

# Spirituality and Christian Values in Business: Pilot Study

Vilmante Kumpikaite-Valiuniene<sup>1+</sup> and Ruth Alas<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania

<sup>2</sup>Estonian Business School, Estonia

**Abstract.** The main question of this paper is, are there any differences how people from different institutional settings see spirituality at work? Data for this research was collected from 2 different samples. 23 interviews were conducted with Christian managers, who belong to Europartners. The second group was formed from Lithuanian respondents. This sample was 79 respondents from different social groups. It was found a number of differences between studied respondents' groups. Europartners accept spirituality's values involving to work more than Lithuanians. Implications for research and practice were discussed.

**Keywords:** Christian Values, Spirituality, Europartners, Lithuania.

## 1. Introduction

Many academic journals like the Leadership Quarterly, Organization, Journal of Social Economics, Journal of Organizational Change Management, Journal of Management Education, and others, have brought out special issues or published articles on different aspects of spirituality (Kumpikaite, 2009).

The rationale for this study lies in the fact that people in different parts of the world have a spiritual quest. The purpose of the present study is to find out differences how people from different institutional settings see spirituality's, which includes religion, involving to work.

It was conducted interview to seek this purpose. The sample was 102 respondents from two different groups. 23 interviews were provided with Christian managers, who belong to Europartners. This is Association of European business and professional people. These people are mostly from traditional capitalist countries in Europe. The second group of 79 respondents from different social groups was formed from Lithuanian respondents. Lithuania is post Soviet country where religion was forbidden for more than 50 years while Lithuania retrieved its Independence in 1991.

## 2. Theoretical Background

During the past two decades, the attention given to the impact that spirituality has on the fields of management research, practice, and pedagogy has increased dramatically (Novak, 1994). However, this category has been vaguely defined. At times the concept of spirituality seems to exclude traditional religions, whereas at other times includes them (McCormick, 1994). Although the impact of classical religious traditions has been discussed in the popular management literature (Chappell, 1993; Novak, 1994) and in fields like business ethics (Greene et al, 2001), there has been somewhat of a void in the academic dialogue (Mitchell, 1988). Accordingly it is not surprising, that some scientists are exploring dimensions of spirituality in their own personal and professional lives.

A discussion regarding the similarities and differences between the constructs of spirituality and religion is occurring in many disciplines including management, counseling, philosophy, and psychiatry (Burke, et al, 1999; Mitroff and Denton, 1999; Nicholls, 1996). During the Middle Ages, religion and daily life were so connected that the church was the final arbiter of scientific questions (Cantor, 1993; Manchester, 1993). Now, however, we have come to a point in history where the break between daily life and spiritual matters has brought us to times of ethical dilemmas and a deep search for meaning (Harman, 1998).

According to Marcic (2000) who reviewed about 100 of books and another 100 journal articles, less than 20% of them mention God or a Higher Power. The journal articles had even less recognition of God,

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<sup>+</sup> Tel.: + 370 611 21952; fax: + 370 37 323683.  
E-mail address: vilmante.kumpikaite@ktu.lt

with no more than 10% acknowledging that God may be part of spirituality (Marcic, 2000). Consequently, some spiritual beliefs and practices are founded in religion and others are unconnected to any religious doctrine in organization (Lewis and Geroy, 2000). Summarizing contemporary literature, we can see that spirituality has been defined in different ways and in most cases religion and God are not mentioned there.

### 3. Empirical Study

#### 3.1. Method and Sample of Survey

The goal of this study was to compare opinion to spirituality at work of two different samples of respondents. As it was mentioned before spiritual need may be seen at various levels in relation to higher purpose and core value displacement (Collins & Kakabadse, 2006). The empirical research method was structured interview, based on theoretical background. We invoke opinion of minority (Collins & Kakabadse, 2006, Schulman, 2003, Zaehner, 2001) that spirituality is related with religion. Looking in to account that interview was provided among Christian people, it was decided spirituality to link with religion and with Christian values.

Accordingly the main questions of the survey presented in this paper were:

- Is successful business possible without Christian values?
- Can business be more successful, if it is based on Christian values?
- Should Christian values be not only in your personal life but also at work activities?
- What are the differences in superior/subordinate relationships between two types of organizations: first, a usual organization with different kinds of people and second, an organization, where mainly/only religious people work?
- What are the advantages of religious employees compared to nonreligious employees?
- What are the disadvantages of religious employees compared to nonreligious employees?

There were two respondents' groups interviewed. 23 interviews were conducted with Christian managers, who belong to Europartners. This is Association of European business and professional people. These people are mostly from traditional capitalist countries in Europe. The second group is formed from Lithuanian respondents. Lithuania comes from totalitarian Soviet Union. Lithuanian sample consisted mostly from students and non managerial employees, European sample from Christian entrepreneurs and managers. 83.33 percent of respondents in Lithuania were female meanwhile 69.57 of respondents of Europartners were males. More than 66 percent of Lithuanians were in the age group 31-40 as Europartners respondents were older. Almost 35 percent varied from 51 up to 60, equal number (21.74 percent) in age 41-50 and 61-70, and 13 percent in group 31-40.

All respondents in both groups considered themselves Christians. All Europartners believe God and 6.67 percent of interviewed Lithuanians do not believe Him. From Lithuanians 63% had been believers from childhood and 23% more than 10 years. From European group 48% more than 10 years and 39% all life.

#### 3.2. Results of Interview

Table 1: Christian Values in Business

	Answer	% of respondents from Europartners	% of respondents in Lithuania
Do you agree that successful business is possible without Christian values?	Strongly agree	21,74	30
	Agree	39,13	33,33
	Disagree	13,04	16,67
	Strongly disagree	13,04	0
	I don't know	8,7	20
	N/A	4,35	0
Can business be more successful, if it is based on Christian values?	Strongly agree	73,91	26,67
	Agree	13,04	6,67
	Disagree	4,35	23,33
	Strongly disagree	0	30
	I don't know	4,35	13,33
	N/A	4,35	0

**Business and Christian values.** 73.91 percent of Europartners and 26.67 percent of Lithuanians strongly agreed and accordingly 13.04 and 26.67 percent agreed that business can be successful if it is based on Christian values (see Table 1). However more than 53 percent of Lithuanian group disagreed, that business can be successful if it is based on Christian values. Asking vs. question if respondents agreed that successful business is possible without Christian values we found out that 21.74 percent strongly agreed and 39.13 agree of Europartners agreed with this proposition. At the same time answers of Lithuanian group were following 30 and 33 percent. Therefore we see the similar tendency of the answers. The main difference was that even 20 percent of Lithuanians could not decide if they agree or do not agree with the following statement.

**Integration of Christian values to work.** Fig. 1 demonstrates respondents' opinion if Christian values should be involved not only in personal life but also at work activities. All Europartners' group strongly agreed with this statement. 60 percent of Lithuanians' strongly agreed, 26.67 – agreed and 3.33 disagreed with this statement.

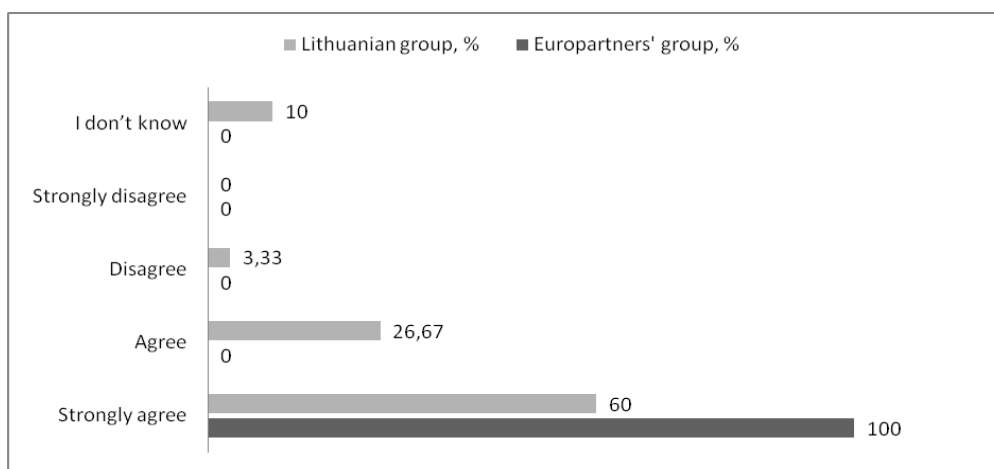


Fig: 1: Answers to the question “Do you agree that Christian values should be not only in your personal life but also at your work activities?”

**Differences among religion and non religion employees.** Respondents enumerated 34 advantages (24 by Europartners and 20 by Lithuanian group) of religious employees compared to nonreligious employees. The same 11 values were named by both groups of respondents. “Ethical and moral values and standards and behavior, act more according to Christian value” was selected as the biggest advantage among Europartners (17.39 percent). The second one was “Work as for God, not for men, a step towards God, with the company, dependent on the Lord” (13.04 percent). However, no one Lithuanian respondent mentioned such or similar advantage. They named “Integrity” (30 percent meanwhile Europartners – 4.35 percent), “Responsibility for every action and work because this shows his trust to God” (23.33), “More tolerant” (16.67) and “Actions are based on spiritual values” (13.33). In comparison with answers for these 3 advantages, no one Europartner mentioned them. Both groups agreed with “Easy cooperation, positive cooperation with co-workers, advantage to celebrate with Christians” (13.04 percent of Europartners and 10 percent of Lithuanians), “Can put their problems and needs on God, do not depend on good or bad circumstances” (13.04 and 3.33).

All respondents recited 25 disadvantages of religious employees compared to nonreligious employees. Just 3 of them coincided between both groups of respondents. The first one was “boundaries less clearly defined” (8,7 percent of Europartners and 6,67 percent of Lithuanian group), the second one – “can be narrow minded” (4,35 and 6,67 percent) and the third one – “wait too long for God to change the situation, instead of acting in trust of God to help and guide” (also 4,35 and 6,67 percent) Notwithstanding, 30 percent of Lithuanian and 17,39 percent of Europartners did not find any religious employees disadvantages compared to nonreligious employees. This was really unexpected as it showed that religious Europartners found more religion employees' disadvantages.

Looking at institutional context of spirituality we can see results in Table 2.

Table 2: What are the differences in superior/subordinate relationships between two types of organizations: first, a usual organization with different kinds of people and second, an organization, where mainly/only religious people work?

Answer	% of Europartners	% of respondents in Lithuania
<b>None</b>	<b>4,35</b>	<b>10</b>
Trust, in Lord	8,7	3,33
<b>Honesty</b>	4,35	<b>10</b>
<b>Harmony</b>	4,35	<b>10</b>
<b>Not boss oriented</b>	4,35	<b>10</b>
Roles and responsibilities are not clear	4,35	3,33
<b>Prayer can be public, prays for subordinates, company, clients, intercessor for his sheep before God</b>	<b>13,04</b>	0
<b>Working together, with Christ, God/Jesus as guide and supporter, always, Godly leader loves Christ</b>	<b>17,39</b>	<b>3,33</b>
Example as acts, lead by life	8,7	0
<b>Opportunities for evangelization, Freedom to speak about Gospel, in religious organization</b>	<b>13,04</b>	0
Respect others view, interested	4,35	6,67
Towards God with the company, a step	4,35	3,33
<b>Good values, both should have</b>	<b>8,7</b>	<b>10</b>
Searching for excellence	4,35	0
Good working motivation	4,35	0
Participative	4,35	0
<b>Spiritual aspects</b>	4,35	<b>10</b>
Mercy and grace for Christ like (people)	4,35	0
Love and help each others, brothers and sisters in faith	4,35	3,33
Serve the others	4,35	6,67
Ability to perform the job first	4,35	3,33
Christian companies should be superior in theory, often quite opposite in practice. Organizations with only Christians in them are not easy to handle.	8,7	0
Men mix the rules, lack of worldly discipline.	4,35	0
The culture will often be different	4,35	0
In secular organizations, a chance to show the Lord they do not yet know	4,35	0
Output defined partly in other terms	4,35	0
Informal leadership	0	6,67
The first one has less tolerance	0	3,33
<b>Very clear hierarchy should be in religion organization</b>	0	<b>20</b>
Religion organization can be nonflexible	0	3,33

It is quite unexpected that 10 percent of Lithuanian group stated there is no difference between traditional and organization where mainly religious people work. At the same time just one Europartner agreed with this statement. The biggest difference according to Europartners is “working together, with Christ, God/Jesus as guide and supporter, always, Godly leader loves Christ” (17.39 percent), “prayer can be public, prays for subordinates, company, clients, intercessor for his sheep before God” (13.04 percent) and Opportunities for evangelization, Freedom to speak (13.04 percent). 20 percent of Lithuanians respondents think that very clear hierarchy should be in religion organization and it is the main difference between these two types of organizations.

#### 4. Conclusion and Future Studies

There is no opinion if spirituality is connected with religion and God or not. But it should be mentioned that according to Mitroff and Denton (1999) spirituality and faith are inseparable. The author of this paper consents with this point of view and the pilot study of attitudes of spirituality, introduced in this paper was based on values of spirituality and faith as synonyms.

Conceptualization of spirituality and related constructs is a foundational requirement for better theorizing in the field of spirituality in management (Pandey & Gupta, 2008). Most of the existing studies are centered on definition questions and aimed at locating spirituality in terms of attitude, behavior and a solution to having greater equanimity at workplace.

Research results showed that almost all Europartners agree that business can be successful if it is based on Christian values. This is not surprising as most of respondents are managers and they deal with this every day. At the same time 53 percent of Lithuanian group disagree that business can be successful if it is based on Christian values. Situation showed that it was very hard for Lithuanian respondents to answer questions about spirituality and Christian values. It means that respondents probably never thought about this and can't imagine business connected with religion even values are the same. We could consider that if Christian values in interview were called just as spiritual values, percent of positive answers increased. Therefore future research on spirituality at work could be provided after instruction how spirituality is understandable in this case.

We suppose that Lithuanians' answers were influenced that the country was by Soviet ragtime for a long time. Usually nobody ever speak and there is no surveys provided about spiritual values involving to work in Lithuania. However, it should be analyzed more particular to prove our suggestion.

To conclude we can say that there are some differences of view to spirituality at work according to different respondents' group, their positions and if they are believers. Europartners agree with the idea involve spirituality and its values not just into personal but also to institutional life and context more than respondents from Lithuanian group.

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