

Spirituality and Moral Identity among Government Employees

Kimberly Joy M. Alcazar, Karissa Nadia M. De La Rosa, Kristine Melody P. Gonda, Lida C. Landicho

Psychology Department, College of Education, Arts and Sciences, Lyceum of the Philippines University-
Batangas City, Philippines

kimberly_alcazar@yahoo.com, issa_kar214@yahoo.com, ph_ashiya_17@yahoo.com

Date Received: February 15, 2015; Date Revised: June 30, 2015

Abstract- *This study investigated the spirituality and moral identity of one hundred forty(140) randomly selected government employees and its impact at work. Two standardized questionnaires, namely Spiritual Involvement and Beliefs Scale and Integrity Scale, were utilized and an anecdote was facilitated in acquiring quantitative and qualitative results, respectively. The results showed that the participants have high level of spirituality and average level of moral identity. Furthermore, it has been revealed that female participants have higher level of spirituality than male. Also, a moderate positive correlation was found between spirituality and moral identity. This study established exemplars of spirituality and moral identity, thus implying an impact at work.*

Keywords: *spirituality, moral identity, government employees, job performance*

INTRODUCTION

Every individual has the responsibility to work and serve for the welfare of other people. Among various social groups or institutions that offer services and aids to the concerns of others, the public offices or government offices top it all. According to Section 1, Article XI of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, "Public Office is a public trust. Public Officers and employees must, at all times, be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty, and efficiency, act with patriotism and justice, and lead modest lives."

However, Baac and Jorge (2005) found out that working in government is still more of a livelihood and employment rather than a call to public service. Government employees are primarily motivated to work because of their salaries, increases and bonuses, vacation leaves, hospitalization benefits, fulfilment of their goals and finding meaning of working in the public service.

Beyond the government employees' perception of working in government as more of a livelihood than public service, researchers believed that their work was guided by two internal factors such as spirituality and moral identity. Researchers agreed that a far from the government employees' loads of works, service with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty and efficiency, was rendered considering their spirituality and moral identity.

According to moral identity theory, the relative importance of a person's moral identity determines the width of the thought/action gap (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004). In the present study, moral identity theory predicted that a government employee who claims a peripheral (i.e., unimportant) moral identity perceives a low level of spirituality. In contrast, a government employee who claims a central moral identity perceives a high level of spirituality.

Spirituality is a central part of the lives of a majority of the people across the world (King & Roeser, 2009). Several studies have shown that sex differences in religiosity are evident among individuals (Smith & Denton, 2005; Wallace et al., 2003). Organizational spirituality is viewing work as spiritual path, as well as an opportunity for holistic growth and development of organizational members (Javier, 2011).

Some individuals may be less concerned with what others think of them and more concerned with adhering to an internal set of moral prescriptions that help define who they are as a person (i.e., their moral identity). Moral identity is defined as a psychological structure that incorporates the prescriptive and universal ideals of justice, fairness, and beneficence into the self-concept (Hardy & Carlo, 2005).

Several factors have been identified as influences on the development of moral identity, some individual and some contextual. At the individual level, things such as personality, cognitive development, attitudes and values, and broader self and identity development

can impact moral identity development. At the contextual level, one important factor is the person's social structure, including neighborhood, school, family, and institutions such as religious, youth, or community organizations.

The centrality of moral identity was associated with a commitment to adopt a more principled, as opposed to expedient, ethical ideology (Aquino et al., 2010). A person who adopts a principled ideology believes that moral principles exist, are important to one's self-definition, and should dictate personal behavior, irrespective of the social or personal consequences for doing so. In contrast, a person with an expedient ideology assumes that moral principles have flexibility and that deviations for personal gain are justifiable. Intuitively, both types of ethical ideologies have their appeal, but they also have their drawbacks (Schlenker, 2008).

The researchers perceived a close relationship between spirituality and moral identity. A lack of moral values inhibits spiritual growth, and lapses in behavior can be damaging to the offender's self as well as to the victim. Spirituality can be seen as the source of the will to act morally. It is suggested that spirituality, being individual and dynamic, can sometimes conflict with traditional assumptions about morality. Spirituality encompasses an intellectual urge to discovery which may lead to challenging views. This study is believed to be beneficial especially in assessing the spirituality and moral identity, which are considered to have an impact at work.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the government employees' level of spirituality and moral identity; to identify demographic variables that can be correlated to spirituality and moral identity; to assess the possible relationship between spirituality and moral identity; and to identify exemplars of spirituality and moral identity at work.

METHODS

Research Design

In the study conducted, the researchers used both quantitative and qualitative method in measuring the level of spirituality and moral identity among government employees and its impact at work. The quantitative design corresponds to the different tests that were included in the study, namely; the Spiritual Involvement and Beliefs Scale and Integrity Scale, which helped the researchers to assess and

numerically record the participants' level of spirituality and moral identity and was using statistical tool. While, the qualitative design pertains to the anecdotal record which helped the researchers to establish exemplars of spirituality and moral identity in the participants' job performance.

Measures

The researchers asked the government employees to answer two surveys: namely, the Spiritual Involvement and Beliefs Scale (SIBS, Hatch, 1998) and the Integrity Scale (Schlenker, 2006), to measure their spirituality and moral identity, respectively.

Spiritual Involvement and Beliefs Scale. The SIBS (Hatch, 1998) contains a Likert scale response format. Examples of items on the SIBS include, "In the future, science will be able to explain everything". Items require participants to respond to a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Other items respond to a Likert scale ranging from 1 (always) to 5 (never) and respond to phrases such as, "When I wrong to someone, I make an effort to apologize" (Hatch, 1997).

The Integrity Scale. The 18-item Integrity Scale measures differences in commitment to a principled ethic of justice, fairness, and honesty. High scores represent strong endorsement of a principled ethics, whereas low scores represent strong endorsement of an ethic of expediency. Integrity Scale items are measured on a 5-point agree - disagree scale and summed for a total score (range = 18 [*extremely expedient*] to 90 [*extremely principled*]).

Participants

The population of the study was composed of one hundred forty (140) randomly selected government employees, ninety-six (96) female and forty-four (44) male, within the age range of nineteen (19) to sixty-eight (68) years old, under the number of years working range of one (1) to forty (40) years, and from Agoncillo, Ibaan, and Mabini.

As to sex, the majority was female which constituted sixty-nine percent (69%) of the participants, and the remaining thirty-one percent (31%) was composed of male. As to age, the majority was within the range of 39 to 48 years old, which is 31 percent of the population. Followed by the participants within the range of 29 to 38, which is 25 percent; 19 to 28 years old, which is 17 percent; 49 to 58 years old, which is 16 percent; and lastly, 59 to 68 years old, which is only 11 percent of the total

number. As to the participants' number of years working, majority was within the range of 1 to 8 years of working, which is 38 percent of the population. Followed by the participants within the range of 9-16 years of working, which is 26 percent; 17-24 years of working, which is 22 percent; and 25 to 32 and 33 to 40 years of working which are both 10 percent of the total number.

As to municipality, Mabini and Agoncillo constituted thirty-five percent (35%) each, with a total of seventy percent (70%) of the population. The remaining thirty percent was from the municipality of Ibaan.

Procedure

The researchers submitted the questionnaires to the adviser for comments and suggestions regarding the format and item content. Also, municipal request consent as well as participant informed consent letter were passed, and were signed by the researchers, adviser, department chair, and college dean.

The researchers presented the municipal request consent to the Municipal Administrator or Human Resource Personnel for the approval, upon arriving in every municipal office. The researchers distributed the questionnaires together with the participant informed consent letter to the randomly selected employees within the whole municipal office.

Participants' questions and confusions regarding the questions were highly entertained and explained by the researchers. The participants were also asked to cite a certain situation wherein they believe they applied their spirituality and moral identity, which served as their anecdotes.

The researchers proceeded to the Municipal Administrator's office or Human Resource Department to express the gratitude for the permission of conducting a research among the municipal employees, before leaving. After the information was gathered, the quantitative results were computed by the statistician while the qualitative data were first transcribed, analyzed and then categorized to derive the significant information.

Data Analysis

This study employed the use of t-test and Pearson r correlation. Furthermore, the researchers used thematic analysis in analyzing the responses that was collected from the anecdotes. The frequency distribution and percentage were obtained from the demographic profile of the participants. Then, ANOVA was used to find if the demographic profile

affects government employees' spirituality and moral identity. Pearson r was used to determine if a correlation exists between the variables of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Level of Spirituality and Moral Identity of Government Employees (N=140)

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Spirituality	94	9.79	High
Moral Identity	60	6.82	Average

Table 1 indicates that government employees have an over-all high level of spirituality and average level of moral identity. In line with this, Wong (2003) asserted that a healthy dose of spirituality and meaning at the workplace improves moral. Aburdene (2005) found that the „deeper“ an individual employee's spiritual experience, the greater the benefits to them – in managing their career – and the organizations in which they work. This result also supports the positive correlation between workplace spirituality and employee attitudes such as commitment to the organization, intrinsic work satisfaction, and job involvement (Czaplewski et al., 2003).

Participants with high level of moral identity were considered to have principled ideology while those with low levels were believed to possess expedient ideology. Empirical research by Schlenker and his colleagues (2007; 2008) shows that people who adopt a principled, rather than expedient, ethical ideology have higher standards for moral conduct, report telling fewer lies, are less likely to rationalize unethical and immoral behaviors, and exhibit greater benevolence and helping behaviors (provided the helping was not performed to avoid costs or gain personal benefit). Furthermore, Aquino et al. (2010) showed that a principled ideology has significant value to organizations, both in increasing pro-social behaviors and in decreasing rationalizations for socially undesirable behaviors. Lastly, Martin (n.d.) explained how an organization moral identity – when reinforced through an appropriate ethical culture and through role modeling behaviors - creates a virtuous circle of identification and trust that facilitates the work of transformational leaders and thus the effectiveness of the organization.

Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference between spirituality when grouped according to sex.

Table 2. Comparison of Spirituality when Grouped according to Sex (N = 140, $\alpha = 0.05$)

Variables	Mean	F	p-	eta ²	Interpretation
Spirituality		6.727	0.011	0.046	Significant
Male	90.77				
Female	95.30				

This implies that the level of spirituality varies between male and female. This data affirmed the result of the study of Bryant (2007) on the gender differences in spiritual development which indicated that women scored higher than men did on dimensions related to spirituality. Furthermore, Bryant explained the significance of peer group effects on women’s spirituality. Women with many close religious friends – friends who share the same beliefs; are involved in a religious organization; and attend church, temple, or other place of worship – became increasingly committed to integrating spirituality into their lives and more prone to rate themselves as “spiritual” in relation to others. The effects of religious friends on men were similar in direction, but not as strong.

Moreover, it has been found that there is no significant difference between spirituality and the participants’ age and number of years working, as well as moral identity and the participants’ sex, age, and number of years working.

Table 3. Correlation Between Spirituality and Moral Identity (N=140)

x	y	r _{xy}	p- value	Interpretation
Spirituality	Moral Identity	0.492	0.000	Correlated

Table 3 illustrates that there is a significant relationship between Spirituality and Moral Identity among government employees. This entails that the participants who have high level of spirituality also have high level of moral identity; and the ones who have high level of moral identity also have high level of spirituality. In line with this, Litzey (2006) cited that integrating spirituality in the workplace reaps the benefits of high morale.

Table 4 presents the exemplars of spirituality in the participants’ job performance based on anecdotal records. Answers related to god-centeredness were most given by the participants, which indicate that their faith comes first than their attitude and relationship towards clients and co-workers. This result avowed the research conducted by East (2005) which stated that employees who feel spiritually

connected at work experience peace of mind, inner strength, serenity, serenity, patience, calmness, sanity, and positive attitude.

Table 4. Exemplars of Spirituality at Work

Categories	Themes
praying for own safety, guidance, and strength (16)	God-centeredness
praying for others (9)	
attending bible study (3)	
being patient (12)	attitude towards clients
giving respect to clients (13)	
giving advice (10)	relationship with co-workers
giving respect to co-workers (7)	

Also, Krishnakumar et al., (2002) found that the encouragement of spirituality in the workplace can lead to benefits in the areas of creativity, process improvement, customer service, honesty and trust, personal fulfillment, and commitment, which will ultimately lead to increased organizational performance.

Table 5. Exemplars of Moral Identity at Work

Categories	Themes
being honest and responsible (32)	positive working attitude relationship with co-workers
giving advice (8)	
giving respect to co-workers (6)	
obeying the higher authority’s orders (6)	attitude towards higher authority
giving respect to higher authorities (4)	
being fair and equal to clients (5)	attitude towards clients
giving respect to clients (6)	
obeying the office’s policies (3)	
	policy-abiding attitude

Table 5 was employed in order to answer the third objective of the researcher’s study. The table enlists the exemplars of moral identity in the participants’ job performance based on anecdotal records. Answers related in positive working attitude were most given by the participants, while policy-abiding attitude answers were the least. In regards to this result, Scott (2002) considered respect for property, respect for religion, honest communication and justice as the five individual and organizational moral values.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants have an over-all high level of spirituality and average level of moral identity. Among the demographic variables, only sex has significant difference based on the participants' spirituality. There is a significant relationship between spirituality and moral identity. The government employees stated that spirituality and moral identity have at work.

The government offices, specifically the Human Resource department, are recommended to focus on the growth of employees' level of moral identity through facilitating seminars regarding personality development, universal ethical principles, and decision making. Future researchers can make use of other variables which may be correlated to spirituality and/or moral identity, such as leadership style, personality, and lifestyle. Other social groups can be utilized in the future research, such as policemen and lawyers. Other variable such as the employees' job performance may be used and measured quantitatively.

REFERENCES

- Aburdene, P. (2005). *Megatrends 2010: The rise of conscious capitalism*. Charlottesville: Hampton Roads Publishing Company
- Aquino, K., M. Duff, & B. McFerraiiy (2010). How personality and moral identity relate to individuals' ethical ideology. *Business Ethics Quarterly – Behavioral Ethics*, 20:1, 35-56.
- Baac, V. G. & Jorge, L. P. (2005). A Spiritual Paradigm for Philippine Public Administration
- Bryant, A. N. (2007). Gender differences in spiritual development during the college years. *Sex roles*. Date retrieved February 17, 2012 from http://www.spirituality.ucla.edu/docs/academic-articles/gender_spirituality_SR.pdf
- Czaplewski, A., Miliman, J. J. & Ferguson, J. (2003). Workplace spirituality and employee work attitudes: An exploratory empirical assessment. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*. 16 (4), pp. 426-447.
- East, T. J. (2005). A grounded study on how spirituality impacts a person's job satisfaction. Minneapolis: Capella, University.
- Hardy, S. A. (2005). Moral Identity
- Hardy, S. A., & Trevino, G. (2005). Identity as a source of moral motivation. *Human Development*, 48,232–256.
- Javier, E.R. (2011). Organizational Spirituality and People Management Practices of Selected Banks in Batangas City: Measures Towards Management Effectiveness, *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* , 2(1): 336-355
- King, P. E. & Roeser, R. W. (2009). Religion and Spirituality in Adolescent Development.
- Krishnakumar, S., & Neck, C. P. (2002). The “what”, “why” and “how” of spirituality in the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 17(3), 153-164.
- Lapsley, D. K., & Narvaez, D. (2006). *Moral development, self, and identity*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Litzey C. (2006). Spirituality in the workplace and the implications for employee and organizations.
- Martin, F. (n.d.). The organization moral identity and organizational effectiveness. Retrieved February 10, 2012 from <http://www.ufhrd.co.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/7-3-refereed-paper.pdf>
- Roeser, R. W. (2006). Exploring the varieties of moral and spiritual education in India: Implications for adolescents spiritual development adolescents”.
- Schlenker, B.R. (2008). Integrity and character: implications of principled and expedient ethical ideologies. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 27 (10), 1078-1125.
- Schlenker, B.R., Miller, M. L. & Johnson, R. M. (2009). Moral identity, integrity, and personal responsibility. In D. Narváez & D. K. Lapsley (Eds.), *Moral self, identity and character*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Schlenker, B. R. (2006). *Principled and expedient ideologies: The Integrity Scale as a measure of ethical orientations*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Florida, Gainesville
- Scott, E. D. (2002). Organizational moral values. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 12: 33-55.
- Smith , C. & Denton, M. (2005). *Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wallace, J. M., Forman, T. A. Caldwell, C. H. & Willis, D. S. (2003). Religion and American youth: Recent patterns, historical trends and socio demographic correlates. *Youth and Society*, 35 ,98 – 125
- Wong, P. T. P., (2003). President's column, September 2003: Spirituality and meaning at work. Retrieved February 26, 2012, from http://www.meaning.ca/articles/presidents_column/print_copy/spirituality_work_sept03.htm