CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Definitions of Spirituality

According to Krishnakumar and Neck (2002), there are three most popular viewpoints and perspectives of spirituality – intrinsic-origin view, the religious view and the existentialist perspective.

2.0.1 The intrinsic-origin view

It is argued that the intrinsic-origin view of spirituality is a concept or a principle of spirituality that originates from the inside of an individual. According to Guillory (2000, p. 33), the intrinsic-origin perspective of spirituality can be defined as "our inner consciousness" and "that which is spiritual comes from within-beyond our programmed beliefs and values". Similarly, Turner's (1999, p.41) definition of the intrinsic-origin view of spirituality is said to be "that which comes from within, beyond the survival instincts of the mind".

One of the most observed characteristics about the intrinsic-origin view of spirituality is that most of the proponents agreed that spirituality is something which is beyond the rules of religion (Guillory, 2000). This is supported by Graber (2001), who found that the definition of spirituality can be classified within the intrinsic-origin perspective in that spirituality avoids the formal and ceremonial connotations of religion and it is "non-denominational, non-hierarchical and non-ecclesiastical" as spirituality implies an inner

search for meaning or fulfilment that may be undertaken by anyone regardless of religion.

While this spirituality perspective mainly speaks about some power which originates from inside, it also involves a feeling of being connected with one's work and with others (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Neck and Milliman, 1994; Mitroff and Denton, 1999).

2.0.2 The religious views

Bruce (1996, p.7) has given a definition of religion as "consists of beliefs, actions, and institutions which assume the existence of supernatural entities with powers of action, or impersonal powers or processes possessed of moral purpose". Therefore, the religious views of spirituality are those that are specifically refer to a particular religion.

For example, the Christians believe spirituality is the "call for work", as Naylor *et al*. (1996, p.38) affirm that "our work participation in the creativity of God is a great blessing, a divine summons, a vocation". For the Hindus, one of the important principles is that the effort towards the goal is most important and the results are supposed to be provided by the gods; and this is stated in one of the most important tenets of their religious text "The Bhagavad Gita" (Menon, 1997).

The views of Islam about the workplace are commonly found under the term "Islamic Work Ethics (ISE)" where Islam preaches its followers to be more committed towards the organisation and this commitment is said to make the employees embrace organisational change more readily than others (Yousef, 2000). The ISE also encourage cooperation and consultation; and this is said to alleviate mistakes (Yousef, 2000). Furthermore, good values such as generosity and justice should be developed and practice in the workplace as this is embedded in the "Islamic Work Ethics (ISE)" (Yousef, 2000).

For the Buddhists, hard work and devotion are the tools used not only to change and modify an individual's life but also the institution as a whole, which ultimately results in total enrichment of life and work (Jacobson, 1983). Other religious views such as Taoism and Confucianism also proposed spiritual views which can be interpreted in the context of an inexplicable feeling of connectedness with the others and the universe (Rice, 1978). In other words, it would seems that for a Taoist and Confucianist perspective on workplace spirituality, emphasis would be place on the importance of harmony, teamwork and togetherness.

2.0.3 The existentialist views

The existentialist views of spirituality could be said to be the most connected to the concepts such as the search for meaning in what the employees are doing at the workplace (Naylor *et al.*, 1996; Neck and Milliman, 1994; Kahnweiler and Otte, 1997). The "search for meaning" has been one of the most quoted phrases in examples of employees who quit their jobs to lead a more spiritually enriching life (Naylor *et al.*, 1996; Burack, 1999). Hence, Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) have come up with some of the existential questions as follows:

- Why am I doing this work?

- What is the meaning of the work I am doing?

- Where does this lead me to?

- Is there a reason for my existence and the organisation's?

These questions are assumed to be important when employees are involved in jobs which are extremely as well as immensely repetitive and boring. Besides the work being repetitive and boring, the lack of meaning in the daily work or the purpose of work can lead to "separation or alienation from oneself", which Naylor *et al.* (1996) termed it as "existential sickness" to which it could result in employee frustration and greatly reduce the overall productivity of the employee.

2.1 Workplace Spirituality: Definitional Controversy

Besides the three most popular perspectives of spirituality accorded by Krishnakumar and Neck (2002), Ashmos and Duchon, (2000, p.137) defined workplace spirituality as the "recognition that employees have an inner life which nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work taking place in the context of a community". Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003, p.13) on the other hand suggested a different definition, arguing that workplace spirituality is "a framework of organisational values evidenced in the culture that promote employees' 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". In a 1998 Symposium addressed to the Academy of Management, Ian Mitroff defined workplace spirituality as "the desire to find ultimate purpose in life and to live accordingly" (Cavanagh, 1999, p.189).

The definitional controversy led Laabs (1995) to point out that it is much easier to explain what spirituality is *not* than to define what it is. Freshman (1999) clarified and stressed that not any one, two or even three things can be said about workplace spirituality that would include the "universe of explanations" but there are many possible ways to understand such a complex and diverse area as "spirituality in the workplace".

This definitional imprecision led some authors to become sceptical and ask themselves whether workplace spirituality deserves the attention it has attracted (Brown, 2003).

2.2 Research on Workplace Spirituality

The researcher in the present study suggests and proposes that the topic of workplace spirituality is worth the effort of a research for four reasons. Firstly, Mitroff argued that the low degree of precision is part of the phenomenon, therefore being necessary to avoid "the obsession with the definition" and to work from "guiding definitions" and furthermore, if excessively severe definitional conditions is require to start with, "then why would [we] need to study the phenomenon?" (interview with Dean, 2004, p.17). According to Mitroff (2003, p.381), even though definitions are important, "they are not a total substitute for the immense feelings and tremendous passions which are an essential part of spirituality". Krishnakumar and Neck (2002, p.153; p.156) further added that differing perspectives and definitions as well as the different views of the meaning of workplace spirituality is derived as a consequence of the very strong personal nature of the word itself and that the "multiple view of spirituality is a positive thing for the organisations if managers attempt to understand differing spiritual views and also encourage all views within an organisation", which would then "encourage employees to practice their own sense of spirituality in the workplace".

Secondly, definitional difficulties should not discourage research efforts. This is because if the researchers want to contribute to a better understanding of what happens in organisations and why people behave in certain ways and form certain attitudes, they must rid themselves of "intellectual bias" (Mohamed *et al.*, 2004) and should not reject studying a topic just because it is difficult to define or test empirically.

Thirdly, even though workplace spirituality is considered a highly personal and philosophical construct, nearly all of the academic definitions acknowledge that spirituality involves a sense of wholeness, connectedness at work and deeper values (Gibbons, 2000); where workplace spirituality involves the effort to find one's ultimate purpose in life, to develop a strong connection to co-workers and other people associated with work, and to have an alignment between one's core beliefs and the values of their organisation (Mitroff and Denton, 1999); which is also consistent with the definition given by Ashmos and Duchon (2000). This is reflected on the three dimensions of workplace spirituality (meaningful work, having a sense of community, alignment with organisation's values) for the purpose of the present study.

Lastly, despite the methodological challenges it creates, spirituality is undeniably a human need for many people (Hart and Brady, 2005) and workplace spirituality is a "reality" that must not be ignored by society and organisations (Judge, 1999; Sanders, 2003). Mitroff and Denton (1999) pointed out that organisational science can no longer avoid studying, understanding and treating organisations as spiritual entities. According to Strack *et al*., (2002), many employees look for the satisfaction of their spiritual needs, i.e. to be unique, to commune with something greater than themselves, to be useful, to be understood by others, and to understand how they fit into a greater context; and at the same time, they also wish to experience a sense of purpose and meaning at work, as well as a sense of connection with other people and their work community (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000). Pfeffer (2003) summarised these human goals as saying that people seek in their workplaces:

- interesting work that allows learning, development and growth which would provides a sense of competency and mastery;

- meaningful work that instils some feeling of purpose;

- a sense of connection and positive social relations with co-workers; and

- the ability to live an integrated life, so that the work does not clash with the essential nature of the worker and his or her desire to live as a human being.

2.3 Three Dimensions of Workplace Spirituality

2.3.1 Meaningful work

One of the fundamental aspects of spirituality at work would involve having a deep sense of meaning and purpose in one's work. This dimension of workplace spirituality represents how employees interact with their day-to-day work at the individual level. The expression of spirituality at work involves the assumptions that each employee has his or her own inner motivations, truths and desires to be involved in activities that give greater meaning to his or her life and the lives of others (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Hawley, 1993).

However, the meaningful work dimension of workplace spirituality is that work is not just meant to be interesting or challenging or enjoyable, but that it is about things such as searching for deeper meaning and purpose, living the employee's dreams and the expression of the employee's needs by seeking meaningful work as well as contributing to others (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Fox, 1994). Similarly, Moore (1992) further observes that work is a vocation and a calling; and act as a way to create a greater meaning and identity in the workplace.

2.3.2 Sense of community

This is the second workplace spirituality dimension that involves having a deep connection to, or relationship with, others, which has been articulated as having a sense of community (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000).

This workplace spirituality dimension of having a sense of community occurs at the group level of human behaviour which involves the interactions between the employees and their co-workers. Community at work is based on the belief that people see themselves as connected to each other and there is some type of relationship between the employee's inner self and the inner self of other co-workers (Maynard, 1992; Miller, 1992). According to Neal and Bennett (2000), this level of workplace spirituality dimension involves the mental, emotional and spiritual connections among employees in teams or groups in organisations; where the essence of community is that it involves

a deeper sense of connection among the employees, including support, freedom of expression and genuine caring.

There have been a few organisations that appear to have developed strong organisational cultures that emphasise a sense of community among employees. One of the examples can be seen is that of Southwest Airlines' organisational culture where the Southwest Airlines community includes a feeling among the employees that they are all part of a larger organisational family; that employees take care of each other as well as their customers; and that the employees' families are also an important part of the organisation (Freiberg and Freiberg, 1996; Milliman *et al.*, 1999).

2.3.3 Alignment with organisational values

The third dimension of workplace spirituality is when employees experience a strong sense of alignment between their personal values and their organisation's mission, vision and purpose. This component of workplace spirituality encompasses the interaction of employees with the larger organisational purpose (Mitroff and Denton, 1999). Alignment with the organisation's values is related to the premise that an individual's purpose is larger than one's self and should make a contribution to others or society. According to Ashmos and Duchon (2000), alignment also means that individuals believe that managers and the employees in their organisation have

appropriate values, have a strong conscience, and are concerned about the welfare of its employees and community.

Furthermore, Hawley (1993) observed that part of living by one's inner truth involves working in an organisation with integrity as well as having a sense of honesty and purpose that is beneficial to others beyond simply making a profit.

Alignment with organisational values involves the concept that employees desire to work in an organisation whose goal is to not just be a good corporate citizen, but an organisation that seeks to have a high sense of ethics or integrity and make a larger contribution than the typical company to the welfare of employees, customers and society. For instance, Malphurs (1996, p.52) states that a person "should not work for any organisation, sacred or secular, if he or she does not share to a great degree the same institutional values".

While organisations clearly experience many limitations and remain imperfect institutions, the alignment with organisational values concept suggests that there are some organisations that have a higher level of commitment to their workers, customers and society than others. For example, there is some evidence which suggests that many of the employees at Southwest Airlines feel aligned with the company's cause which includes offering low airfares (allowing people to fly who normally could not afford

to), frequent and on-time flights, and a personal service characterised by fun and humour (Milliman *et al.*, 1999).

2.4 Workplace Spirituality Dimensions and Affective Organisational Commitment

Theoretical and empirical evidence supports the hypothesis that higher levels of spirituality at work allow employees to satisfy their spiritual needs, therefore leading to higher affective organisational commitment (Fry, 2003; Fry *et al.*, 2005; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003; Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004; Milliman *et al.*, 2003) and hence, lead to higher individual performance. For example, benevolent activities such as kindness towards colleagues can generate positive emotions and result in more positive employee attitudes about work and the organisation, which in turn induced the employees to develop higher affective commitment (Pfeffer and Vega, 1999; Milliman *et al.*, 2003).

Moreover, this is likely to happen because employees who feel socially supported and perceive that their organisation promotes their hope, dreams and happiness tend to reciprocate (Settoon *et al.*, 1996; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001) with positive attitudes towards the organisation including stronger organisational affective bonds and feelings of loyalty towards their organisation.

2.4.1 Meaningful work and affective commitment

The sense of meaningful work and enjoyment at work is a source of psychological well-being (Kets de Vries, 2001) and therefore could easily expect that positive reactions and attitudes toward the organisation will develop as well. The opportunity to do meaningful work instils feelings of purpose in employees and improves their self-esteem, hope, health, happiness and personal growth (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Kets de Vries, 2001). As a result, employees bring their entire self (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual self) to the organisation, taking on work as a mission more than as a "job", which in turn makes them more affectively attached to their organisations and more committed to improving organisational performance (Gavin and Mason, 2004; Wright and Cropanzano, 2004).

2.4.2 Sense of community and affective commitment

Milliman *et al.* (1999) postulated that having a strong sense of community as well as having strong purposeful organisational goals was associated with greater affective employee commitment and higher retention rates. In addition, Brown (1992) states that a sense of community also leads to greater employee satisfaction with the organisation; besides enhanced creativity, cooperative behaviours and performance (Burroughs and Eby, 1998; Frederickson, 2001; Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004; Wright and Cropanzano, 2004).

The perception of a strong team's sense of community can make employees feel that they can satisfy their social, intimacy and security needs, therefore experiencing higher psychological well-being (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Burroughs and Eby, 1998; Christopher *et al.*, 2004; Haller and Hadler, 2006). When employees perceive a strong team's sense of community feel that the organisation provides opportunities for their inner life and perform meaningful work, they feel respected and appreciated as valuable emotional, intellectual and spiritual beings (Kim and Mauborgne, 1998; Morris, 1997; Strack *et al.*, 2002) and not merely as "human resources". Hence, perceiving that the organisation cares for their well-being, the employees are likely to experience higher levels of health and psychological well-being as well as the experience of lower levels of stress and burnout (Adams et al., 2003; Karasek and Theorell, 1990; Simmons and Nelson, 2001). They also experience a sense of psychological and emotional safety (Brown and Leigh, 1996; Burroughs and Eby, 1998); trust the organisation and its leader; and develop a higher sense of organisational virtuosity (Cameron et al., 2004).

In response, the employees tend to develop a sense of duty and would reciprocate with more cooperative and supportive actions; and with greater loyalty, affective commitment, enthusiasm, work effort and productivity; therefore contributing to organisational performance (Cameron *et al.*, 2004; Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001; Gavin and Mason, 2004; Kouzes and Posner, 1995; Settoon *et al.*, 1996; Wright and Cropanzano, 2004).

2.4.3 Alignment with organisational values and affective commitment

When the employees perceive that the organisation's values and their own values are aligned, they tend to develop and experience higher affective organisation commitment; besides greater satisfaction (Cooper-Thomas *et al.,* 2004; O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991; Sims and Kroeck, 1994).

When employee's growth and personal values and goals are consistent with the pursuit of organisational values and goals, workers' identification with their organisation would tend to be strengthened (Dutton *et al.*, 1994); more cooperative behaviours would be carried out; self-esteemed develops; and more pleasant effects emerge (Herrbach and Mignonac, 2004; Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996). The employees, would as a result, transcend physical and cognitive demands, are more affectively committed and carrying out their tasks as having spiritual significance (Richards, 1995); which would lead to their performance (Pfeffer, 2003; Strack *et al.*, 2002).

On the other hand, when the employee's personal and organisational lives clashes, they would experience negative emotions, lack of connection, disparity and alienation from their work environment, further contributing to higher absenteeism, turnover, negligent behaviour and lower affective commitment (Adams, 2000; Bradford, 1993; Jurkievicz, 2000; Kupperschmidt, 2000; Smola and Sutton, 2002; Yu and Miller, 2003). The merger effect of workplace spirituality and into personal or family life would be expected to

enhance satisfaction with family, marriage, leisure activities and social interactions, thus enabling employees to live an integrated life (Pfeffer, 2003), which in turn, would increase affective commitment as well as work performance (Bromet *et al.*, 1990; Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004). In other words, organisations that express spirituality as defined by the presence of certain values such as trust, respect, meaningful work, dignity and honesty "create an environment where integration of the personal and professional selves is possible, engaging the whole person in the work process" (Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004, p.134).

Therefore, it has been proposed that organisations which create an environment where the firm identifies with and is responsive to employees' input and sense of values would have employees who are more adaptable and will help the company succeed (Catlette and Hadden, 1998); have a greater sense of "esprit de corps" (Channon, 1992); and are more affectively committed to helping the organisation succeed (Hawley, 1993; Catlette and Hadden, 1998).