

# The synergistic influence of spiritual leadership and mindfulness on organisational behaviour: insights from the Buddhist college context

Chandra<sup>1\*</sup>, Nagian Toni<sup>2</sup>, Elly Romy<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Doctoral in Management Science Department, Universitas Prima Indonesia, Medan, Indonesia

Corresponding E-mail: [chandrashi1992@gmail.com](mailto:chandrashi1992@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** This study investigates the synergistic influence of spiritual Leadership and mindfulness on organisational behaviour within the context of a private Buddhist college in Medan, Indonesia. Drawing upon theories of leadership, mindfulness, and organisational behaviour, the research employs a quantitative associative design involving 25 respondents, comprising lecturers and administrative staff. Data were collected through standardised questionnaires that measured validated dimensions of spiritual Leadership, mindfulness, and organisational behaviour. The findings demonstrate that spiritual Leadership exerts a positive and significant impact on organisational behaviour, affirming the role of vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith in enhancing intrinsic motivation and organisational commitment. Likewise, mindfulness shows a positive and significant effect, supporting the proposition that conscious awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy foster more harmonious workplace interactions. Together, these variables explain 58% of the variance in organisational behaviour. The results highlight the importance of integrating spiritual values with psychological competencies to build a positive organisational culture. Practically, the study suggests that higher education institutions grounded in religious values should incorporate spiritual leadership development and mindfulness training as strategic interventions to promote harmony, resilience, and productivity within academic environments.

**Keywords:** spiritual Leadership, mindfulness, organisational behaviour, Buddhist higher education

## 1. Introduction

Spiritual leadership has emerged as a prominent approach in modern organisational literature. Unlike traditional leadership models that emphasise control and efficiency, spiritual leadership focuses on creating meaning, fostering intrinsic motivation, and promoting the well-being of organisational members. Through the dimensions of vision, calling, and altruistic love, spiritual leaders establish authentic relationships with their followers, which in turn promote work engagement, loyalty, and prosocial behaviours, such as organisational citizenship behaviour [1], [2], [3].

In parallel, the concept of mindfulness has rapidly evolved as a crucial variable in organisational behaviour research. Mindfulness is defined as full awareness of the present moment, characterized by openness and non-judgmental attention. Within the workplace, mindfulness has been shown to enhance emotional regulation, reduce stress, strengthen resilience, and ultimately contribute to both individual and team performance [4], [5].

Moreover, recent studies suggest that mindfulness also improves leadership quality, as mindful leaders tend to be more empathetic, reflective, and capable of making balanced and inclusive decisions [6], [7].

The integration of spiritual leadership and mindfulness offers a comprehensive framework for cultivating positive organisational behaviour. Both constructs are rooted not only in psychological but also in spiritual dimensions, offering a balance between work performance and life meaningfulness. Literature on positive organisational behaviour highlights that the combination of spiritual values and mindfulness practices can enhance intrinsic motivation, strengthen team cohesion, and cultivate sustainable organizational commitment [8], [9]. Consequently, the synergy between spiritual leadership and mindfulness can be viewed as an effective strategy to reinforce organizational culture amid increasing environmental complexity and change.

Although the theoretical frameworks connecting these constructs have been widely discussed, empirical research examining their relationship within higher education contexts remains limited. Most previous studies have focused on corporate or general organisational settings, leaving a significant research gap in the education sector, particularly within faith-based institutions. Religious higher education institutions possess unique characteristics, as they integrate spiritual values into academic governance while also internalizing mindfulness practices in daily life [10].

Indonesia provides a relevant context for such an inquiry, given its rich religious and cultural diversity, which shapes perspectives on leadership and organisational management. North Sumatra, particularly the city of Medan, is home to one of the largest Buddhist communities in Indonesia. The Buddhist College of Bodhi Dharma serves as a tangible example of how Buddhist values are integrated into higher education systems. This institution functions not only as an academic entity but also as a space for character formation grounded in spirituality and mindfulness, making it a significant context for empirical investigation.

In the international literature, mindfulness in leadership has been conceptualized as the leader's capacity to cultivate compassion, focus, and non-judgmental awareness in decision-making [11]. Recent conceptual research further emphasizes the Buddhist principle of non-self as a foundational aspect of spiritual leadership, countering the risk of pseudo-spiritual leadership that prioritizes egoism [12]. This highlights the importance of examining these dynamics in Buddhist educational settings, where non-attachment and compassion are core values.

Empirical studies have also demonstrated that spiritual leadership contributes to mental health, performance, and organizational inclusivity [13], [14]. However, integrative examinations of spiritual leadership and mindfulness in relation to organisational behaviour within Buddhist higher education are scarce. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by empirically examining the impact of spiritual leadership and mindfulness on organisational behaviour at STAB Bodhi Dharma Medan.

This research is expected to make both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it expands academic understanding of how spiritual values and mindfulness interact within the organizational dynamics of higher education. Practically,

it offers managerial insights for developing Buddhist value-based organizational cultures. Accordingly, the central research question guiding this study is: How do spiritual leadership and mindfulness influence organizational behavior at STAB Bodhi Dharma Medan? The answer to this question is anticipated to enrich international scholarship on spiritual leadership and mindfulness while supporting the development of higher education governance in Southeast Asia that is more adaptive, harmonious, and sustainable.

## **2. Method**

### ***2.1 Research Design***

This study employed a quantitative approach with an associative research design. This design was chosen because it enables the analysis of causal relationships between the independent variables spiritual leadership and mindfulness and the dependent variable, organizational behavior. A quantitative approach is suitable for this study, as it enables empirical validation through statistical hypothesis testing, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings [15].

### ***2.2 Population and Sample***

The population of this study consisted of all lecturers and administrative staff at the Buddhist College of Bodhi Dharma (STAB Bodhi Dharma), Medan. Sampling was conducted using a purposive sampling technique, with criteria requiring that respondents be directly involved in organizational and institutional leadership activities. A total of 25 respondents were selected, considering the limited population and the availability of participants relevant to the study focus. Given the small sample size, the research emphasizes in-depth analysis rather than broad generalization.

### ***2.3 Research Instrument***

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from previously validated measurement scales. Spiritual Leadership was measured using Fry's [1] framework, which includes the dimensions of vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith. Mindfulness was assessed using the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) developed by Brown and Ryan [16]. Organisational Behaviour was measured using the Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) scale developed by Podsakoff [17]. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Before the primary survey, a pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents to assess the validity and reliability of the survey. Validity was examined through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Threshold values of  $\alpha \geq 0.70$  and  $CR \geq 0.70$  were used as indicators of acceptable instrument reliability [18].

## **2.4 Data Processing**

Collected data were processed through several stages: data cleaning, coding, and tabulation. The cleaned dataset was then analyzed using SmartPLS 4 software. Data processing involved testing for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability to ensure the measurement quality of the research instruments.

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modelling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), a flexible analytical method that is suitable for small sample sizes. SEM-PLS does not require strict assumptions of normal data distribution, making it an appropriate approach for this study. The analysis consisted of two stages:

1. Measurement Model Evaluation to assess convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability.

2. Structural Model Evaluation to test the hypothesised relationships among variables.

To enhance the robustness and validity of the results, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples was conducted to compute t-statistics and p-values, thereby assessing the statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships despite the small sample size.

## **2.6 Methodological Justification**

The use of SEM-PLS was methodologically justified for several reasons. First, it is particularly effective for exploratory models and predictive research involving latent constructs such as spirituality and mindfulness, which are inherently abstract and multidimensional. Second, SEM-PLS accommodates small sample sizes while maintaining reliable estimation and statistical power, a crucial consideration in this study's limited population context. Third, compared to covariance-based SEM (e.g., AMOS), PLS-SEM emphasises variance explanation and predictive relevance over model fit indices, aligning well with the study's goal of understanding how spiritual leadership and mindfulness jointly influence organisational behaviour. Thus, SEM-PLS was deemed the most appropriate analytical approach for the objectives and data characteristics of this research.

## **3. Research Findings**

### **3.1 Respondent Characteristics**

This study involved 25 respondents, comprising both lecturers and administrative staff of STAB Bodhi Dharma Medan. Based on demographic data, the majority of respondents were aged 30–40 years (45%), followed by those under 30 years (30%) and over 40 years (25%). The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 52% male and 48% female participants. In terms of tenure, most respondents had worked for more than five years (60%), while the remaining 40% had less than five years of service. These demographics suggest that the sample consisted of individuals with substantial organisational experience and engagement, providing reliable insights for the analysis of this study.

### 3.2 Validity and Reliability Testing

#### Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability

Convergent validity was assessed through the evaluation of factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and construct reliability using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). Items with factor loadings greater than 0.70 were considered acceptable, indicating strong convergence among indicators of each construct. Furthermore, AVE values exceeding 0.50 confirmed that the constructs explained a substantial portion of variance among their indicators. Reliability analysis demonstrated that all constructs met the minimum threshold of Cronbach's Alpha  $\geq 0.70$  and CR  $\geq 0.70$ , signifying that the measurement model possessed adequate internal consistency and construct reliability.

**Table 1.** Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability Test Results

Variable / Indicator	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	Information
Spiritual Leadership		0.89	0.92	0.64	Reliable
Vision_1	0.78				Valid
Vision_2	0.82				Valid
Vision_3	0.8				Valid
AltruisticLove_1	0.85				Valid
AltruisticLove_2	0.79				Valid
HopeFaith_1	0.81				Valid
HopeFaith_2	0.84				Valid
Mindfulness		0.88	0.91	0.62	Reliable
MAAS_1	0.77				Valid
MAAS_2	0.8				Valid
MAAS_3	0.82				Valid
MAAS_4	0.75				Valid
MAAS_5	0.79				Valid
MAAS_6	0.83				Valid
Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)		0.91	0.93	0.65	Reliable
Altruism_1	0.83				Valid
Altruism_2	0.8				Valid
Conscientiousness_1	0.84				Valid
Conscientiousness_2	0.81				Valid
Courtesy_1	0.78				Valid
Courtesy_2	0.76				Valid
Civic Virtue_1	0.8				Valid
Civic Virtue_2	0.82				Valid
Sportsmanship_1	0.82				Valid
Sportsmanship_2	0.79				Valid

Source: Research Data Management, AMOS-SEM PLS, 2025

The results of the convergent validity and reliability tests indicated that all indicators had factor loadings above 0.70, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding 0.50, and Cronbach's Alpha as well as Composite Reliability (CR) values greater than 0.70.

These findings confirm that all constructs used in this study were both valid and reliable, thereby ensuring that the research instrument was appropriate for subsequent analyses.

### 3.3 Structural Model Results (Inner Model)

After the measurement model satisfied the required validity and reliability criteria, the next step was to evaluate the structural model (inner model) to examine the hypothesized relationships among the variables. This stage aimed to assess the causal effects of spiritual leadership and mindfulness on organizational behavior, as well as to determine the overall explanatory power of the model.

**Table 2.** SEM-PLS Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Variable Relationships	Line Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	t-statistic	p-value	Results
H1	Spiritual Leadership → Organizational Behavior	0.42	5.87	0	Accepted
H2	Mindfulness → Organizational Behavior	0.36	4.92	0	Accepted

Source: Research Data Management, AMOS-SEM PLS, 2025

The results of the structural model testing revealed that both research hypotheses were accepted, with p-values less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that both spiritual leadership and mindfulness have a significant positive impact on organisational behaviour. The path coefficients ( $\beta$ ) demonstrate the strength of these relationships, showing that spiritual leadership ( $\beta = 0.42$ ) exerts a more substantial influence on organisational behaviour than mindfulness ( $\beta = 0.36$ ). Moreover, the t-statistic values for both hypotheses exceeded 1.96, confirming that the effects of both variables on organizational behavior are statistically significant and robust.

### 3.4 Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )

**Table 3.**  $R^2$  Value of Endogenous Variables

Variable endogenous	$R^2$	Information
Organizational Behavior	0.58	Moderate (58% of variation explained)

Source: Research Data Management, AMOS-SEM PLS, 2025

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value of 0.58 indicates that the proposed model explains approximately 58% of the variance in organizational behavior. This suggests that the combination of spiritual leadership and mindfulness has a moderate influence on organisational behaviour. The remaining 42% of the variance is likely explained by other factors not included in this model, such as organisational culture, job satisfaction, or intrinsic motivation, which may also contribute to variations in organisational behaviour.

#### 4. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that spiritual leadership has a significant and positive impact on organisational behaviour. This finding supports Fry's [1] theory, which posits that the dimensions of vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith foster intrinsic motivation and strengthen members' psychological attachment to their organization. The path coefficient ( $\beta = 0.42$ ) indicates that spiritual leadership has the most substantial effect among the tested variables, suggesting that leaders who embody spiritual values can effectively encourage organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB), such as altruism, loyalty, and proactive participation. This result aligns with the empirical findings of Chen and Yang [2], who reported that spiritual leadership significantly contributes to enhancing OCB within organisations.

Accordingly, this study reinforces the notion that spirituality-based leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering a constructive and value-driven organizational culture. In the context of STAB Bodhi Dharma Medan, spiritual leadership becomes particularly relevant given its foundation in Buddhist values and practices. Fry and Vu [12] emphasize that the Buddhist concept of non-self serves as a safeguard against pseudo-spiritual leadership—a form of leadership that prioritizes ego over service. By integrating this principle, leaders are better equipped to foster an authentic, ethical, and compassionate organisational environment. Thus, spiritual leadership not only provides strategic direction but also cultivates a workplace imbued with moral depth and shared meaning, resonating with the holistic ethos of Buddhist education.

Similarly, the findings indicate that mindfulness also has a significant positive effect on organizational behavior ( $\beta = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This result is consistent with Good [5], who found that mindfulness enhances emotional regulation, reduces stress, and strengthens interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Sutcliffe [6] further argue that mindfulness increases situational awareness and fosters higher-quality social interactions among employees. Within this study, mindfulness was found to encourage members to remain focused, empathetic, and calm, thereby enhancing prosocial behaviours such as cooperation and voluntary participation in organisational activities. These findings align with the empirical evidence of Hafenbrack [19] and Reizer [20], who observed that mindfulness practices promote prosocial tendencies, enhance team cohesion, and improve the overall organisational climate. Therefore, mindfulness can be regarded as a psychological capability that supports positive organizational behavior and complements the spiritual dimension of leadership.

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.58$ ) indicates that spiritual leadership and mindfulness together account for approximately 58% of the variance in organisational behaviour. According to Hair [18], this value falls within the moderate explanatory range, implying that the model possesses adequate predictive power. However, the remaining 42% of unexplained variance suggests the possible influence of other factors not included in this model, such as organizational culture, job satisfaction, or managerial support. This finding highlights opportunities for future research to incorporate additional mediating or moderating variables, thereby deepening the theoretical understanding of behavioural

outcomes in organisational contexts. From a theoretical perspective, the results strengthen the argument that spiritual leadership and mindfulness function on two complementary levels. Spiritual leadership operates at a systemic level, fostering a collective vision, shared values, and a meaningful organisational culture [1]. In contrast, mindfulness functions at an individual level, enhancing awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy [5]. The integration of these two constructs produces a synergistic influence that effectively fosters positive organisational behaviour, as exemplified by the case of STAB Bodhi Dharma Medan.

From a practical standpoint, these findings offer important implications for the management of Buddhist higher education institutions. First, institutional leaders should strengthen spiritual leadership capacity by formulating meaningful visions, nurturing altruistic love, and promoting collective optimism within the organization. Second, mindfulness training can be incorporated into human resource development programs to help lecturers and staff manage emotions, sustain focus, and enhance interpersonal communication in daily work. Together, these strategies can serve as an integrated managerial approach to build a more harmonious, adaptive, and productive organisational culture aligned with Buddhist principles.

## **5. Conclusion, Limitation, and Recommendation**

This study confirms that spiritual leadership and mindfulness are significant predictors of organizational behavior within Buddhist-based higher education institutions. Spiritual leadership, characterised by vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith, was found to strengthen intrinsic motivation and organisational attachment, thereby fostering organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Likewise, mindfulness enhances self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy, thereby contributing to more harmonious and productive workplace interactions. Theoretically, these findings extend the organisational behaviour literature by revealing that the integration of spiritual values and mindful awareness forms a robust, multidimensional framework for explaining variations in OCB. This highlights the importance of integrating value-based leadership and psychological competencies to foster holistic and ethical organisational cultures. Practically, the results suggest that Buddhist higher education institutions should adopt managerial strategies that combine the development of spiritual leadership capacities with structured mindfulness training programs. Such initiatives are expected to improve not only individual well-being and interpersonal relations but also to strengthen institutional harmony, adaptability, and sustainability.

Nevertheless, the study's findings must be interpreted with caution due to certain limitations, particularly the small sample size and focus on a single institution, which restrict the generalizability of results. The cross-sectional design also limits causal inference over time. Future research should broaden its scope to include multiple institutions and employ longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches to capture the dynamic interrelations among variables. Incorporating mediating or moderating factors, such as organisational culture, job satisfaction, or psychological capital, would also deepen theoretical insights. In conclusion, this research reaffirms the crucial role of



spiritual leadership and mindfulness in shaping positive organizational behavior and provides valuable theoretical and practical implications for advancing human resource management within value-based higher education across Southeast Asia and beyond.

## Reference

- [1] L. W. Fry, "Toward a theory of spiritual leadership," *Leadersh Q*, vol. 14, no. 6, pp. 693–727, Dec. 2003, doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.09.001.
- [2] C.-Y. Chen and C.-F. Yang, "The Impact of Spiritual Leadership on Organizational Citizenship Behavior: A Multi-Sample Analysis," *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 105, no. 1, pp. 107–114, Jan. 2012, doi: 10.1007/s10551-011-0953-3.
- [3] J. Jiang, Z. Ye, J. Liu, W. U. H. Shah, and Z. Shafait, "From 'doing alone' to 'working together'—Research on the influence of spiritual leadership on employee morale," *Front Psychol*, vol. 14, Mar. 2023, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.992910.
- [4] J. Kabat-Zinn, *Full catastrophe living: using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York, USA: Bantam Dell, 2005.
- [5] D. J. Good *et al.*, "Contemplating Mindfulness at Work," *J Manage*, vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 114–142, Jan. 2016, doi: 10.1177/0149206315617003.
- [6] K. M. Sutcliffe, T. J. Vogus, and E. Dane, "Mindfulness in Organizations: A Cross-Level Review," *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 55–81, Mar. 2016, doi: 10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-041015-062531.
- [7] J. B. Doornich and H. M. Lynch, "The mindful leader: a review of leadership qualities derived from mindfulness meditation," *Front Psychol*, vol. 15, Mar. 2024, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1322507.
- [8] F. Luthans, "Positive organizational behavior: Developing and managing psychological strengths," *Academy of Management Perspectives*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 57–72, Feb. 2002, doi: 10.5465/ame.2002.6640181.
- [9] P. Rego, M. P. Lopes, and J. L. Nascimento, "Authentic leadership and organizational commitment: The mediating role of positive psychological capital," *Journal of Industrial Engineering and Management*, vol. 9, no. 1, Feb. 2016, doi: 10.3926/jiem.1540.
- [10] M. C. Vu and R. Gill, "Are Leaders Responsible for Meaningful Work? Perspectives from Buddhist-Enacted Leaders and Buddhist Ethics," *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 187, no. 2, pp. 347–370, Oct. 2023, doi: 10.1007/s10551-022-05293-w.
- [11] B. Burmansah, R. Rugaiyah, and M. Mukhtar, "Mindful Leadership: The Ability of Leader to Establish Connection to Others, Community, and Deal with Changes Skillfully-A Case Study of Buddhist Higher Education Institute Leader," *International e-Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 4, no. 7, pp. 133–149, 2020, doi: 10.31458/iejes.618343.
- [12] L. W. Fry and M. C. Vu, "Leading Without a Self: Implications of Buddhist Practices for Pseudo-spiritual Leadership," *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 190, no. 1, pp. 41–57, Feb. 2024, doi: 10.1007/s10551-023-05416-x.
- [13] J. Manuel Andrade Navia, E. Ramírez Plazas, and Y. Catherine Diaz, "Leadership and social responsibility from the perspective of gender," *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 303–312, Jun. 2019, doi: 10.21511/ppm.17(2).2019.23.

- [14] S. Widodo and G. Suryosukmono, "Spiritual leadership, workplace spirituality and their effects on meaningful work: Self-transcendence as mediator role," *Management Science Letters*, pp. 2115–2126, 2021, doi: 10.5267/j.msl.2021.2.016.
- [15] J. F. Hair, W. C. Black, B. J. Babin, and R. E. Anderson, "Multivariate Data Analysis Eighth Edition," 2019. [Online]. Available: [www.cengage.com/highered](http://www.cengage.com/highered)
- [16] K. W. Brown and R. M. Ryan, "The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being," *J Pers Soc Psychol*, vol. 84, no. 4, pp. 822–848, 2003, doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.822.
- [17] P. M. Podsakoff, S. B. MacKenzie, J. B. Paine, and D. G. Bachrach, "Organizational Citizenship Behaviors: A Critical Review of the Theoretical and Empirical Literature and Suggestions for Future Research," *J Manage*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 513–563, Jun. 2000, doi: 10.1177/014920630002600307.
- [18] J. F. Hair, J. J. Risher, M. Sarstedt, and C. M. Ringle, "When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM," *European Business Review*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 2–24, Jan. 2019, doi: 10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203.
- [19] A. C. Hafenbrack, L. D. Cameron, G. M. Spreitzer, C. Zhang, L. J. Noval, and S. Shaffakat, "Helping People by Being in the Present: Mindfulness Increases Prosocial Behavior," *Organ Behav Hum Decis Process*, vol. 159, pp. 21–38, Jul. 2020, doi: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2019.08.005.
- [20] A. Reizer, B. L. Galperin, and M. Koslowsky, "Editorial: Is Prosocial Behavior Always Good for the Workplace? On the Direction and Strength of the Relationship Between Prosocial Behaviors and Workplace Outcomes," *Front Psychol*, vol. 11, Aug. 2020, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01886.