CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Generation at Workplace

In organisations, employees from different generations work together for achieving organizational goal to harvest more profitability. The working abilities of the employees differ within and between generations because of the difference in their attitudes and behaviors.

Generation is referred as a group of people having born in the same period of time and sharing a unique and common set of characteristics based on the historical experiences, economic and social conditions, technological advances and other societal changes they have in common (Raineri et al. 2012). Generation is an identifiable group that involves birth year, age, location, and significant events at critical developmental stages (Kupperschmidt 2000). Generations are classified into different groups in different countries and they are briefly given here.

1.1.1.1 Generations at western countries

In the USA (Karp & Sirias 2001; Smola & Sutton 2002; Chen & Choi 2008; Fletcher et al. 2009; Meriac et al. 2010; Rood 2011), the UK (McGuire et al. 2007), Canada (Appelbaum et al. 2004) and Australia (Yu & Miller 2005; Wong et al. 2008; Benson & Brown, 2011) researchers have identified four generations namely Veterans, Baby boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. Veterans are observed to be more loyal, have a high value on integrity
(Kim 2008), dedicated (Schaming 2005), hardworking and respect authority (Rood 2011). Baby boomers are not loyal; prefer self-gratification and money (Schaming 2005). Gen Xers are realistic, self-reliant, entrepreneurial, independent, market savvy, fun loving and techno-literate (Rood 2011). Gen Yers are highly educated, confident, assertive and entitled, optimistic and goal oriented (Chen & Choi 2008).

1.1.1.2 Generations at Asian countries

Researchers followed the same generation categorization of Western countries though the significant events mentioned in their generations are not relevant as in Asia (Yu & Miller 2005; Turner et al. 2011). It was Hole et al. (2010) who proposed the generational differences of Asian countries such as Japan, China, Vietnam and South Korea. In Japan there are seven groups which are: 1st baby boomer, danso generation, shinjinrui or bubble generation, 2nd baby boomer or dankai generation, post bubble, shinjinrui junior or generation Z and yutori. In China, five groups have been identified and they are post-50s generation, post-60s generation, post-70s generation, post 80s generation and post-90s generation. While in Vietnam, the researchers have grouped four generations such as post war cohort, the trasition cohort, the open economy cohort and the global cohort. But in South Korea, only three groups are reported namely ‘475’ generation, ‘386’ generation, and Gen X and Gen Y (Vasanthi 2012).

1.1.1.3 Generations at India

In India, Roongrerngsuke (2010) and Erickson (2009) identified four generations namely traditionalists, baby boomers, Gen X/Socialist and Gen Y. According to Hole et al. (2010), there are three generations namely traditional generation, non-traditional generation and Gen Y. Ghosh & Chaudhari (2009) also reported three generations such as conservatives,
integrators and Y2K. However, Saundarya & Ekambaram (2014) classified five generations namely Veterans, Free Gens, Gen X, E-Gens & Gen Y. Veterans are rare in the modern Indian workplace. Free Gens (1945-1960) comprised of 20% of India’s active workforce and they are hardworking and loyal. Gen Xers (1961-1970) are 25% of the Indian workforce and have a great sense of duty, treat work as a challenge and take extra efforts to meet this challenge. The E-Gens (1971-1980) consisted of 29% of modern India’s workforce are competitive, respect entrepreneurship streak and hardworking. Gen Yers (1981-1990) comprised of 26% of the total workforce and they are techno brilliant, carry global mindsets and value diversity due to their multicultural upbringing.

1.1.2 Generational Difference

Generational difference has always existed in the workplace, in terms of values, attitude, ethics, ambitions, views, mind sets and demographics. This difference results in generational conflict which ultimately affects the organisational productivity and success. Lack of attention of generational differences will make any company less attractive and greater difficulty in searching of right employees. Now-a-days, many organizations around the world are experimenting to understand how to address generational conflicts successfully at their workplace for enhancing employee’s motivation and productivity. They are framing approaches and procedures to narrow down the conflict, and build co-operation among them. Efforts have been taken through generational studies by management researchers to assess the generational differences for several decades (Filipczak 1994; Poskaitis 1999; Giancola 2006; Joshi et al. 2010; Saundarya & Ekambaram 2014). According to Mannheim (1952) and McMullin et al. (2007), generational differences is people’s attitudes and values that result from significant economic, political and social events which they experience during their formative years of childhood.
Generational difference is the difference among individuals of different generations in terms of characteristics, knowledge, critical economic, political, social, technological and spiritual experiences during their growth and developmental stages.

In any workplace, individuals possessing different values, ideas, ways to get things done and ways to communicate with each other have always existed. As each generation has distinct attitudes, behaviors, expectations, habits and motivations, they communicate based on their generational background (Elmore 2010; Gesell 2010). This generational difference may influence the policies of an employer such as recruiting, team building, dealing with change, motivating, managing and improving productivity. Employers look for specific talents based on skills and abilities among the candidates when they recruit employees for different positions in organisations for achieving their goals. Employers have to develop strategies and manage the varied interests of each generation to bridge these differences for better collaboration, increased knowledge sharing, greater innovation, improved productivity and an increased competitive advantage. When well-managed, the treasure of knowledge owned by the elder generations can be harvested and utilized for developing greater leadership qualities of younger generations (Saundarya & Ekambaram 2014). The critical management skills will involve understanding generational differences in order to strengthen work relationship between and among employees. The companies should design work/life programs that can help them train, develop and retain employees. It should also lead to ideas on how the generations can work together most effectively and efficiently (Smith 2000).

1.2.1 Spirituality

Spirituality as a major shift and transformation is practiced in many organisations which make room for spiritual dimensions for enhancing
employees meaning, purpose and a sense of work and community. This enriches employee’s simplicity, self-expression and interconnectedness to achieve higher growth and productivity (Ashmos & Duchon 2000). Spirituality is defined as inner consciousness (Guillong 2000), a specific form of work feeling that energies action (Dehler & Welsh 1994), a process of self enlightenment (Barnett et al. 1999), and the unique inner search for the fullest personal development through participation into transcendent mystery (Delbecq 1999). Employees have an inner life that nourishes and nourished by meaningful work and that takes place in the context of their work community (Ashmos and Duchon 2000). Spirituality improves happiness, severity, good self-esteem, and harmonious and loving relationship of employees (Rotimi, 2008).

1.2.1.1 Spiritual growth

Spiritual growth of an individual depends on their life experiences and spiritual knowledge (Wilber 1986; Vaidehi Priyal & Ramkumar 2015b). Indian tradition reveals that seven *chakras* present inside the human *aura* decide the spiritual growth of an individual. *Chakra* is the Sanskrit word which indicates wheel (Best 2010). These *chakras* represent seven centers of energy located vertically along the spine, according to Sui (2000, 2009). The first *chakra* located at the base of the spine is known as the *Muladhara* (root) which represents basic survival and self-preservation. It is about learning to be responsible for developing a basic trust in life. The second *chakra* is called as *Svadishthana* (sacral) which is located in the genital area and is referred for sensuality and procreation. It is about psychological issues with respect to parents, family and friends. The third is the *Manipura* (navel) *chakra* and it is placed in the abdominal area of solar plexus. This *chakra* is responsible for assertion of will. It is the center of ego and control, power and dominance over others. The fourth one is the *Anahata* (heart) *chakra* present in the upper chest and associated with the expression of unconditional love. It relates to qualities of empathy, joy, acceptance, trust, intuition, understanding,
compassion, playfulness, healing, friendship, sincerity and feeling of unity in love. The fifth chakra is named as Visuddha (throat) chakra and it is located in the throat and responsible for creativity and expression. The Ajna (third eye) is the sixth chakra which is present in the center of the head behind the eyes. It is related to intuition and wisdom. The seventh chakra is Sahasrara (crown) which is located just above the crown of the head. This chakra associates not only the highest state of consciousness, but also complete and total union with the source of all creation. It relates to truth, unconditional love and enlightenment (Rama et al. 1976; Scotton & Hiatt 1996).

These seven levels of consciousness, called ‘The Chakra System’, describe the seven steps that an individual undergoes in his personal and spiritual development process towards spiritual maturity. It refers to the psychology of enlightenment and the science of inner transformation. The seven spiritual growth parameters or chakras integrates physical reality, mental attitude, emotional makeup, social style, personal power and leadership style, financial choices, career options, and spirituality of our well-being into one coherent whole (Bowers 1989; Oslie 2000; Vaidehi Priyal & Ramkumar 2015a).

The management of an organization has to understand the employee’s problems in the workplace, as the level of spirituality differs among employees. In recent years, spirituality in workplace is well received by the employees in many organizations. An employee with high level of spirituality due to his spiritual transformation possessed a positive outcome in terms of interpersonal and organizational aspects (Pawar 2009), leading to organizational success.

The managers who experiences spiritual activities in organization improved employee’s commitment and attained a sense of psychological safety, purpose, self-determination, enjoyment and belonging. Employees feel that they are valued and deserve respectable treatment (Rego & Cunha 2008).
1.3.1 Performance Orientation Factors

Performance orientation factors are standards for employee behavior at work. Employees are rated based on their work performance compared with a set of factors determined by the employer. These performance orientation factors refer to loyalty, workaholism, goal-orientation, manager’s attitude, organizational culture, financial rewards, work engagement, training, mentoring, leadership style, motivation and environment. Of these factors loyalty, workaholism and goal-orientation of an employee defines how an employee does the work, which have a closer relationship with employee’s performance and organizational growth.

Employee loyalty includes employees work dedication, strong bonding, devotion and willing to work long in an organization. An employee possessing high loyalty contribute for increased productivity, greater efficiency, and a customer loyalty (Hart & Thompson 2007), and corporate profitability (Reichheld 1996). Workaholism refers to an employee who loves working and happy for his achievement. Workaholics always balance his work and personal life for achieving the goal (Friedman & Lobel 2003) and organizational standards (Scott et al. 1997; McMillan & O’Driscoll 2006). Goal-oriented employees always work hard and are competitive to achieve their mastery; and performance goal orientations improve job performance, as they motivate employees to meet out their required standards (Van Yperen & Janssen 2002). Goal orientation has a very strong relationship with performance (Locke & Latham 1990).

Research suggests that the organization implementing workplace spirituality results in improving creativity, customer service, trust, honesty and personal satisfaction. This in turn results in enhanced organizational performance (Krishnakumar & Neck 2002).
Spirituality improves the well-being and quality of life of an employee. It also provides a sense of purpose, interconnectedness and community, and meaning at work. This will encourage the organizations to practice spirituality for enhancing organizational performance and profitability (Karakas 2010).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A variety of generations is existing in the workplace at different organisations. The chosen generations for this research are Free Gens (1945-1960), Gen X (1961-1970), E Gens (1971-1980) and Gen Y (1981-1990), working in academic institutions, hospitals, spiritual centre, IT fields, textile unit and auto component unit. There are generational differences in the workplace which lead to generational conflict. The managers of organization should understand the characteristics, values, attitudes and behaviours of individuals from different generations for formulating the strategies and approaches to narrow down the conflict, and work together with other generations.

Employees of organisations are implementing a variety of management tools such as employees respect, work-life balance, nature of work, quality of co-workers, organisation’s leadership quality, basic pay, working environment, long term career opportunities, flexible work, recognition and rewards, learning and development activities, promotion opportunities, and incentives and bonus (Brotherton 2012). In addition to these tools, many organisations are at present focusing on employee spirituality in the workplace. When employees are practicing spirituality, their interest increases towards organization along with a sense of obligation (Rego & Cunha 2007). It has been suggested that organisation that encourage spirituality experiences improved, their performance and profitability (Thompson 2000). Despite growing recognition of spirituality at work as a significant area of inquiry, research conducted in the intersection of
spirituality and organisational performance has not been studied systematically. Workplace spirituality is subject worthy of research because of its strong relevance to the well-being of individuals, organisations and societies (Sheep 2006).

Organisational success and goals are achieved only by employees work performance. The work performance factors such as loyalty, workaholism and goal-orientation are considered to be major factors differ between and among generations. It is opined that older generation had positive characters in terms of loyalty and hardworking and younger generation had negative thinking (Wood 2005). If the generational differences are well managed by management tools such as spirituality, the working behavior of employees of different generation can be improved for achieving organizational goal and productivity.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the relationship between employee’s workplace spirituality and work performance?

2. What are the differences between generations in workplace and how they influence work performance factors of employees?

3. How spirituality differs across generations?