

### *2.2.3. Measurements of Organizational Learning*

Siegert, Eberl, and, Göhlich (2021) adopted a mixed-method approach to examine organizational learning with reference to the nursing staff. Meanwhile, Tu and Wu (2020) relied on a quantitative approach to measure organizational learning as a mediator by adapting to March's (1991) classification of exploitative and exploratory learning (Atuahene-Gima & Murray, 2007; He & Wong, 2004), where 5 questions are asked, 2 questions under the exploitative learning and another 3 questions under the exploratory learning.

Relying upon structural equation modeling, the moderating impact of organizational learning can be measured (Zhou, Yuen, Tan, & Thai, 2021) and it is scaled quantitatively to find the mediating impact of organizational learning (Mu, Yang, Zhang, Lyu, & Deng, 2021). Both studies adopted the Organizational Learning Capability Scale (Jerez-Gomez et al., 2005) with 16 items under 4 dimension: managerial commitment, systems perspective, openness and experimentation, and transfer and integration.

Moreover, organizational learning has been enriched through meta-analyses as well. One study has engaged in reviewing 1582 studies in organizational learning published in two web-based research databases. A qualitative study has been designed based on Lesson Learned Management Process Model (Eken et al., 2020) to understand how web-based tools and management information systems can help improve organizational learning at work.

## **2.3. Aesthetic Leadership**

### *2.3.1. Defining Aesthetic Leadership*

Related literature with meaningful operationalizations of aesthetic leadership started emerging in 1996 (Taylor & Hansen, 2005). Polat and Kavak (2011) defined it as a leadership style that uses aesthetics as an instrument and synthesizes transformational, charismatic, and authentic leadership. Thus, it is verified that aesthetic leadership is a common feature that can be characterized by any prevailing leadership style rather than being a separate and independent leadership style.

Aesthetic leaders share their aesthetic vision with their inherent aesthetic behaviors such as criticisms, sensitivity, emotions, attention, and aesthetic pleasure, called the influence process (Güven & Polat, 2011). It is different from mainstream leadership disciplines because it is not rational, purposive, and linear in nature (Zhang et al., 2011). Thus, it is an approach focused on sensory knowledge and felt meaning associated with leadership phenomena (Hansen et al., 2007).



### *2.3.2. Theoretical Underpinning of Aesthetic Leadership*

Aesthetic leadership is amplified with 2 enduring components: engagement of the senses and the focus on the experience. With these, it is deemed an aspect of a broader movement toward aesthetics and art in leadership, management, and organization studies (Polat and Kavak, 2011). The development of aesthetic leadership has not solely occurred through experiential learning theory but also the Scharmer's Theory U (Dasro, 2004; Sutherland, 2012) emphasizing how the engagement of an individual with arts could establish a process of reflection leading to action (Dasro, 2004).

The aesthetic leadership theory was first connoted by Hansen, Ropo, and Sauer (2007) emphasizing that leadership studies in modern academia are having a remarkable drift toward more aesthetic dimensions of leadership. Further, 2 matters are declared by this leadership style: leadership as the management of meaning, and leadership as a follower-centric model (Hansen et al., 2007). It reflects neglected mainstream leadership qualities in humanness. The aesthetic view of leadership emphasizes the importance of the bodily presence of a leader at work (Hansen et al, 2007).

Guyen and Polat (2011) state that the aesthetic leadership of teachers has an impact on students' education. The stylish and trendy clothing of teachers provides visual examples for students. Students tend to believe that teachers who adapt to fashion are open to changes, very innovative, planned, and scheduled. As per Guven and Polat (2011), there are 7 dimensions in aesthetic leadership: aesthetic appearance, aesthetic communication, aesthetic honesty, aesthetic sensitivity, aesthetic support, aesthetic application, and aesthetic approach.

### *2.3.3. Measurements for Aesthetic Leadership*

Most of the studies work with qualitative methodologies (Hansen et al., 2007). However, it can be observed that there are some scholarly attempts in developing and verifying scales to measure this construct (Polat and Kavak, 2011). The 'Aesthetic Leadership Scale' has been developed with 50 items with 5 Likert-type items based on the 7 dimensions, aesthetic support (10), aesthetic application (10), aesthetic approach (9), aesthetic communication (8), aesthetic sensitivity (6), aesthetic honesty (4), and aesthetic appearance (3) (Polat and Kavak, 2011). However, the authors point out that the construct can successfully be scaled with a mixed approach.

Meanwhile, Azimi (2016) adapted to a scale with 24 items under 7 dimensions: identifying beauty and efficiency (2); discovering everyday experience (5); special attention to instrumental and ethical issues (4); developing artistic sensitivity in the rational process (3); the given appeal to followers (3); validating the relationship between leaders and followers (6); and clarifying the relationship between leaders and followers (1).



## **2.4. Workplace Spirituality**

### *2.4.1. Defining Workplace Spirituality*

As Dent et al. (2005) explored, there are pre-determined dimensional categorizations of workplace spirituality. However, they made notable distinctions between spirituality and religion. Meanwhile, Howard (2002) noticed that spirituality is impossible to interpret because it is personalized and a universal concept. Fanggidae et al. (2015) identified workplace spirituality at both individual and organizational levels. Individual level refers to the values that motivate individual transcendent experience through work processes and facilitates the feeling of being connected with others (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003), whereas organizational level refers to the framework of cultural values in an organization triggering employees' transcendent experience through the work process with the feeling of connectedness with others.

Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) critically evaluated the definitions of workplace spirituality and identified 5 themes: connection, compassion, mindfulness, meaningful work, and transcendence. Workplace spirituality is defined as the recognition that people have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community (Robbins, Judge, & Vohra, 2019). Hence, workplace spirituality is the mindfulness of employees at work leading them to do more meaningful work and guiding them to find great meaning in their work.

### *2.4.2. Theoretical Underpinning of Workplace Spirituality*

#### *2.4.2.1. Value-based model of workplace spirituality*

This is committed to demonstrating the relationship between spiritual values and their effect on the organization (Dehaghi et al., 2012; Milliman et al., 1999). It is a combination of two models, value-based management mode (Anderson, 1997) and strategic human resource management framework (Schuler & Jackson, 1987). The value-based management model deals with the effect of spiritual values on the corporate strategy, whereas the strategic human resource management framework is concerned with the implementation of the organizational strategy through the execution of the firm's HR strategy (Dehaghi, Goodarzi, & Arazi, 2012). Further, the integration of these models establishes a holistic approach to connotating workplace spirituality illustrated in Figure 1.

#### *2.4.3. Measurements for Workplace Spirituality*

Spirituality as a religious domain has been largely researched qualitatively based on secondary data (Alyona et al., 2016) grounded on Holy Bible and Al-Quran. Hence, many Islamic scholars prefer to further research spirituality and its related concepts in a religious domain (Alyona et al., 2016). Meanwhile, Silingiene and Skeriene (2015) studied spiritual intelligence by using a questionnaire-based survey. It was measured with 4 dimensions: critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, conscious state expansion, and transcendental awareness (Silingiene & Skeriene, 2015).

Focusing on contemporary research published before 2015, workplace spirituality has been measured by a scale with 23 items (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Sorakraikitikul & Siengthai, 2014). These items were sub-categorized into 3 dimensions: inner life, meaningful work, and sense of community (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Later, Rego and Cunha (2008) added another 5 items under a new dimension, self-work integration. All these are measured with 6 Likert-type scales from 1 (almost never) to 6 (almost always) (Sorakraikitikul & Siengthai, 2014).



Figure 1: Value-Based Model of Workplace Spirituality

Source: Milliman et al. (1999, p.p. 223)

Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) have developed a new scale for workplace spirituality exclusively in the Asian context. Excluding Duchon's 4 previous dimensions (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000), 5 new dimensions were finalized; 'connection', 'compassion', 'mindfulness', 'meaningful work', and 'transcendence'. These are not new dimensions but smartly worded old dimensions in the original scale. In the analysis, the first dimension, connection, and its 4 items were removed (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009).

### 03. Conceptual Framework

#### 3.1. Organizational Aesthetics and Workplace Spirituality

Organizational aesthetics is meant as the sensory means of grasping reality, understanding instincts, and making decisions by familiarizing with every form of appreciation, intuition, or imaginative synthesis (Bjerke et al., 2007; Lu et al., 2020; Strati, 1999). Scholars applied meaningfulness, mindfulness, and self-expansion though they have not used the exact word, aesthetics, in postulating the amplification of some outcomes such as productivity and performance in organizational lifespan (Choi, 2019; Buschgens et al., 2019; Devine et al., 2020).

Dimension-wise compatibilities of both constructs can be found justified with previous scholarly work (Johnson, 2019). As Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) pointed out, compassion, mindfulness, meaningfulness, and transcendence are the components of

workplace spirituality. Studies have demonstrated a higher level of correlations between the dimensions of both constructs cumulatively ensuring the relationship between organizational aesthetics and workplace spirituality (Sutherland, 2012).

Meanwhile, Devine et al. (2020) have empirically found that workplace aesthetics matter to career and organizational outcomes. Trustworthiness, warmth, competence, powerfulness, self-efficacy, self-esteem, locus of control, well-being, and emotional stability are specified as career outcomes. Further, firm performance, firm strategy, and firm prestige are specified as organizational outcomes. Here, well-being, emotional stability, self-efficacy, and powerfulness are indirectly associated with workplace spirituality (Bandura & Hall, 2018; Bajaj, Gupta, & Sengupta, 2019; Johnson et al., 2017).

Therefore, it is presumed that organizational aesthetics, together with workplace aesthetics, work environmental aesthetics, and visual attractiveness make a significant impact on determining the workplace spirituality of individuals and it is postulated as:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a positive impact of Organizational aesthetics on workplace spirituality in an organization.

### **3.2. Organizational Aesthetics and Organizational Learning**

Studies have found that workplace spirituality does not occur merely through organizational aesthetics but it takes a considerable time lag to absorb and understand aesthetic-driven spiritual development through learning (Eken et al., 2020; Gomez et al., 2005; Jothibabu et al., 2010; Moriceau & Paes, 2016). Thus, organizational learning is constructed with seven dimensions: continuous learning, dialogue and inquiry, team learning, employee empowerment, structural level enablers for leadership and learning, system connection, and embedded systems (Jyothibabu et al., 2010). There is a strong argument that organizational aesthetics directly, as well as indirectly, interrelate with organizational learning dimensions with positive associations providing adequate witnesses to shed light as a mediator (Chia, 2017; Jyothibabu et al., 2010; Wiewiora et al., 2020).

Moreover, organizational aesthetics can make positive impacts on innovations, organizational learning, and a firm's overall performance (Jimenez & Valle, 2011). When the organization is bolstered with visual attractiveness and is more artistic, it leads to improving the level of innovation and performance with the integration of knowledge. Even Jyothibabu et al. (2010) argue that organizational aesthetics should be an integrated component of organizational learning because it rationalizes only the logical component of learning and no indication of artistic learning (Roy et al., 2020). Therefore, scholars point out that workplace spirituality is missing the artistic component of learning (Antunes & Pinheiro, 2020).

With the above justifications, it is suggested that organizational learning mediates the relationship between organizational aesthetics and workplace spirituality. Thus, it is suggested that organizational aesthetics positively associate with organizational learning. Therefore, the second postulation is indicated as:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** There is a positive impact of organizational aesthetics on organizational learning.

### **3.3. Organizational Learning and Workplace Spirituality**

The association between organizational learning and workplace spirituality has been enriched with a mature body of literature (Deshpande, 2012; Moriceau & Paes, 2016; Pandey et al., 2019). The relationship between these two constructs has been hypothesized and tested in numerous studies, and according to them, it is strongly justified that the organizational tacit knowledge and motivation of its members to learn at work, strongly incorporate into building workplace spirituality (Strati, 1999; 2003; 2009; 2012).

Meanwhile, Arrieira et al. (2018) report that learning occurring in interdisciplinary teams leads to organizational spirituality. Workplace spirituality could make a strong positive impact on organizational transformation through its performance-driven learning culture (Dhiman, Modi, & Kumar, 2019). Moreover, scholars have established the interconnection between organizational learning culture and workplace spirituality. Organizational learning culture significantly impacts workplace spirituality with the mediating impact of knowledge-sharing behavior (Sorakraikitikul & Siengthai, 2014).

The statistical relationship between the dimensions of knowledge sharing and meaningful work has well been established (Sankar & Suresh, 2018). In the action of creating a humanistic work environment, organizational learning plays a critical role (Fanggidae, 2018). Team learning is justified as a driving force of workplace spirituality (Pandey et al., 2019). Hussain (2018) has pointed out that system connection and embedded systems moderate the building of a spiritual culture at work.

Considering all these justifications, it is understood that there is a positive association between organizational learning and workplace spirituality with its mediating impact. Thus, the third and fourth postulations are drawn as:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** There is a positive impact of organizational learning on workplace spirituality.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Organizational learning mediates the relationship between organizational aesthetics and workplace spirituality.

### **3.4. Aesthetic Leadership and Workplace Spirituality**

The association between aesthetic leadership and workplace spirituality is ambiguous in literature (Dangmei & Singh, 2017) because it has been incorporated to test various phenomena in mainstream leadership (Arslan & Staub, 2013). Aesthetic leadership is critical for building workplace spirituality through organizational aesthetics because it is trusted when leaders apply their artistic sense and sensory information over his/her followers, workplace spirituality is easy to achieve (Ali et al., 2020).

In the Chinese business context, aesthetic leadership is considered an important element because business personnel largely tend to incorporate Confucian values to manage their businesses (Zhang et al., 2011). The ancient Confucian leadership values closely link with

aesthetic leadership style. Therefore, it is closely associated with workplace spirituality. In nursing research, aesthetic leadership is placed as a driving force of caring for and curing patients through a spiritual intervention; so nursing officers are trusted to be aesthetic leaders (Mannix & Daly, 2015). Meanwhile, Louis and Murphy (2017) convey that aesthetic leadership links with trust, caring, and organizational learning.

Direct and positive associations are established between organizational aesthetics and aesthetic leadership (Ema et al., 2019) by justifying that arts-based methods in leadership development are required for building workplace spirituality in the European context (Sutherland, 2012). Alternatively, Howard (1996) states that the aesthetic face of leadership leads organizations to transform them through learning. Mindfulness, transcendence, and meaning of work are always associated with spirituality at work (Alabbas et al., 2019; Cuhna et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2016).

In association with the above justifications, it can be seen that aesthetic leadership can moderate the mediating relationship between organizational learning and workplace spirituality. Thus, the fifth and sixth postulations are developed as:

**H<sub>5</sub>:** There is a positive impact of aesthetic leadership on workplace spirituality.

**H<sub>6</sub>:** Aesthetic leadership moderates the relationship between organizational learning and workplace spirituality.

Based on the above-derived hypotheses, the conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

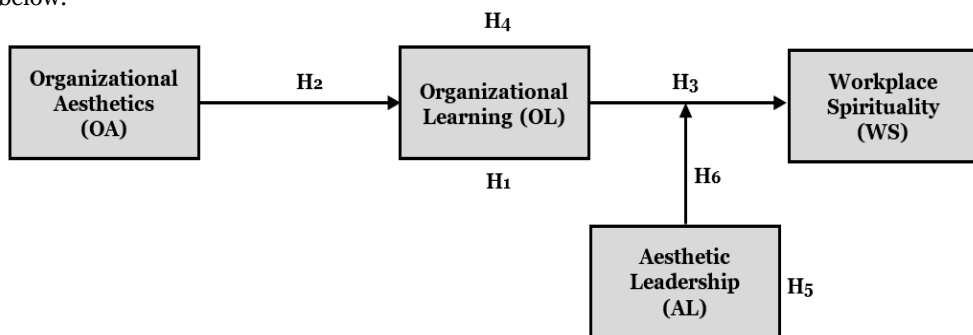


Figure 2: Proposed Conceptual Framework

#### 04. Methodology

The proposed empirical study replicates the positivism philosophy which is supposed to work with an observable social reality so that findings can be generalized (Saunders et al., 2011). Further, it adopts the deductive approach. The scope of research flows from the underlying theories to data/facts. Alternatively, this study is explanatory where the causal relationships have been formulated between the constructs rationally (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Also, the research strategy is the survey method, finalized in accordance with the research approach (Saunders et al., 2011).

Moreover, driven by the conceptualization, the proposed empirical study applies the mono-method for data collection (Saunders et al., 2011) and the data will be collected only from self-administered questionnaires. Based on Sunder's Research Onion framework (Sunders et al., 2011), the cross-sectional time horizon is convenient for the proposed empirical study as the particular phenomenon is researched at a particular time (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, & Collins, 2014). This will involve only primary data collection and only primary data is exported for the analysis. The unit of analysis of the proposed study lies at the individual level and it will be an employee who has a permanent job contract in an organization irrespective of the sector of employment.

The pilot study has been executed prior to the implementation with a sample of 25 respondents (N = 25). The reliability analysis was run on SPSS (version 24) and the Cronbach's Alpha value of the data 0.842 verified the higher level of reliability, which allows main data collection. Also, the Cronbach alpha value item-wise is higher than 0.7 for each item, and therefore, all the items of the questionnaire are taken. The sample size of the empirical study will be 300 – 350. The data collection method will be the simple random sampling technique because methodologically, it is accurate and easily accessible, which is recommended for larger samples (Saunders et al., 2011). Since the unit of analysis of the study is significantly common, it is decided to execute the simple random sampling in the lottery (random) technique, where every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). However, the sampling frame of the study is unprecedented.

Quantitative techniques will be applied to draw the findings of this study as this is a quantitative study. Descriptive statistics will be run to outline the demographical nature of the sample of the proposed empirical study. Subsequently, inferential statistics will be run with correlations and multiple linear regression. These basic statistical applications will be run on SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and the Structural Equation Modeling will be run on SPSS Amos in order to test and evaluate multivariate causal relationships among the constructs in the conceptual framework.

## **05. Conclusion**

The purpose of this conceptual paper was to explore the antecedents of workplace spirituality and identify the conceptual connotations among those antecedents. It was hypothesized that organizational aesthetics have a direct impact on workplace spirituality in an organizational context. Thus, it can be justified that the aesthetical interventions carried out by an organization, which were formally referred to as organizational aesthetics, may have a direct influence on workplace spirituality. Further, adequate evidence is available in the literature to convince that learning interventions also have a direct influence over workplace spirituality, which was conceptualized as a mediator between organizational aesthetics and workplace spirituality in the referred conceptual framework of this study. The reason for considering organizational learning as a mediator is, that it cannot be a single determinant of workplace spirituality. Moreover, the relevant body of literature indicates that spirituality at work is sharpened by leadership; so, it is more reasonable that aesthetic leadership, which is known as the leadership style which utilizes aesthetics, as the main tool to synthesize transformational, charismatic, and authentic leadership styles covering a broad spectrum of leadership. Hence, aesthetic leadership is predicted to moderate the relationship between

organizational learning and workplace spirituality in this conceptualization.

Finally, workplace spirituality is the central construct of the workplace spirituality theory on which this study is based. With this conceptual paper, the theoretical modifications can be made based on Organizational Aesthetic Theory and Organizational Learning Theory by bringing their central constructs, organizational aesthetics, aesthetic leadership, and organizational learning, respectively, for a meaningful conceptualization of workplace spirituality from the aesthetic point of view.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

Hereby it is confirmed that the present study has no significant conflict of interest as there is no third party involved in this study in terms of funding or any other means. All the data and other forms of literature are openly published and no special permission is required for the author to access those.

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