

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' PERCEIVED SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT: A MULTILEVEL ANALYSIS IN THE HONG KONG CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose to this paper is to explore the relationship between teachers' perceived spiritual leadership and organizational commitment. A survey was conducted to collect data from a sample of 2,094 teachers from 117 primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong. Questionnaire developed by Fry et al. (2005; Fry, 2003; Karadag, 2009) was used to measure teachers' perceived spiritual leadership and spiritual survival in their schools. Eighteen items were used to measure the three factors of teachers' organizational commitment: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). The analyses were conducted using multilevel confirmatory factor analysis (MLCFA) and multilevel structural equation modeling (MLSEM). The current study has illustrated how membership and meaning/calling play a mediating role between spiritual leadership and organisational outcomes. It has shown that the influence of spiritual leadership on membership is apparently stronger at the school level than is it at the teacher level. This reflects, to an extent, the observation that qualities operate at both individual and organizational levels. It also reflects the call for all members in an organization to engage in a spiritual journey – a journey of transformation to become a less ego-centered and more other-centered person (Fry and Altman, 2013, p. 69).

Keywords: Spiritual Leadership, Organizational Commitment, Leadership Model, Leadership in Chinese Context

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is always an interesting research topic for many scholars and the concept is evolving. Northouse (2018) attempts to conceptualize leadership in six thoughts representing the most recognized definitions in the literature – trait, ability, skill, behaviour, relationship, and process. In particular he emphasizes on the interactive and ethical dimensions of thinking about leadership is an influence process which he refers it as “a process whereby an individual influences another individual or a group to achieve a common goal” (p.7). Spiritual leadership, in common with other terms in leadership studies, is a rather elusive concept, and has different connotations. Some scholars associate spiritual leadership with spiritual orientation or spirituality such as Christian leadership (Banke, et al. 2005), Islamic leadership (e.g., Al Arkoubi, 2008) or an Islamic perspective on spiritual leadership (Gustiawan and Chen, 2015). Since the present study is to explore the relationship between teachers' perceived spiritual leadership and organizational commitment, the authors will adopt a more secular and organizational perspective of spiritual leadership which is applied in the context of schools and not linked to any particular religion (Aslan and Korkut, 2015, p.125).

Dinh et al. (2014, 36) conducted “an extensive qualitative review of leadership theory across 10 top-tier academic publishing outlets” for stocking the established and emerging leadership theories since the turn of 21st century. At the same time Dionne et al. (2014, 6) conducted a

comprehensive 25-year review of the incorporation of levels of analysis into conceptual and empirical leadership research published within Leadership Quarterly throughout its history. Interestingly, both teams provided strong evidence showing that spiritual leadership is one of the emerging leadership theories which is drawing more and more attention of researchers and has growing impact on practices of leaders.

One of the pioneers, Fry (2003) building on ethical well-being, positive health and positive psychology proposed “a causal theory of spiritual leadership built on an intrinsic motivation mode that incorporates vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love, theories of workplace spirituality, and spiritual survival” (p.693). He further claimed that the “purpose of spiritual leadership is to create vision and value congruence across the strategic, empowered team, and individual levels and, ultimately, to foster higher levels of organizational commitment and productivity” (p.693). Fry’s work inspired many researchers in the further developments in spiritual leadership theories and models. For example, Malone and Fry (2003) argued that “spiritual leadership is a causal leadership model for organizational transformation (OT) designed to create an intrinsically motivated, learning organization” (p.2). After reviewing Fry’s work, Chen & Li (2013) concluded that in addition to transformational and charismatic leadership aspects, “Fry’s theory also encompasses the religious-based aspect (religion and spirituality both value care and love), the ethics-based aspect (such as treating the organizational stakeholders and customers with responsibility), and the value-based aspect (such as developing an organizational culture that values the work, meaning, and positive interpersonal relationships of employees)” (p.241). Fry’s model has been applied to workplace organization as well as to educational organizations including schools (Fry and Nisiewicz, 2013, pp.225-237). Fairholm (2011) an influential researcher and advocates of spiritual leadership argues that values-based, i.e. spiritual leadership is the only way to do leadership in today’s globalized, multi-differentiated world. He further suggests that five generations of leadership theory building could be identified from the literature developed in the past hundred years – “The first generation dealt with who the leader is. The second generation focused on what the leader does. The third generation concentrated on where leadership takes place. The fourth generation of leadership theory building, rooted in what leaders think about, value, and do – or values leadership (p. 93). Fairholm (2011, 102) further comments while each of the initial generations of theory offered useful insight into real leadership, none is inclusive enough to satisfy even the casual analyst. As such he argues that spiritual leadership is the wave of future leadership (p.155) which he names it the fifth generation of values leadership. In his view real leadership is articulating, transmitting, and actualizing the work community’s values to produce group harmony (p.157).

Among these scholars, Fairholm (1998) argued leadership deals with a range of elements and proposed a model of the Spiritual Leadership Model to organize and summarize eight core values of spiritual leadership into three interrelated components – *spiritual leadership tasks*, *spiritual leadership process technologies* and *the prime leadership goal*. Spiritual leadership tasks refer to task competence, vision setting and servanthood. Spiritual leadership processes refer to building community, wholeness, setting a higher moral standard and stewardship. The prime leadership goal refers to Continuous improvement (Fairholm, 1998, pp. 139-141).

In the context of organizational commitment as a kind of organizational outcome, Meyer and Allen (1991, p.61) proposed a three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment and hypothesized that “commitment has at least three separable components reflecting (a) a desire (affective commitment), (b) a need (continuance commitment), and (c) an obligation (normative commitment) to maintain employment in an organization”. Meyer, Allen and Smith (1993, p.539) further elaborated that a three-component conceptualization

comprising *affective*, *continuance* and *normative commitment*. Affective commitment connects with emotions, while continuance commitment links with the “perceived cost” of leaving the organization (Jaros, 2007, 7), with normative commitment relating to “perceived obligation towards the organization”. Jaros (2007, p.7) remarked that Meyer and Allen’s three-component model of organizational commitment has become the dominant model for study of workplace commitment.

In recent years, more empirical studies have been conducted on applications of spiritual leadership in workplaces in both east and west. For example Jeon, Lee & Hunsaker (2013) conducted a validation study of spiritual leadership involving employees working for private corporate organizations in South Korea. Afshari, Hoveyda & Eshaghian (2015) studied 110 principals in the city of Zarin Shahr in Iran to assess the impact of spiritual leadership on teacher performance, using the questionnaire developed by Fry, Vitucci & Cedillo (2005).

In the Greater China region, spiritual leadership is a comparatively new topic, and still tends to be associated with religious or church leadership (e.g., Cheung, 2002) or spiritual leadership effectiveness (e.g., Chen and Li, 2013). Tsai (2007, pp.16-17) conducted a study to assess and construct the dimensions of Taiwan primary school principals’ spiritual leadership and subsequently categorized it into five dimensions: educational meaning, altruistic spirit, educational mission, community building and caring. In the context of Hong Kong, Thom et al. (2005, p.117) emphasized “mindfulness meditation (within) and compassion for others (without) to achieve educational leadership in the spiritual way” (p.118). Walker and Quong (2003, p. 19) discussed “spiritual development and school leadership” and posed the questions “What does the person *care* about? What *matters* to the person? What is at the core of the person’s *being*?”.

It is against this background and the research gap that the current study attempts to fill – the investigation of the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment in Hong Kong schools. The principal method of analysis involves using Multilevel Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MLCFA) and Multilevel Structural Equation Modeling (MLSEM) (e.g., Hox & Maas, 2004; Muthen, 1991, 1994).

METHOD

Participants

The data for this study is drawn from a total of 2,094 teachers from 117 primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong who participated in a larger study on leadership in schools (average teachers per school = 17.897, range = 5 to 38). This sample consisted of 1267 primary and 827 secondary school teachers which accounted for 60.5% and 39.5% of the sample. Among the sampled teachers there were 1,392 female teachers (66.48%), 672 male teachers (32.09%), and 30 teachers without disclosing their gender information (1.43%). The higher percentage of female teachers of the sample is resulted from the higher response rate of primary school teachers (read further statistics of Hong Kong teachers from *Census and Statistics Department, 2016*).

Measurements

Spiritual leadership and spiritual survival

The questionnaire which was developed by Fry et al. (2005; Fry, 2003; Karadag, 2009) was used to measure teachers’ perceived spiritual leadership and spiritual survival in their schools. The questionnaire comprised 26 items, measuring three factors of spiritual leadership and two factors of spiritual survival. *Vision* was the first spiritual leadership factor. This was measured by five items assessing teachers’ perceptions of their schools’ clear and

compelling vision in the near-to-distant future. *Hope/faith* was the second spiritual leadership factor, which was also measured by five items, and referred to teachers' assurance of their school's vision and their willingness to fulfill the school's vision, purpose and mission. *Altruistic love*, measured by seven items, was the third factor and demonstrated teachers' "sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others" (Fry, 2003, p.712). *Meaning/calling* was the first spiritual survival factor. This was measured by four items and related to teachers' experiences of how they make a difference, believe their profession is valuable, and derive meaning and purpose in their lives (Fry, 2003). *Membership*, the second spiritual survival factor, was measured by five items and referred to teachers' perceptions of being understood and appreciated by their schools. All items were presented on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Organizational commitment

Eighteen items were used to measure the three factors of teachers' organizational commitment: *affective commitment*, *continuance commitment*, and *normative commitment* (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). The factor *affective commitment*, measured by six items, assessed teachers' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the school. The second factor *continuance commitment*, measured by six items tapped teachers' perceived costs associated with leaving their schools. The last factor *normative commitment*, referring to teachers' perceived obligation to remain in the school, was measured by six items. All items were rated by the teachers on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

Data Analysis

The statistical analyses followed the following steps. First, conventional Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which ignores the hierarchical structure of the data, was conducted in an attempt to fit the five-factor measurement model to the total sample covariance matrix and to identify any obvious model misspecification (Fry et al., 2005). Second, the appropriateness of and necessity for running multilevel analysis was tested, i.e., determining systematic school-level variation in each item. Two indices, including intra-class correlation (ICC) and design effect (DE) – both widely used in determining whether a multilevel analysis is necessary or not – were computed to detect whether or not between-group variations were present. ICC shows the proportion of the total variance located at the between level (Dedrick & Greenbaum, 2010; Dyer, Hanges, & Hall, 2005; Muthen, 1994; Hox, 2002). DE (Kish, 1965; Muthen & Satorra, 1995). It indicates the ratio of the variance of the estimator under complex cluster sampling to the variance under simple random sampling. If item ICC and DE values are very small, the majority of the total variance in the responses to the items may then be explained by the variation within schools, with overall differences in the responses among schools being considered comparatively trivial. If the latter is the case, a multilevel analysis may not be required and conventional CFA analysis – which was undertaken in the first step – can be seen to be reasonable and unbiased. Large ICC and DE values indicate large variances in response to items located at the school level. In this situation, a multilevel analysis is then required to simultaneously incorporate within- and between-school variations. There is no real rule of thumb for how large ICCs need to be to justify multilevel analysis as the values constituting a nontrivial degree of between variance often depends on study context. Dyer et al. (2005) state that little benefit is gained through multilevel analysis if the ICCs are less than 0.05. In the current study, the two criteria used to determine the appropriateness of multilevel analysis are that the value of ICC be greater than 0.05 (Dyer et al., 2005) and the value of the DE be greater than 2 (Muthen & Staorra, 1995). After seeing

multilevel analysis to be warranted, MLCFA was conducted to examine the construct validity of the instrument under a multilevel framework. Finally, MLSEM was conducted to examine the relationship between perceived spiritual leadership and organizational commitment.

Multiple goodness-of-fit indices were computed in the study to assess how well the models fit the data. These indices included the chi-square statistic, the comparative fit index (CFI; Benter, 1990), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudeck, 1992), and the standardized root mean residual (SRMR). Given the well-known sensitivity of chi-square to sample size (chi-square may well be statistically significant in a correctly-specified model if sample size is large), other goodness-of-fit indices were used in assessing the adequacy of model fit. In line with Hu and Bentler (1999), a cutoff value close to 0.95 or above for CFI and TLI, a cutoff value close to 0.08 for SRMR, and a cutoff value of 0.06 for RMSEA were used in the study. In addition, the Akaike information criterion (AIC, Akaike 1974) and Bayesian information criterion (BIC; Schwartz, 1978) were also used in the study to compare non-nested models. Relatively smaller values of AIC and BIC suggest better models in terms of model fit and parsimony. All analyses were conducted via a maximum likelihood estimation method with robust standard errors using Mplus Version 6.1 (Muthen & Muthen, 2008-2011, Muthen & Satorra, 1995).

RESULTS

CFA analysis of spiritual leadership instrument

To detect any obvious misspecifications of the measurement model for further consideration in the following MLCFA analysis, one-level CFA – which uses the total sample variance-covariance matrix and ignores the nested structure of the data – was first conducted to examine the fit of the five-factor model (Fry et al., 2005). The goodness-of-fit indices indicated that the five-factor model fit the data well ($\chi^2(238) = 1203.14$, CFI = .974, TLI = .970, RMSEA = .044, SRMR = .030; AIC = 70763.538; BIC = 71249.125). Two items (i.e., “I always do my best in my work because I have faith in my organization and its leaders.” and “I feel my organization understand my concerns.”) were removed because these two were significantly related to at least two factors according to the modification indices. In addition, error variances between certain items were allowed to be correlated. These were between:

1. item 6 (“I have faith in my organization and I am willing to ‘do whatever it takes’ to insure that it accomplishes its mission.”) and item 7 (“I persevere and exert extra effort to help my organization succeed because I have faith in what it stands for.”)
2. item 9 (“I set challenging goals for my work because I have faith in my organization and want us to succeed.”) and item 10 (“I demonstrate my faith in my organization and its mission by doing everything I can to help us succeed.”)
3. item 11 (“My organization really cares about its people.”) and item 12 (“My organization is kind and considerate toward its workers, and when they are suffering, wants to do something about it.”)
4. item 25 (“I feel I am valued as a person in my job.”) and item 26 (“I feel my organization demonstrates respect for me, and my work.”)

As Table 1 shows, values of standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.565 to 0.881, indicating the strong relationship between items and their respective latent factors. Table 2 presents the intercorrelation coefficients among the five factors. As can be seen from Table 2,

the three spiritual leadership factors, namely *vision*, *hope/faith*, and *altruistic love*, are mutually highly correlated. The other two spiritual survival factors, *meaning/calling* and *membership*, are moderately associated with the three spiritual leadership factors.

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Table 1. Summary of Standardized factor loadings for spiritual leadership measurement

	One-level CFA		MLCFA			
	Factor loading	Residual variance	Teacher level		School level	
			Factor loading	Residual variance	Factor loading	Residual variance
Vision						
Item 1	.706	.502	.664	.558	.954	.089
Item 2	.684	.532	.654	.572	.954	.089
Item 3	.824	.321	.797	.364	1.000	.000 ^a
Item 4	.840	.295	.811	.342	.994	.011
Item 5	.841	.293	.811	.342	.984	.032
Hope/Faith						
Item 6	.825	.319	.807	.348	.980	.040
Item 7	.864	.254	.845	.286	1.000	.000 ^a
Item 9	.771	.405	.749	.439	.985	.031
Item 10	.710	.496	.686	.530	.996	.008
Altruistic love						
Item 11	.815	.336	.782	.388	.995	.009
Item 12	.807	.349	.781	.390	.970	.059
Item 13	.843	.289	.824	.322	.943	.112
Item 14	.866	.251	.847	.282	.995	.009
Item 15	.565	.680	.534	.714	.892	.205
Item 16	.817	.333	.795	.369	.947	.103
Item 17	.820	.327	.787	.381	.967	.064
Meaning/calling						
Item 18	.699	.512	.698	.513	-	-
Item 19	.862	.256	.863	.255	-	-
Item 20	.872	.240	.872	.240	-	-
Item 21	.608	.630	.608	.630	-	-
Membership						
Item 23	.881	.223	.869	.245	.992	.018
Item 24	.816	.334	.807	.348	.928	.140
Item 25	.797	.365	.799	.362	.956	.086
Item 26	.836	.302	.830	.312	1.000	.000 ^a

Note: a. Residual variances were fixed to 0.

Table 2. Variances of the factors and inter-correlations among the latent factors of spiritual leadership

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
One-level CFA					
1.Vision	.170				
2.Hope/Faith	.929	.311			
3.Altruistic love	.781	.796	.470		
4.Meaning/Calling	.444	.511	.445	.158	
5.Membership	.639	.662	.754	.492	.436
MLCFA					
<i>Within level</i>					
1.Vision	.133				
2.Hope/Faith	.919	.269			
3.Altruistic love	.754	.773	.371		
4.Meaning/Calling	.454	.519	.462	.157	
5.Membership	.608	.630	.739	.495	.391
<i>Between level</i>					
1.Vision	.035				
2.Hope/Faith	.991	.037			
3.Altruistic love	.882	.941	.094		
5.Membership	.898	.941	.941	-	.037

Note: All the correlation coefficients are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

The italics are variances. All the variances are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.

Appropriateness of multilevel modeling analysis

As shown in Table 3, the means of the ICCs for the item measuring the factors *vision*, *hope/faith*, *altruistic love*, and *membership* are greater than 0.5. In addition, the values of DEs for these items are all greater than 2. These statistics are indicative of sufficient between-school variation in the items and justify the use of an MLCFA approach. An interesting finding here is that the items measuring meaning/calling show the smallest ICCs, ranging from 0.032 to 0.057 with an average ICC of 0.047. These figures indicate that the majority of the variances in the responses to the four meaning/calling items may be explained by within-school differences. DE values for the four items are all less than 2.0. The results imply that one-level CFA is appropriate to analyze the relationships between the four items and the latent factor meaning/calling: MLCFA cannot provide additional information to that obtained through CFA. To justify the use of MLCFA, school-level variations were next examined item by item to see whether the proportion of the total variances in the items explained by the school level were substantial and nontrivial. Descriptive statistics of the ICCs and DEs for the items are presented in Table 4.

Table 3. ICCs and DEs

Instrument	Factor	No. of items	ICC			DE		
			Range	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD
Spiritual leadership	<i>Vision</i>	5	.103-.182	.146	.029	2.740-4.074	3.462	.486
	<i>Hope/Faith</i>	4	.088-.132	.112	.019	2.486-3.229	2.896	.316
	<i>Altruistic love</i>	7	.083-.196	.151	.035	2.402-4.310	3.550	.591
	<i>Meaning/Calling</i>	4	.032-.057	.047	.012	1.540-1.963	1.794	.200
	<i>Membership</i>	5	.061-.095	.077	.014	2.030-2.604	2.300	.237
Organizational commitment	<i>Affective (Positive)</i>	3	.061-.098	.083	.020	2.027-2.649	2.402	.331
	<i>Affective (Negative)</i>	3	.035-.064	.049	.015	1.589-2.077	1.830	.244
	<i>Continuance</i>	6	.009-.027	.019	.009	1.151-1.454	1.325	.156
	<i>Normative</i>	6	.014-.028	.020	.007	1.236-1.471	1.337	.121

MLCFA analysis of spiritual leadership instrument

The first MLCFA model to be tested incorporated two different measurement models at different levels. The original five-factor measurement model was tested against the sample pooled covariance matrix at the teacher level. At the school level, a four-factor measurement model (i.e., vision, hope/faith, altruistic love, and membership) was fitted to the scaled school-level covariance matrix. Goodness-of-fit indices of the different measurement models are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Measurement models goodness-of-fit indices

Measurement	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR		AIC	BIC	Sample-size adjusted BIC
						Within	Between			
Spiritual leadership – Five factors at teacher level and four factor at school level (MLCFA)	1236.370	403	.973	.969	.031	.032	.048	70351.979	71080.359	70670.513
Spiritual leadership – five factors at teacher level and one factor at school level (MLCFA)	1281.909	410	.971	.968	.032	.032	.072	70385.230	71085.378	70691.418
Organizational commitment – Four factors at teacher level and one factor at school level (MLCFA)	352.502	48	.953	.932	.055	.052	.005	79814.808	80085.672	79933.172

As can be seen from Table 4, the goodness-of-fit indices suggested a reasonably good fit of the MLCFA model ($\chi^2(403) = 1236.370$ CFI = .973, TLI = .969, RMSEA = .031, SRMR_{within} = .032, SRMR_{between} = 0.048; AIC = 70351.979; BIC = 71080.3593). A comparison of the goodness-of-fit indices revealed smaller values of AIC and BIC for the MLCFA model compared to the CFA model, indicating that the MLCFA model fit the data better than CFA, which ignores the nested structure of the data. Standardized factor loadings as well as residual variances of the items at both teacher and school levels were presented in Table 1. As Table 1 illustrated, the moderate-to-high values of the standardized factor loadings implied a close relationship between the items and the measuring latent factors at both teacher and school levels. The variances of the five latent factors – presented in Table 2 – were all statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) at the teacher level, indicating significant differences of teachers’ responses on the five factors. The variances of the four school-level latent factors (see Table 2) were also statistically significantly different from zero ($p < 0.001$), indicating significant differences in the four latent factors among the schools. Table 2 also showed the intercorrelations among the factors at both the teacher and school levels. It can be seen that the correlation coefficients at the teacher level derived from MLCFA are very close to those obtained from CFA, with intercorrelations among the four factors of vision, hope/faith, altruistic love, and membership at the school level being greater than those at the teacher level. The very high correlations among the three spiritual leadership factors (ranging from .882 to .991) implies that there might be a common factor that predominantly determines the relationship among the items measuring the three spiritual leadership factors. The spiritual survival factor membership was found to be highly associated with the three spiritual leadership factors at the school level. According to Fry et al.’s (2005) spiritual leadership model, the factor membership describes spiritual survival which is seen as one of the consequences of spiritual leadership. In this light, the school-level measurement model was revised to a simple two-factor model, as Figure 1 illustrates.

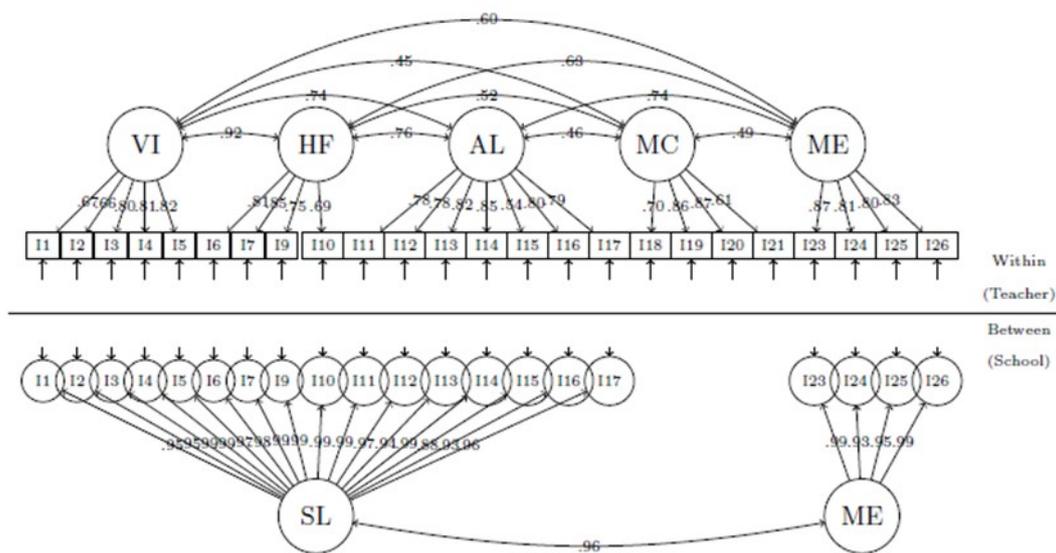


Figure 1. MLCFA analysis of spiritual leadership model

Note: VI – Vision; HF – Hope/Faith; AL – Altruistic love; MC – Meaning/Calling; ME - Membership

In this model, it can be observed that the items which were originally supposed to measure the three spiritual leadership factors load onto a single latent factor which taps the overall construct of spiritual leadership. In further testing of the MLCFA model, goodness-of-fit indices (see Table 4), suggested a good fit to the model ($\chi^2(410) = 1281.909$ CFI = .971,

TLI = .968, RMSEA = .032, SRMR_{within} = .032, SRMR_{between}=0.072; AIC = 70385.230; BIC = 71085.378).

Measurement analyses of organizational commitment

A one-level CFA ignoring the nested structure was first conducted to examine the psychometric properties of the organizational commitment instrument. The initial CFA analysis indicated that the three negatively-worded items and the three positively-worded items which were supposed to measure the same latent factor *affective commitment* appeared to measure two different factors, suggesting a method effect. In this regard, the factor measured by the three positively-worded items was renamed *affective commitment (positive)*. The other factor –measured by the three negatively-worded items – was renamed *affective commitment (negative)*. Modification indices provided by the software also suggested that six items found to have double factor loadings or very low factor loadings should be removed. Given these adjustments, as shown in Table 4, the final CFA model to be tested was a four-factor measurement model, for which goodness-of fit-indices indicated adequate model fit ($\chi^2(48) = 421.301$ CFI = .960, TLI = .944, RMSEA = .061, SRMR = .048; AIC = 79852.996; BIC = 80090.002). ICC and DE descriptive statistics for the items measuring organizational commitment were presented in Table 3. As could be seen, only the three items measuring the factor affective commitment (positive) showed substantial school-level variation. Under these circumstances, a MLCFA model incorporating a four-factor model at the teacher level and a single-factor model at the school level was tested.

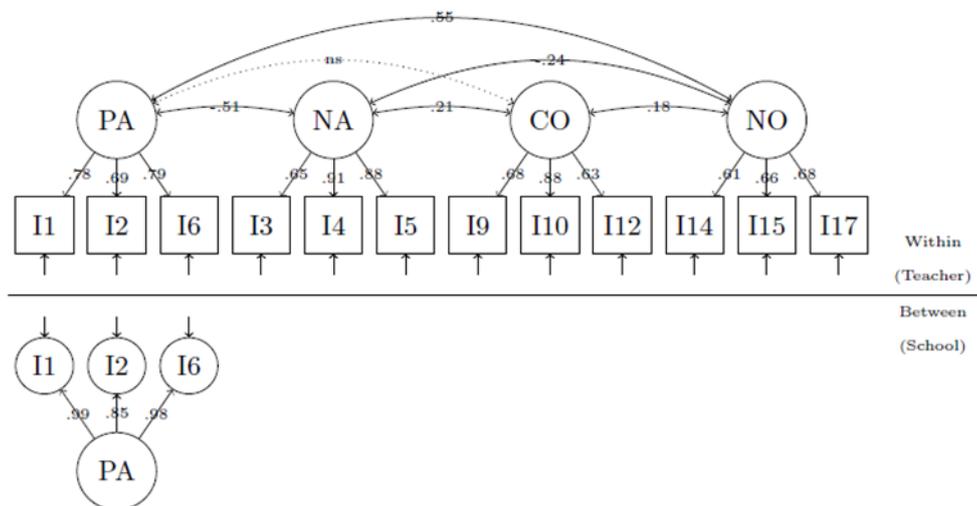


Figure 2. MLCFA analysis of organizational commitment

Note: PA – Affective commitment (positive); NA – Affective commitment (Negative); CO – Continuance commitment; NO – Normative commitment

Goodness-of-fit indices of the MLCFA analyses to the organizational commitment scale were presented in Table 4. As could be see, the goodness-of-fit indices provided support for this MLCFA model ($\chi^2(48) = 352.502$, CFI = .953, TLI = .932, RMSEA = .055, SRMR_{within} = .052, SRMR_{between}=0.005; AIC = 79814.808; BIC = 80085.672).

impacts *affective commitment (positive)* ($\gamma = .511, p < .001$) and *normative commitment* ($\gamma = .266, p < .001$) and negatively influence *affective commitment (negative)* ($\gamma = -.240, p < .001$). The statistically significant indirect coefficients reveal that the influences of *spiritual leadership* on the three factors of organizational commitment are also mediated by the two spiritual survival factors (i.e., *meaning/calling* and *membership*). The results do not show a significant relationship between *spiritual leadership* and *continuance commitment* at the teacher level. On the other hand, the positive effect of *spiritual leadership* on *membership* is also supported at the school level. The standardized path coefficient ($\gamma = .988, p < .001$) shows an extremely high association between these two latent factors. This suggests that the high overall mean levels of the teachers' perceived spiritual leadership should almost certainly be related to the high levels of overall *membership* of teachers. In addition, the indirect effect of *spiritual leadership* on *affective commitment (positive)* through *membership* was also statistically significant (*indirect effect* = .699, $p < .001$).

Impacts of spiritual survival factors on organizational commitment

The two spiritual survival factors, namely *meaning/calling* and *membership*, were significantly related to organizational commitment, with both *meaning/calling* ($\gamma = .182, p < .001$) and *membership* ($\gamma = .197, p < .001$) positively predicting *affective commitment (positive)*. The factor *meaning/calling* ($\gamma = -.142, p < .001$) was found to be a statistically significant predictor of *affective commitment (negative)*. The factor *membership*, however, did not have a significant effect on *affective commitment (negative)*. Neither of the two spiritual survival factors was a significant predictor of *continuance commitment*. While the factor *meaning/calling* was identified as a significant predictor of *normative commitment* ($\gamma = .170, p < .001$), the influence of *membership* on *normative commitment* was nonetheless not statistically significant. Furthermore, a strong effect of membership on affective commitment (positive) ($\gamma = .707, p < .001$) was found in the school-level model.

DISCUSSION

Meaning of values in spiritual leadership in the Chinese context

The present study has been an exploratory and pioneering study into the qualities of spiritual leadership in Hong Kong schools. Spiritual leadership theories reflect leadership values such as altruistic love and hope/faith – whether these are religiously related or otherwise. Chen et al., (2012, p.925), in the context of Chinese societies such as China and Taiwan, remarked how the “paternalistic leadership” of Chinese societies emphasising “authority and control” and “transformational leadership” of Western societies highlighting “personal charisma and intellectual inspiration” have different assumptions about their leaders and followers, although they may share common characteristics such as “spirituality”.

For Hong Kong, where there are both influences of Confucian Culture Heritage (CHC) as well as Christian values in a number of schools, the notion of spiritual leadership may have different interpretations. It is interesting to note that while Fry et al.'s model of spiritual leadership has been empirically supported in Hong Kong schools in the current study, components of hope/faith, vision/mission and altruistic love are embedded rather than differentiated under spiritual leadership. Chen and Li (2013, p.251) have pointed out how spiritual leadership and its factors and processes “may hold true in the leader-follower relationship across both east and west, yet the enactment of these factors is possibly different in the Asian context”. To support their argument, they provided examples regarding *wu wei* (“effortless doing”) being connected with “Daoist values” and spiritual leader qualities such

as “selflessness”, “compassion”, and “loving kindness” arising from “Buddhist” values (p.251).

Using “altruistic love” as an example, Fry (2003, p. 712) refers to “a sense of wholeness, harmony and well-being produced through care, concern and appreciation for both self and others” (Ma, 2009, p.2). Altruism is also a virtue in Christianity as indicated in both the New Testament and Old Testament such as “You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:34 English Standard Version, retrieved 18th October from <http://www.biblestudytools.com/leviticus/19-34-compare.html>). In Chinese Confucianism, the concept of *ren* (仁) is partly reflected in Analects XV 24, “Tzu-kung asked, 'Is there a single word which can be a guide to one's conduct throughout one's life?' The Master said, 'It is perhaps the word *shu*. Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.' ” (Translated by James Legge and Retrieved from <http://wengu.tartarie.com/wg/wengu.php?l=Lunyu&no=415>). Ma (2009, pp. 6-7), however, points out that while both Confucianism and Christianity make reference to the concept of “altruism”, Confucianism tends to highlight the “hierarchical” nature of “graded love” while Christianity emphasises the “peer to peer” orientation of “universal love”. Ma further elaborates: “When members observe uneven altruism in the organization, Chinese people may expect that this is the-way-it-is while those from a Christian culture may see this as favoritism. On the other hand, members with a Chinese culture may expect greater love if they are within the leaders’ *guanxi* network, but the leaders’ altruism concept may be that of universal love, thus creating an expectation mismatch with these members” (Ma, 2009, p.5). In a similar vein, Cheung and Chan (2008, p.480) comment how Confucian leadership and Christian leadership share a commonality in terms of “upholding harmony”.

One of the qualities of spiritual leadership is that of hope/faith which is exemplified by endurance, perseverance, do what it takes, stretch goals, expectation of reward/victory and excellence (Malone and Fry, 2003, p.25). From a Chinese cultural perspective, “Chinese begin with a view of life, work and community that is far more integrated than that of Westerners. Their spiritual intelligence comes from persevering through hardship, sacrificing for the group, and setting the frame. They develop a heightened ability to intuitively feel the larger situation” (Lynton and Thøgersen, 2009, p. 116). In the context of China – which includes Hong Kong – Wong (1998) suggests that moral leadership highlights ethical humanism with a view to “keeping spiritual beings at a distance and at the same time giving full attention to human activities” (pp.119-120). Wong also places an emphasis on the moral aspects of learning which encompasses learning to be conscientious (*chung*) and altruistic (*shu*) (p.121). Wong (2001, p.316) further points to Chinese educational leadership as a practical endeavor and deems it moral art in action, which focuses on leader’s honesty and faith in terms of educating the children (Kennedy and Lee, 2010, p.132).

Importance of membership and meaning/calling in fostering organizational commitment

The current study has illustrated how membership and meaning/calling play a mediating role between spiritual leadership and organisational outcomes – a finding which is broadly in line with Chen et al.’s (2012) study in Chinese industries confirming the prediction of spiritual leadership for meaning/calling and membership and the concomitant contribution to organizational outcomes (Yusof and Mohamad, 2014, p.1951).

Membership refers to a sense of belonging and community (Retrieved 18th October 2015 from <http://iispiritualleadership.com/spiritual-leadership-theory/> and Fry and Nisiewicz, 2013, p.45) and a collective dimension of spiritual leadership (Reave, 2005, p.663). In connection

with workplace spirituality and management practices, Pfeffer (2003) suggests the importance of connectedness and positive relationships with colleagues as well as an integration of a person's work role and other roles as a human being which are related to the concept of membership (Fry, 2003, p.704). It is thus imperative for teachers to be admired, respected, praised and recognized for their contributions to a school. Leaders might consider using more motivating language, and sending personal notes to colleagues when they have done a good job and performed well, for example (see Reave, 2005, p.678). In addition, school leaders would be well advised to provide opportunities for aligning individual purpose and organizational mission (Jeon et al, 2013, p.353).

For personal meaning and calling, leaders and organizations might also be advised to forge a shared vision with refinements based on colleagues/followers' inputs, as well as focusing on values that facilitate colleagues/followers' understanding of what constitutes meaningfulness in their lives and endeavors (Markow and Klenke, 2005, p.21).

This study has shown that the influence of spiritual leadership on membership is apparently stronger at the school level than is it at the teacher level. This reflects, to an extent, the observation that qualities operate at both individual and organizational levels. It also reflects the call for all members in an organization to engage in a spiritual journey – a journey of transformation to become a less ego-centered and more other-centered person (Fry and Altman, 2013, p. 69). To help such a journey to succeed, systematic training through external facilitators and spiritual coaches, a supportive environment and periodic feedback do indeed need to form part of the bigger picture.

In this regard, Fry and Nisiewicz (2013, p.206) provide suggestions for organizational development interventions which encompasses elements for team empowerment, for managing conflict, for collaborative, consensus-based decision making, for managing resistance to change, and for overcoming anger, resentment, worry, and fear through forgiveness, gratitude, and acceptance. They cite the example of an American public school in the context of experiencing spiritual leadership, where school-sponsored away-days for all students were scheduled for all students, facilitating staff in discussing issues, socializing and celebrating as a school community (Fry and Nisiewicz, 2013, p.232).

CONCLUSION

This study has provided pioneering and empirical support for Fry et al.'s (2005) model of the qualities underlying spiritual leadership and their relationship with organizational commitment in Hong Kong schools. There are, however, limitations to the study: the study has been cross-sectional, which constrains the drawing of conclusions regarding causal relationships among variables. Looking ahead, a longitudinal study might need to be conducted. In addition, the variables of individual self-efficacy and self-esteem such as transcendental self-concepts and motivational mechanisms (Chen and Li, 2013, pp.241-243) as well as other organizational outcomes such as work satisfaction and organizational citizenship (Chen, Yang and Li, 2012, p.923) could be added to the model, with a view to refining the empirical spiritual leadership model in different contexts. Further research is also needed to understand why spiritual leadership appears to be conducive to affective commitment but not to continuance and normative commitment. Finally, qualitative studies might help unpack the interpretation of spiritual leadership and its practices in the Chinese context and help shed light on how culture influences the impact of spiritual leadership on school organizational outcomes.

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