



Research Article



Fostering Ethical Organizational Climate and Workplace Spirituality To Prevent Deviance and Misbehaviours at Workplace

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Abstract: The objective of this research is to examine the role of workplace spirituality in reducing undesirable workplace behaviours. Organizational misbehaviour, as defined by Vardi and Wiener 1996¹, is any voluntary act by employees that violates fundamental organizational or society norms. Employee deviant behavior is defined as employee deliberate activity that breaches standard norms of the organization and endangers organizational well-being.² Deviant misbehaviors that occur within the organization are often deemed as unethical deviations and sometimes develop due to environmental factors. Factors within the organizational environment such as organizational support, management support, role conflict, and work demand have been shown to be significant correlates of deviant behaviors. Deviations are often identified as responses to undesirable stimulus that elicits negative emotional state among employees. Additionally, it aims to investigate "ethical organizational climate" as a potential catalyst in enhancing the negative effects of workplace spirituality on unruly employee behaviours. Data was collected from 158 salespersons employed in private sector banking and insurance organizations and analysed using AMOS-SEM (structural equation modelling). The findings suggested that a direct positive relationship exists between workplace spirituality and ethical organizational climate. Also, ethical organizational climate exerted significant negative effects on salespersons deviant misbehaviours, thereby reducing them and acted as an overall mediator in the relationship between workplace spirituality and deviant misbehaviours among salespeople working in banking and insurance. The implications can help professionals working in the financial sectors in curbing deviant misbehaviours by embracing a more spiritual and ethical work culture for the benefit of their workers, their company, and the greater society. Thus, the research is novel to specifically focus on how workplace spirituality with a mediating effect of ethical work climate makes a difference.

Keywords: Workplace Spirituality, Deviance Misbehaviours, Perceived Organizational Climate, Ethical Climate, Salespersons Behavior

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I. INTRODUCTION

Research around negative behaviours displayed by employees at workplace is garnering a growing amount of interest among academicians, researchers, and professionals. Structural changes such as downsizing, layoffs, cost-cutting, and mergers and acquisitions have resulted in a major increase in global competitiveness among business houses and caused unprecedented harm to the psychological health of employees.² which is then reflected in negative employee behaviours such as deviance. The concepts of organizational delinquency, workplace deviance, anti-social behaviours, anti-normative behaviours, retaliatory behaviours, dysfunctional behavior, and counterproductivity are all synonymous with employee deviance behaviors³. Actions and behaviors that deviate from the conventional set of norms and code of conduct or are deemed unethical are referred to as deviant misbehaviors⁴. Prior research studies have reported that around sixty percent and eighty percent of workers have engaged in some sort of deviant behavior at workplace^{5,6}. Instances of theft, stealing, cyberslacking, damaging employer property and belongings, misbehaviors aimed towards other employees and customers, purposeful non-productivity at workplace, etc.^{7,8} are some of the activities that are classified under the ambit of deviance misbehaviors and organizations are increasingly looking for ways to manage them. Researchers have advocated for identification and comprehension of the factors that set the stage for such behaviors to effectively deal with them⁹. Among various antecedents, job dissatisfaction and perceived injustice at workplace^{10,11} workplace aggression, and management incivility behaviors¹² are a few that have been highly researched. It is undeniable that a worker who is experiencing psychological disturbance is unable to function at his or her best and go above and beyond the requirements of the job. In numerous research studies, workplace spirituality has been shown to be a strong predictor of characteristics like employee engagement, organizational commitment, ethical behaviors, and employee performance Petchsawang & McLean, 2017.¹³ It is believed that workplace spirituality will operate as a powerful deterrent to employee misbehaviors at work because it is known to leverage a favourable psychological environment for employees. Another important factor that may influence behavior of employees at workplace is the perceived ethical climate of an organization¹⁴ as evidenced in literature. The Affective Events Theory (AET) serves as the foundation for this argument (Weiss and¹⁵, an ethical work climate influences employees' workplace behavior. Therefore, despite significant research on the emotional and cognitive dimensions of the workplace, literature is scarce when we consider the spiritual dimensions of an organization and its influence on employee behaviors very little research has been carried out to understand its influence on the negative workplace behaviors of employees. The objective is to examine whether spirituality at workplace and perceived ethical climate at workplace act as potential deterrent to employee deviance misbehaviors at workplace. Further, sectors like banking and insurance are the most competitive and fastest growing sectors of the economy yet, instances of counterproductive workplace conduct among employees are becoming very common. Examples include behaviors like sales personnel running personal errands while on field during work hours, misusing organization belongings, non-productivity at workplace, service sabotage,

misleading customers, representing organization in bad light, making false claims and the concealment of facts for the purpose of sale Swimberghe et al., 2014.¹⁷ Since this industry depends significantly on human resources for product sales, deviant employee conduct impacts client happiness, consequently impacting consumer loyalty and organizational performance at the end. Given the substantial losses associated with deviance misbehaviors, it is vital to understand their antecedents in order to control them. Another gap that this study attempts to address is that the findings regarding the effects of perceived ethical work climate on negative employee behavior have been inconsistent Appelbaum et al., 2005; Hsieh & Wang, 2016, Yüksel, 2012^{18,19}, so this research intends to examine its role as a mediator between workplace spirituality and employee deviant behaviors.

2.1 Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.2 Workplace Deviance Misbehaviors

NOD is negative behaviour intentionally undertaken with an intention to harm the organization and NID is negative behavior intentionally undertaken with an aim to target people within the organization. Jelinek and Ahearne 2006²⁰ proposed a third type of negative customer-directed deviance. NCD) in addition to NOD and NID. Although workplace deviation has been examined for a while in the marketing literature, there aren't many studies that have been published in sales. The focus of this study is limited to organizational deviance misbehaviors (directed at the organization and its members) and frontline deviance misbehaviors (directed at external customers) since salespeople spend the majority of their work time on the field with prospective customers.

2.3 Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

A spiritual workplace encourages connectedness, gives employees a sense of purpose, fosters a friendly atmosphere at work, and ultimately improves the way an organization functions. The first empirical research on workplace spirituality was conducted in 2000 by Ashmos and Duchon²¹ as "the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community" (p. 137). As per their view, workplace spirituality was understood to exist at three statutes: individual, group, and organizational level. Therefore, a more acceptable view of workplace spirituality considered by academicians is that it is represented by three dimensions namely- individual level, sense of community (group level), and alignment with organizational values organizational level²². Workplace spirituality is known to positively affect several employee attitudinal variables. For instance, in a study conducted among 156 employees working in education, manufacturing, healthcare and IT industry found that sense of community and meaningful work as dimensions of workplace spirituality are positively correlated with trust within the organization. It also found that meaningfulness in their work and inner life are positively associated with employee's job performance. It may then follow that a spiritual culture in an organization inspires workers to work hard and be happy by nourishing their inner selves thereby creating a positive psychological state. Conversely, workplace spirituality is also

known to be inversely correlated with several negative employee related outcomes. Similarly, Through their study, Van Der Walt and Steyn 2020¹²³ showed that institutes may decrease unethical behavior by fostering a spiritual culture in the workplace and assisting employees in deciding what is right and morally relevant for them and the firm. As a result, the idea of workplace spirituality encourages organizations to establish a more ethical and humane workplace. But this construct has been highly underestimated and has undergone limited research by scholars compared to other cognitive and emotional components of the job environment.

1.6 Perceived Organizational Ethical Climate

The impressions of organizational policies, practises, and interpersonal interactions in terms of their ethical substance is referred to as the "perceived ethical climate at workplace". The term "ethical environment" is commonly used to describe the shared view of employees within an organization about how to deal with ethical challenges at workplace and how to implement morally right behaviors. The seminal works of Victor and Cullen 1988²⁴ operationalized ethical climate with five dimensions namely caring, rules, law and code, instrumental and independence climates. The degree to which each of the five kinds of climates as ethical dimensions is present inside an organization is often used to assess its ethical standing. An organization is deemed ethical if any of the following is true- if its members care about others and follow rules and procedures, if the members of a workplace believe in making decisions based on their own internalised personal moral principles (a sense of right and wrong) rather than externally imposed ethical requirements, and carefully weigh the consequences attached to their decisions, or if organizational members demonstrate greater care for the interests of their colleagues than for their own in their decision making and work conduct Trevino, 1986²⁵. This is based on the Affective Events Theory (AET) as Weiss and Cropanzano's 1996²⁶. Affective events theory (AET) suggests that the daily events that workers face at work (e.g., a superior's criticism because of one's low job performance) can elicit their emotional reactions (e.g., negative emotions), which can then influence their workplace attitudes (e.g., reduced motivation at work, or low workplace satisfaction). Therefore, an employee who perceives an event to be negative/undesirable/unfair may be overcome with negative emotions which he may reciprocate through negative behaviors intended to harm the organization and its members Judge et al., 2006.²⁷ The strategies, policies and procedure underlying an organization's operational systems will be based on its ethical orientation. Therefore, when an ethical climate is perceived to be governing the rules, processes, and practises of an organization as fair, employees are more likely to focus on their efforts and deliver high end performance as a kind of reciprocity. They become more conscious and considerate about the well-being of the organization and work for common good Karakas, 2010.²⁸ This eliminates the tendency to engage in negative behaviors at workplace.

1.7 Workplace Spirituality and Perceived organizational ethical climate

Spiritual experiences are crucial in determining the ethicality of judgments since they enable people to transcend limited self-

concepts and empathize truly with others. It has been argued that workplace spirituality is a source of values and ideals to encourage organizations "to follow a morality that demands more than following the minimal standards of acceptability of conventional business practices" Jackson, 1999 as cited in Nair & Sivakumar, 2018.²⁹ Thus, the foundation of an ethical climate at workplace is laid down by spirituality at workplace. Spirituality at workplace enables employees to feel more connected to their inner self and their conscience. H1: Workplace spirituality is positively related to perceived organizational ethical climate

1.8 Perceived Ethical Climate and Deviance Misbehaviors

Employee attitude and behavior is influenced by the interaction of employees with organizational variables. Amongst several factors related to the organization, perceived ethical climate at workplace is believed to have the most important influence on employee behavior among all organizational characteristics Turnipseed, 2002.³⁰ Using the Causal Reasoning Theory (CRT) it is possible to comprehend. According to CRT, aberrant behaviors result from a two-stage process. According to this hypothesis, people initially assess the quality and consequences of the outcomes before acting and then respond depending on the belief of the reasons that caused those outcomes. In other words, an individual's emotions are determined by the causal reasoning process about the reasons they attach to the outcomes at workplace Nishii et al., 2008,³¹ Veetikazhi et al., 2022³². As an example, even if two workers have the same opinion that they are not treated fairly, each employee's reaction will depend on how they see the reasons of this unfair treatment. If one of the two associates the unfair treatment to reasons that were deliberate on the part of the organization, then he may choose to retaliate by way of engaging in deviant behaviors. Therefore, if workers encounter negativity (or a lack of positivity) in a situation or environment, this will result in negative attitudes and behaviors such as cynicism, carelessness, or unproductive behavior (Hsieh & Wang, 2016).³³ In a study conducted by Haldorai et al. 2020,³⁴ it was found that ethical organizational climate shares a significant negative correlation with counterproductive behaviors among customer service employees employed at a luxury hotel. These findings are suggestive of the fact that workers' deviant behaviors were fewer in companies with better ethical climates. It is therefore hypothesized that, H2: Perceived organizational ethical climate is negatively related to organizational deviance misbehaviour H3: Perceived organizational ethical climate is negatively related to frontline deviance misbehavior

1.9 Workplace Spirituality and Deviance Misbehaviors

Several research studies have looked at the impact of workplace spirituality on employee related attitudinal and behavioral outcomes such as organizational unproductive work behavior, workplace cynicism and workers' inclinations to leave their jobs (Indradevi, 2020; Khatri & Gupta, 2017; Rathee & Rajain, 2020)^{35,36,37} but most studies are inclined towards positive employee outcomes. Only a couple have of them have attempted to explore its association with deviance misbehaviours among employees at work. They proposed that workers are comparatively not engaged in deviant conduct when their hold work to be important, meaningful, and holy. Researchers have

shown that organizational cynicism is associated with deviant conduct in the workplace Jiang et al., 2017;³⁸ Li and Chen, 2018,³⁹ indicating probable connections between workplace spirituality and deviant behavior. According to Ahmad and Omar 2014,⁴⁰ workplace spirituality may help individuals gauge their conduct at work since it can serve as a personal control. Therefore, workplace spirituality might lessen disruptive behavior. Weitz et al. 2012⁴¹ discovered a detrimental relationship between organizational misconduct and workplace spirituality. H4: Workplace Spirituality is negatively related to organizational

deviance misbehavior H5: Workplace Spirituality is negatively related to frontline deviance misbehavior Spiritual people engage their moral imagination and form their moral judgement based on their internal moral standards and the alignment of values of self and the organization. Once they believe that a synergy exists between them, they perceived the creation and existence of an ethical climate as well. Further, characteristics like collaboration, synergy and workplace positivity may all be synonymous with sense of community dimension of workplace spirituality. These characteristics

Table I-Value Framework for Workplace Spirituality and Behaviour

Workplace Spirituality	A Connection between Self and Workplace
Ethical work environment	The policies of the companies that direct organization norms, ethical mindset, social-driven values, and climate of the organization
Organization deviance behavior	A kind of violent behavior that threatens the well-being of the organization, its employees, and its image
Frontline deviance behavior	A behavior faced and confronted with direct interactions with customers and the market based on company policies and standards

It explains different terms and values associated with the constructs chosen for the study based on which the conceptual model is prepared.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 Sample Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

Primary data was collected for this research from sales employees working in the 2 private sector banks and 3 insurance firms in Delhi NCR. Due to the target-driven nature of their jobs and consequently rising instances of fraud, theft, and unethical practices in the banking and insurance sector, this job type and industry were found to be most suitable per the study objectives. A structured questionnaire was administered online (via Google form) and offline (physically distributing questionnaires to employees). To overcome social desirability biases, it was informed it would be confidential. The questionnaire was distributed to 320 sales employees, and a total of 171 responses were received to the questionnaire fetching a response rate of 53.4%. Out of these, 13 were omitted due to incomplete information. It led to a total of 158 complete questionnaires, which were put to analysis. Of the 158 respondents, 63.9% ($n = 101$) were males, and 36.1% were females. The average age of the respondents was 32.13 years ($SD = 10.14$), with an average tenure in the job of 4.6 years ($SD = 3.14$).

2.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The study included salespersons concerning the profession, and all other professions were not included.

2.3 Common method bias

Since the researchers collected data using self-reported questionnaires, common method bias (CMB) could impact the study's findings (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To test CMB, the authors utilized both procedural and statistical methodologies. To avoid social desirability bias, the implemented procedural solution was to ensure strict anonymity and secrecy of the responses received from participants. Harman's single-factor test was conducted to statistically examine the plausibility of

CMB. By limiting the number of factors to be extracted to one and estimating an unrotated factor matrix, this single factor must not account for more than 50 percent of covariance between the measures. Existing data showed that Harman's single-factor test only explained 29% of the variance, demonstrating that common method variance was not an issue.

2.4 Survey Structure and Measures

The questionnaire had four different parts. The first is seeking demographics. The succeeding sections were divided into construct-wise questions that pertained to each of the three measures.

2.5 Deviance Misbehaviors

The authors adapted workplace deviance misbehavior measures using Bennett & Robinson (2000)⁸ items. Using separate statements, This scale measures deviance towards the organization (organizational deviance) and deviance towards customers (frontline deviance). Each of the two sub-scales was measured using 4 items each. Cronbach's Alpha value of deviance and misbehavior is 0.87.

2.6 Workplace Spirituality

To measure workplace spirituality, the scale developed by Milliman et al. (2002)³⁶ was adapted for the current study. It consisted of 15 items measuring 3 dimensions of workplace spirituality, i.e., connection, meaningful work, and alignment with organizational values. Cronbach's Alpha value of this scale is computed as 0.692.

2.7 Perceived Ethical Work Climate

The ethical climate at work was measured using a 14-item scale created by Victor and Cullen (1988)⁶³ that focused on four sub-dimensions of ethical climate: care, independence, law, and code,

and rules within the organization. In addition, it sought to assess how employees felt about the situation and their perceptions. Though previous studies have well validated the four sub-

dimensions wherein the alpha reliability has ranged between 0.60 and 0.89 (Teymoori et al. 2022, Taştan, & Davoudi, 2019),^{56,55} the reliability in the current study was found to be .789.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for the constructs

Measures	No of items	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Workplace Spirituality	15	4.32	2.13	(.886)			
Perceived Ethical workplace climate	14	3.82	2.53	.369	(.789)		
Organizational Deviance misbehaviour	4	5.12	2.84	.218**	.354**	(.892)	
Frontline Deviance Misbehaviour	4	5.89	1.78	.152**	.236**	.12	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) Cronbach's alpha values are represented along the diagonal in parentheses for each of the construct

Table 2 describes the descriptive values of the four constructs of the study with their mean values and standard deviation along with correlation with each other.

3. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis for this study was divided into stages, the first stage included estimating descriptive statistics for the constructs, second- an assessment of the measurement model to ensure model fit and establishing validity and reliability Hair et al., 2010,⁴⁶ and lastly, estimating the path coefficients for the structural. All constructs' composite scores were calculated, and the total values were all mean centered to make sure multicollinearity wasn't an issue Shieh, 2011⁴⁷. In order to eliminate any items that properly loaded on their respective constructs, an item to total correlation was investigated. The proposed framework for the current study was examined using SPSS and AMOS (version 24.0). As advocated by Yousaf et al., 2019,⁴⁸ while testing mediation in a model, it is not necessary for the relationship between the antecedent and the outcome to be statistically significant. Regardless of whether there is a direct influence or not, the mediation occurs when the indirect effect is supported by a significant p-value. A partial mediation is said to exist if there is a significant direct effect between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Conversely, a full mediation exists in case the direct effects render insignificant Lachowicz et al., 2018.⁴⁹ The Sobel Test is then be used to determine whether the mediation effect is present which is a formal procedure for determining if a mediating effect has a significant impact or not Mustillo et al., 2018.⁵⁰ The Sobel test has the advantages of being widely used and producing seemingly accurate data; for example, one may precisely calculate a p-value and construct a confidence range for the mediated effect Woody, 2011.⁵¹

3.1 Proposed Model -Theoretical framework

Thus, the proposed model is based on a literature review of previous studies aimed at assessing how workplace spirituality mediated through perceived ethical work climate will lead to improving organizational deviance behaviour and front-line deviance behaviour, also how workplace spirituality directly affects organization deviance behaviour and also directly the front-line deviance behaviour. It also looked to find how ethical work climate affects both the behaviour as also established in the literature review.

3.2 Model I-Proposed Model

Model I- The proposed model aims to understand the interrelationship between the chosen constructs prepared based on previous studies to establish findings.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Assessment of Measurement Model

4.2 Results Confirmatory Measurement Model

Before analyzing the causal paths in the model, an item-to-total correlation was calculated to eliminate items that contribute to the model's poor fit. Thus, item loadings less than 0.4 were disregarded. It led to the removal of 3 items from the workplace spirituality scale and 2 items from the perceived ethical climate at the workplace scale, leading to a total of 32 statements in the questionnaire. The reliability of each construct measure was then evaluated using the average extracted variance (AVE) and construct reliabilities (CR) using Fornell and Larcker's (1981)¹⁶ criterion and presented in Table 2. Each construct's CR and AVE were determined to be higher than the required thresholds (CR > 0.7 and AVE > 0.5; & CR > AVE). During confirmatory factor analysis, the estimated fit indices as $\chi^2 = 675.70$, $df = 246$, $\chi^2/df = 2.74$, GFI=0.911, TLI= 0.948, CFI= 0.965, and RMSEA = 0.074 were all indicative of a strong and acceptable model fit.

Table 3: Results of reliability and validity

Construct	No. of items	Factor Loadings	CR	AVE
Workplace Spirituality	13		0.897	0.627
WPS1		0.872		
WPS2		0.785		
WPS3		0.855		
WPS4		0.773		

WPS5	0.544
WPS6	0.811
WPS7	0.794
WPS8	0.738
WPS9	0.752
WPS10	0.817
WPS11	0.568
WPS12	0.785
WPS13	0.724
Ethical Organizational Climate	12
EOC1	0.745
EOC2	0.802
EOC3	0.869
EOC4	0.764
EOC5	0.733
EOC6	0.779
EOC7	0.765
EOC8	0.723
EOC9	0.644
EOC10	0.788
EOC11	0.645
EOC12	0.766
Organizational Deviance Misbehavior	4
ODEV1	0.821
ODEV2	0.826
ODEV3	0.834
ODEV4	0.781
Frontline Deviance Misbehavior	4
FDEV1	0.873
FDEV2	0.906
FDEV3	0.867
FDEV4	0.856

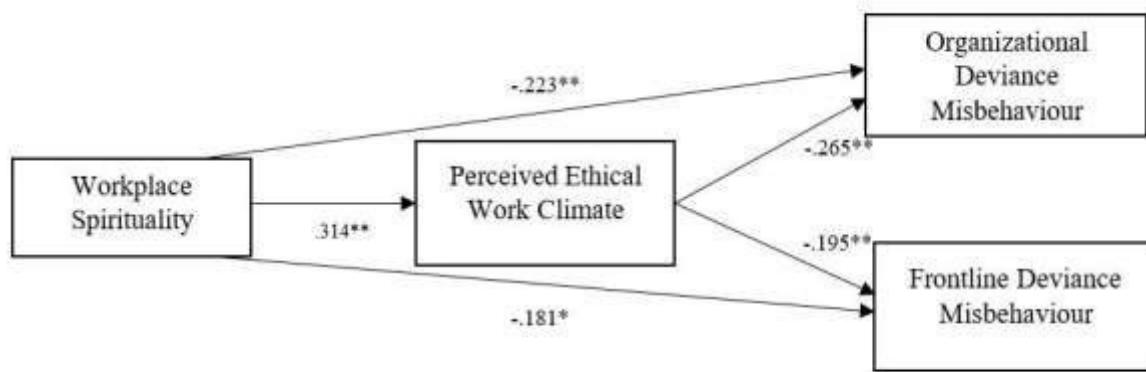
Note: AVE represents the average variance extracted score.

Table-3 shows the value of reliability and AVE of the chosen construction and its associated dimensions. Again, most values are higher and acceptable to continue with the study.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

The proposed model's hypotheses are tested via path analysis employing the maximum likelihood estimation method. Thus, when path coefficients were estimated, a positive path coefficient ($\beta = .314$) was obtained for hypothesis H1, which postulates a favorable association between workplace spirituality and perceived ethical atmosphere at the workplace significant at $p < .01$. Further, it was discovered that having an ethical workplace environment had a negative impact on employees' deviance misbehavior, particularly on organizational deviance ($\beta = -.265$, $p < 0.01$) and frontline deviance behaviors ($\beta = -.195$, $p < 0.01$). It suggested that an ethical climate in the workplace discourages unruly behaviors among employees because they are deemed to be against the organization's values, thereby supporting H2 and H3. It was also observed that workplace spirituality exerted direct diminishing effects on organizational deviance misbehaviors ($\beta = -.223$, $p < 0.01$) and frontline deviance

misbehaviors ($\beta = -.181$, $p < 0.01$) demonstrated by salespersons. The path estimates are represented in Figure 1. Finally, we employed the bootstrapping method to examine the mediating effects of the perceived ethical climate at work between workplace spirituality and deviant behaviors. The direct, indirect, and total effects results are presented in Table 2. Our findings indicated that workplace spirituality exerted negative effects on organizational deviance misbehavior indirectly via ethical climate at the workplace (indirect effect = $-.17$, $p < 0.01$) (H6); however, this was not true for frontline deviance misbehaviors among salespeople indirectly via ethical organizational climate (indirect effect = $.012$, $p > 0.05$) (H7). Consequently, results partially supported hypothesis 6, where perceived organizational ethical climate partially mediated workplace spirituality and organizational deviance. However, no evidence was found for hypothesis 7. Sobel test estimates were used to boost our confidence in the mediation effects. The estimates of Sobel tests revealed that the indirect effect of workplace spirituality on deviant organizational behavior through perceived organizational ethical climate at the workplace (Sobel $Z = -3.42 > -2.58$, $p < 0.01$) was significant, further supporting hypothesis 6.



Model: Proposed Research Framework

Fig 1: Proposed Research Frame Work

Table 4-Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	t-value	Decision
Workplace spirituality is positively related to perceived organizational ethical climate	.314**	3.361	Accepted
The perceived organizational ethical climate is negatively related to organizational deviance and misbehavior	-.265**	-3.032	Accepted
The perceived organizational ethical climate is negatively related to frontline deviance and misbehavior	-.195**	-2.112	Accepted
Workplace Spirituality is negatively related to organizational deviance and misbehavior	-.223**	-2.862	Accepted
Workplace Spirituality is negatively related to frontline deviance and misbehavior	-.181*	-1.927	Accepted
Perceived organizational ethical climate mediates the relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational deviance and misbehavior amongst salespersons.	-.17*	-1.432	Partially accepted
Perceived organizational ethical climate mediates the relationship between workplace spirituality and frontline deviance and misbehavior among salespersons	-.012	-0.132	Not accepted

Table 4 Summary of Hypothesis findings gives an ideation on the acceptance or non-acceptance of the selected hypothesis; from the table, it is clear that most of the formulated hypotheses are accepted, and only one of the hypotheses is partially supported.

4.4 Direct, Indirect, and total effects

Table 5: Results of Mediation Analysis

Predictor Measures	Workplace Spirituality			Perceived organizational ethical climate				
	Direct	Indirect	Total Effect	Effect	Direct	Indirect	Total Effect	Effect
Perceived organizational ethical								
climate	.314**	--	.314**	--	--	--	--	--
Organizational Deviance								
Misbehavior	-.223**	-.17*	-.393**	-.265**	--	--	-.265**	
Frontline Deviance	-.181*	-.012	-.193**	-.195**	--	--	-.195**	
Misbehavior								

**significant at .01

*significant at .05

Table 6 shows the results of the mediation analysis. From the table, it is clear that the perceived organization's ethical climate is directly related to workplace spirituality. Similarly, deviant behavior has a negative relationship as it affects performance, as when workplace spirituality is not adequately worked. It results in the negative impact of frontline deviant behavior.

4. DISCUSSION

The data findings validate majority of hypothesised relationships. The study provided evidence in favour of hypothesis H1, which holds that there is a positive correlation between workplace spirituality and perceived ethical organizational atmosphere. This is based on the idea that when employees believe their

organization works to foster an environment that supports and nurtures spirituality at workplace. The results were consistent with the findings of Nair & Sivakumar 2018⁵³, Lata & Chaudhary 2022⁵⁴, and Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020.⁵⁵ Moreover, the argument that workplace spirituality has been viewed to enhance ethical behaviors in studies and deemed as a deterrent to their unethical conduct Chawla, 2014⁵⁶ has been supported in the present study too through hypotheses H4 and H5 but its linkages to negative behaviors have been explored through a psychological conduit like perceived ethical climate at workplace in this study. The aim of the study was to examine the role of perceived organizational ethical climate as a mediator between workplace spirituality and employee related behavioral outcomes. It has been observed that stronger perceptions of ethical climate of employees at work have a controlling effect on their tendency to demonstrate counterproductive behaviors such as deviance. In the current study, perceived ethical climate at workplace is deemed as both behavior only for organizational deviance (H6) and not for frontline deviance behaviors (H7). Thus, ethical organizational climate perceptions act as a partial mediator in the relationship between workplace spirituality and salesperson deviance. It may be that since salespersons spend most of the time outside the workplace, thus, there are numerous factors that may affect their conduct in front of their customers. Therefore, organization related factors such as spirituality and ethical climate may take a backseat and be overshadowed by factors that may have a stronger effect on their stress levels, motivation, self-esteem, perceived injustice, frustration, etc. all of which are antecedents of deviance misbehaviours and compel the salesperson to reciprocate by way of deviance directed towards the customers. It's different in the sense that it explores salesperson's perspective of workplace spirituality and how it may affect their ethical climate perceptions. Previous studies have explored the links between workplace spirituality and salespersons attitudinal aspects such as organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction Marschke et al., 2011,⁵⁷ job involvement, relational selling, customer-oriented selling Schwepker Jr & Good, 2021,⁵⁸ Kolodinsky et al., 2007⁵⁹ but its association with a behavioural construct like deviance behaviours largely remains unexplored, but also that this link is partially mediated by the impression of an ethical milieu, which only strengthens to control these behaviours. Workplace spirituality has the capacity to influence the ethical organizational climate perceptions, thus organizations should educate their employees about its benefits. There are several ways in which these values may be imparted to employees that should be researched and pay close attention to the organizational and personal milestones that are reached and acknowledge them accordingly to foster pro-social work behaviours among them. This is especially true for sales employees whose jobs are highly competitive and target driven, and they constantly seek motivation in such environments. Also, ethical atmosphere has been observed to be adversely associated with deviant behaviors in the workplace. Theoretical arguments as extended by literature suggest that spirituality in the workplace can guide ethical conduct Shrestha & Jena, 2021⁶⁰, Phillips et al., 2018; Zhang, 2020⁶¹ which may in turn, may strengthen positive employee attitudes at work Arsenich, 2018⁶² Chawla & Guda, 2013⁶³ Phillips et al., 2018.⁶⁴ Further, the construct of employee deviance behaviour has been studied largely to include 'organizational deviance' in particular Hsieh & Wang, 2016, Kanter & Ulker, 2013⁶⁵ i.e., misconduct demonstrated by

employees within the organization. Workplace spirituality has been found to affect organization effectiveness to large extent and also dependent on different demographic factors as a universality principal Nidhi&Reetesh,2020⁶⁶ The study is relevant as long term consequences include building of wellbeing, commitment and high job satisfaction when a culture of ethical work climate exists Missabh Hassan,2016⁶⁷ Managers and businesses that want to foster a more cooperative workplace and boost their service output might benefit greatly from the finding of the current study. When employees believe they work in a caring environment, they are more likely to produce high-quality results because they associate doing so with doing what is right Rathee & Ranjan, 2020.⁶⁸

5. CONCLUSION

Thus, our study concludes that workplace spirituality affects ethical culture building at the workplace strongly. The study indicates and statistically established that when an ethical environment exists and nurtures in an organization, it helps in building a sense of commitment, well-being, togetherness, and a sense of community from employees. It helps foster a sense of belongingness and more conscious behavior at the end of employees and improves overall organizational culture. In line with the nature of the sample chosen, the study is highly relevant because the role of a salesperson, especially in insurance and banking, is largely driven by customer interactions. Thus, frontline deviant misbehaviors are highly probable in such a scenario. Employees, as instruments, are more inclined to care about the well-being of others and engage in more pro-socially desirable behaviors. In this regard, it is thus crucial to create a culture in the workplace that communicates and supports a standard code of conduct for employee actions, outlining what acceptable and undesirable behavior is behavior. Any deviation from the established code of ethics should prompt management to take appropriate action. In addition, it will encourage employees to abstain from engaging in such acts and behaviors. This study provides a complete framework by investigating the mediating influence of an ethical atmosphere in the workplace.

5.1 Implications

The study makes deeper and more conscious application in the area wherein the salesperson is required to exert in different ways for an effective outcome and target achievement; when an organization aims at establishing an ethical-based environment, it helps in building a positive work culture, confidence, and citizenship behavior with the task and organization thus ensuring a positive environment. The study's findings are applicable to other sectors and the organization's nature since these factors, whether workplace spirituality or ethical environment, make sense for every profession. Milliman et al. 2003, in their study on spirituality at the workplace, advocated that the more engaged and meaningful one feels at work, the more committed he is towards his work, and his intention to quit the job is lower. Badri Narayanan & Madhavaram 2016 suggest that a spiritual aspect of the workplace fosters emotional stability among employees at individual and group levels, which thereby helps them cope with negative emotional states like stress, exhaustion, etc. By establishing workplace spirituality as a condition precedent to ethical climate, the study responds to the demands for research

into the factors that determine an ethical work environment and contributes to the limited understanding of how ethical climates are constructed Manroop et al., 2014.

5.2 Limitations and Future Perspectives

The study aimed at understanding how workplace spirituality routed through workplace spirituality can help improvise deviant behavior and frontline deviant behavior of salespersons. However, other factors and sub-dimensions can affect, explain, or influence workplace spirituality as well. Sales associates are among the professionals who need to be prepared with behavioral and psychological perspectives; thus, a study and outcomes like these are significantly relevant. It is also important to see that along with workplace spirituality, other individual factors like work commitment, workplace culture, leadership style, motivational climate, and clarity in organization policy can also affect deviant behavior. Thus, there can be future research on other factors to be studied, but this study emphasized specific behavior outcomes, which are most of the times barriers to organization success which are deviant behavior. Businesses and organizations undergo a lot of changes with changing times; thus, various factors can affect these changes largely, and depending on the kind of organization, it can affect the outcome of both employees and management. These factors can also be used while conducting similar research. Thus, the present research provides springboard findings to factors affecting deviant

behavior and how workplace spirituality mediated through ethical climate can foster relationships.

6. AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Dr. Vijit Chaturvedi conceptualized the topic and framework and prepared a discussion for the study. Ms. Gurpreet Kaur prepared the research design, review of literature data collection, and analysis. Dr. DS Yadav elaborated on the analysis and findings and helped with the preparation of the discussion section.

6.1 Ethical statement

All approval was taken suitably from respondents for data collection after telling the purpose of the study to ensure consensus; rest, any approval was not involved in the present study. Ethical committee approval from the relevant institutional ethics committee with an appropriate approval number was not applicable in the present study. Permission from the database/records owner (mostly of that institution) to use the record information for the relevant study and subsequent publication does not apply to the present study. No database/open records are used in the study.

7. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflict of interest declared none.

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