

WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY AND EMPLOYEE LOYALTY: EXPLORING MANAGERIAL AND ENTREPRENEURIAL PERSPECTIVES IN ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT

Employee loyalty has become an increasingly fragile outcome in contemporary organizations, particularly in environments characterized by uncertainty, value misalignment, and weakened relational ties. In response to this challenge, managerial attention has gradually shifted toward approaches that emphasize meaning, relational depth, and ethical coherence at work. Within this landscape, workplace spirituality is addressed in this paper not as a personal belief system, but as a collectively enacted organizational climate shaped by leadership conduct and shared value orientations. The analysis is informed by an exploratory investigation involving Romanian managers and business owners, whose perspectives were gathered through a structured questionnaire during late 2024 and examined using econometric techniques. Rather than isolating spirituality as an abstract construct, the study focuses on how concrete leadership behaviors, such as recognition, authenticity, and consistency in communication, are perceived to influence trust, engagement, and employees' willingness to remain committed to their organizations. The results point to the central role of value congruence in sustaining relational stability and fostering a sense of long-term organizational belonging. By repositioning workplace spirituality within the sphere of managerial practice and organizational governance, this research offers an alternative lens for understanding employee loyalty beyond transactional or incentive-based explanations. The paper contributes to ongoing debates on value-driven leadership by highlighting how spiritually informed managerial orientations can support resilient organizational cultures and opens avenues for future inquiry into the strategic embedding of spiritual values in leadership processes.

KEYWORDS: *employee loyalty, leadership practices, organizational climate, organizational values, workplace spirituality.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Workplace spirituality has gained increasing attention in business research, emphasizing the alignment of organizational values with personal beliefs and principles (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003).

It is commonly understood through three dimensions: meaning, or the personal significance of work; purpose, the alignment of personal values with broader goals; and interconnectedness, which reflects trust and connection among employees and leaders (Fry, 2003; Denton & Mitroff, 1999).

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Rather than referring to religion, workplace spirituality promotes authenticity, ethical responsibility, and value-driven actions (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). Research consistently links it to enhanced well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational performance (Reave, 2005). When employees perceive a deeper sense of purpose in their roles, they display stronger engagement and commitment. This underscores the need for organizational cultures that respect personal values and enable authentic self-expression.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in this dynamic. As Posner notes in the *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance* (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010), admired leaders act on principle and practice self-examination to align inner values with external decisions. This authenticity builds trust, fosters loyalty, and equips them to navigate organizational complexities with integrity. By leading through consistent, value-driven behavior, such leaders establish credibility and long-term success. Organizations mirror this process: superficial cultural symbols, such as slogans or promotional materials, are insufficient (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010). Genuine loyalty emerges when missions align with employees' personal beliefs and motivations. Leaders who succeed in creating this alignment cultivate belonging, engagement, and sustainable commitment (Sass, 2000; Marques, 2006).

1.1 Cultural Context – The Case of Romania

Romania offers a distinctive setting to examine WPS and loyalty. It is among the most religious countries in Europe, with 73.6% of citizens identifying as Eastern Orthodox Christians (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2023). At the same time, its business culture is formal and hierarchical, with significant power distance and limited informal interaction between managers and subordinates.

Aioanei's (2006) study of Romanian leadership styles highlights this framework, shaped both by communist heritage and post-1989 exposure to European organizational models, particularly through multinational corporations. Leadership was categorized along two dimensions: autocratic versus democratic, and task-oriented versus relationship-oriented. Results showed that 55% of leaders displayed authoritarian tendencies, while 45% adopted democratic practices. These findings underline the persistence of hierarchy, especially in state-owned enterprises, where leaders often exclude subordinates from decision-making (Pauceanu, 2015). Such dynamics reflect Romania's centralized governance legacy, suggesting that WPS values of authenticity, participation, and interconnectedness may face cultural constraints or require adaptation.

Despite this, personal relationships and trust remain central to organizational life. Loyalty is often based on relational bonds and perceived integrity rather than formal structures, reflecting Romania's collectivist orientation. With an Individualism Index score of 30, Romania is classified as a predominantly collectivist society (Malea, 2019). Cohesion, mutual support, and deference to authority are embedded cultural values, shaping workplace stability and long-term commitment.

These factors influence how WPS is implemented and perceived. Since no empirical study has yet examined WPS and loyalty in Romania, this research addresses a key gap. It explores loyalty as a consequence of spiritual practices and values in organizational contexts, focusing on managers' perspectives. Specifically, it investigates: (1) how managers perceive spiritual practices in fostering loyalty, and (2) how such practices strengthen organizational commitment. Drawing on a pilot study, the paper evaluates the integration of spirituality into leadership within Romania's cultural and organizational norms. By situating the analysis in a post-communist, deeply religious context, the study tests whether global assertions about WPS hold true. It bridges theoretical insights with practical findings.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Workplace Spirituality: An Evolving Concept

The rise of workplace spirituality (WPS) reflects organizational responses to unstable and complex environments. Spiritual frameworks offer balance, purpose, and resilience (Cash et al., 2000; Denton & Mitroff, 1999). This trend aligns with global shifts toward greater social consciousness and renewed interest in spiritual inquiry (Inglehart, 1997; Neal, 1998), as well as a fascination with Eastern philosophies emphasizing harmony, interconnectedness, and mindfulness (Brandt, 1996). And yet WPS remains conceptually ambiguous. Some scholars emphasize transcendence and divinity. Others view it as value-driven practices and behaviours, reflecting broader debates on spirituality as objective reality versus subjective experience (Reder, 1982).

For this study, a clear distinction is necessary between WPS and religious spirituality. While religion is culturally bound, grounded in doctrines and rituals, spirituality is seen as natural and flexible (Niculaiesei, 2019). Religious systems prescribe fixed rules, whereas WPS emphasizes tolerance, meaning, ethical integrity, and service to the community (Emmons, 2000). It nurtures personal growth and alignment between individual and organizational values, fostering purpose and collaboration without imposing religious ideologies. Indeed, Denton and Mitroff (1999) found employees widely regard spirituality as acceptable and inclusive at work, in contrast to religion. This distinction is critical in secular or diverse contexts, where initiatives must draw on universal values such as empathy, integrity, and gratitude. In Romania, where the workforce is largely Christian Orthodox, WPS may resonate more easily with personal beliefs. However, framing spirituality inclusively remains essential to ensure accessibility and relevance for all employees, regardless of faith.

2.2 Dimensions and Frameworks of Workplace Spirituality

Workplace spirituality is widely acknowledged as a multidimensional concept, with scholars identifying several interconnected dimensions. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) define it as recognizing employees' inner lives, which are nourished by meaningful work and a sense of unity. Meaning, as a core dimension, relates to perceiving work as significant and fulfilling. This closely ties to purpose, which reflects alignment between personal values and broader organizational goals.

Another vital dimension is interconnectedness, identified by Denton and Mitroff (1999) as the defining and unifying feature of WPS. This concept is echoed throughout literature under various terms, such as liaison or mutuality (Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004) and interdependence (Marques, 2006). At its core, interconnectedness reflects a sense of shared purpose and mutual support, fostering compassion, empathy, and collaboration among employees. At its core, workplace spirituality involves a sense of shared purpose, mutual support, and empathy among members of an organization. By emphasizing collective growth and valuing individual talents, interconnectedness builds strong bonds that inspire loyalty and deepen commitment. This dynamic is especially critical in management practices, where nurturing authentic relationships can transform teams into cohesive and purpose-driven units (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

Closely related to interconnectedness is authenticity, which emphasizes nurturing employees' unique talents and skills. Organizations are called to support employees' growth rather than imposing constraints, fostering an environment that encourages self-expression and development (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). Such an environment enables individuals to bring their "full self" to work, which promotes alignment between individual and organizational goals and reinforces both loyalty and performance (Duyck & M'Hennaoui, 2013).

2.3 Practical Implications and Performance Outcomes

The implications of workplace spirituality (WPS) extend beyond theory, offering tangible benefits for organizational performance and sustainability. Empirical studies show that spiritually grounded cultures enhance productivity and create advantages. They embed purpose and values into daily practices (Reder, 1982). Employees who view work as a source of personal and spiritual growth demonstrate higher dedication, resilience, and engagement.

Authentic, values-based leadership is central to this process. Leaders who embody virtues such as integrity, empathy, and gratitude foster trust and loyalty, shaping both team dynamics and the broader culture (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Spiritually grounded leaders bridge management and employees, building trust, shared responsibility, and open communication (DePree, 1989). This foundation cultivates commitment and team performance (Saas, 2000).

WPS also functions at a systemic level, aligning individual and organizational values. When managers integrate personal beliefs with organizational objectives, work transcends routine tasks, becoming a source of fulfilment and shared purpose (Saas, 2000). This alignment strengthens belonging and motivation, reinforcing loyalty as a cultural norm and positioning it as both a strategic asset and a driver of performance (Marques, 2006).

2.4 Workplace Spirituality and Employee Loyalty - Global and Regional Insights

Employee loyalty appears in commitment, trust, and the intention to stay and contribute. Workplace spirituality (WPS) supports this loyalty by fulfilling core human needs. When employees find meaning and value alignment, they form stronger bonds and view work as a vocation instead of just a contract (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Marques, 2006).

Empirical studies reinforce this link across diverse contexts. In India, Aboobaker, Edward, and Zakkariya (2022) found that WPS enhanced both loyalty and psychological well-being across employment types, suggesting a stabilizing role even in flexible arrangements. Similarly, Gupta and Srivastava (2022) showed that hospitality workers in Northern India who perceived spiritual values at work reported higher well-being and commitment during the COVID-19 crisis, highlighting WPS as a buffer against stress.

Global evidence suggests that workplaces fostering meaning, care, and shared purpose enjoy stronger loyalty, especially in turbulent times. However, cultural context shapes how these values are enacted. Individualistic societies emphasize autonomy and personal growth, while collectivist cultures stress group harmony and shared rituals (Otake-Ebede et al., 2020). Romania reflects both collectivism and hierarchical traditions, where employees value community-like environments but expect value-based leadership from the top.

The dimensions of workplace spirituality- meaning, purpose, interconnectedness, and authenticity- serve as foundations for cohesive, value-driven cultures where employees feel respected and empowered. When personal values align with organizational mission, individuals experience belonging and commitment, laying the groundwork for loyalty (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

Among these, interconnectedness is especially influential. By fostering trust, empathy, and collaboration, it encourages employees to see themselves as part of a larger community rather than as isolated actors (Denton & Mitroff, 1999). Such environments promote accountability, shared purpose, and collective responsibility, positioning loyalty as an active outcome of spiritually grounded workplaces (Marques, 2005).

Research confirms that organizations nurturing genuine emotional connections- through trust, reliability, and sustained support- see higher motivation and loyalty (Milliman et al., 1999; Matzler & Renzl, 2006). This loyalty strengthens both individual growth and organizational sustainability, positively impacting performance, service quality, and retention (Tomic et al., 2018; Yee et al., 2010). Although loyalty and commitment are often intertwined, scholars highlight important distinctions.

Commitment reflects emotional attachment and attitudinal connection (Allen & Meyer, 1991), while loyalty extends further, manifesting in proactive behaviours shaped by trust and shared values. Loyalty thus represents the behavioural expression of commitment, translating internal attitudes into actions that actively support organizational goals (Mowday et al., 1982).

3. METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS AND COLLECTION

3.1 Data Collection

Workplace spirituality remains underexplored in Romanian organizations. To address this gap, this pilot study examined the relationship between WPS dimensions and employee loyalty through a structured questionnaire. The research design did not restrict participation to specific industries, aiming instead to test the hypotheses across diverse organizational contexts. Respondents were divided into two groups: (1) business owners managing employees directly, and (2) managers supervising employees within organizational structures.

The questionnaire comprised 15 questions divided into two main sections. The first section sought to capture personal opinions of managers and business owners regarding the WPS dimensions that influence employee loyalty. The second section explored managerial perspectives within the organizational contexts in which respondents operated, either as founders or part of the leadership structure. Responses were collected using a five-point Likert scale to ensure structured and comparable data. Items were measured on a five-point Likert scale. The survey was administered electronically between November 27 and December 20, 2024, yielding 32 valid responses (17 managers, 15 business owners). Anonymity was guaranteed to encourage candid feedback. Data were securely stored in Google Drive and analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

The study tested two hypotheses:

- **H1:** Managers and business owners perceive that WPS dimensions (meaning, purpose, interconnectedness, authenticity, spiritual attributes) positively influence employee loyalty.
- **H2:** The WPS dimensions influencing employee loyalty differ between managers employed in organizations and business owners managing their own employees.

3.2 Data analysis

This section reports the results of a Pearson correlation analysis examining the relationship between workplace spirituality dimensions-meaning, purpose, interconnectedness, authenticity, and spiritual attributes- and employee loyalty. The analysis also compared average WPS scores between managers and business owners and assessed intercorrelations among dimensions within each group.

Given the small sample size, results should be interpreted cautiously; nonetheless, the findings offer useful insights into how WPS dimensions function as antecedents of loyalty and how they interact across managerial roles.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Correlation Between Workplace Spirituality Dimensions and Employee Loyalty

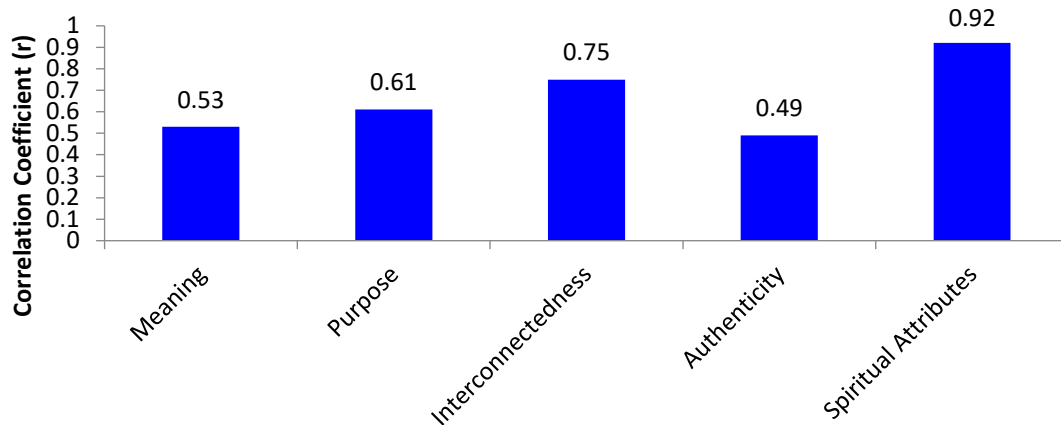


Figure 1. Correlation Between Workplace Spirituality Dimensions and Employee Loyalty

Source: Authors' contribution

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis revealed statistically significant relationships between all dimensions of workplace spirituality and employee loyalty. Correlation coefficients (r) were interpreted based on established guidelines: values of 0.3-0.5 indicate moderate correlations, 0.5-0.7 suggest strong correlations, and values above 0.7 reflect very strong correlations. Figure 1 summarizes the correlation coefficients (r) for each dimension.

Meaning

- **Correlation coefficient (r):** 0.53
- **P-value:** 0.008 (statistically significant)

A moderate positive correlation indicates that as perceived **meaning** at work increases, employee loyalty also rises (Aboobaker et al., 2020). This aligns with prior evidence linking meaningful work to higher job satisfaction and commitment (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Meaning refers to seeing work as significant and fulfilling, a cornerstone of personal–organizational alignment (Fry, 2003). When tasks carry personal significance, engagement grows and emotional attachment deepens (Bashaw & Grant, 1994). Practically, designing roles that connect personal aspirations with organizational objectives fosters retention and dedication as a natural outcome of this alignment (Milliman et al., 2003).

Purpose

- **Correlation coefficient (r):** 0.61
- **P-value:** 0.002 (statistically significant)

The strong positive correlation shows that alignment between employees' personal values and organizational goals significantly enhances loyalty (Milliman et al., 2003). Purpose represents this alignment, creating a shared mission that resonates deeply with employees. When work is perceived as purposeful, it transcends routine tasks, fostering commitment and meaningful outcomes (Fry, 2003). This highlights the importance of value-driven leadership and strategic alignment in cultivating purpose (Milliman et al., 2003). Leaders who emphasize purpose enable intrinsic motivation and fulfilment, which, in turn, drive loyalty (Fry, 2003). Purpose serves as a bridge

between personal aspirations and collective success, positioning WPS as a source of both individual growth and organizational sustainability. By fostering purpose-driven cultures, organizations increase satisfaction while reinforcing retention, engagement, and competitive advantage (Milliman et al., 2003).

Interconnectedness

- **Correlation coefficient (r):** 0.75
- **P-value:** <0.001 (highly significant)

Interconnectedness proved to be a strong predictor of loyalty, underscoring the role of trust, collaboration, and workplace relationships in fostering commitment (Fry, 2003). It embodies shared purpose and mutual support among employees and between employees and leadership (Denton & Mitroff, 1999). When people feel connected to colleagues and leaders, they develop belonging and attachment, strengthening organizational cohesion and collaboration. These findings confirm Denton and Mitroff's (1999) view that interconnectedness is a cornerstone of WPS, driving both individual and collective performance. By promoting trust, empathy, and collaboration, organizations enhance emotional bonds, accountability, and loyalty. Prioritizing strong interpersonal relationships therefore yields higher engagement, satisfaction, and commitment to the mission, while building sustainable cultures rooted in shared values.

Authenticity

- **Correlation coefficient (r):** 0.49
- **P-value:** 0.014 (statistically significant)

A moderate positive correlation shows that authenticity fosters loyalty by creating environments where employees feel their unique contributions are valued. Authenticity builds trust and psychological safety, allowing individuals to express themselves and align personal values with organizational culture (Brown & Treviño, 2006). This alignment enhances belonging and strengthens emotional connection (Milliman et al., 2003). Although weaker than other dimensions, authenticity remains a foundational element of WPS: when workplaces support individuality and genuine interactions, employees feel appreciated and are more likely to stay loyal. By prioritizing authenticity, organizations cultivate cultures that sustain loyalty, engagement, and long-term commitment.

Spiritual Attributes

- **Correlation coefficient (r):** 0.92
- **P-value:** <0.001 (extremely significant)

The exceptionally high correlation highlights the transformative role of values such as empathy, compassion, and gratitude in shaping workplace dynamics. Prior studies confirm these attributes as central to WPS (Fry, 2003; Milliman et al., 2003), and our findings reinforce their impact on fostering loyalty. By embedding such values in daily interactions and practices, organizations create environments where employees feel genuinely cared for, strengthening emotional bonds, commitment, and attachment. Far from being supplementary, spiritual attributes are foundational to loyalty and long-term success. Companies that prioritize them benefit from higher engagement, satisfaction, and performance. Leaders who adopt compassionate, value-driven styles are especially likely to inspire reciprocal commitment and loyalty among employees.

The interrelationships among WPS dimensions also merit attention. Interconnectedness and authenticity are closely linked, as cultures that value genuine interactions naturally foster greater trust and collaboration. Likewise, purpose and meaning reinforce each other: when organizational goals align with individual values, employees are more likely to perceive their work as meaningful. These synergies highlight the multidimensional nature of WPS and its collective impact on loyalty. Organizations seeking to strengthen loyalty should adopt a holistic approach that integrates spiritual

attributes, interconnectedness, purpose, meaning, and authenticity. Such integration not only reinforces loyalty but also elevates overall engagement and satisfaction.

As shown in Figure 1, average scores across all WPS dimensions were high. This indicates broad agreement that spiritual values drive loyalty. Both managers and owners highlighted virtues such as empathy, compassion, and gratitude as especially effective in fostering dedication and trust. These results confirm that each WPS dimension can act as an antecedent to loyalty. The small sample requires cautious interpretation. Still, the very high coefficient for spiritual attributes (above 0.9) suggests multicollinearity or conceptual overlap, implying that respondents may see loyalty and spiritual values as nearly inseparable. One explanation is that managers who lead with strong values naturally build more cohesive and loyal teams.

4.2 Managers vs. Owners: Average Dimension Scores vs. Correlations Between Dimensions

The analysis revealed that managers rated all WPS dimensions higher than business owners when considering average perception scores. However, correlation coefficients showed that business owners demonstrated stronger interrelationships among dimensions. These findings suggest distinct but complementary perspectives: managers perceive themselves as more engaged with WPS practices, while owners view the dimensions as more interconnected within organizational culture.

Average Dimension Scores

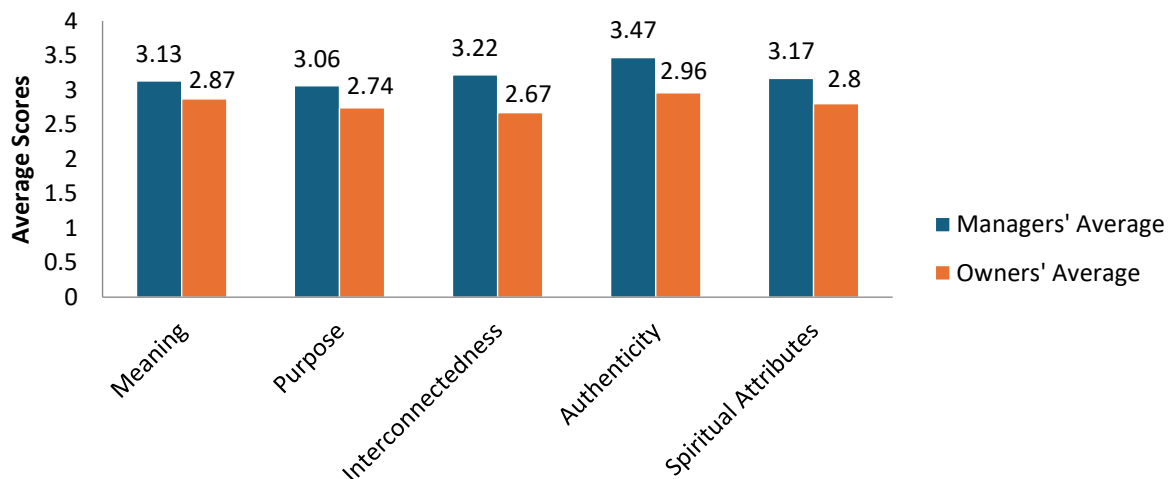


Figure 2. Managers vs. Owners: Workplace Spirituality Dimensions

Source: Authors' contribution

Managers consistently rated all dimensions of workplace spirituality higher than business owners (Figure 2). The largest gaps were in Authenticity (Managers: M = 4.55; Owners: M = 4.33) and Purpose (Managers: M = 4.31; Owners: M = 4.15), while smaller differences appeared in Interconnectedness (Managers: M = 4.45; Owners: M = 4.42) and Spiritual Attributes (Managers: M = 4.55; Owners: M = 4.53). These results suggest that managers perceive themselves as more engaged with these dimensions in daily roles, while owners' scores, though still high, were consistently lower, with the smallest gaps in Interconnectedness and Spiritual Attributes.

These differences suggest that managers perceive themselves as more engaged in applying spiritual dimensions in daily practice than owners. Managers, who interact with employees closely, may feel they actively use practices such as authenticity or purpose in team leadership. Owners, by contrast,

operate at a more strategic level, endorsing these values but rating them slightly lower, either from distance or skepticism about immediate impact. While managers emphasized daily concerns like morale and trust, owners reflected a broader perspective that placed less weight on spirituality alone.

Correlation Coefficients Between Dimensions

The analysis of correlations (Figure 3) revealed that business owners demonstrated stronger interrelationships between dimensions compared to managers. For example, the correlation between Purpose and Interconnectedness was significantly higher for business owners ($r=0.90$, $p < 0.0001$) than for managers ($r=0.77$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, the relationship between Meaning and Purpose was stronger for business owners ($r=0.84$, $p < 0.0001$) than for managers ($r=0.73$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggest that business owners perceive workplace spirituality dimensions as more interconnected, while managers may view them as distinct constructs.



Figure 3. Correlation Coefficients Between Dimensions

Source: Authors' contribution

5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Managerial vs. Ownership Perspectives on WPS: Interpreting the Differences

Understanding how workplace spirituality is perceived across different levels of leadership is crucial in evaluating its role in fostering employee loyalty. The findings indicate that managers and business owners' approach spiritual values at work through distinct perceptual and operational lenses. These differences are shaped by their respective roles, responsibilities, and daily organizational involvement.

Managers, given their proximity to employees and position in the organizational hierarchy, tend to engage with WPS at a more immediate and practical level. Supervision, performance evaluation, and the need to sustain morale require managers to translate values such as authenticity, compassion, and interconnectedness into everyday leadership. Their higher ratings across all dimensions may reflect this constant interaction, where meaning and purpose become actionable strategies for cohesion and reduced disengagement (Fry, 2003; Milliman et al., 2003). Some of this emphasis may also reflect self-perception, as managers wish to be seen as effective, value-based leaders. However, the alignment of these ratings with concrete behaviours- gratitude, active listening, transparent communication- suggests that their engagement is not merely aspirational but grounded in observable practice (Reave, 2005; Brown & Treviño, 2006).

By contrast, business owners operate from a strategic vantage point, balancing personnel oversight with culture, long-term goals, and institutional continuity. Their lower average scores on individual dimensions may reflect less direct employee contact or a broader view of workplace dynamics. Owners reported stronger correlations between WPS dimensions, including Purpose-Interconnectedness ($r = 0.90$) and Meaning-Purpose ($r = 0.84$), reflecting a perception of these constructs as highly interrelated. This pattern points to a systemic perspective: spirituality is not viewed as a set of isolated practices but as an organizational architecture where values such as meaning, authenticity, and community reinforce each other over time (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Schein, 2010). Within this framework, spiritual values are not only behaviours but embedded principles shaping organizational character.

Role autonomy also shapes these perceptual differences. Business owners, with greater freedom to define organizational culture, can align personal values with institutional norms. For them, authenticity often reflects deeper attributes such as integrity and compassion, functioning within a holistic ecosystem. Managers, by contrast, operate within hierarchical boundaries and policies, which may lead them to treat spiritual dimensions as discrete focuses rather than an interdependent whole. A manager might emphasize purpose when motivating a team, while an owner is more likely to embed purpose within a broader mission-building narrative.

These differences should not be viewed as contradictory but as complementary. Managers implement spiritual practices at the interpersonal level, while owners provide the philosophical and structural framework in which those practices take root. Translating WPS into loyalty thus requires coordinated effort: owners articulate and model values through policies and culture, while managers embody them in daily operations and leadership. Together, they create both the architecture and the lived experience of a spiritually enriched workplace. In Romania, where small and medium-sized enterprises often see owners acting as direct managers, these roles may overlap. This dual perspective, though demanding, offers a unique opportunity to merge strategic vision with operational empathy- a combination well suited to fostering loyalty in the close-knit cultures typical of Eastern Europe.

Overall, WPS is experienced and enacted differently across leadership roles. Managers focus on the immediate link between values, engagement, and performance, while owners take a longer view of how values shape legacy and organizational identity. Bridging these perspectives is essential for building authentic, loyal, and value-driven teams.

5.2 Interpreting Findings Through Romanian Cultural Norms

The distinct cultural context of Romania offers an essential lens for understanding how WPS shapes employee loyalty. Romania's post-communist landscape, Orthodox heritage, and collectivist values all influence how spiritual attributes are internalized at work. The high ratings for interconnectedness and authenticity in this study must be read considering these cultural particularities. Romanian society remains strongly collectivist, prioritizing relationships and cohesion over individual autonomy (Hofstede et al., 2010). In organizational settings, this often takes the form of tightly knit

environments, particularly within small and medium-sized enterprises. Such workplaces foster a familial atmosphere in which colleagues celebrate milestones, provide support during personal challenges, and sustain ties beyond formal obligations (Bibu et al., 2009). This cultural inclination helps explain the elevated scores for interconnectedness, as well as its strong link to loyalty. Respondents rarely mentioned grassroots or peer-driven WPS practices. Instead, they pointed to managerial behaviours- gratitude, empathy, integrity- as catalysts of spiritual culture, reinforcing that WPS in Romania is most likely to succeed when initiated and legitimized from leadership, consistent with Schein's (2010) view that cultural change begins with leader behaviour and narrative. Formal communication styles and lingering caution from communist-era restrictions also shape practice. Employees may embrace compassion, purpose, and ethical behaviour but avoid explicitly religious expressions, instead framing them in moral or emotional terms- echoing Denton and Mitroff's (1999) finding that secular, inclusive definitions of WPS are preferred. Although today's business environment is largely secular, Romania's Orthodox heritage continues to shape values of dignity, compassion, and service in leadership and relationships. Collectivism, hierarchy, and religious heritage together create both opportunities and constraints for WPS. Values like compassion, integrity, and community resonate strongly, but bottom-up initiatives may lack legitimacy without visible leadership, and overt religiosity may be counterproductive. Emphasizing moral leadership, shared values, and interpersonal respect makes WPS more authentic, culturally attuned, and effective in fostering loyalty.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has clear limitations. The most significant is the small sample size ($n=32$) and its exploratory, pilot nature. With such a limited pool, results must be interpreted cautiously and cannot be generalized to all Romanian organizations. They point to indicative trends that require confirmation through larger, more diverse studies. Future research should involve several hundred respondents across multiple industries, enabling more robust statistical analyses.

A further limitation lies in the short data collection period and the static design, which captured only a late-2024 snapshot. Loyalty and perceptions of WPS may evolve in response to external events, such as economic shifts or generational changes. A longitudinal approach would allow observation of how strengthening WPS practices influences loyalty over time, or how shifts in loyalty (e.g., following downsizing or crises) affect spiritual practices. While our study did not examine generational differences, future research should, as younger employees are often noted to seek stronger purpose in work.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study offers insights into how workplace spirituality influences employee loyalty. All dimensions- meaning, purpose, interconnectedness, authenticity, and spiritual attributes- showed positive correlations, confirming their role as antecedents of loyalty. Spiritual attributes had the strongest correlation ($r = 0.92$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring the impact of empathy, compassion, and gratitude in creating supportive workplaces. Interconnectedness ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$) was also a critical predictor, highlighting trust, collaboration, and relationships as central to loyalty (Fry, 2003; Milliman et al., 2003). Interestingly, while managers scored higher than business owners on average perception scores for all dimensions, business owners showed stronger correlations between them. For example, the link between purpose and interconnectedness was higher for owners ($r = 0.90$, $p < 0.0001$) than managers ($r = 0.77$, $p < 0.001$), and the relationship between meaning and purpose was also stronger for owners ($r = 0.84$, $p = 0.0001$) than managers ($r = 0.73$, $p = 0.0008$). These results suggest that managers, with their operational focus, engage more directly with individual dimensions,

while owners adopt a broader view that highlights deeper interrelationships (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003).

The study also revealed nuanced differences in how managers and business owners engage with workplace spirituality. Managers reported higher scores on dimensions such as authenticity and purpose, reflecting their closer involvement in team dynamics and their role in fostering supportive cultures (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Business owners, while reporting slightly lower averages, showed a stronger grasp of the interplay among dimensions, consistent with their strategic role of integrating WPS into broader organizational goals. These findings confirm both hypotheses: that WPS dimensions positively influence employee loyalty, and that managers and owners perceive them differently due to their distinct organizational roles.

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical role of workplace spirituality in fostering employee loyalty within Romanian enterprises. By addressing both individual dimensions and their interrelationships through a holistic approach, integrating meaning, purpose, interconnectedness, authenticity, and spiritual attributes, organizations can cultivate a supportive and engaging workplace culture. The complementary perspectives of managers and business owners further highlight the importance of collaboration across all levels of leadership to effectively integrate workplace spirituality into organizational practices.

Given its pilot design and limited scope, the study's conclusions should not be overextended; instead, they mark an important but early step in clarifying how workplace spirituality shapes employee loyalty, a step that future research must now expand upon.

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