

SPIRITUALITY IN ACHIEVING TRUE PURPOSE OF ORGANIC INDUSTRY

*N.A.C. Samarasinghe¹, U.A. Kumara², M.S.S. Perera³, R. Ulluwishewa⁴

¹*Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka, 6115FM2019014@fgs.sjp.ac.lk*

²*Department of Business Economics, Faculty Of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka, uthumange@sjp.ac.lk*

³*Department of Business Economics, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka, sumudu@sjp.ac.lk*

⁴*Center for Spirituality in Sustainable Business Management, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka, ulluwishewa@sjp.ac.lk*

ABSTRACT

Organic industry plays a significant role in enhancing both human and planetary health and hence contributes to sustainability. That is the very purpose of organic consumers for consuming organic. However, evidence suggest that the purpose of those who involve in organic production (growers) & processing are solely profit maximization. Therefore, they are unlikely to sacrifice any part of profit for the wellbeing of society and environment. Profit orientation likely to adopt unethical practices by behaving unsustainable ways. Unsustainable practices of organic production and processing are in conflict with the consumers' purpose of being organic. This is where spirituality becomes important. The spiritual development is an inner- process which transforms the mind of people from self-centeredness to self-transcendence in which health and sustainability of the planet are valued in addition to profit. The present paper, with the help of evidence derived from the literature on the science of spirituality and the organic industry argues that spiritual transformation of stakeholders in organic industry is essential in achieving its purpose.

Key words: Organic Industry, Spirituality, Inner Transformation, Sustainability, Organic.

INTRODUCTION

Emerging concern in business studies now a days has been notion of “Spirituality.” Many books, public seminars & lectures based on empirical studies that discovered many dimensions of spirituality has been a significant

concern of entrepreneurs who are keen to be sustainable in what is being done. Therefore, a clear idea about the spirituality and its dynamics on human mind and behavior to deal with self and others to be genuine in what they are doing is a prime importance. It is essential to understand how a person become spiritual and what does the spirituality make towards the health and sustainability to serve the true purpose of being organic. Therefore, understanding the significance of spirituality on the relationships & behaviors to make a person's involvements sustainable toward achieving a good health and sustainability by serving the true purpose of being organic concepts for the health and sustainability is the main purpose of this study. This study support to understand how a business transforms into a sustainable business to deliver sustainable product or a service when members of organic industry are spiritually developed for which a deep study on ontology and epistemology of the spirituality and its impact on true purpose of organic industry in terms of health and sustainability is a must.

The research has been planned to be conducted over certified and uncertified organic industry in Sri Lanka. The industry consists of farms, processors, traders, suppliers, certifiers, and consumers of organic product which are confirmed to be sustainable and healthy, and then to conclude with the significance of spirituality for the true purpose of being organic.

LITERATURE

Those behaviors which does not go in line with natural process of the environment, ethical behaviors of the society, and standardized & disciplinary norms of economics are known as unsustainable behaviors which are literally mean the inability of present humankind to sustain indefinitely (Ulluwishewa, 2018). Further the study conducted by Ulluwishewa, pointed out that the root course of unsustainable behavior is our perceived separateness from fellow human beings and the natural environment, which results in self-centeredness, greed, and fear.

Ideas of our feelings sometimes as personal opinions are well explained collectively by Ulluwishewa (2018). It states that shifts of exterior effects are also required to achieve long lasting existence, which has been termed as sustainability. However, the change itself is insufficient to come across pleasure by achieving sustainability. In view of that, the focus of ours should also be at external effects as well as on inner changes which develop intrinsic values to drive a person for a better interaction with surrounding plants, animals, and the environment altruistically (p.167). Global trade of organic

food has grown tremendously over the past years (Vidanapathirana R., 2014) Growing number of food poisoning have impacted on the health of people worldwide, the impact itself is acting as a driving force towards organic industry. Consumers are becoming more health-conscious owing to the harmful effects caused by the presence of chemical pesticides in food products (Mie, 2017). The toxicity of chemical pesticides in food products can cause cancer, hormone disruption and birth defects. According to an UN report in 2017, around 200,000 people die every year due to toxic effects of pesticides in food products (Boedeker *et al.*, 2020). This is causing consumers to shift their focus towards organic food products.

Organic is a growing global concern due to increasing food related health issues. Organic industry is consisted of many industries such as agriculture, processing, manufacturing, forestry, trading, sales & marketing, regulatory authorities, inspections & certification organization, consumers etc. Organic industry has been divided in to two stages such as “production” and “processing” (European Commission Regulation, 2021). Production stage is also known as agricultural stage. The agricultural activities starting from land election up to harvesting is known as production stage. Processing stages starts from the output of production stage and ends up with the final labeled product which are ready for the consumptions. The final product from every industry includes, but are not limited to, foods feeds, ingredients yarns, fabrics, clothes and home textiles, latex, and rubber products. According to the data collected by IFOAM-Organic International and FiBL, seventy-two countries had fully implemented organic regulations as of 2020. Twenty-two countries had regulations which were not fully implemented, while fourteen countries were in the process of drafting legislations (Kirchner, 2021). Organic standards have begun to be developed by regional groups of organic farmers and their supporters as early as 1940s (Vidanapathirana, 2014). Standard for organic have long been used to create an agreement withing organic agriculture about what an “Organic” claim on a product means, and to some extent, to inform consumers (Vidanapathirana, 2014). The basic standard of IFOAM for production and processing of organic of an organic product is one of the most significant expositions of the aim and principle of organic farming (Rigby, 2001). Regulatory authority of every country or region for organic industry has produced their own standard to standardize the industry.

Spirituality:

Spirituality and spiritual development of a person has been a significant concern in many different subjects because inner spiritual development transforms a person to behave in a humane manner with concerns on in and out of others. Ulluwishewa (2014) has referred to spirituality as an ultimate or immaterial reality which exist beyond the material realm. In most books, articles, publications, and research papers published so far, the “transcendence” has been identified as the fundamental feature for spirituality (McDonald, 2015). Spirituality has been defined as “a way of being and experiencing that come about through awareness of a transcendence dimensions and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considered to be the ultimate” (McDonald, 2015).

However, religiosity and spirituality are distinct (Yusuf, 2020). Spirituality can be achieved through many ways with or without religious influence. Serious efforts are needed to be made to achieve spirituality through activation of inner dimensions of the mind that encourage one to think deeply. (Ulluwishewa, 2014., Kurt Y, Sinkovics, 2020). This has helped people to search for the ultimate reality to achieve ultimate transcendent higher power (Kurt et al., 2020).

Spiritual attitudes and behaviors reinforce the mind and soul of persons creating and promoting healthy relationships, better network commitment, and sustainable attitudes. Such reinforcement strengthens a collective effort of caring about personalities (society), eco-system (environment), and business (economy) to safeguard needs and wants of present and future generations. Spirituality is a process of developing internal transformation with the help of some external influence. It transforms oneself from selfishness to selflessness which is what is seen as happening when a person is identified to be spiritual. Spirituality makes people happy. Happy people care for others (Ulluwishewa et al. 2019).

McDonald (2015) have identified one hundred items measures for operationalizing spirituality. Those measures have been then categorized in to five main dimensions as a directional framework for future research. Those are, Cognitive Orientation toward Spirituality, Experiential/ Phenomenological Dimension, Existential Well-Being, Paranormal Beliefs and Religiousness. Based on evidence of his findings, he further argued that

those five dimensions have significant relation with, health, personality, social behavior of people.

RESEARCH PROBLEM/ STATEMENT:

Gap between the expectation and existing level of the purpose of being organic: Organic Produces are often sold at a higher price than conventionally produced products. However, it is not possible to find out the authenticity of the product by the appearance of it for consumers. There are some producers of organic products who are genuine enough to practice what they intent to practice throughout the production process by themselves with an internal motive to practice so before using the term for their products as “organically grown”. The same terminology has found to be open the door to all types of fraudulent practices by another group of selfish people. One example for which was the distinct price difference between sales prices among organically grown and conventionally grown products. Organically grown products are often sold at higher prices than that of conventionally grown. (John, 2015). Such fraudulent acts might increase the growth of organizations in terms of revenue generations and profits leaving a question about long lasting existence of the organization as well as the rest of society and environment. Past researchers have pointed out various factors affecting to the growth of SMEs but not specifically for organic industry. For example, (Wellmilla et al., 2011) pointed out that there are main factors that affect for the success of entrepreneurs include age, experience, and education level of the entrepreneur. However, most of such research have not concern about effect of the spirituality as a factor for business/ organic business sustainability under Sri Lankan context or global context. This literally means the inability of present humankind to sustain indefinitely and is witnessed by the socio-political-economic-environmental dimensions we see around us. (Ulluwishewa, 2018). Ulluwishewa R. further pointed out that the root course of such unsustainable behavior is our spiritual underdevelopment followed by perceived separateness from fellow human beings and the natural environment, which results in failures of leadership due to self-centeredness, greed, and fear.

Number of studies have evidenced that the importance of any factor on enterprises’ success and economic development. Even much research has been done in in developed countries, little attention had been given to developing countries. Even in the action plan of national policy framework for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) development made by the ministry of industries and commerce in Sri Lanka in 2016, it is mentioned under

national strategy for SME sector development that four main strategic elements are recommended to develop SME sector. And in the meantime, ten major areas of business supports are identified for SMEs. Those are Finance, Technology, access to information market, business development services, linkage information, infrastructures, legal and regulatory frameworks, industrial relations and labor, entrepreneurship skills, and environmental issues, however no concern about spirituality and non on organic sector at national level in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka, being a country with rich agricultural heritage based on the Indigenous knowledge in nature management schemes practiced in ancient Sri Lanka, has been involving in eco-friendly nature farming practices evolved as a tradition, fed by their religion, and traditional believes with naturally available farm inputs with no chemical applications as fertilizers, or pests and diseases controls. Those farms and products were safe & healthy products with no contamination with harmful chemicals. Later, with the green revolution, the agriculture was gradually developed from subsistence nature farming to industrial agriculture. Then the agriculture became very efficient with mechanization and effective with many improved varieties and application of synthetic inputs supporting the improved varieties to deliver a maximum output in tums of yield per land area. Those excess yields were sold locally and internationally as a row product or as a processed product using technologically advanced processing technics and additives to enhance the shelf life. The use of chemicals in the agricultural industry as fertilizers, insecticides, weedicides, pesticides, growth regulators, growth inhibitors, vitamins, antibiotics, hormones etc. have become exceptionally higher beyond accepted limits for human health and the ultimate sustainability. Accumulation of chemical residues in soil, water, air, and in animals through food chains have been turning to irrevocable health issues for human, environment, society, and economy. As a preventive action the Sri Lankan government has declared chemical free cultivation from 2021 by banning Imports of chemical inputs for agriculture. Therefore, cultivations are to be carried out with other inputs such as compost, natural minerals extracted form mins and extraction from naturally available ingredients.

However, those cultivation practices with no chemical applications cannot be justified as organic because of the organic is a a labeling system that is granted for ecological production when the whole process has been certified by accreted third party organization (Vidanapathirana, 2012). According to a publication made by Prof. J.M.R.S. Bandara (2007) on Nature Farming,

Indigenous knowledge (IK) in nature management schemes practiced in ancient Sri Lanka during farming has been very prominent.

Most of studies related to the spirituality have been carried out in the western countries, but not in developing countries, especially in Sri Lanka. In a paper publishes by Harshan (2015) on “*The impact of Business Networking on SME Performance: Development of a Conceptual Framework*” have concluded that the conceptual framework model developed by him is expected to be used to examine the Sri Lankan context of business network in future because of it is especially important since the values, attitudes, cultural motives etc. of Sri Lankan people that affect business motives are entirely different from other developing countries which have been cited in relevant literature. Similarly, Wincent (2004) many others have developed and tested similar models, however, it has not been tested in Sri Lankan context thus far. Therefore, it has been a valid argument that a study to find the impact of the level of spirituality of stakeholders of organic orientation make a significant difference on the level of business sustainability under Sri Lankan context. All above evidence shows that the spirituality and the Sri Lankan context have not been a considerable concern for research studies on business sustainability of business in Sri Lanka.

There is a common misunderstanding among the public, businesspeople, academics, and even withing scientific communities that spirituality is about something related to religious. Therefore, most of the time the term spirituality is perceived as religiosity. However, spirituality and religiosity are two different aspects. Therefore, a demystification of spirituality has been a significant concern for any sector. Dr. Radolf Steiner has stressed the fact that the degradation is not only due to addition of systemic agrochemicals, but also due to spiritual shortcomings in the farming systems adopted. However, religious practices based on rituals and believes which are different from religion to religion. Therefore, depending on the type of religion and the state of mind and behaviors is soften specific to farmers whose behaviors, method of faming and ambitions evolves from the tradition fed by the religion. However, limited empirical studies have been conducted to demystify the difference between spirituality and religiosity among farming communities.

Organic products are a reliable source of foods grown and processed in sustainable way with organic management practices without harmful agrochemicals. Growing, producing, and processing of an organic food or product is more on to a spiritual practice rather than just a technical

involvement, in which the right code of practice with genuine commitment is a must. Organic foods are becoming more popular in the western world where majority of developed countries are located. This popularity is being built up due to the healthy and sustainable nature of the entire supply chain starting from raw materials leading all the way up to a product. Certified organic companies are supposed to have been every well administered and managed to be sustainable & organic and proven to be sustainable & Organic by certification itself offered after an audit & inspection carried out against a sustainable organic standard. Therefore, those companies can be considered as technically sustainable and organic. However, the question remains is whether they are sustainable, and the people of those organizations are genuine enough to serve true purpose being organically certified product producer to the nation? Therefore, a systematic empirical study is a timely requirement to find the sustainability and status of organic nature. Such a study is helpful to identify potential differences between “certified sustainability” and “empirical sustainability.” The empirical sustainability is the sustainability achieved in compliance with an empirically tested and accepted dimensions of definitions for the sustainability. And investigating the roll of spirituality of member of organic network on sustainability and to finding the impact of spirituality to makes inner changes of members is also a significant importance. However, very limited or no research have been carried out thus far

- to find out if there is a significant difference between certified sustainability and empirical sustainability of certified organic companies in Sri Lanka and in the world.
- to find the level of empirical sustainability of certified organic companies thus far.
- to find the level of spirituality of member of organic industry.
- to find the effect of spirituality for serving the purpose of being organic.

With respect to the quality & compliances management, a considerable attention has been given now a days to European, American, and Japanese models such as “total quality management,” “business excellence medals” and “national quality awards” frameworks. However, performance management systems and business excellence models and frameworks have given little to no consideration for social, environmental, human, and ethical dimensions of organizational performances. Moreover, organizations have been confronting many unsurmountable challenges, changes and pressures

that make it very necessary to look for an organizational excellence alternative, namely spiritual organization (Al- Qutop et al., 2014). Similarly, the organic production and processing are also covered by the same country specific set of standards which are based on three main sustainable pillars people, Planet and Profit. Apart from the sustainable dimension of those standards, Considering the spiritual dimension of those standard to assess the level of spirituality of the organic industry is a significant importance.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What is organic and industry?
- How does something become organic and why?
- What are existing issues with the organic industry?
- Is there any gap between the expected purpose and the existing status of being organic?
- What are potential reasons to have such a gap between the expected and existing level of organic status?
- What is spirituality and its characteristics?
- What is the role of spirituality in achieving the purpose of organic industry?

OBJECTIVES

Overall Objective: To assess the significance of spirituality of stakeholders in organic industry in achieving the true purpose of being organic.

Specific Objectives:

- To investigate what is organic and organic industry.
- To investigate the true purpose of being organic consumer.
- To evaluate existing status of the organic industry.
- To empirically identify reasons for the gap between existing status of organic industry and true purpose of being organic.
- To understand spirituality in rational terms and to investigate how spiritual growth transforms people from self-centeredness to self-transcendence.
- To assess the significance of the level of spirituality of people and to understand the relationship of the level of spirituality to commitment to the purpose of being organic.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

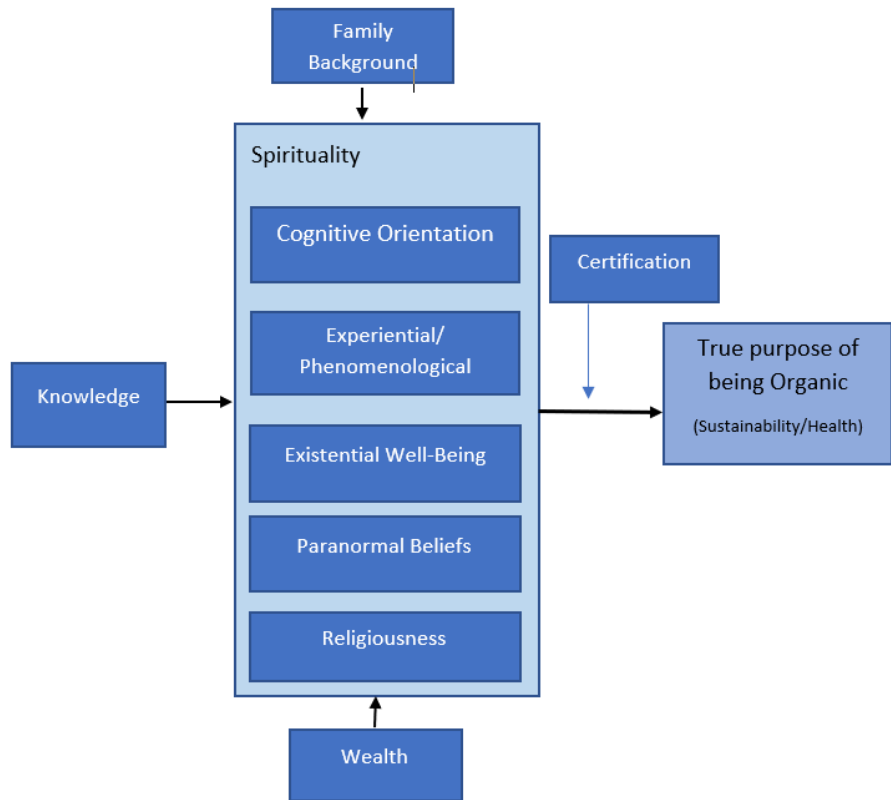


Figure 1: Conceptual Diagram

HYPOTHESIS

H₀: Organic industry without spirituality in its key decision-makers is unlikely to serve the true purpose of being organic.

H₁: Organic industry with spirituality in its key decision-makers is likely to serve the true purpose of being organic.

METHADODOLOGY

Research Design

Research type: Mix: Pure research

Method: Mix Method (Qualitative and quantitative).

Sources of data: Primary and Secondary data will be collected as information and data for the research.

Data collection Techniques: Two methods will be used to collect data for dependent and independent variables. They are.

- questionnaire and
- direct interviews/case studies.

Structured questioners and direct interviews will be used for primary data collection. Questioners will be distributed among owners within the sample, who shall be key decision makers of the Organic Industry. Self-administrative (hand over and ask them to fill and return later) method will be used. Contact persons telephone numbers will be also collected for future verifications of doubts. Information will be collected as primary data using questionnaire. The questionnaire will be developed by using questions selected from past research to collect information for empirical analysis. Guidance about the questioner will be given only about the questioner and how to answer. Answers will be supposed to be given by the respondent by themselves as an independent individual.

The following sources will use as secondary data (Books, Journal articles, Newspapers, Internet)

Population and Sample:

Population: - Population of certified organic producers (Growers) and processors will be identified from records of the Department of Census and Statistic and from certification bodies who certify organic projects in Sri Lanka.

Sampling method: -Quoter sampling based on the activity within the organic industry, will be used as representative samples over industries. (Non-probability sampling).

Convenience sampling methods will be used as sampling method. Sample quantity of individuals despondence from the industry from the total population of registered and non-registered organic producers and processors list will be selected at random as the sample. The equiprobability method of systematic sampling will be used by progressing through the list to pick individuals. The sampling will be started by selecting an element from the list at random and then every element in systematic order in the frame will be selected. However, a convenience sampling method will be used for collecting data from the industry in place of someone whose details in the list are not traceable enough to locate them to their actual location.

Data Analysis: Statistical techniques such as, descriptive statistic and inferential statistic techniques will be used for data analysis. Descriptive statistic technique such as mean, median, standard deviation will be used to

analysis and describe the basic features of the data in the study to provide simple summaries about the sample and measures. Coefficient of correlation, independent t-test, regression analysis will be used as inferential techniques to analysis the data of the research to infer the properties of the population. The data will be analyzed using SPSS 23.0, AMOS.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There is a significant requirement of an organic industry as far as consumers health and the health of the planet is concerned. The consumers' purpose of being organic is personal health and planetary health. However, the organic producers' purpose of being organic has been the profit. This is a significant conflict between the consumers' and producers' purposes of being organic. These conflicts make the organic industry fail to achieve its purpose.

Organic producers can be motivated either extrinsically by greed for having organic status & profit in terms of a premium, fear of losing profit, and of getting caught to organic inspectors for non-compliance or intrinsically by spiritual qualities arising from their feeling of connectedness/ Oneness with self, others, and nature. While those who are spiritually underdeveloped are likely to be motivated extrinsically those who are spiritually developed are likely to be motivated intrinsically. It is the intrinsically motivated organic producers/ stakeholders who contribute to achieve the true purpose of the organic industry.

The potential role of spirituality in transforming the minds of organic producers so that equal priority is given to people, customers, planet and profit and the purpose of organic industry is achieved. In that effort of being spiritual for serving the true purpose of organic, understanding what spirituality is, a significant importance. Accordingly, this research would contribute to investigate as to how spiritual growth causes inner transformation from self-centeredness to self-transcendence and how this inner transformation makes organic producers value customers' health and the health of the plant. Finally, findings of the research would contribute to develop strategies to make organic producers spiritual.

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