

LECTURERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP: A QUANTITATIVE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received February 04, 2024

Revised March 10, 2024

Accepted April 16, 2024

Available online May 21, 2024

Keywords: spiritual leadership, lecturers' perceptions, higher education, qualitative descriptive, academic environment

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Abstract. Spiritual leadership has been recognized as holistic leadership that prioritizes spiritual aspects in managing the complex and dynamic academic environment. However, its implementation remains challenging. This study aimed to comprehensively understand lecturers' perceptions of spiritual leadership in higher education institutions. The research method used was a descriptive quantitative design. Respondents consisted of 336 lecturers from various private higher education institutions in Bali determined through a proportional random sampling technique and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings demonstrate lecturers' perceptions of spiritual leadership in the very high category. The vision indicator received the most important focus of attention in motivating and directing lecturers' actions in achieving institutional objectives, while the aspects of altruistic love, hope/faith, meaning/calling, and membership indicate opportunities for deeper emphasis to develop leaders who are responsible, competent, and have integrity. The findings contribute to the importance of implementing spiritual leadership in developing a harmonious academic community and creating the spiritual well-being of

lecturers to achieve the main performance of higher education institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is an important issue, referring to its ability to influence almost every aspect of the organization. It is believed to play a role in organizational sustainability, including in higher education institutions (Filho et al., 2020 & Tingkat, 2020). Leadership can be a crucial driver for developing a collaborative culture, improving educational quality, human resource development, and improving higher education performance (Liu, 2021; Scott, 2022; Sloof & von Siemens, 2021). Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of appropriate leadership paradigms is critical to competitiveness in the complex and dynamic higher education environment.

Several leadership styles have been studied and applied in higher education institutions. A systematic literature review by [Suyudi et al. \(2020\)](#) shows the significant effects of transactional, transformational, charismatic, and democratic leadership in improving higher education performance. [Carvalho et al. \(2022\)](#) highlighted most transformational leadership studies in higher education, especially in online learning systems and various types of technology. [Khatri et al. \(2021\)](#) explained the effectiveness of servant leadership in higher education, transforming the learning experience for faculty and students. These findings confirm that leadership can positively impact higher education management. Likewise, spiritual leadership places the values and principles of spiritual principles as the primary foundation in the interaction of leaders with organizational members, but unfortunately, studies related to this leadership are still limited to the context of higher education ([Oh & Wang, 2020](#)). [Subhaktiyasa et al. \(2023\)](#) indicate that there is still a need to explore spiritual leadership in higher education, referring to its significant potential in shaping a harmonious and inspiring academic environment carried out by lecturers as responsible for achieving the central performance of higher education in teaching, research and community service.

Spiritual leadership promotes spiritual, moral, and ethical practices in the leader's interactions with followers in the organizational community and positively impacts spiritual well-being ([Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023](#)). [Fry \(2003\)](#) emphasizes that spiritual leadership is not about religion but universal values everyone can share. Leaders who adopt spiritual leadership have a deep understanding of the meaning and purpose of life that is greater than mere material achievement or personal gain ([Oh & Wang, 2020](#)). Critical dimensions of spiritual leadership include clear vision, inspiring altruistic love, strong hope/faith, creating a deep calling, and inclusive membership ([Fry et al., 2005](#); [Evi Yupani & Widana, 2023](#)). Vision refers to a leader's ability to set a clear direction and inspire others to follow with solid determination. Altruistic love is a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being through caring, concern, and respect for oneself and others. Hope/faith reflects high trust and confidence in achieving desired goals. Calling refers to a transcendent experience or making a difference through service to others and a more meaningful life. Finally, membership describes how the leader creates solid and inclusive relationships with his/her team members.

A brief review of the related literature shows that interest in spiritual leadership in higher education settings has increased in recent years ([Abou Zeid et al., 2022](#); [Oh & Wang, 2020](#)). Past research has uncovered various aspects of spiritual leadership, including its effect on organizational commitment, workplace spirituality, organizational culture, work motivation, organizational citizenship behavior, counterproductive work behavior, and overall organizational performance, including in the context of higher education institutions ([Macini et al., 2023](#); [Oh & Wang, 2020](#); [Rocha & Pinheiro, 2021](#); [Scott, 2022](#); [Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023](#); [Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023](#)). In addition, recent research has also begun to highlight the importance of spiritual values in shaping people-to-people relationships in the academic environment ([Chapman et al., 2021](#); [David et al., 2022](#)). However, previous studies have not provided an in-depth understanding of lecturers' perceptions of spiritual leadership in higher education. It creates a gap in our comprehension of how academic leaders interpret and implement the principles of spiritual leadership in the context of higher education. The main objective of this study was to gain a comprehensive understanding of lecturers' perceptions of spiritual leadership in higher education. Through a descriptive quantitative approach, this study

aims to delve deeper into how lecturers in higher education understand, apply, and perceive the importance of spiritual leadership in an academic context. Thus, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how the critical dimensions of spiritual leadership are reflected in practice and how these perceptions contribute to building a harmonious and quality academic environment.

METHOD

This study adopted a descriptive quantitative research design to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of spiritual leadership among lecturers in higher education. This research design was chosen to describe objectively observed phenomena through systematic quantitative data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The population of this study was 1.293 lecturers of private higher education institutions in Bali Province, Indonesia, with lecturer identification numbers and national lecturer certificates. The minimum sample size of 296 lecturers was determined using the formulation of Krejcie & Morgan (1970) and corrected to 346 using the formulation of Warwick & Linenger (1975) to ascertain adequacy in the data analysis process. Meanwhile, the sampling technique applied proportional random sampling to ensure that every lecturer in the higher education institution had an equal opportunity to be part of the sample (Widana et al., 2023). The main instrument used in this study was a closed-ended questionnaire referring to the spiritual leadership questionnaire by Fry et al. (2005), adapted for research purposes referring to Subhaktiyasa (2024). The measurement adopted a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The indicators in the spiritual leadership questionnaire consist of vision, altruistic love, hope/faith, calling, and membership, with 36 statement items. The questionnaire has been tested for content validity, item validity, and reliability so it can be used to collect data on lecturers' perceptions of spiritual leadership (Subhaktiyasa, 2024).

The data in this study were collected using Google Forms and assisted by enumerators appointed at each higher education institution. Enumerators are used to guide and assist respondents in filling out the questionnaire, thus ensuring that the data collection process runs well and gets complete responses from respondents. However, of the 346 questionnaires distributed, only 336 could be analyzed further. Data analysis in this study was carried out using descriptive statistical techniques. This technique is used to summarize and interpret numerical data, such as calculating the average, frequency, and percentage of respondents' responses to each statement in the questionnaire (Agung, 2018). This descriptive analysis aims to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of lecturers' perceptions of spiritual leadership in private higher education in Bali. The results of this analysis will generate helpful information in answering the research questions posed and provide an in-depth understanding of the dynamics and variability of spiritual leadership perceptions in a complex academic context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Respondents in the study came from various forms of higher education institutions with a distribution where 15% of lecturers were from Universities, 13 from Institutes, 23 from Colleges, 23 from Academies, 3 from Community Academies, and 1 from Polytechnics. The majority, 57.7% of respondents were female, with 43.8% in the age range of 30-39 years. 73.5% of respondents completed their master's degree, and 40.2% had worked for 6-10 years. 63.1% of respondents had academic positions as lecturers, while only 1.5% were

professors, and 82.1% came from home-based institutional higher education institutions with very good accreditation levels. Analisis dilanjutkan dengan melakukan identifikasi jawaban penelitian untuk melihat persentase skor jawaban dari alternatif jawaban dan rata-rata setiap indikator pada kepemimpinan spiritual sebagaimana ditunjukkan pada Tabel 1.

Table 1. Distribution of population and sample

Indicator	Respondent's answer in percent (%)					Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	
Vision	0.10	0.15	3.42	63.74	32.59	4.29
Altruistic love	0.03	0.53	9.85	70.93	18.65	4.08
Hope/faith	0.03	0.53	9.85	70.93	18.65	4.18
Calling	0.00	0.60	6.38	70.45	22.58	4.15
Membership	0.09	0.77	8.12	69.01	22.02	4.12
Mean	0.05	0.51	7.53	69.01	22.90	4.16

Table 1 shows that respondents' perceptions of the spiritual leadership variable amounted to 4.16. The indicator with the highest mean is the vision indicator, while the indicator with the lowest is the altruistic love indicator. Overall, the altruistic love, calling, and membership indicators indicate mean values below the mean value of spiritual leadership. Furthermore, the analysis continued with descriptive statistical tests where the statistical data description of the score distribution of the spiritual leadership variable was used. The analysis results explained that the mean spiritual leadership score was 149.55, with a standard deviation 13.05. The measurement results of 336 respondents indicate that the highest score for spiritual leadership is 180, while the lowest is 111. Based on this, calculations were carried out to determine the categories and qualifications of spiritual leadership scores consisting of 36 statement items, using alternative answers on a scale of 5. The results of the calculations are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Spiritual Leadership Score Categorization

Score Range	Interval	Qualification
$M_i + 1.5 S_{di} \leq M$	$144 \leq M$	Very good
$M_i + 0.5 S_{di} \leq M < M_i + 1.5 S_{di}$	$120 \leq M < 144$	Good
$M_i - 0.5 S_{di} \leq M < M_i + 0.5 S_{di}$	$96 \leq M < 120$	Medium
$M_i - 1.5 S_{di} \leq M < M_i - 0.5 S_{di}$	$72 \leq M < 96$	Low
$M < M_i - 1.5 S_{di}$	$M < 72$	Very Low

Table 2 shows the categorization and qualification of spiritual leadership scores, where the mean spiritual leadership score is 149.55 with a standard deviation of 13.05 in the interval $144 \leq M$. This indicates that the mean spiritual leadership score is in the very good category.

Discussion

This study provides insight into lecturers' perceptions of spiritual leadership in academic settings. The findings indicate that most lecturers hold positive views regarding the importance of spiritual aspects in the context of leadership in an academic setting. The study illustrated a high recognition of the vision, altruistic love, hope/faith, meaning/calling, and membership in practical spiritual leadership. It highlights the

effectiveness of spiritual leadership in influencing the development of responsible, competent, and integrated behavior in a harmonious academic context (Karadağ et al., 2020; Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2002; Reave, 2005; Subhaktiyasa, 2023). While most lecturers gave high ratings to their relationships with leaders, there were significant differences in perceptions regarding fair and thoughtful treatment, highlighting the importance of consistency and fairness in implementing altruistic love. Likewise, the perception of calling indicates high meaningfulness as a professional educator, but there is potential in recognizing the lecturers' vision and mission to harmonize the individual goals of each lecturer and the higher education institution. Furthermore, the membership aspect explains the importance of strengthening lecturers' sense of belonging in the academic community through creating an inclusive work environment and recognizing individual contributions. These findings emphasize the importance of paying attention to specific aspects of spiritual leadership in higher education to improve the relationships between lecturers and leaders and strengthen higher education institutions' overall cohesion and effectiveness (Karsono et al., 2022; Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023; Subhaktiyasa et al., 2024).

Analysis of the vision indicator revealed important aspects of lecturers' perceptions of spiritual leadership in higher education. The results show that the average score of lecturers' perceptions of the college leaders' vision is in the excellent category, with a focus of attention on the statement, "I am committed to the vision of the higher education leaders." This result indicates that most lecturers consider the vision promoted by the leadership to be something worth following and supporting. However, there is an important note on the statement, "I have the responsibility to achieve the vision of higher education leaders," which received less attention than other statements. It illustrates an awareness of individual responsibility in achieving the vision, but further efforts are needed to motivate and facilitate lecturers' active involvement in realizing the vision. The findings conclude that the vision aspect is important to spiritual leadership. However, more attention must be paid to communication and empowerment strategies to encourage lecturers' active participation in integrating their personal and institutional vision of the higher education institution. This finding confirms the results of previous studies that demonstrate a positive relationship between shared vision understanding and organizational performance (Ficapal-Cusí et al., 2021; Maran et al., 2022). The positive interpretation of vision emphasizes that clarity is essential in motivating and directing lecturers' actions in achieving institutional objectives. It serves as a foundation for developing leadership theories that focus on aspects of vision as one of the crucial elements in shaping leadership perceptions and behaviors. A deeper understanding of the importance of vision in leadership can assist leaders of higher education institutions design strategies and policies that are more effective in achieving a shared vision.

The findings on the altruistic love indicator indicate a positive level of perception of lecturers' experience of mutual care in higher education academic activities. The focus of lecturers' attention on the statement "I feel valued by the higher education leadership as a lecturer and appreciate the contributions I make" indicates that lecturers tend to need to feel valued and recognized for their contributions in the academic environment. However, some statements are given little attention, especially those such as, "I am treated fairly and wisely by higher education leaders." It suggests there is still potential to prioritize wisdom in interactions within the higher education environment. The study reflects the importance of recognizing and appreciating individual contributions in creating a harmonious and

altruistic values-oriented work environment. These results may reinforce the understanding that altruistic love is about giving, recognizing, respecting, and treating individuals fairly and thoughtfully (Hu et al., 2015; Rahimyar & Sarvari, 2023). Hence, there is a need for awareness and concrete actions in creating an inclusive academic climate that supports each feeling valued and allowed to thrive.

The hope/faith indicator showed high responses from lecturers on their hopes and beliefs towards implementing spiritual leadership in the academic environment. The statement "I have faith that this higher education institution will continue to grow and get better" indicates that lecturers have positive expectations for the future of their institution. However, there were statements of lower concern, particularly in the statement, "I have confidence in the leadership of my higher education institution, and I am willing to do whatever is necessary to ensure the realization of the mission." It illustrates that there are areas where lecturers' beliefs and expectations may not have been fully realized or met by existing leadership practices in their institutions. The findings underscore supporting lecturers' beliefs and expectations in creating an inspiring and future-oriented academic environment (Matos et al., 2022; Purnadewi & Widana, 2023). It requires leaders who can strengthen communication, transparency and participation in formulating a shared vision to generate shared hopes and beliefs.

Analysis of the meaning/calling indicator reveals a high level of perception of the meaning and calling of lecturers as educators and scientists to contribute to realizing educational purposes (Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023). High attention to the statement "Higher education leaders accept me in the academic community" illustrates that lecturers feel recognized and accepted in their academic environment. However, the statement "Higher education leaders help me develop my vision and mission in my professional and personal life" received low perceptions, underscoring that there are aspects of self-development support for meaning and vocation that may not have been fully met or considered by the existing leadership at their institutions. It indicates leaders' importance in better understanding and supporting the development of individual lecturers' vision and mission in professional and personal contexts (Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023).

The findings on the membership indicator explain the positive perception of lecturers' relationship and attachment to the institution and academic community where they serve. The statement "Higher education leaders understand my strengths and weaknesses as a lecturer" is the focus of attention, indicating that lecturers feel individually recognized by their institutional leaders. The statement "Higher education leaders create a strong emotional attachment between the people of higher education" shows a low perception and illustrates the need for emotional attachment between lecturers and institutional leaders to impact the work climate and lecturers' performance positively. The findings emphasize the importance of emotional connection to build organizational attachment which impacts the sense of acceptance and belonging (Esters et al., 2023 & Sumandya et al., 2023). Hence, there is a need for efforts from institutional leaders to create an environment that strengthens emotional attachment and understands the needs and contributions of individual lecturers in achieving higher education objectives.

CONCLUSION

The study comprehensively explains how higher education lecturers interpret spiritual leadership in a dynamic academic environment. The findings indicate a high level of

agreement regarding vision, altruistic love, hope/faith, meaning/calling, and membership in the interactions of lecturers within their higher education institutions. As well as altruistic love, hope/faith, meaning/calling, and membership, there are indications of opportunities to emphasize these aspects in spiritual leadership to build a harmonious academic environment. The results of this study contribute to the importance of implementing spiritual leadership in supporting sustainable higher education institutions. Higher education institutions need to strengthen the effectiveness of spiritual-based leadership to achieve higher education objectives through harmonizing interactions that foster spiritual well-being in the academic environment to support positive work behavior. However, some limitations need attention, especially related to the sample which only involves lecturers of private higher education institutions in Bali. Therefore, conducting further research with a more representative sample is recommended to expand the generality of the findings and gain deeper insights through more diverse research methods.

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