

Spiritual Experience as a Predictor of Organizational Commitment among Nurse Educators in Government Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Filipino spirituality is deeply rooted in their sense of meaning. In Filipino culture, spirituality transcends the religious aspect. This study aimed to determine if spiritual experience is related to and can predict organizational commitment among nursing educators. By examining how spiritual experience is related to organizational commitment, the research aimed to provide evidence of what can potentially predict loyalty to the workplace among nursing educators. The study utilized survey questionnaires to measure spiritual experience and organizational commitment. The questionnaires were administered online through Google Forms to 80 nurse educators currently teaching in government higher education institutions (HEIs) in the CALABARZON and NCR areas. Data analysis was conducted using JAMOV. Participants have high (frequent) spiritual experience and average organizational commitment. Results revealed significant positive relationship between spiritual experience and affective commitment; spiritual experience and normative commitment; and spiritual experience and overall organizational commitment (total scale). Spiritual experience was also found to significantly predict affective commitment, normative commitment, and overall organizational commitment. Spiritual experience was not related to and did not predict continuance commitment. This study demonstrates that fostering and promoting the practice and expression of nurse educators' spirituality in the workplace may enhance organizational commitment. The findings of this study advocate for the integration of spirituality in the workplace, fostering an organizational culture centered on spirituality, wherein individuals discover meaning and purpose in their work.

Keywords: Spirituality, Spiritual Experience, Organizational Commitment, Work Outcomes, Nurse Educators



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INTRODUCTION

Finding a single and unified definition for spirituality has eluded researchers until today. There have been many different definitions and usages of the word "spirituality". Recent definitions of spirituality assert that it is separate from religion (van Rensburg et al., 2015), while others believe that it is a complex subjective concept that may or may not involve religiosity (Torskenaes et al., 2015). Relatively recent definitions refer to spirituality as aspects of personal life or ordinary experience from both the religious and the non-religious contexts. To fully understand and describe the meaning of spirituality, further research should include culturally diverse experiences and perspectives (Daghan, 2018). Since Filipinos are known to be deeply spiritual and spirituality makes up a fundamental aspect of the everyday Filipino experience, it is important to look at spirituality through the lens of the Filipino

experience. In a study conducted by Yabut (2018), Filipinos' definition of spirituality resulted in three main themes: connectedness with the sacred, sense of meaning and purpose, and expressions of spirituality. Connectedness with the sacred is manifested through a connection with a Supreme Being, with people, or with nature (Yabut, 2018). Spiritual individuals do not only believe in a Supreme Being but also engage in different activities and rituals that strengthen their relationship with the transcendent (God), such as attending mass or praying alone. Being spiritual involves a strong and deep belief that God will always take care of them no matter what, taking risks, and trusting God. This is referred to as faith.

Filipino spirituality is deeply rooted in their sense of meaning or purpose (Yabut, 2018). Spirituality in this sense goes beyond the religious dimension. It involves developing a sense of direction as well as a purposeful self,

sense of identity, inner peace, morality, conscience, and values. It also consists of establishing good relations with others. Spirituality has to do with the values that we hold most dear, our sense of who we are and where we come from, our beliefs about why we are here—the meaning and purpose that we see in our work and our life—and our sense of connectedness to each other and the world around us. It can also involve aspects of our experience that are not easy to define or talk about, such things as intuition, inspiration, the mysterious, and the mystical. A recurrent theme is a belief that spirituality is more than religion, although religion is considered a vehicle for spirituality. This is evident in the belief that spirituality can also be expressed through one's relationship with family, friends, or loved ones.

Spirituality has been widely studied in different disciplines – health and well-being, social sciences, such as psychology, education, and the workplace. Research on spirituality in organizations has been gaining momentum in recent years. This might be due to the positive associations found between spirituality and favorable work outcomes and positive psychological results, such as job satisfaction (Kumar, 2015; Hassan, 2016), intrinsic motivation (Moon et al., 2018), life satisfaction, and workflow (Datu & Mateo, 2016), organizational commitment (Mousa & Alas, 2016), and work engagement (Roof, 2014). It was also found to be negatively correlated with intentions to quit (Scherer et al., 2015), burnout (Kumar, 2015; Ho et al., 2015), depression (Ho et al., 2015), and anxiety (Ho et al., 2015; Datu & Mateo, 2016). Spiritually connected leaders were also found to be exemplary and exemplary leaders were spiritually connected (Zaharris et al., 2017).

In the academe, the challenge is how to effectively integrate spirituality and transformative teaching in higher education. In the Philippines, government HEIs are mostly secular. This results in overemphasizing academic excellence over the attainment of values and virtues. In some institutions, the attainment of wisdom and prosperity is given more importance than values formation,

morality, and faith. Spirituality can influence behavior, as revealed by previous studies. Examining how it relates to the practical and professional life of nurse educators in the academe and those involved in policymaking may lead to valuable educational policy reforms.

Also pivotal to positive work outcomes in organizations is the concept of organizational commitment. Organizational commitment refers to identification with (attachment) and involvement in organizations. Recent research found that organizational commitment can lead to positive organizational citizenship behaviors (Thakre & Mayekar, 2016). The central objective of this study was to correlate an aspect of spirituality, in this case, spiritual experience, to organizational commitment. The present study focused on spiritual experience as an aspect of spirituality to avoid the nuances that come with the term “spirituality” as it is believed to have many dimensions which include spiritual well-being, spiritual transcendence, spiritual development, spiritual wellness, spiritual distress, spiritual intelligence, spiritual self-consciousness, spiritual growth, spiritual health, and spiritual experience (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010). Through the examination of how spiritual experience relates to organizational commitment, the research can provide evidence of what can potentially predict optimal loyalty and commitment in the academe and the professional life of nursing educators. The present study hopes to advance the understanding of how spiritual experience is associated with employee behavior in the workplace and how organizations may benefit from supportive spirituality policies. This study aimed to determine if spiritual experience is related to and can predict organizational commitment among nurse educators. This study hypothesized that spiritual experience is related to and can predict organizational commitment.

LITERATURES

Workplace Spirituality and Positive Job Outcomes. Research on spirituality within organizations has led to the emergence of

workplace spirituality, a deeply personal construct that emphasizes interconnectedness, the pursuit of life purpose, social relationships with colleagues, and the alignment of individual beliefs and values with those of the organization (Afsar & Rehman, 2015). Workplace spirituality was found to be positively associated with innovative work behaviors (Afsar & Rehman, 2015), and organizational citizenship behaviors, while negatively associated with intention to leave (Anvari et al., 2017). This indicates that workplace spirituality mitigates elevated turnover rates by diminishing the intention to leave.

Workplace spirituality was also found to be strongly positively associated with employee work intentions (Soder, 2016) and job satisfaction (Kumar, 2016). The positive correlation between workplace spirituality and work intentions suggests significant potential for the benefits that workplace spirituality provides to organizations and people. Organizations fostering spirituality among employees may achieve higher employee satisfaction. Employees who have a profound sense of meaning and purpose in their jobs are likely to experience increased satisfaction and are more likely to be motivated to realize their full potential. High spirituality also results in low burnout (Kumar, 2015), high intrinsic motivation, job engagement, job performance (Moon et al., 2018), life satisfaction, and positive workflow (Datu & Mateo, 2016). In the study conducted by Pandey et al., (2019), spiritual climate was found to be positively associated with learning in teams. Similarly, workplace spirituality was positively related to ethical climate, prosocial motivation, and moral judgment (Otiye-Ebede et al., 2019).

Spirituality and Mental Health. A survey by Reed (2016) revealed that those identified as spiritually disconnected exhibited much worse mental health and life happiness. Another study examining the correlation between varying degrees of spirituality and religiosity with quality of life, depressive symptoms, anxiety, optimism, and happiness revealed that high spirituality and religiosity resulted in better outcomes compared to those with low

spirituality and religiosity (Vitorino et al., 2018). Spirituality positively influences subjective well-being, (Villani et al., 2019). These studies imply that organizations must recognize the impact of spirituality and religion on individuals' subjective well-being. In contrast, individuals who are non-spiritual yet participate in religious activities reported a greater incidence of stomachaches and had markedly poorer overall health (Zidkova et al., 2020).

Spirituality has also been linked to decreased health-risk behaviors among adolescents (Malinakova et al., 2018). Higher levels of spirituality were also associated with decreased burnout, anxiety, and depression among healthcare professionals (Ho et al., 2015). Individuals who reported stronger spirituality had fewer intentions to quit than those who reported lower spirituality (Scherer et al., 2015). Spirituality also negatively predicted state anxiety (Datu & Mateo, 2016), implying that higher spirituality was related with decreased feelings of apprehension and worry. Veterans high in both religiosity and spirituality are less likely to develop lifelong post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder, or alcohol use disorder (Sharma et al., 2017).

Spirituality and organizational commitment. Meaningful work and a sense of community were shown to be associated with the three components of organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative (Mousa & Alas, 2016). This suggests that practicing spirituality in the workplace leads to higher commitment. Consistent with earlier findings, spirituality was found to have a direct influence on affective and continuance commitment (Garg, 2017). Workplace spirituality was also shown to mediate the relationship between organizational commitment and job effectiveness. (Ke & Deng, 2018). Organizational commitment is also positively related to organizational citizenship behaviors; increased organizational commitment results in enhanced organizational citizenship behaviors or positive work ethics (Thakre & Mayekar, 2016).

Filipino Spirituality. A survey among Filipino counselors defined spirituality as an awareness of and connection with a higher being than the self (i.e., God, Christ, Holy Spirit) (Abardo & Ramos, 2016). Spirituality was also perceived as a concept that is both dependent and independent of religion. Accordingly, one's spirituality can be expressed outside of a religious context, while others view it as a concept that often encompasses aspects of religion but something broader than religion. These definitions of spirituality have multiple dimensions and transcend the divine and the ordinary. Consistent with the results of Abardo & Ramos (2016), Filipino spirituality was deeply connected to religion; that is, it cannot be understood if it is separated from religion. Furthermore, spirituality was perceived as a phenomenological or personal experience that pertains to the relationship of the self to a higher being or other people.

METHODS

Design. The present study implemented a predictive cross-sectional research design with the aim of examining relationships and whether spiritual experience can predict organizational commitment. Data collection was done in a relatively brief period hence, the study is cross-sectional. Spiritual experience and organizational commitment were measured using standardized questionnaires, Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) and Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), respectively. Data collection was conducted online through Google Forms. Participation to the study is entirely voluntary.

Population and Sampling. Nurse educators from government HEIs were included in the study. Non-probability, purposive sampling was utilized. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique that involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2014). Eighty nurse educators from government HEIs in CALABARZON and NCR participated in the study. The number of years in service ranged from one year to 26 years ($M = 8.96$, $SD = 6.85$).

Forty-eight female and 32 male nurse educators participated in the study. Thirty-three nurse educators were from CALABARZON, and 47 were from NCR. The recruitment of participants was done online. Faculty members from non-government HEIs were excluded from the study.

Data Source. Participant responses were downloaded from Google Forms in Excel format. Data was first cleaned before it was analyzed through JAMOV ver. 2.4.11.

Instrumentation. Participants completed two questionnaires measuring spiritual experience and organizational commitment.

Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES). The Daily Spiritual Experience Scale (DSES) is a 16-item self-report measure developed by Dr. Lynn Underwood to assess ordinary experience of relationship with the divine or transcendent in daily life. It aims to measure spiritual life as it plays out in the experiential and emotional details of daily life (Underwood, 2006). Originally developed for use in health studies, the DSES has been widely used in social sciences, counseling, addiction treatment settings, and religious organizations (Underwood, 2011). It includes constructs such as awe, gratitude, mercy, a sense of connection with the transcendent, compassionate love, a desire for closeness to God, an awareness of discernment/inspiration, and a transcendent sense of self (Underwood, 2006). It has been translated into 20 languages and has shown sound psychometric validity in its English, Spanish, French, Brazilian Portuguese, German, and Mandarin Chinese versions (Underwood, 2011). Other translations include Arabic (Saudi Arabia), Egyptian, Greek, Hebrew, Hindu, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Lithuanian, Nigerian, Pakistan, Persian, Polish, Portuguese (Portugal), and Vietnamese (Underwood, 2011). For the original English scale, Cronbach's alpha has been consistently high at $\alpha = 0.89$ and above. The Chinese translation showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.97. The Spanish translation administered to the Mexican population had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91. The German translation has shown a single-factor structure

and supports the unidimensionality of the scale. Items 1-15 of the DSES are scored on a 6-point Likert scale. Only item 16 is a 4-point Likert scale. Scoring can be done either by computing a total score or a mean total score. Either scoring can be used.

A brief version of the scale, the 6-item short form, has been used by past researchers and was found to have a high internal reliability coefficient, $\alpha = .83$ (Datu & Mateo, 2016). However, Underwood (2011) strongly recommends using the 16-item scale. Although there is a plethora of religiousness/spirituality scales, the DSES has wider applicability since over 70 published studies are using the DSES in many different cultures (Underwood, 2011). It is also a multidimensional measure that taps into both the theistic (God) and atheistic (non-God or self-transcendent) spirituality. It also has a Filipino translation by Carlos and Concepcion (2012). Sample items include, "Nadarama ko ang pag-akay ng Diyos sa aking pang araw-araw na gawain" and "Kapag ako ay naglilingkod sa iba nadarama ko na hindi ako makasarili". The Filipino translation of the DSES was used in this study.

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire by Meyer and Allen (1984) and the revised version by Meyer et al., (1993) were based on the three-component model of organizational commitment. It is an 18-item self-report measure that is scored on a 7-point Likert scale. The three scales (components) of commitment are affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. Affective commitment characterizes positive feelings of identification with an organization. Normative commitment determines why people felt obligated to remain employed in an organization. Continuance commitment is associated with an employee's commitment to the organization based on the costs associated with leaving the organization. The OCQ has been widely used in organizational commitment studies across cultures. It has been translated and validated in German, Polish, English, Hungarian, Spanish, and Malaysian. In one study involving Thai samples,

the intercorrelation coefficient showed that the three components are significantly related to each other (Jangsiriwattana, & Tulwatana, 2019). Sample items include, "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me" and "I owe a great deal to my organization."

Data Analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to analyze the data. Mean and standard deviation were computed to measure the participant's spiritual experience and organizational commitment. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationships between spiritual experience, affective, continuance, normative, and overall organizational commitment. Simple linear regression analyses were used to determine if spiritual experience predicts affective, continuance, and normative commitment. All analyses were conducted in JAMOV ver. 2.4.11.

RESULTS

Most of the participants experience spirituality "every day" ($M = 5.19$; $SD = .54$), indicating that they experience spirituality almost "every day" or "most days." Most of the participants have average organizational commitment (Affective commitment: $M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.10$; Continuance commitment: $M = 5.09$; $SD = 1.10$; Normative commitment: $M = 4.75$; $SD = 0.79$; Total scale: $M = 4.94$; $SD = 1.19$). Results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between spiritual experience and affective commitment, $r = .37$, $p < .001$; normative commitment, $r = .44$, $p < .001$; and overall organizational commitment (total scale), $r = .38$, $p < .001$. The relationship between spiritual experience and continuance commitment was not found to be significant. The correlation coefficients are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlations Among Spiritual Experience, Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, Normative Commitment, and Overall Organizational Commitment

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Spiritual experience	5.16	0.54				
2. Affective commitment	4.22	1.10	0.373***			
3. Continuance commitment	5.09	1.10	-0.027	-0.066		
4. Normative commitment	4.75	0.79	0.443***	0.706***	0.077	
5. Total Scale	4.94	1.19	0.379***	0.780***	0.468***	.857***

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; $N = 80$

Four simple linear regression analyses were conducted using JAMOV version 2.4.11 to determine if spiritual experience predicts affective, continuance, normative, and overall organizational commitment. All regression models were significant at $p < .001$, except for continuance commitment, $p = .813$. Regression coefficients can be found in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5.

The researchers examined whether spiritual experience predicted affective commitment, continuance commitment, normative commitment, and overall organizational commitment. Simple linear regression analyses were performed and were found to statistically significantly predict affective commitment, $F(1, 78) = 12.6$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .14$, adjusted $R^2 = .13$; normative commitment, $F(1, 78) = 19.0$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .20$, adjusted $R^2 = .19$; and overall organizational commitment, $F(1, 78) = 13.1$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .14$, adjusted $R^2 = .13$. Spiritual experience did not predict continuance commitment, $F(1, 78) = 0.06$, $p = .813$.

Table 2

Regression Model Coefficients for Affective Commitment

Predictor	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval		t	p
			Lower	Upper		
Intercept	1.142	1.119	-1.086	3.37	1.02	0.311
Spiritual experience	0.766	0.216	0.337	1.20	3.55	<.001

Table 3

Regression Model Coefficients for Continuance Commitment

Predictor	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval		t	p
			Lower	Upper		
Intercept	4.5036	1.207	2.102	6.906	3.733	<.001
Spiritual experience	-0.0552	0.233	-0.519	0.408	-0.237	0.813

Table 4

Regression Model Coefficients for Normative Commitment

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	-0.125	1.166	-0.107	0.915
Spiritual experience	0.981	0.225	4.363	<.001

Table 5

Regression Model Coefficients for Overall Organizational Commitment

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	1.840	0.808	2.28	0.026
Spiritual experience	0.564	0.156	3.62	<.001

DISCUSSION

Previous research has shown that spirituality leads to positive outcomes in the workplace. The present study aimed to determine if spiritual experience is related to and can predict organizational commitment. For this study, spirituality was operationalized as spiritual experience as measured by DSES. The DSES measures an individual's ordinary spiritual experience in daily life. The results reflect the nurse educators' frequent experience of connection with the transcendent, connection with life, or inner peace and harmony. The results resonate with the very spiritual nature of Filipinos, as mentioned in previous research (Yabut, 2018). Among the items in the DSES, the item with the highest mean ($M = 5.47$) is Item 12 "Nais kong magpasalamat sa mga biyayang aking natatanggap," which reflects the participants' gratitude for the transcendence of the blessings they receive. Item 14 "Natatanggap ko pa rin ang iba kahit alam ko na mali ang kanilang ginagawa" has the lowest mean ($M = 4.44$). This item also has the highest standard deviation, which indicates that the variation in the answers of the participants is high.

The positive correlations between spiritual experience and affective commitment, normative commitment, and overall organizational commitment indicate that as one's spiritual experience becomes more frequent, nurse educators' positive feelings and sense of obligation toward their organization also increase. This is both consistent and

inconsistent with the results from the study of Garg (2017), which showed positive associations between spirituality and affective commitment and continuance commitment, but not with normative commitment. Garg (2017) found no significant correlations between spirituality and normative commitment. While there may be inconsistencies with previous studies, the results of our study suggest that as feelings of connectedness and attachment to the transcendent increase, feelings of belonging and attachment to the organization also increase.

Spirituality did not predict the participants' continuance commitment. The results were inconsistent with previous studies (Garg, 2017; Scherer et al., 2015; Anvari et al., 2017), where spirituality was negatively associated with their intention to leave the organization (Scherer et al., 2015; Anvari et al., 2017). Continuance commitment measures the individual's commitment to the organization based on the perceived costs of leaving the organization. The nurse educators' continuance commitment may be explained by the many available alternatives to their current profession, and they are not afraid to leave their jobs, especially if problems or dissatisfaction exist at work. It appears spirituality does not reduce the intentions of leaving the organization or prevent high turnover rates. These may be rooted in a lack of feeling obligated to stay in the organization, a diminished sense of loyalty, or the feeling that one does not owe the organization anything. This can be further explored in future research. Item 12 "One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of available alternatives" has the lowest mean ($M = 3.66$), while Item 6, "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me", has the highest mean ($M = 5.36$).

The results of this study add to the growing literature on the positive impact of spirituality in the workplace. The results highlighted the need for more research on Filipino spirituality, and organizational commitment, on a large-scale scope and in different work contexts. The results of this correlational study do not imply

causation. However, inferences about the possible causal relationships are being offered. These possibilities should be investigated in future research. As an implication of this research, promoting spirituality in the workplace can enhance organizational commitment.

The present study provides evidence that enhancing and encouraging the practice and expression of nurse educators' spirituality in the workplace improves organizational commitment. It also provides some support to initiatives that promote spiritual resources, such as spiritual retreats and other means of enhancing a sense of connectedness with God, the divine, or a Higher Being. Efforts to create an organizational culture that is spirituality-driven, where employees would find meaning and purpose in their work were shown to be beneficial. Organizations and institutions need to acknowledge the influence of spirituality on individuals' commitment to their organizations.

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