

Chapter 12

The Influence of Spirituality: Measuring Spirituality in Leadership With the SpEI

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ABSTRACT

Spirituality and its relationship to leadership and organizational behavior has been of increasing interest to researchers, but inadequate scales have limited rigorous quantitative studies. Spirituality is complex and involves experiential, emotional, and transformative dimensions that create dynamic cycles of expectancy, behavior, and attitudes that evolve, rendering many existing spiritual practice behavioral measures inadequate. An instrument developed to capture the broader concept of spiritual engagement, the Spiritual Engagement Instrument (SpEI), is presented. Through an overview of SpEI development, and demonstration of SpEI research, a primer to advance spirituality-based organization and leadership research is offered. If spiritual engagement is a transformative cycle, understanding and measuring the phenomena in context will better inform leadership and organization development policy. Toward a theoretical and practical understanding, this chapter guides the researcher in exploring the potential of spirituality in organizations.

INTRODUCTION

The influence of spirituality has been of increasing interest to leadership and organizational behavior scholars and practitioners, but research has been hindered by inadequate scales (Nicolae et al., 2013) that often capture only limited spiritual disciplines or other behaviors. When considering the complex nature of spirituality as experiential, emotional, and transformative, manifested as a cycle of expectancy, behavioral practices, attitudes, and deepening spirituality, simple behavioral measures are inadequate (Roof et al., 2017). For researchers interested in capturing a complex, multi-dimensional construct of human spirituality as an antecedent to leadership effectiveness, authenticity, identity, organizational outcomes, or other constructs of interest in leadership or organizational science, the Spiritual Engage-

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ment Instrument (SpEI) is offered. The SpEI was developed to assess the motivating beliefs, attitudes, intentions, expectations, and actions that comprise an active cycle of spirituality that results in greater connectedness with God, deeper spirituality, and individual affective and cognitive change through core character development (Gould, 2005; Roof et al., 2017).

This chapter will briefly present the theory, development, and initial validation of the SpEI as foundational to an illustration of how the measure can be applied to explore the spirituality-leadership relationship. An examination of spiritual engagement in an organizational setting through the use of the SpEI will then be demonstrated using a previous study that explored spiritual engagement and authentic leadership relationships (Roof, 2016). Through the lenses of the theoretical and practical intersection, scholars seeking to advance the understanding of human spirituality will find options for measuring the complexity of dynamic spiritual constructs in new, active, dynamic ways. The ability to measure the spiritual engagement concept with a validated, multi-dimensional instrument can offer the researcher fresh perspectives with which to explore complex spirituality influences to advance leadership and organizational behavior theories globally.

BACKGROUND

Researchers have been increasingly interested in understanding the higher order needs of individuals and how related motivators may influence organizations and their leaders. Reflecting a growing awareness of intrinsic drives, attention has turned to the less materialistic motivations (Crossman, 2010), leadership spirituality dimensions (Conger, 1994; Fry, 2003; Posner, 2009; Reave, 2005) and spiritual wholeness and workplace meaning within the framework of positive psychology (Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Karakas, 2010).

Scholars are increasingly aware that effective leadership is “grounded in the spiritual dimension of the individual leader” (Strack & Fottler, 2002, p. 4) which allows leaders to develop humility, wisdom, a moral compass, servanthood, self-awareness, and the relational transparency to advance their leadership effectiveness (McNeal, 2000). Considering that leadership is a projection of the leader’s identity, Ashmos and Duchon (2000) suggested that spirituality provides an inner nourishment that clarifies identity, and Hoppe (2005) connected that developing inner self with the spiritual connectedness necessary for true authenticity. In addition, the resulting integration of core beliefs from deepening spirituality helps the leader align espoused theory with behaviors connecting heart and mind to deliver effective, authentic leadership (Fry, 2003).

Work life benefits through the integration of spirituality as purpose, ethics, performance, and moral outcomes are elevated and aligned (Garcia-Zamor, 2003). As Byrne et al. (2014) noted, spiritual engagement can bolster leaders’ resources and enable desirable behaviors that reflect normative leadership practices contained in theories such as ethical, authentic, transformational, and servant leadership (Roof, 2016). Psychological resources are replenished (Byrne et al., 2014), core beliefs shaped and strengthened (Issler, 2009), and identity-driven authentic behaviors demonstrated (Fields, 2007; Walumbwa et al., 2008) through spiritual engagement. Reave (2005) concluded that effective leadership and spirituality are connected throughout research as leader performance, resiliency, authenticity, emotional intelligence, integrity, and identity are related through the connection of “...inner values and outer behavior” (p. 668).

When considering the relationship or influence of spirituality with leadership or other organizational constructs, spirituality is anything but simple. Spirituality is not static, a simple behavior, or a condition, but should be considered as a complex construct involving emotional, experiential, and transformative

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