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# Workplace Spirituality: A Study of Human Resource Practices Promoting Employee Engagement

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Abstract

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MA, Troy State University, 2000

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Philosophy

Management

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Abstract

Workplace spirituality is a growing phenomenon, yet a research problem exists because many organizational leaders do not fully understand how workplace spirituality can be used to improve employee engagement, and no clear workplace guidelines exist for U.S. human resource (HR) professionals to follow. The study's purpose was to examine how HR practices can support workplace spirituality and improve employee engagement. The research question focused on how HR professionals practice servant leadership to support employees' internal and external workplace spirituality needs and promote employee engagement. A snowball sampling approach was used to select participants who are HR professionals with 5 years of work experience. A qualitative multiple case study design and inductive analysis methods generated a holistic view of HR professionals' workplace spirituality experiences. The data analysis process used semistructured interviews, field notes, organizational documents, and social media posts. The results indicated that workplace spirituality supports employees' internal and external spiritual needs and promotes employee engagement. When organizations care about employees' spiritual well-being, employees become more committed and productive. Participants indicated that workplace spirituality benefits all stakeholders, including entry-level employees, senior management, stockholders, and community members. The study contributed to positive social change by highlighting the link between workplace spirituality and employee engagement and illustrating how HR professionals can use workplace spirituality to benefit organizations and employees, especially in times of crisis or change.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated first to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. His name is Jesus, a waymaker. I call Him teacher, and I have learned to depend on Him when I felt like giving up. When I did not know how to write what was required of me to complete this researcher, He reminded me through His word in Psalm 32:8 "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you."

I also dedicate my research to all of those who paid the price for me to have the opportunity to attend college and pursue my dreams. I dedicate my research to my grandparents, Willie and Doris Jones, and my great-grandmother, Alberta Jones, who taught me to have faith in God and know that with prayer all things are possible. My great-grandmother, Alberta Jones, was 13 years old when the slaves were freed. I also dedicate this research to my mother, Betty Jean Boone-Holloway, a single mother who raised five children on her own, always believing that God would give her the strength to provide for her children. I am standing on their backs, as their sacrifice and prayers have made it possible for me to achieve a level of education that they did not have the opportunity to pursue. I am thankful to God that He has allowed me to be the first in my family to obtain a doctoral degree. All the Glory and Honor belong to Jesus, my Lord and Savior.

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First and foremost, I want to thank God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit for giving me the determination and perseverance to stay focused on this journey. Without His divine power, amazing grace, and favor, starting and completing this research would have never been possible. No matter what we decide to do in this life, I know God can make the impossible possible if we only believe.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Workplace spirituality is an emerging topic of interest in the field of

organizational management (Gocen & Ozgan, 2018). Workplace spirituality is not

concerned with promoting a particular religion or denominational system but instead

creating a culture that embraces the whole person in the workplace and acknowledges

that employees benefit from being able to satisfy their spiritual needs at work

(Devendhiran & Wesley, 2017). Research conducted on spirituality and religion has

shown that spirituality is required for religion, but religion is not required for spirituality

(Gocen & Ozgan, 2018; Gupta, Kumar, & Singh, 2014).

Religion represents the outer nature of humanity, which pertains to the world we

live in (Gupta et al., 2014). Spirituality pertains to the inner nature of humanity that

upholds the morals in the community (Belwalkar, Vohra, & Pandey, 2018; Shinde,

Nelson, & Shinde, 2018). In Western culture, organizations maintain work environments

that are separated from the physical and spiritual worlds of their employees (Allen,

Williams, & Allen, 2018; Ewest, 2015). In the wake of the financial crisis of the last

several years, organizations have dealt with significant changes in the business culture

and environment (Garg, 2017; Gupta et al., 2014). This change includes an understanding

that workplace spirituality may benefit both employers and employees.

Garg (2017) noted that employees have experienced greater insecurity and stress

in the work environment due to evolving technologies and organizational changes such as

layoffs, mergers, and downsizing. For organizations to remain competitive, they put

pressure on their employees to work harder with fewer resources (Gupta et al., 2014).

Work hours have increased while vacation time and breaks have decreased (Gupta et al., 2014; Milliman, Gatling, & Bradley-Geist, 2017; van Wingerden & van der Stoep, 2017). Employees who face increasing workloads suffer from stress, burnout, and anxiety, which can lead to unsatisfactory work performance, health and family problems, and poor social interactions among coworkers (Palakshappa & Chatterji, 2018; van Wingerden & van der Stoep, 2017). These factors cause employees to become disengaged in the workplace, which can cause increased rates of absenteeism and turnover (Gupta et al., 2014). The consensus among some scholars in the literature is that spirituality in the workplace plays a significant role in helping organizations overcome employees' disengagement, as spirituality is a positive force in an individual's life as well as a benefit to the community (Garg, 2017; Gupta et al., 2014; Milliman et al., 2017).

This qualitative multiple case study helps organizational leaders and human resource (HR) professionals understand the importance of incorporating spirituality into the workplace through organizational practices and the link between workplace spirituality and employee engagement. Spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2016), integral theory (Wilber, 2005), and servant leadership theory (Blanch, Gil, Antino, & Rodriquez-Muñoz, 2016) served as a theoretical framework for this research. These combined theories were used to show how organizational practices that promote workplace spirituality can indirectly influence employee development, increase job performance, decrease absenteeism, enhance profit margins, and lead to stabilizing employee tenure. In this chapter, I present information on the topic under investigation. Sections include the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, interview

questions, conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

**Background of the Study**

The practice of workplace spirituality is a growing phenomenon, particularly among individuals seeking fulfillment in their jobs and organizations seeking an engaged and productive workforce (Houghton, Neck, & Krishnakumar, 2016). Despite the increasing growth and popularity of the phenomenon, spirituality in the workplace, often introduced through spiritual leadership, is not without criticism. The primary criticism of workplace spirituality conflates spirituality with religion, and the discussion of religion within the workplace makes many people uncomfortable (Bhatia & Arora, 2017; Gill, 2014). This criticism is misplaced and stems primarily from a misunderstanding of the differences between spirituality and religion.

Bhatia and Arora (2017) argued that spirituality is entirely independent of religion or faith in a higher power. Zinnbauer et al. (1997) defined a higher power as an indescribable force greater than an individual that is often associated with a divine being such as Christ, Allah, or Buddha. Spirituality in the context of work is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of beliefs and values that create a sense of meaning or purpose within work life (Kaya, 2015). According to spiritual leadership theory, the promotion of workplace spirituality involves the use of values and behaviors to motivate employees by promoting a sense of purpose and belonging (Kaya, 2015). In contrast, religion teaches a belief in a higher power. As a construct, religion is a more formal and institutionalized than spirituality. Religions teach people moral values through worship services,

traditions, and rituals designed to transform individuals into more spiritual beings (Gupta & Singh, 2016; Tecchio, Cunha, & Santos, 2016).

The term spirituality originated from the Latin word *spiritus* or *spiritualis* and has been defined in terms of breathing, breath, air, wind, soul, courage, and vigor (Bhatia & Arora, 2017; Lepherd, 2015). Fry and Kriger (2009) noted that the spirit is an element of one's existence that heightens awareness of the possibility of transcendence and deepens one's connection with the world. Spirituality is relevant to the workplace because work is an integral component of a person's existence (Fourie, 2014). Spirituality is present throughout a worker's development and in all aspects of their personal and professional lives (Fourie, 2014). By connecting with employees intellectually, physically, psychologically, socially, and emotionally on a spiritual level, it may be possible to improve overall employee engagement.

The scholarly literature on workplace spirituality credits Fry (2003) as the first to combine the terms *workplace* and *spirituality* in the context of organizational leadership (Bhatti & Sadia, 2018). Fry created spiritual leadership theory and the concept of workplace spirituality to give leaders and employees a sense of commitment and motivation to achieve a higher level of production (Bhatti & Sadia, 2018; Fry & Kriger, 2009). Fry (2003) introduced the first model of spiritual leadership with an intrinsic motivation framework that consisted of constructs such as vision, hope/faith, altruistic love, and the component of spiritual wellbeing that consisted of a sense of calling and a sense of membership.

Within the present study, calling was defined as a sense of meaning and purpose associated with serving others, whereas membership is defined as a sense of belonging or community where individuals feel they are appreciated and understood (Fry, Latham, Clinebell, & Krahnke, 2017). Fry (2003) argued that spiritual leadership provides employees with a vision and values that foster a sense of service to others and purpose to make a difference in life (i.e., a sense of calling). Spiritual leadership also creates an environment that makes employees feel valued, supported, and integral to the organizational community (i.e., a sense of membership; Benefiel, Fry, & Geigle, 2014). This sense of membership also contributes to the belief that organizational leaders are concerned about and appreciate all individuals in the workplace (Benefiel et al., 2014).

Researchers such as Bhatti and Sadia (2018), Fry et al. (2017), and Kaya (2015) have affirmed the validity of Fry's (2003, 2016) spirituality leadership model and the positive impact spirituality has on individual and organizational performance and productivity. Other researchers have documented similar results over time. Roof (2015) conducted an empirical study on engagement and spirituality, documenting the link between workplace spirituality and employee engagement through the quantitative analysis of cross-sectional data. Roof found that a link existed between workplace spirituality and employee engagement, particularly concerning employee vigor and dedication. Roof also noted that both workplace spirituality and employee engagement are still emerging topics in the field of HR management, and as a result, the constructs are ill-defined and in need of further exploration by scholars.

Similarly, Arora and Bhagat (2016) examined workplace spirituality and employee engagement in relation to organizational citizenship behavior. The authors proposed a model in which workplace spirituality was linked to organizational citizenship through engagement. Arora and Bhagat theorized that workplace spirituality could also improve retention by creating a sense of belonging within the organization. They recommended that further research into the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement be conducted to understand how the two constructs are interrelated.

Afsar, Badir, and Kiani (2016) further revealed the positive potential effects of spirituality in the workplace. The researchers statistically analyzed data on professionals in Thailand and found that spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality had positive impacts on employee outcomes. Specifically, Afsar et al.'s analysis showed that workplace spirituality significantly improved employees' intrinsic motivation and passion for their job. Afsar et al. also noted that organizational support had a moderating effect on the relationship between workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership practices.

Like Arora and Bhagat (2016), Neubert and Halbesleben (2015) found evidence to suggest a correlation between spiritual workplace practices and organizational citizenship behavior. Neubert and Halbesleben conducted a quantitative study exploring how spiritual calling and job satisfaction influenced organizational commitment. Analyzing data collected from working adults, Neubert and Halbesleben determined that spiritual calling and job satisfaction were both significant predictors of organizational commitment. The authors also found that even when employees were not highly satisfied

with their jobs, there was still a strong correlation between spiritual calling and organizational commitment. Neubert and Halbesleben found that organizational commitment was highest among employees with high levels of both spirituality and job satisfaction, but they argued that the link between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment was strong enough to be independent of other constructs such as job satisfaction.

Using a quantitative approach, Kaya (2015) studied the link between workplace spirituality and organizational citizenship behavior in school principals. Kaya found that significant correlations existed between spiritual leadership and factors such as civic virtue, conscientiousness, and altruism. Other scholars also reported positive correlations between spirituality, altruism, and courtesy (Fry et al., 2017; Tkaczynski & Arli, 2018).

Petchsawang and McLean (2017) used a postpositivist, quasi-experimental approach to study the link between employee engagement and workplace spirituality. They compared organizations in Thailand that offered mindful meditation with organizations that did not. Through this comparison, Petchsawang and McLean found that organizational support for workplace spirituality was linked to increases in employees' creativity, motivation, commitment, and engagement.

Research has shown that employee support, whether practical or spiritual, is a critical element of engagement. Singh (2016) conducted a literature review to understand the various factors that influence employee engagement. Based on the literature review, Singh concluded that organizations that do not promote engagement by creating a supportive work environment have poorer performance outcomes due to increased

employee absence and decreased intrinsic motivation. One way to provide a supportive work environment is to promote workplace spirituality, and the studies by Afsar et al. (2016), Kaya (2015), Neubert and Halbesleben (2015), Petchsawang and McLean (2017), and Singh (2016) highlight the importance of workplace spirituality within the field of organizational management.

Research shows that many scholars agree on the importance of workplace spirituality (in the form of calling and membership) in the success of both individuals and corporations (Fry et al., 2017; Gupta & Singh, 2016). However, the lack of understanding on the part of many organizational leaders and scholars as to how HR practices can incorporate workplace spirituality and promote employee engagement constitutes a gap in the literature (Charoenarpornwattana, 2016; Iddagoda & Opatha, 2017). There are still aspects of workplace spirituality that require greater examination, and those aspects were investigated in this study. The next section details the problem statement that this research was designed to address.

**Problem Statement**

In the United States, 75% of the population considers themselves to be spiritual (Lipka & Gecewicz, 2017). Because of this, spirituality in the workplace is a topic of intense and ongoing interest (Houghton et al., 2016). Over 70 definitions of work-related spirituality exist within the scholarly literature, and this causes a great deal of confusion among some scholars and practitioners (Aravamudhan & Krishnaveni, 2014). This confusion leads many organizational leaders to avoid implementing HR practices that

incorporate workplace spirituality despite the benefits that can be achieved by these policies (Afsar et al., 2016).

One of the driving factors in workplace spirituality research is the recognition that happiness and well-being within a person's work life are vital to both individual and organizational performance (Van Der Walt & De Klerk, 2014). The general problem is that many organizational leaders do not fully understand the concept of workplace spirituality or how spirituality can be used to improve employee engagement (Charoenarpornwattana, 2016; Iddagoda & Opatha, 2017). The specific problem is that most organizations have a limited understanding of workplace spirituality, and as a result, there are no clear guidelines or frameworks for HR professionals to follow when attempting to institute workplace spirituality practices in the United States (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014; Charoenarpornwattana, 2016; Kaya, 2015; Pradhan & Jena, 2016; Schutte, 2016). By using a qualitative case study approach to explore how some HR professionals in the United States use values and behaviors related to workplace spirituality to create a sense of calling and membership among workers, this study documented how organizations and individuals benefit from workplace spirituality.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to develop a better understanding of how HR practices can be used to support workplace spirituality and improve employee engagement, especially in the areas of membership and sense of calling. Researchers such as Charoenarpornwattana (2016) and Iddagoda and Opatha (2017) have acknowledged that this lack of knowledge constitutes a gap in the body of

knowledge. The present study addressed that research gap. The study's purpose was accomplished by exploring HR practices at organizations where workplace spirituality is supported and where employees are actively encouraged to feel a sense of calling and membership related to their work.

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**Research Questions**

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The present study was conducted to investigate a single overarching research question: How do HR professionals practice servant leadership to support the internal and external workplace spirituality needs of employees to promote employee engagement?

**Interview Questions**

An interview guide was created to aid in the data collection process. The following questions were included in that guide. The full interview guide, which included definitions of key terms to provide context for the participants, is presented in Appendix A.

**Background Questions**

1. What is your current position, and how long have you worked with your organization?

2. Can you describe what spirituality means to you, both in a personal context and within the workplace?

**Workplace Spirituality**

3. How do you use the workplace spirituality elements of vision, hope, and altruistic love to foster a sense of calling and membership among employees?

4. How do you use a sense of calling and a sense of membership to promote employee engagement within your organization?

5. In what ways do you use organizational practices to support workplace spirituality and promote employee engagement at your organization?

6. How do you incorporate spiritual values into your leadership and decision-making practices within the organization?

Internal and External Workplace Spirituality

7. Can you describe how workplace spirituality practices impact individuals, the organization, and the community?

The Role of Servant Leadership

8. Can you describe how your moral principles and spiritual values influence your use of workplace spirituality practices?

9. Can you describe how your sense of stewardship and the value of service to others influence your use of workplace spirituality practices?

Concluding Question

10. Is there anything that we have discussed related to workplace spirituality, servant leadership, or employee engagement that you would like to elaborate on?

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was based on a combination of spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2016), integral theory (Wilber, 2005), and servant leadership theory (Blanch et al., 2016). As part of spiritual leadership theory, Fry (2016) argued that

employees have two main workplace spirituality needs: a need to feel a sense of calling in their work and a need for a sense of membership in their organization. Fry noted that when those needs are met, employees are happier and more engaged.

When viewed through the lens of integral theory (Wilber, 2005), workplace spirituality needs can manifest both internally on an individual level and externally on an organizational level. In servant leadership theory, organizational leaders emphasize the needs, objectives, and interests of employees in order allow for their growth and development as well as the success of the business (Blanch et al., 2016). Elements from spiritual leadership theory, integral theory, and servant leadership theory were used to explore how servant leadership practices can be used by HR professionals to support the internal and external workplace spirituality needs of employees and promote employee engagement.

## Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative, using a multiple case study approach. Qualitative methodologies allow researchers to explore the real-world behavior of participants in their natural environment (Yin, 2014). Multiple case studies are particularly appropriate for researchers seeking to answer complex research questions focused on how or why a particular phenomenon or behavior occurs (Stake, 2006). A qualitative, multiple case study approach was well-suited to examine the practices HR professionals use to support workplace spirituality and determine how those practices promote employee engagement. By using such an approach to examine how HR professionals engage in spiritual leadership, the present research addressed the problem,

highlighted by Charoenarpornwattana (2016) and Iddagoda and Opatha (2017), that organizations are uncertain how to incorporate workplace spirituality into HR practices to improve individual and organizational outcomes.

## Definitions

This section covers the definitions of relevant terms used throughout this study.

Altruistic love refers to a wholistic attitude toward others that includes the "values of patience, kindness, lack of envy, forgiveness, humility, selflessness, self-control, trust, loyalty, and truthfulness" (Fry, 2003, p. 712).

Employee engagement was defined as a positive mindset that leads to commitment and a satisfying work attitude that is identified by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Roof, 2015).

Hope/faith is the belief that an organization mission can be accomplished (Fry, 2003).

Human resource (HR) management was defined by Charoenarpornwattana (2016) as the effective recruitment and use of a labor force to satisfy organizational objectives and employee needs. The overall goal of the HR management is to ensure that employees are able to secure a favorable outcome for the organization.

Individual spirituality refers to the extent that employees are allowed to express their spiritual values within the workplace (NandanPrabhu, Rodrigues, & Kumar, 2017).

Integral theory is a theory developed by Wilber (2005) that integrates central philosophies, scientific theories, and cultural worldviews across four quadrants of human existence.

*Integrated spirituality* is the interconnection between a person's spiritual values and the values of their organization (Freund, Yahav, & Gilboa-Arama, 2016; Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2008).

*Organizational spirituality* is a framework that creates a culture of values that allows an organization to acknowledge their workers' spirit  (Devendhiran & Wesley, 2017). Spiritual organizations inspire a sense of meaningful work and purpose that contributes to the employees' sense of wholeness and happiness in the workplace (Freund et al., 2016).

*Religion* refers to an organized belief system that uses rituals and practices to shape individuals' values, character, and perspective regarding the world around them (Benefiel et al., 2014; Schutte, 2016).

*Sense of calling* is the feeling that work is interesting and guided by a sense of purpose or divine intervention (Fry, 2003; Fry, Hannah, Michael, & Fred, 2011). A sense of calling also describes a desire to serve others in society to gain meaning in life (Fry, 2003; Fry et al., 2011).

*Sense of membership (community)* is a sense of connection to colleagues in the organization and the opportunity to work in an integrated environment through social interactions (Fry, 2003).

*Servant leadership theory* describes a perspective where leaders act as a servant, focusing on the needs and development of their followers before promoting their personal interest (Shek, Chung, & Leung, 2015).

*Spiritual leadership* occurs when a leader uses "values, attitudes, and behaviors to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (Van Der Walt & De Klerk, 2014, p. 386).

*Spiritual leadership theory* was defined by Fry (2003) as an individuals' ability to harness employees' intrinsic spiritual motivations through a sense of calling and membership.

*Spirituality* is a personal relationship or experience with God or the divine that provides a sense of direction , meaning, purpose, or calling (Bhatia & Arora, 2017). Spirituality engenders feelings of understanding, support, wholeness, and connectedness (Garg, 2017). The sense of connectedness can be directed inwardly or toward other people, nature, the universe, a higher power (God), or some other supernatural power (Roof, 2015; Smith & Rayment, 2007). Spirituality is not associated with specific religions, nor does spirituality exclude the essence of religion (Roof, 2015).

*Vision* describes the organization's future goals and intentions. Vision serves three specific functions. Vision clarifies the general direction of change, simplifies more detailed decisions, and coordinates the actions of many different individuals quickly and efficiently (Fry, 2003).

*Workplace spirituality* has been defined by Gocen and Ozgan (2018) as a shared understanding in the workplace that allows people to find meaning at work with a sense of serving a superior purpose and integrity among coworkers. Workplace spirituality is comprised of several constructs such as inner life, meaning, connectedness, and transcendence (Gocen and Ozgan, 2018).

**Assumptions**

Assumptions are a researcher's opinions and beliefs about the study pertaining to what is out of the researcher's control (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Assumptions are essential to all studies as, without assumptions, researchers would not have a reason to justify their proposed research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). In this study, I relied on multiple assumptions.

The first assumption was that I recruited HR professionals who were open and honest when answering the interview questions. The second assumption was that all participants were eager to participate and shared their perspective on spirituality in the workplace freely. The third assumption was related to the use of snowball sampling. It was assumed that participants were willing to recommend other individuals that met the criteria of the study, and those individuals were also willing to participate in the study. The fourth assumption was that the participants understood the distinction between religion and spirituality. The fifth assumption was that the participants were aware of their spiritual beliefs and how those beliefs influence the participants' leadership practices. The final assumption was that the outcome of this study contributed to the understanding of spirituality and the practices that organizations can use to increase employee engagement in the workplace.

**Scope and Delimitations**

Delimitations are the features that define, explain, and limit the scope and boundaries of a research study. Researchers control the delimitations of a study, as

opposed to the limitations, which are outside researchers' control (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Simon & Goes, 2013). Delimitations are used to clarify the scope of research.

In addressing the research questions, I interviewed seven professionals with at least 10 years of experience working as an HR manager. The decision to explore seven cases was based on standards for case study research and recommendations by Robinson (2014), Stake (2006), and Yin (2014). The population of this study was limited to HR professionals in the United States to ensure that participants would be knowledgeable about organizational practices and employee engagement within their organizations.

One delimitation of the study was that I chose not to include virtual employees in the sample. This decision was based on the fact that the focus of this research is on the expression of spirituality within the traditional workplace. My decision to conduct a multiple case study also impacted the scope of the study. Multiple case studies are very different from research using a single case study approach, and this may have influenced the outcome of the study.

## Limitations

Ndimande, Chisoro, and Karodia (2016) characterized limitations as factors that are outside of the researcher's control that may weaken the results of the study. According to Simon and Goes (2013), every study has limitations regardless of how thoroughly and proficiently a researcher is when designing and conducting the investigation. One limitation of this study was based on the perception that the human participants were truthful and answered the question with accuracy concerning their knowledge of spirituality and leadership practices in their organization. Another

limitation was that I did not set an age limit as a criterion for participants to participate in the study. The study was also limited because factors such as globalization and diversity were not investigated even though they also may influence employee engagement. Lastly, given the recruitment strategy of the study, I relied on recommendations from the participants to identify future participants.

## Significance of the Study

Today's organizational leaders recognize the importance of an engaged workforce, and they are looking for strategies to engage employees and recruit the best talent in the market (Singh, 2016). A significant level of debate exists over the role of spirituality in the workplace (Roof, 2015). Within many organizations, HR personnel and organizational leaders are reluctant to promote policies that encourage spirituality due to uncertainty and confusion regarding what workplace spirituality is and how the policies and practices can benefit both employees and organizations (Charoenarpornwattana, 2016; Iddagoda & Opatha, 2017).

### Significance to Practice

The findings from this study contributed to business practice by identifying spiritual practices that organizations can use to influence employee engagement. The essence of workplace spirituality has the potential, through spiritual leadership, servant leadership, and integral theory, to transform employee attitudes and behaviors in a positive manner that may contribute to organizational success (Tecchio et al., 2016). The review of the literature revealed that workplace spirituality has the potential to provide organizations with strategies to retain key employees, influence change management,

heighten organizational commitment, strengthen employee engagement, and increase employee and organizational performance (van Wingerden & van der Stoep, 2017).

A better understanding of workplace spiritual leads to happier employees if leaders create a culture that is meaningful where employees feel connected to the community. Organizations that are experiencing high turnover rates, high absenteeism, and low performance can use the study's findings to develop programs that incorporate spiritual practices that positively affect their organizational culture. The outcome of this study may be the force that leaders need to encourage leadership style changes and the development of new skills.

**Significance to Theory**

For scholars and practitioners, the findings of this study may encourage future research into workplace spiritual and employee engagement. The present research also contributed to the gap in the knowledge of workplace spirituality by providing insights into precisely how some HR professionals promote a sense of calling and a feeling of membership in their organizations. The study provided organizational leaders with a better understanding of the link between workplace spirituality and employee engagement. By demonstrating how incorporating workplace spirituality into HR practices can provide positive benefits to both organizations and individuals , this study extended theory. It also offered insights into the practicality of merging elements from spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2016), integral theory (Wilber, 2005), and servant leadership theory (Blanch et al., 2016).

**Significance to Social Change**

This study was significant because it added to the literature on spirituality in the workplace, spiritual leadership, servant leadership, integral theory, and employee engagement. Research on spirituality in the workplace forces organizational leaders to acknowledge the essence of their workers as an integral part of the workplace and organizational success. The decisions or actions of leaders in the workplace can impact employees' attitudes and performance as well as the culture of the organization. Organizations can use workplace spirituality to manifest social change through engaged employees who add value to their communities and effect change while serving others. Society benefits when employees are engaged in the betterment of humanity (Van Der Walt & De Klerk, 2014).

Singh (2016) demonstrated that incorporating workplace spirituality within an organization results in positive social change by increasing employee productivity, reducing absence from work, strengthening organizational commitment, and improving an organization's competitive advantage. By eliciting HR professionals' descriptions of how they use workplace spirituality to increase employee engagement, the research provided valuable information for organizational leaders, employees, and scholars. This information can then enable stakeholders to foster positive social change in the workplace as well as the broader community.

**Summary and Transition**

In Chapter 1, I provided a general overview of the need to research workplace spirituality with a brief introduction of background material relevant to the study. The

purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to examine how HR professionals use workplace spirituality practices to promote employee engagement. The conceptual framework of this study used constructs from spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2016), integral theory (Wilber, 2005), and servant leadership theory (Blanch et al., 2016). Due to increased organizational interest in workplace spirituality, it was necessary to understand how HR professionals address employees' spiritual needs in the workplace. Research on workplace spirituality has linked spirituality, servant leadership, and integral theory to positive outcomes for the organization and employee engagement as well as initiatives toward positive social change.

In Chapter 2, I review scholarly literature focused on workplace spirituality, servant leadership, spiritual leadership, and integral theory. The review provides a discussion of the literature and conceptual framework of the study. I further clarify the connections between workplace spirituality, servant leadership, and integral theory as they relate to employee engagement. These theories established a robust conceptual framework to study how workplace spirituality can be incorporated in HR practices to promote employee engagement.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Workplace spirituality has been a growing topic of interest for more than 30 years, yet some scholars and practitioners have noted that spirituality remains a misunderstood paradigm (Gocen & Ozgan, 2018; Hudson, 2014; Jena & Pradhan, 2018; Majeed, Mustamil, & Nazri, 2018; Meng, 2016; Weinberg & Locander, 2014). The consensus among scholars is that spirituality is a multifaceted construct, incorporating elements such as inner life, meaning, purpose (i.e., a sense of calling), membership, and community (Chawla, 2014; Houghton et al., 2016). Chawla (2014) asserted that the growing interest in workplace spirituality is due to uncertainty within the workplace, and Freund et al. (2016) explained that organizations can use workplace spirituality as a tool to address employee engagement, burnout, job satisfaction, employee wellbeing, and organizational commitment.

The present research was designed to explore how HR practices support workplace spirituality and improve employee engagement in the United States. The purpose of this chapter is to review the scholarly, peer-reviewed literature related to workplace spirituality. The chapter begins with a discussion of the literature search strategy and then moves to a discussion of the conceptual framework. The main body of the chapter includes a review of scholarly literature on the topics of workplace spirituality, spirituality and leadership, and employee engagement. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature.

**Literature Search Strategy**

A computerized system was used to search for peer-reviewed, scholarly literature. Articles were obtained from Walden University's electronic library as well as other online library institutions and academic journal websites. The databases that were searched included Google Scholar, ProQuest Central, SAGE, ABI/INFORM Complete, EBSCO, and Business Source Complete. A Google alert was created to send newly published articles on workplace spirituality, employee engagement, and spiritual leadership to my Walden email address.

To identify articles applicable to the research topic, I selected specific keywords to aid in the literature search. The keywords I used included spirituality, religion, workplace spirituality, spirituality in the workplace, spiritual leadership theory, calling, membership, vision, hope/faith, altruistic love, employee engagement, leadership, human resources, organizational performance, organizational values, leadership values, servant leadership theory, integral theory, and employee disengagement. The literature search revealed numerous articles that contained relevant information and concepts pertaining to workplace spirituality as a positive construct to employee engagement that leads to a high level of organizational performance.

As the appropriate peer-reviewed articles were identified, the search was broadened by checking the reference list for each article to find additional articles that were relevant to the research topic. Workplace spirituality is a subject that has sparked the interest of scholars studying organizational behavior, organizational citizenship, spiritual well-being, spiritual intelligence, and job satisfaction. However, peer-reviewed

articles referencing HR practices that incorporate workplace spirituality to promote employee engagement in the workplace were scarce.

## Conceptual Framework

Researchers use conceptual frameworks to define how a research problem is examined and how meaning is constructed from data (Imenda, 2014). Conceptual frameworks incorporate relevant theories and categorize and describe important concepts, mapping relationships between elements of interest (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). The conceptual framework of this study incorporated three distinct theories: (a) spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2016; Fry et al., 2017); servant leadership theory (Blanch et al., 2016); and integral theory (Wilber, 2005). The theory constructs used in this study include calling, membership, internal/personal spiritual needs, external/organizational spiritual needs, compassionate love, altruistic calling, and community building. Through the creation of a conceptual framework for this study, these constructs aided in understanding how workplace spirituality is incorporated into HR practices to promote employee engagement. The following subsections briefly describe each of the theories.

### Spiritual Leadership Theory

In 2003, a seminal theory of spiritual leadership was proposed by Fry, who asserted that spiritual values could be used to foster intrinsic motivation in the workplace. Fry's (2003, 2016) spiritual leadership theory was based on a motivation model that identified the specific drivers of workplace spirituality. As part of spiritual leadership theory, Fry (2016) argued that employees have two main workplace spirituality needs: a need to feel a sense of calling in their work and a need for a sense of membership in the

organization. Fry suggested that employees are happier and more engaged when these needs are met.

Within Fry's (2003, 2016) spiritual leadership theory, the internal elements of spiritual leadership are vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love. These elements originate and manifest inside individuals. By recognizing the importance of these elements, spiritual leaders encourage employees to find their calling or meaning in life through their vocation while also sharing in organizational goals that benefit the community (Kaya, 2015). Employees and organizations both benefit as leaders steer their organizations in directions where performance outcomes create benefits for individual workers as well as higher levels of profit for the organizations (Parameswar & Prasad, 2017, p. 46). Figure 1 is an adaptation of Fry's (2016) model of spiritual leadership.

The first internal element of spiritual leadership theory is vision. Kaya (2015) described vision as an idea in the mind of an individual that spurs action. Fry et al. (2017) described vision as a "compelling directive" (p. 28). Vision serves as a motivator for employees by identifying a direction for change, specifying the change process, and allowing leaders to efficiently coordinate organizational efforts (Fry, 2003; Kaya, 2015).

The second internal element of spiritual leadership theory is altruistic love. Fry (2003) defined altruistic love as "a sense of wholeness, harmony and well-being" (p. 712). Altruistic love is evinced through an appreciation and consideration of one's self and others (Fry, 2003). The essence of altruistic love is the ability to accept others as they are and love them unconditionally (Kaya, 2015). Loyalty, benevolence, and intimacy are qualities associated with altruistic love (Fry et al., 2017; Kaya, 2015).

Model of Spiritual Leadership
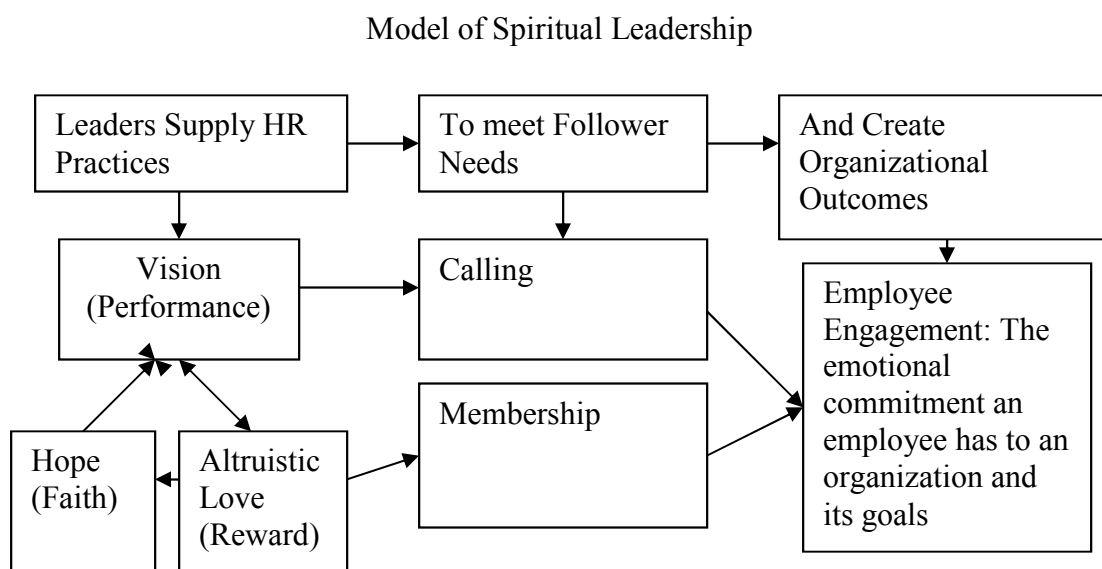


*Figure 1*. Model of spiritual leadership. Adapted with permission from Fry (2016).

The third internal element of spiritual leadership theory is hope/faith. This combined element refers to the desire to achieve a specific outcome and the belief that that outcome can be achieved (Kaya, 2015). Fry et al. (2017) noted that hope and faith are the ultimate source of conviction that a vision or goal can be achieved. Within spiritual leadership theory, the elements of vision, altruistic love, and faith/hope are mutually reinforcing. Altruistic love allows employees to become personally invested in an organization's vision, and employees' faith/hope allows them to work more successfully toward that vision.

In addition to being mutually supporting, the internal elements of Fry's (2016) spiritual leadership model also result in the manifestation of a sense of calling and membership. A sense of calling and a sense of membership are elements of an

individual's spiritual well-being (Fry et al., 2017). A sense of calling refers to the purpose individuals find in their life and the work they perform (Fry et al., 2017). A sense of membership refers to the feeling of belonging to an organization or community (Fry et al., 2017). Fry (2003) argued that a sense of calling and a sense of membership are essential elements that contribute to factors such as loyalty, attachment, and organizational commitment. Many researchers have used spiritual leadership theory as a framework, and several of the most impactful studies are examined in greater detail later in this chapter.

**Integral Theory**

The second theory that contributed to this study's conceptual framework was integral theory. Wilber initially proposed integral theory in 1997. The premise of integral theory is that the elements of an individual's consciousness are interrelated, and the aspects of consciousness can be categorized as intentional, behavioral, cultural, or social. Błajet and Przyborowska (2015) suggested that integral theory represents an attempt to create a universal theory that incorporates elements from diverse domains of knowledge including evolutionary psychology, quantum physics, evolutionary biology, logic, mathematics, and anthropology.

With integral theory, Wilber (1997) divided an individual's consciousness into four quadrants: (a) the interior individual (i.e., intentional), (b) the exterior individual (i.e., behavioral), (c) the interior collective (i.e., cultural), and (d) the exterior collective (i.e., social). Within these four quadrants, Wilber (2005) also argued that various levels or dimensions of personal growth and spiritual awareness exist. Figure 2 presents an

adaptation of the levels of awareness within Wilber's integral theory quadrants related to

the levels of workplace spirituality.
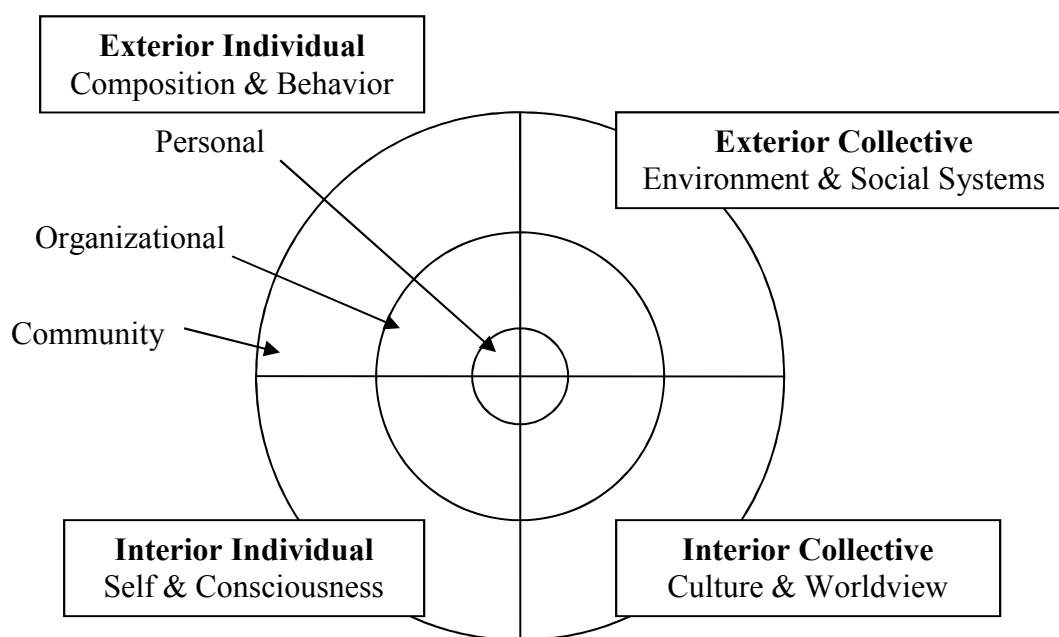


*Figure 2.* The workplace spirituality elements viewed through the lens of integral theory. Adapted with permission from Wilber (2005).

The interior individual and interior collective quadrants of integral theory are

most closely aligned with spiritual leadership theory and the present study's purpose. As

illustrated in Figure 2, the levels of the interior individual include the body, mind, and

spirit. The levels within the interior collective quadrant are designated as me, us, all of us.

Sepers (2017) noted that each quadrant had specific functions, with the interior individual

quadrant addressing self and consciousness, the exterior individual addressing

composition and behavior, the interior collective addressing culture and worldview, and the exterior collective addressing environment and social systems.

When viewed through the lens of Wilber's (2005) integral theory, workplace spirituality needs can be manifested both internally on an individual level and externally on an organizational level. A sense of calling is an example of a personal dimension within the interior individual quadrant, whereas a sense of membership corresponds with the exterior individual quadrant. By incorporating Wilber's integral theory into the present study's framework, developing a deeper understanding of the interconnectivity among aspects of workplace spirituality is possible.

**Servant Leadership Theory**

The final element of the present study's conceptual framework is servant leadership theory. Greenleaf (1998) introduced servant leadership theory as a combination of an individual's desire to serve while also striving to lead and develop others. Greenleaf noted that the goal of servant leadership is to achieve a higher purpose and benefit individuals, organizations, and societies. The fact that servant leadership has the potential to benefit individuals at various levels mirrors the dimensions in Wilber's (2005) integral theory. Researchers have associated a total of eight characteristics with servant leadership: (a) accountability, (b) altruism, (c) authenticity, (d) compassion, (e) courage, (f) humility, (g) integrity, and (h) listening (Coetzer, Bussin, & Geldenhuys, 2017). As a result of these characteristics, Coetzer et al. posited that servant leadership theory offers a multidimensional approach that encompasses ethical, relational, and outcome-based dimensions of leadership.

Contreras (2016) suggested that servant leadership is more of a philosophical posture than a leadership theory. Contreras argued that because servant leadership is related to a leader's moral behavior, it is different from spiritual leadership that is often linked with organizational behavior and performance. It should be noted, however, that both theories address issues of commitment, membership, and motivation. Contreras (2016) analyzed servant leadership and spiritual leadership and found that many elements of the two theories are compatible. For example, Contreras discussed similarities between the construct of stewardship in the servant leadership theory and the construct of membership in the theory of spiritual leadership. Spiritual values and beliefs are also linked to altruistic love and a sense of calling. Table 1 presents the corresponding elements of servant leadership theory and spiritual leadership theory as identified by Contreras.

Table 1. *Common Aspects of Servant Leadership and Spiritual Leadership*

Attributes of servant leadership

As indicated in Table 1, servant leadership, and spiritual leadership theories both focus on values centered on people rather than their productivity. In servant leadership, leaders emphasize service to others whereas, in spiritual leadership, leaders are driven by a sense of social purpose (Contreras, 2016). Social purpose relates to employees' attitudes towards each other, engagement, job assignments, trust, respect, and organizational performance. Moral principles serve as a structure for servant leadership while the overall business purpose can be used as a framework for spiritual leadership.

Spiritual values correspond with altruistic love, and in both theories, leaders express a legitimate concern for the interests of employees. Spiritual values encompass the ethical and moral principles of both the leaders and employees (Contreras, 2016). These values shape the culture of the company through social growth, membership, and calling. Contreras (2016) noted that servant leadership supports a higher level of productivity, performance, and organizational commitment in the workplace compared to many traditional leadership styles. By incorporating servant leadership in the present study's conceptual framework, I explored how a nontraditional leadership style influenced workplace spirituality and employee engagement.

This section has reviewed the present study's conceptual framework. Together, the three theories of spiritual leadership theory, integral theory, and servant leadership theory create a theoretical lens through which to view workplace spirituality and employee engagement. The next section reviews the literature on workplace spirituality and employee engagement viewed through this combined theoretical lens.

**Literature Review**

The following sections contain a literature review on the topics of workplace

spirituality, servant leadership practices, and employee engagement. Within this literature

review, topics such as the benefits of workplace spirituality and the role of HR

professionals in supporting workplace spirituality are discussed. The literature review

includes both seminal and recent sources and begins by introducing the concept of

workplace spirituality as it is defined in the body of knowledge.

**Workplace Spirituality**

Mitroff and Denton (1999) conducted the first empirical study on workplace

spirituality, and defined workplace spirituality as an interconnectedness that encourages

employees "to bring more of their complete selves' to work" (p. 83). Mitroff and Denton

employed a mixed-methods research design that relied on quantitative surveys and

qualitative interviews, and identified several important factors that contribute to

meaningful work. The most common factor among the participants in the study was the

ability of an individual to achieve their full potential. Mitroff and Denton also found that

working for an ethical organization; engaging in interesting work; and serving society,

their local communities, and future generations were also factors that made work

meaningful.

Mitroff and Denton's (1999) study illustrated that the concept of workplace

spirituality is both important to employees but also difficult for some individuals to

actualize. The authors noted that it was easier for employees to engage with colleagues

intellectually than emotionally. Mitroff and Denton also noted that despite a strong desire

to express spirituality in the workplace, most participants feared doing so would offend their co-workers. The authors stated, "unless organizations learn how to harness the 'whole person' and the immense spiritual energy that is at the core of everyone, they will not be able to produce world-class products and services" (p. 84).

Since the seminal work of Mitroff and Denton (1999), numerous studies have analyzed the relationships between workplace spirituality and organizational outcomes, including the link between workplace spirituality and employee engagement (Roof, 2015). Arora and Bhagat (2016) studied workplace spirituality and employee engagement in relation to organizational citizenship behavior. Afsar et al. (2016) evaluated the impact of spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality on professionals in Thailand. Neubert and Halbesleben (2015) studied the relationships between spiritual calling, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. A more recent empirical study was conducted by Jena and Pradhan (2018), who investigated workplace spirituality and employee commitment in relation to the role of emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior in Indian organizations. Bhatti and Sadia (2018) conducted a study to explore how spiritual leadership can produce positive outcomes. These examples demonstrate an active scholarly interest in the concept of workplace spirituality.

Vallabh and Vallabh (2016) stated that one of the most challenging aspects of workplace spirituality is that it is difficult for scholars to define the concept. Afsar et al. (2016) suggested that workplace spirituality is based on the understanding that people are driven to express their inner being through meaningful work, and spiritual individuals experience a sense of completeness and joy when they feel they are a part of a

community. Majeed et al. (2018) stated that workplace spirituality deals with the spiritual needs of employees through the recognition of the ultimate meaning of their work. Thus, it is essential for organizations to address the fact that employees have such a need for purpose, objective, and meaning in their work. Majeed et al. also noted that employees need a sense of relationship with others in the workplace. In addressing the needs of meaning and belonging, Majeed et al. recognized workplace spirituality as a "critical influencer of employees' well-being and performance" (2018, p. 50). Majeed et al. also noted that providing recognition, support, and development of employee's spiritual needs results in more devoted employees.

Majeed et al. (2018) acknowledged the extensive literature on workplace spirituality, yet they also noted that it is a relatively new concept within the area of organizational scientific research. Majeed et al. opined that scholars have only made limited progress towards the development of a comprehensive definition and meaning of the term workplace spirituality. The authors attributed this lack of progress to the fact that workplace spirituality combines both individual and organizational perspectives. The organizational perspective defines workplace spirituality as a structure of organizational values in a culture. The culture then (a) encourages employees to express their spirituality through shared goals and work procedures and (b) assists employees to strengthen their connections with others, increasing individuals' feelings of joy and completeness.

Majeed et al. (2018) cited three elements of workplace spirituality: (a) work that has meaning, (b) a sense of connection to the work community, and (c) a feeling of alignment with an employer's goals. These dimensions were drawn from an earlier work

by McKee, Driscoll, Kelloway, and Kelly (as cited in Majeed et al., 2018). Meaningful work is an element of workplace spirituality that corresponds to individual spirituality. Connection to the work community corresponds to group-level spirituality, and the feeling of alignment with the goals of an employer corresponds with organizational-level workplace spirituality.

Majeed et al. characterized meaningful work as enjoying work, being energized by working, and finding personal meaning and purpose in the work. Majeed et al. cited skill variety and task identity and significance as elements of an employee's job that contribute to meaningfulness. Majeed et al. (2018) characterized the sense of community as mutual support and connections between co-workers. The authors noted that employees exhibited a sense of community when they shared a common purpose. The final element of workplace spirituality, alignment with organizational values, was exhibited when employees felt a connection with organizational goals, missions, and values. It was also important for employees to feel the organization cared about the needs of employees.

Fachrunnisa and Adhiatma (2014) described workplace spirituality as "a framework of organizational values" that is expressed via an organization's culture and daily work routine (p. 17). Connections between employees are promoted through the work process, and this component of workplace spirituality is represented by a sense of belonging and community. Fachrunnisa and Adhiatma identified a sense of calling as another vital spiritual construct. According to Fachrunnisa and Adhiatma, a sense of calling refers to an employee's feeling that the work they do has a purpose and the

potential to positively impact the lives of others. The sense that work actions contribute to the care for others and improves the welfare of the community and society results in a sense of meaningfulness. Fachrunnisa and Adhiatma argued that this sense of meaningfulness intensifies an employee's commitment to the organization and the community.

According to Fachrunnisa and Adhiatma (2014), employees' spiritual well-being is the result of spiritual leadership and an organization's ability to communicate a shared vision. Fachrunnisa and Adhiatma were careful to note that the shared vision must be built upon altruistic love between organizational leaders and employees. Through the presence of altruistic love, a spirit of authenticity is generated, and employees attribute this authenticity to the organization. This process, in turn, supports a sense of belonging and shared values and increases employee engagement. The creative process of meeting employees' spiritual needs, if supported by organizational leaders, results in the increased well-being of the individual (Fachrunnisa & Adhiatma, 2014).

Despite the growing interest in workplace spirituality among scholars and practitioners, little consensus on how to foster and implement spirituality in the workplace has been generated (Weinberg & Locander, 2014). According to Gocen and Ozgan (2018), workplace spirituality can be perceived on two levels, organizational and individual. On an individual level, workplace spirituality provides employees with feelings of purpose and transcendence. On an organizational level, workplace spirituality helps strengthen bonds between individuals and the organization and creates the overall

sense of connectedness. Gocen and Ozgan (2018) noted that specific factors that help develop workplace spirituality include altruism, shared values, unity, and diversity.

Workplace spirituality consists of integrated values, attitudes, and behaviors. These factors contribute to a sense of calling and membership and intrinsically motivate employees to excel (Afsar et al., 2016). Spiritually engaged employees feel that they are understood and appreciated (Afsar et al., 2016). These employees also feel as though their contributions in the workplace make a difference to their co-workers, their community, and their organization. Scholars have noted that these feelings have a positive influence on issues such as corporate social responsibility and sustainability (Afsar et al., 2016; Fry, 2003). Many different researchers have focused on exploring the factors that drive workplace spirituality as well as the factors that are affected by spiritual practices in the workplace.

Hassan, Nadeem, and Akhter (2016) investigated how trust affected the relationship between workplace spirituality and job satisfaction. Hassan et al. found that meaningful work, a sense of community, and organizational values are all elements of workplace spirituality. Hassan et al. suggested that by promoting workplace spirituality, organizations can connect past experiences to positive outcomes and develop trust among employees by altruistically supporting their needs. Through this process, the organization benefits from the development of a more productive work environment. Hassan et al. also noted that when organizations do not support workplace spirituality, the workplace becomes more challenging for employees.

Organizations can use a framework of values to promote workplace spirituality and positive organizational culture in ways that promote employees' experiences (Afsar et al., 2016). For example, organizational practices that support loyalty and justice benefit individual employees while also reinforcing a positive organizational culture. When organizational practices are productive, employees experience transcendence through the work process, a sense of being connected to others, and feelings of completeness and joy. These feelings, in turn, support a sense of meaning and purpose within an individual's work life (Afsar et al., 2016).

The conscious decision to promote workplace spirituality has the potential to transform organizational culture (Bhatti & Sadia, 2018). Leaders are responsible for conveying an organization's spiritual values and practices (Bhatti & Sadia, 2018). A transformation of organizational culture to include workplace spirituality results in increased happiness and well-being for employees as well as for society (Bhatti & Sadia, 2018). Bhatti and Sadia's (2018) perspective on workplace spirituality differed from that of Gocen and Ozgan (2018). While Gocen and Ozgan divided workplace spirituality perspectives into two categories, individual and organizational, Bhatti and Sadia (2018) identified a third perspective: interactive workplace spirituality. Bhatti and Sadia argued that the organizational perspective on workplace spirituality refers to the implementation of spirituality throughout an organization in terms of both levels and departments. The goals of organizational workplace spirituality, according to Bhatti and Sadia, are to promote a value-based vision for the organization and also benefit society. The purpose

of individual workplace spirituality is to focus on employees' spiritual needs and ensure those needs are fulfilled.

Spiritual workplace practices that address both individual and organizational needs can be considered interactive (Bhatti & Sadia, 2018). Bhatti and Sadia noted that an interactive approach to workplace spirituality resulted in the most balanced outcomes. Mitroff and Denton (1999) claimed that it is a challenge for organizations to implement workplace spirituality practices without first aligning those practices with organizational culture. However, Bhatti and Sadia (2018) contended that it is easy for organizations that have already identified a set of social values to implement spiritual practices effectively, and that the perspective of integrated workplace spirituality is to bridge the gap between personal and organizational spirituality.

Charoenarpornwattana, Sakulkoo, and Tubsree (2015) took a different approach than that of Gocen and Ozgan (2018) and Bhatti and Sadia (2018), dividing workplace spirituality into individual, organizational, and community levels. According to Charoenarpornwattana et al. (2015), workplace spirituality on the individual level is beneficial because it leads to employees with improved skill sets, better attitudes, greater moral strength, and higher ethical standards. These qualities are beneficial to employers, but Charoenarpornwattana et al. also noted that workplace spirituality benefits the employees by allowing them to express their beliefs, reducing job stress and burnout, increasing job satisfaction and positive thinking, and building trust.

At the organization level, engaging in workplace spiritual activities enables employees to strengthen work connections and relationships with staff members and their

co-workers (Charoenarpornwattana et al., 2015). Workplace spirituality also increases productivity, reduces inefficiency, lowers absenteeism and turnover, and increases creativity and innovation (Charoenarpornwattana et al., 2015). These factors, while benefiting individual employees, have the most significant positive impact on the organization itself (Charoenarpornwattana et al., 2015).

On the community level, workplace spirituality focuses on individuals' ability to jointly make group contributions that benefit society (Charoenarpornwattana et al., 2015). Community-focused workplace spirituality promotes activities that occur outside the workplace such as volunteer activities. Organizations promote these activities to strengthen a sense of community within their employee base and help foster shared values, ethics, and morals (Charoenarpornwattana et al., 2015). Organizational leaders support workplace spirituality by providing guidance and "discipline, unity, altruism, morality, and gratitude" (Charoenarpornwattana et al., 2015, p. 88). In organizations concerned with workplace spirituality, business leaders and HR professionals believe in social responsibility and efforts are made to ensure that the organization's practices benefit a wide range of stakeholders including employees, customers, and the broader community (Charoenarpornwattana et al., 2015).

Trust, relatedness, flexibility, and a sense of shared power are elements of community-focused workplace spirituality that help to promote intrinsic motivation and encourage employees to use their talents and abilities in new ways (Afsar et al., 2016). Employees seek continuity and connections within their organizations, and "through calling and membership, they take interest and enjoy activities, feel a sense of skillfulness

or creativity to accomplish tasks, satisfy higher order needs, and perceive an internal attitude of connection" (Afsar et al., 2016, p. 81). Social connections developed as a result of workplace spirituality enable employees to feel understood and appreciated (Afsar et al., 2016).

Naidoo (2014) noted that the main purpose of workplace spirituality is to allow individuals to attain personal fulfillment on the job. The sense of fulfillment through the pursuit of a career and the desire for inclusion within a corporate culture or organizational community is the foundation for a theory of workplace spirituality (Naidoo, 2014). As a result, workplace spirituality is often framed within the context of integrated cultural, organizational, and personal values (Naidoo, 2014). Evidence suggests that correlations exist between workplace spirituality and a number of other variables including creativity, organizational trust, honesty, a commitment to organizational goals, and personal fulfillment (Naidoo, 2014).

Van Der Walt and De Klerk (2014) argued that organizational change can lead to employee disengagement, alienation, and difficulty coping with feelings of isolation. In today's work environment, employees can be exposed to stress-related illnesses, violence, burnout, corruption, and absenteeism, which are exacerbated in the absence of workplace spirituality (Van Der Walt & De Klerk, 2014). Van Der Walt and De Klerk stated that workplace spirituality was "the spiritual nature of the organization itself, evidenced by spiritual organizational values and a culture that facilitates employee's experiences and sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy" (p. 381). Van Der Walt and De Klerk noted that workplace

spirituality also acknowledges that employees' benefit personally from the completion of meaningful work.

Another facet of workplace spirituality is that the work environment directly impacts the emotional well-being of the contemporary worker (Van Der Walt & De Klerk, 2014). Many organizations take a materialistic approach to address these needs, but other organizations recognize the inadequacy of a superficial approach. Spiritual employees require that organizations have a philosophy that includes a spiritual vision and mission as well as core values and leadership practices that support such a vision and mission. Van Der Walt and De Klerk noted that by supporting the spiritual needs of employees, organizations create positive feedback loops among employees that result in beneficial outcomes such as job satisfaction. For many individuals, work results in meaningful life experiences, which, in turn, create spiritual fulfillment and overall satisfaction (Van Der Walt & De Klerk, 2014). Conversely, if individuals are not able to connect on a spiritual level with their organization, the result can be dissatisfaction and diminished enjoyment of the work experience (Van Der Walt & De Klerk, 2014).

Workplace spirituality occurs on both an individual and an organizational level. Furthermore, Van Der Walt and De Klerk (2014) argued that if an organization intends to develop spirituality in the workplace, concerted efforts must occur at the organizational level to promote and encourage individual spirituality and implement practices that support organizational values and goals. Spiritual transformation on the organizational level "may consist of changes in the organization's philosophy, purpose, and mission and

the embedding of spiritual values in the workplace" (Van Der Walt & De Klerk, 2014, p. 386).

According to Chawla (2014), workplace spirituality creates multiple benefits for organizations, including increased employee and organizational productivity, higher earnings, improved job retention, greater competitive advantage, enhanced levels of honesty and trust, increased job satisfaction, and improved customer service. Chawla noted that workplace spirituality also promoted employee engagement, creativity, and ethical behavior. Freund et al. (2016) found that workplace spirituality lowered employee turnover, decreased absenteeism, improved civil conduct within organizations, and boosted organizational performance. From an individual perspective, Freund et al. noted that workplace spirituality reduced employee stress and burnout.

Houghton et al. (2016) conducted research and found that workplace spirituality had both individual and organizational benefits. Individual benefits include improved employee well-being (e.g., reduced stress and aggression); reduced career and social costs for female employees; and increased creativity, personal fulfillment, and job satisfaction. Organizational benefits include increased organization citizenship behaviors, improved ethics, higher levels of honesty and trust in the workplace, increased job involvement, and a buffering effect on emotional labor.

Pradhan and Jena (2016) found that the practice of workplace spirituality in an organization aligns employees' personal values with organizational principles, and this creates a better fit between employees and employers. Pradhan and Jena also found that workplace spirituality directly influences employee engagement and organizational

commitment, which, in turn, improves employees' accomplishments, job behaviors, and job satisfaction. Therefore, Pradhan and Jena recommended that HR professionals implement workplace spirituality philosophies and practices with the purpose of creating a sustainable work culture. The studies reviewed in this section demonstrate that when appropriately implemented, spirituality in the workplace enhances and aligns the value systems of both employees and organizations to yield positive results.

**Spirituality vs. Religion**

While spirituality and religion are interrelated terms and often discussed collectively, significant distinctions between the two concepts must be made. Schutte (2016) argued that spirituality and religion have different but overlapping meanings in both academic and work contexts. Religion is associated with formalized theological beliefs, activities, and rituals (Lepherd, 2015). Conversely, spirituality refers to a more personal developmental process that is malleable and shaped by life experiences (Lepherd, 2015). Most scholars perceive spirituality as independent of religion (Lepherd, 2015; Schutte, 2016).

Traditionally, religion in the workplace has been approached hesitantly or prohibited whereas the concept of spirituality is generally more acceptable in organizations (Gocen & Ozgan, 2018). Although religions and spirituality often share common features such as hope, trust, and love, they are two very different concepts that organizations must recognize (Lepherd, 2015). Kaya (2015) adopted Mitroff and Denton's seminal definition of spirituality as the pursuit of an ultimate life goal and the conscious decision to abide by that goal throughout life. For some, the ultimate goal of

spirituality is doing the will of God, but spirituality has a very different meaning for others (Kaya, 2015).

Kaya (2015) noted that spirituality is intrinsically inclusive even though different belief systems and religions can have different philosophies and understandings. Some may argue that spirituality is only necessary within a religious lifestyle; however, religious affiliation is not necessarily required for someone describing themselves as spiritual (Fry et al., 2017; Kaya, 2015). Spirituality and religion also share common value structures and components. For example, while traits like honesty and integrity can be linked to religious duty, the same traits can frequently be observed in people without a specific religious or spiritual belief system.

Research indicates that most people would like the ability to integrate personal faith and spirituality within their work life, but few resources are available to help them do so (Miller & Ewest, 2013). Despite this finding, some researchers have raised the concern that increased expression of religion or spirituality in the workplace could lead to divisiveness and discrimination (Benefiel et al., 2014). This concern places organizational leaders in a difficult position. Spirituality allows individuals to authentically express themselves and connect with others in ways that are meaningful, and, if leveraged, workplace spirituality can have significant benefits to both individuals and organizations (Lepherd, 2015). However, if spirituality in the workplace is poorly understood, the benefits of spirituality are difficult to achieve. The following sections address research on the personal and organizational aspects of spirituality.

**Personal spirituality.** Workplace spirituality encompasses the notion that an individual's spiritual values affect their work behaviors and the way in which they respond to events and work-related activities that occur in the workplace (Kolodinsky et al., 2008). On an individual (i.e., personal) level, workplace spirituality involves the incorporation of an employee's spiritual ideals and values into their job role. The employee's spiritual values affect the way in which their job tasks are performed, and if good alignment exists between the individual's spirituality and the organization's culture, outcomes are improved. Conversely, if misalignment occurs between an individual's personal spirituality and the codes and values of the organization, outcomes can be impaired. Impaired outcomes can include friction that arises between co-workers with different views on spirituality. Vallabh and Vallabh (2016) noted that spirituality is inherently individualistic, and, as a result, spirituality is something that transcends the rules of religion. This view can help defuse conflicts between co-workers arising from differing religious beliefs.

Crossman (2016) contended that personal identity is at the core of self-concept, and values, behavior, psychological traits, and interests all influence an individual's spiritual identity. Crossman noted that experiences such as education, travels, and relationships with family, friends, and co-workers affect values and belief structures and by extension a person's spiritual identity. Crossman characterized personal spiritual identities as "highly diversified, individualized, and sometimes influenced by a number of traditions and spiritualities simultaneously" (pp. 158-159).

Soha, Osman, Salahuddin, Adbullah, and Ramlee (2016) noted that the determination of meaningful work is dependent on factors such as an individual's sense of purpose, their specific work duties, and the personal inner feelings and intentions. Soha et al. explained that an employee's values are rooted in emotion and spirituality, and these values can either be reinforced or contradicted by work tasks and organizational culture. When the values are reinforced, work is perceived as more meaningful. Meaningful work improves work performance. When employees feel that their work content enriches their lives, they enjoy their jobs more, and this feedback loop has a positive effect on both organizational and individual performance (Soha et al., 2016).

Personal spirituality can also be expressed through an individual's leadership style. Servant leadership refers to a style of leadership where a leader desires to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Servant leaders employ a combination of awareness of surrounding and anticipation of consequences (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Servant leaders employ sound reasoning and mental frameworks to accomplish goals and encourage members of their organization to make positive societal contributions (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Du Plessis, Wakelin, and Nel (2015) identified five characteristics of servant leaders: "altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping and organizational stewardship" (p. 2).

The altruistic calling characteristic, identified by Du Plessis et al. (2015), shares similarities with a sense of calling and altruistic love from Fry's (2016) theory of workplace spirituality. Du Plessis et al. (2015) described altruistic calling "as a leader's innate desire to make a positive difference in others' lives" (p. 2). Altruistic calling

represents a servant leader's motivation to prioritize the needs and interests of others and take an organizational approach focused on benefiting others through community service (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). These elements of personal spirituality represent the internal components of Wilber's (2005) integral theory.

**Organizational spirituality.** Workplace spirituality can also be addressed on a macro-level by viewing the organization's spiritual climate or culture. While personal spirituality encompasses an individual's perception of spiritual values, organizational spirituality includes the shared values, beliefs, and attitudes within an organizational setting. Workplace spirituality in an organizational context reflects the interaction between an individual's personal spiritual values and the organization's spiritual values. When an employee's personal spirituality is in alignment with organizational culture, employees tend to be more supportive of workplace initiatives and engaged in actions that support the organization's mission and objectives (Kolodinsky et al., 2008).

Employees who view their organizations as more spiritual feel less friction and frustration at work (Fry et al., 2017; Kolodinsky et al., 2008). This perception is partly because spiritual organizations are more participatory and inclusive of employees during decision-making and information sharing (Kolodinsky et al., 2008; Vallabh & Vallabh, 2016). Workplace spirituality on an organizational level helps workers to feel empowered and important, allowing employees to embrace openness and community orientation and reducing friction within the organization (Kolodinsky et al., 2008).

Organizational spirituality is characterized by organizational members working collectively towards a common goal, altruistic behavior, helpfulness, and cooperation.

Kolodinsky et al. (2008) argued that organizational practices that support workplace spirituality encourage empathetic understanding and altruistic behavior among employees. Vallabh and Vallabh (2016) further stated that organizational practices reinforce individual spiritual beliefs about social reciprocity and responsibility. This organizational reinforcement results in mutually beneficial consequences for both organizations and individuals (Vallabh & Vallabh, 2016).

Crossman (2016) contended that the term *organizational identification* refers to the psychological definition of an individual based on their identity as a member of the workplace community and their internalization of "the organization's norms, hierarchies, mundane practices or conflicts, attitudes, behaviors, and even ultimately, its successes and failures" (p. 155). Crossman noted that most employees prefer to engage in positive relationships with coworkers and enjoy the sense of inclusion and group membership within an organization. Organizational spirituality is communicated through nonverbal artifacts, written documents, policies, practices, communicated values, and charitable contributions. An organization's spiritual identity is highly individualized and reflective of context, and organizations differ in their approach to decision-making and leadership practices in relation to the practice of workplace spirituality. Crossman noted that spiritual identity, whether personal or organizational can change over time, and an organization's spiritual identity might change because of shifting social values or management change.

A sense of community is an important component of both organizational spirituality and workplace spirituality. However, research has not shown a sense of

community to have a significant effect on employees' work performance, and teamwork

that incorporates spiritual leadership practices does not necessarily affect work

performance (Roof, 2015). Research has suggested that the lack of a significant

relationship between organizational spirituality and individual performance indicates that

employees tend to be judged on their individual rather than their collective performance

(Roof, 2015). Thus, a sense of community is important to the performance of employees

only within the context of cooperation (Roof, 2015).

Hewitt and La Grange (2017) described community building as aligning the needs

of a diverse group of people in relation to commons goals to obtain mutually beneficial

outcomes. Hewit and La Grange cautioned, however, that community is less about

structure and more about cooperation. The ability to create alliances and partnerships is

an important skill for spiritual leaders to have. Creating a community requires feedback,

acceptance of others' views, and a willingness to resolve conflict among group members

(Hewitt & La Grange, 2017). Community building also involves sharing power,

accountability, and decision-making authority.

Finally, the sense of membership that results from organizational spirituality

produces a feeling of belonging and understanding within the practice of workplace

spirituality (Fry, 2003). Individual group members are appreciated within the social order

and/or organizational culture through a leader's use of altruistic love. Group leaders

express sincere concern for everyone within the group (Fry, 2003; Fry et al., 2017). These

social connections formed between individuals in organizations employing spiritual

workplace practices use interrelationships and connections to accomplish organizational goals (Fry, 2003).

**Spirituality and Leadership**

Twenty-first-century corporations are seeking leaders who are not only competent managers but who are also engaged in authentic, honest, compassionate, and meaningful leadership practices. Spirituality and leadership have been linked in the scholarly literature, and spiritual leaders are individuals who act based on a code of moral standards that transcends narcissism (Ungvari-Zrinyi, 2014). Fry (2003) defined spiritual leadership as leadership comprised of intrinsic values, attitudes, and behaviors that allow a leader to motivate not only himself or herself but also others. Spiritual leaders create a vision for followers to help them experience increased meaning at work and feel as though they can and are making a difference (Fry, 2003).

According to Fry (2003), the goal of organizational leadership is to motivate employees. Motivation can be either extrinsic or intrinsic to the employee. Extrinsically motivated employees are motivated by external rewards such as pay increases, bonuses, and promotions as well as nonmaterial factors such as praise, recognition, approval, and respect. Intrinsically motivated individuals take satisfaction in the quality of their work, and the reward is derived from a sense of accomplishment. Intrinsic motivating factors are generally intangible rewards and can include a sense of meaningfulness, a sense of connectedness, or a sense of self-fulfillment. Self-fulfillment engenders feelings of happiness and satisfaction and supports positive employee behaviors. Regardless of how they are engendered, positive employee attitudes lead to higher levels of organizational

commitment and productivity (Gjorevska & Takacs, 2016). To achieve these positive organizational outcomes, leaders must create a work environment that is both intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful (Gjorevska & Takacs, 2016).

Leaders shape and define the culture of the workplace. Leaders in organizational management have the primary responsibility to ensure the accomplishment of organizational goals. Thus, leaders must communicate an organization's mission and vision clearly to every employee and also ensure that the company's resources are deployed in ways that positively affect stakeholder outcomes (Fry, 2016). Parameswar and Prasad (2017) noted that effective leaders strive to be continuously aware of the shifting strengths and weakness of their organization. As a result, leaders are frequently engaged in process improvements aimed at enhancing organizational productivity (Parameswar & Prasad, 2017).

Effective spiritual leaders exhibit a strong awareness of the meaning and purpose of organizational efforts, they emphasize connectivity with the community, and they support employees' spiritual well-being (Afsar et al., 2016). Hudson (2014) noted that spiritual leaders assist their followers in embracing spiritual values and create links between the external environment and employees to create synergy. Both Hudson (2014) and Parameswar and Prasad (2017) found that spiritual leadership positively affected intrinsic motivation in employees as well as engagement with social issues external to the organization. The research indicates that spiritual leaders promote employees' well-being through their willingness to look beyond self-interest and act in the best interests of others.

**Followers.** Spiritual leaders help followers actualize their spiritual needs through integrative practices that foster authenticity and strong relationships with others in the workplace (Hudson, 2014). Afsar et al. (2016) further noted that to support such actualization, spiritual leaders encourage their followers to practice mindfulness of matters outside their own self-interest such as concerns for the planet, society, and nature. The work of Kaya (2015) supported the findings of Hudson (2014) and Afsar et al. (2016). According to Kaya (2015), spirituality is connected to an individual's personal values "such as love, affection, tolerance, satisfaction, responsibility, and harmonious feelings toward [themselves] and others" (p. 598).

**Recent research.** In recent research, Fry et al. (2017) and Kaya (2015) found a correlation between spiritual leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors. This correlation was related to employee perceptions of connectedness and togetherness with co-workers. However, Kaya found that spiritual leadership must be a part of a holistic spiritual system if it is to be effective. Systematic support for workplace spirituality requires the integration of four key properties: (a) the physical body, (b) the rational mind, (c) the emotional heart, and (d) the soulful spirit (Kaya, 2015). According to Kaya (2015), these four fundamental properties define the essence of human existence. When effective spiritual leadership brings these four properties into alignment in the workplace, the foundation is laid for better organizational performance in conjunction with employees' personal self-fulfillment (Fry et al., 2017; Kaya, 2015).

Chen and Yang (2012) stated that several characteristic values are present in organizations that promote spiritual leadership practices. In such organizations,

organizational visions and goals are aligned to engender intrinsic meaning for employees. To achieve personal and organizational spiritual alignment, managers in these organizations emphasize employee development, foster trust and honesty, promote employee empowerment, and provide opportunities for employees to give input (Chen & Yang, 2012).

Leadership and spirituality can intersect in a variety of ways. Blanch et al. (2016) researched the positive role that leadership can play in promoting both organizational and occupational well-being and health at the collective and individual levels. Blanch et al. found that spiritual leadership is a key leadership theory linked to positive organizational and individual outcomes. Ethical leadership and servant leadership are also topics that have been linked to leadership and spirituality.

Ethical leadership is a key component of the servant leadership style. Brown and Trevino (2006) found that individuals using an ethical leadership style engaged with their followers for the specific purpose of modeling behavior. The interaction between leaders and followers was aimed at creating productive interpersonal relationships that served as reward and feedback systems. Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005) noted that ethical leaders establish psychological processes that help define the boundaries of the relationship between leaders and followers in the context of applied ethical leadership. These processes illustrate both prosocial and antisocial behaviors, allowing the leaders to communicate which behaviors are acceptable (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leaders use a process of learning and social exchange to model behavior for their followers to emulate in an otherwise ethically neutral environment (Brown et al., 2005).

Houghton et al. (2016) explained that the purpose of ethical leadership is for

leaders to model socially appropriate behavior that followers can then imitate. Ethical

leaders promote the adoption of prosocial behaviors through decision-making,

reinforcement, and two-way communication (Houghton et al., 2016). Ethical leadership

has been shown to increase ethical decision-making and prosocial behavior in followers

(Houghton et al., 2016). Ethical leadership has also been shown to reduce

counterproductive behaviors among followers (Houghton et al., 2016). A difficulty in

equating aspects of ethical leadership directly to spiritual leadership is the lack of a

precise and universally accepted definition of appropriate normative behavior (Frisch &

Huppenbauer, 2014).

**Positive leadership.** Another leadership style that has a potential link to the

promotion of workplace spirituality is positive leadership. Cameron (2012) characterized

positive leadership as a leadership style that focuses on applying positive principles to

behavioral situations. This approach to leadership shares some similarity with both

servant leadership and spiritual leadership in the sense that leaders emphasize the

importance of positive behavior principles. However, while better-established leadership

models have solid empirical support, the positive leadership model is still in an early

stage of theoretical development (Blanch et al., 2016).

Cameron (2012) identified three basic components of positive leadership. Positive

leaders reaffirm human potential by focusing on followers' strengths and abilities

(Cameron, 2012). Positive leaders bolster performance by emphasizing the importance of

positive results. Finally, positive leaders encourage followers to focus on human virtues

as essential components of achievement (Cameron, 2012). Like servant leadership and

spiritual leadership, positive leadership also focuses on the importance of

communication, relationships, meaning, and a positive working climate (Cameron, 2012).

Kelloway, Weigand, McKee, and Das (2013) found support for the theoretical

framework supporting positive leadership. Kelloway et al. surveyed 454 nursing home

employees to ask about positive leadership behaviors and employee well-being and found

that positive leadership was at once distinct from transformational leadership and also

could interact with transformational leadership to predict positive employee effects. In

another empirical study, Antino, Gil, Rodriguez-Muñoz, and Borzillo (2014) validated a

reduced version of the Positive Leadership Assessment Scale and demonstrated that a

five-factor model achieved a good fit with empirical data. Antino et al.'s findings

indicated links between transformational leadership and positive leadership as well as a

relationship between positive leadership and employee engagement. Relatively few

studies on positive leadership are available; however, the extant literature does illustrate

that some similarities exist between positive leadership, servant leadership, and spiritual

leadership. The following section explores the direct link between servant leadership and

workplace spirituality.

**Servant leadership practices and workplace spirituality.** The concept of

servant leadership envisions leaders as compassionate, caring, and trustworthy and

emphasizes the importance of a leader's responsibility to followers rather than

emphasizing organizational performance (Mahazan et al., 2015). Marques (2015) noted

that within servant leadership, the sense of responsibility to followers is voluntary and

often a result of a leader's personal morality or spirituality. Servant leadership is quite

different from other leadership styles, primarily as servant leaders tend to be unconcerned

with personal advancement (Marques, 2015). Instead, these individuals act out of their

personal concern for the well-being and needs of others (Marques, 2015).

The act of servant leadership results in the development of more servant leaders.

Because servant leaders encourage followers to develop into leaders themselves,

followers often adopt a servant leadership style as they emerge from the development

process (Marques, 2015). The servant leadership style generally instills a sense of

humility in the leader who practices it (Marques, 2015). Servant leaders also tend to focus

on individuals who are in the greatest need of guidance and support (Marques, 2015).

Marques noted that servant leadership is based on a spiritual foundation of community,

caring, trust, and the intention to benefit all stakeholders.

According to van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015), servant leaders focus

primarily on meeting the needs of their followers as an approach to employee

development. In line with spiritual leadership theory, servant leaders provide a vision to

their followers and work to establish trust (van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). These

steps are taken in an attempt to inspire their followers. Servant leaders use interpersonal

communications to influence others. Altruistic calling is another aspect of servant

leadership that shares a connection with spiritual leadership theory. Barbuto and Wheeler

(2006) noted that servant leaders also exhibited wisdom and promoted emotional healing.

Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) studied servant leadership and found that a leader's

self-reported altruistic calling was significantly correlated with a follower's reported

satisfaction with the leader. Further, a leader's self-reported wisdom was strongly correlated with an employee's willingness to make extra efforts and the leader's perceived organizational effectiveness (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Altruism is a desire to have a positive effect on the lives of others (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Altruistic leaders put others' needs first and focus consistently on ways to benefit individuals in the organization, the organization as a whole, and the wider community (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). In this way, servant leaders who focus on altruism seek to benefit stakeholders at all levels.

Other attributes that are associated with servant leaders include the ability to listen, empathy, an interest in community building, and a capacity for growth (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Listening and empathy are skills evident in many effective leadership styles, and they are not qualities unique to servant leaders. However, Barbuto and Wheeler noted that because listening and empathy are key contributors to emotional healing and wisdom, they are essential skills for servant leaders to possess. Tanno and Banner (2018) also supported the importance of listening and empathy, citing these abilities as key features used to measure a leader's level of servant leadership.

Tanno and Banner (2018) credited van Dierendonck and Patterson as the first scholars to introduce compassionate love as an antecedent for servant leadership. Tanno and Banner (2018) described compassionate love as "a cornerstone for servant leadership that helps deepen the motivation to serve" (p. 5). Compassionate love in Tanno and Banner's framework for servant leadership is analogous to altruistic love in spiritual leadership theory. "Love can be as mysterious as leadership itself, and yet there is

something powerful about the components of love that compel both the leader and follower" (Tanno & Banner, 2018, p. 5). Shek et al. (2015) also described the compassion dimension of servant leadership as critical for creating a sustainable, positive, and lasting personal brand. Shek et al. noted that followers may not be inspired to trust leaders that are not perceived as compassionate.

Hewitt and La Grange (2017) argued that community building is an important quality of servant leaders. Hewitt and La Grange described servant leaders as community creators who focus on interrelationships among people to ensure alignment with common goals. In this way, servant leaders are able to achieve outcomes that are mutually beneficial to everyone who contributes. Hewitt and La Grange explained that the element of community building is less about structure and more about cooperation among the members of the community. Servant leaders leverage a sense of community by using alliances and partnerships to achieve a common goal or mission (Hewitt & La Grange, 2017).

Creating a community involves valuing the input and perspectives of others, the ability to respond positively to feedback, a desire to amicably resolve conflicts among community members, and a desire to build teams to ease the workload (Hewitt & La Grange, 2017). Community building also requires a leader to be able to share power and employ accountability (Hewitt & La Grange, 2017). By allowing followers to share in the decision-making process, servant leaders build trust and strengthen the bonds between members.

Leaders transform employees more effectively through organizational cultures that foster growth. Organizations that seek to benefit from workplace spirituality must seek out leaders who are comfortable addressing the spiritual needs of employees. Spiritual leaders possess the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate employees by fostering a sense of calling and membership (Shek et al., 2015). Spiritual leadership is achieved through a leader's use of altruistic love, hope, and faith (Kaya, 2015). In the context of servant leadership, these elements are quite similar to altruistic calling and compassionate love.

Servant and spiritual leadership also both adopt a system oriented toward meeting the needs of leaders and followers in order to benefit both individual and organizational development. By addressing the importance of openness, fairness, and individuality, servant and spiritual leaders create personal meaning and self-worth for members of the community (Shek et al., 2015). The spiritual leadership model conceptualizes an organization as an economic enterprise as well as a human system, recognizing the importance of employees' personal and professional lives (Shek et al., 2015). This emphasizes the responsibility of the organization in terms of workplace spirituality. The following section examines the role of HR professionals in promoting workplace spirituality.

**The role of HR in promoting workplace spirituality.** Charoenarpornwattana (2016) suggested that HR professionals are the organizational leaders most responsible for ensuring that cultural change occurs. HR professionals offer training and help employees understand their responsibilities as well as their relationship with the

organization. Charoenarpornwattana noted that workplace spirituality is not a new subject to HR professionals, and they address many work-related topics on a daily basis that support employees' spirituality in the workplace. For example, topics such as work-life balance, performance goals, individual incentives, and co-worker relationships can all be related to organizational practices that incorporate spirituality.

Charoenarpornwattana (2016) asserted that organizations that exhibit workplace spirituality are demonstrating that they care and support their employees. These organizations are also demonstrating the importance of compassion, acceptance, integrity, and authenticity (Charoenarpornwattana, 2016). Through the use of targeted organizational policies and practices aimed at fostering both personal and organizational workplace spirituality, HR professionals can encourage employees to exceed expectations while making positive personal and social contributions. Through HR practices that support workplace spirituality, organizations can promote employee development, meaningfulness, job commitment, employee well-being, and trustworthy behaviors (Charoenarpornwattana, 2016).

Charoenarpornwattana (2016) noted that HR managers are responsible for ensuring that employees in an organization maintain a high level of performance. Resource specialists and line managers share in the responsibilities of HR managers. Charoenarpornwattana observed that HR management duties can be divided into primary and secondary functions. As part of their primary function, HR professionals are tasked with a wide range of actions that support employee development and human capital

maintenance. Within the secondary function, HR professionals support management activities and work to maintain or transform organizational structure and culture.

Charoenarpornwattana (2016) conducted a study on workplace spirituality and found that spirituality has distinct personal and professional benefits for employees. As a result of these findings, Charoenarpornwattana recommended that HR departments incorporate practices that support workplace spirituality to improve both individual and organizational outcomes. Charoenarpornwattana found that well-being was enhanced, quality of life improved, and a sense of meaning and interconnectedness was promoted when workplace spirituality was encouraged. Charoenarpornwattana noted that understanding these benefits allows HR professionals to engage in employee development more effectively.

The results of Charoenarpornwattana's (2016) study indicated that employees who participated in workplace spirituality activities demonstrated higher productivity and increased their work output. These workers also wasted less time, had lower absenteeism and turnover rates, and were better able to focus on work. Charoenarpornwattana noted that these benefits ultimately led to increases in organizational performance and financial gain.

Charoenarpornwattana (2016) noted the importance of positive interactions between employers and employees when attempting to establish workplace spirituality practices. When work atmospheres are constructive and supportive and work assignments are inspiring, productivity can be dynamic. However, HR professionals should continuously monitor the work atmosphere and the personal needs of workers to ensure

that practices meant to be supportive are also effective. While practices supporting workplace spirituality can enhance skills among employees and contribute to organizational performance, ineffective or poorly implemented HR practices can frustrate workplace spirituality on both the personal and the organizational level.

**Employee Engagement**

Petchsawang and McLean (2017) credited Kahn with first introducing the term workplace engagement in 1990. Petchsawang and McLean noted that work engagement is related to employee engagement but that the constructs have different focal points. Petchsawang and McLean explained that while work engagement addresses how employees relate to the content of their work, employee engagement is more closely associated with how employees relate to their overall organizations. Despite this distinction, many researchers use workplace engagement and employee engagement interchangeably (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017).

Demirtas, Hannah, Gok, Arslan, and Capar, (2017) described engagement as an active state of psychological immersion in one's work that incorporates three distinct features. These features are vigor, dedication, and cognitive absorption. Individuals who are engaged exceed the minimal performance expectations of their leaders, and the sense of accomplishment that results allows them to attain a sense of meaningful contribution (Demirtas et al., 2017). Employees who are engaged in meaningful work also find it easier to remain cognitively present, exhibit higher levels of efficacy, and display increased dedication to both their work and their organization (Demirtas et al., 2017).

Coetzer et al. (2017) identified a positive link between servant leadership and work engagement. Coetzer et al. conducted a systematic literature review and determined that several studies supported the link between work engagement and servant leadership practices. The authors also noted that evidence suggests factors such as goal congruence and social interaction can moderate the relationship between servant leadership and work engagement. Other factors that mediated the relationship included psychological empowerment and organizational identification (Coetzer et al., 2017).

Bhuvanaiah and Raya (2014) studied employee engagement in the context of individual role integration in the workplace. The integration approach suggests that employees engage in two different types of integration: (a) self-employment, where individuals engage with the work they are assigned, and (b) self-expression, where individuals engage in conversations to communicate their thoughts, opinions, and ideas. Bhuvanaiah and Raya conceptualized engagement in terms of personal engagement (i.e., a person's self-integration with role) and personal disengagement (i.e., a person's withdrawal from an established role). Bhuvanaiah and Raya found that three psychological conditions influence employees' engagement levels at work: (a) meaningfulness, (b) safety, and (c) availability.

The *2017 Trends in Global Employee Engagement* report, conducted by Aon Hewitt, suggested that levels of employee engagement have fallen globally. The 2017 report indicated that 24% of employees considered themselves to be highly engaged, with another 39% considering themselves moderately engaged. The report stated that the concept of employee engagement is often confused with job satisfaction or happiness.

However, employee engagement was defined in the report as "the level of an employee's psychological investment in their organization" (p. 2).

The *2017 Trend in Global Employee Engagement* report measured employee engagement using a three-part model. The trend report surveyed employees to determine:

- ☐ If they Say positive things about their organization and act as advocates,
- ☐ If they intend to Stay at their organization for a long time, and
- ☐ If they are motivated to Strive to give their best efforts to help the organization succeed (p. 2).

Employee engagement declined between 2016 and 2017. There was a 1% decline in the level of engagement in all three parts of the model. The precise cause of the decline or whether engagement would continue to decline was unknown (Aon Hewitt, 2017).

A similar report, the *Gallup 2017 Employee Engagement Report,* did not show any change in the level of engagement compared to previous years but reflected very different results compared to the Aon Hewitt report (2017). In the Gallup report, almost 70% of the respondents indicated they were not engaged in their work. In the Gallup report, engagement rates have remained relatively unchanged over the past decade. In 2016, only 33% of the respondents indicated they were engaged, with 51% stating that they were not engaged and 16% indicating they were actively disengaged. Overall, in the 2017 Gallup report, employee engagement increased only 3% form 2012-2016. The Gallup report estimated that disengaged employees cost U.S. organizations somewhere between $450 and $550 billion each year.

Drivers of employee engagement. Singh (2016) identified a number of drivers that lead to employee engagement by examining various studies conducted on the topic. Some of the drivers Singh identified included:

- Career development planning,
- Flexible welfare policy and employee involvement programs,
- Job satisfaction,
- Organization citizenship behavior,
- Emotional intelligence and leadership competencies,
- Age,
- Task significance and interaction,
- Motivation,
- High-performance work practices,
- Individual spirituality,
- Training,
- Leadership styles, and
- Procedural justice. (Singh, 2016, p. 108)

Singh (2016) concluded that factors such as recreational activities, birthday celebrations, job rotations, and job enlargement were not significant enough factors to influence employee engagement.

Singh identified a four-step process that organizations can follow in developing and implementing a strategy to improve engagement. First, organizations must define engagement within the organization. Second, the drivers of engagement have to be identified. Third, organizations must take action to implement drivers. The fourth and final step is to measure the progress of the engagement process. Singh noted that the first three steps focus on the return on investment aspect of employee engagement. Singh argued that this approach to building employee engagement was different from other strategies because it addressed employee engagement as a qualifying benefit rather than as a diagnostic tool. Singh argued that this distinction was important as the approach considered both employees and business level strategy.

Bhuvanaiah and Raya (2014) identified several drivers of employee engagement, including (a) meaningful and challenging work, (b) autonomy, (c) career development

opportunities, and (d) efforts on the part of an organization to show that employees are valued. Bhuvanaiah and Raya suggested that additional research should focus on how HR management practices are used to meet the needs of employees and improve engagement and overall satisfaction. Bhuvanaiah and Raya also recognized the importance of understanding the leadership role in the context of motivation and engagement.

Carter and Baghurst (2014) examined the impact of servant leadership on employee engagement among restaurant employees. Their research revealed that servant leadership positively influences employee engagement and leads to increased employee loyalty. When servant leadership practices were used, the restaurant employees reported higher levels of organizational commitment, experienced healthier working relationships, and expressed a willingness to actively strive toward organizational goals.

He, Zhu, and Zheng (2014) explored procedural justice as a driver of employee engagement and developed three propositions. First, based on the group engagement model, He et al. hypothesized that procedural justice would enhance employee engagement through employee organizational identification. Second, they hypothesized that employees with stronger moral identities would be more likely to be engaged in their jobs. Third, the researchers theorized that when procedural justice within an organization is high, an employee's moral identity would be a less significant driver of employee engagement. He et al.'s findings supported their hypotheses.

Taking a slightly different approach, Evangeline and Ragavan (2015) investigated the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on employee engagement. Evangeline and Ragavan noted that when employees are engaged, they give their full attention to the

organization, which, in turn, improves an organization's financial performance. Evangeline and Ragavan attributed the fact that some people are engaged while others are not to the concepts of internal and external motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the result of an inner desire to achieve an outcome, whereas extrinsic motivation is the result of the desire to obtain an external reward or benefit.

Evangeline and Ragavan (2015) found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors influence employee engagement. The result revealed strong, positive relationships between both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and employee engagement. Evangeline cited (a) interesting work, (b) job satisfaction, (c) overall satisfaction, and (d) stress as four important intrinsic factors affecting engagement. In the context of extrinsic factors, (a) job security, (b) monetary compensation, (c) promotion, and (d) recognition were most significant to engagement. Evangeline and Ragavan noted that extrinsic motivation factors have a greater influence on employee engagement than intrinsic factors, but the authors concluded that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors are necessary components of an engaged workforce.

**Employee engagement and workplace spirituality.** Researchers have also examined workplace spirituality as a driver of employee engagement. Roof (2015) conducted an empirical study aimed at understanding the relationship between individual spirituality and employee engagement. Roof found that spirituality was positively and significantly correlated with specific dimensions of engagement (i.e., vigor and dedication). However, spirituality was not directly correlated with absorption. Roof suggested that further research is necessary to understand how factors such as spirituality,

leadership behaviors, cultural influences, and organizational conditions affect employee engagement.

Bhuvanaiah and Raya (2014) noted that engaged employees are more desirable as they are generally more effective at accomplishing tasks whereas disengaged employees are often unsupportive and negative. Employees who are not engaged show little enthusiasm for work and put less effort into their work tasks, resulting in fewer measurable accomplishments (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014). One concern for organizations is that highly engaged employees can become disengaged in some circumstances. However, it is also possible to improve employee engagement levels and encourage individuals with low levels of engagement to become more invested in their organization by fostering a sense of community and shared purpose (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014).

Majeed et al. (2018) argued that organizations must search for strategies to engage employees and linked workplace spirituality to employee engagement. Majeed et al. acknowledged that workplace spirituality and employee engagement are independent topics, but suggested that in some ways the constructs share similar features. Majeed et al. posited that if organizations embraced workplace spirituality, it would also encourage engagement among employees both on an organizational and a personal level. Workplace spirituality represents a sense of utility within the workplace, and Majeed et al. suggested that workplace spirituality offers scholars and practitioners a new perspective for understanding employee engagement.

> The integration of these apparently different topics has the potential to enrich our knowledge and understanding of both, and in the process lead to new and existing

studies that can benefit both the organization and employees. The meaning of workplace spirituality and engagement both suggest a sense of completeness and wholeness. (Majeed et al., 2018, p. 54)

Majeed et al. (2018) developed a theoretical definition of spirituality that incorporated a sense of completeness, and they compared this to a similar aspect of engagement in which employees feel unity within their rational, physical, and emotional selves. Majeed et al. noted that engagement requires the simultaneous investment of these three facets in order to invest fully in routine activities. Majeed et al. also noted that without full engagement, employees are not reaching their full potential.

Naidoo's (2014) recent research in South Africa suggested that workplaces have become stressful environments due to downsizing and restructuring that result in outsourcing, layoffs, and growing discontent over salaries. Employee disengagement as a result of this stress manifests in rising absenteeism, low morale, and poor performance, and these effects impair the ability of an organization to compete in the global marketplace successfully. By allowing employees to express creativity in the workplace, organizations can be more successful, but creativity is difficult to maintain if work is repetitive or lacks meaning (Naidoo, 2014).

Employees are a vital competitive advantage, and organizations must work to retain more talented and valuable employees (Naidoo, 2014). Naidoo (2014) argued that existing motivational models should include elements that address employees' spiritual needs and that workplace spirituality is central to understanding organizational underperformance and individual ineffectiveness. Naidoo asserted that while workplace spirituality can be perceived as controversial, when used effectively, it "allows

employees and leaders to act from personal truth, integrity, values and ethical practices"
(p. 2).

Petchsawang and McLean (2017) adopted Kahn's definition of employee engagement, as the expression of an employee's physical, cognitive, and emotional selves through the performance of job tasks. Conversely, disengaged employees are withdrawn and make fewer physical, cognitive, or emotional contributions to the workplace. Petchsawang and McLean noted that three questions can be used to determine whether an employee exhibits engagement or disengagement:

1. How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance?
2. How safe is it to do so?
3. How available am I to do so? (p. 6)

Petchsawang and McLean (2017) argued that if organizations want to enhance employee engagement, they need to provide challenging work that allows employees to be creative and autonomous. Having variety in their job tasks is important to individuals (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017). Organizations must also attempt to foster nonthreatening work environments where consistent social interactions ensure safety. Further, by providing sufficient resources, organizations demonstrate their availability and investment in employees' wellbeing. Providing individuals with an opportunity for meaningful work is a central concept of workplace spirituality, but Petchsawang and McLean noted that a sense of security within a bounded community is also equally important and inter-related. "When individuals are given the permission to express themselves freely at the spiritual level, it will give them a sense of security" (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017, p. 7).

Saks (2011) conducted a study on the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee engagement to determine how factors such as employee engagement affected the meaning of work. Saks used a model of workplace spirituality that incorporated transcendence, community, and spiritual values. Saks posited that these elements of workplace spirituality influenced meaningfulness in and at work as well as safety and availability. Saks argued that to keep employees actively engaged, organizations need to "provide employees with physical, emotional, and psychological resources" (p. 326).

Saks (2011) noted that adjusting job assignments and providing constructive feedback positively affect employee engagement, but Saks argued that these actions alone may not be sufficient to maintain a high level of engagement over time. Instead, Saks recommended making more substantial changes in the work environment to engage employees on a spiritual level. Saks posited that "to achieve a more complete and holistic form of engagement, there must be a strong connection between individuals and their organization that extends beyond the task, job, or role that one performs" (p. 327).

Like Majeed et al. (2018), Saks (2011) recognized similarities in the constructs of workplace spirituality and employee engagement. Saks argued that workplace spirituality and employee engagement are mutually independent, yet they share many common factors. Saks noted that meaningful work and purpose are recognized as important dimensions of workplace spirituality. Saks compared this to the importance of meaningfulness as a psychological condition required for personal engagement. Saks

concluded, "meaningfulness appears to be at the heart of both workplace spirituality and employee engagement" (p. 328).

Meaningfulness in the workplace is derived from the type of work in which an employee engages rather than from where or how the work is accomplished (Saks, 2011). Thus, the employee's intrinsic motivation to complete the work is an essential component of creating meaning. Saks (2011) also argued that meaningfulness can be derived from a sense of membership in an organization or community, implying that meaningfulness at work can be influenced by group values and goals. Meaning derived from a sense of belonging allows individuals to feel "worthwhile, useful, and valuable" (Saks, 2011, p. 328). Meaning can also be the result of feeling that actions and accomplishments make a difference and are not disregarded (Saks, 2011).

Saks (2011) believed that the similarities between workplace spirituality and employee engagement suggest that the two phenomena can exist simultaneously in an organization. Saks (2011) posited that if organizations embrace workplace spirituality, these practices might encourage employees to become more engaged in their work roles. Saks predicted that workplace spirituality has a positive effect on employee engagement but noted that more research would be necessary to explore the relationship further.

Pradhan and Jena (2016) studied workplace spirituality, employee engagement, and organizational commitment in relation to employee behavior. The authors identified inner peace, meaningful work, and a collaborative work atmosphere as important factors that contribute to employee engagement and organizational commitment. Pradhan and Jena noted that factors related to emotional and spiritual well-being are more closely

related to employee engagement and organizational commitment compared to material concerns such as increased pay. This finding suggests that organizations that introduce a spiritual component in the workplace may benefit more than organizations that focus on more traditional management approaches.

Pradhan and Jena (2016) noted that workplace spirituality is often approached as an issue of person-organization fit (P-O fit). This approach emphasizes the congruence between an employee's personal values and the organization's culture. Pradhan and Jena argued that when individual and organizational values are aligned, a strong bond is created between employer and employee, and outcomes improve for all stakeholders.

The research has shown that the key to employee engagement is to foster intrinsic motivation among workers to support deep and persistent organizational commitment (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017; Pradhan & Jena, 2016). Organizations today cannot hope to retain talented professionals by paying high salaries alone; employees must feel interested and excited about their work environment and that they are contributing to their community (Pradhan & Jena, 2016). Organizations should specifically seek to make employees feel as though they are integrated into a larger system that benefits them both individually and on a community level (Pradhan & Jena, 2016).

**Summary and Conclusions**

Research indicates that the proper alignment of organizational practices and policies combined with leadership and employee awareness of workplace spirituality can generate positive work behaviors and result in organizational success. Furthermore, the body of knowledge on workplace spirituality suggests that allowing workers to integrate

their physical, spiritual, and intellectual needs within the workplace can yield positive results for both individuals and organizations. Workplace spirituality has also been shown to increase employee engagement, job satisfaction, attendance, organizational behavior, commitment, and community involvement. Therefore, organizations benefit when HR managers and leaders foster a culture that allows employees to express their spirituality in the workplace freely.

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a theoretical foundation for the present study. This literature review has examined research on workplace spirituality and employee engagement viewed through the combined lens of spiritual leadership theory, integral theory, and servant leadership theory. The review of the literature has helped to develop a foundation for this study, and the following chapter presents the methodology used to conduct the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore HR practices at organizations where workplace spirituality is supported and where employees are actively encouraged to feel a sense of calling and membership related to their work. The literature review showed that spirituality in the workplace has a positive effect on the organization and individual level (Van Der Walt & De Klerk, 2014). This chapter describes the research method, the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodology used to conduct the study, and the considerations that ensured the trustworthiness of the study. This study represents an attempt to close the gap in the literature by exploring how HR managers and organizations use workplace spirituality to benefit the organization and their employees.

**Research Design and Rationale**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how HR practices can be used to support workplace spirituality and improve employee engagement. To help achieve this objective of this study, I selected a qualitative methodology using a multiple case study approach following guidelines provided by Yin (2014), Merriam (1998) and Stake (2006). Bengtsson (2016) stated that qualitative research provides an understanding of human environments in different circumstances and documents reactions and perspectives on relationships within that environment. There is no flawless research design, and unexpected issues may occur (Yin, 2014). Researchers must adopt the best qualitative design for their study and ensure that data are obtained from the appropriate sources to minimize problems (Bengtsson, 2016).

Qualitative researchers are interested in "how individuals make sense of the world, how they experience events and what meaning they attribute to phenomena" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 7). Qualitative researchers are also more interested in the condition of human experiences than in causal relationships between sets of variables (Bengtsson, 2016; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Quantitative researchers seek to measure occurrences, volumes, or the extent of the relationships between concepts, whereas qualitative researchers seek to provide a rich descriptive detail of the phenomenon under investigation (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In qualitative studies, data are most often collected in the participants' natural habitat. There is also a subjective element to qualitative research as participants' and researchers' interpretations of the data are considered during the analysis process (Merriam, 1998; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

After analyzing other qualitative research methods, I determined that the case study approach was the most appropriate method for exploring how HR professional use workplace spirituality practices to promote employee engagement. According to Yin (2009), a case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). Yin further explained that case studies typically examine a "technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points" (p. 18). The case study approach requires researchers to triangulate multiple data sources (Yin, 2014). Yazan (2015) noted that a case study focuses on the *how* and *why* questions of the event of interest. Stake (2006) recommended that a case study's main focus should be on participants'

experiences and knowledge of specific contexts. This perspective allows researchers to provide detailed descriptions of the social and political persuasions and controls relevant to the case being investigated. Case study research can focus on an individual, group, or collective, and the studies can range in complexity from simple to highly complex (Yin, 2014).

Merriam (1998) described the case study methodology as an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process or a social unit" (p. 13). Yazan (2015) identified three different case study designs: holistic, single, and multiple. Holistic designs focus on a single unit of analysis, whereas an embedded multiple case design requires multiple units of analyses. Scholars should use the design that is appropriate for their research and provides them with the maximum opportunity to answer their research questions. A case study design should also be selected based on the strengths and limitations of each design and the ability to effectively document the phenomenon of interest.

I selected a multiple case study design to achieve the research goal and obtain truthful and authentic answers to my research questions. Yin (2014) suggested using a multiple case approach when studying individuals or a group that has a mutual experience or interest in common. A multiple case study approach allows a researcher to use their chosen conceptual framework to compare multiple cases within their study (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014).

I studied HR professionals' perspectives and experiences to describe how workplace spirituality is used to promote or support employee engagement.

Using the multiple case design allowed me to examine how HR professionals who

practice spirituality in the workplace improve employee attitudes and behaviors. This

information provided a greater understanding of the participants' experiences with

spirituality in the work environment. Case study designs allow researchers to collect data

from individuals in their own words. Using this method allowed me to document,

observe, interview, and gather historical records as well as other data that provided an in-

depth and rich understanding of workplace spirituality in the context of HR practices and

employee engagement (see De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014).

**Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative studies, researchers are required to explain their role as it pertains to

the research process. Researchers must understand their role in the study as well as the

manner in which their position can limit the design. The researcher is the essential factor

in the planning and implementation phase of a study (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani,

Shoghi, & Cheraghi, 2014). The researcher is the primary instrument in case study

research (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) noted that researchers are responsible for guiding and

ensuring the integrity of the study. In the qualitative research, the researcher is engaged in

every step of the study from defining the concept to collecting the data (Sanjari et al.,

2014). Researchers conduct interviews, transcribe responses, analyze data, verify

findings, and present the concepts and themes identified during the study (Sanjari et al.,

2014).

Sanjari et al. (2014) noted that effective qualitative researchers cultivate specific

characteristics. These characteristics include the ability to (a) respond to environmental

challenges, (b) react to unexpected circumstances, (c) collect separate segments of information on numerous levels concurrently, (d) comprehensively identify situations, (e) translate data when it becomes accessible, and (f) present feedback quickly. Researchers, as the primary data collection instrument, are responsible for improving their research abilities as their interpersonal skills are vital in naturalistic settings, and the research procedures and outcomes rely heavily on researchers' abilities (Sanjari et al., 2014; Yin, 2014).

Yin (2014) stated that case study researchers should possess unique skills such as the ability to develop clear substantive questions, the ability to be an active listener, and the ability to interpret and transcribe data fairly and impartially. Yin also suggested that researchers must possess a thorough understanding of the phenomenon of interest when using a case study design so that the topic can be explored using multiple approaches. Yin cautioned that it is essential for researchers to understand their personal biases. Researchers can minimize their biases by being sensitive to the evidence, even if it is contrary to their own beliefs (Sanjari et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). Researchers also must remain cognizant of their role as the primary instrument to ensure research is conducted ethically, and in doing so, researchers should incorporate ethical considerations, control risk, and demonstrate respect and justice for all participants (National Institute of Health, 2014).

In qualitative research, researchers must recognize the potential for bias (Yin, 2014). Researchers can minimize the potential for bias by examining their preconceptions about a topic, population, or participant (Sanjari et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). My interest in

workplace spirituality stemmed from my experience as an HR manager observing

employees in the workplace who were disgruntled and disengaged due to company

layoffs and organizational restructuring. I was aware of my potential bias, and I took

careful measures not to allow my perspective to influence or hinder the outcome of this

study.

Sanjari et al. (2014) noted that researchers must be careful when establishing

relationships with participants because it can raise ethical concerns such as problems with

privacy. Personal relationships between researchers and participants can also create

problems engaging in open and honest interaction on a topic (Sanjari et al., 2014; Yin,

2014). Finally, relationships between researchers and participants can cause a researcher

to inadvertently misrepresent a participant's experiences (Sanjari et al., 2014).

To diminish as much bias as possible, researchers should practice their

interviewing techniques, observe the participants' body language, and be aware of their

own body language. Researchers should avoid any reactions that indicate disapproval or

approval regarding participants' responses (Sanjari, et al., 2014; Yin, 2014). Another step

to diminish or take responsibility for researcher bias is to audio record each interview and

analyze the data to identify possible inadvertent bias during the interview process

(Sanjari, et al., 2014). In dissertation research, reviewers and committee members can

assess the research questions to determine if they are written from a biased perspective or

an objectivity perspective. I took all possible steps to prevent researcher bias from

undermining this study.

I specified in the consent form precisely what data would be collected and how I was going to use it, based on Sanjari et al.'s (2014) recommendations. I clarified the nature of the study, the participants' role, my identity, the school name, the research objective, and how the results would be published and used. I also used appropriate management practices to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, as outlined by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the American Counseling Association's (ACA, 2014) set of laws. I had a responsibility to instill trust in the quality and accuracy of the qualitative design and implement safe procedures throughout the study that aligned with the ethical standards of the IRB. Only by fulfilling this responsibility did I ensure that the research environment was secure, protecting the participants from harm during the interview process.

## Methodology

The details of the methodology are presented in the following sections. First, information is provided on the logic behind the process of participant selection. Next, the instrumentation is discussed, followed by the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection. The final section addresses the data analysis plan used to answer the research question.

### Participant Selection Logic

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the experiences of HR managers using workplace spirituality practices to promote employee engagement. According to Stake (2006), participants should be recruited based on their ability to contribute relevant experiences to the study. Snowball sampling, which Robinson (2014)

noted has been called chain sampling, chain-referral, and referral sampling, is the data collection method selected for this study. Snowball sampling allows researchers to recruit participants that are members of hard to reach populations and populations that are under-researched (Robinson, 2014). The snowballing technique relies on participants to identify friends or colleagues who meet the criteria of the study and refer them as additional participants.

I selected three initial participants from a group of HR professionals that have 5 or more years of work experience. The study's target population focused on HR professionals because these individuals are responsible for implementing spiritual leadership practices within an organization. Participant selection was based on a single-case selection strategy (see Robinson, 2014). The case selection process focused on organizations where workplace spirituality and servant leadership practices are being used. I used my professional contacts in the HR field to identify the initial cases that accurately represent the phenomenon under study. Following the completion of the interviews with each of the initial participants, those individuals were asked to recommend other HR professionals that fit the parameters of the study. The snowball referral process was essential as HR professionals represent a hard-to-reach population, and it can be difficult to gain access to these professionals.

When using snowball sampling, the chain of referral continues until a researcher has reached the appropriate number of participants (Robinson, 2014; Waters, 2015). It was expected that six participants would be adequate for the present study. The individuals recommended for this study by their friends or colleagues were more likely to

meet the criteria and to be honest and open when sharing their stories. For these reasons and because HR professionals constitute a hard-to-reach population, snowball sampling was the most appropriate sampling method.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher is the primary instrument tool and the sole collector of the data (Yin, 2014). I employed data collection strategies such as observations, in-depth semistructured interviews, document review, and audio recording of interviews. Developing an interview strategy allowed the participants to verbalize their experiences and perspectives on the topic while I recorded and documented the conversations (Sanjari et al., 2014; Yin, 2014).

Qualitative research interviews are designed to help researchers understand the world from the participants' perspective, uncover the meaning of participants' experiences, and to explore participants' environments (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Yin, 2014). The interview process is based on conversations between the researcher and participants about the participants' everyday lives and how they make sense of their experiences. "Knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is an interchange of views between two individuals conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 2).

The purpose of the interview as a data collection method is to structure the conversation with careful questioning and listening techniques for the purpose of obtaining a thorough knowledge of data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Yin, 2014). The interview process is not a conversation between mutual friends, because the researcher

defines and controls the process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The use of semistructured interviews allowed me to build a relationship with the participants by clarifying my role as a researcher and my experience as an HR professional. Researchers must create a safe and comfortable environment to encourage participants to be open, honest, and thorough when answering the questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Yin, 2014). The purpose of the semistructured interview process is to reconstruct the factual details of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Semistructured interviews allow researchers to ensure that their data collection processes are rigorous, and all participants are treated equally (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). The use of a semistructured interview guide increases a researcher's objectivity and promotes the trustworthiness of the data (Kallio et al., 2016; Yin, 2014). Carefully designed interview questions helped focus the participants' definitions and descriptions of workplace spirituality and clarify the participants' relationships with the organization's employees. The questions designed to guide the interview process for this study are outlined in Appendix A.

**Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants for this study. Waters (2015) noted that snowball sampling is usually regarded as an "effective sampling technique that allows the researcher to recruit participants who are difficult or are hidden" (p. 367). HR managers are considered difficult to access as they function as organizational gatekeepers and often refuse participation in research based on potential liability or an organizational reluctance to participate in social science research (see Dusek, Yurova, & Ruppel, 2015).

I was the primary data collector during the interviewing process. The participants were given the choice to complete interviews face-to-face or via technologies such as Skype, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger.

The participants recruited for this study were HR professionals working in organizations that promote workplace spirituality. To participate in the study HR professionals must have been in their position for 5 years or longer and understand the organization's practices and culture. The age of the participants was not a factor because the experience of the participants was the focus of this study.

The study consisted of seven cases. Yin (2009) suggested that researchers who conduct a multiple case study should perform five to six replications (interviews). Yin also stated that the use of multiple case design should follow a replication design rather than using sample logic. Therefore, the cases must be chosen very carefully. When conducting multiple case study research, saturation is not a relevant concern (Robinson, 2014). Instead, replication logic of patterns and techniques is more important as it allows the researcher to make comparison across cases to analyze common themes (Yin, 2014, 2009). Interviewing seven participants allowed me to evaluate each participant as a single case and compare them with the other participants to identify any replicated themes (Yin, 2014, 2009).

The data collection process entailed the use of semistructured interviews with seven participants. Data collection began after obtaining a signed consent form from initial participant indicating they were willing to participate in the study. The informed consent document provided participants with information about the nature of the study

and my contact information if the participants had questions. The participants were told in the consent form that the interview would last between 60 and 90 minutes. Upon receiving the informed consent document, participants had the opportunity to decline to participate in the study.

Once the informed consent document was signed and returned, I scheduled a time for the interview to take place. I scheduled the interviews based on the participants' preferences using Skype, telephone, or other means of technology. Interview dates and times were scheduled to accommodate the participants' work and personal schedules, and I was mindful of not going over the scheduled time committed for the interview.

During the interview, the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions, and I explained the measures taken to protect their identity and ensure their confidentiality and privacy. Before beginning the interview, I explained the interview process so that the participants were comfortable and knew what to expect. I explained that I would record the participants' responses and also take notes. I informed the participants that the purpose of the audio recording was to ensure that I could transcribe and replay the interviews and accurately document their stories.

Before beginning the interviews, I asked participants for permission to follow up with them by telephone or email or get further clarification if needed. I also explained to the participants that a second interview was needed to complete the member checking process. Member checking allowed participants to read over their interview transcripts and make changes or further clarify their responses.

After obtaining the participants' permission to record the data, I used both an audio recorder and an Echo Smart Pen (LiveScribe) to record the information provided by the participants. Van Thienen, Sajjadi, and De Troyer (2015) noted that the LiveScribe Echo Smartpen writes like a normal pen but can record audio using a tiny infrared digital camera in the pressure tip of the pen. This camera is activated every time something is written on paper. The smartpen has a small display that can present information, a microphone to record audio, and a built-in speaker that can play audio recordings. The pen also has a built-in memory that can be used to store what has been recorded.

The use of a digital pen allowed me to write notes while recording the live interview. I used the pen to document my field notes as well as complete the observation sheet. I used both audio devices to ensure the reliability of the data collection process. After completing all the interviews, the field notes and audio recordings were transcribed and analyzed to identify recurring themes.

As part of the data collection process, I also collected data in the form of organizational documents. These documents included internal memos regarding HR practices, pages from an organization's website, and organizational policies published to clarify an organization's position on spirituality in the workplace. The collection of documents and data for review added depth to the study as I was able to compare participants' subjective interview responses to more objective organizational policies. Triangulation adds to the credibility of qualitative case study research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

**Data Analysis Plan**

The use of a structured interview process was essential to control the study and establish consistency across all the cases (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). After transcribing the interviews, the documents were saved and organized into a computer file. The written documents were kept in a locked file cabinet. The research questions served as a framework for guiding the interviews and also aided in structuring the data analysis process. After conducting each interview, a manual coding process was used to analyze and organize the data. During data analysis, researchers analyze and identify participants' concerns or questions about the topic and compare participants' responses to other cases in the study (Stake, 2006).

The data analysis followed a six-stage process adopted from Glover (2016) and Manley-Johnson (2012). This process was based on the integration of seminal work by Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) and Colaizzi (1978). The process was in harmony with the qualitative case study research design and analysis technique as it allows researchers to gain a holistic view of the participants' experiences in their natural surroundings (Baskarada, 2014).

The six-stage data analysis process consisted of (a) immersion, (b) understanding, (c) abstraction, (d) synthesis and theme development, (e) illumination and illustration of the phenomena, (f) integration and critique (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Bowers & Green, 2013; Glover, 2016; Manley-Johnson, 2012; Setati & Nkosi, 2017). Using this process, I identified the fundamental structure of the phenomenon. Table 2 presents information on the tasks completed at each stage of the data analysis process.

Table 2. *Stages of Data Analysis*

Stage

Higgs (2007) explained that the immersion stage allows researchers to engage with the meaning of the data or make *sense* of the participants' texts.

Stage 2: Understanding. In Stage 2, I identified the first order constructs and began to code the data. First order constructs were identified when participants exchanged information and ideas using their own words and terminology (Setati & Nkosi, 2017). The second stage gave me the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the data based on the first-order constructs. Understanding the first-order constructs involved identifying my perceptions of the participants' specific words.

The first order constructs were checked at each stage by reading back the participants' story and ask probing questions throughout the interview (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). "This iterative form of member checking provides for a richer and deeper understanding" of the participants' experiences and perspectives concerning spirituality in the workplace (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007, p. 624). I reviewed each participant's recorded interview for the last time to listen for meaningful words or phrases that focus on the main point of the participants' experiences and ideas.

Stage 3: Abstraction. The third stage of the data analysis process was abstraction. Abstraction involves the identification of second-order constructs through the grouping of themes by subthemes. In this stage, I formed my own interpretations of each participant's story to form a blueprint of those experiences. Abstraction provides researchers with a richer and greater understanding of the phenomenon being developed (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Setati & Nkosi, 2017). At the end of this stage, all appropriate data were grouped under the proper construct for each subtheme. This stage enables

researchers to answer the central research question along with the subquestions (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Setati & Nkosi, 2017). The words and phrases related to the themes and subthemes were documented separately for each case to identify points of similarity among the cases.

**Stage 4: Synthesis and theme development.** Stage 4 consisted of the development of themes from the first three stages of the analysis process. In this stage, themes and subthemes were further clarified, reviewed, and re-reviewed using all the data to establish relationships (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Setati & Nkosi, 2017). During this stage, researchers continuously move "backwards and forwards between the literature, the research data and the earlier analysis, moving from parts to whole following a process informed by the hermeneutic circle" (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007, p. 625). As part of the synthesis and theme development stage, I reflected on the development of my interpretations during the writing and articulation process.

**Stage 5: Illuminating and illustrating the phenomenon.** In this stage, I examined the connections between the literature and the themes and subthemes that were identified from the data in the previous stages. I also examined the themes and subthemes in relation to their connection as the basis to re-establish the participants' experiences in their own words in order to illuminate their experiences with spirituality in the workplace. During this stage, researchers should highlight the key results from the data using passages identified in each case (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). I also examined each participant's timeline to guarantee that the constructs were true to the participants' experiences concerning spirituality in the workplace.

**Stage 6: Integration.** The final stage of the data analysis process was concerned with the integration and critique of the findings. In this stage, researchers analyze their work by reviewing the themes that have emerged from the data to ensure accuracy in the coding process (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). The integration process provides the researcher with an understanding of the themes developed from the literature that influence the findings of the study and perhaps provide scholars and organizations with an understanding of the importance of the findings (Setati & Nkosi, 2017). This process also ensured that I capture the significances of the participants' experiences in the emerging themes.

At the end of the analysis process, I scheduled follow up appointments with each participant to review the transcripts of their initial interview for accuracy. The follow-up interviews allowed the participants to read and make changes to their answers and ensure that their responses were captured truthfully and honestly according to their own words. This process also ensured that all the participants' beliefs and ideas were represented accurately.

Concurrently with the review of the interview data, I conducted a document review to triangulate the participants' responses with other data sources. The document review included available print and electronic media that addressed the organizational mission, values, and policies regarding HR practices and workplace spirituality in the companies where the participants worked. To avoid unintentionally identifying the participants through their organizations, no specific details were shared from the document review when writing the final data analysis report. Instead, I used the

document review process to contextualize the interview data, understand the participants'

responses, and validate the credibility of the study's findings.

**Issues of Trustworthiness**

Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that the terms trustworthiness and validity are used

interchangeably in qualitative research to ensure rigor and credibility in a study. In

qualitative research, trustworthiness refers to the methods that researchers use to

guarantee that the results of their data are reliable and representative of the experiences of

the participants. Trustworthiness in qualitative research cannot be guaranteed completely.

Trustworthiness is both a system and a goal. Having a credible study is not achieved

through specific methodological strategies but by using techniques that heighten the rigor

and validity of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2014).

Creswell and Miller (2000) stated that qualitative researchers use different lenses

to establish validity and trustworthiness. "The qualitative lenses are viewpoints that are

not based on scores, instruments, or research but lenses that are established using the

viewpoints of individuals who conduct, participate, read, and review the study" (p.125).

The different lenses that researchers use to validate their research are based on the

researchers' perspectives, participants' perspective, and the perspectives of others outside

the study such as reviewers and dissertation committee members (Creswell & Miller,

2000; Yin, 2014). Other methods that researchers can use to establish trustworthiness or

rigor in their study include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Each of these concepts is described in the following sections.

**Credibility**

Credibility refers to whether a study effectively measures the phenomenon of interest or produces findings that answer the research questions and fulfill the study's purpose (Setati & Nkosi, 2017; Wahyuni, 2012). Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted that researchers should establish the credibility of their study by implementing strategies to increase trustworthiness such as "triangulation, member checking … , presenting thick description, discussing negative cases, having prolonged engagement in the field, using peer debriefers, and/or having an external auditor" (p. 189). To established credibility, trustworthiness, and rigor for this study, I employed the strategies of member checking, audit trails, and peer review.

**Member checking.** Member checking is a technique that researchers use to provide participants with an opportunity to discuss the different parts of the research, clarify how they feel about the research process, and verify the data and the interpretation of their story (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2014). In the present study, member checking allowed participants to verify the accuracy of their statements and their interview transcripts. The participants' input was essential to my ability to provide an in-depth interpretation of the data. The participants' input was used to clarify the themes and experiences of their story (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The goal of using the participants' feedback during the data analysis process was to create a dialogue within the study and gain a greater understanding of the participants' responses. Member checking also provides an opportunity for feedback or questions pertaining to the data collection, the results, or validation of the participants' experiences

(Setati & Nkosi, 2017). Obtaining validation from the participants established the credibility, authenticity, and integrity of the research relating to spirituality in the workplace (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

**Audit trail.** Creswell and Miller (2000) explained that an audit trail is a record of extensive documentation that details the research process. An audit trail includes information on the processes used to record the data, and it can entail the creation of a research journal to document the order of the data collection. Both Bowen (2009) and Li (2004) noted that the audit process is an examination of the research methods that validate the raw data. In an audit trail, researchers explain in detail the decisions that were made and the processes that were used to collect, record, and analyze the data. For a researcher to conduct an intensive audit, certain documents should be retained for crossing checking purposes. These documents include raw materials from the interviews, observation notes, field notes and records collected from the research site, and any additional data scores (Bowen, 2009). The audit trail confirms the researchers' findings by ensuring that the themes, patterns, and concepts are identified directly from the data (Anney, 2014).

**Peer review.** During the research process, I sought peer review support to establish the trustworthiness of my study's findings. This support included feedback from faculty members, dissertation committee members, friends, other doctoral students, and the department director. Peer review is important as peers can challenge researchers on their assumptions, biases, and interpretations (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Comments from others assist researchers in improving the quality of their findings (Anney, 2014).

Individuals reviewing a study should pay close attention to the background information,

the data analysis process, the research questions, the data collection methods, and the

findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The goal of peer review is to engage in a dialogue with

the researcher about every area of the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

**Transferability**

Transferability refers to the probability that the findings from a study are

applicable to other groups in similar environments or situations (Cope, 2014; Setati &

Nkosi, 2017). A qualitative study has met this criterion if the findings have meaning to

individuals that have not participated in the study and the readers' can apply the results to

their own experiences and environment (Cope, 2014). Bitsch (2005) noted that the

"researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through thick

descriptions and purposeful sampling" (p. 85). When a researcher presents an in-depth

description of the analysis and the participants were recruited purposively, it increases the

transferability of the study (Anney, 2014). Cope (2014) noted that researchers should

present enough information on the participants and the framework of the research for the

reader to determine whether the findings are "fit or transferable" (p. 89).

**Dependability**

The dependability of a study is determined once the researcher has used

triangulation and demonstrated the credibility of the results (Setati & Nkosi, 2017). Cope

(2014) noted that researchers achieve dependability when another researcher agrees with

the decisions made at every stage of the research process. A study can also be deemed

dependable if the results of the study can be replicated using participants with the same

qualifications or experiences (Koch, 2006). Researchers can increase dependability by using "an audit trail, a code-recode strategy, stepwise replication, triangulation, and peer examination or iterator comparisons" (Anney, 2014, p. 278). In this study, I used an audit trail, member checking, triangulation, and peer review to increase the dependability of the findings.

**Confirmability**

Researchers demonstrate confirmability by explaining how the conclusions and interpretations were achieved and explaining how the results were obtained directly from the collection of the data. In reporting qualitative research, this is illustrated by using quotes from the participants that detail each theme derived from the interviews (Cope, 2014). Confirmability is achieved when others can validate the results in order to guarantee the results of the study accurately communicate the understandings and experiences of the participants, instead of the researcher's preferences (Cope, 2014; Wahyuni, 2012).

The literature suggests that confirmability is accomplished through audit trails, reflexive journaling, and triangulation (Anney, 2014; Bowen, 2009; Koch, 2006; Wahyuni, 2012). The documentation of the collected data and the research progress should be maintained in the form of written notes from the field and summaries of the coding process. A written record serves to provide an audit trail and allows the research process and the findings to be reviewed based on the step by step methods used to conduct the study. Peer collaboration and member checking during the coding process can also assist with confirmability (Wahyuni, 2012).

**Ethical Procedures**

To adhere to the highest ethical standards, I obtained approval from Walden University's IRB before beginning the research process. The IRB protocol ensures that all human participants are protected from harm and treated with dignity and respect. It was necessary to submit an application to IRB with details regarding the research, the participants, and the data collection and analysis processes. The purpose of the IRB review was to ensure that the benefits of research conducted at Walden outweigh the potential risks. The IRB ethics review provides clear, timely feedback to ensure all research conducted at the university meet the university's standards. The IRB process helps to ensure that student researchers use research designs that minimize participants' safety and privacy risks and that any risks associated with a study are proportionate in comparison to potential benefits. The IRB process required the completion of an informed consent document to ensure that participants were aware of their rights and there was no opportunity for me to inadvertently pressure or coerce the participants.

To adhere to the protocol of the IRB standards, all the participants read and signed a consent form. The consent form provided a detailed outline of the nature and purpose of the study, my role in the study, the steps used to protect the confidentiality of the participants, and a description of how the findings would be published. The participants were informed of their rights to refuse or terminate their commitment to participate in the study at any time throughout the interview process. All audio tapes and written documents were locked in a secure file cabinet in my home office. I was the only person handling the data outside of the person hired to review and transcribe the audio

recordings. The participants' names and the names of their organizations were removed

from the transcripts to protect their confidentially and prevent identifying information

from being inadvertently included in the reported results. Participants were given

pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Participants were not exposed to any emotional or physical harm during this

study. I ensured that there were no conflicts of interest. I had not worked with any of the

study's participants in the last 5 years, nor was I employed at the organizations where

they worked. This ensured that I had no management, supervisory, or leadership authority

over the lives of the targeted participants, and they could not be coerced into participating

in the study. As an HR professional, I followed the guidelines set by Walden University's

IRB to avoid any appearance of bias or favoritism toward the study's participants.

**Summary**

This chapter began with an explanation of the research method, the research

design, and the rationale for selecting a multiple case study design. The use of qualitative

case studies has increased in popularity among scholars in recent years (Hyett, Kenny, &

Dickson-Swift, 2014). A multiple case study design was used because it allowed me to

conduct an in-depth study of workplace spirituality within the real-life context of the

participants' work experiences. Case studies are pertinent to organization and

management studies as they advance the understanding of the operations demonstrated

within natural settings and work environment (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014).

This chapter also presented a detailed explanation of the methodology, which

included information on the participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for

recruitment and participation, and data collection processes. An explanation of the data analysis plan, included an outline of the six stages (i.e., immersion, understanding, abstraction, synthesis and theme development, illumination and illustration of the phenomena, and integration and critique) that were used during the analysis process. The chapter also documented the plan for analyzing the data, highlighting the strategies to employ trustworthiness within this study. This chapter concluded with a discussion of ethical procedures aligned with the standards provided by Walden University's IRB. In Chapters 4 and 5, the findings and conclusion of the study are discussed.

Chapter 4: Results

On September 09, 2019, I was granted the approval from Walden's IRB to conduct a study on HR practices that support workplace spirituality in U.S. organizations. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to develop a better understanding of how HR practices can be used to support workplace spirituality and improve employee engagement, especially in the areas of membership and sense of calling. This qualitative study used a multiple case study approach, which was appropriate because examining multiple cases allowed me to develop an understanding of the perspectives and experiences of HR professionals at different organizations.

Chapter 4 contains an interpretation of the data collected to address the research questions. The chapter begins with a methodological recap that explains the method of sampling, the screening process used to identify and select cases, the procedures used to conduct the interviews, and the data collection and analysis processes. The methodological recap is followed by a description of the seven sample participants. The description of the sample includes information about each participant's personal demographics, spiritual background, and work experience as an HR professional. Next, the thematic results are presented. The results of the study are presented based on the emergent themes that were identified during the analysis process. The themes are then discussed in relation to the research question, and the analysis is evaluated in terms of the coding process, the evidence of trustworthiness, and the transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

**Methodological Recap**

**Method of Sampling**

The sample included seven HR professionals that worked in organizations that promoted or embraced principles associated with workplace spirituality. A purposive snowball sampling approach was followed when selecting participants. A purposive sampling approach ensured that the participants' experiences were relevant to the research questions and addressed the purpose of the study. All participants who volunteered to participate in this study met the criteria outlined in the screening process described in Chapter 3. Participant age was not a factor for this study because the focus was on length of work experience. Participants were required to be currently employed as HR professionals and have 5 or more years of work experience in the field of HR to be eligible for the study.

I employed a mixture of strategies to recruit participants, including posting flyers on Facebook, LinkedIn, and HR websites that I am a member of such as SHRM Networking Group, HR Manager Talent Solutions, Walden Facebook, and LinkedIn: HR (#1 Human Resources Group). I also accessed my personal and professional network to inform potential candidates about my research through a process of snowball sampling. Participants were offered a $25 gift card for their participation in the study. My recruitment materials included my phone number and email address, and interested individuals were invited to contact me to learn more about the study. A total of 21 potential participants contacted me regarding the study. I replied to each of these individuals by sending a formal invitation email that had additional details about the

requirements of the research. Out of the 21 potential participants, eight individuals did

not meet the criteria of the study, three individuals declined to participate after learning

more about the study, and three individuals did not respond. I interviewed the remaining

seven participants.

I found recruiting participants for this study challenging as the target population

of HR professionals constitutes a hard to reach population. The first week, I secured only

one participant who saw the IRB approved flyer and invitation on LinkedIn. After

completing the first interview, I asked the participant to share the flyer and invitation on

her LinkedIn and Facebook page. I also asked her to refer potential colleagues that might

meet the criteria of the study, but this participant was unable to provide any referrals.

I shared the invitation flyer that was approved by IRB on my Facebook and

LinkedIn page. I asked my friends on Facebook and LinkedIn to share on their page on a

continuous basis until I reached the number of participants needed for the study. I also

shared the invitation flyer in Facebook and LinkedIn groups where I am a volunteer

member. I attended a MarketPlace Conference in November of 2019, where

organizations that practice workplace spirituality come together to empower and

encourage each other in their faith and business endeavors. I engaged in networking at

the conference and provided my contact information to individuals who indicated they

might be interested in participating.

I received a phone call from two business owners that attended the conference to

notify me that they were allowing their HR professionals to participate in my study. I

received two participants from attending the conference, four participants reached out to

me from seeing the flyers on Facebook, and the last participant heard about my research

from a friend and sent me an email wanting to know more about my research. We set up

an appointment to discuss my study. Based on that phone call, I was introduced to a HR

professional who agreed to participate in my study. I was successful in completing all the

face-to-face interviewing 3 months after receiving IRB approval.

**Screening Process**

Over a 3-month period, the recruiting and screening process produced a total of

seven participants for the study, which surpassed the targeted sample size by one. Once

the participants responded to the email invitation, a time was scheduled to complete the

screening questionnaire to determine their eligibility. The screening process ensured that

participants met the criteria of the study. The screening process served as an appropriate

assessment of the interview guide, with the participants demonstrating an understanding

of the definition of relevant terms and of the purpose of the study, as well as a

competence to answer the questions without hesitation. Three of the participants were

identified through snowball sampling. The remaining four participants learned of the

study through informational flyers distributed through social networking websites.

Before beginning any data collection, I emailed each participant a consent form.

They were required to read and sign the consent form to be included in the study. Once I

received a signed copy of the consent formed, I scheduled and conducted the interviews. I

emailed and called the participants 2 days before the scheduled interviews to confirm the

appointments. I also informed the participants that the study was voluntary. Participants

were free to terminate their participation at any time.

**Interview Procedures**

I conducted the interview process using Zoom, a face-to-face conference software. I chose to use Zoom to allow face-to-face conferencing because of the convenience, time savings, and the fact that no traveling was necessary. The participants were able to take part in the interview in the security of their own homes, which also bolstered the confidentiality of the process. Because each participant's interviewing site was their home, there was no evidence that organizational conditions influenced their experiences, nor were there any interpretations during the interview process. I was the primary person collecting the data. As the highest risk of bias and integrity in this study, I was careful not to interject my perspective into the data collection process. As a result, the interviews were recorded and transcribed to eliminate the need to rely on memory or note-taking as the sole sources of data.

Before beginning the interviews, each participant was allowed to read the consent form and ask questions concerning the form and the study. The participants were also informed verbally that their participation was voluntary, and their shared information would be confidential. The participants emailed a signed copy of the consent form and kept a copy of the consent form for their records.

During the interviews, all the participants were asked the same set of questions. The questions were provided in advance to the participants in the form of an interview guide. I conscientiously crafted the interview guide to draw out detailed accounts of the participants' experiences and perspectives of working in an organization that promoted or supported spirituality in the workplace. At the end of the interview, each participant was

offered a $25 Visa gift card for their participation. All but three participants decline the
$25 Visa card compensation.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

At the beginning of each interview, I reiterated that they would be audio-recorded
and that I would take written notes as well. Each participant gave me permission to
record and take notes during the interview. After setting up the recording in Zoom, we
proceeded with the interview. All participants were engaged and excited to discuss their
personal and work-related experiences pertaining to spirituality. The interviews lasted
approximately 40 minutes; however, two of the interviews lasted over 60 minutes.

This qualitative multiple case study relied on data collected from a variety of
sources, including in-depth face-to-face interviews conducted via Zoom conference,
telephone contacts, email contacts, field notes, and websites of companies where the
participants worked. I commenced the interview using the IRB-approved interview guide
and protocol. I asked the open-ended questions designed for this study, while attentively
listening to the participants' answers (Yin, 2014). At the appropriate time during the
interview, I ask probing, follow-up questions to clarify my understanding of the
participants' experiences. The participants shared stories illustrating their personal and
work-related perspectives on workplace spirituality.

During a pause in the interview, I reviewed the answers with the participants to
make sure that I captured their perspective correctly. This process encouraged the
participants to add to or clarify their answers. I documented the written field notes on the
formal interview guide for each participant to manage my thoughts and record potential

follow up questions as they occurred to me. At the end of each interview, the participants were given an opportunity to provide additional information that they deemed important to the study.

The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed using Temi.com, an online transcription company that I hired. I considered several different transcription services but selected Temi.com because the company offered a cost-effective and reliable transcription service that produced a complete transcript in approximately two to three hours. Temi.com transcribed the audio recordings into PDF documents that were emailed to me. I then compared the transcripts against the Zoom recordings to verify that audio was transcribed accurately. I made my corrections to the documents and then sent the documents to each participant to allow them the opportunity to review the interview transcript, make necessary changes, and clarify any information discussed during the initial interview. All participants reviewed their transcripts and agreed that their interview was accurately captured by Temi.com. The transcribed PDF document was emailed back to me with each participant's explicit permission to use their story and experiences in the study.

The data analysis followed a six-stage process described by Glover (2016) and Manley-Johnson (2012). The six stages included (a) immersion, (b) understanding, (c) abstraction, (d) synthesis and theme development, (e) illumination and illustration of the phenomena, and (f) integration and critique (Glover, 2016; Manley-Johnson, 2012). The data analysis resulted in the creation of first- and second-order codes that I used to identify patterns and themes in the data. I took steps to ensure the transferability,

credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study's findings, and these steps are described later in this chapter.

## Description of the Sample

The initial anticipated sample size for this study was six participants; however, a seventh individual working in an organization publicly described as a spiritual company became available for an interview during the data collection process. I decided to interview Participant 7 for the rich data he could provide to the study. The following subsections provide a brief summary of each participant.

### Participant 1

The first participant that was interviewed worked as a culture and development lead for a market research company. Participant 1 was a woman with over 25 years of work experience as an HR professional. Despite extensive experience in HR, Participant 1 had transitioned to her current company within the last 3 years. Discussing the meaning of spirituality, Participant 1 stated that spirituality consisted of values and morals. "It's what I hold dear; it's my belief system." Participant 1 equated workplace spirituality to the "organization's core values," which Participant 1 explained were expressed through the company's vision, mission, and belief system. Taking a comprehensive perspective, Participant 1 asserted that workplace spirituality is achieved by communicating organizational belief systems, future goals, and organizational values to employees to create synergy.

**Participant 2**

Participant 2 was a woman with over 20 years of work experience as a HR professional. Participant 2 worked for a company that provided HR consulting services to other organizations. The organization where Participant 2 worked provided recruitment and training services and managed HR compliance for their clients. When asked to define spirituality and workplace spirituality, Participant 2 defined spirituality as a personal belief in God and explained that workplace spirituality was the application of faith-based principles to improve transparency, communication, and organizational practices. Participant 2 explained that the application of workplace spirituality resulted in "everyone working together to meet a common goal such as happy employees [or] processes working together for profits." Examples of faith-based principles cited by Participant 2 included integrity, empathy, devotion, and loyalty. These values were reflected both in the participant's responses and on the participant's website in discussions on leadership coaching and the qualities of a good leader. Participant 2 equated integrity with leaders doing what they promised and being transparent in their actions. Empathy referred to the fact that leaders at Participant 2's organization express care and concern for employees and customers, and this care and concern also fostered employee and customer devotion and loyalty to the organization and its goals.

**Participant 3**

Participant 3 was a woman HR consultant. Like Participant 2, the company that Participant 3 worked for provided HR services to other organizations. Participant 3's company focused primarily on helping small businesses meet their HR needs. Participant

3 had over 7 years of senior leadership experience in the field of HR. Defining

spirituality, Participant 3 stated, "What spirituality means to me on a personal level is a

connection between myself and a higher power." Participant 3 elaborated, "I believe

we're all spiritual beings. We're emotional creatures, and so we connect in that manner."

Participant 3 then expanded on her view of workplace spirituality, "As far as it relates to

the workplace… I believe it [workplace spirituality] starts with the leadership."

Participant 3 believed that the actions of departmental leaders set an example of

workplace spirituality among the organization's employees.

**Participant 4**

The fourth participant that was interviewed worked as a corporate recruiter for an

IT company specializing in healthcare technology. Participant 4 was a woman with a total

of 5 years of work experience as a HR professional. The primary focus of Participant 4's

HR experience was recruitment and team building. Participant 4 stated that she had

worked for her current company at two separate times for a period of more than 3 years.

When asked to define what spirituality meant to her, Participant 4 stated, "an awareness

of humanity and the emotional state of people and also an awareness of your higher

power and being connected to that higher power and listening to direction from that

higher power." Participant 4 noted that in the workplace, spirituality meant "trying to

keep everyone in positive spirits." Participant 4 indicated that it was important to her

personally to be a good listener and support the people around her if they were facing

personal challenges. Participant 4 noted that while she had developed an interest in

spirituality at a young age, the origin of her spirituality was not rooted in a religious

upbringing.

**Participant 5**

Participant 5 was a man with over 25 years of experience as a HR professional

and entrepreneur. For the past decade, Participant 5 served as the executive director of a

community organization that provided support for small businesses and individuals

seeking to build stronger business relationships through faith. As part of the discussion of

workplace spirituality, Participant 5 differentiated between spirituality and religion.

"Spirituality has a lot to do with relationships… religion has something to do more of a

form of belief. It's a form of how you practice your belief." Participant 5 noted that

practicing spirituality in the workplace was critical to success as it empowered

relationship building and fostered a sense of belonging among employees. Both

personally and professionally, spirituality was intensely important for Participant 5. "I

build my whole character, my attitude, my desires, my goals and ambitions around my

spirituality. It is the center core of who I am."

**Participant 6**

The sixth participant was a man who had served as a director of culture and

development for a food service company that highlighted spirituality as a core business

value. Participant 6 had worked for the company for over 5 years, and during that time,

HR titles within the organization had changed from HR manager to culture executives.

As the director of culture, Participant 6 was responsible for managing HR issues and

ensuring that alignment was maintained between organizational practices and the

corporate vision as a faith-based organization. Participant 6 noted that as an adolescent he began to develop the spiritual principles that guided his life. In the workplace, Participant 6 noted that his spiritual values were reflected in the actions of the organization. Participant 6's organization operated "on a principle of treating everyone with honor, dignity, and respect."

**Participant 7**

Participant 7 was the final participant interviewed as a part of the present study. Participant 7 was a man who work for a computer company as an HR professional. Participant 7's official title was operations manager with HR responsibilities. At the time of the interview, Participant 7 had worked for his company for over a decade. Participant 7 defined personal spirituality as "having a relationship with God and Jesus Christ." In contrast, Participant 7 defined workplace spirituality by describing actions. "I guess showing my actions would be the better way to answer that question. Helping people and developing my management style, our company codes, our company ethics, based on those types of beliefs in our organization." As part of his role in the organization, Participant 7 noted that he tries to "lead by example" and be intentional in his support of workplace spirituality.

## Thematic Results

The present study was designed to explore the perspectives of HR professionals who work in organizations that use spirituality in the workplace to promote employee engagement. The data collected from the participants were analyzed using a six-stage

process adopted from Glover (2016) and Manley-Johnson (2012). The data analysis

process resulted in the identification of seven themes.

**Theme 1**

The first theme that emerged from the data analysis was that the participants'

personal spirituality was the source of their servant leadership and workplace spirituality.

The first theme was developed based on a wide range of first-level codes and the

emergence of two second-level codes, personal spirituality and workplace spirituality.

Table 3 presents examples of the first and second level codes that contributed to Theme

1. While Table 3 does not include all the first level codes that were identified during the

analysis of participants' answers, the codes that are presented illustrate the range of codes

that emerged from the first round of coding.

Participants were in unanimous agreement that their individual spirituality guided

their leadership and workplace spirituality practices. Both P1 and P3 specifically referred

to their personal spirituality as a compass. P1 was the first to use the compass metaphor.

I use [my personal spirituality] as a compass. I use it as a guide, that constantly

taking moments, because so much can happen, especially in this day and age. Things

happen so fast that you don't always have the opportunity to sit back and think about

what you are about to do. We like to think that we do, but sometimes you have to respond

very quickly. (P1)

Table 3. *First and Second Level Codes for Theme 1*

First level codes

what I believe is still paramount and that's the root of what I'm doing." P1 noted that her personal spirituality was important because it helped her to be an authentic leader. "You can't help someone be something that you aren't yourself."

When asked about the links between personal spirituality, workplace spirituality, and leadership, P2 indicated that personal spirituality made her a better HR professional. P2 stated, "Now for me, I express my faith freely, and, and so it's made my job easier. There's no facade." P2 felt that by being an authentic leader in the workplace, she was able to convey organizational values more effectively. P2 noted that even though her personal spirituality sometimes conflicted with workplace practices, spirituality-based leadership practices helped her to foster strong values within the organization.

Like P1, P3 referred to her personal spirituality as a compass, guiding her actions in the workplace. P3 stated, "You have your own moral compass on the inside, and everybody has something. It's there. The question is, do you follow it?" P3 acknowledged that having a strong sense of personal values does not automatically mean all employees or leaders act responsibly in the workplace.

> Now mind you, people fall. We're not perfect. We've, we default whatever it is, but it's something on the inside I would say it is that thing on the inside that says, no, you know you're wrong. Um, go back and apologize. Go and say you're sorry. (P3)

When asked to elaborate, P3 noted that even managers and HR professionals sometimes struggled to adhere to their personal values. P3 stated, "Even when I speak to a lot of people in HR, especially management, a lot of times they have a problem saying to you

that they have a problem saying I'm sorry or did something wrong." P3 suggested that the times when something had gone wrong were the times when people most needed to look to their moral compasses.

Some participants equated personal spirituality to moral principles and values that guided workplace behavior. P4 indicated that personal values rooted in spirituality were critical when working as a HR professional because unethical practices were sometimes common. P4 explained how her conscience influenced her behavior when working with job candidates and company employees.

I just can't sleep at night if I'm not being upfront and truthful to [job candidates] about a major decision that they need to make. So, I don't, I won't lie to people, and I won't try to like push them into a decision where some recruiting agencies want you to push a candidate or browbeat them or beat them up on rates. (P4)

P4 elaborated, "I treat people the way I want to be treated, and I don't do any shady shiesty things that I hear of other recruiters doing."

P4 noted that at times, there was pressure from her organization to take actions that conflicted with her personal spirituality.

If I get into a situation where the leadership is asking me to do something that I feel is downright wrong, I'll try to eliminate myself from the equation and just say, well, can you guys place that phone call or handle this situation because I don't feel comfortable, uh, going against my values and principles. (P4)

P5 expressed an opinion that was similar to P4's perspective. P5 noted that his personal

spirituality allowed him to demonstrate consistency as a leader in the workplace. When

discussing the employees he managed, P5 noted that "they know that I have not changed

who I am." This consistency over time supported P5's credibility as a leader, and P5

noted that part of that credibility stemmed from treating all employees equally. "They

[his employees] won't see a difference in how I treat another person, regardless of where

they are in life" (P5).

When asked about his personal spirituality and how it affects his leadership

practices and approach to workplace spiritualty, P6 offered a longer explanation than the

other participants. P6 started by recounting how his personal spirituality developed. "I

began to develop the core principles that I'll live my life by today, as a young man. I

didn't always live by the principles, but they were developed." P6 noted that during his

developmental years, his personal spirituality was "laid in the foundation of my heart, my

mind, my soul." Now, as an adult, P6 uses those values to shape his leadership within the

workplace.

P6 noted that leaders' shared values and personal spirituality were important parts

of organizational success. P6 explained that other leaders within his organization felt

similarly about opportunities to serve and lead others. "I'm not the only one in this

organization who feels this way about our opportunities to serve and lead others." P6

continued, "even though we're all different, the core values that really define how we

make our decisions are pretty much the same." P6 noted that when others saw the

examples set by the leaders in the company, the values began to be shared and passed

down to younger individuals. P6 observed that modeling ethical behavior could help "shape [an employee's] way of thinking about seeing how we live, by seeing how we make decisions, by seeing how we lead, by seeing how we serve, without having to preach."

The sentiments expressed by P7 echoed the statements made by P6. P7 emphasized the importance of leading by example, but he also expressed the most frustration of all the participants when discussing the application of his personal spirituality and values in the workplace.

> I'm old, and I've got a younger workforce, and the younger workforce is needing something different, and I am trying to figure out what that is in order to help them as much as you said, be engaged. And it's not always about spirituality; it's about other things too. And so, I'm being challenged, and I'm having to change my management style in order to deal with them. So, a combination of their needs and also trying to, trying to deliver on the spirituality side of it is, is a challenge. (P7)

While he expressed frustration over trying to apply his personal spirituality to the workplace, P7 remained positive. Recognizing that part of being a good leader is adapting when needed, P7 concluded, "I don't think we let our standards down, but we have to find a new standard."

**Theme 2**

The second theme that emerged from the data analysis was that participants' sense of duty and responsibility encouraged their use of spiritual practices in the workplace.

Table 4 presents examples of the first and second level codes that contributed to Theme 2. While Table 4 does not include all the first level codes that were identified during the analysis of participants' answers, the codes that are presented illustrate the range of codes that emerged from the first round of coding.

Table 4. *First and Second Level Codes for Theme 2*

First level codes

As indicated in Table 4, there were two second-level codes that emerged during the development of Theme 2. These second-level codes were duty and spiritual practices. When reviewing the participants' responses for patterns, Theme 2 emerged as it became clear that the participants took their personal responsibility as leaders very seriously. All seven of the participants compassionately agreed that as HR professionals, their personal spirituality contributed to their sense of duty and responsibility in their organization. The participants offered many comments during their interviews that highlighted their sense of duty and responsibility.

Participant 1 indicated that she took the responsibilities of her position seriously and was guided by her personal beliefs. She stated, "I keep my belief system in the forefront of my mind." Participant 1 also shared that she believed in the golden rule. "One of my principles, I'm going to say, is to treat people how I want to be treated." Offering a more thorough perspective, Participant 1 continued.

> We really do need to be spending time with our team members, our employees, really seeing what's going on with them. So that way I can tell you what's going on and not just me. This is a team effort. We can all communicate, and we can all spend time with our employees. And then see and see what's going on, see what they're experiencing, and then come up with programs, plans, or initiatives in order to help them. (Participant 1)

Participant 1 suggested that communication and regular check-ins were an important part of her responsibility to both the organization and to employees.

Duty was also important to Participant 2. Participant 2 explained how her beliefs and sense of responsibility supported her behavior. When talking about her organization's responsibility to be stewards, Participant 2 stated, "so I think for me, their commitment to the community in what they do in the community. Um, it's true Testament of giving back to them or when I say for less fortunate. Is like community-driven." Participant 2 indicated that her company was very focused on contributing to the community because of a moral obligation to do good works. Participant 2 recounted how her organization encourages employees to volunteer and participate in events to benefit the community. "They believe in, the principles. And then, that's to me, it's so important to be able to work with a company that allows you time to give back and volunteer in the community." Participant 2 finished by describing the essence of her community. "They embody the principle of giving back and serving the community and serving people in their community."

Participant 3 characterized her sense of duty and responsibility as a major influence in the decision to engage in workplace spirituality practices. Additionally, Participant 3 recognized that these practices benefited employees.

> We're servants, I truly believe that when you recognize the fact that you are servant on servant, and you're here to serve others to help them become better individuals, you begin to operate, and you can begin to see life and things differently. (Participant 3)

Participant 3 continued, "It's your duty. Yeah, responsibility that I think that makes for better world. It's your responsibility."

For Participant 4, her sense of duty translated into leading by example. Participant 4 indicated that the biggest considerations related to duty and responsibility from her perspective included respect for authority, obedience, and stewardship. Participant 4 described herself as a people pleaser and stated, "that's kind of how I try to build it in [the] sense of stewardship into my job is just by doing the right thing and kind of taking a stand for doing the right thing."

Participant 5 felt that duty and responsibility were critical to workplace spirituality and that all these elements were interrelated in the minds of servant leaders. Summing up the situation concisely, Participant 5 stated that workplace spirituality was all about "being intentional." When asked to elaborate, Participant 5 stated, "It's putting your money where your mouth is, uh, putting the rubber to the road when you [are] intentional and when you inconvenience yourself for others."

Participant 6 believed that the link between duty and the use of spiritual leadership practices could be attributed to a sense of stewardship. Participant 6 stated, "Stewardship simply means you manage something that doesn't belong to you." Participant 6 then described duty and spiritual leadership using a metaphor about purchasing a car.

It's like the difference between buying a car and leasing a car. If you purchase a car, you're making payments on it, you can treat it any way you to treat it. If you purchase car, you're making payments on it, you can treat it any way you want to treat it. If you want to keep the oil change every 3,000 to 5,000 miles, that's great. But if you wanted this 40,000 miles oil change, it's up to you. You're still making

the payments, you're still going to pay for the car, but you can treat it any way

you want to treat it. But if you are leasing that vehicle and you turn that vehicle in

at the end of that lease with excess wear and tear or damage cause she's not taking

care of it from a maintenance standpoint, then that company's going to charge you

a lot of money because you didn't take care of the car. Because you don't own it,

you're just stewarding it. You're just managing it for someone who owns it.

And so, I take personal responsibility for the stewardship of the brand of

our organization because I know that I've been entrusted with building the brand

and so everything that I do in my life, whether I'm in uniform and that we're, or

I'm not at work and I'm not in uniform, but I'm having conversations with others

outside my company, I know that whatever I do is going to either the brand up or

tear the brands down. It's my choice.

I have to constantly keep in mind that the way I represent that brand is

how other people are going to feel about the brand. I take my stewardship, very

seriously, and I, in turn, try to instill that particular weight of stewardship on our

people from Day 1. (Participant 6)

The metaphor of the car helped Participant 6 to articulate his stewardship and sense of

responsibility.

Participant 6 then explained that at his company, they offer to help applicants find

alternate jobs if they do not feel comfortable embracing the company's values after

orientation.

I told you that I give them an offer that if this is not something, they feel is for them after they spend the day with me learning who we really are and what our why is and what purpose we have and what drives, us our mission, what our vision is. If they'll tell you that this is not something they want to be a part of, I'll help them find another job. I'll teach you that this is not something that's going to be fulfilling to them, and it's going to fit them based on how they're designed and what they're into and what they're passionate about. (Participant 6)

Participant 6 stated that the goal of this offer was to help job-seekers develop a sense of ownership of their own future.

I think that placing the weight of stewardship and what our values are upon our team members early on in their career here, I think that's important because if they are going to own it, I want them to own it from Day 1, and I want to help them go somewhere, where they can own it because I want it to be a positive thing for both of them and the organization that they're a part of it. A lot of companies don't, that mindset, they want to, they will want to bring people in and reshape their way of thinking so that there'll be company people and there'll be all of that company. (Participant 6)

Collectively, Participants 6's comments illustrated how proper leadership can benefit employees and the company.

When contributing to Theme 2, Participant 7 stated that his role as a HR professional was "to serve every employee." Participant 7 elaborated.

I've got to give them the tools. I've got to give them the ability, I got to give them

the opportunity to do their job. I have to figure out how I can help them succeed.

So, you know, I'm trying to do that every day and also at the same time educate

them on why we need to be doing certain things, certain ways. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 shared that he also believed his duty to help his employees extended beyond

the workplace. "I'm in the business of helping my employees become better parents and

better family members and providing them an opportunity to, to support their family."

Together the participants described how duty and spiritual practices often combined as

part of their work role to allow them to better serve their employees. Theme 3, which

deals with the links between spiritual values and decision-making is presented next.

**Theme 3**

The third theme that emerged from the data analysis was that the participants let

their spiritual values guide their leadership and decision making within the organization.

Several first-level codes and two second-level codes emerged during the data analysis

process when developing Theme 3. The two second-level codes were spiritual values and

personal leadership. When examining how patterns emerged in the data, it became clear

from the participants' responses that participants' spiritual values frequently guided their

work-related decisions. Table 5 presents examples of the first and second-level codes

used to develop Theme 3.

Participant 1 noted that she continually monitored all the parameters of her

organization's mission vision, in terms of the organization's goals and belief systems to

contextualize her personal leadership. Participant 1 had previously stated, "I keep my

belief system in the forefront of my mind." As a result, her personal leadership within the

context of the organization's goals was always mediated by her personal belief system.

Table 5. *First and Second Level Codes for Theme 3*

First level codes

While Participant 1's personal leadership was directly informed by her spiritual values, Participant 2 noted that in her organization, management made decisions based on the question of "what's in it for us," meaning employees rather than exercising "their positions of power." Participant 2 believed that the management of her organization expressed spiritual values by looking at business decisions from the perspective of what was good for all organizational members and stakeholders. Expressing a similar sentiment, Participant 7 noted that spiritual leadership was a touchstone that allowed leadership to "stay within the boundaries of our mission statement and our core values."

Participant 3 contextualized her spiritual leadership by noting a recent conversation with God on her actions and decision-making style. This participant noted that the conversation resulted in the realization that decisions that accounted for all factors could not be rushed.  Participant 3 stated that being "intentional on the process [was important] because it is so easy not to do it."  Participant 3 concluded that when "you got to make the choice" it is necessary to take time and space to consider whether your decision is in alignment with the principles of spiritual leadership. Participant 3's concerns about quality spiritual decision-making supported Participant 2's organizational principle of thinking through decisions in the context of the needs of all stakeholders.

Participant 4 was particularly concerned about several practical consequences of spiritual leadership. Participant 4 noted, "I definitely incorporate my spiritual values into my decision making in that I don't discriminate." Participant 4 further noted that, consequently, she was concerned about transparency in the actions of others. Transparency specifically included honesty in others' communications within Participant

4's organization. Participant 4 stated, "if I catch somebody lying, then that immediately kind of either pretty much disqualifies them from my consideration." Spiritual leadership was contextualized by Participant 4 as a two-way street in which employees had to do their part for the spiritual practices to function properly in an organizational context. Participant 4 viewed spiritual leadership not as a passive set of principles or properties in the leader's mind but as a shared reality between the leaders and employees.

The value of spiritual leadership was also supported by Participant 6, who stated that "the more value we can show people, the more they're going to want to bring to the table for us as well. It becomes a reciprocal relationship where both parties win." Participant 6 also noted that "everyone wants to feel valued." Participant 5 argued that for spiritual leadership to work, the leader's attitude was crucial. Participant 5 stated, "attitude is everything. Attitude is everything when it comes down to your faith." This sentiment was also echoed by Participant 7, who stated that in order to be a good spiritual leader, a HR professional needed to be less concerned about self and more concerned about the welfare of others.

Participant 6 stated that faith was "part of who I am as an individual." The participant expanded on this in the work context, stating that his core faith-based principals and convictions "drive my work decisions." Participant 6 noted that his organization was founded "good, solid moral values." While Participant 6 derived his values from moral foundations provided by an abiding personal faith, he noted that organizational success could be found by using these values in a leadership capacity

without ever making specific references to either God or spirituality. Participant 6

believed that morally derived values drove organizational success.

> [Even if] you never use any lingo or jargon that refers to spirituality or refers to
>
> God, if you only treat people and lead people and make decisions for yourself and
>
> for your business based on what's good for all humanity, then everyone's going to
>
> win, right? (Participant 6)

Participant 6 perceived spiritual leadership as valuable in the current environment. He

stated, "even though we're very connected technologically, I think we're very

disconnected relationally." This disconnect could be ameliorated in the participant's eyes

by teaching employees "to show others great value by doing the simple things that we

would want done for us. So, [that we can] we live in a really connected generation."

Overall, participants agreed that spiritual leadership was closely linked to servant

leadership. Such leadership was dynamic, not only in terms of the relationships within an

organization, but also in terms of setting moral boundaries that allowed the organization

to maintain the vision of its mission statement and not violate its core values. Finally, the

participants believed that spiritual leadership was concerned with the welfare of all

stakeholders, which tied into a later theme as well.

**Theme 4**

The fourth theme that emerged from the data analysis was that organizations take

a values-based approach and use concrete methods to promote a sense of calling and

membership among employees. As with the first three themes, Theme 4 encompassed

numerous first-level codes and two specific second-level codes (i.e., values-based

approach and concrete methods). Table 6 presents the first and second-level codes related to Theme 4.

Table 6. *First and Second Level Codes for Theme 4*

First level codes

All the participants believed that it was the leaders who drove their organization's core value systems and who promoted and sustained the sense of calling and membership among employees. Participant 1 noted that sustaining the sense of calling and membership required leadership's regular examination of an "organization's core values." Furthermore, Participant 1 noted that sustaining an organization's cores values required "having constant conversations with the employee[s] …to let them know, what the organization['s] value system is all about." P1 further noted that a values-based approach required "keeping a constant pulse" on employees' engagement with core values and membership to ensure that they were "constantly aligned" with the organization's core values and mission.

Participant 2 also strongly supported continuous engagement with employees using a values-based approach. Participant 2 noted that it was important to discuss core values within the organization and furthermore, that leaders put their values into practice at work with the view of gaining loyal partners. Participant 2 noted that at her company, management supported their core values and team cohesiveness by holding a Bible study every Monday morning.

Participant 2 noted that management at her company believed in empathy, and this sentiment was echoed by Participant 6, who stated that a key organizational principle was to treat "everyone with honor, dignity, and respect. We treat people the way we want to be treated, not necessarily the way they treat us, or the way they deserve to be treated." Participant 6 also noted that the organization deliberately "put other people before ourselves." Participant 6 continued, "when you put people before profits, and you put the

needs of others ahead of the needs of your sale, it's all going to come back to you in a way that you can't even imagine." P6 summarized the results of the organization's approach stating that if organizations value "people above the bottom line, then the bottom line continues to grow higher and higher and higher and higher."

When talking about concrete methods used to implement a values-based approach, Participant 3 focused on managing the organizational atmosphere. Participant 3 stated, "I believe people work within an atmosphere. We create the atmosphere, especially as the leader." Participant 6 agreed, noting that atmosphere was a cooperative effort within the organization.

> We have other people to help hold our arms up and make sure that we know we're not alone. And it's just as good place to be when you can share ownership, and you can share stewardship with other people. (Participant 6)

Participant 6 further noted that the consequence of the cooperative effort was that "people normally take that stewardship, and they run with it in a positive way because they want to please the one who has given him that opportunity to lead." Participant 6 provided more insight into the methods he used when taking a values-based approach.

> From a standpoint of workplace spirituality, I allow, the life example about which I live to be evident in the way that I teach and the way that I train and the way that I guide, our, our team members, the way that I counsel our team members. (Participant 6)

By leading through example, Participant 6 believed that he was both supporting his personal values and the values of the organization.

Offering another perspective on encouraging spiritual values in the workplace, Participant 7 noted the role of "policies or procedures that give people an opportunity to give back to the community." Participant 7 specifically noted that it was important to foster a sense of calling in employees and that his organization attempted to do that on a regular basis.

> I foster a sense of calling is if somebody has a sense of calling to be involved with the food ministry and meals on wheels or something like that, then we give them enough time during the year that they can participate in that on a regular basis. (Participant 7)

Participants focused on continuous attention being paid by leadership to foster and sustain spiritual core values in the organization. Participants also noted that it was important to treat people with respect and engage them in the stewardship of organizational values and activities. Finally, setting a leadership example by living by one's spiritual values at work and informing all one's decisions with those values was cited by several participants as critically important.

**Theme 5**

The fifth theme that emerged from the data analysis was that communication and acceptance are necessary elements when using a sense of calling and membership to promote employee engagement. Table 7 presents the first and second-level codes associated with Theme 5. The two second-level codes that resulted in the development of the theme were communication and acceptance.

Table 7. *First and Second Level Codes for Theme 5*

First level codes

"to know that person's story in order to make sure that they are aligned with their purpose and their calling."

Participant 1 noted that conversations with employees were important when promoting both a sense of calling and a sense of membership.

In the midst of all the conversations you're having, it gives feedback, and everybody wants feedback. So anytime you give an employee feedback, you give them time, you listen to their story, they are going to feel engaged because they're feeling heard. (Participant 1)

Participant 3 noted that communication needs to be kept simple to maintain clarity. "I believe in keeping things very visible, keeping it very simple. Yeah. Cause sometimes things can be so far over people's head that they just cannot grasp it" (Participant 3). Expanding on the theme of employee communication, Participant 3 offered the following feedback.

I do believe in powwows so everybody will understand and always connecting to one another and say, Hey, how you doing? You know, do you understand what the plan is for today or what it is for this week, and what are the benchmarks we can get to? (Participant 3)

Acceptance was considered as important as communication, but Participant 2 noted that to support acceptance, leaders had to set an example. Participant 2 argued that it was necessary for employees to feel that they could be themselves at work instead of hiding their true values and beliefs. Participant 5 characterized the freedom to practice spirituality in the workplace as "impactful." Participant 2 stated that it was important to

create "a place where they [employees] can really be themselves increases engagement because they truly feel like the owners and the leaders live the integrity that the company talks about in the organization, and they devote it to their employees."

Participant 4 fostered acceptance by bringing employees little gifts, and Participant 5 looked for personal opportunities to engage with employees. Participant 3 noted that acceptance also requires a vision, stating, "when I as an individual share the vision and people take hold of it and say, I love this vision and I also want to be a part, this belongs to me. It creates that sense of membership." Participant 2 noted that an organization's vision should put "employees before profit" to foster acceptance and allow the creation of "a sense of belonging." Participant 2 further noted that "it also creates a sense of openness, which creates an environment [to] encourage employee engagement."

Participant 6 noted that acceptance hinged on shared goals, "You got to pick a goal. And so, a lot of people that come on board with us that don't really have a goal that's been established, they're just kind of drifting. Participant 6 explained that to deal with the concept of acceptance and foster a sense of belonging, "we help them develop goals. We helped them develop a why behind the way they live their lives." Regarding goals and vision, Participant 3 warned that "the people [new employees] who don't connect to it, they will not become a part of the organization." Acceptance is not just accepting a person's strengths and weaknesses, it is also the concept of an employee accepting an organization's vision and mission as legitimate, valuable, and worth believing in and developing.

Participant 2 noted that "leaders [must act] as a guide for the employees to follow. Participant 2 also noted that employees who accepted and believed in the organization's mission and vision benefited. "I personally believe that that people, for the most part, they are highly engaged, able to truly use their God-given gifts" (Participant 2). Participants concurred that communication and acceptance must be mutual between employees and leaders. Additionally, participants noted that if communication was effective in the longer term, the benefits of spiritual leadership would be increased for all stakeholders.

**Theme 6**

The sixth theme that emerged from the data analysis was that organizations use both internal and external and formal and informal practices to support workplace spirituality and promote employee engagement. Table 8 presents the codes that were identified during the development of Theme 6. The four second-level codes that resulted in the development of the theme were internal, external, formal, and informal.

Six out of seven participants stated that their organizations used internal, external, formal, or informal practices in the workplace to promote employee engagement. Discussing internal practices, participants referenced company culture, organizational routines and practices, leadership practices, and the atmosphere within the organization. Participant 3 believed it was important for leaders to adopt leadership styles that made all employees feel valued. "At the end of the day, we're emotional creatures, and all people want to do is be heard and respected" (Participant 3). Participant 3 suggested that when leaders adopted respectful employee-focused leadership styles, they felt more respected

and more engaged. Participant 2 added that "checking up on one another and um, basically seeing how one another is doing" was an important internal means of maintaining engagement.

Table 8. *First and Second Level Codes for Theme 6*

First level codes

Participant 6 referred to internal practices related to leadership and organizational practices when discussing how organizations support workplace spirituality and employee engagement.

> So, from an organizational standpoint, um, everything we do from the bottom tier to the next year to the next year to the next year is designed to make sure our team members not only know who we are and where we're trying to go, but how to get there. Okay. So, we give them the tools that they're going to need so that they can lead at the next level. We teach, a bottom-up leadership style to where our people, as I mentioned earlier, are given autonomy, to steward the brand, to manage the brand, to own the brand even before they have the title of manager on their name. (Participant 6)

Participant 7 focused on the role of organizational culture when discussing how his organization supported workplace spirituality. "For me, it's more about our company culture then promoting employee engagement. Um, if our company culture is something that somebody can get behind, then the hope is that they're going to be an engaged employee" (Participant 7). Participant 7 suggested that a supportive and inclusive culture was essential to organizational success. "If you're intentional about your culture, then you should be successful" (Participant 7).

When discussing external practices, participants cited events like Bible study groups outside of work, work-sponsored lunches or events for employees, volunteering and missionary opportunities supported by the organization, community service, and activities like book clubs. The primary characteristics of the external work-related

practices were that these events happened outside of the workplace and individuals' work roles, yet the participants' employers were supportive of the practices. Participant 2 noted that her "company offers Bible study." Participant 2 explained how she felt Bible study supported workplace spirituality and employee engagement. "I personally believe that people for the most part they are highly engaged [when they are] able to truly use their God-given gifts" (Participant 2).

A second external policy that Participant 2 noted was her organization's support for employees' community service and volunteering activities. "I believe that compared to other companies, I worked for a company that put[s] their employees before profit" (Participant 2). Participant 2's responses suggested that external workplace practices "create a sense of belonging and also create a sense of openness, which create an environment encouraging employee engagement."

When discussing external workplace practices, Participant 3 noted that a common way for employees to get to know one another on a more personal level was to gather outside of work. Participant 3 explained that these events helped employees learn about others in the workplace and appreciate differences.

A lot of times we come into contact with people that are not the same color as us. They're different from us, different ethnicities, and just checking in and saying, "Hey, how about going out to eat? Let's share a meal together, let's do lunch." And that way you get the opportunity to understand one another on an individual basis. And when you have that, you begin to develop more respect and

relationship. Everything is about the relationship and that understanding.

(Participant 3)

Participants also discussed formal and informal practices that supported workplace spirituality and employee engagement.

Participant 1 stated that an important formal practice to support workplace spirituality was on-boarding.

Those on-boarding moments, those training moments, uh, there are times in the interview process, um, and especially once the person is hired, if they are interviewing for another role within the organization, another opportunity that you have to have those conversations [about workplace spirituality]. (Participant 1)

Participant 5 indicated that the role of training was also an important formal structure that HR professionals can use to support workplace spirituality and improve employee engagement. Participant 5 explained that when an employee has a problem or the work atmosphere begins to be less inclusive, he uses those situations to create training workshops that address the issues. "I would definitely interject those things that people have shared in my teaching or in my workshop training, so they can least be heard and, and provide a solution for what may be going on in the workplace" (Participant 5). Participant 5 noted that this practice helped employees know they were valued.

Participant 7 suggested that when attempting to support both workplace spirituality and employee engagement, it was important to use formal practices that demonstrated an organization was "intentional about [its corporate] culture." Participant 6 also noted how formal practices helped shape brand ownership among employees.

We teach, a bottom up leadership style to where our people, as I mentioned

earlier, are given autonomy, to steward the brand, to manage the brand, to own the

brand even before they have the title of manager on their name. (Participant 6)

Participant 6 continued, explaining that these formal practices benefited both employees

and the organization.

And from a bottom-up, from a leading up perspective, our team members are

encouraged to take the reins and to get engaged and to get involved and to be a

bigger and a better and a stronger part of the team every single day. And not

everyone, not everyone takes that opportunity and runs with it. But the ones who

do find that when they ultimately get to that next level of management, it's such a

seamless transition because they've already been doing it. (Participant 6)

Collectively, the statements from Participants 6 and 7 supported the essence of Theme 6.

The final element of Theme 6 was the use of informal workplace practices to

support spirituality and employee engagement. Participant 7 acknowledged that

workplace spirituality was not something that could be forced. "If somebody participates,

uh, that's because they want to participate. They're not forced to participate and if they

don't want to participate, then that's their choice" (Participant 7) Participant 4 noted that

while it could be problematic to focus on organized religion in the workplace, it was

important to "embrace other people's religions" in the context of maintaining and

supporting workplace spirituality.

Participant 4's feedback on informal practices was somewhat similar to the

feedback provided by Participant 5, who stated that it was important for employees to

feel comfortable in the workplace. "If you can show an employee that you care for them and their family and you're willing to go, boy, you got somebody that's going to go, to the end and back for you, I promise you" (Participant 5). Participant 5 also noted that it was "part of your spiritual duty" to help, and care for, fellow employees in times of personal trouble." Participant 5 raised important questions.

> How do you add value to someone who, who, who perhaps maybe going through something, but they're not having to grow the company because of what they going through? But you know, they have the skillsets and the talents to do it. So how do you bridge the two? That's when you have to really care about the people that's working for you. (Participant 5)

Participant 3 also felt that communication and checking on employees were essential methods of support for employees. "Checking up on one another, and basically seeing how one another is doing" (Participant 3).

When analyzing the participants' feedback, it became clear that internal and external as well as formal and informal practices supported workplace spirituality and employee engagement. The different types of practices demonstrated to employees that an organization and its leadership cared about them as human beings. Participants believed that putting employees' needs before profit was extremely important. Participants also emphasized formal support for spiritual leadership and values, which included acceptance and respect for other religions. The evidence indicated that workplace spirituality and employee engagement thrive diverse, accepting, and open organizations, as these policies create engagement and belonging among employees.

**Theme 7**

The seventh and final theme that emerged from the data analysis was that workplace spirituality practices benefit all stakeholders. Theme 7 closely aligned with integral theory. Table 9 presents some examples of the codes that were identified when developing Theme 7. All the participants emphatically stated that spirituality practices in the workplace benefitted a range of stakeholders at the personal, organizational, and community levels.

When discussing the benefits of workplace spirituality, P1 felt that understanding was a key factor driving behavior. Participant 1 stated, "we need to understand in the workplace that our core values, our belief systems, how we treat people matter." For Participant 1, treating people well included understanding their personal struggles and treating them with compassion. Using workplace spirituality also meant ensuring that the organization's actions and behaviors were aligned with spiritual values. "If we don't treat people correctly, lining up with our spirituality, if we don't treat them correctly, we don't use our vision, our mission, and make sure our culture is right" (Participant 1).

Participant 1 asserted that organizations needed to honor their promises, ensure that employees had a healthy work-life balance, and make certain that organizational policies and procedures aligned with the company's mission and vision statements. Participant 1 also shared the perspective that respect was a critical element of ensuring that workplace spirituality benefited individuals.

Table 9. *First and Second Level Codes for Theme 7*

First level codes

Participant 1 stated,

Everyone deserves respect … It's like my, my personal contract … I'm going to

respect you. I'm going to make sure that you're in a place with diversity of

thought, but if I don't align with that, and if I don't make sure that you're an

environment where your thoughts can be accepted, that I'm not treating you to go

back to that word directly. I'm not treating you right. I violated my promise. Or

maybe a better way to say is I've not lived up to my promise to you. (Participant

1)

Participant 2 shared similar sentiments about respect and love, but the feedback received

from Participant 2 highlighted how workplace spirituality could benefit the organization

as well as the individual.

They [the company's owners] love and value everyone, tall, short, dark, dark and

light. They have all nationalities to work and to be able to work in an environment

where I think it shows, we accept them, oh, and we value, oh, and we provide a

place for growth. It is felt through the leaders' passion, and the leaders pass their

passion on to their employees. And when you talk about [the] heritage of the

company that's ingrained in our people, or processed, not profit. (Participant 2)

Participant 2 believed that because the company was "concerned about the whole

person," employees had a better balance and were able to focus on their work more

productively. This approach to workplace spirituality allowed the company to benefit

from more dedicated and engaged workers without making the workers feel as though

their contributions were devalued or taken for granted.

From Participant 3's perspective, workplace spirituality was a significant benefit on a community level.

Spirituality impacts the community because it's one person at a time. We live in a community, and the only way a community can be affected is by an individual. And that individual lives in a family. And so, when you connect with that individual, my whole motto is making a difference in the life of someone else. And they continue to, that's how it begins to impact the community and then an impact a world. But everyone has to operate together. And you may not even recognize that you're doing it, but you're impacting individuals who then infect community as a whole. (Participant 3)

Participant 3 acknowledged that the process of engaging in workplace spirituality occurred on a spectrum from the individual to the world through our social networks and intimate connections.

When you speak to leaders, you speak to 2 million people. And so it's the same thing when you speak to individuals, when you speak to that one individual, you're speaking not only to just that individual, you're speaking to more people because that individual thing is connected to someone else and to other people. (Participant 3)

Participant 4 also identified the different ways that workplace spirituality benefitted individuals, employers, and the community.

Participant 4 stated, "I think spirituality can definitely be uplifting, and also it could improve morale and improve retention." Participant 4 asserted that on an individual

level, employees enjoyed being able to embrace spiritual values in the workplace. This enjoyment and appreciation, in turn, resulted in increased productivity, which benefitted the organization. Participant 4's employer also sponsored charitable giving as a way for both individuals and the organization to extend positive values and outcomes into the community. The participant noted that sometimes community outreach was instigated by the organization, and other time, employees could ask the organization to support their personal charitable causes. Participant 4 stated, "They [the organization] match charitable giving, and they also are more than happy to step in and participate in charitable events or efforts that their employees are making."

When talking about the benefits of workplace spirituality, the focus for Participant 5 was on the role of organizational culture and how that culture affects interpersonal relationships. Participant 5 stated, "If you change the culture, they [employees] will adapt to the change." Participant 5 offered the example of swearing. He stated, "Take the job that I'm on now, I can see the culture changing; they're [his employees] not cursing anymore on the job." Participant 5 attributed this change in culture to respect for the personal values he shares in the workplace. Explaining the culture change process, Participant 5 noted that it was important to be transparent, kind, and intentional. "You have to be intentional. Jesus did it with 12 disciples. He built a relationship with them, and they turned the world upside down" (Participant 5).

For Participant 6, the individual benefits of workplace spirituality were the most important "because there are a lot of people out there that feel devalued." Participant 6 elaborated.

From an individual standpoint, I specifically pour our people as much as I

possibly can on a daily, weekly, monthly basis to make sure that they know how

much they mean to me and to our company. Because if they don't feel valued

themselves, how in the world are they going to help other people feel valued?

(Participant 6)

Participant 6 then discussed the ways in which he attempted to make his employees feel

valued. "I help them uncover their strengths and define what their strengths really are. I

help them define what their weaknesses are" (Participant 6). The participant continued,

"We write programs, and we develop environments and opportunities for them to be able

to strengthen their weaknesses. So they become well-rounded."

Despite the benefits to individuals, Participant 6 acknowledged that the

organization and the community would also benefit.

The more we can value and show value to the people that are a part of our

organization, the better they're going to be able to serve those that are not only in

our organization, but outside of that relationship. (Participant 6)

Participant 6 concluded by stating that a well-rounded individual "benefits the

organization as a whole because as the, as the individuals in any organization get better,

the organization itself can't help but get better."

Finally, Participant 7 discussed the unique link between personal well-being and

organizational well-being from the perspective of workplace spirituality. Describing

workplace spirituality, Participant 7 stated, "I think from my team's perspective, um, it's

very rewarding." The participant explained that he tries to make sure employees "feel that

they're cared for outside of our business relationship and that we're caring for them as a person." One way in which Participant 7's organization supported workplace spirituality was to provide employees with access to a spiritual counselor.

> We just find that it's one more outlet that if somebody is having a crisis, they're probably not gonna want to go and talk to their manager, but they might go talk to the corporate chaplain, um, who might be able to help them in some way, shape or form. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 also noted that the counselor often provided struggling employees with links to additional resources beyond the organization. This process allowed Participant 7's organization to help ensure their employees were supported outside of work in times of crisis.

Regardless of whether the participants highlighted the importance of workplace spirituality on an individual level, an organizational level, or a community level, they all agreed that the practices were beneficial. The participants' organizations all approached workplace spirituality differently, but that again reflected similarities between personal spirituality and the values-based approaches many of the organizations too. This section has examined each of the themes in detail. The following section provides a discussion of how the themes answer the study's research question.

**Theme Summary**

Most themes received widespread support from the participants, but not all participants contributed to every theme. Table 10 was created to provide a summary of theme participation among the participants. As each participant represented a single case

study, Table 10 identifies both the cases that supported each theme and the themes that emerged when analyzing the data for each case. Data supporting the themes were observed in most cases.

## How the Themes Answer the Research Question

When viewed together, the seven themes provide important answers to the study's research question. The research question guiding this study asked, how do HR professionals practice servant leadership to support the internal and external workplace spirituality needs of employees to promote employee engagement? To answer this question, I devised a series of interview questions based on a conceptual framework that included elements of spiritual leadership theory, integral theory, and servant leadership theory. This section provides an analysis of how the study's findings relate to the research question and the study's conceptual framework.

In exploring how HR professionals practice servant leadership, the first three themes were related to the role of servant leadership when practicing workplace spirituality. Theme 1 indicated that participants' personal spirituality was the source of their engagement with servant leadership and workplace spirituality. Participants talked about their use of personal spirituality as a moral compass and described the importance of core principals, convictions, and personal values when occupying a leadership position. These sentiments were directly linked to attributes associated with servant leadership, such as spiritual values, stewardship, beliefs, and moral principles. The participants believed leaders' behavior should reflect their personal values. Linking personal and workplace spirituality, participants indicated that self-awareness,

consistency, and authenticity were important qualities in a leader. Figure 3 presents the

moral values that participants indicated were influential in their adoption of servant

leadership.

Table 10. *Theme Participation by Case*

Theme #
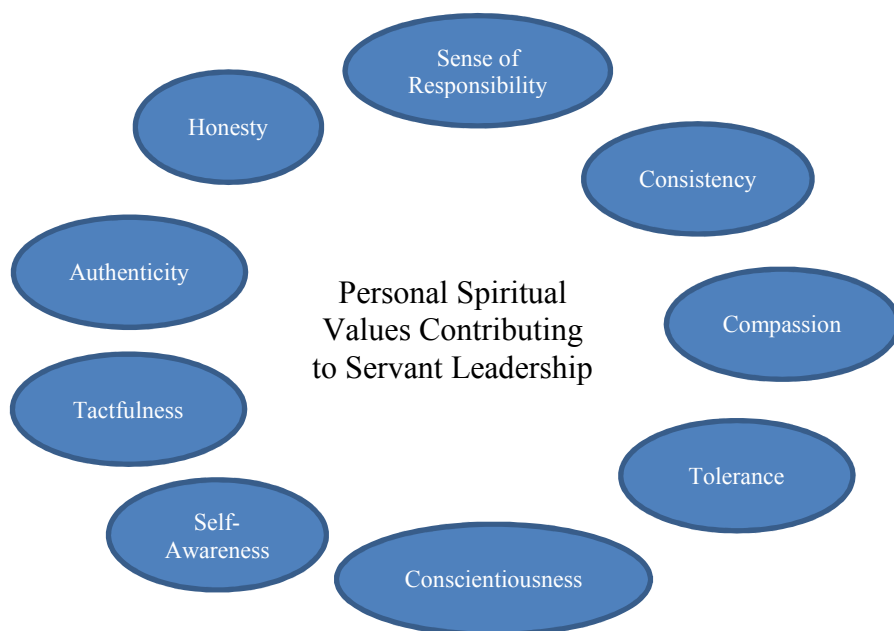
*Figure 3*. Participants' personal spiritual values contributing to servant leadership.

Theme 2 also addressed the concept of servant leadership. Theme 2 indicated that participants' sense of duty and responsibility encouraged their use of spiritual practices in the workplace. Participants indicated that they felt a moral obligation to do what was right rather than what was wrong, and this commitment extended to employees, the organization, and the wider community. When discussing Theme 2, participants referred to a duty to support individuals through tough times, to be intentional about responsibility, and to foster the success of employees and the organization by being good stewards of leadership. Because of their sense of duty and responsibility, participants indicated that they engaged in many different actions to support workplace spirituality.

Figure 4 shows how duty and responsibility were manifested by the participants and the effects it had on employees.

```
┌──────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐
│              │        │ Showing Respect         │        │                  │
│     Duty     │        │ Taking Accountability   │        │ Profitability    │
│      &       │ ─────▶ │ Being Dedicated         │ ─────▶ │ Success          │
│ Responsibility│       │ Fostering Trust         │        │ Happiness        │
│              │        │ Managing Time           │        │ Engagement       │
└──────────────┘        │ Investing Time          │        │ Virtuous Cycle   │
                        │ Empathizing             │        └──────────────────┘
                        │ Volunteering            │
                        │ Listening               │
                        │ Communicating           │
                        │ Observing               │
                        │ Making Decisions        │
                        └─────────────────────────┘
```
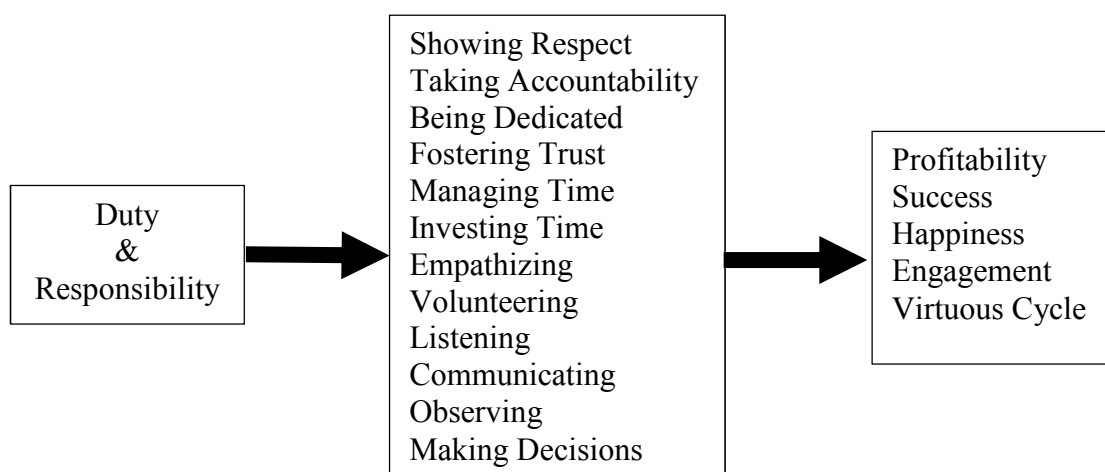
*Figure 4.* The influence of servant leaders' duty and responsibility.

The final theme that was closely related to the role of servant leadership in workplace spirituality was Theme 3. Theme 3 described how the participants let their spiritual values guide their leadership and decision-making within the organization. The participants indicated that they had wide-ranging personal values. These values included love, dedication to the golden rule, prayer, spiritual alignment, spiritual conversation, faith, intentionality, and confidence in one's self. Participants' personal spiritual values often differed slightly from their organization's values related to workplace spirituality.

Examples of workplace spirituality values specific to organizations included values

regarding eye contact, professionalism, team perspectives, transparency, and consistency.

Despite the differences between personal spirituality and workplace spirituality,

participants noted that their personal spiritual values often guided decision-making as

many of their personal values were applicable in the workplace and aligned with

organizational values. Where personal values and workplace values aligned, participants

noted there was strengthened leadership. Figure 5 shows the commonality between

participants' personal spiritual values and workplace spiritual values when addressing

decision-making.

Personal                                  Workplace

Figure 5. Intersection of personal spirituality and workplace spiritualty to support
decision-making.

The next two themes provided insights into the link between workplace

spirituality and employee engagement. Theme 4 indicated that the participants'

organizations took a values-based approach and used concrete methods to promote a

sense of calling and membership among employees. According to the participants, values

such as empathy, integrity, communication, self-awareness, sharing, and respect were manifestations of workplace spirituality. Organizations implemented concrete methods such as policies and practices that, in turn, promoted a sense of calling and membership. Some of the concrete methods that participants identified included the use of active management practices, open-door policies, brand building exercises, shared ownership, and the development of support systems both within and external to the organization.

Based on the participants' interview responses, a values-based approach aligned with participants' personal spiritual values in most cases. Because of this alignment, a reinforcing effect occurred. Figure 6 shows the interaction effects between the values-based approach, the concrete methods used by the participants' organizations, and the improved sense of calling and membership. The cycle identified in Figure 6 represents a positive feedback loop.

Theme 5 also addressed the link between workplace spirituality and employee engagement. Theme 5 stated that communication and acceptance were necessary elements when using a sense of calling and membership to promote employee engagement. The participants affirmed that a sense of calling and membership were important aspects of workplace spirituality and that these elements did improve engagement among employees. The participants' acknowledgment of a sense of calling and membership supported the importance of spiritual leadership theory. When viewed through the lens of Fry's model of spiritual leadership, communication and acceptance correspond to vision and altruistic love. Figure 7 provides an updated Fry's model that incorporates the findings drawn from the participants' lived experiences.

*Figure 6*. The feedback loop associated with a values-based approach. Within the feedback loop, no element was more important than any other.

Theme 5 also addressed the link between workplace spirituality and employee engagement. Theme 5 stated that communication and acceptance were necessary elements when using a sense of calling and membership to promote employee engagement. The participants affirmed that a sense of calling and membership were important aspects of workplace spirituality and that these elements did improve engagement among employees. The participants' acknowledgment of a sense of calling and membership supported the importance of spiritual leadership theory. When viewed through the lens of Fry's model of spiritual leadership, communication and acceptance

correspond to vision and altruistic love. Figure 7 provides an updated Fry's model that

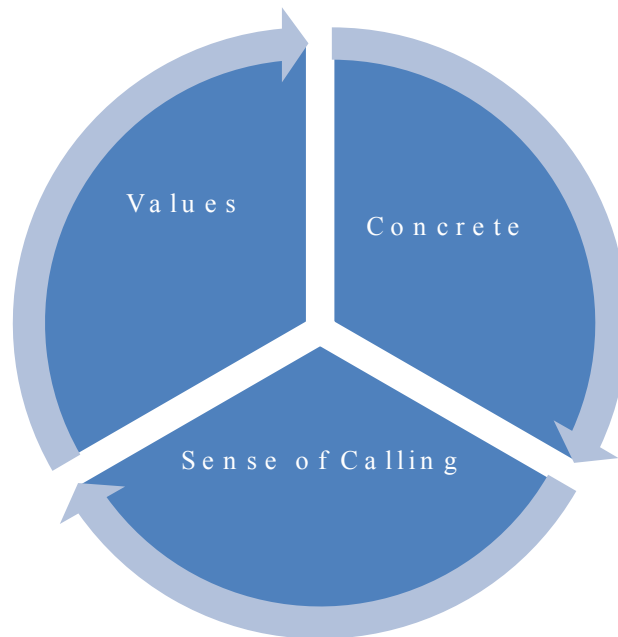incorporates the findings drawn from the participants' lived experiences.

Model of Spiritual Leadership



*Figure 7*. An updated of Fry's model based on the present study's findings.

When providing feedback about Theme 5, participants indicated that

communication was a necessary component to feeling a sense of calling because

communication enabled employees to understand the organization's vision and approach

to workplace spirituality. Participants discussed the importance of active listening and

constant conversations to ensure that there was alignment between the employees and the

organization. Feedback mechanisms, effective communication, and strong team

communication were highlighted by the participants.

In describing the importance of acceptance, participants indicated that the sense that their spiritual natures were welcome within their organizations produced a strong sense of membership. Participants discussed the shared vision between employees and their organization and the alignment between personal and organizational values and goals. Many participants welcomed the ability to feel welcome and connected to others in the workplace, and several commented that this sense of membership did lead to higher levels of employee engagement.

The two final themes, Theme 6 and Theme 7, were closely related to integral theory and the notion that there are many different levels of an individual's experience. Theme 6 demonstrated that organizations use both internal and external practices and formal and informal practices to support workplace spirituality and promote employee engagement. When identifying the main internal aspects of workplace spirituality, participants cited company culture, routines and practices, their organization's leadership hierarchy, and the overall workplace atmosphere. In addition to these internal workplace practices, all the organizations also offered external ways for the participants to express workplace spirituality. Examples of external workplace practices included Bible study, volunteering, ministry committees, book clubs, charitable giving, and socializing among coworkers. Figure 8 illustrates the different internal and external practices noted by the participants in relation to Theme 6.
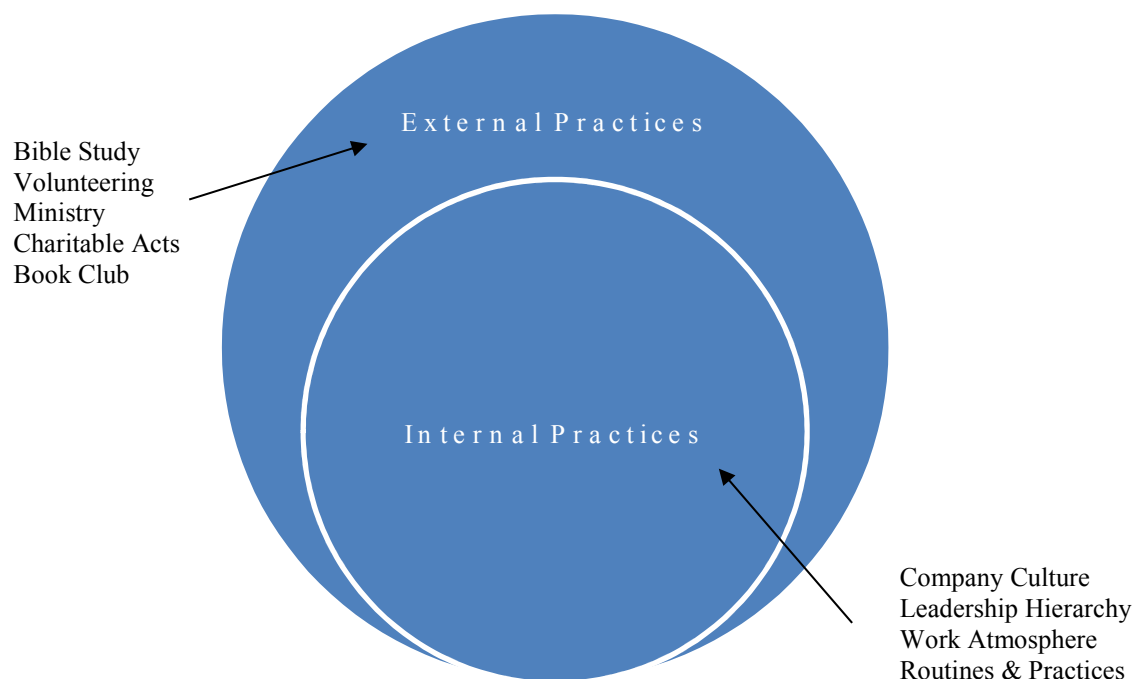
Bible Study
Volunteering
Ministry
Charitable Acts
Book Club

E x t e r n a l   P r a c t i c e s

I n t e r n a l   P r a c t i c e s

Company Culture
Leadership Hierarchy
Work Atmosphere
Routines & Practices

*Figure 8.* Internal and external practices supporting workplace spirituality.

Formal and informal practices were also discussed by the participants in relation to Theme 6. Formal practices referred to specific measures that organizations took to support workplace spirituality, whereas informal practices referred to actions and behaviors HR professionals observed among organizational leaders and employees. Formal practices included onboarding, training, the organization's leadership hierarchy, brand ownership, structured leadership advancement paths, and experience building exercises. Informal practices mentioned by the participants included communication, checking on others, providing encouragement, providing employees with autonomy, gifting, and demonstrating intentionality. Both formal and informal support for workplace spirituality contributed to employee engagement. Figure 9 provides a graphic

representation of the combined effect of formal and informal support for workplace

spirituality. As indicated in Figure 9, the combination of formal and informal support for

workplace spirituality lead to employee engagement.
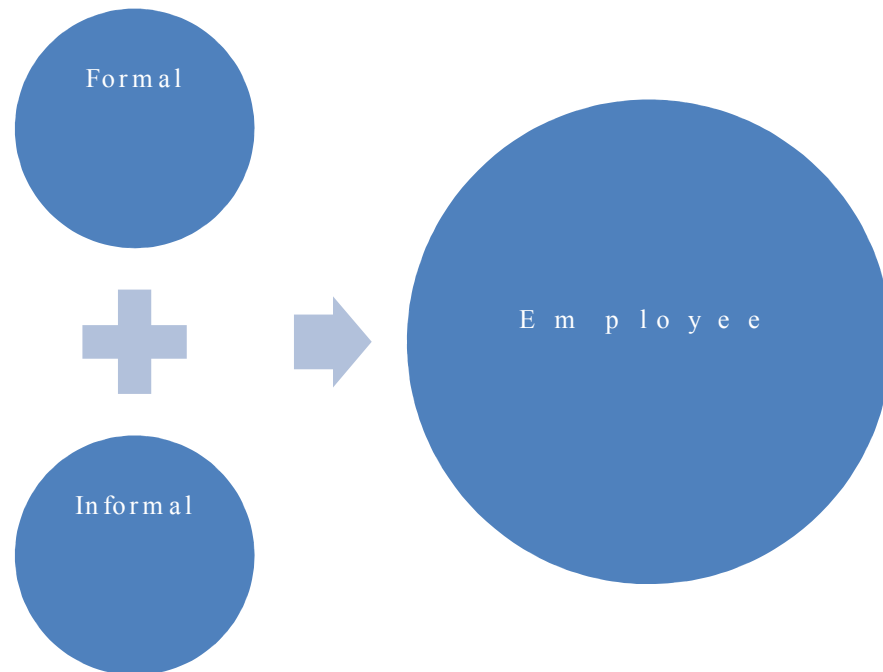


*Figure 9.* The combined result of formal and informal support for workplace spirituality.

The seventh and final theme stated that workplace spirituality benefits all

stakeholders. Theme 7 was directly relevant to the concepts proposed in integral theory as

participants indicated that workplace spirituality benefited employees, the organization,

and the community. Benefits to employees included reduced stress, job stability, personal

fulfillment, personal growth, and physical and mental health benefits. Benefits to

organizations included lower turnover, organizational diversity, increased profits,

improved work atmosphere, and higher employee engagement levels. The community

benefitted as a result of greater levels of inclusion and diversity, charitable giving,

volunteering, mission work, and the reinforcement of positive values. I created Figure 10

to illustrate the different types of benefits based on the interpretation of Theme 7.
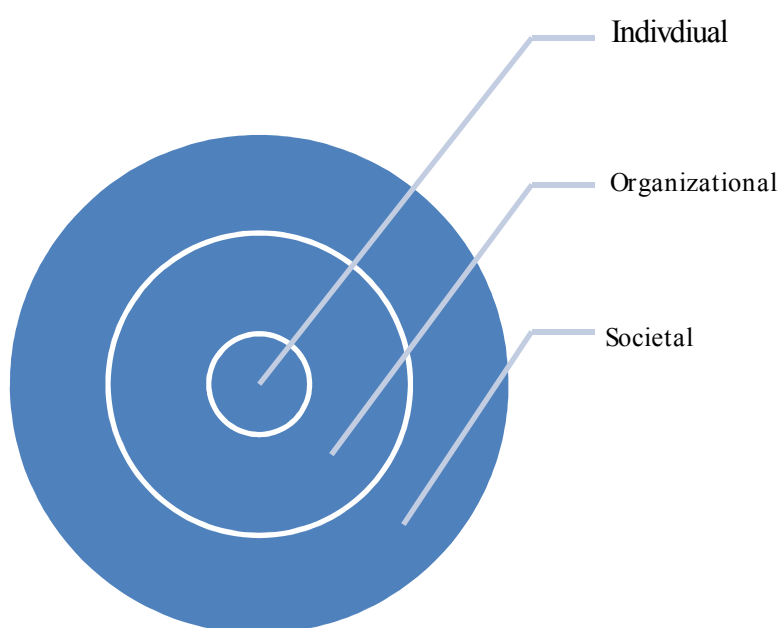


*Figure 10.* Stakeholder benefits of workplace spirituality.

Evaluation of the Analysis

Data Analysis

I began the data analysis process by reading each transcript several times to

familiarize myself with the participants' experiences and decipher the raw data. As the

researcher (i.e., the primary data collection instrument), my goal concerning the analysis

process was to make sure I gained an understanding of the raw data in order to code the

participants' responses correctly as the data were filtered into categories for the

development of themes (Saldana, 2016). The coding for this study was organized based

on my analysis of the participants' responses. Participants' direct responses recorded

during the interview process were evaluated to identify unique code terms and phrases.

According to Saldana (2016), this coding technique, called Vivo Code, refers to "that

which is alive," and each individual code represents "actual language taken directly from

the participants" (p. 105).

The audio interview response was transcribed by Temi.com, an online

transcriptionist, web-based software at $0.25 per minute. The interviews with the seven

participants produced a total of 91 transcribed pages. The data analysis process consisted

of a six-stage process described by Glover (2016) and Manley-Johnson (2012) and based

on the integration of seminal work by Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) and Colaizzi (1978). The

six-stage process consisted of (a) immersion, (b) understanding, (c) abstraction, (d)

synthesis and theme development, (e) illumination and illustration of the phenomena, and

(f) integration and critique (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Bowers & Green, 2013; Glover, 2016;

Manley-Johnson, 2012; Setati & Nkosi, 2017). In subsequent rounds of analysis, field

notes were reviewed in conjunction with the transcribed material provided by Temi.com.

**Coding**

After reading the transcribed interviews from Temi, I reviewed the audio while

reading the transcriptions to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions. I made the

necessary changes and emailed each participant a copy of their transcript for them to

review and approve. Participants were free to make changes that they deemed necessary. After the participants returned the transcribed data with their changes, the changes were sent back to Temi for correction. After receiving the transcript back from Temi, I subsequently sent the data back to the participants for a second and third review until the participants were satisfied with the transcription of their interview.

After reading the transcripts, I started the first stage in the data process, which was the immersion stage. I began by reading each translated interview line-by-line multiple times to make sure that I gained an understanding of the participants' lived experiences and their perspectives on workplace spirituality. The data captured the heart and significance of each participant's genuine or authentic narrative of their reality when practicing spirituality in their workplace. In this stage, I organized the data by labeling each participant, according to when I interviewed them as, Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), Participant 4 (P4), Participant 5 (P5), Participant 6 (P6), and Participant 7 (P7). I reviewed the data multiple times to ensure that I understood the participants' experience before beginning the coding process (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007). My thoughts that developed from reading the interviews were captured, documented, and compared to my field notes.

In the second stage of the data analysis process, I identified the first-order constructs and began coding the data. I began the coding process using the questions from the interview guide. I read each participant's transcript along with the probing questions to make sure that I listened for meaningful words and phrases that focused on the main point of the participants' experience and perspective. I prepared a list of

extractable codes. Because the interviews included such rich detail, the codebook grew

substantially as I begin coding using an open-coding method.

The third step of the data analysis process was the abstraction stage, where I

identified the second-order constructs and then grouped them by subtheme. This stage

allowed me to form my own interpretations of each participant's story to form a blueprint

of their collective experiences. I reviewed the transcripts for words and phrases related to

the themes and subthemes, documented these words separately by creating a matrix that

differentiated between the first-level and second-level codes that emerged from analyzing

the transcripts line-by-line during the coding process. The matrix allowed me to identify

points of similarity among the cases from each participant's story.

The fourth stage of the data analysis involved the synthesis and theme

development, where the themes and subthemes were further clarified, reviewed, and

analyzed using the data that had been established during the abstraction stage. I listed

codes in a column and then inserted selected text from the transcripts next to the

appropriate codes. I repeated this process with each interview, comparing, and

contrasting the data from each transcript with the data from the other participants,

reorganizing the codes and text selections as needed. As the themes emerged, I compared

my interpretation of the data from parts of the transcripts against the entire development

process to allow the patterns and themes to develop during the writing and articulation

process.

The fifth stage of the data analysis stage involved illuminating and illustrating the

phenomenon. I examined the patterns and themes that were identified in the previous

stages for connections across the entire dataset. This process allowed me to establish and re-established the participants' experiences and perspectives using their own words to illuminate their experiences with workplace spirituality. Seven overarching themes emerged from the data analysis process. These themes were related to (a) the influence of personal spirituality on workplace spirituality, (b) the importance of a sense of duty, (c) the use of spiritual values to guide behavior, (d) the use of a valued-based approach within organizations, (e) the role of communication and acceptance, (f) the use of internal and external and informal and formal practices, and (g) the benefits of workplace spirituality practices. Each of these themes was categorized and labeled.

The final stage in the data analysis process was the integration of the analysis. Upon completing the analysis process with each participant's data, I reviewed the findings across all the cases. I confirmed that the themes that emerged from the data were representative of all the participants' experiences and ensured that the coding process was accurate and precise. In addition, I reviewed the codes, themes, and the process used to sort and analyze the data to make sure I addressed any differences that I might have missed within the themes.

**Evidence of Trustworthiness**

To introduce a highly-quality study, I incorporated several methods to ensure the trustworthiness and rigor in this study. I specifically sought to ensure the study evinced credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Addressing these areas within my study strengthened this multiple case study. To ensure the credibility of this study, I employed the following strategies: member checking, triangulation, audit trail,

and peer review (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Yin, 2014). For example, I used member checking by contacting the participants on three occasions to verify the accuracy of the data. First, I emailed the participants a copy of their audio to allow them to listen to the recording for accuracy. Participants were given the opportunity to rerecord responses where an initial recorded response was not clear or accurate.

Second, I emailed a copy of the transcribed interviews to the participants to review for accuracy. The participants could make any necessary changes to their transcripts, and the changes were sent to Temi. Once the transcripts were returned to me with the changes from Temi, I sent the transcripts back to the participants for the third and final review. All seven of the participants approved the data used during the analysis.

An audit trail also improved the trustworthiness of the findings. The audit trail was possible as the interviews were recorded using Zoom, field notes were taken, and the transcribed documents from Temi allowed for the data to be reviewed at each stage in the verification process. The audit trail was conducted by extensively checking the field notes with the raw data for accuracy. I incorporated triangulation in the review process by having a qualitative data analysis expert review my analysis for researcher bias, and my chair served as my peer reviewer. I also used direct quotes from the participants, which validated the findings and enriched the study. By using these steps, I enhanced the accurateness and trustworthiness of this study.

**Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability**

The transferability of this study to other populations is possible in similar environments or situations (Cope, 2014; Setati & Nkosi, 2017). To improve

transferability, I used a purposeful recruitment strategy and presented a thorough description of the analysis. These measures increase a study's transferability, according to Anney (2014) and Cope (2014). I also included direct quotes from the participants as often as possible to safeguard the essence of the participants' explanations and experiences.

I showed dependability by incorporating a variety of strategies within this study. I employed several methods during the interview, such as using a recording device to ensure data were not lost during the collection process. I verified the data via member checking three times to ensure the accuracy of the transcripts, and I used a peer-review process to increase the dependability of the findings. In addition, I confirmed the coding process with a qualitative expert to review my code accuracy and confirm my development of the codes and themes. I followed the steps listed within my IRB data collection process and adhered to the established research protocol throughout the research process.

## Summary

The blueprint of this study was designed to examine the lived experiences of HR professionals working in organizations that practice workplace spirituality. The seven participants communicated about their experiences and their journey working in a spiritual environment. The data collected produced seven themes related to (a) the influence of personal spirituality on workplace spirituality, (b) the importance of a sense of duty, (c) the use of spiritual values to guide behavior, (d) the use of a valued-based approach within organizations, (e) the role of communication and acceptance, (f) the use

of internal and external and informal and formal practices, and (g) the benefits of workplace spirituality practices.

Chapter 4 contained a recapitulation of the methodology used to conduct the study, including information on the method of sampling, the screening process, the interview procedures, and the steps followed during the data collection. Next, information on each participant was provided to create an overall description of the sample. Detailed descriptions of each of the themes followed, along with an analysis of how the themes answered the research question. The chapter concluded with an evaluation of the analysis procedures and a summary. In Chapter 5, the implications of the results are presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore HR practices at organizations where workplace spirituality is supported and where employees are actively encouraged to feel a sense of calling and membership related to their work. I accomplished the research purpose by employing qualitative methods to interview seven HR professionals to understand their experiences working in an organization that promotes spirituality in the workplace. Multiple case study methods allow researchers to focus on *how* and *why* questions associated with an event or phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Multiple case studies also allow researchers to focus on the deeper perspectives and experiences of research participants (Yin, 2014). As a result, I was able to use a multiple case study approach to obtain truthful and authentic answers to the present study's research questions.

The present research design was built on a conceptual framework that drew on three well-established theories. The theoretical framework incorporated aspects of spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2016), integral theory (Wilber, 2005), and servant leadership theory (Blanch et al., 2016). Elements from spiritual leadership theory, integral theory, and servant leadership theory were specifically used to explore how HR professionals use servant leadership practices to support employees' internal and external workplace spirituality needs and promote employee engagement. This research question aligned with the use of a qualitative multiple case study and a data collection process that included semistructured interviews, field notes, audio and video recordings, organizational documents, and social media posts.

Before beginning the research, I conducted an extensive literature review on the topic of workplace spirituality. Several studies within the extant literature indicated that workplace spirituality is a vital component of employee engagement. Breytenbach (2016) argued that for organizations to promote spirituality in the workplace, it must be acceptable for employees to express their spirituality. Additionally, Van Der Walt (2018) found that workplace spirituality has a positive influence on work engagement and employees' ability to thrive. Mahipalan and Sheena (2018) even noted that workplace spirituality and employee engagement were positively connected to employee job satisfaction.

Data were analyzed using a six-stage process adopted from Glover (2016) and Manley-Johnson (2012). The process involved (a) immersion, (b) understanding, (c) abstraction, (d) synthesis and theme development, (e) illumination and illustration of the phenomena, and (f) integration and critique (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Bowers & Green, 2013; Glover, 2016; Manley-Johnson, 2012; Setati & Nkosi, 2017). The results of the data analysis indicated that based on the participants' experiences, spirituality in the workplace supported employee engagement by promoting a sense of calling and membership. All the participants agreed that recognizing the talents of individual employees and allowing them to use their skills to add value in the work environment contributed to employees' sense of calling in their organizations. Furthermore, organizations can foster a sense of membership by allowing employees to volunteer in the community or contribute to an personally meaningful cause. Alignment between organizational goals and employees' values enables individuals to give back by serving

their community. The results of this study indicated that the participants supported the use of spirituality in the workplace, and HR professionals recognize the existence of a positive relationship between spirituality and employee engagement.

This chapter contains a discussion of the research findings. It begins with my interpretation of the findings in relation to the existing research. Next, the conceptual framework is discussed to determine whether the findings supported the use of elements from spiritual leadership theory, integral theory, and servant leadership theory. The limitations of the study are then presented, followed by research recommendations. The chapter closes with a discussion of the study's implications for social change and the conclusions I drew from the findings.

## Interpretation of Findings

The overarching research question of this study asked: How do HR professionals practice servant leadership to support the internal and external workplace spirituality needs of employees to promote employee engagement? Seven themes emerged from the data analysis.

**Theme 1**: Participants' personal spirituality was the source of their engagement with servant leadership and workplace spirituality.

**Theme 2:** Participants' sense of duty and responsibility encouraged their use of spiritual practices in the workplace.

**Theme 3:** The participants let their spiritual values guide their leadership and decision making within the organization.

**Theme 4:** Organizations take a values-based approach and use concrete methods to promote a sense of calling and membership among employees.

**Theme 5:** Communication and acceptance were necessary elements when using a sense of calling and membership to promote employee engagement.

**Theme 6:** Organizations use both internal and external and formal and informal practices to support workplace spirituality and promote employee engagement.

**Theme 7:** Workplace spirituality practices benefit all stakeholders.

The present study's findings contributed to the literature regarding HR practices and workplace spirituality within organizations seeking to promote employee engagement. The participants all expressed support for workplace spirituality and a belief in the need for cultural changes to promote spiritual values in the workplace. The participants believed that newly hired employees should receive training on the organization's mission and vision statement. This training results in alignment between the organization's  and employee's values, bolstering a sense of calling and a sense of membership within the workplace.

Participants indicated that alignment between employees and organizations could be achieved in many ways. Examples included treating people the way they want to be treated, putting employees' needs above profits, and leading by example. Organizations also supported employee initiatives that gave back to the larger community.

The participants' feedback aligned with recent research. Banerjee (2020) found that leaders need to adopt spiritual values such as "integrity, caring, love, concern, and missions to create and sustain values" (p. 20). Singh (2019) found that workplace

spirituality has a positive role in "creating a strong and encouraging work culture, which gives their employees a bigger purpose and motivates them for higher attainments in their lives." Spirituality, according to Singh, is deemed necessary for employees' productivity and an organization's overall performance. All the participants believed that workplace spirituality practices that incorporate core principles such as valuing others, showing empathy, fostering a culture with care and love, and treating people with honor, dignity, and respect are necessary to reach profit goals.

Leaders in an organization have the responsibility to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. A leader who has a spiritual connection can develop a culture that values, supports, and empowers employees. HR professionals can use procedures and systems to support that culture. Several recent scholarly articles on spirituality in the workplace contain findings that align with the results of this research. Singh (2019) stated that effective leaders possess characteristics that support workplace spirituality, including team orientation, adaptability, the ability to share knowledge, and the desire to work collaboratively with employees. A leader should be able to communicate an organization's mission to employees, improving the employees' understanding of their roles and responsibilities to the organization (Singh, 2019). This kind of culture promotes learning and reduces employee grievances and turnover, resulting in higher workplace productivity. Singh's findings aligned with Themes 1 through 3 in the present study, as these three themes focused on the personal spirituality and values of organizational leaders and how those values shape the treatment of employees and organizational culture.

Like Singh (2019), Fanggidae (2018) also studied culture and contended that organizational culture significantly impacts workplace spirituality. Fanggidae argued that spirituality in the workplace is viewed from two levels, the individual and the organizational. Fanggidae suggested that the individual level is related to a link between personal values, work, and interpersonal relationships that result in positive feelings. The organizational level referred to the framework of the values that encourage the transcendent experience of employees through the process of working and connecting with others while promoting feelings of belonging and happiness (Fanggidae, 2018). Fanggidae's assessment of workplace spirituality aligned most closely with Theme 6 in the present study, which found that organizations use both internal and external and formal and informal practices to support workplace spirituality.

In another study, Bhattacharyya and Afroz (2019) concluded that leaders have the critical job of supporting spiritual values that support the employees and the organization. Bhattacharyya and Afroz argued that the beneficial impact that spirituality has on work-related outcomes is vast and limitless with improvements to productivity, innovation, and morale and decreases in employee turnover and absenteeism. The work by Bhattacharyya and Afroz is closely aligned with Themes 4 and 5 in the present study. Employees spend much of their time at work, and often they are looking for an organization that accepts who they are as a person (i.e., body, soul, and spirit). Employees want to feel valued and connected to the organization. Participants' responses suggest that employees are no longer willing to leave their faith at the door because their faith defines who they are and how they live according to spiritual values such as love, honesty respect, and compassion.

By making concerted efforts to embrace workplace spirituality, organizations can support their workers.

Researchers have examined workplace spirituality in diverse settings. Ke, Zhang, Yan, and Fu (2017) conducted a study on the effects of workplace spirituality among university teachers and found that spirituality has a positive impact on the teachers' engagement. The participants in Ke et al.'s study concurred that universities are in the business of people building. Therefore, the organizations put people first and use a leadership style based on the duty to serve or steward others. These sentiments were echoed in the responses of the participants in the present study. Ke et al.'s findings closely aligned with Theme 2 in the present study that recognized the role of duty and responsibility as drivers of the use of workplace spirituality practices.

Finally, other scholars studied the role of servant leadership. Tanno and Banner (2018) argued that servant leaders influence, empower, and develop their employees professionally and personally. In return, employees become servant leaders as they move into management positions. Servant leaders can help their employees find meaning in their job and become strong contributors to the surrounding community. Fatima and Zafar (2018) contended that when serving others becomes a priority, the needs of many stakeholders are met. By meeting the needs of employees and strengthening the meaningfulness of the workplace, both the employees and the organization benefit (Fatima & Zafar, 2018). This finding most closely aligned with Theme 7, which indicated that workplace spirituality benefits all stakeholders.

The findings of this study showed that workplace spirituality plays a significant role in organizational leadership. From the participants' perspective, promoting workplace spirituality practices led to employee engagement and positive outcomes for all stakeholders. Together, the findings supported the study's aims, answered the research question, and contributed to the body of knowledge on workplace spirituality. The next section addresses the alignment between the findings and the study's conceptual framework.

## Conceptual Framework

I selected a combination of spiritual leadership (Fry, 2016), integral theory (Wilber, 2005), and servant leadership theory (Blanch et al., 2016) as part of the conceptual framework for this study. I selected elements from these theories because they each provided critical elements for assessing the practices that HR professionals use when promoting workplace spirituality. The goal was to allow participants to articulate their experiences and perspectives pertaining to the use of workplace spirituality in their organization.

The spiritual leadership theory suggests that employees need to feel a sense of calling in their work and a sense of membership within their organization (Fry, 2016). Fry (2016) argued that when these two needs are met in the organization, then employees are happier and more engaged. The participants' responses supported Fry's assertions about the importance of the sense of calling and membership. Specifically, my findings indicated that communication and acceptance strongly contributed to the sense of calling and membership.

The second component of the conceptual framework was integral theory. Wilber (2005) believed that spiritual needs are manifested both internally on a personal level and externally on an organizational level. This element of the conceptual framework was also supported by the participants' feedback. Participants indicated that there were distinct differences and boundaries between their personal spirituality and the organization's approach to workplace spirituality. Additionally, the findings indicated that workplace spirituality benefitted individuals on both internal and external levels. Individual employees were benefited, organizations were benefited, and the wider community was benefited when workplace spirituality practices were used.

The final component of the study's conceptual framework was servant leadership theory. In servant leadership theory, organizational leaders emphasize the needs, objectives, and interests of employees to promote their growth and development as well as the success of the business (Blanch et al., 2016). As with spiritual leadership theory and integral theory, the present study's findings supported the inclusion of servant leadership theory in the conceptual framework. The participants strongly indicated that they engaged in servant leadership in their efforts to promote workplace spirituality through the development and support of employees.

In this study, the participants articulated their interpretation of how workplace spirituality practices promote employee engagement. All three theories were supported by the findings because of the participants' perspectives on personal spirituality, organizational culture, and servant leadership. This study allowed the participants to discuss their role in organizations that embrace workplace spirituality. The study also

allowed participants to communicate how their faith helps them in their everyday decision-making process and in their roles as leaders in the workplace.

## Limitations of the Study

There was a limitation within my study concerning the sampling approach used to select HR professionals that practice workplace spirituality. I used a snowball sampling procedure to recruit participants for my study. Researchers generally use snowball sampling when the individuals needed for the study are a difficult or hidden population to access (Waters, 2015). HR managers are a population that is difficult to access as they function the gatekeepers of the organization and often refuse to participate in research because of confidentiality clauses within their contracts and the potential liability issues associated with the management of employee's personal information (Dusek et al., 2015).

I found that many HR professionals contacted through the snowball sampling process were reluctant to refer others or provide information as a participant. Three individuals referred to me as potential participants initially agreed to participate in the interview progress. However, once the interview date was set, the individuals stopped responded to emails. I addressed the difficulty of obtaining participants exclusively through referrals by posting flyers on social media websites and professional HR sites. IRB approval was obtained before posting these flyers. Through this additional request for participants, I was able to conduct interviews with seven experienced HR professionals who worked in companies that promoted workplace spirituality.

The second limitation was that all seven of the participants were of the protestant Christian faith. Workplace spirituality is not linked to any organized religion. Instead,

spirituality is considered inherently individualistic (Vallabh & Vallabh, 2016). In this study, no effort was made to include participants from different faiths as part of the sampling requirements. However, I believe that the study would provide a much richer perspective if it included individuals with other spirituals faiths such as Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, or Catholicism.

The third limitation was linked to the age group of the participants. The study did not specify an age range as the participants' experience was the focus. However, the participants in this study ranged in age from 35 to 60. The lack of information from younger HR professionals indicates that the findings may not be representative of the practices of all members of the target population. Interviewing younger HR professionals might provide different insights into the experience of working in a spiritually focused organization.

The last limitation was that the study was focused exclusively on HR professionals in the organization. A study that encompasses the entire leadership staff, as well as the employees, might yield different results or a more comprehensive image of how spirituality in the workplace is actually demonstrated. After reviewing the limitations, I am convinced that future research is needed to understand how HR practices are used to promote workplace spirituality. The findings might differ substantially if a sample included participants with different faith-based perspectives, HR professionals of different ages, or the perspectives of managers and employees in addition to HR professionals. Recommendations for further research are presented in the following section.

**Recommendations**

While the information that resulted from this study could prove useful to organizational leaders who are skeptical about spirituality in the workplace or leaders looking for ways to implement spirituality in their organization, the findings are general. The participants indicated that spirituality in the workplace could promote employee engagement, reduce employee retention, improve attendance and customer service, and increase employee productivity, community service, and organization profitability. A recommendation would be for future researchers to conduct an in-depth single case study that documents the specific workplace spirituality practices and policies to track their outcomes related to employee engagement and organizational outcomes.

A second recommendation would be to examine companies trying to implement workplace spirituality practices for the first time. It would be useful to document how organizations implement practices within their workplaces as part of a culture change to foster an environment of spirituality. Documenting the transition phase from a nonspiritual workplace to a workplace that embraces workplace spirituality would benefit everyone in organizations considering a shift toward workplace spirituality. Such a study would allow researchers to document any observed changes in employee engagement, behavior, or emotional well-being resulting from the implementation of workplace spirituality practices.

A third recommendation for future research based on this study is to compare HR professionals' perspectives of faith-based organizations with organizations that do not practice spirituality in their workplace. Such a study would allow researchers to learn

how the different types of organizations keep their employees engaged. The study could compare retention rates, attendance, turnover rates, employee performance, and profitability to determine whether workplace spirituality practices created measurable differences.

A fourth recommendation is for researchers to conduct the same study but include managers and employees in the sample group. A study that included managers, HR professionals, and employees would provide different perspectives on the aspects of workplace spirituality that were most important to different employee groups. A study including multiple employee groups might also provide insights into the workplace spirituality practices that are most important to different types of employees.

A fifth and final recommendation is to conduct a study of HR professionals from different faith backgrounds and nationalities working in countries worldwide. A mixed group of HR professionals could shed light on how individuals with different theological backgrounds approach workplace issues. A study like that would also illustrate differences between companies in the United States and companies in other parts of the world where different religions are common.

## Implications

As stated in Chapter 2, this study was socially important because it added to the literature on spirituality in the workplace, spiritual leadership, servant leadership, integral theory, and employee engagement. Employees are the foundation of an organization, and it is necessary to have HR professionals committed to spreading the mission and values of the organization at all levels, including at the community level. Researchers have

noted that employees play an integral role in the success of the organization. Researchers have also found that organizations with cultures that nurture employees' spiritual values benefit from increased profitability.

The participants in this study indicated that spirituality in the workplace has a significantly positive social influence on individuals' engagement in the workplace. Increased engagement has positive effects on organizational culture, employees' families, and the surrounding community. The present study's results reaffirmed that when leaders respect individuals' spiritual needs and values within an organization, then the employees will be committed to the value and mission of the company. Loyal to the organization increases, turnover rates decrease, employee productivity improves, and organization profitability rises.

The social benefits obtained when employees are engaged at work advantage families and workplace communities. Organizations are able to realize increased profits, and in some cases, these factors benefit the surrounding community as organizations and employees engage in greater volunteer activities that add value to humanity. Bhattacharyya and Afroz (2019) contended that a company without spirituality in the workplace would result in "low morale, burnout, high turnover, rising absenteeism, [and] stress-related illness" (p. 288). Conversely, a spiritually driven organization contributes to positive social change through committed, loyal, and creative employees that form a caring and compassionate workforce. Van Der Walt (2018) also linked organizational cultures that embrace spirituality to increased engagement, improved health outcomes, and profitability. These benefits all have social value in today's society.

This dissertation was completed just after the global Covid-19 pandemic started, and widespread civil unrest was being experienced in the United States as a result of the death of George Floyd, an African American man who was the victim of police brutality. These dual crises demonstrate that the world is in a state of unrest, with entire portions of our society experiencing frustration, grief, fear, pain, and uncertainty. The pandemic has also resulted in a significant shift in organizational practices as more people are working from home, and millions of people face layoffs, job losses, and business closures (Aaronson & Alba, 2020).

Workplace spirituality is significant tool that organizations can use during times of crisis. For this reason, the present study had even greater social significance than anticipated when I proposed the research. In the face of COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, organizations have an opportunity to demonstrate their values of compassion, caring, love, and community. Many organizations like Target, Walmart, and Facebook have donated to millions of dollars to support both COVID-19 and BLM relief efforts (Clay, 2020; Hanbury, 2020; Livingston, 2020; Singh, 2020). Despite the public donations many organizations have made to show their support, it is important that organizations embrace cultural change that addresses the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations. The necessary cultural change can be achieved through the implementation of practices and policies that support workplace spirituality, diversity, inclusion, acceptance, and loving communication.

Many individuals are experiencing life-threaten sickness, the loss of loved ones, or economic hardships because of Covid-19 and the resulting economic downturn. These

challenges create a burden of stress that can manifest in many unhealthy ways (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Organizations can use workplace spirituality practices to ensure that social safety nets are available to employees to help decrease the mental, emotional, and financial hardships these individuals face. Working from home can create added stress during the pandemic, and organizational leaders should make efforts to remain flexible with employees and offer support through whatever means are available.

The social environment in the United States as a result of racial inequalities indicates that workplace spirituality is needed now more than ever. Since the death of George Floyd, many individuals in a wide range of industries have spoken about systemic and institutionalized racism that contributes to a toxic work environment (Luscombe, 2020; Mastromatteo, 2020; Vaughan & Murugesu, 2020). There have even been calls for HR professionals to give special consideration to African American employees as a result of the additional stress they are under (Webber, 2020). Some of the foundational tenants of workplace spirituality are inclusion, diversity, and acceptance. Individuals are encouraged to feel a sense of membership and belonging within the organization. Thus, workplace spirituality is a natural solution to workplaces facing division from racial tensions.

Now is the time when organizations can demonstrate their love and compassion by helping and allowing their employees to draw upon the companies and their own personal practices, values, and beliefs that support spiritual integration and wholeness of the body, mind, and soul. Spiritual integration is associated with spiritual care that is

linked to the overall quality of life and mental and spiritual well-being (Kruizinga,

Scherer-Rath, Schilderman, Puchalski, & van Laarhoven, 2018). Spiritual integration is

defined by "the extent to which spiritual beliefs, practices, and experiences are organized

into a coherent whole… [e.g.,] integration of spirituality into daily life, integration of

spiritual beliefs and practices, and integration of spiritual motivation and practices"

(Pargament, Desai, & McConnell, 2006, p. 130).

Through the use of spiritual integration, workplace spirituality can offer

organizations support with dealing with job satisfaction, job frustration, stress, burn out,

and job tension during the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising racial tensions. These

issues threaten employees' spiritual wholeness. Spirituality to most people is a resource

for growth and positive change when facing a life crisis, pain, or suffering. Spirituality

allows people to lean on their faith and personal values for peace and strength to get

through life's difficulties. By embracing workplace spirituality, organizations can create

practices that support those values and beliefs. Promoting love and compassion in the

workplace reduces employee stress and tension, which benefits the organization and

community. Taking a positive view of workplace spirituality promotes social change by

initiating a positive feedback cycle that benefits a wide range of stakeholders.

**Conclusions**

This research focused on HR practices that foster workplace spirituality practices

and how those practices encourage employee engagement. Employees in today's

workplace face extreme stress related to emerging technology, job uncertainty, and

disruptions in the global economy. Spirituality and personal values help many individuals

cope with these stresses, and as a result, employees less and less willing to leave their faith at the door when they enter the workplace. Organizations are also recognizing the importance of workplace spirituality. Engaged employees are extremely important as they enable the organization to meet performance goals, and the success of a business relies primarily on employee performance. In recognition of the importance of employee well-being, more and more organizations are using workplace spirituality practices to bolster engagement and create alignment between the values of the organization and its employees.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, religion represents humanity's outer nature, which pertains to the world in which we live (Gupta et al., 2014). Spirituality pertains to the inner nature of humanity that upholds the morals in the community (Belwalkar et al., 2018; Shinde et al., 2018). Spirituality is about the existence of the inner sacred person's desire to be transformed into a spiritual being. Individual, group, and organizational spirituality are addressed differently in the scholarly literature. Individual spirituality concerns the personal spiritual growth of the person, group spirituality addresses community building, and organization spirituality covers the values of the organization reflected in their culture and instilling a sense of meaningfulness and belonging (Bhattacharyya & Afroz, 2019).

The result of this study was that spirituality in the workplace has a significant positive impact on employees, and this positive impact is manifested through employee engagement. When employees feel that their organization values their personal spirituality, the organization shows that it cares about the employee's well-being inside

and outside of work. The feelings of connectedness and membership engendered by workplace spirituality produce employees that are more committed, engaged, and productive in the workplace. When employees can express their spiritual beliefs, they feel more connected to their community, and the organization's profits increase. Implementing certain workplace spirituality practices within the organization (e.g., practices that foster acceptance, diversity, connectedness, and communication) empowers and motivates employees, improves morale and teamwork among peers, increases engagement, and reduces turnover. Workplace spirituality benefits all stakeholders from entry-level employees and senior management to stockholders and community members. Because of the vast benefits of workplace spirituality practices, more research is necessary, especially in times where there is extreme societal division and strife.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

The purpose of this study is to develop an understanding of how HR practices associated with servant leadership support the workplace spirituality needs of employees and promote employee engagement. The Overarching Research Question guiding this study asked: How do HR professionals practice servant leadership to support the internal and external workplace spirituality needs of employees to promote employee engagement?

This interview will include five groups of questions. The first group of questions will ask you to share a bit of background about yourself. The next three groups of questions will ask about workplace spirituality, how workplace spirituality affects individuals and the organization, and the role of servant leadership. The final question will allow you to share any additional thoughts you have on the topic of workplace spirituality and employee engagement. Before beginning the interview, I would like to provide you with the following definitions to provide context for the interview questions.

**Spirituality** is defined as a personal relationship with a divine power that provides meaning in an individual's life. Spirituality is not dependent upon any specific religious beliefs, and the concept of spirituality is not being equated with religion in this study.

**Workplace spirituality** is defined as a feeling of inner purpose associated with the workplace. Vision, hope, and altruistic love are elements of workplace spirituality that can be used to foster a sense of calling and a sense of membership among employees.

**Vision** refers to your organization's future goals and intentions.

**Hope** refers to the belief that purposeful goals can be achieved.

**Altruistic love** refers to compassion, respect, and appreciation for others.

**A sense of calling** refers to an individual's feeling that their work is meaningful and purpose driven.

**A sense of membership** refers to an individual's feelings of a connection and shared purpose with others in an organization.

**Servant leadership** is a leadership style that prioritizes the needs of employees.

**Employee engagement** is defined as an individual's commitment and dedication to performing their job to the best of their ability.

# Interview Questions

**Background Questions**

1. What is your current position, and how long have you worked with your organization?

2. Can you describe what spirituality means to you, both in a personal context and within the workplace?

**Workplace Spirituality**

3. How do you use the workplace spirituality elements of vision, hope, and altruistic love to foster a sense of calling and membership among employees?

4. How do you use a sense of calling and a sense of membership to promote employee engagement within your organization?

5. In what ways do you use organizational practices to support workplace spirituality and promote employee engagement at your organization?

6. How do you incorporate spiritual values into your leadership and decision-making practices within the organization?

**Internal and External Workplace Spirituality**

7. Can you describe how workplace spirituality practices impact individuals, the organization, and the community?

**The Role of Servant Leadership**

8. Can you describe how your moral principles and spiritual values influence your use of workplace spirituality practices?

9. Can you describe how your sense of stewardship and the value of service to others influence your use of workplace spirituality practices?

Concluding Question

10. Is there anything that we have discussed related to workplace spirituality, servant leadership, or employee engagement that you would like to elaborate on?