Role of Spirituality in Human Decision Making

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Abstract

The paper is an attempt to observe the application of spirituality in Human Decision Making. The decision taken at a point of time proves to be correct or incorrect in future and also the span of time taken for deciding if the decision is correct or incorrect is vital, as in longer run a correct decision may prove incorrect and vice versa. Spirituality being an intangible variable is as vast as God itself and so are its philosophies. This paper takes into consideration the philosophies of renowned psychotherapists, who are working in the area of reincarnation and spirituality and also have live cases to confirm the existence of a different world, though their theories are challenged at various levels, but so is the existence of God. The Paper primarily identifies the factors to be considered for effective decision making as: Identification of a problem as structural or executional. Identification of solution and alternatives there of. Critical analysis of alternatives on the scale of probability of success or failure. Choice of most feasible alternative. Extent of loss in the event of failure. Capability of extracting learning from the event, be it success or failure. The decision making is always considered as being very important in management but the tool ignored very often, is to live in here and now. Living in here and now does not mean ignoring future but elimination of too many assumptions, that act as disturbances in far sightedness. The theories proposed for the study are: Mind body is reward body, heart body is soul body. Mind- The slave but not the master Intelligence and Intuition; Reaction and Response Self realization and Actualization Another important observation is to continuously check your decision in terms of intensions and the clarity in identifying those intensions. There are numerous tools for effective decision making but the most important part is to identify the problem. For somebody said,” Target marketing is a toy for those who work for cost and not for them who wish to decide it “.

Keyword: Mind Body, Reward Body.

INTRODUCTION

Despite widespread interest in the topic of spirituality and Human decision making, very few articles exploring the topic have specifically addressed Human decision making. The study of Human decision making focuses the identification of right problem and identification of the right problem area depends on the clarity of the objective. The soul of effective decision lies in the identification of right problem and identification of the right problem area can never be done without clarity of the objective. Reason being problem in implementation of one strategy may be bliss for the other. Therefore, one has to identify the hurdles in a very holistic way. According to some authors on decision making, organizations are a reflection of their Decisions, making the usage of spirituality therein highly relevant, and the shortage of literature integrating decision making and spirituality even more significant. This paper primarily identifies few factors for ensuring effective decision making and suggests few spiritual prepositions for the same.

A review of the literature reveals a lack of consistency and a widespread lack of consideration regarding the clarity regarding the organizational goals when considering spirituality and decision making. While some authors claim spirituality is an individual phenomenon (Ashforth& Pratt, 2003), others describe it as an organizational dynamic (Mitroff& Denton, 1999). This highlights the need for clarity about whose spirituality is under consideration, and at what level of the organization it is being studied. In the present paper it is the spiritual belief of the decision maker that is under
examination. The goal of obtaining clarity is not to have a universal approach, but rather to have clarity regarding the starting point. The eventual development of a multi-level theory of spirituality and decision making incorporating spiritual belief of the decision maker, follower spiritual belief, and the collective spirituality of the organization will depend on the field’s ability to distinguish these as separate ideas (Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999).

Interpersonal vs. Directional Leadership

A second reason prior work on spirituality has not addressed decision making may be assumptions about the underlying value of such an examination. In their review of possible interdisciplinary links to workplace spirituality, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) identified 13 possible areas of connection between existing organizational research and spirituality. Decision making and organizational direction were not listed as possible points of connection. While Decision making does not exclude long term effects of the decisions, it is more focused on current organizational direction and mission (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001; House & Aditya, 1997). The information to which Decision makers attend, and the perspective they take on the organizational context can be critical to the organization’s future (Canella & Monroe, 1997; Levy, 2005). If organizations are infact reflections of their decisions, then it is important to understand how spiritual beliefs influence Decision makers in their exercise of Decision making. There is currently no conceptual framework for understanding that influence. This paper seeks to fill that void.

Dangers in Examining Spirituality

Finally, there is an inherent danger in the examination of personal spiritual belief and decision making. Some have argued that corporate spiritualism runs the risk of overstepping into a more true to self decision than one in line with the organizational goal. It is not the intent of this work to define which spiritual beliefs are preferred or disfavored. Rather, the goal of this paper is to create a framework for discussion, thought, and study of the influence spiritual beliefs already exert in organizational decision making. On this point, this author agrees with Hicks (2002) that the goal is to inspire organizations that can effectively negotiate religious and spiritual diversity, not to impose one view of the optimal spirituality.

Definitions

Since this paper approaches spirituality and Decision making from a unique vantage point, clarity of terms is important. Toward that end, the following definitions are offered. Although the literature to date has offered a wide variety of definitions for the term spirituality (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003), for the purposes of this paper, spirituality will refer to the human being as being one and complete in self and his desire to confirm and affirm the same, in order to bring every other entity in sync.

The terms spirituality and religion have different but overlapping meanings in both academic and popular use (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). The literature on spirituality and decision making has often attempted to differentiate between the terms, arguing that spirituality can be a unifying force, while religion can be fractious (Cavenaugh, 1999; Nadesan, 1999). Hicks (2002) has challenged this distinction, arguing that the acceptance of spiritual belief coupled with the exclusion of religious belief accomplishes little (Hicks, 2002). The purpose of the current paper is to explore how the beliefs of a Decision maker influence decision making. For that purpose it is unimportant whether the leader characterizes the belief as spiritual or religious. Therefore, this paper will use the term spiritual belief to describe all beliefs about the transcendent or ultimate purpose of life. Subsumed within that category are spiritual beliefs and religious beliefs that relate to a transcendent being or ultimate purpose in life.
LITERATURE REVIEW

For brevity’s sake, this literature review will highlight only prior work on the influence of spiritual belief on the decision made in the organisation. Though much of the literature on spirituality and decision making focuses on spirituality at the organizational level of analysis, there are a few examples of work focusing on the personal spiritual belief of the decision maker. Observing that most of the works on spirituality and management failed to address the individual manager’s relationship with the sacred, McCormick (1994) offered five themes observed in the literature and practice of spirituality and management: compassion, right livelihood, selfless service, work as meditation, and problems with pluralism. Fernando and Jackson (2006) interviewed leaders about how they engaged in religion-based workplace spirituality, and discovered that many of their answers were associated with decision making.

ELEMENTS OF A FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this article is to offer a framework for understanding the influence of spiritual belief on strategic decision making. Before that framework can be constructed, however, we must first consider the issue of spiritual beliefs and schemas.

Spiritual Beliefs and Schemas

The cognitive framework used by the decision maker has long been acknowledged as an important influence on the decision making process and is sometimes referred to as a cognitive map, paradigm, or schema. Schemas assist with the potentially overwhelming amount of information available to the decision maker by guiding him or her to attend to select information, and to integrate that information into a coherent whole. Thus schemas influence which information the decision maker notices, and how that information is interpreted. A more refined type of schema, known as a strategic schema, has been described for top level leaders responsible for setting organizational direction. A strategic schema operates as a lens through which the strategic leader filters information about the organizational context when making decisions (Nadkarni & Narayanan, 2007). We can argue that, taken together, the individual spiritual beliefs of the decision maker serve to filter the data to which he attends and to frame or assign meaning to the data that are accepted.

Proposition 1: The personal spiritual beliefs of the decision maker act in a manner similar to schema during strategic decision making by filtering out information and framing information for taking the decision. The identification of a problem as structural or executional, is just a confirmation of the spiritual beliefs of the decision maker. The idea that religious or spiritual beliefs influence decision making is not new. Other authors have proposed that religious beliefs (McIntosh, 1995; Worden, 2005) or ethical beliefs (Ireland & Hitt, 1999) might act as filters through which the strategic decision maker sorts potential courses of action. However, the current work goes further to propose that beliefs are used to both filter and frame information.

Mediating Variables

If spiritual beliefs act as schema for the decision maker, we must next consider what other variables may affect the operation of spiritual belief as schema. Two related variables are offered as mediating variables: constructive development and meta-belief.

Constructive development is premised on the idea that our experience of reality is constructed at an individual level, and that the method whereby individuals construct their reality evolves over their lifetimes. Kegan proposed a series of stages, each characterized by a particular pattern of “meaning making.” As an individual’s stage of constructive development advances, the ability to think with
complexity expands. Constructive development is important to the current topic partly because it parallels one of the fundamental premises underlying strategic decision making. Jaques and Clement’s Stratified Systems Theory (SST) asserts that the cognitive complexity required for effective leadership increases as the leader’s level of responsibility advances in the organization. Lewis and Jacobs emphasized the importance of constructive development to decision making as follows: “It is not nearly as important to discover what a potential strategic decision maker believes (a values issue) or how he or she prefers to operate (a style issue) as it is to know how he or she structures an understanding of the strategic environment”. This perspective suggests two insights relevant to the current question. First, constructive development plays a role in how the leader’s beliefs influence strategic decision making. Second, the influence exercised by constructive development may actually control or determine the influence exerted by leader beliefs. Thus the leader’s constructive development acts as a mediating variable, transmitting the effect of belief on strategic decision making.

**Proposition 2:** The leader’s stage of constructive development will mediate the effect of the leader’s beliefs on strategic decision making.

Another variable likely to affect how leader beliefs influence strategic decision making is the identification of solution to the problem and alternatives thereof.

For the purposes of this paper we will consider identification of solution to be completely based on the self-awareness of spiritual belief of the decision maker.” To illustrate, consider the influence of a spiritual belief on strategic decision making for a leader who believes in the ultimate validity of his or her spiritual belief, as contrasted with a leader who imagines his or her belief to be a limited perception of an ultimate reality. In this way, the concept of identifying solutions in accordance with organizational goals will automatically be in sync with the spiritual belief of the leader, and also about how that belief is perceived by the one who holds it.

There are strong parallels between the idea of meta-belief and constructive development. However, individuals who make meaning at a higher order are still capable of operating at a lower level in a particular circumstance. Therefore, it is possible that the decision maker could choose to insulate his or her spiritual beliefs from change or examination, resulting in a belief that is not synonymous with that leader’s higher capacity for meaning making.

Research from the related field of cognitive complexity offers some support for this idea. At least one empirical study examined the complexity of thought in those with orthodox or fundamental religious belief. They found that those high in orthodox religious beliefs thought less complexly about religious issues than they did about non-religious issues. In other words, the ability to recognize other perspectives was limited only in the domain of religion. This finding provides some support for the assertion that meta-belief is distinct from constructive development. For this reason meta-belief is proposed here as a separate mediating variable.

**Proposition 3:** What a leader believes about his or her spiritual beliefs (meta-belief) will mediate the effect of the leader’s beliefs on critical analysis of alternatives on the scale of probability of success or failure.

At least one prior author has observed that a strategic leader’s “attitude” about belief could influence his or her decision making. Worden (2005) argued that theological attitudes (either evangelical or pluralist) and normative attitudes (either absolutist or relativist) might make it difficult for some leaders to find common ground. However, Worden’s focus was exclusively on religious belief, and the typology offered did not account for change or development over time. For these reasons, though Worden’s (2005) description of theological and normative attitude combinations is instructive, the idea of meta-belief is offered as a mediating variable in the current model.
Moderating Variables
In addition to the mediating variables mentioned above, there are important contextual variables that will affect how a strategic leader’s personal beliefs influence decision making:

Organizational context has been shown to have an influence on the meaning top leaders attach to information in strategic decision making (Thomas & McDaniel, 1990). Organizational context is a broad concept that can include organizational structure, communication channels, and decision rules. Each of these directs the attention of decision makers toward particular information (Ocasio, 1997). Furthermore, an organization’s culture filters the perspective of its members, shaping the questions they ask about the organizational environment (Smith & Vecchio, 1997). Taken together, these and other contextual factors moderate the influence of the strategic leader’s spiritual belief on decision making.

Proposition 4: The organizational context in which the leader operates will moderate the effect of the leader’s spiritual beliefs on the information considered and used by the leader in choice of most feasible alternative. The particular model adopted and practiced by a strategic leader will moderate the extent to which an individual’s spiritual belief influences strategic decision making. It stands to reason that the influence of a leader’s belief on strategic decision making might be different if he or she were a participatory decision maker instead of an autocratic one, or if he or she relied on positional power instead of referent power. In this way, the leader’s approach to the role of strategic leader (i.e., leadership style) moderates the extent to which personal spiritual belief influences decision making.

Proposition 5: A strategic leader’s spiritual beliefs will influence decision making by filtering and framing the information upon which the leader relies. That influence will be mediated by the meta-belief and constructive development of the leader, and will clearly reflect in the evaluation of extent of loss in the event of failure.

Proposition 6: Capability of extracting learning from the event, be it success or failure will completely depend on the leader’s spiritual beliefs and also the information considered and used by the leader in strategic decision making.

Summary of Framework
Taken together, the propositions above comprise a framework for how the decision makers spiritual beliefs influence decision making. This collective process is proposed as follows:

Strategic Advantage
This approach has important implications for the idea of strategic advantage. Within this framework, strategic advantage is a product of how the leader makes meaning of the context, regardless of whether followers share in that perspective. In this way, the influence exerted is upon the strategic leader him or herself. Therefore the measure of efficacy is whether the belief causes the leader to access more or less relevant information and to frame the organizational setting in a more or less positive and productive way.

Proposition 7: Those spiritual beliefs that operate with moderating and mediating variables to allow the most relevant information to be considered in the strategic decision making process will provide strategic advantage to the decision makers. To support this preposition few psychoanalysts propose the theory as Mind- The slave but not the master. The spiritual belief developed, called as schema, defines the factors that as per individual belief be taken into consideration for decision making and others that are not to be taken.
Proposition 8: Those spiritual beliefs that operate with moderating and mediating variables to promote the most positive or productive framing of the organizational context will provide strategic advantage to top level leaders. The theory of Self realization and Actualization supports this proposition. The decision maker having been developed spiritually, reaches the level of self realization and this filter and finesse is applied in the organizational decision making, the result being actualization of spiritual beliefs in organizational policies and decisions.

Proposition 9: Those spiritual beliefs that operate with moderating and mediating variables to allow the most relevant Alternative to be selected in the strategic decision making process precisely will be based on Intelligence and Intuition; Reaction and Response and will provide strategic advantage to the decision makers. Intelligence meaning filtering the available information and intuition refers to analyzing the criticalities of the proposed alternative, here.

IMPLICATIONS

This framework makes several important contributions to the literature on spirituality and decision making. First, it demonstrates the importance of deliberateness of identifying the organizational goals with absolute clarity by adopting the preposition of living in here and now. Organizational goals are intentions of the individual, standardized and filtered in terms of personal spiritual beliefs. Second, it demonstrates the importance of deliberateness in the level of analysis by extending the examination of spirituality and decision making to the decision makers as an individual construct. Specificity of this type will hopefully pave the way for a multi-level theory of spirituality and decision making.

Third, the framework offered here provides researchers a more objective stance from which to study the influence of spiritual belief on decision making. Placing the focus on how the belief is used rather than on the belief itself reduces the appearance that researchers are passing judgment on the veracity, consistency, or desirability of individual spiritual beliefs.

Finally, this framework presents opportunities for individual development in the field of spirituality and strategic decision making, while minimizing the risk of coercion. The strategic advantage arising from individual belief may increase as the decision maker examines how he or she uses the belief to filter or frame available information. Through reflection and self awareness the decision maker could increase the likelihood that personal spiritual beliefs would provide strategic advantage in future decision making, regardless of the nature of particular beliefs. In this way, the framework is a step toward organizations that can effectively negotiate religious and spiritual diversity.

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