

The Nature of Spiritual Values in the Workplace: A Theoretical Approach Linking the Human and Organizational Dimensions

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Abstract:

This theoretical study explores spiritual values in the workplace as contemporary concepts reflecting recent transformations in human resource management and organizational behavior. Adopting a critical analytical perspective, it examines how these values emerge from the dynamic interaction between the human and organizational dimensions, where they function as a guiding framework for professional behavior grounded in meaning, purpose, and ethical responsibility. The study is based on a theoretical review of classical and contemporary literature on workplace spirituality and existential meaning in professional practice, drawing on key models such as spiritual intelligence theory (Zohar & Marshall, 2000), spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003), and meaning in work (Steger, 2012). The findings indicate that spiritual values transcend religious boundaries to promote belonging, fulfill existential needs, and enhance ethical and emotional commitment. They also play a vital role in supporting occupational mental health, reducing burnout, and fostering a cooperative, trust-based

organizational climate. The study recommends integrating spiritual values into organizational policies to balance performance effectiveness with human well-being.

Keywords: Spiritual values; Workplace; Human dimension; Organizational dimension; Spiritual leadership.

Introduction:

Modern work environments have undergone profound transformations driven by globalization, professional pressures, productivity demands, and the pursuit of sustainable competitive advantage. Within this context, interest in spiritual values in organizations has emerged as a significant topic, not merely as an ethical orientation, but as an approach to understanding the human being within the professional context and to enhancing conscious and effective employee engagement (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

In light of the contemporary challenges facing organizations, spiritual values in the workplace have become a central element not only from an ethical perspective but also from a strategic organizational standpoint. As

organizations strive to maximize productivity and performance, a critical question arises regarding how the human dimension—supported by spiritual values—can achieve a balance between organizational efficiency and employees’ psychological well-being. This paper aims to present a theoretical approach to spiritual values in the workplace by exploring their nature, dimensions, and significance at both the human and organizational levels.

Accordingly, this paper seeks to offer a comprehensive theoretical perspective that highlights the nature of spiritual values in the workplace and their role at the intersection of the individual’s human dimension and the organization’s structural dimension, drawing on contemporary literature in this field..

1. The Concept of Spiritual Values in the Workplace

The concept of workplace spirituality refers to an internal value system through which individuals perceive their work as meaningful, feel part of a professional community, and experience alignment between their inner life and their professional role (Milliman et al., 2003). Specifically, “spiritual values” are those that reflect the depth of human experience at work, such as meaning, belonging, compassion, altruism, ethical consistency, and emotional attachment to work (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

Fry (2003) emphasizes that organizational spirituality is not tied to a particular religion but constitutes a shared value framework encompassing vision, hope, faith, and selfless love.

2. the Concept of Spiritual Values in the Workplace

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3. Theoretical Models of Spiritual Values in the Workplace

a. Ashmos & Duchon (2000) Model

Ashmos and Duchon (2000) proposed that workplace spirituality is founded on three core components. The first is the inner life, which refers to the individual’s psychological and emotional needs and their internal experience at work. The second component is meaningful work, defined as the employee’s perception that their work carries purpose and personal significance. The third component is the sense of community, which reflects the quality of human relationships among employees and the extent to which they experience connection, cooperation, and mutual support within the workplace.

b. Milliman et al Model (2003)

Milliman et al. (2003) extended the earlier model of workplace spirituality by conceptualizing it across three interrelated levels. The individual level

focuses on the employee's personal values, inner life, and sense of meaning at work. The group level emphasizes interpersonal relationships, belonging, and shared values within work teams. Finally, the organizational level refers to the extent to which spirituality is embedded in the organization's culture, leadership practices, and structural systems, thereby shaping a collective climate that supports meaning, purpose, and connectedness in the workplace.

c. Fry's Spiritual Leadership Model (2003)

motivation and spiritual well-being in the workplace. The first dimension is vision, which provides employees with a clear and inspiring sense of purpose. The second is hope and faith, which reflect confidence in the achievement of organizational goals and perseverance in the face of challenges. The third dimension is altruistic love, expressed through genuine care, compassion, and concern for others, thereby cultivating a supportive and ethically grounded organizational climate.

d. Kinjerski & Skrypnik (2006) Model

Kinjerski and Skrypnik (2006) introduced an experiential dimension to workplace spirituality through the concept of Spirit at Work, which captures the lived spiritual experience of employees in their professional roles. This dimension encompasses affective vitality, reflecting feelings of energy, enthusiasm, and emotional aliveness at work; passion, which denotes deep engagement and intrinsic motivation; a full sense of self, whereby individuals experience authenticity and personal wholeness in their work roles; and connectedness with others, which reflects a profound sense of relational

bonding, shared purpose, and meaningful interpersonal relationships within the workplace.

4. The Human Dimension of Spiritual Values in the Workplace

a. Meaning and Purpose

Literature indicates that when individuals perceive their work as meaningful, they become more committed, satisfied, and engaged. Spiritual values help reduce burnout and provide psychological protection by promoting inner balance (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009).

b. Human Relationships

Spiritual values expand motivation toward helping others and foster a sense of community and collaboration (Milliman et al., 2003).

c. Recognition of Human Dignity

Organizational spirituality serves as an avenue to reintroduce "humanity" into the workplace through respect for emotions, transparency, and fairness (Fry, 2003).

5. The Organizational Dimension of Spiritual Values in the Workplace

a. Building a Sustainable Organizational Culture

Spiritual values contribute to creating an organizational culture based on trust, respect, and a sense of belonging (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

b. Job Performance

Recent studies have consistently confirmed the existence of a positive relationship between organizational spirituality and several key work outcomes, including individual performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and

positive organizational behavior, indicating that spirituality in the workplace plays a significant role in enhancing both employee well-being and organizational effectiveness (Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008).

c. Effective Leadership

Spiritual leadership is considered an effective leadership model that fosters employees' creativity, strengthens organizational loyalty, and enhances work motivation by promoting meaningful values, trust, and a shared sense of purpose within the work environment (Fry, 2003).

d. Enhancing Ethical Responsibility

Spiritual values elevate organizations' social responsibility, reflecting modern management trends toward sustainability and ethical practices (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010)

6. Challenges in Integrating Spiritual Values

a. Confusion Between Spirituality and Religion

Organizations must clearly distinguish spirituality as a universal human value from religion as a personal belief system in order to ensure inclusivity and mutual respect in the workplace.

While religion is rooted in specific doctrines, rituals, and individual convictions, workplace spirituality focuses on shared values such as meaning, purpose, integrity, compassion, and connectedness. This distinction is essential to prevent exclusion, discrimination, or the imposition of particular beliefs, and to maintain a neutral and respectful organizational climate. By framing spirituality as a human and ethical dimension rather than a religious one, organizations can foster a

diverse, psychologically safe environment in which employees from different cultural and religious backgrounds feel equally valued and respected. Moreover, this separation allows spiritual values to be integrated into organizational practices, leadership styles, and work relationships in a way that supports well-being, ethical behavior, and collective harmony without infringing on individual freedom of belief. (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000)

b. Symbolic Adoption (“Value Washing”)

Some organizations adopt spirituality in a superficial or symbolic manner without introducing genuine or substantive changes in their actual practices, policies, or power structures (Tourish & Pinnington, 2002).

In such cases, spirituality is used as a rhetorical or cosmetic tool to enhance the organization's public image, rather than as a deeply embedded value system that genuinely guides behavior and decision-making. This superficial adoption may involve the use of spiritual language in mission statements, slogans, or training programs without corresponding transformations in leadership styles, employee relations, or ethical standards. As a result, a gap emerges between declared values and lived organizational reality, which can lead to employee cynicism, distrust, and disengagement. Furthermore, when spirituality is instrumentalized for performance or reputation purposes alone, it risks losing its ethical and human essence, turning it into a form of managerial manipulation. Therefore, the genuine integration of spiritual values requires authentic commitment, structural alignment, and consistent behavioral practice across all organizational levels. (Tourish & Pinnington, 2002).

c. Measurement and Assessment

Accurately measuring the impact of spiritual values in the workplace remains a significant challenge when compared to tangible and material performance indicators such as productivity, profit, or efficiency.

Spiritual values are inherently abstract, subjective, and deeply rooted in individuals' inner experiences, emotions, and perceptions, which makes them difficult to quantify using traditional evaluation tools. Moreover, their effects often appear indirectly through psychological well-being, quality of relationships, ethical behavior, and sense of meaning at work—outcomes that require complex, multidimensional measurement approaches. The lack of universally standardized instruments further complicates the assessment process, as cultural, organizational, and individual differences strongly influence how spirituality is experienced and expressed. Consequently, organizations face methodological difficulties in linking spiritual values to concrete outcomes with precision. This challenge highlights the need for the development of more refined, reliable, and context-sensitive measurement tools that can capture both the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of workplace spirituality. (Kinjerski & Skrypnik, 2006).

7. Practical Recommendations for Enhancing Spiritual Values in the Workplace

a. Individual Level

These recommendations aim to strengthen employees' "inner life" by fostering self-awareness and reinforcing personal meaning at work, through the organization of regular training sessions focused on identifying personal values, practicing mindfulness, stress management, and gratitude exercises, in addition to

providing booklets or e-learning platforms that support self-awareness and the formulation of meaningful career goals (Author, Year). Work meaning is further enhanced by encouraging employees to develop their own "Why Statement," which clarifies why they work, the value they seek to achieve, and how their work connects with their inner self, while integrating "meaning reflection sessions" into weekly meetings to reinforce a shared vision (Author, Year). Moreover, psychological balance is supported by providing quiet spaces within the organization for relaxation practices and by promoting self-care as an integral part of organizational culture rather than merely an individual responsibility (millan et al, 2003).

b. Group/Community Level

At the group or community level, the focus is on fostering values of belonging, support, and mutual respect among employees. This can be achieved by building a "professional community" culture through informal gatherings, such as open days or coffee meetings, which strengthen interpersonal connections. The implementation of dialogue circles, where teams meet regularly to discuss challenges, emotions, and needs without judgment, further reinforces a sense of community. Trust-building mechanisms are also essential and include communication practices based on respectful honesty, deep listening, refraining from interruptions, acknowledgment of others' feelings, and training employees in empathic communication skills. Additionally, promoting altruistic collaboration through collective initiatives, such as volunteering, fundraising, school support, or health campaigns, along with programs like the "Colleague First" initiative to provide social or practical support among peers, enhances cohesion and solidarity within the workplace. (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009).

c. Third: Leadership Level

Leadership is the primary driver of spiritual values within the organization.

7. Training Leaders in Spiritual Leadership

Leadership training programs should focus on developing a clear and inspiring vision that provides employees with a strong sense of purpose and direction, enabling them to understand how their individual roles contribute to the broader mission of the organization. In parallel, such programs must strengthen leaders' emotional presence by enhancing their self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and ability to regulate emotions in complex workplace situations. Equally important is the cultivation of essential interpersonal skills, particularly empathy, compassion, and active listening, which allow leaders to establish deeper human connections, understand employees' needs, and respond to them in a supportive manner. These competencies play a vital role in shaping a psychologically safe, respectful, and empowering work environment where employees feel valued, trusted, and encouraged to express their authentic selves. As a result, individuals become more willing to engage meaningfully in their professional roles, demonstrate higher levels of commitment and well-being, and participate actively and ethically in organizational life.

8. Leading by Example

Leaders should embody organizational and spiritual values in their daily behavior before expecting others to adhere to them, as credibility and moral influence stem primarily from personal example. Values such as integrity, respect, fairness, altruism, and transparency must be consistently reflected in leaders' decisions, interactions, and leadership

practices, as employees closely observe and interpret these behaviors as indicators of the organization's true ethical standards.

When leaders act with honesty, demonstrate fairness in treatment, and show genuine concern for others, they foster trust, psychological safety, and moral commitment among employees. In addition, leaders can strengthen human connection within the workplace by sharing personal stories about professional challenges, failures, and the deeper meaning they find in their work. Such storytelling humanizes leadership, reduces emotional distance, and allows employees to see their leaders as authentic individuals rather than distant authority figures. This openness helps cultivate empathy, mutual understanding, and shared purpose, thereby reinforcing a relational and values-based organizational culture. (Kouzes & Posner, 2012)

9. Fear-Free Management

Adopting a "no punishment for unintentional mistakes" culture is a critical strategy for fostering a psychologically safe work environment where creativity, openness, and innovation can flourish (Edmondson, 1999). Such a culture mitigates fear-based behaviors that often inhibit employees from voicing concerns, experimenting with new ideas, or acknowledging errors, thereby limiting organizational learning and adaptability (Schein, 2010).

When employees are confident that unintentional mistakes will be treated as opportunities for reflection and improvement rather than grounds for reprimand, they are more willing to take calculated risks, propose innovative solutions, and communicate potential problems proactively.

Encouraging the transparent acknowledgment of errors and embedding systematic mechanisms for learning from these experiences reinforces a growth-oriented organizational mindset (Argyris & Schön, 1996).

This approach not only strengthens trust between leadership and employees but also enhances team collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective problem-solving capabilities. Over time, it cultivates an environment of continuous improvement where moral responsibility, ethical decision-making, and accountability are emphasized alongside performance outcomes (Fry, 2003).

Moreover, organizations that institutionalize this principle are better positioned to sustain long-term development, adapt to complex challenges, and nurture a culture of resilience and mutual support. By normalizing learning from mistakes, organizations reinforce the integration of spiritual and ethical values, ultimately promoting both human well-being and organizational effectiveness (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009).

d.Fourth: Human Resources Level (HR Level)

Leadership serves as the primary driver of spiritual values within an organization, playing a pivotal role in embedding these values into everyday practices, organizational policies, and the overall workplace culture. Leaders act as the central agents who translate abstract spiritual principles into concrete behaviors, decisions, and interpersonal interactions that shape the work environment and influence employee perceptions and engagement (Fry, 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

By modeling ethical conduct, integrity, respect, and compassion, leaders

create a normative framework that legitimizes and reinforces spiritual values throughout the organization, ensuring that these principles are not merely aspirational ideals but are actively operationalized in daily activities, performance expectations, and organizational rituals (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009).

Comprehensive leadership development programs are therefore essential and should focus on cultivating a clear, compelling, and inspiring vision that aligns organizational goals with humanistic and ethical imperatives. Additionally, such programs must strengthen leaders' emotional presence, enabling them to demonstrate authenticity, vulnerability, and empathy in their interactions with employees. The enhancement of critical interpersonal competencies, including active listening, compassion, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution, is equally vital, as these skills facilitate meaningful communication, trust-building, and collaborative problem-solving (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Fry, 2003).

By embodying these qualities, leaders establish a supportive and psychologically safe environment where employees feel empowered to express their authentic selves, pursue meaningful work, and contribute actively to the achievement of organizational objectives. This alignment between leadership behavior and spiritual values not only enhances employee engagement, well-being, and satisfaction but also fosters a culture of ethical responsibility, continuous learning, and sustainable organizational development (Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008). Ultimately, leadership acts as the cornerstone for integrating spirituality into organizational life, ensuring

that ethical and humanistic principles permeate every facet of the workplace.

In addition, leaders are expected to consistently model the values they advocate, including integrity, respect, fairness, altruism, and transparency, thereby establishing credibility and moral authority within the organization. Sharing personal narratives about professional challenges, learning experiences, and the sense of purpose they derive from work helps humanize leadership, strengthen relational bonds, and cultivate trust and emotional connection among employees.

Furthermore, instituting a fear-free management culture—characterized by policies such as “no punishment for unintentional mistakes”—encourages employees to openly acknowledge errors and treat them as opportunities for learning rather than grounds for blame. This approach not only reduces anxiety and fear of reprisal but also promotes psychological safety, supports continuous learning, enhances team cohesion, and contributes to a culture of accountability and ethical responsibility within the organization (Fry, 2003). Through these combined practices, leadership effectively becomes the linchpin for nurturing spiritual values, ethical conduct, and a resilient, engaged workforce.

e.Fifth: Organizational Culture Level

The integration of spiritual values constitutes a fundamental aspect of an organization’s identity, influencing its culture, operational policies, and daily practices. Establishing a formal “Value Charter” serves as a practical instrument for codifying the organization’s core principles, including respect, empathy, transparency, justice, belonging, and meaning. Such a charter not only communicates the ethical and spiritual

framework expected from all employees but also clarifies the organization’s commitments to its workforce, delineating both the professional and moral responsibilities of each member within the institutional setting (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

In parallel, developing a spiritually grounded organizational vision ensures that the institution addresses essential questions concerning its contribution to humanity, the societal value it provides, and the positive transformations it aims to foster. By articulating a vision that aligns operational goals with ethical and human-centered considerations, organizations can inspire employees, reinforce a sense of purpose, and cultivate a cohesive, value-driven culture (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

Furthermore, promoting organizational justice requires ongoing evaluation of procedures to prevent discrimination, bias, or inequitable treatment. Establishing transparent and consistent mechanisms for conflict resolution safeguards employees from fear or intimidation, strengthens trust in leadership, and reinforces ethical standards within the organization. By embedding these practices, spiritual values become actionable, contributing to both individual well-being and sustainable organizational effectiveness (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

f. Sixth: Work Environment Level

Spiritual values require a work environment that actively facilitates their expression, cultivation, and practical application. Establishing such a supportive environment goes beyond mere structural arrangements; it involves creating dedicated spaces for relaxation, meditation, and personal

reflection that enable employees to reconnect with their inner life and professional purpose (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010). In addition, the physical design of the workplace should minimize distractions, reduce noise, and enhance comfort, thereby fostering concentration, well-being, and a sense of psychological safety (Kinjerski & Skrypnik, 2006).

Flexible work policies play a pivotal role in promoting work-life balance, including adjustable working hours, opportunities for remote work, and organizational support in managing family and personal responsibilities. Such measures not only contribute to employees' overall health and satisfaction but also enhance engagement, motivation, and commitment to organizational goals (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009).

Moreover, a supportive work environment reinforces the integration of spiritual values into daily professional practices, including ethical behavior, meaningful collaboration, and positive interpersonal relationships, which collectively strengthen both individual flourishing and organizational culture (Milliman et al., 2003).

Ultimately, by aligning organizational practices with the human and spiritual dimensions of work, institutions can cultivate a workplace where employees experience a sense of purpose, belonging, and holistic well-being, resulting in higher productivity, reduced burnout, and sustainable organizational growth (Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008).

g. Seventh: Evaluation & Measurement of Organizational Spirituality

Effective implementation of spiritual values in the workplace necessitates

systematic and continuous assessment to ensure that these values are not merely symbolic but are genuinely embedded in organizational practices and culture. Regular monitoring allows organizations to identify areas of strength and areas requiring improvement, thereby facilitating strategic decision-making and the alignment of policies with the organization's spiritual and ethical goals (Fry, 2003). Developing comprehensive spiritual performance indicators is central to this process; these may include measures such as the meaning at work index, the quality and depth of interpersonal relationships, psychological well-being, trust and respect among colleagues, and perceptions of organizational justice (Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009).

Annual surveys using validated instruments, such as the Workplace Spirituality Scale (WPS), the Spirit at Work Scale (SAWS), and the Spiritual Leadership Scale (SLS), provide reliable and structured data on the extent to which spiritual values are being realized across individual, group, and organizational levels (Milliman et al., 2003).

These quantitative insights can be complemented by qualitative feedback from focus groups, interviews, and reflective exercises, which help capture employees' lived experiences of spirituality at work and provide context to numerical scores (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

Furthermore, organizations are encouraged to prepare comprehensive annual reports that document the progress made in integrating spiritual values into daily practices, identify the most impactful programs, and highlight successful initiatives that promote meaning, ethical behavior, and emotional engagement (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

Such reporting not only reinforces accountability but also strengthens organizational transparency, encourages leadership commitment, and fosters a culture of continuous improvement. By institutionalizing regular evaluation and reporting mechanisms, organizations can ensure that spiritual values contribute to sustainable employee well-being, ethical conduct, cohesive teamwork, and long-term organizational performance (Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008).

Conclusion:

This study explored the nature of spiritual values in the workplace from a theoretical perspective bridging the human and organizational dimensions. It revealed that spiritual values extend beyond religious or ritualistic considerations, forming an ethical and emotional framework that provides work with meaning, strengthens belonging, and fosters employees' moral and emotional commitment to their organizations.

Analysis of theoretical models highlighted that spiritual values enhance creativity, loyalty, motivation, and psychological well-being, while mitigating occupational burnout. Effective implementation requires a supportive environment, including leadership training in spiritual practices, cultivating a culture of justice, transparency, and respect, applying flexible work-life balance policies, and monitoring through validated performance indicators and annual surveys (Kinjerski & Skrypnik, 2006; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

In addressing the research problem and questions, the study confirmed that spiritual values are not merely performance tools; they constitute an integrated system that restores

humanity to the workplace and balances organizational efficiency with employee well-being. Moreover, they strengthen professional commitment, interpersonal relationships, and ethical accountability, demonstrating tangible benefits for both individuals and institutions.

Consequently, embedding spiritual values into organizational policies is essential for fostering a sustainable, meaningful, and positive work environment. Such integration not only enhances institutional productivity but also promotes psychological well-being, affirming the strategic importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to spiritual values at all organizational levels.

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