

# Elevating Performance: Spiritual Leadership and Mitigation of Counterproductive Work Behavior in Higher Education

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## Abstrak

Peran kepemimpinan spiritual dalam mengurangi perilaku menyimpang yang bertentangan dengan tujuan pendidikan tinggi masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh kepemimpinan spiritual terhadap perilaku kerja kontraproduktif melalui mekanisme kesejahteraan spiritual. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kuantitatif yang bersifat prediktif eksploratif yang melibatkan 310 dosen perguruan tinggi swasta yang ditentukan melalui teknik random sampling. Data diperoleh melalui kuesioner tertutup yang disebarluaskan secara online dan dianalisis melalui PLS-SEM dengan model reflektif menggunakan SmartPLS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan spiritual berpengaruh negatif signifikan terhadap perilaku kerja kontraproduktif dan berpengaruh positif signifikan terhadap kesejahteraan spiritual. Selain itu, kesejahteraan spiritual secara signifikan berpengaruh negatif terhadap perilaku kerja kontraproduktif. Penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman tentang peran penting kesejahteraan spiritual dalam memediasi pengaruh kepemimpinan spiritual terhadap perilaku kerja kontraproduktif. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penerapan kepemimpinan spiritual cenderung meningkatkan kesejahteraan spiritual dan mengurangi perilaku menyimpang dosen. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pemahaman yang komprehensif dalam mengintegrasikan aspek spiritual pada manajemen pendidikan tinggi untuk mempromosikan etika dan lingkungan akademik yang harmonis.

**Kata kunci:** Kepemimpinan Spiritual, Perilaku Kerja Kontraproduktif, Kesejahteraan Spiritual, Pendidikan Tinggi

## Abstract

The role of spiritual leadership in reducing deviant behavior contrary to higher education objectives is limited. This study aimed to examine the effect of spiritual leadership on counterproductive work behavior through the mechanism of spiritual well-being. The study was quantitative research of an exploratory predictive nature involving 310 lecturers of private higher education institutions determined through random sampling techniques. Data were obtained through a closed questionnaire distributed online and analyzed through PLS-SEM with a reflective model using SmartPLS. Findings demonstrated that spiritual leadership has a significant negative effect on counterproductive work behavior and a significant positive impact on spiritual well-being. In addition, spiritual well-being significantly negatively affected counterproductive work behavior. The study provides an understanding of the influential role of spiritual well-being in mediating the effect of spiritual leadership on counterproductive work behavior. The findings indicate that implementing spiritual leadership tends to improve spiritual well-being and reduce the deviant behavior of lecturers. The study contributes a comprehensive understanding of integrating spiritual aspects into higher education management to promote harmonious academic ethics and environment.

**Keywords:** Spiritual Leadership, Counterproductive Work Behavior, Spiritual Well-Being, Higher Education

### History:

Received : April 01, 2024

Accepted : June 24, 2024

Published : July 25, 2024

**Publisher:** Undiksha Press

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education is a crucial tool for individual development in intellectual, character, and value aspects (Ismayilova & Laksov, 2023; Smolentseva, 2023). As an integral part of this process, lecturers play an essential role in guiding, modeling, and inspiring students and achieving the goals of the tri dharma of higher education (Nugraha et al., 2023; Subhaktiyasa et al., 2022). However, underneath this ideal balance, there are often challenges faced by the academic environment, one of which is the presence of counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) that can hinder the positive development of the educational environment and have a destructive impact. These behaviors can take actions that contradict the higher education institution's (HEI) objectives and harm workplace colleagues (Ugwu et al., 2023; Yean et al., 2022). CWBs from lecturers can include actions that refuse to participate in curriculum

development, cause interpersonal conflicts, damage facilities, steal scientific research, or even refuse to comply with established academic rules (Fauzi, 2023; Spector et al., 2006). These include acts of abuse, production deviance, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal.

CWB is dysfunctional behavior since the actions that arise almost entirely violate norms and are contrary to organizational objectives, violate procedures, and even reduce productivity (Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Follmer et al., 2022). This phenomenon cannot be avoided, but it is attempted to be minimized in organizations by examining several factors that cause this behavior to appear. CWB is influenced by factors originating from organizations and individuals. Meta-analysis describes individual characteristics such as gender, locus of control, attribution style, core self-evaluation, integrity, and negative affectivity (neuroticism) and situational showing links to quality of work life such as injustice, job dissatisfaction, workplace change, conflict among organizational members, and poor leadership as predictors of CWB (Alaybek et al., 2023; Miao et al., 2023; Mitchell et al., 2022). Furthermore, studies demonstrate the critical role of leadership in influencing aspects of the organizational environment.

The importance of leadership in managing lecturers' CWBs is increasingly becoming a significant focus in organizational research. Leadership is believed to have the ability to influence the behavior of organizational members (Hughes et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020). The appropriate leadership style will encourage harmonization to improve individual performance and achieve organizational purposes. Previous studies have examined the effect of leadership style on CWB, but results indicate inconsistencies (Al-Romeedy, 2022; Hu, 2023; Huang, 2021; Jin, 2022). Variability in organizational context, differences in the measurement of counterproductive behaviors, and a lack of understanding of the complexities and variables that influence the relationship between leadership styles and work behaviors contribute to the variation in results. Previous research has focused more on leadership styles such as transformational and transactional, while value-based leadership styles, such as spiritual leadership (SL), remain a neglected area in this context (Huang, 2021; Sabran, 2022). The relationship between SL and CWBs in academic settings still requires further exploration to comprehensively understand its influence (Ritchhart et al., 2009; Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023).

SL is believed to be related to educational management and contributes better in higher education (Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023). SL emphasizes ethical and moral values that have the potential to create spiritual well-being (SWB) among followers. Spirituality is the most profound dimension of human experience, relating to harmonization, which brings happiness to oneself and others (Chang & Arisanti, 2022; L. W. J. Fry, 2017). The concept of SL is developed in the model of intrinsic motivation, collaborating vision, instilling hope, and practicing altruistic love. Through this type of leadership, leaders can tap into the basic needs of leaders and followers to become more organized, committed, and productive (Fry et al., 2017; Hsieh et al., 2022). Several previous studies have demonstrated the ability of SL to improve individual and organizational output, including in the context of educational organizations (Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023). However, understanding the effectiveness of SL in reducing the CWB of lecturers is limited. This condition requires an examination of the influence of SL on lecturers' counterproductive performance work behavior by considering SWB through calling and membership as mediators in the relationship.

Understanding SWB is very important in gaining insight into lecturers' CWB. A strong and clear sense of calling to the responsibilities of a lecturer can provide a high intrinsic drive for lecturers to perform positively and contribute optimally. Meanwhile, a high membership in the academic community can create cohesion among lecturers, reduce conflict, and increase motivation to work together for a common goal (Benefiel et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2015). Therefore, SL in the context of higher education plays an essential role in promoting a positive environment and minimizing the negative impact of CWBs. The novelty

of this study lies in the in-depth exploration of the influence of SL on lecturers' CWB in a higher education environment, taking into account spiritual well-being as a mediating mechanism that has not been widely researched before. This study offers a new perspective by integrating the concept of value-based leadership, which is believed to create a more harmonious and productive academic environment. This study aimed to examine the effect of spiritual leadership on counterproductive work behavior through the mechanism of spiritual well-being.

## 2. METHODS

### *Research Design, Population, and Sampling*

This quantitative study attempts to predict the relationship between SL, SWB, and CWB in one research model. The study was conducted at private HEIs in Bali Province, Indonesia, which consist of universities, institutes, colleges, academies, community academies, and polytechnics. The research population is all lecturers of private HEIs with a national lecturer identification number and certification. The research sample represents the population through random sampling techniques, where the number of samples for multivariate research is determined considering the strength of statistical tests, path coefficients, and significance levels (Hair et al., 2021; Kock & Hadaya, 2018). The larger the sample in the study, the greater the precision and consistency of the estimated predictions of the research model. Therefore, 310 research samples were obtained after checking for outlier data that could be analyzed further. This number has met the statistical power of 80% with levels of minimum path coefficients 0.11-0.2 and significant levels of 1%. The characteristics of the research respondents are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Respondents

Demographics	Classification	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	132	42.58
	Female	178	57.42
Age	20 - 29	8	2.58
	30 - 39	142	45.81
	40 - 49	64	20.65
	>50	96	30.97
	Education	Master	231
	Doctor	79	25.48
Years of service	1-5	38	12.26
	6-10	134	43.23
	11-15	52	16.77
	16-20	28	9.03
	21-25	7	2.26
	26-30	19	6.13
	>31	32	10.32
Functional	Expert Assistant	51	16.45
	Lectors	198	63.87
	Head Lectors	56	18.06
	Professor	5	1.61
HEIs	University	204	65.81
	Institute	46	14.84
	College	51	16.45
	Academie	3	0.97

Demographics	Classification	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
	Community	1	0.32
	Academie	5	1.61
	Polytechnic		

The main instrument of this study was a closed-ended questionnaire that applied a 5-point Likert scale. The SL and SWB questionnaires where SL consists of 3 indicators, namely vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith, with 22 statement items, while SWB consists of 2 indicators namely calling and membership with 14 statement items. The CWB questionnaire consists of 2 indicators, namely CWB organizational and CWB individual, with 7 statement items. All questionnaires have been tested for content validity, item validity, and reliability.

The data was collected through online questionnaires distributed via Google Forms and involving enumerators at each HEI. Furthermore, research hypotheses were tested using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) of the relative model through two evaluation stages, namely measurement evaluation and structural evaluation. In measurement evaluation, several criteria are used to ensure the construct validity, including evaluation of outer loading (OL), composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). In structural evaluation, to test the relationship between variables and the goodness of the research model, the assessment is carried out through collinearity value, p-value,  $R^2$ ,  $f^2$ ,  $Q^2$  blindfolding, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and PLSpredict (Hair et al., 2019).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Results

SL, SWB, and CWB variables were measured using the reflective approach of the first-order model. First, we conducted a measurement evaluation to check the construct validity of the research model through OL and AVE values, evaluate the reliability level of the reflective constructs through CR values, and test the discriminant of the constructs through HTMT values. The evaluation uses SmartPLS through PLS Algorithm calculation. Table 2 shows the validity and reliability of the constructs.

**Table 2.** Validity and Reliability of Research Constructs

Variable	Indicator	OL	CR	AVE
SL	vision	0.795	0.916	0.846
	altruistic love	0.828		
	hope/faith	0.818		
SWB	calling	0.925	0.855	0.663
	membership	0.914		
CWB	CWB organization	0.795	0.807	0.677
	CWB individual	0.850		

Table 2 shows that all indicators have an outer loading value above 0.7, which indicates that the indicator has represented the measured construct compared to other constructs. The AVE value above 0.5 means the goodness of the variance of the indicators used to measure the latent construct. Likewise, the CR value above 0.7 explains that the construct is reliable in describing the research phenomenon. Furthermore, the results of discriminant testing are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Discriminant Validity of Research Constructs

Variable	CWB	SL	SWB
CWB			
SL	0.468		
SWB	0.433	0.882	

Table 3 presents the HTMT value below 0.9, indicating that the constructs measured in the model are entirely different and do not overlap. It means that the research constructs have good discriminant validity, which can provide a proper interpretation of the relationship between constructs in the research model. Then, we conducted structural evaluation through bootstrapping calculations and checked collinearity involving latent variables from exogenous constructs through the inner Variance Inflated Factor (VIF), hypothesis testing through the t-statistic value, p-value, interval value at the 95% confidence interval (CI), and the effect size of the direct relationship through the  $f^2$  value presented in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Hypothesis Testing Results

Hipotesis	Coefficient	t-statistics	p-value	97.5% CI	Decision
<b>Direct relationships</b>					
SL→CWB	-0.189	2.444	0.015	[-0.342, -0.039]	accepted
SL→SWB	0.691	16.008	0.000	[0.605, 0.770]	accepted
SWB→CWB	-0.154	2.052	0.040	[-0.303, -0.007]	
<b>Indirect relationships</b>					
SL→SWB→CWB	-0.107	2.037	0.042	[-0.213, -0.005]	accepted

Table 4 displays t-statistic values above 1.96 and p-values below 0.05, indicating that all hypotheses in the study are proven. The VIF value below 3 confirms no collinearity problem in the research model. In the direct relationship, the analysis showed that SL significantly negatively affects CWB. A better implementation of SL will tend to reduce the CWB of lecturers to -0.039. SL also has a significant positive effect on SWB, where the more influential the implementation of SL is, the more it will tend to improve lecturers' well-being to 0.770. In addition, the test results also explain the effect of SWB having a negative significant impact on CWB. Increasing lecturers' SWB will reduce their CWB by up to -0.007. As for the indirect relationship, the analysis results suggest that SWB plays a significant role in mediating the effect of SL on CWB. However, the effect size of the direct relationship, as indicated by the  $f^2$  value, and the effect size of the indirect relationship using the upsilon ( $\nu$ ) statistical approach is not more than medium.

The examination continued regarding the study's goodness of fit model. The  $R^2$  value of SWB is 0.475, and CWB is 0.094. The blindfolding  $Q^2$  showed a value of 0.396 for SWB and 0.062 for CWB. This result indicates that the model has medium predictive power. The resulting SRMR value is 0.09 below 0.1. In addition, an examination of the model's goodness was also carried out through the PLSpredict approach, the results of which are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Predictive Power of Research Model

Item	RMSE <sub>PLS</sub>	RMSE <sub>ELM</sub>	RMSE <sub>PLS</sub> -RMSE <sub>ELM</sub>
Calling	1.677	1.686	-0.008
Membership	2.101	2.105	-0.004
CWB Organization	2.566	2.562	0.004
CWB Individual	2.221	2.234	-0.013



Table 5 explains that the model has medium power in predicting the relationship between the research variables. It is indicated that most Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) values in PLS are lower than RMSE in the linear model (LM). The results suggest that the model can be utilized to describe the relationships between SL, SWB, and CWB of lecturers in private HEIs.

## **Discussion**

This study's main objective was to understand the effectiveness of SL in reducing the CWB of lecturers in private higher education through SWB. SL as holistic leadership has been proven to have a positive influence on improving organizational and individual productivity in various organizational contexts, but the evidence is still limited in the context of higher education. The analysis results demonstrate that SL significantly negatively affects lecturers' CWB in private HEIs. It suggests that the more favorable the implementation of SL in higher education, the more it tends to decrease CWB among lecturers. This finding indicates that leaders with a clear vision, inspiring expectations, and altruistic love that encourages caring tend to increase lecturers' positive behavior towards themselves and their tertiary institutions. It confirms the role of SL in supporting lecturers' behavior to be more responsible than the standard tasks assigned to help colleagues and their HEIs. As holistic leadership, SL can cultivate a more harmonious, ethical, and productive academic environment (Bohak Adam & Metljak, 2022; Subhaktiyasa, 2024). With the complexity of higher education, implementing an SL style is more significant in influencing work behavior that encourages the achievement of the vision of higher education. Although the empirical evidence is limited to the context of higher education, these findings align with some previous studies. SL has been proven to reduce CWB in the Korean cultural context (Hunsaker & Nam, 2017). SL has shown its effectiveness as an actualization of inspirational behavior, caring, attentive, selfless affection, one word and one action, mutual trust, respect, and upholding honesty can reduce deviant behavior in the workplace (Mahyarni, 2019; Wahyono et al., 2021). Thus, the findings of this study contribute significantly to strengthening the understanding of the importance of SL in higher education management in establishing a harmonious academic environment that promotes HEI performance.

The results also revealed a significant positive influence between SL and well-being. This finding indicates that SL in higher education tends to increase the sense of calling and membership among lecturers as self-awareness in performing the obligations of lecturing, research, community service, and other responsibilities that bind their roles as scientists and educators. Lecturers feel a stronger attachment to the HEI and their colleagues. It reflects the vital role of leaders who pay attention to spirituality in creating a supportive academic environment and motivating lecturers to feel a greater sense of purpose in life and an attachment to organizational values (W D Hunsaker, 2023; Zou et al., 2020). The results of the study are aligned with previous findings, which highlight the importance of SL in fostering employees' SWB, particularly in enhancing a sense of purpose, belonging, and overall satisfaction at work, which ultimately impacts individual and organizational performance (Chang & Arisanti, 2022; William D. Hunsaker, 2021). The results of this study confirm the need to consider spiritual aspects in leadership to build the SWB of lecturers and create a healthy and productive work environment.

SWB, including calling and membership, significantly negatively influenced lecturers' CWB. This result points to the role of SWB in suppressing deviant behaviors that may occur in an academic setting. The calling perspective shows a deep interconnection between the meaningfulness of lecturers' lives and the meaningfulness of their significant role as lecturers in providing education to achieve national education goals (Akhtar, 2019; Singhal & Rastogi, 2018). The sense of membership shows the involvement of the feelings of lecturers who have

invested part of themselves to be part of the academic community with inclusive acceptance. This study's results align with previous findings that confirm aspects of spirituality that demonstrate ethical behavior in organizations, which leads to increased individual well-being and decreased CWB (William D. Hunsaker, 2021; James et al., 2011; McGhee & Grant, 2017). These findings prove that investing in the SWB of lecturers can be an effective strategy for creating a positive and harmonized higher education environment.

In addition, these findings also provide evidence of the significant role of SWB in mediating the effect of SL on the CWB of lecturers in private higher education. It implies that the role of SL in reducing lecturers' CWB can be explained by increasing lecturers' SWB. HEIs that implement SL oriented towards spiritual values tend to improve the SWB of lecturers through a sense of calling and a sense of membership, which has an impact on reducing the CWB of lecturers individually and organizationally. SWB indicates its consistency and relevance as a mediator in various organizational contexts, including private higher education academic environments (William D. Hunsaker, 2019, 2021; Wahyono et al., 2021). These findings highlight the need to integrate spiritual aspects in educational management practices to achieve an environment promoting academic ethics.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study explains the relationship between SL, SWB, and CWB of lecturers in private HEIs. The findings demonstrate the significant role of SL in promoting SWB and reducing lecturers' CWB in academic activities, especially in lecturing research and community service. SWB plays a meaningful role as a mediator for the effectiveness of SL in reducing CWB. These results confirm the importance of the spiritual dimension in education management to create an ethical and productive academic environment. The management of private HEIs needs to implement strategies that make a harmonized role for lecturers towards themselves and their HEIs by involving spiritual values in the sustainability of HEIs in the face of dynamic environmental changes. However, some limitations in the study need to be considered. The research was conducted only by private HEIs in Bali Province, Indonesia, so more geographically extensive research is required to obtain more comprehensive views. In addition, the use of mixed methods of research can provide an in-depth understanding of the mechanism and context of the relationship between the research variables by involving other variables affecting deviant behavior.

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