



## WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY: METAPHORS AND OPINIONS OF TEACHERS

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### Abstract:

This study examined metaphors teachers provided about what their concepts of spirituality were. It also examined teachers' opinions regarding workplace spirituality definitions, along with the qualities a spiritual organization requires. Based on the qualitative research method, the research was structured according to a phenomenological design. The sample studied was composed of two groups of teachers (N=40) from another study conducted on the schools' spiritual development program during the 2016-2017 academic year in Şanlıurfa, Turkey. The teachers from both groups volunteered to participate in different parts of this study and answered written questions about their personal metaphors to explain their concept of spirituality and what they think about the place of spirituality in schools, in light of their interpretations and definitions of workplace spirituality and spiritual qualities. While the first part of the study produced 18 different metaphors such as "*water, knowing the self, energy, sea, space, math, oxygen, students, nucleus*", the second part included 30 different opinions about workplace spirituality on both a personal and a group level. The results show that the participants consider workplace spirituality as an important issue for self-identity, organizational identity, and growth.

**Keywords:** workplace spirituality, metaphors, schools, teachers

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## 1. Introduction

Coping with problems and dilemmas at work is a very common issue these days due to globalization, competition, workload, mergers, and acquisitions (Gautam and Jhajharia, 2016: 13). While seeking solutions to deal with these problems, many business people and schools have displayed a significant interest in spirituality at work (Cavanagh, 1999: 198). The concept of workplace spirituality (WS) in the fields of business and performance outcomes has been discussed much in each discipline's literature. Furthermore, it seems to be a topic discussed increasingly in management and business journals since the topic debuted in the disciplines' literature.

Discussion over the definition of workplace spirituality continues in both the popular and academic literatures (Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004: 26) Workplace spirituality is seen to be defined around core dimensions of inner life, meaningful work and community (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000). Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) defined it as *"a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote employees' experience of organizational transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy."* Göçen (2017: 28) in his study on spirituality among teachers defines workplace spirituality as *"a shared understanding that allows people to find meaning at work with a sense of serving a superior purpose, to listen to their inner voice, to experience their transcendence and a sense of integrity among team members."*

Despite the increasing number of studies about workplace spirituality in business and management fields, the same level of attention has not been witnessed in the education field. Kernochan, McCormick, and White (2007: 61) specified the need to focus on teachers' spirituality, since management literature tells little about a teacher's spiritual identity or self. Similarly, research on teacher effectiveness has largely examined the ways to equip teachers to become effective in the cognitive domain, but there is virtually no research in examining the affective domain—specifically, in the realm of spirituality (Barsh, 2015: 5).

Mousa and Alas (2016), who carried out a study to examine the relationship between workplace spirituality (WS) and organizational commitment among Egyptian teachers, stated, *"The majority of teachers are leaving governmental schools in search for better work opportunities in the private sector and Gulf countries as their schools do not show a sense of community; they do not see their work to be meaningful... followed by work slowdowns, high level of absenteeism, low productivity and high rates of turnover (p. 248)."* Schools and teachers face many different problems all over the world while maintaining their roles as individuals. An OECD report states (2005) several points for countries to consider about teacher retention, such as the impact of high workloads, stress, and poor working

environments on job satisfaction, the undervalued image and status of teaching, and the limited means in most countries to recognize teachers' work. According to Özoğlu, Gür, and Altunoğlu (2013:125), teachers seem to be seriously demoralized, desperate, and discouraged in many countries and think that their profession is not as respected as it used to be. This case requires a multi-faceted approach to schools and teachers. The solution to these problems could be provided to some extent by supporting and fostering spirituality in school communities, as spirituality helps people gain a more transcendent perspective on their work, family, community, and self. Studies consistently show that mental health and well-being correlates significantly with spirituality (Walt and Klerk, 2014: 368).

The spirituality of people and teachers develops over time and is influenced by significant relationships with others through lived experiences (Ambrose, 2005: 93). When the concept of spirituality in the context of schools is discussed, there are different paths to interpret it, on a personal level, and on a group-centered, faith-based level, followed by secular concerns in the schools. Thus, Watson (2000) asks how far we can embed spirituality into secular school environments while pointing out the secularization of religion on one hand, and the religionization of atheism in the schools (p. 39), and suggest that the two ends should meet in the middle.

It is not our intention to propose workplace spirituality as the sole and final solution to the teachers' problems mentioned above. WS can be a great tool in helping teachers to overcome school-related problems. The exclusion of the spiritual dimension is known to lead to the slowdown in teachers' growth (Klerk-Luttig, 2008: 505) because WS empirically has proven to increase performance, wellbeing, and to decrease stress. Rego and Cunha (2008: 54) assert that it is natural to promote spirituality at the workplace to improve the commitment of employees and their organizational performance, as long as the respect for the dignity of people and ethical issues are considered. In their study regarding schools and spirituality, Abdullah, Ismail, and Mydin (2013: 1321) found workplace spirituality correlates positively with teachers' commitment and satisfaction, departmental effectiveness, and also with effective leadership practices." It serves an important role in solving problems of employees, since training programs that integrate spiritual dimension into an organization help the development of the whole person, and not merely the "head/knowledge" and "hands/skills." (Petchsawang and Duchon, 2009: 460).

Nuzulia and Rupiati (2016: 1242) suggest that one of the important efforts in education systems should be about making teachers feel satisfied with their job. This, too, is closely related to workplace spirituality. Feeling satisfied is not necessarily a function of high income or any other tangible asset because teachers desire to experience connectedness, a sense of unity, wholeness, and meaning in their lives and

at the workplace. The ones with a spiritual dimension at work are more inclined to self-reflection; are more attentive to their inner self, both with others and with a greater power than the self (Klerk-Luttig, 2008: 508). This spirituality affects both teachers and students. Based on connectedness and caring, spirituality in schools has been stated by Vokey (2003: 174) as an antidote to several student problems and social ills. Stanley (2011: 47), who studied challenging (violent) students and teachers' relationships in the schools, discovered that spirituality helped teachers to maintain efficacy through anxiety reduction and by functioning as a tool to connect with students. That means that spirituality is an indispensable requirement for both teacher and student success in high-stress educational settings. Before they connect with the lives of the students, however, teachers need first to recognize their own lives and their inner world (Chittenden, 2003). Thus, introducing WS into the school climate may have vital implications for both teachers and students.

Considering the importance of spirituality in school settings, our study aims to reveal the metaphors about spirituality, followed by the opinions and definitions of teachers about WS and desired workplace principles and features for a spiritual organization.

## **2. Method**

This study is based on a phenomenological design within the qualitative research method. This method was chosen to examine teachers' metaphors about spirituality and their opinions and definitions about workplace spirituality within the context of schools. A phenomenological design study's goal is to understand people's opinions, their perspectives, and their understandings of a particular phenomenon, e.g., their perceptions about spirituality in the workplace. The phenomenological study aims to reveal the essences, meanings, attributes, and opinions concerning people's experiences (Patton, 2002). According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016: 78), the phenomenological design attempts to uncover the topics or issues with which we are familiar, but about which we have no extensive information. In this study, the researchers tried to go deep into more subjective and personal clarifications of participants about the concept of spirituality and the workplace.

Two groups of teachers (N=40) included in the sample of the study is taken directly from another study carried out in a spiritual development program for schools in the 2016-2017 academic school year. Each group was attending a spiritual development program for schools within a pilot preparatory study for a Ph.D. thesis when the researchers asked them to be part of this study. The first training group included 30 participants, while the second group included 23 participants. The whole

study group was asked if they were interested to be part of another study about workplace spirituality targeted at their metaphors and opinions. Those 20/20 teachers from both groups agreed to volunteer for the study, putting in extra hours. They were asked about their metaphors regarding the concept of spirituality and then what they think about the place of spirituality in schools, in light of their interpretations of workplace spirituality. The reason to include these two different groups was that they had completed some spiritual training by that time and knew the basic dimensions of spiritual development, which could help the researchers to collect more detailed information in a short time with a group that was already informed about spiritual practices leading to harmony in schools. The reason the researchers did not conduct the study with a single group was that they wanted to compare the metaphors and opinions of two different groups who received the same training. The sample was distributed across the primary, middle, and high schools of Şanlıurfa.

The session with the first group (N=20) took 30 minutes to answer metaphor questions which included "*Spirituality is like ..... because .....*" The answers were returned on the paper, and the researchers examined all answers separately and crosschecked each other's list. Since there were a small number of participants in the study, and the metaphors were taken directly from the papers of the participants, there was found a full match between researchers' metaphor lists. The session with the second group took about 40 minutes to answer "*what they think about workplace spirituality and desired qualities in schools.*" The answers were requested on paper, but they were also given the option of explaining their ideas or definitions openly in the group. There was also an ongoing video-record process for both groups, which were done for a possible use of the data in the analysis process to check whether the researchers missed or overlooked some points in what was discussed. Reporting the data in a detailed way and explaining how the investigator reaches the results are among the important criteria in a qualitative research to explain the validity of the study (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016). The researchers transferred the data in its original written form, which were put into two categories under "personal and group level." Once all the data were coded and charted, the texts and tables with all original quotations were re-examined according to the thematic categories, and then sent to a field expert for examination to provide a high level of consistency.

The first groups' participants are not coded or introduced in a detailed way in this paper since the researchers felt during the training that the participants did not favor getting recognition for their personal opinions. The second group, however, felt more flexible and did not consider it as a problem if their opinions were made public with general details given. The second group's information and code details are given below.

**Table 1:** The Demographic Information of Participants in the Second Group

| Variable                             | Groups             | N  | %  |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----|----|
| Gender                               | Women              | 10 | 50 |
|                                      | Men                | 10 | 50 |
| Age                                  | 20-29 years old    | 9  | 45 |
|                                      | 30-39 years old    | 11 | 55 |
| Marital Status                       | Married            | 8  | 40 |
|                                      | Single             | 12 | 60 |
| Duration in the School               | 1-4 years          | 16 | 80 |
|                                      | 5-9 years          | 4  | 20 |
| Duration in the Profession           | 1-4 years          | 11 | 55 |
|                                      | 5-9 years          | 3  | 15 |
|                                      | 10-14 years        | 4  | 20 |
|                                      | 15 and above years | 2  | 10 |
| The number of teachers in the school | 20 and below       | 2  | 10 |
|                                      | 21-40 teachers     | 3  | 15 |
|                                      | 41 and above       | 15 | 75 |
| School Type                          | Elementary School  | 2  | 10 |
|                                      | Middle School      | 11 | 55 |
|                                      | High School        | 7  | 35 |

The teachers interviewed in the second group represented a diverse sample from the schools. Their ages ranged from 22 to 39, and their years of experience ranged from one to 15. They were mostly in schools with more than 20 teachers and taught in their last school at least one year. The second group’s participants were coded according to their “teaching branch” and “gender.” **EW1** = English Teacher, Woman, No 1.

**MM** = Math Teacher, Man.

**PSW**: Psychology Counselor, Woman.

**CM**: Chemistry Teacher, Man.

### 3. Findings

In the research, the participants were asked how they identified the concept of spirituality in a metaphor; the metaphors used in the explanation of spirituality are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2:** The Metaphors for Spirituality

| Metaphors  | Frequency (f) | Metaphors        | Frequency (f) |
|------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| Energy     | 1             | Magic Key        | 1             |
| Sea        | 1             | Knowing the Self | 2             |
| Space      | 1             | Phone Battery    | 1             |
| Black hole | 1             | Power Within     | 1             |

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|          |   |           |   |
|----------|---|-----------|---|
| Math     | 1 | Home      | 1 |
| Oxygen   | 1 | Awakening | 1 |
| Water    | 2 | Mirror    | 1 |
| Students | 1 | Magnet    | 1 |
| Nucleus  | 1 | Teacher   | 1 |

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As seen in Table 2, the teacher participants identified the concept of spirituality with 18 different metaphors, two of which were articulated two times: *water* and *knowing the self (me)*. The metaphors mentioned with diverse perspectives reveal the subjective nature of spirituality, which changes from person to person, even though some of them rotate around similar meanings. Accordingly, the “*water*” metaphor was used by one of the teachers to mean that “*it takes the shape of the person (like the water in a cup) and his psychological condition.*” Another participant used the metaphor of “*black hole*” to mean that the concept of spirituality is vast and open to discussion with many unexplored sides.

*“Spirituality is like a black hole because it is vast, large, and visible, but in an unknown direction” (black hole metaphor).*

Two participants used the metaphor of “*knowing the self (me)*,” one of whom used it in regard to a poem of Yunus Emre, a famous preacher in Islamic Sufism known for his teachings on love.

Knowledge should mean a full grasp of knowledge:  
Knowledge means to know yourself, heart and soul.  
If you have failed to understand yourself,  
Then all of your reading has missed its call.

Interestingly, teacher participants used the metaphor of “*math*” to suggest that “*the solution lies in the problem (math metaphor)*” to mean that the spirituality can be linked to a math problem which is hard to understand at first but harbors all the answers and solutions naturally in itself.

Two other participants used “*magnet and energy*” metaphors to mean that “*it pushes and pulls the person back, depending on the case (magnet metaphor)*” and “*it moves people*” (*energy metaphor*), attracting the attention in some part to the “*nucleus*” metaphor, which was used to mean that “*it shapes (empowers) the life of persons*” with the power it has inside the person.

One of the teacher participants used the “*phone battery*” metaphor to signal their mental well-being: “*It is like a phone battery for me. When the battery gives a low signal, I*

*know that I am mentally tired at that time; if the battery is full, my energy is full as well.*" Another participant used the "(magic) key" metaphor to mean "it is the first step and gate to the desired" with a focus on spirituality's connection to "greater being than the self" as the spirit includes a transcendent dimension. Other participants used the metaphors of "mirror" to reflect on their inner world, "home" to draw attention to the case that you furnish your home with your feelings, "water" as it sometimes softens the materials as much as it breaks up the hard things like stone, "oxygen" to mean it is an indispensable part of life, "sea" to point out the wavy, stable, and transparent condition of the body and spirit, and "awakening" of mind and person (like from sleep) to open up the self to new dimensions. The teachers' expressions also included "infinity, emotions, and oneness" in several explanations, which drew attention to the existence of a human being with feelings and their unity with the infinite borders of connection to the beyond.

In the second part of this study, the participants volunteered were asked their general opinions about the interpretation of workplace spirituality in their school context and their desired workplace principles and features for a spiritual organization. The teachers' definition of a spiritual workplace, including the keywords and the desired qualities, can be seen below in Table 3. The participants were found to express their opinions regarding workplace spirituality on a personal level, which means what **one** should do, have, and foster to have a spiritual workplace. They also expressed their opinions about spirituality on the group level, which means what a **group** should do or have in their existing context to label themselves as a spiritual organization. Keywords like "peace," and "respect" include both personal and group attributes, so they could be included in both categories.

**Table 3:** The Opinions of Teachers about Workplace Spirituality

| Themes         | Keywords/qualities used in interpretation of WS | Frequency (f) |
|----------------|---|---------------|
| Personal Level | Realizing your own identity (knowing yourself)  | 5             |
|                | Peace (inner peace and peace with others)       | 4             |
|                | Self-actualization                              | 3             |
|                | The feeling of being use/benefit for others     | 3             |
|                | Meaningfulness                                  | 3             |
|                | Bodily and spiritual energy                     | 3             |
|                | Setting/focus on goals for life                 | 2             |
|                | Joy in job (teaching)                           | 2             |
|                | Determination                                   | 2             |
|                | No focus on monetary goals                      | 2             |
|                | Transcendence                                   | 2             |
|                | Self-sufficient                                 | 2             |
|                | Taking control of your feelings                 | 2             |

|             |                                       |   |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|---|
|             | Paying attention to now (mindfulness) | 2 |
|             | Working with passion                  | 2 |
|             | Listening to your inner world         | 1 |
|             | Being part of the solution            | 1 |
|             | Compassion                            | 1 |
|             | Satisfaction of life                  | 1 |
|             | Seeking your calling                  | 1 |
| Group Level | Happiness at work                     | 5 |
|             | Harmony                               | 4 |
|             | Respect                               | 3 |
|             | Realizing others and their self       | 2 |
|             | Sharing                               | 2 |
|             | Altruism                              | 1 |
|             | Trust                                 | 1 |
|             | Dignity at organization               | 1 |
|             | Appreciation                          | 1 |
|             | Colorfulness in the organization      | 1 |

As seen above in Table 3, *realizing your own identity, peace, goals for life, self-actualization, bodily and spiritual energy, being use/benefit for others, and meaningfulness* are the most articulated expressions in the WS opinions of the participants in regard to personal level. In their review of Goertzen and Barbuto's writings on the topic (2001), Dent et al. (2005: 626) cited several meanings under various paradigms of individual spirituality such as *"self-actualization, purpose and meaning in life, health and wellness, workplace spirituality and leadership spirituality,"* parallel the several results in this study. Thus, it is needed for organization members to find peace in themselves, set goals for their lives, lead lives that lead toward self-actualization and transcendence, so that the organization could start to fill itself with spirit through the action of its members.

When the opinions of teachers regarding the group level are examined, the answers suggest what qualities organization members should have in order to achieve a spiritual workplace. These are also mostly related to the personal level, but require everyone's contribution. *Happiness at work, respect, harmony, dignity at the organization, sharing and appreciation, etc.,* need all members to have a feeling of unity and maturity, first in themselves and then in the group.

Five teachers in the group stressed that *"spirituality is more about realizing your own identity"* while three participants mentioned WS in schools as the employment of *"bodily and spiritual energy"*. According to EW1, *"Workplace spirituality means for a person to use bodily and spiritual energy to find peace at work and feel useful for others....and crave for a meaningful goal at work with no monetary goals at mind."* Another participant, EW2 defined spiritual workplace as *"being in a place where a person feels peace inside and*

*harmony with colleagues and attains spiritual contentedness in the works s/he does and also feels himself/herself transcendent, useful and self-sufficient."*

Participants were seen to cite *"the feeling of being of use/benefit for others"* (f=3) and *"meaningfulness"* (f=3) more in their WS interpretations. Ashmos and Duchon (2000: 137) define *"spirituality at work as the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community."* This definition, as supported by the participants' opinions above, draws attention to meaningfulness and community constructs which are built on meaning, harmony, and the feeling of being useful for others. People experience meaningfulness when they feel themselves useful, worthwhile, and valuable (Kahn, 1990: 704). Employees that view their work as sacred are likely to approach their role quite differently compared to others who treat their job as a means to pay the bills (Zinnbauer et al, 1999: 910).

According to MM, *"workplace spirituality means forming an atmosphere where people are sincere and respectful towards each other, where people work with mutual trust and cooperation when necessary, and a place which prioritizes the emotions of conscience and compassion."* Although the feeling of shared happiness is desired in all organizations as stated by five teachers in the study, MW makes a distinction concerning *"happiness at work"* by saying, *"Happiness at work is not a must for workplace spirituality, but the meaning is."* MW has also commented on the transcendent side of the workplace by stating, *"Transcendence is about self-actualization and solving the meaning of life and seeking more from life"* as an additional requirement of spiritual organizations.

CM explains workplace spirituality in a very personal dimension: *"identifying or being aware of the self, listening to the inner voice with an increased awareness and leading life with the determination to reach happiness"* in the workplace context. This interpretation of WS, along with that of several other participants, is more about the persons in the organization who are urged to know themselves more, pay attention to their inner world, and lead their lives in a way to attain happiness that is not solely based on joy, which is thought to help formation of a spiritual organization if adopted by each member. PM also touched upon the purpose of workplace spirituality practices: to *"help employees reach their best psychologically and socially in the workplace,"* while MM believes that an understanding of workplace spirituality provides *"a chance to work in a place where people are dedicated, respectful, self-aware, happier."*

PSW, who perceived workplace spirituality in terms of a *"collection of meaningful works in the schools,"* draws attention to the leaders of schools by claiming, *"Teachers cannot fulfill themselves as long as they are not appreciated, but scrutinized by the managers, which leaves no room for spirituality in the school."* Fagley and Adler (2012) point out the value of appreciation for well-being and successful performance, which is keenly connected to spirituality, through forging and maintaining social bonds, building trust,

encouraging helping, and promoting better sleep. These hold an important place in workplace spirituality as well and are seen to be supported by the teachers' opinions. They, too, are included in Table 3.

According to EM, a spiritual workplace includes *“dedicated members in the workplace, who know and value their own self and their colleagues' inner world.”* He objects to the idea of creating *“a special workplace understanding of spirituality that is fixed, ruled, and mathematical”* by asserting, *“When a teacher goes to school, s/he cannot leave his or her existing spirit at the door and get into a new spirit that the workplace urges!”* Similar objections can be found in the related studies as well, especially about a leader's inclination to foster a spiritual organization, not in its *pure form*, but in an authoritarian way to embed his or her way of thinking and belief system in the institution under the mask of a WS approach, which should actually be open to any belief system by fostering respect in the organization. Groß (2010) states while there are authors who see spirituality as beneficial for employees and organizations alike, there are critical authors as well who highlight the potentially authoritarian effects of spirituality under pragmatist concerns to colonize employees' minds, hearts, and souls. Bell and Taylor (2003) mention that workplace spirituality practices can be criticized if they have a managerial goal for controlling employees. Thus, an adoption of a *pure approach* for WS in the school—without authoritarian practices to embed a new spiritual understanding—will render these pragmatist approaches and practices ineffective in schools and contribute to a democratic atmosphere the organization's well-being.

EW3 specifies, *“In defining WS, knowing the self holds an important place as it is easier to change yourself than others, so we should start from ourselves and embed the principles of Sufism (An Islamic mysticism based on love, discretion, and self-devotion to a greater power and to other people) and rules of good manners into the schools...”* That being said, the participants were seen mostly not to discriminate between religion and spirituality, though nearly all agree that both terms differ a lot, but are closely connected to each other. EM stated, *“All virtues that the religions command help their followers get more spiritual, but it does not mean that people without any religion will not experience the same.”* Mata (2012: 240) found that teachers that define spirituality within the scope of religion were divided into two perspectives, one of which meant religious beliefs and the notion of God were indispensable for understanding spirituality, while the other one seemed more flexible and approached spirituality through a non-religious stance, but did not know how to go about it without including God. Oman (2013) states that there is a lack of consensus about the borders of both terms and mentions about searches in PsycINFO which show that both terms are cited in the titles of an increasing proportion of professional publications in psychology. While increased citations of religion have been modest, the increased usage of terms related to spirituality has been high,

approximately 40-fold. However, Streib and Klein (2016: 73) state a different perspective, *“While spirituality should not be established as a scientific concept (to compete with or replace ‘religion’), spirituality as self-attribution needs to be studied.”* It seems that the discussion about spirituality and religiosity will not end, but the concepts will surely stay interrelated, as many of the participants have talked about a strong connection between both concepts, as in the statement of Vasconcelos (2010: 607), *“Spirituality and religion, wherein it is commonly undergirded, are subjects closely intertwined on human beings’ journey on this planet.”*

#### **4. Discussion and Results**

The findings discovered that the metaphors the teachers used to define spirituality and their perceptions about workplace spirituality focused on personal and group level constructs. The results imply that the participants considered workplace spirituality as an important topic for self, organizational identity, and growth.

Writers about workplace spirituality tend to adopt that concept as an individual one, as a collective one, or as a phenomenon that has both facets (Dent et al., 2005: 640). At the individual level, it is certain that workplace spirituality’s focus should be the private realm of the inner life (Hill et al, 2013: 619). At the organizational level, the members should spread their spirituality to other members, like building trust and appreciation among one’s colleagues. This should not go unnoticed when one contributes positively to others’ lives; it ultimately enriches and adds value to one’s life (Fry, 2003). When employees fail to bring their spirituality into work, this could lead to a segmented spirituality, as Hill et al. (2013: 622) point out. This could inhibit the workplace integration of spirituality in its pure form. Segmented spirituality could be the result of the individual’s unwillingness to share a spiritual part of their life—maybe due to fear of reprisal—the inability to enact individual’s spiritual beliefs at work, or due to the individual’s feeling that spirituality should not be carried into the workplace at all (p. 622).

The first part produced 18 different metaphors of spirituality (see Table 2), and the second part summarized participants’ opinions regarding WS under 30 codes (see Table 3). When the results of both topics are looked at comparatively, e.g., spirituality metaphors and workplace spirituality definitions and opinions, there are found five keyword groups and metaphors that are more interrelated than others in both research groups.

**Table 3:** Intersection of WS perceptions and Spirituality Metaphors

| WS Opinions                            | Spirituality Metaphors  |
|--|-------------------------|
| Realizing Your Own Identity            | Knowing the Self,       |
| Bodily and Spiritual Energy            | Energy                  |
| Being Part of the Solution             | Math (Problem)          |
| Seeking Your Calling and Transcendence | Magic Key and Awakening |
| Listening to Your Inner World          | Power Within and Mirror |

Knowing the self is seen to be one of the most important implications of spirituality, and its integration into the workplace, as both groups mentioned the importance of “realizing your own identity” to help spiritual development on both a personal and a group level. The inner world holds a vital place in the realization of spirituality as it is nurtured within, which is also supported by both groups, since “*power within*” and “*mirror*” metaphors point out the need to look into or reflect on the internal depth of a person to realize his own spirituality in the workplace. Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin, and Kakabadse (2002: 166) assert that some writers define spirituality as “meaning, energy, and knowing,” while some other claim it is related to the spiritualities of “Tao, Buddhism, Hinduism, Zen, and Native American beliefs.” Likewise, Diana Whitney (1995) defines spirit variously as “meaning, energy, and epistemology” in her essay.

The participants used different metaphors to define spirituality like a math problem that harbors the answer in itself, which could be said to be supported by the perception of “being part of the solution” in the second part of the study. “Awakening” and “magic key” metaphors point out to the transcendent dimension of persons who try to accomplish their calling in the process of self-actualization. These mean moving from one dimension to another dimension as in sleeping (the awakening metaphor).

The studies done in the field show similarities with the findings of this study to a great extent about the WS perceptions of the participants. Vasconcelos (2013) examined workplace perceptions of workers upon the findings of Marques et al. (2007: 38), who identified the themes of “*trust, openness, kindness, honesty, moral and ethics, a sense of peace and harmony, team orientation, aesthetically pleasing work environment, understanding, respect and truth, faith in God.*” Vasconcelos (2013: 248) added 22 themes to this list as follows: “*fun, love, higher values, politeness, human valuing, meaning of work, sincerity, tolerance, social responsibility, well-being, coherent attitudes, patience, serenity, common interests and objectives, stimulating environment, positive energies and thoughts, willing to offer guidance and be an example, listening to and be listened, a sense of religiosity, praying habit, concerns with other’s well-being and the spirit of solidarity.*” These themes share similarities with the keywords in our study, e.g., *peace, meaningfulness, respect, harmony, realizing others and their self, appreciation, altruism, trust, etc.*, which could greatly contribute to the formation of a better understanding about the nature of a spiritual workplace.

Another result in the study is that the perceptions that fall under “realizing your own identity—knowing yourself” (f=5), “peace, inner peace and peace with others,” (f=4), taking control of your feelings (f=2), paying attention to now (f=2) point to “mindfulness,” which is in fact related to workplace spirituality, as both terms focus on the body and spirit to foster wellbeing. That is why organizations started to run WS programs to increase workers’ wellbeing—to have a positive effect on performance. Likewise, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programs (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) present similar outcomes with increased attention and a mindful state.

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