Relationships between organizational spirituality and organizational commitment

Relações entre a espiritualidade organizacional e o comprometimento organizacional

Adriane de Morais Ferreira¹
Walid Abbas El-Aouar²
Arthur William Pereira da Silva³
Ahiram Brunni Cartaxo de Castro⁴

Abstract

This study aimed to identify how the dimensions of organizational spirituality relate to the dimensions of organizational commitment in a Brazilian educational institution. Concerning the methodological procedures, the research is configured as a quantitative and exploratory survey. The sample comprised a total of 588 civil servants of IFRN, the researched institution. Data were collected through scales based on studies by Rego, Cunha & Souto (2005), in the case of organizational spirituality, and on the three-component conceptualization model of Meyer & Allen (1996), in the case of organizational commitment. The collected data were treated and analyzed by analyzing the position, dispersion, and Pearson’s correlation coefficient (r). The study’s findings point to the existence of positive and statistically significant correlations between two dimensions of organizational spirituality (alignment of the individual with the values of the organization and joy at work) and a dimension of organizational commitment (affective organizational commitment). Thus, we noticed that implementing management models that consider the dimensions of organizational spirituality can improve the employees’ affective organizational commitment.

Keywords: Organizational spirituality. Organizational commitment. Human capital.

¹ Mestre em Administração, Administradora no Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN).
² Doutor em Administração, Coordenador do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração da Universidade Potiguar (UNP).
³ Doutor em Administração, Docente no Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Ceará (IFCE) - Campus Jaguaruana.
⁴ Doutor em Administração, Administrador no Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN).
Resumo
Este estudo objetivou identificar como as dimensões da espiritualidade organizacional se relacionam com as dimensões do comprometimento organizacional em uma instituição de ensino brasileira. Em relação aos procedimentos metodológicos, a pesquisa se configura como quantitativa e exploratória, tratando-se de uma survey. A amostra compreendeu o total de 588 servidores públicos da instituição pesquisada (IFRN). Os dados foram coletados por meio de escalas baseadas nos estudos de Rego, Cunha & Souto (2005), no caso da espiritualidade organizacional, e no modelo de conceitualização de três componentes de Meyer & Allen (1996), no caso do comprometimento organizacional. Os dados coletados foram tratados e analisados por meio da análise das medidas de posição, dispersão e do coeficiente de correlação de Pearson (r). Os achados do estudo apontam para a existência de correlações positivas e estatisticamente significantes entre duas dimensões da espiritualidade organizacional (as dimensões “alinhamento do indivíduo com os valores da organização” e “alegria no trabalho”) e uma dimensão do comprometimento organizacional (a dimensão “comprometimento organizacional afetivo”). Assim, obteve-se evidências que a implementação de modelos de gestão que considerem as dimensões da espiritualidade organizacional, podem contribuir para a melhoria do comprometimento organizacional afetivo dos colaboradores.


Introduction

During much of the development of modern organizations, workers were seen as parts that could be replaced at any time without harming the organization (El-Aouar, Gallo, Castro, Silva & Mesquita, 2019; El-Aouar et al., 2019). In recent decades, despite advances in automating operational functions in organizations, it has become clear that many activities still depend and will continue to depend on people for a long time to come. Most of these activities require different professionals with specific skills, abilities, and attitudes that are difficult to develop.

In this context, organizations have been fighting real battles to attract and retain the best employees. Therefore, they seek to offer several advantages and benefits in addition to salaries, such as career plan; productivity bonuses; possibility to contribute to a relevant mission; food, transport, and health assistance; possibility to work remotely; schedule flexibility; good organizational atmosphere; and profit sharing, among other various possibilities.
Thus, based on the need to attract and retain the best employees, many companies have been giving special attention to the implementation of strategies capable of improving their levels of organizational commitment (Jiang, Gollan & Brooks, 2017; Silva, Santos, Oliveira, Soares & Coelho, 2017; Silva, Veiga-Neto, Coelho & Castro, 2019) to be able to retain the good professionals they have managed to attract in the labor market and maintain their competitiveness against competitors (Curtis & Taylor, 2018; Déniz-Déniz, Cabrera-Suárez & Martín- Santana, 2018; Dogan & Celik, 2019).

According to Meyer & Allen (1990), organizations must monitor and seek to develop three types of organizational commitment with their employees: affective, instrumental, and normative commitment. Moreover, according to the authors, employees with a strong manifestation of affective commitment tend to remain in the organization because they want to, while employees who touch on instrumental commitment remain in the organization because they need to, and those who externalize the normative commitment stay because they feel the obligation to remain.

An approach that has been gaining ground among the strategies for promoting employees’ organizational commitment is considering the employee as endowed with biopsychosocial and spiritual attributes. This approach takes into account personal particularities and enhances the employees’ workplace in order to provide them with a better quality of life and obtain better results for the organization (Ashmos & Duchon; 2000; de Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson, 2003; Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Rego, Cunha & Souto, 2005; Garg, 2017).

Thus, the development of a management model that considers the spiritual aspect of employees allows organizations to distance themselves from the design of a work environment focused on control, hierarchy, individualism, and submission and move closer to an environment focused on personal development, self-knowledge, and empowerment of the employee as a provider of creativity (Silva & Siqueira, 2009; (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Rego, Cunha & Souto, 2005; Garg, 2017).

However, so far, few studies have sought to investigate how organizational spirituality influences in practice the behavior of employees in the organization and, precisely, their commitment to it (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008; Siqueira, 2014).

Thus, based on the presented context, this study proposed to investigate the following question: how do the dimensions of organizational spirituality relate to the dimensions of organizational commitment, from the perception of employees of the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN)?
Given the scarcity of empirical studies that address the influence of organizational spirituality on organizational commitment and other dimensions of organizations (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008; Siqueira, 2014) as well as the lack of studies with this approach in Brazilian organizations (Rego, Cunha & Souto, 2007), the present study seeks to contribute to expanding knowledge about the relationship between these critical constructs, in particular, based on the Brazilian reality. Thus, this research aims to identify how the dimensions of organizational spirituality relate to the organizational commitment from the perception of IFRN employees.

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment represents an essential factor for the development of organizations. Employees with a high level of organizational commitment are more dedicated and willing to put more effort into their activities by promoting the improvement of individual and organizational performance (Kim, Laffranchini, Wagstaff & Jeung, W, 2017; Neves, Graveto, Rodrigues, Marôco, & Parreira, 2018; Woznyj, Heggestad, Kennerly, & Yap, 2019; Jung & Takeuchi, 2019).

As stated by Robbins (2005), Quratulain, Khan, Crawshaw, Arain, & Hameed (2018), Straatmann, Nolte & Seggewiss (2018), and Woznyj, Heggestad, Kennerly, & Yap (2019), job satisfaction involves a subjective process, making it difficult to define. According to the authors, it is subject to the influence of internal and external forces in the work environment, affecting the worker’s physical and mental health and interfering with their personal and professional behavior.

Among the scholars that stand out in the literature on organizational commitment are the authors Meyer & Allen (1984, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1997), who devised three dimensions – affective, normative, and instrumental – which were used in this study to portray the bond between employees and the organization. These authors permeated one of the most significant contributions to the literature on organizational commitment in the search for the operationalization of this construct.

To Medeiros (2003), Silva et al. (2017), and Silva et al. (2019), among the various models of conceptualization of organizational commitment with more than one component, the
model most widely accepted by scholars is the three-component model, established by Meyer & Allen (1991). This model is internationally accepted and has been validated across cultures.

Meyer & Allen (1990) state that employees with a strong manifestation of affective commitment tend to remain in the organization because they want to, while employees who surface instrumental commitment remain in the organization because they need to, and those who externalize the normative commitment stay because they feel obligated to stay.

Concerning the affective dimension of organizational commitment, it is associated with the employee’s identification and acceptance of the organization’s beliefs, values, philosophy, and objectives (Curtis & Taylor, 2018; Déniz-Déniz et al., 2018; Quratulain et al., 2018; Woznyj et al., 2019).

Meyer & Allen (1996) explain that affective commitment is linked to an emotional identification with the organization and that employees choose to remain in the organization because they want to. Thus, the authors explain that employees committed through bonds of an affective nature tend to be enthusiastic about their work and committed to collaborating with the organization’s performance and success.

According to Medeiros (2003), the normative dimension of organizational commitment represents two approaches: the feeling of moral obligation to remain in the organization, which is derived from the employee’s sense of duty and guilt when leaving the organization, and the other focus is represented by the feeling of obligation directed to performance, as in this case, the employee expresses the need to obtain the most satisfactory results for the organization, as well as the belief and desire that they should strive for the organization, seeking to comply with their function effectively.

Thus, Medeiros (2003) states that organizational culture represents an essential factor in guiding the behavior of employees, as well as the role played by rules and regulations. In the same line of analysis, Bastos (1993) argues that the theme around organizational commitment is linked to aspects of cultural and motivational systems.

Medeiros (2003) further explains that organizational culture can play a relevant role in maintaining committed employees and influencing their behavior to promote normative pressures that lead employees to act according to internalized standards.

This form of commitment tends to be expressed when the employee internalizes the organization’s rules and regulations and establishes a reciprocal relationship by achieving benefits and establishing a psychological contract. In this sense, normative commitment comes from the feeling of obligation and duty of loyalty to the organization.
Regarding the instrumental dimension of organizational commitment, Medeiros (2003) suggests the analysis from three approaches. First, the scarcity of alternatives tends to cause the employee to remain in the organization because they need to, instigating the feeling that there are few alternatives for employment in the labor market if the employee chooses to leave the organization they work for.

Another focus is on the lack of rewards and opportunities, which express an imbalance between the organization and the employee, caused by the perception that the extra effort in favor of the organization may not be recognized or benefit the employee. In the last approach, the employee seeks to maintain consistent activities to remain in the organization due to the costs and advantages linked to their dismissal.

Based on the research by Rego, Cunha & Souto (2005), in which the authors studied the relationship that the five dimensions of organizational spirituality establish with the three dimensions of commitment, we understand that employees who feel obligations and duties of loyalty towards the organization usually present positive behaviors in the work environment, especially concerning affective commitment.

It is essential to highlight the study by Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson (2003), which positively associated organizational spirituality with organizational commitment, the perception of self-esteem and involvement with work, and, on the other hand, negatively evaluated the intention to leave the organization. As evidenced by Teixeira (2015), employees who are more motivated, committed, and connected with the organization tend to promote better results.

According to Cavanagh & Bandsuch (2002), many managers consider spirituality in organizations as a way to provide motivation, commitment, and satisfaction at work, which complies with authors such as Ashmos and Duchon (2000), Rego, Cunha & Souto (2007), and Karakas (2010).

In their research, Kinjerski & Skrypnek (2008) point out that the experience of organizational spirituality is linked to the propensity of employees to show an increase in their capacity for creativity, honesty, organizational commitment, and a sense of personal accomplishment.

2.2 Organizational spirituality

As it is a subjective theme, its understanding is sometimes restricted to those who experience it, which is difficult to explain. As evidenced by Karakas (2010), there are many
ways to conceptualize organizational spirituality. We see that this contributes to the lack of a clear definition in the literature about organizational spirituality.

Table 1 presents several concepts of organizational spirituality found in the literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors/Year</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mitroff and Denton 1999</td>
<td>It promotes a human experience through purpose and meaning in life, family, work, personal values, and the organization itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashmos; Duchon, 2000</td>
<td>Recognition that workers have an inner life that nurtures and is nurtured by meaningful work in the community context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milliman; Czaplewski; Ferguson, 2003</td>
<td>It involves efforts to find the ultimate purpose in life through developing connections with co-workers and consistency (or alignment) between individual values and the organization’s values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurkiewicz; Giacalone, 2004</td>
<td>A framework of organizational values is evidenced in the culture that seeks to promote the experience of workers’ transcendence through the work process, facilitating their connection with feelings of compassion and joy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rego; Souto; Cunha, 2007</td>
<td>Opportunities to carry out meaningful work in the context of a community by experiencing a sense of joy and respect for the inner life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawar, 2008</td>
<td>Workers’ experiences of transcendence, meaning, and community in the workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karakas, 2010</td>
<td>It is a journey to find sustainability, understanding, authenticity, meaning, and a holistic and deep understanding of existentialism and its relationship/interrelationship with the sacred and the transcendent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Tecchio (2015).

In a study proposed by Rego, Cunha & Souto (2007), organizational spirituality is conceptualized as the experience of opportunities in the workplace with a sense of purpose and meaning, within a community in which joy and respect for inner life are cultivated.

Despite being treated with indifference and prejudice by many managers, organizational spirituality promotes the realization of a differentiated approach by organizations concerning human and organizational development and, above all, the raising of awareness of their employees in search of better conduct and meaning at work, through the application of values considered fair, moral, and correct.

In the conception of Mitroff & Denton (1999) and Rego, Cunha & Souto (2007), literature and academic and organizational studies can no longer fail to study, understand, and treat organizations as spiritual institutions. The influence of spirituality in the workplace has been highlighted in recent years, and in general terms, it is linked to the search for the revaluation of human capital, especially concerning the search for purpose and greater connection with peers, managers, and the community (Silva & Siqueira, 2009).

It is noteworthy that organizational spirituality provides significant benefits for organizations when linked to strategic planning (Paula & Costa, 2008) because, in an...
organizational environment where spirituality is essential, employees’ level of performance and commitment tends to be higher.

Paulino, Vasconcelos & Alves (2011), in turn, address the so-called spiritual learning, which helps employees to remain connected to their values and beliefs in the face of changes and crises. In this sense, Mitroff & Denton (1999) propose that many impasses in the organizational environment result from the spiritual impoverishment of employees and managers.

Concerning the benefits of organizational spirituality, there are gains beyond the financial, such as collective and social, through job satisfaction, better commitment, involvement, availability to add value to the organization, and a greater sense of purpose (Silva & Siqueira, 2009). Thus, we can also point out that organizational spirituality enables employees to reflect on the congruence of their goals and values with those of the organization and how to improve them.

Considering the empirical studies extracted from the literature on organizational spirituality, more specifically the instruments suggested by Ashmos & Duchon (2000) and Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson (2003), authors Rego, Cunha & Souto (2005) developed and validated a research instrument to measure the level of organizational spirituality through five dimensions.

The five dimensions of organizational spirituality in the proposed instrument validated by Rego, Cunha & Souto (2005) are a sense of community in the team, alignment of the individual with the organization’s values; a sense of service to the community; joy at work and opportunities for the inner life. They correlate with affective, normative, and instrumental commitment in the organizational environment.

The dimension concerning the sense of community in the team is associated with the employees’ feeling of being involved with the organization through an intense connection or relationship with co-workers, permeated by the sense of belonging to the community. Sense of community in the team comes from the group level of people’s behavior and refers to the interactions between employees and their colleagues, promoted through an intense connection between them, including support, freedom of speech, and attention to others (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

The dimension concerning individual alignment with the organization’s values guides how the employee’s intrinsic values and inner life are aligned with the organization’s values. It also encompasses the feeling that the organization’s leaders seek to be beneficial to society, as employees tend to feel intrinsically more connected with organizations in which their leaders...
are more concerned with the society that surrounds them in contrast to personal interests, organization, and shareholders (Rego, Cunha & Souto, 2005).

This dimension of spirituality is represented by employees’ feelings when they experience strong compatibility between their values, the mission, and the purpose of the organization. Thus, this dimension portrays the interaction of people with the organization’s ultimate goal (Mitroff & Denton, 1999).

The dimension concerning the sense of service to the community shows how the employee feels that the work carried out in the organization is beneficial to the community and refers to the most significant values for a person’s life (Rego, Cunha & Souto, 2005). Thus, it denotes a feeling of being helpful to oneself and others, and society.

The dimension concerning the sense of service to the community is associated with the fundamental aspect of organizational spirituality, which corresponds to the intense sense of meaning and purpose at work, since employees, through their intrinsic motivations, beliefs, and desires, tend to become more involved when developing work that promotes meaning in their lives and those of others (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson, 2003).

The dimension concerning joy at work is considered a sub-dimension of meaningful work and analyzes whether the work performed in the organization promotes the employee’s sense of pleasure and joy (Rego, Cunha & Souto, 2005). Thus, the search for joy at work is carried out daily by employees in activities carried out within the organization.

The dimension concerning opportunity for inner life is considered the most transcendent of all and relates to how the organization respects the employee’s spirituality and spiritual values (Rego, Cunha & Souto, 2005). Therefore, it encourages the development of a reflective attitude to awaken self-awareness and self-knowledge.

In the view of Ashmos and Ducan (2000), the opportunity for inner life comes when recognition and respect for the organization and its administrators are manifested, showing that individuals have an inner life that feeds and is nurtured by carrying out work with a purpose involved in a community context.

**Methodological procedures**

Seeking to investigate the proposed research problem on “how do the dimensions of organizational spirituality relate to the dimensions of organizational commitment from the perspective of IFRN’s civil servants?” this research is configured as quantitative and exploratory as it aims to address the issue through bivariate statistical analysis, and, thus,
contributes to a better understanding of the nature of the relationship between the studied phenomena.

As for the method, it is a survey, from which, according to Fink (1995), one seeks to obtain data on characteristics or perspectives of a sample of individuals representing a specific population and thus clarify different phenomena.

Characterization of the educational institution and the servants that took part in the research will be presented next.

3.1 Characterization of the organization studied and sample size

The Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte (IFRN), Brazil, emerged from the signing of the decree for the creation of 19 Schools for Craft Apprentices, including the one in Natal, by the then President Nilo Peçanha, on September 23rd, 1909. At the time, the introductory course, drawing and craft workshops, was offered.

The modification into the Federal Center for Technological Education (CEFET) took place in 1994, the so-called “cefetization” process, a particular time for the institution, which resulted in the offer of professional education at the primary, technical, and technological levels, in addition to secondary education. Concerning higher education, this consisted of technological graduation courses and then licentiate courses.

The current nomenclature of the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rio Grande do Norte was adopted in 2009 and is thus characterized as an autarchy belonging to the Federal Indirect Public Administration, per Law No. 11,892 of December 29th, 2008.

The expansion of IFRN began in 1994 with the inauguration of the Decentralized Teaching Unit in Mossoró. After twelve years, the Ministry of Education began the 1st phase of expansion, implementing, in 2006, three new units: the North Zone of Natal, Ipanguaçu, and Currais Novos. In the current context, IFRN comprises 21 campuses, including a distance learning unit, the EAD Campus, and a Rectory.

According to its social function, IFRN aims to offer professional and technological education – of socially-referenced quality and a political-pedagogical architecture capable of articulating science, culture, work, and technology – committed to integral human training, to the exercise of citizenship and the production and socialization of knowledge, aiming, above all, to transform reality from the perspective of social equality and justice.
Currently, IFRN has 3,132 servants, of which 1,800 represent teachers of primary technical and technological education and 1,332 represent technical and administrative education staff, belonging to the institution’s permanent staff. The data refer to January 2017, according to information from the Institute’s Personnel Management Board. The sample comprised 588 civil servants, among administrative technicians and teachers. Three hundred ninety-seven of which correspond to administrative technicians and 191 to primary technical and technological education teachers.

3.1.1 Sociodemographic and occupational profile of the institution’s servants

According to research data, we can see in the sample that 57.14% are male, while 42.86% are female. It appears that most servants who answered the survey are between 31 and 35 years old, corresponding to 28.91%. Respondents aged between 26 and 30 years represent 25.17% of the total, whereas 14.12% are between 36 and 40 years old and the same percentage of 14.12% for those aged over 46 years old. Finally, people between 41 and 45 years old correspond to 11.73% of the servants surveyed.

Regarding the level of education, we have the following results: high school (4.25%), undergraduate (18.54%), specialization (32.49%), master (36.90%), doctorate (7.31 %), and postdoctoral degree (0.51%). There is a profile with a high level of education, which suggests that it is related to the incentive for the qualification that the Institution offers for training its servants.

As for the servant’s category, we identified that 67.35% are administrative technicians and 32.65% are professors. It is noteworthy that 30.44% hold management positions. In terms of the time spent in a management position, the following results are identified: up to 2 years (59.79%), 3 to 4 years (18.44%), 5 to 6 years (7.82%), 7 to 8 years (5.59%), and over 8 years (6.15%).

Thus, we see that most civil servants who occupy a management position at the institution have little time in this function. This result may be associated with the fact that many campuses have a short opening time and the high turnover caused by internal relocation, caused by the release of new spaces to meet the demand and growth of the campuses.
3.2 Data collection

The research aimed to identify how organizational spirituality, considering its 5 five dimensions, is related to normative, affective, and instrumental organizational commitment, based on the perception of IFRN servants.

Given the above, two research instruments were used in this study: Rego, Cunha & Souto (2005), to investigate employees’ perception about organizational spirituality, and Meyer, Allen & Smith (1993, 1996), which encompasses the indicators of organizational commitment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 – Spirituality components.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dimension</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of community in the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My group/team encourages the creation of a community spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that people in my group/team support each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that my group/team members care about each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that people in my group/team are linked together for a common purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My group/team cares about the most disadvantaged in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment of the individual with the organization’s values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People feel good about their future in the organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organization respects my “inner life”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My organization helps me to live in peace with myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The leaders of my organization are concerned about being helpful to society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel connected to my organization’s goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of service to the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see there is a link between my work and the benefits for society as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I work, I feel that I am helpful to society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most days, I am happy to come to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for the inner life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my workplace, there is no place for my spirituality (I)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from a study by Rego, Cunha & Souto (2005). Indicators (I)* have an inverted value in the sense of the sentence.*
Table 3 – **Organizational Commitment Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Indicators evaluated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>I would be delighted to dedicate the rest of my career to this organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel the organization’s problems as my own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I do not feel a strong sense of integration with my organization (I)*.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I do not feel emotionally attached to this organization (I)*.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I do not feel at home in my organization (I)*.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This organization has immense meaning for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>In the current situation, staying with my organization is a necessity as well as a desire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Even if I wanted to, it would be challenging for me to leave my organization now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If I decided to leave my organization now, my life would be much unstructured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think I would have few alternatives if I left this organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If I had not already given so much of myself to this organization, I might consider working elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One of the few negative consequences of leaving this organization would be the scarcity of immediate alternatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>I do not feel any obligation to stay in my company (I)*.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Even if it were to my advantage, it would not be right to leave my organization now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would feel guilty if I left my organization now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This organization deserves my loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would not leave my organization now because I have a moral obligation to the people here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I owe a lot to this organization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993). Indicators (I)* have an inverted value in the sense of the sentence.

Notably, 10 questionnaires were initially applied as a pre-test of the data collection instrument for this research, making it possible to verify whether the research instrument was clear and understandable to the respondents. As an improvement to the instrument and because it deals with personal issues, after suggestions from the pre-test phase, we decided to add brief explanations about the items that were unclear to the respondents (Mesquita, Sousa, Martins & Matos, 2014, Mesquita & Matos, 2014).

**Data analysis**

All statistical analyzes of this research were developed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, version 20.0.

To analyze the perception of the IFRN employees who took part in the research on the 5 dimensions of organizational spirituality and the 3 dimensions of organizational commitment, measures of position and dispersion of descriptive statistics were used, such as: mean, median, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation.

In order to achieve the objective of this work, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was used to identify how organizational spirituality is related to the organizational commitment.
from the perspective of IFRN employees. This measures the level and direction of the linear correlation between the two dimensions (Hair et al., 2005).

Analysis and discussion of results

4.1 Data reliability

Through the Cronbach’s Alpha statistical test, the degree of reliability of the scales was verified, as shown in Table 4. Considering coefficients equal to or higher than 0.7 as adequate (Hair et al., 2005), all dimensions of both scales showed reliability.

Table 4 – Cronbach’s Alpha Statistical Test for Strategic Planning Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Spirituality Quiz</strong></td>
<td>0.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of community in the team</td>
<td>0.903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment of the individual with the organization’s values</td>
<td>0.902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of service to the community</td>
<td>0.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy at work</td>
<td>0.903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for the inner life</td>
<td>0.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Commitment Questionnaire</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.767</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective commitment</td>
<td>0.753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental commitment</td>
<td>0.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative commitment</td>
<td>0.740</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4.2 Servants’ perception of organizational spirituality

To analyze the perception of IFRN servants about organizational spirituality, the mean and standard deviation of each of the dimensions studied was verified, using the data in Table 5 as a reference.
Thus, from the means presented, we can see that the dimension of organizational spirituality that had the highest mean (5.00) was the sense of service to the community, as well as the dimension that had the lowest standard deviation (1.02), that is, this item presents a high level of perception by the servants in general.

This dimension shows how the employee feels that the work carried out in the organization is beneficial to the community and refers to the most significant values for the employee’s life (Rego, Cunha & Souto, 2005). Therefore, a feeling of usefulness is denoted not only for oneself but also for others and society.

This result complies with what Jurkiewicz and Giacalone (2004), and Garg (2017) state that organizational spirituality can provide transcendent experiences to employees through work processes, facilitating feelings of connection, fullness, and joy.

It is noteworthy that this alignment of the employee with the organization’s values proposes a reflection on how employees believe that their organization’s managers have appropriate values, have a strong conscience and are concerned with the well-being of their employees and the community (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Garg, 2017).

This dimension is focused on macro-level aspects of organizational behavior. In this sense, aspects such as form, the flow of corporate power, structure, values, organizational climate, and culture are evaluated.

### 4.3 Servants’ perception of organizational commitment

Upon analyzing the perception of IFRN employees concerning organizational commitment, the mean and standard deviation of each of the dimensions studied were used, using the data in Table 6 as a reference.
Table 6 – Comparison of the dimensions of organizational commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>25%</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>75%</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>CV</th>
<th>p-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>21.65</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>23.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>30.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The affective commitment had the highest mean among the dimensions of organizational commitment (3.66) and a relatively low standard deviation (0.79). This result allows us to suggest that civil servants identify emotionally with the Federal Institute. Meyer & Allen (1996) clarify that employees committed through bonds of an affective nature tend to be enthusiastic about their work and committed to collaborating with the organization’s performance and success.

In the same line of thought, Rego, Cunha & Souto (2007), Curtis & Taylor (2018), Déniz-Déniz et al. (2018), Quratulain et al. (2018), and Woznyj et al. (2019) point out that the affective dimension of commitment is conceived from the emotional basis of the organization and, therefore, allows employees a feeling of affective welcoming that provides greater motivation, better contribution to the organization’s performance and, otherwise, less turnover, lower absenteeism and a greater focus on citizenship.

As evidenced by Bastos (1994), the organizational commitment of public servants is higher in the affective dimension, noting that the organizational context collaborates so that the affective commitment becomes higher.

We should mention Siqueira & Gomide Júnior (2014), Jiang et al. (2017), and Dogan & Celik (2019), as they state that instrumental commitment is associated with benefits, retirement plans, and other advantages arising from the employee’s investments, and by the perceived possibility of either losing or not being able to replace the benefits of the employees’ investments, should they leave the organization.

4.4 Correlations between the dimensions of organizational spirituality and organizational commitment

The correlations between the dimensions of organizational spirituality and organizational commitment were established based on the Correlation Matrix in Table 7, using the Pearson’s linear correlation coefficient value as a reference, which allowed the
identification of either the existence or the absence of correlations between each of the dimensions of organizational spirituality, with each of the dimensions of organizational commitment.

Table 7 – Correlation analysis of the dimensions studied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sense of community in the team</th>
<th>Organizational’s values</th>
<th>Sense of service to the community</th>
<th>Joy at work</th>
<th>Opportunities for the inner life</th>
<th>Affective</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
<th>Normative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of community in the team</td>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>0.58</strong></td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.4**</td>
<td>0.2**</td>
<td>0.30*</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational’s values</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.48*</td>
<td>0.6**</td>
<td>0.3**</td>
<td>0.53*</td>
<td>0.10*</td>
<td>0.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of service to the community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.6**</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
<td>0.47*</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
<td>0.34*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy at work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for the inner life</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.23**</td>
<td>0.60*</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>0.46*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p-Value < 0.05

Based on the analysis of the data presented in Table 7, we can see that, for a significance level of 5%, we have moderate positive and statistically significant correlations between the dimensions concerning the alignment of the individual with the organization’s values and sense of community in the team (r = 0.58); alignment of the individual with the organization’s values and joy at work (r = 0.62); alignment of the individual with the organization’s values and affective commitment (r = 0.53); a sense of service to the community and joy at work (r = 0.65), and finally, the dimension concerning joy at work and affective commitment (r = 0.60).

The results regarding the correlations between the dimensions of organizational spirituality and the dimensions of organizational commitment, obtained in this study, reinforce the findings and postulates of Ashmos and Duchon (2000), Cavanagh & Bandsuch (2002), Milliman, Czaplewski & Ferguson (2003), Rego, Cunha & Souto (2007), Kinjerski & Skrypnek (2008) and Karakas (2010), showing that the spiritual state of employees can influence their level of organizational commitment, and consequently their functional and institutional performance.
The results of this study especially corroborate the findings of Rego, Cunha & Souto (2005), who emphasized a positive influence of the dimensions of organizational spirituality on affective organizational commitment.

Final remarks

The research sought to identify how the dimensions of organizational spirituality relate to organizational commitment based on the perception of IFRN servants. In this sense, the study’s findings point to the existence of positive and statistically significant correlations (at a 0.05 level of significance) between two dimensions of organizational spirituality (alignment of the individual with the values of the organization and joy at work) and a dimension of organizational commitment (affective organizational commitment).

The present study results suggest that implementing management models that consider the dimensions of organizational spirituality can improve employees’ affective organizational commitment, which, in turn, tends to positively impact the productivity and performance of employees, and consequently, the institution.

In addition, more significant affective organizational commitment, resulting from the strengthening of organizational spirituality, can also contribute to the constant efforts to maintain good employees in the organization, since the more affectively they are linked to the organization, the less likely they are to leave it. Given the relevance of these professionals to institutional performance and the difficulty in finding suitable candidates in the labor market, this is an essential contribution from the implementation of management models that consider organizational spirituality.

The dimension of organizational spirituality that stood out the most in the perception of the investigated servants was the sense of service to the community, with the highest average among the five dimensions of the construct (5.00). This result shows how much the server considers that the work performed in the institution is beneficial to the community, referring to feeling useful not only for themselves but also for others and society.

Concerning organizational commitment, based on the model of Meyer and Allen (1996), a high degree of perception is inferred in the three dimensions (affective, normative, and instrumental), which indicates a relevant identification with the objectives and values of the institution. Among the dimensions of organizational commitment, the one that most stood out in the employees’ perception was the affective one, which portrays an emotional bond of affection between the employees and the institution.
This affective bond may be linked to the fact that it is a public educational institution that provides job stability, which is a relevant factor for the profile of the professional who takes public examinations. Another fact could be that many servants have already been students of the institute, contributing to its pride. Equally noteworthy is the tradition and respect that the institution has towards society, which contributes to the feeling of affection towards it.

The results of this study show the importance of meeting the spiritual needs of employees and the search for valuing them as intelligent and emotionally linked beings so that, as a consequence, they develop a more excellent affective bond with the organization and are more loyal and productive, for, as proposed by Meyer & Allen (1990), the commitment of employees to contribute to organizational goals is associated with the nature of the psychological bond that links them to the organization.

For future studies, we suggest carrying out similar research in private organizations to identify how the relationship between the dimensions of organizational spirituality and organizational commitment takes place in this environment, as well as comparing the results obtained with those in this and other studies that focus on the relationship within the scope of public organizations.

Another possibility would be to assess the relationship between constructs in countries and regions with different foundations and spiritual philosophies, to identify how it behaves in each case, enabling a greater understanding of the phenomenon, and to support the strategies of multinational organizations, which have facilities in different countries and regions of the globe.
References


Revista Gestão e Secretariado (GeSec), São Paulo, SP, 13(1), jan./abr., 2022, p. 262-285.

Submetido em: 25.01.2021
Aceito em: 08.11.2021