



SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: MEDIATING ROLE OF TRI HITA KARANA AND SPIRITUAL WELLBEING

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual values and local wisdom play a significant role in organizational behavior; however, their integration with leadership and lecturer commitment has not been explored. This study aims to examine the effect of spiritual leadership on lecturer commitment, mediated by Tri Hita Karana (THK) and spiritual wellbeing. The study employed an exploratory quantitative design involving 98 lecturers using the inverse square root and exponential gamma methods. The sample was selected through purposive sampling, with the criteria being Hindu faith and a functional rank of at least assistant expert. Data analysis employed a PLS-SEM with measurement and structural models. The results indicate that spiritual leadership affects organizational commitment, THK, and spiritual wellbeing. The effect size of spiritual leadership on THK was larger than that of other variables. THK and spiritual wellbeing were significant mediators of the effect of spiritual leadership on organizational commitment. The findings indicate that integrating local values can strengthen lecturers' commitment. Higher education management needs to develop leadership that aligns with local wisdom and spirituality to foster a harmonious academic.

ABSTRAK

Nilai spiritualitas dan kearifan lokal berperan penting dalam perilaku organisasi, namun integrasinya ke dalam kepemimpinan dan komitmen dosen belum banyak dieksplorasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh kepemimpinan spiritual terhadap komitmen dosen, yang dimediasi oleh Tri Hita Karana (THK) dan kesejahteraan spiritual. Penelitian menggunakan desain kuantitatif eksploratif dengan melibatkan 98 dosen melalui metode akar kuadrat terbalik dan gamma eksponensial. Sampel ditentukan menggunakan purposive sampling dengan kriteria dosen tetap beragama Hindu dan jabatan fungsional minimal adalah asisten ahli. Analisis data menggunakan model reflektif orde kedua PLS-SEM melalui evaluasi model pengukuran dan model struktural. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan spiritual mempengaruhi komitmen organisasi, THK, dan kesejahteraan spiritual dosen. Pengaruh kepemimpinan spiritual terhadap THK memiliki ukuran efek yang lebih tinggi dibandingkan pengaruh antar variabel lainnya. THK dan kesejahteraan spiritual signifikan sebagai mediator pengaruh kepemimpinan spiritual terhadap komitmen organisasi. Temuan mengindikasikan integrasi nilai budaya lokal dapat memperkuat komitmen dosen dalam menjalankan tugas pokok dan fungsinya. Manajemen pendidikan tinggi perlu mengembangkan kepemimpinan yang sejalan dengan kearifan budaya lokal dan spiritualitas untuk menumbuhkan lingkungan akademik yang harmonis.

Kata kunci: Commitment, Spiritual Leadership, Spiritual Wellbeing, Tri Hita Karana.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions in the era of digital transformation face complex challenges in maintaining the fundamental values of academic ([Alton et al., 2024](#)). The development of information technology and globalization has brought various opportunities, such as increased operational efficiency, greater access to education, and the development of digital learning methods ([Timotheou et al., 2023](#); [Yang et al., 2022](#)). However, these changes have led to moral degradation, increased pressure to adapt, and the erosion of organizational cultural identity ([Laufer et al., 2021](#)). Higher education institutions must address disparities in access to technology, varying levels of digital literacy among lecturers and students, and ethical dilemmas such as the increasing misuse of artificial intelligence and plagiarism ([Cotton et al., 2024](#); [Resta & Laferrière, 2015](#)). These conditions demand management strategies that are responsive to technological change and uphold the integrity of core academic institutional values.

Organizational commitment is an essential aspect that supports the success and sustainability of a higher education institution's mission ([Subhaktiyasa, 2025](#)). Organizational commitment encompasses affective (emotional attachment to the organization), normative (sense of obligation to continue contributing), and continuance (costs perceived if leaving the organization) dimensions ([Ingersoll & Tran, 2023](#); [Nassir & Benoliel, 2024](#); [Zhang & Xie, 2022](#)). However, the pressure of digital transformation often negatively affects faculty commitment levels. This decline in commitment can result in low loyalty, suboptimal academic performance, and even high turnover in higher education institutions ([Richard, 2024](#); [Zhang & Xie, 2022](#)). In contrast, the role of lecturers in higher education is very complex and critical to realizing the institution's vision through educational performance, research, and community service. Subhaktiyasa (2025) notes that the tendency toward low moral attachment to higher education institutions in the era of digital transformation requires strategies to strengthen lecturers' long-term commitment through leadership approaches.

Leadership is an important factor in overcoming organizational challenges because almost all aspects of an organization depend on and are influenced by it ([Subhaktiyasa, 2024a](#)). Various leadership styles have been proven effective in educational management. However, spiritual leadership has become a more relevant approach in higher education in responding to the challenges of global change ([Subhaktiyasa, 2023](#); [Subhaktiyasa, Rizki, et al., 2023](#)). Spiritual leadership is value-based leadership that enhances a sense of purpose and meaning, promotes spiritual wellbeing, and influences organizational commitment ([Candrawati et al., 2024](#); [Oh & Wang, 2020](#)). The literature provides insight into how spiritual leadership significantly influences organizational commitment through the mediation of spiritual wellbeing ([Lahmar & Rodhain, 2023](#)). Spiritual leadership in higher education can foster a supportive work environment and balance technological demands with the moral and emotional values of lecturers and students ([Subhaktiyasa, 2024a](#); [Subhaktiyasa, Agung, et al., 2023](#); [Subhaktiyasa & Sintari, 2024](#)). However, most previous studies have focused solely on the business sector, while studies in higher education remain limited ([Oh & Wang, 2020](#); [Subhaktiyasa, Agung, et al., 2023](#)). In addition, the role of spiritual wellbeing in education from a multi-construct perspective is still limited. The complexity of higher education institutions requires assessment across personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental aspects, which are more relevant to a comprehensive understanding of lecturers' spiritual wellbeing ([Heng et al., 2021](#); [Pattaraarchachai & Viwatpanich, 2021](#); [Trolan et al., 2022](#)).

Studies on spiritual leadership, spiritual wellbeing, and organizational commitment

should be conducted across diverse demographics and cultures to achieve a more contextually grounded understanding ([Hunsaker, 2016](#); [Lahmar & Rodhain, 2023](#)). Local cultural values, such as Tri Hita Karana (THK), rooted in Balinese wisdom in Indonesia, provide a framework for addressing these challenges. The THK philosophy emphasizes harmony among three dimensions: Parhyangan (spiritual relationship with God), Pawongan (relationships among humans), and Palemahan (relationship with the environment). These principles are relevant to social life and can serve as a basis for managing educational organizations ([Divayana, 2020](#)). THK can strengthen the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment by offering a holistic, context-based approach. THK values significantly contribute to the formation of organizational culture ([Subhaktiyasa et al., 2024](#)). However, the integration of THK into higher education management, which addresses lecturers' psychological and spiritual aspects to build organizational commitment, has not been widely studied.

Integrating THK values into the framework of spiritual leadership strengthens local relevance within a global framework. This approach explores how local values can strengthen the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment, especially amid the challenges of digital transformation. It is important to respond to the needs of higher education institutions by creating a harmonious work environment, increasing lecturers' loyalty, and maintaining the sustainability of institutional values in the digital age.

This study aims to analyze the effect of spiritual leadership on organizational commitment in higher education institutions, with Tri Hita Karana and spiritual wellbeing as mediators. This study integrates local values into the spiritual leadership framework with the research concept framework shown in Figure 1. The research hypotheses are: i) spiritual leadership has a positive effect on organizational commitment (H1), Tri Hita Karana (H2), and spiritual wellbeing (H3), ii) Tri Hita Karana positively impacts organizational commitment (H4), iii) spiritual wellbeing positively impacts organizational commitment (H5), Tri Hita Karana mediates the impact of spiritual leadership on organizational commitment (H6), and spiritual wellbeing significantly mediates the impact of spiritual leadership on organizational commitment (H7). The results of this study can provide strategic direction in educational management to maintain and develop lecturer commitment within a framework of spirituality.

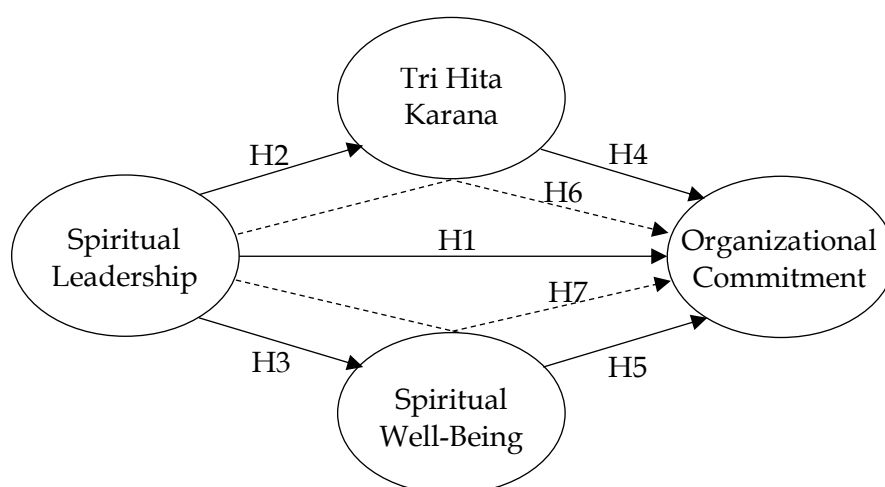


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the research model

METHOD

This study uses an explanatory design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the causal relationship between variables within a single time period. The research location is a

higher education institution in Bali, Indonesia, because the THK cultural values have become an integral part of social practices and higher education institutions. The research population consisted of all lecturers at higher education institutions in Bali. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents who were permanent lecturers and Hindus, with a minimum functional position of assistant expert. The minimum sample size was 69 respondents, determined using the inverse square root and gamma exponential methods, with a test power of 80%, a minimum path coefficient of 0.11–0.20, and a significance level of 5% (Subhaktiyasa, 2024b).

The main instruments of this study consisted of a questionnaire on respondent characteristics and another on research variables, both using a 5-point Likert scale. The Spiritual Leadership Questionnaire, based on Fry (2005), consists of 17 items: vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love. Spiritual wellbeing is adapted from Gomez & Fisher (2003) and comprises 20 questions across the personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental dimensions. The Tri Hita Karana questionnaire, as described by Subhaktiyasa, Sintari, et al. (2024), consists of Parahyangan, Pawongan, and Palemahan and includes 12 questions. Meanwhile, organizational commitment, as defined by Meyer & Herscovitch (2001), comprises affective, continuance, and normative commitment and is measured using 24 questions. All instruments were translated into Indonesian through a back-translation procedure. The validity and reliability of the instruments were tested through PLS-SEM at the first-order construct stage with criteria following those of Hair et al. (2019). The evaluation results are presented in the results section, which demonstrates that all questionnaires are valid and reliable. Data collection was conducted online using Google Forms. Respondents provided informed consent, explaining the purpose, benefits, and procedures of the study, before completing the questionnaire. Participation in this study was voluntary, and all data collected was guaranteed to be confidential and used only for research purposes.

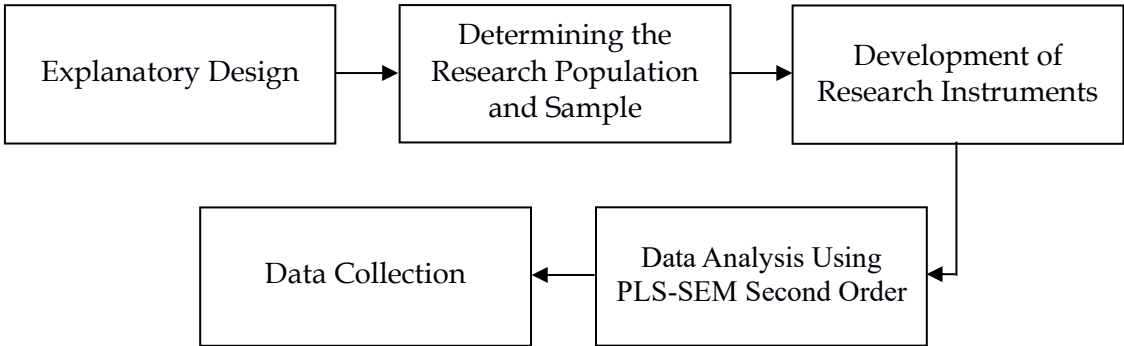


Figure 2. Research method steps

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Data from 101 respondents were collected via an online questionnaire. The data were verified through the Higher Education Database website to ensure compliance with the research inclusion criteria. Three respondents were excluded for noncompliance with the criteria, resulting in a final sample of 98 lecturers. This number met the study's minimum sample size requirement. Next, the potential for multivariate outliers was evaluated using a Mahalanobis Distance analysis with a probability of < 0.01. The test results showed no outliers, so the analysis continued by examining the characteristics of the respondents presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent characteristics

Characteristics	Classification	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	43	43.88
	Female	55	56.12
Age	<30 years old	4	4.08
	30–39 years old	54	55.10
	40–49 years old	26	26.53
	≥ 50 years old	14	14.29
Education	Magister	76	77.55
	Doctorate	22	22.45
Academic grade	Assistant Expert	21	21.43
	Senior Lecturer	65	66.33
	Associate Professor	12	12.24
	Professor	0	0.00
Length of Service	<5 years	8	8.16
	5–10 years	37	37.76
	11–15 years	34	34.69
	>15 years	19	19.39
Type of Higher Education Institution	Public	18	18.37
	Private	80	81.63
Higher Education Accreditation	A/Excellent	30	30.61
	B/Very Good	49	50.00
	C/Good	19	19.39

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents were female (56.12%), with the highest age distribution in the 30–39 age range (55.10%) and the lowest in the <30 age range (4.08%). 77.55% had a Master's degree as their highest level of education, compared to only 22.45% with a Doctorate, with the majority holding the functional position of Senior Lecturer (66.33%). The longest length of service for lecturers was 5–10 years (37.76%), with 81.63% from private higher education institutions, and the majority of higher education accreditation rankings were Very Good.

The analysis continued with an evaluation of the first-order measurement model at the dimensional level to ensure indicator quality and construct validity. All OL values were > 0.70, except for item OC16 (continuance commitment indicator), with a value of 0.661. This item was not excluded from the construct because it met the tolerance criteria. The reliability test results indicate that all constructs have CA and CR values greater than 0.70. The AVE value is > 0.50, and all HTMT values are < 0.90. All of these values meet the criteria, so the second-order measurement model evaluation is continued using the latent variable values generated from the first-order evaluation. The evaluation of latent variables includes the outer loadings, construct reliability, and convergent validity reported in Table 2. Meanwhile, discriminant validity is assessed from the HTMT values displayed in Table 3.

Table 2. Reliability and validity of second-order constructs

Variable	Indicator	OL	CA	CR	AVE
Spiritual Leadership (SL)	Vision	0.932	0.926	0.953	0.871
	Hope/Faith	0.938			
	Altruistic Love	0.930			
Tri Hita Karana (THK)	Parahyangan	0.927	0.903	0.939	0.837
	Pawongan	0.903			

Spiritual Wellbeing (SWB)	Palemahan	0.914	0.913	0.938	0.792
	Personal	0.877			
	Communal	0.891			
	Environmental	0.914			
	Transcendental	0.877			
Organization Commitment (OC)	Affective	0.932	0.925	0.952	0.869
	Continuance	0.937			
	Normative	0.927			

Table 2 shows OL values > 0.70 , indicating that the latent variables explain more than 50% of the indicator's variability. The reliability test results indicate that all constructs have CA and CR values > 0.70 , indicating good internal consistency. AVE values > 0.50 indicate that the average construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators.

Table 3. Evaluation of Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio, second order

	OC	SL	SWB	THK
OC				
SL	0.804			
SWB	0.843	0.776		
THK	0.892	0.783	0.829	

Table 3 shows all HTMT values > 0.90 , indicating that the constructs in this study meet the criteria for discriminant validity. The analysis then continued with a structural model evaluation to assess the quality of the research model and test the research hypotheses. The results of the model quality evaluation are shown by VIF values < 3 , confirming that there are no collinearity issues. The SRMR value is 0.09, which is below 0.1. The R^2 value for OC is 0.748, THK is 0.521, and SWB is 0.514. The blindfolded Q^2 values are 0.640 for OC, 0.427 for THK, and 0.397 for SWB. In addition, the PLS-predicted value shows that the Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) is comparable between PLS and the linear model (LM). All of these indicators suggest that this model can be used to describe the relationships among SL, THK, SWB, and OC among university lecturers. Next, an assessment of the results of the research hypothesis test presented in Table 4 was conducted.

Table 4. Evaluation of path analysis and hypothesis testing

	O	STDEV	T Statistics	CI (97.5%)	Effect size	p-values	Decision
SL→OC	0.227	0.093	2.439	0.032-0.398	0.084	0.015	H1 accepted
SL→THK	0.722	0.058	12.545	0.599-0.825	1.088	0.000	H2 accepted
SL→SWB	0.717	0.075	9.617	0.557-0.845	1.060	0.000	H3 accepted
THK→OC	0.440	0.111	3.968	0.209-0.648	0.278	0.000	H4 accepted
SWB→OC	0.282	0.111	2.538	0.094-0.536	0.116	0.011	H5 accepted
SL→THK→OC	0.318	0.080	3.993	0.154-0.470	0.101	0.000	H6 accepted
SL→SWB→OC	0.202	0.090	2.253	0.065-0.420	0.041	0.024	H7 accepted

Table 4 indicates that all t-statistic values are > 1.96 and the p-values are < 0.05 , indicating that all hypotheses are accepted. The direct effect shows that the better the implementation of SL, the higher the THK, SWB, and OC will be, reaching 0.825, 0.845, and 0.084, respectively. The effect size of SL on THK and SWB is larger than that of SL on OC. Meanwhile, the indirect effects of THK and SWB are significant, but THK's effect size is larger

than SWB's.

Discussion

This study aims to analyze the effect of spiritual leadership, Tri Hita Karana cultural values, and spiritual wellbeing on lecturer commitment in higher education. The results show that all variables contribute significantly to organizational commitment, either directly or through the mediating mechanisms of Tri Hita Karana and spiritual wellbeing. Spiritual leadership is proven to have a positive effect on lecturer commitment with a moderate effect size. These findings confirm the first hypothesis and reinforce the theory of spiritual leadership, which emphasizes that a meaningful vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love can foster organizational commitment ([Fry, 2003, 2005](#)). Leadership grounded in spiritual values guides the achievement of organizational goals and sustains the inner dimension of lecturers, thereby fostering stronger loyalty and a sense of belonging to the institution ([Karim et al., 2022](#); [Maryati & Astuti, 2022](#)). These results are in line with previous studies that found a positive relationship between spiritual leadership and lecturers' attachment to their higher education institutions ([Al-Sakinah & Sudiro, 2020](#); [Djaelani et al., 2020](#)). Leaders who can inspire, motivate, and foster a deep, meaningful environment will provide strong impetus for organizational commitment.

Spiritual leadership has also been shown to impact THK culture, thereby confirming the second hypothesis positively. The results of the study show that this influence has a large effect size, indicating that spirituality-based leadership aligns with THK values that emphasize harmony in relationships with God, fellow human beings, and the environment. Spiritual leadership strengthens local cultural values that are believed in and incorporated into lecturers' social interactions. Furthermore, Subhaktiyasa, Sintari, et al. (2024) state that THK, as local wisdom, can contribute to a harmonious organizational culture in higher education institutions in the digital era. These findings support studies demonstrating that spiritual leadership can encourage local wisdom-based organizational behavior across cultural contexts ([Azzuhri et al., 2024](#); [Chou, 2024](#); [Hunsaker, 2016](#)). Spiritual leadership is an important instrument for internalizing the THK philosophy in higher education institutions.

The results of the study indicate that spiritual leadership has a significant effect on spiritual wellbeing with a high effect size, although lower than that of Tri Hita Karana. These findings demonstrate that spiritual leadership can improve the personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental wellbeing of lecturers in higher education. Spiritual leadership fosters a sense of meaning and purpose in carrying out academic duties, strengthens social relationships, and fosters a sense of togetherness in the academic community. In addition, these results confirm that spiritual leadership fosters concern for the work environment and creates space for lecturers to link academic activities with a higher spiritual meaning. It aligns with the view that SWB is multidimensional and influenced by individual experiences, social and ecological interactions ([Hannikainen, 2021](#); [Lifshitz et al., 2019](#); [Thauvoye et al., 2018](#)). Therefore, spiritual leadership plays an important role in strengthening lecturers' holistic spiritual wellbeing in higher education environments.

The results of the study confirm the fourth hypothesis, which posits that Tri Hita Karana has a significant effect on lecturer commitment, with a relatively high effect size. It indicates that the internalization of Tri Hita Karana values provides a strong foundation for fostering loyalty, emotional attachment, and normative responsibility among lecturers toward higher education institutions. Organizational commitment is more easily formed when collective cultural values rooted in lecturers' social identity are incorporated into the governance of higher education institutions ([Lifshitz et al., 2019](#); [Thauvoye et al., 2018](#)). Meanwhile, SWB is

also shown to have a significant effect on organizational commitment, confirming the fifth hypothesis with a high effect size, though lower than that for THK. These findings suggest that although personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental wellbeing are important factors, organizational commitment is more influenced by collectively institutionalized cultural values than by individual wellbeing experiences ([Choi et al., 2015](#); [Galanaki et al., 2020](#); [Triguero-Sánchez et al., 2022](#)). Lecturer wellbeing tends to be private and needs to be institutionalized in organizational policies and systems ([Laundon & Grant-Smith, 2023](#); [Rakow et al., 2024](#)). These findings are consistent with the literature, which emphasizes the importance of local cultural wisdom as a stronger determinant of organizational members' attachment and loyalty ([Molose et al., 2018](#); [Nyiauwung et al., 2025](#)).

Mediation analysis demonstrated that Tri Hita Karana and spiritual wellbeing played significant mediating roles in the influence of spiritual leadership on lecturer commitment. These results support the sixth and seventh hypotheses, which state that THK's mediating effect is greater than that of spiritual wellbeing. These findings illustrate that when leadership aligns with the principles of Parahyangan, Pawongan, and Palemahan, lecturers feel a sense of harmony with collective norms that strengthen emotional attachment, moral obligation, and practical reasons for remaining in the institution. THK serves as a cultural bridge, transforming spiritual leadership values into sustainable organizational commitment. These findings are in line with previous studies that emphasize the role of collective culture as a connecting mechanism between leadership and organizational outcomes ([Den Hartog & De Hoogh, 2024](#); [Sertel et al., 2022](#)), and confirm the relevance of integrating local wisdom into higher education leadership amid digital disruption ([Gruzina et al., 2020](#); [Uleanya, 2023](#)). Furthermore, although SWB has been shown to mediate, due to its more personal and subjective nature, its impact on organizational commitment is not as significant as that of Tri Hita Karana, a collective value institutionalized in the work culture. Studies confirm that the experience of spiritual wellbeing requires organizational support to be operationally in educational management ([Houghton et al., 2016](#); [Prout et al., 2023](#)).

This study confirms that higher education institutions in the digital era need to develop spiritual leadership by integrating local cultural values into institutional governance. Both individual psychological factors and the internalization of institutionalized collective values influence organizational commitment. Higher education leaders need to ensure that the organizational vision is communicated in an inspiring manner that aligns with Tri Hita Karana values, thereby maintaining cultural and moral legitimacy. Lecturer development programs should not only focus on improving academic competence but also on creating a work environment that strengthens spiritual wellbeing, whether through environmentally friendly policies, collaborative academic communities, or self-reflection programs. Therefore, harmony management grounded in spirituality and local wisdom can mitigate the potential decline in lecturer commitment driven by digital transformation pressures. However, this study has limitations. The cross-sectional design limits causal conclusions; the use of self-reports can introduce perception bias; and the research context, which focuses only on higher education institutions in Bali, limits generalizability. Further research should use a longitudinal design to examine the dynamics of commitment change using mixed methods, expand the cross-cultural context, and test additional factors in the research model.

CONCLUSION

This study provides an understanding of the effect of spiritual leadership, THK, and spiritual wellbeing on lecturer commitment to higher education institutions in Bali. Spiritual leadership that emphasizes meaningful vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love has been shown

to strongly influence Tri Hita Karana, spiritual wellbeing, and organizational commitment. Furthermore, Tri Hita Karana and multi-construct spiritual wellbeing play a significant role as mediators in the effect of spiritual leadership on lecturers' commitment in higher education. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of spiritual leadership in higher education institutions depends on individual wellbeing and the internalization of collective cultural values relevant to lecturers' social identity. Therefore, integrating spiritual leadership and local wisdom is a strategy in educational management to maintain and strengthen organizational commitment amid the challenges of the digital era. This study contributes to recognizing the relevance of local culture as a crucial mechanism for enhancing the influence of spiritually-based leadership on the outcomes of higher education institutions. The values of Tri Hita Karana are critical to institutionalize as a work culture for harmonious educational management. Future research should adopt a longitudinal design and include a broader demographic sample to deepen understanding of the dynamics of lecturer commitment.

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