# Spiritual leadership: a validation study in a Korean context

Ki Seok Jeon[a], David L. Passmore[b], Chan Lee[c] & William Hunsaker[d]

[a] Hyundai Motor Group University, South Korea.

[b] Workforce Education and Development Program, The
Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA.

[c] Vocational Education and Workforce Development Major, Seoul
National University, Seoul, South Korea.

[d] School of Business Administration, Kyungpook National
University, Daegu, South Korea.
Published online: 17 Dec 2013.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

# Spiritual leadership: a validation study in a Korean context

Ki Seok Jeon[a]*, David L. Passmore[b], Chan Lee[c] and William Hunsaker[d]

*[a]Hyundai Motor Group University, South Korea; [b]Workforce Education and Development Program, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA; [c]Vocational Education and Workforce Development Major, Seoul National University, Seoul, South Korea; [d]School of Business Administration, Kyungpook National University, Daegu, South Korea*

This study examined and validated revised and new spiritual leadership models with higher-order factors in the Korean organizational context. Research on revised spiritual leadership models has not yet been conducted in the US context and no empirical research on new spiritual leadership models has occurred in South Korea. Structural equation modeling (SEM) results revealed that the revised spiritual leadership model had validity in the Korean organizational context. Inner life plays a foundational role having a positive relationship with three factors of spiritual leadership: vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith. Membership doubled the impact on team productivity and life satisfaction over calling/meaning. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

**Keywords:** spiritual leadership; workplace spirituality; inner life; membership; calling

Researchers and scholars have made significant efforts toward understanding and defining the concept of leadership, despite ongoing debates about related concepts and models (Yukl 2006). Clearly, neither becoming a leader nor explaining the concept of leadership is easy (Bennis 2003).

In recent years, greater attention has been paid to linking spirituality and leadership in general, and to workplace spirituality in particular, not only in the popular press but also in the business and management literature and in research (Fry 2003, 2008, Gotsis and Kortezi 2008, Kolodinsky *et al*. 2008, Pawar 2009). The ability to become a leader is based on the assumption that leaders are people who can express themselves fully; therefore to fully understand leadership we need to understand the leader as a whole person who expresses him/herself through his/her body, mind, emotions, and spirituality (Fairholm 1998, Bennis 2003, Fry 2003, 2008, Jarvis 2005).

Researchers looking at spirituality in the workplace have identified clear connections between spiritual values and practices and leadership (Fry 2003,

---

*Corresponding author. Email: kiseokjeon@kia.com

Reave 2005). Successful leaders motivate their followers by creating meaningful work as well as a sense of community at work (Pfeffer 2003). As members of a workplace community it is more likely that followers will value these ideas as well (Duchon and Plowman 2005).

The creation of spiritually oriented workplaces involves identifying and then nurturing core values among leaders and followers. More and more organizations are developing leaders who lead from spiritual values. Ultimately, employees seek to improve the quality of their workplace life by finding meaning within their work as well as achieving purpose beyond earning (Fairholm 1998, Fry 2003). Employees wish to bring their whole selves – body, mind, and spirituality – to work, not just a part of themselves (Hicks 2002, McLaughlin 2005). Also, the spirituality of leaders has been acknowledged as one of the motivational aspects of their behavior as well as a fundamental aspect of their effective leadership (Bass 1985, 1997, Fairholm 1996, Mitroff and Denton 1999, Fry 2003, 2005b).

Thus, spiritual leadership has been an emerging topic within the broader context of workplace spirituality (Fairholm 1998, Fry 2003, 2005a, 2008, Dent *et al*. 2005, Reave 2005). Spiritual leadership is defined as "The values, attitudes, and behavior necessary to intrinsically motivate oneself and others so that they have a sense of spiritual well-being through calling and membership" (Fry 2008, p. 109). As interest in workplace spirituality grows, the relationship between spirituality at work and leadership requires more research (Fry 2008, Chen and Yang 2012).

Although culture by definition is elusive, intangible, and implicit, it is acknowledged to be based on a set of underlying assumptions, norms, and beliefs shared by a group of individuals (Singh and Krishnan 2007). Culture has a relationship with leadership because leadership can be understood as a social phenomenon (Bass 1997). According to Fry (2003), the spiritual leadership model is universal and therefore varies little across cultural contexts or by personality traits.

In the case of the USA and South Korea (with the former representing the country in which the majority of leadership research has occurred, and the latter being the focus of the study reported here), the USA represents an advanced economy and highly individualistic culture based on Christian morals while Korea has been highly influenced by Confucian traditions (Hofstede 1983). Korea has unique characteristics – approximately one-half of the country views itself as Christian, as well as the Korean culture is based on Confucian traditions in which "spirituality" is not commonly found. Chen and his colleagues (2012) identified that the universality of spiritual leadership in Confucian cultures such as China and Taiwan exist.

In South Korea, workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership have recently received attention from scholars and practitioners (Yu *et al*. 2010). However, such research is little known in the South Korean business context (Heo 2010, Yu *et al*. 2010). The purpose of this study was to validate and apply the spiritual leadership model in a Korean organizational context.

## Workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership theory

### *Workplace spirituality*

A variety of concepts of workplace spirituality have been suggested but they lack universally accepted definitions (Gotsis and Kortezi 2008, Kolodinsky *et al.* 2008). Although, *workplace spirituality* has been used in research to describe the same phenomenon, several terms have been used: organizational spirituality, spirituality in the workplace, spirituality at work, spirituality in business, and workplace spirituality (Brown 2003, Gotsis and Kortezi 2008).

Cavanagh and Hazen (2008) conceptualized workplace spirituality as "the effort to pursue an ideal of a higher purpose within the practical constrains of everyday organizational life and the context in which this takes place" (p. 63). Ashmos and Duchon (2000) conducted research to measure workplace spiritu- ality, defining workplace spirituality as "recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community" (p. 137).

Ashmos and Duchon provided the systematic dimensions of workplace spirituality: inner life, meaningful work in terms of meaning and purpose of personal life, and community in terms of connectedness. Their definition not only explained comprehensive dimensions of spirituality, but also included both individual and organizational perspectives (Fry, 2003, Duchon and Plowman 2005). Mitroff and Denton (1999) conducted empirical research on managers' and executives' beliefs and feelings about workplace spirituality. They identified interconnectedness as a key characteristic of workplace spiritu- ality. These definitions involve personal meaning and purpose, connectedness, and personal fulfillment as characteristics of workplace spirituality.

The most often-cited definition of the organization-focused perspective on workplace spirituality is from Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003): "a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote employees' experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy" (p. 13). This definition has been evaluated as being systematic and scientific, which identifies spirituality as a component of organizational values and organizational culture (Cavanagh and Hazen 2008, Gotsis and Kortezi 2008).

### *Spiritual leadership theory*

Spirituality leadership is an emerging research topic within the broader context of workplace spirituality (Fairholm 1998, Fry 2003, 2005a, 2008, Dent *et al.* 2005, Reave 2005). A special issue on spiritual leadership published in 2005 attracted scholars to the study of spiritual leadership within the broader context of workplace spirituality (Fry 2005a).

Fry (2003) argued that previous leadership theories paid attention to one or more aspects of the physical, mental, or emotional elements of human

interaction in organizations but overlooked the spiritual component. However, spiritual leadership has not been included in empirical research relative to other leadership models because leadership models are often in developmental stages (Dent *et al.* 2005). Fry proposed that the purpose of spiritual leadership is to tap into the fundamental needs for spiritual well-being by both leaders and followers so they become more organizationally committed and productive (2003, 2008). He defined spiritual leadership as "the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual wellbeing through calling and membership" (2008, p. 108).

Furthermore, Fry suggested a revised theory of spiritual leadership to which was added inner life and individual life satisfaction (2008, 2009) (see Figure 1). Inner life may play a role as the source of spiritual leadership and fundamental source of inspiration and insight, and may positively influence the development of hope/faith in a transcendent vision of service to key stakeholders and the values of altruistic love (2008, 2009).

According to Fry, the vision reflects an organization's purpose (its reason for existence) and mission. Further, this vision forms the foundation for relating to, meeting and exceeding the expectations of high-powered and/or high-importance stakeholders (e.g. customers, employees, chain of command, and regulatory agencies) (Fry 2003).

Fry (2003) defined altruistic love in spiritual leadership as "as a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others" (p. 712). Spiritual leadership entails establishing a social/organizational culture based on altruistic love. Hope/faith is a source of confidence that the vision and mission of an organization will be accomplished (Fry 2003, 2005a, Fry and Matherly 2006). Spiritual leadership seeks to ensure the presence of hope/faith in an organization's vision to keep followers looking forward to the future (Fry 2003, 2005b).
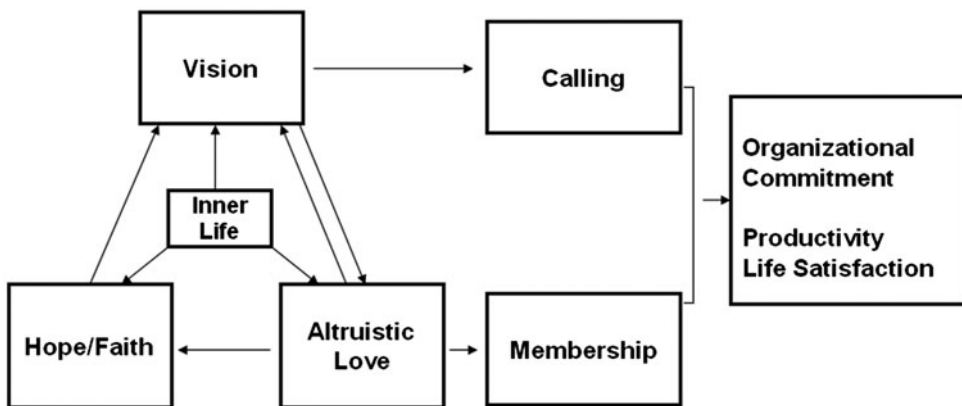


Figure 1.   Fry's revised model of spiritual leadership (2008).

Fry suggested that having a calling through one's work and a need for membership are seen as fundamental dimensions of workplace spirituality (Fry 2003). Calling has long been used as a defining characteristic of a professional. Many people want not only to realize their full potential through their work but also to feel social meaning or value through work (Pfeffer 2003). One of the leader's roles is to inspire a sense of calling in oneself and workers (Fry 2003).

In terms of spiritual well-being, Fry (2005a, 2008) proposed that those practicing spiritual leadership at the personal level will score high on life satisfaction.

In recent research, Fry *et al*. (2011) found that Fry's original spiritual leadership model has higher-order factors on three spiritual leadership latent variables: vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love. The Fry *et al*. study was conducted with US Military Academy cadets; findings revealed a positive relationship between spiritual leadership and several unit-level outcomes. Cadets were assessed according to their military performance and Academic Periodic Development Review, including productivity and commitment (Fry *et al*. 2011).

This study showed that the complex system of spiritual leadership is simpler than that found in the original spiritual leadership model by adopting a second-order spiritual leadership factor. Findings also demonstrated that the unit of analysis is a critical issue in that previous studies were based on the individual level of analysis while the Fry *et al.* study examined spiritual leadership theory (SLT) at the unit level.

## Validation studies of the spiritual leadership theory

To date, several studies have examined the validity of SLT in US contexts – specifically, military and business organizations (Fry *et al*. 2005, 2011, Fry and Slocum 2008, Fry and Cohen 2009). Using longitudinal data from a newly formed Apache Longbow helicopter squadron, Fry *et al*. (2005) identified a positive relationship among spiritual leadership, spiritual well-being, organizational productivity, and commitment. Other studies of business organizations and municipal government discovered positive results from the use of SLT (Fry and Cohen 2009).

Recently, researchers have identified that the spiritual leadership model was validated in two major Chinese societies, China and Taiwan (Chen and Yang 2012, Chen *et al*. 2012). Both of these societies are rooted in Confucian tradition which demonstrates the universality of the construct of spiritual leadership. Furthermore, several other studies on workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership have demonstrated the possibility of the universality of spiritual leadership model in India, Malaysia, Turkish, and Iran (Ayranci and Semercioz 2011, Jamaludin *et al*. 2011, Nooralizad *et al*. 2011, Javanmard 2012).

Identification with religion or a religious tradition is important to spiritual leadership because, for many, religion is the root of spirituality and can give

spirituality depth and discipline (Cavanagh and Bandsuch 2002, Hicks 2002). However, research on a revised model in which inner life plays a foundational role has not yet been conducted in the US context (Fry 2008). Therefore, findings from this study can contribute to spiritual leadership research in Korea as well as further development of the SLT by examining the validity and reliability of the revised spiritual leadership model (Fry 2008, 2009).

## Methods

### Sample and procedure

The study population was employees who were working for private corporate organizations in South Korea. For the research sample, 18 companies that had more than 2000 employees were recruited. Of these companies, 17 belonged to the largest 100 companies in South Korea. Also to improve the generalizability of this research, 500 MBA alumni from the major business school in Korea, who are currently employed, were recruited. Approximately, 1841 employees were asked to participate in this survey and 556 responded to this survey (response rates = 31%). Finally, 514 respondents were analyzed; there were 42 with missing responses. Respondents working in the manufacturing industry (e.g. motor, electronics, and steel) were predominate, totally 42.4%; the rest of the profile was as follows: male, 76.8%; age 30–49, 75.7% (30–39, 40.9%; 40–49, 34.8%); four-year college graduate, 54.3%; and not affiliated with a religion, 40.9% (Protestantism = 28.6%). With regard to the sampling procedure, the current study employed a non-random sampling process that involved volunteer participants from several profit organizations in South Korea.

### Instruments

#### Spiritual leadership and spiritual well-being

The three dimensions of spiritual leadership – vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love – was measured using survey questions developed and validated especially for SLT (Fry and Matherly 2006, Fry 2008). The inner life concept as developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) was adapted to this study. This instrument was found to have good reliabilities of between .83 and .93, which were validated in several empirical research studies in the US context (Fry *et al.* 2005, Fry and Matherly 2006, Fry *et al.* 2007). The questionnaire utilizes a 5-item Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree).

#### Organization performance and individual outcomes

Organizational commitment, productivity as organization performance, and life satisfaction as individual outcomes were measured. The items measuring affective organizational commitment and productivity were developed and validated in earlier research (Nyhan 2000) as well as SLT (Fry and Matherly 2006, Fry 2008). These instruments have good reliabilities: organizational commitment ($\alpha = .91$), productivity ($\alpha = .85$), and life satisfaction ($\alpha = .88$).

## *Translation of survey instrument*

Fry's (2008) spiritual leadership survey was translated into Korean by professionals familiar with the leadership field. Following the translation, the survey instrument was back-translated into English to evaluate the accuracy and improve the reliability of the translation. Different professionals were used for the translation and back-translation steps.

## *Data analysis*

For this study, structural equation modeling (SEM) was mainly employed by using AMOS 18.0. SEM, also known as path analysis with latent variables, has been utilized to describe a large number of statistical models used to evaluate the validity of substantive theories with empirical data (McDonald and Ho 2002). One of the main advantages of SEM is that it can be used to study the relationship among latent constructs that are indicated by multiple measures (Lei and Wu 2007).

## Results

The results of this study are reported in three parts: (1) descriptive statistics and reliability, (2) revised spiritual leadership model, and (3) higher-order model.

## *Descriptive statistics and reliability*

Each variable was significantly correlated; Table 1 (see supplemental material online) shows the results of the Pearson correlation. All variables involved in the spiritual leadership model were significantly correlated with each other ($r$ = range from .28 to .72) at the level of $p < .001$.

To check the internal consistency for each item of the measurement, Cronbach's alpha was used with each variable. The results (shown in Table 2, in the supplemental material online) demonstrate that all measures had adequate levels of reliability ($\alpha$ = .81–.91). Furthermore, to test the reliability of the constructs, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was calculated (shown in Table 2). AVE is the variance in the indicators explained by the common factor; average trait-related variance extracted and AVE value must be .5 to indicate reliability (Fornell and Lacker 1981). All AVE had higher values than .5, which demonstrated the adequate reliability of the constructs.

## *Confirmatory factor analysis for revised model*

The measurement model in SEM is assessed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The primary advantage of CFA is its utility in assessing the construct validity of a proposed measurement model (Passmore *et al.* 1987, Hoyle 1995, McDonald and Ho 2002). Table 3 (see supplemental material online) shows the CFA result for the revised spiritual leadership model (Fry 2003, 2005a).

$\chi^2$ is known to be sensitive to samples of larger size; even small deviations from a perfect model are statistically significant (Hoyle 1995, Lei and Wu 2007). Therefore, other practical fit indices are needed to evaluate the goodness-of-fit of the model, such as the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), and non-normed fit index (NNFI) to supplement the $\chi^2$ test (Bentler 1990, Browne and Cudeck 1993, McDonald and Ho 2002).

Table 3 shows the CFA result for the revised spiritual leadership model developed by Fry (2008, 2009) (see Figure 2 for revised SLT). One of the life satisfaction items (IL1) had the lowest factor loading value (.505). Also, the revised spiritual leadership model indicated a poor fit in indices due to the value of NNFI ($\chi^2$[783] = 2341.291, $p < .001$; NNFI = .891; CFI = .901; RMSEA = .062). Therefore to improve the measurement model fit, some items, including "IL1" which had the lowest factor loading value were deleted. Eventually, the revised spiritual leadership model indicated a good model fit with the deletion of three items ($\chi^2$[688] = 2010.783, $p < .001$; NNFI = .901; CFI = .908; RMSEA = .061).

The method followed in deleting several items is described below.

First, one item (IL1 of inner life: "I feel hopeful about life") was deleted because it had the lowest factor loading value (.505) and thus reduced the model fit. In addition, after carefully looking at the items, one of the vision items (V2) and one of the hope/faith items (H1) were deleted. Those two items (V2 and H1) were added to the Korean version by dividing the original items, but eventually those was deleted.

The original version of vision (Fry 2003, 2005a) involved four items. In this study, one item was divided into two items because they were believed to have two different meanings ("I understand and am committed to my organization"s vision', V2: I understand my organization's vision and V3: I am committed to my organization's vision). However, the meaning of item V2 was implicit in V3, V1, V4, and V5 (V1: My organization has a vision statement that brings out the best in me, V4: My organization's vision is clear and compelling to me, V5: My organization's vision inspires my best performance). Therefore, V2 was deleted from this study. Eventually, the model fit was improved without the loss of the item's information.

In addition, the original version of hope/faith (Fry 2003, 2005a) involved four items. One of these items was divided into two separate items for the same reason as stated above under vision ("I have faith in my organization and I am willing to 'do whatever it takes' to ensure that it accomplishes its mission", H1: I have faith in my organization; H2: I am willing to "do whatever it takes" to ensure that it accomplishes its mission). However, item H1 was implicit in H3, H4, and H5 (H3: I persevere and exert extra effort to help my organization succeed because I have faith in what it stands for; H4: I demonstrate my faith in my organization and its mission by doing everything I can to help us succeed; H5: I set challenging goals for my work because I have faith in my organization and want us to succeed). Therefore, H1 was deleted from this study.

The revised model had 39 items as per Fry (2008). However, in this study 38 items were used because one item on inner life (IL1: I feel hopeful about life) had the lowest factor loading (.505) and was deleted. Also, H1 and V2, which were divided, were not included in this study.

### Assessment of structural model

The revised spiritual leadership model (Fry 2008, 2009) indicated an acceptable fit in indices ($\chi^2[688] = 2010.783$, $p < .001$; NNFI = .901; CFI = .908; RMSEA = .061). As shown in Figure 2, all standardized path coefficients in the revised causal model were positive and statistically significant in the Korean business context. Inner life was significantly related to all three variables: vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith. The beta weight and strength of the relationship between membership and productivity was almost twice that of calling and productivity (($\beta = .51$, $\beta = .25$, respectively). Also, life satisfaction was more influenced by membership than calling/meaning ($\beta = .50$, $\beta = .26$, respectively).

The model's variable squared multiple correlations, which provided the proportion of its variance accounted for by its predictors, ranged from .36 to .72.

### Discussion

Several empirical research studies on the earlier original spiritual leadership model have been conducted in the military, private organization, schools, and police organizations in the US context (Fry 2003, Fry and Matherly 2006, Fry 2008, Fry and Cohen 2009). Fry then suggested a revised theory of spiritual leadership to which inner life and individual life satisfaction were added (2008). Inner life may play a role as a source of spiritual leadership and fundamental source of inspiration and insight, and may positively influence the development of hope/faith in a transcendent vision of service to key stakeholders and the values of altruistic love (2008). However, research on this revised model has not been yet conducted both within and outside the US context.
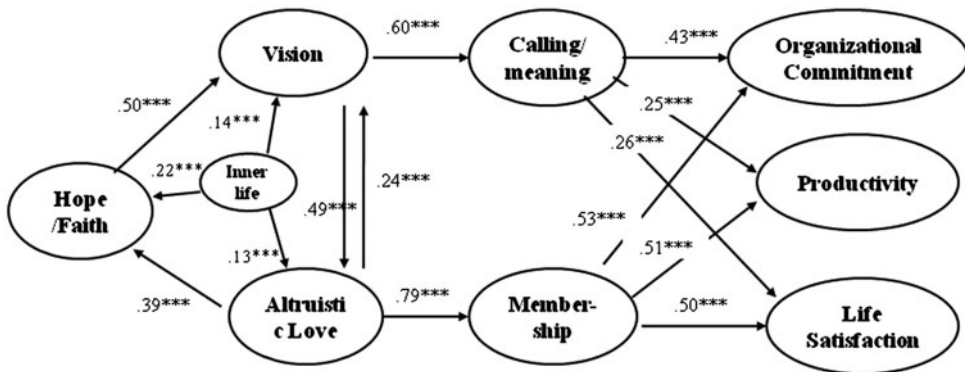


Figure 2.    Result for the revised spiritual leadership model.

All standardized path coefficients in the revised causal model were positive and statistically significant. Furthermore, inner life had a positive relationship with three factors: vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith ($\beta = .13$, $\beta = .15$, $\beta = .21$, $p < .001$, respectively). This result demonstrated that inner life is an essential source of inspiration and insight is the source of spiritual leadership, and positively influences development of hope/faith in vision and the values of altruistic love.

Membership doubled the impact on team productivity over calling/meaning. Also, life satisfaction was more influenced by membership than calling/meaning ($\beta = .50$, $\beta = .26$, respectively). Interestingly, this study of membership influence had similar results to those in previous research by Fry in the US business context.

Membership means employee spiritual attribute toward organization/team, while calling/meaning is relevant to employee spiritual attribute toward work (Chen *et al*. 2012). The result of this study demonstrated that followers' spiritual and psychological attribute toward organization/team such as relationship with colleagues is more critical to commitment, productivity, and even life satisfaction rather than work which employee do in organization/team.

Fry (2003) proposed that the spiritual leadership model, as a universal model, would not vary across cultural contexts or by personality traits. The proposition of spiritual leadership was proved in the Korean context as well. Study results provide the possibility of the generality of the spiritual leadership model regardless of individualistic cultures with Judeo-Christian religious traditions and collective cultures with Confucian traditions. Furthermore, the spiritual leadership model should be validated regardless of whether one engages in a religion or not – as this study showed, one-half of study participants did not have any kind of religion.

## Theoretical and practical implications

Study results have a number of important theoretical and practical implications. This study's findings can add value to the development of a spiritual leadership model. First, from a theory development perspective, this research may contribute to improvements to the generalizability of a spiritual leadership model. Spiritual leadership has not been included in empirical research relative to other leadership models because leadership models are often in developmental stages (Dent *et al*. 2005). This study validated a recently revised model of SLT by Fry (2008), which suggested involving inner life as an independent variable and life satisfaction as a dependent variable. This has not been part of a validation study either in the USA or other cultures, to date. This study showed that inner life, through a small coefficient, may play a fundamental role in the revised spiritual leadership model. Second, the results of this validation study may contribute to facilitating relevant research on spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality in Korea.

Study findings have several implications for practice in leadership training, ethical training, understanding organization culture, and organizational commitment. First, spiritual leadership as examined in this study could offer a new perspective in the design of meaningful leadership development programs. Previous leadership development focused on individual knowledge, and skills and abilities as a formal leadership role, emphasizing the directional influence of leaders on followers (Day 2000). On the other hand, spiritual leadership engages all group members in meeting spiritual needs and enhances organizational commitment and performance in meaningful ways, emphasizing the collective social influence process (Fry *et al.* 2011). In Korea, it is not a common practice to provide meditation and prayer rooms to employees. However, in this study, inner life plays a fundamental role to influence hope and faith, vision, and altruistic love. Therefore, the training departments in Korean organizations should eagerly consider to including inner life practice such as meditation, yoga, and walking in nature in leadership development. Recently, many Korean companies have begun to pay attention to healing and spiritual wellbeing.

Organizations should consider integrating spirituality into its leadership and organization life because subordinates seek to improve the quality of their workplace life by finding meaning within their work as well as achieving purpose in life beyond earnings (Benefiel 2005). Leaders should recognize the significance of creating meaningful work for others as well as a connection to the workplace. Doing so intrinsically motivates employees to have a sense of spiritual well-being through calling and membership.

A leadership development program should help leaders engage in self-reflection about who they are, what they are doing, and where they are going, aiding them in paying attention to their inner life as a human being regardless of their different religious beliefs. The fundamental questions relate to the vision and mission of their organization which help leaders find their life and the meaning of their leadership so they are able to mentor subordinates by exuding a sense of competence and by offering them meaningful work.

Further, the hope/faith of both the leader and employees instills confidence that the vision and mission of an organization will be accomplished. Leaders are told that vision is critical to leadership effectiveness and organizational success when they attend leadership development programs. Although it is clear that vision plays a role in guiding the future, energizing people, and giving meaning to work, vision itself is not enough. Hope/faith in the vision of the leader and subordinates is necessary. Faith is based on values, attitudes, and behaviors that express absolute certainty and trust that what is desired and expected will come to pass. Thus, a leadership development program should include discussion of the importance of hope/faith in developing a vision.

Second, human resource development practitioners may include workplace spirituality in the development of business values training programs that enhance organizational commitment. Organizational commitment comes from the beliefs, values, and feelings of employees based on a business philosophy that provides meaning to individual work as well as a reason for the existence

of a business. Furthermore, employees often seek to engage their entire being – body, mind, and spirit – in their work, and not just engage a part of themselves (Hicks 2002, McLaughlin 2005). Results from this study on workplace spirituality (inner life, calling/meaning, and membership) and organizational commitment and individual life satisfaction provide a starting point for aligning individual purpose and organization mission.

An organization's vision and mission play a role by giving meaning to an employee's work by producing a sense of calling. Employees need to feel a calling and sense of meaning within their work, which eventually contributes to the achievement of the organization's vision and mission.

High-performance organizations' core values act as a standard for employees' behavior and decision making. These core values underlie employees' work and foster their interaction with each other. Individual spiritual values such as integrity, honesty, and humility are connected to the core values of organizations (Reave 2005). Organizations need to appeal to employees' core values, which are naturally associated with their individual spiritual values.

People want to feel connected to each other as members of an organization or community. Connectedness to coworkers, customers, communities, and the world is one of the fundamental characteristics of workplace spirituality. An organization's members should build an organizational culture that fosters a sense of being understood and appreciated and thus being a part of their organizations.

## Reflections on research limitations

This study had several limitations that may have affected its results. First, generalization of this study's results to circumstances in other countries may not be possible because the target population was employees in South Korea. National cultural contexts (i.e. nations that have strong religious backgrounds) may impact views of perceived inner life, calling/meaning, and life satisfaction. In this vein, the results have limited generalizability in the all-Korean organization due to the non-randomized sample selection process and to the small presence of female employees in the sample.

Second, the translation of the instrument revealed interpretative challenges with the concept of spirituality, due to cultural differences in the use and understanding of the concept of spirituality and its relationship with religion. While construct reliabilities were shown to be significant and similar to construct reliabilities found in previous spiritual leadership studies, the cultural differences cannot be ignored as a potential limitation of the results of this study.

## Recommendations for future research

Several recommendations for future research are made here in the interest of further developing the concept of spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality theory. First, future studies should require a validation study of the spiritual

leadership model in several different nations in terms of different religious backgrounds and different economic development stages. The spiritual leadership model should include inner life, which implies a religious relationship, so that the causal effect of the spiritual leadership model will be affected by perceptions of a target population with a strong religious background (i.e. Islamic countries and the countries whose population are Christian). Some people are comfortable with the word "spirituality" or "religion" or "God" while some people like "values" and "ethics" rather than "spirituality" for expressing similar phenomena in organizations (McLaughlin 2005). Furthermore, economic development stage can affect the perception of the causal spiritual leadership model. In advanced economies, employees seek to improve the quality of their workplace life by finding meaning within their work as well as achieving a purpose beyond earning while workers in poor countries do not pay attention to spiritual issues in organizations as they are working to survive.

Second, in order to improve the possibility of generalizing spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality as well as define any differences according to characteristics of organizations in the Korean context, several non-private organizations should be involved, such as an NGO, school setting, general government sectors, and military and police sectors. We can assume that different organizations will have different definitions of calling/meaning within work.

Third, qualitative research on spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality is necessary in Korean companies. Quantitative research limits deep understanding of the perception of spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality in the Korean context because this topic is related to belief, feeling, and attitude. To gain a unique or general sense of spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality in the Korean organization context, deeper qualitative research is necessary based on face-to-face interviews.

## Supplemental Material

## Notes on contributors

Ki Seok Jeon is in charge of leadership development team of Hyundai Motor Group University. He received PhD from Human Resource Development major in Workforce Education and Development Program at the Pennsylvania State University. His research interests include spiritual leadership, workplace spirituality, and leadership development, and organizational effectiveness. His research has been published in *Human Resource Development International and The Korean Journal of Human Resource Development Quarterly.*

David L. Passmore is professor of Education in the Workforce Education and Development academic program at The Pennsylvania State University. He is also a professor of Operations Research in the dual degree, intercollege Operations Research

Program, and director of the Institute for Research in Training and Development. His research has been published in *Human Resource Development Review*, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *American Journal of Public Health*, *Journal of Labor Research*, and *International Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, among others.

Chan Lee is a professor in Vocational Education and Workforce Development at Seoul National University in Korea. Prior to joining academia, he worked at LG Electronics Alabama Inc. in USA, as the HRD team leader as well as at HR department at LEGO Korea Inc. He holds a PhD and a master's degree in Human Resources Development from the Ohio State University, USA.

William Hunsaker is currently working as an assistant professor in the School of Business Administration at Kyungpook National University in Daegu, South Korea. His research interests include spiritual leadership, servant leadership, toxic leadership, Korean leadership, Confucian culture, and organizational change.

## References

Ashmos, D. and Duchon, D., 2000. Spiritual at work: a conceptualization & measure. *Journal of management inquiry*, 9 (2), 134–145.

Ayranci, E. and Semercioz, F., 2011. The relationship between spiritual leadership and issues of spirituality and religiosity: a study of top Turkish managers. *International journal of business and management*, 6 (4), 136–149.

Bass, B.M., 1985. *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Bass, B.M., 1997. Does the transactional/transformational leadership paradigm transcend organizational and national boundaries? *American psychologist*, 52, 130–139.

Benefiel, M., 2005. The second half of the journey: spiritual leadership for organizational transformation. *The leadership quarterly*, 16, 723–747.

Bennis, W., 2003. *On becoming a leader*. New York: Basic Books.

Bentler, P.M., 1990. Comparative fit indexes in structural models. *Psychological bulletin*, 107, 238–246.

Brown, R., 2003. Organizational spirituality: the skeptic's version. *Organization*, 12 (2), 393–400.

Browne, M.W. and Cudeck, R., 1993. Alternative ways of assessing model fit. *In*: K. A. Bollen and J.S. Long, eds. *Testing structural equation models*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 136–162.

Cavanagh, G.F. and Bandsuch, M. R., 2002. Virtue as a benchmark for spirituality in business. *Journal of business ethics*, 38 (1/2), 109–117.

Cavanagh, S.J. and Hazen, M.A., 2008. Sustainability, spirituality, and discernment or discernment upholds sustainability. *In*: J. Biberman and L. Tischler, eds. *Spirituality in business*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 35–50.

Chen, C. and Yang, C., 2012. The impact of spiritual leadership on organizational citizenship behavior: a multi-sample analysis. *Journal of business ethics*, 105, 107–114.

Chen, C., Yang, C., and Li, C., 2012. Spiritual leadership, follower mediators, and organizational outcomes: evidence from three industries across two major Chinese societies. *Journal of applied social psychology*, 42 (4), 890–938.

Day, D.V., 2000. Leadership development: a review in context. *Leadership quarterly*, 11, 581–613.

Dent, E., Higgins, M., and Wharff, D., 2005. Spirituality and leadership: an empirical review of definitions, distinctions, and embedded assumptions. *The leadership quarterly*, 16, 625–653.

Duchon, D. and Plowman, D.A., 2005. Nurturing the spirit at work: impact on work unit Performance. *The leadership quarterly*, 16, 807–833.

Fairholm, G.W., 1996. Spiritual leadership: fulfilling whole-self needs at work. *Leadership & organization development journal*, 17 (5), 11–17.

Fairholm, G.W., 1998. *Perspectives on leadership from the science of management to its spiritual heart*. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.

Fornell, C. and Larcker, D.F., 1981. Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of marketing research*, 18, 39–50.

Fry, L.W., 2003. Toward a theory of spiritual leadership. *The leadership quarterly*, 14, 693–727.

Fry, L.W., 2005a. Toward a paradigm of spiritual leadership. *The leadership quarterly*, 16 (4), 619–622.

Fry, L.W., 2005b. Toward a theory of ethical and spiritual well-being, and corporate social responsibility through spiritual leadership. *In*: R.A. Gicacalone, C.L. Jukiewicz, and D. Craig, eds. *Positive psychology in business ethics and corporate responsibility.* Greenwich, CT: Information Age, 47–84.

Fry, L.W., 2008. Spiritual leadership: state-of-the art and future directions for theory, research, and practice. *In*: J. Biberman and L. Tischler, eds. *Spirituality in business*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 106–124.

Fry, L.W., 2009. Spiritual leadership as a model for student inner development. *Journal of leadership studies*, 3 (3), 79–82.

Fry, L.W. and Cohen, M., 2009. Spiritual leadership as a paradigm for organizational transformation and recovery from extended work hours cultures. *Journal of business ethics*, 84, 265–278. doi: 10.1007/s10551-008-9695-2.

Fry, L.W. and Matherly, L.L., 2006. Spiritual leadership and organizational performance: an exploratory study. *Paper presented at the Academy of Management* [online], Atlanta, GA. Available from: http://www.tarleton.edu/Faculty/fry/SLTOrg-Perf.pdf.

Fry, L.W. and Slocum, J.W., 2008. Maximizing the triple bottom line through spiritual leadership. *Organizational dynamics*, 3, 86–96.

Fry, L.W., Vitucci, S., and Cedillo, M., 2005. Spiritual leadership and army transformation: theory, measurement, and establishing a baseline. *The leadership quarterly*, 16, 807–833.

Fry, L.W., *et al.*, 2007. Transforming city government through spiritual leadership: measurement and establishing a baseline. *Paper presented at the National Meeting of the Academy of Management* [online], Philadelphia, PA. Available from: http://www.tarleton.edu/Faculty/fry/SLTCityGovFinal.pdf.

Fry, L.W., *et al.*, 2011. Impact of spiritual leadership on unit performance. *The leadership quarterly*, 22, 259–270.

Giacalone, R.A. and Jurkiewicz, C.L., 2003. Toward a science of workplace spirituality. *In*: R.A. Giacalone and C.L. Jurkiewicz, eds. *Handbook of workplace spirituality and organizational performance*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 3–28.

Gotsis, G. and Kortezi, Z., 2008. Philosophical foundation of workplace spirituality: a critical approach. *Journal of business ethics*, 78, 575–600.

Heo, K.S., 2010. Workplace spirituality and its relationship to leadership. *Korea human resource management*, 17 (1), 329–336.

Hicks, D.A., 2002. Spiritual and religious diversity in the workplace. Implication for leadership. *The leadership quarterly*, 13, 379–396.

Hofstede, G., 1983. The cultural relativity of organizational practices, & theories. *Journal of international business studies*, 14 (2), 75–90.

Hoyle, R.H., 1995. *Structural equation modeling: concepts, issues, and applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jamaludin, Z., *et al.*, 2011. Do transactional, transformational and spiritual leadership styles distinct? A conceptual insight. *Journal of global business and economics*, 2 (1), 73–82.

Jarvis, P., 2005. Towards a philosophy of human learning: an existentialist perspective. *In*: P. Jarvis and S. Parker, eds. *Human learning: an holistic approach*. London: Routledge, 1–15.

Javanmard, H., 2012. The impact of spirituality on work performance. *Indian journal of science and technology*, 5 (1), 1961–1966.

Kolodinsky, R.W., Giacalone, R.A., and Jurkiewicz, C.L., 2008. Workplace value and outcomes: exploring personal, organizational, and interactive workplace spirituality. *Journal of business ethics*, 81, 465–480.

Lei, P.W. and Wu, Q., 2007. Introduction to structural equation modeling: issues and practical considerations. *Educational measurement: issues and practices*, 26 (3), 33–43.

McDonald, R.P. and Ho, M.H., 2002. Principles and practice in reporting structural equation analyses. *Psychological methods*, 7 (1), 64–82.

McLaughlin, C., 2005. Spirituality and ethics in business. *European business review*, 17, 94–101.

Mitroff, I.I. and Denton, E.A., 1999. *A spiritual audit of corporate America*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass intelligence.

Nooralizad, R., Ghorchian, N., and Jaafari, P., 2011. A casual model depicting the influence of spiritual leadership and some organizational and individual variables on workplace spirituality. *Advances in management*, 4 (5), 14–20.

Nyhan, R.C., 2000. Changing the paradigm: trust and its role in public sector organizations. *American review of public administration*, 30, 87–109.

Passmore, D.L., Risher, G.A., and Ay, U., 1987. A measurement model for labor force attachment of American youth. *Journal of technical and vocation education*, 4, 45–60.

Pawar, B.S., 2009. Workplace spirituality facilitation: a comprehensive model. *Journal of business ethics*, 90, 375–386. doi: 10.1007/s10551-009-0047-7.

Pfeffer, J., 2003. Business and the spirit: management practices that sustain values. *In*: R.A. Giacalone and C.L. Jurkiewicz, eds. *Handbook of workplace spirituality and organizational performance*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, 29–45.

Reave, L., 2005. Spiritual values and practices related to leadership effectiveness. *The leadership quarterly*, 16, 655–687.

Singh, N. and Krishnan, V., 2007. Transformational leadership in India: developing, & validating a new scale using grounded theory approach. *International journal of cross cultural management*, 7 (2), 219–236.

Yu, G.C., Seo, J.H., and Kim, J.I., 2010. Conceptual definitions and model of workplace spirituality. *Korean journal of management*, 18 (4), 153–199.

Yukl, G., 2006. *Leadership in organizations*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.