THE EFFECT OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP ON PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS’ PROFESSIONAL WELL-BEING: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CAREER CALLING

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Received: 16.10.2023 Accepted: 15.01.2024

ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: The teaching profession is recognized as a high-intensity and high-stress occupation, and teachers’ professional well-being is being greatly challenged. To enhance teachers' professional well-being, researchers have begun to explore influence mechanisms from the perspective of leadership style. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the effect of principals' spiritual leadership on primary and secondary school teachers' professional well-being in the Chinese context.

Methodology: The data in this study was analysed using a cross-sectional survey approach. Questionnaires were distributed to school teachers in Heze City, Shandong Province. Eventually, 380 participants were identified to be suitable for study. The data were analysed using IBM SPSS and SmartPLS 4.0.9.5 software, specifically adopting the partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approach.
Findings: The results indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between spiritual leadership, career calling, and teachers' professional well-being, and that career calling mediated the relationship between spiritual leadership and teachers' professional well-being.

Contributions: The findings are valuable for school organizational management. It helps to the positive role of spiritual leadership of principals and enhances teachers' calling, thus improving their professional well-being. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by identifying the causal relationships between spiritual leadership, career calling, and teachers' professional well-being.

Keywords: Spiritual leadership, professional well-being, career calling, primary and secondary school teachers, mediating effect.


1.0 INTRODUCTION

Well-being is the common pursuit and the ultimate pursuit of human society (Meng & Guan, 2013). The OECD released the "OECD Learning Compass 2030" in 2019. According to the report, education should focus on a broader goal—Well-being in 2030, with "well-being" as a common concern, being placed at the core of human development (OECD, 2019). Teachers' Well-being: A Framework for Data Collection and Analysis, published by the OECD in 2020, established teacher well-being as a key component of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2020). Primary and secondary school teachers are the mainstay of basic education, an indispensable and important force in the educational endeavor, and shoulder the important mission of training future talents (Lauwerier & Akkari, 2015). Only happy teachers can instill happiness in their students (Meng & Guan, 2013). Nonetheless, in China, teaching is regarded as a high-intensity, high-pressure vocation. In today's environment of rapid development, change, and adjustment, social transformation and competition increase teacher job pressure and burnout, and teachers' professional well-being of Chinese is severely threatened (Yao, 2019). Teachers' teaching quality, job passion, self-efficacy, and emotional commitment will suffer if their professional well-being is low, affecting students’ learning quality and physical and mental health development (Tian et al., 2021). As a result, boosting teachers' professional well-being is a practical issue that must be addressed as soon as possible.
Some scholars have investigated the influencing aspects of teachers' professional well-being in order to improve their professional well-being, and one of the major factors is leadership style (Hascher & Waber, 2021). Research shows that transformational leadership, distributed leadership, authentic leadership, and servant leadership have a significant impact on teachers' professional well-being (Clarence et al., 2021; Shie & Chang, 2022; Tian et al., 2021). Spiritual leadership, as a new leadership theory, aims to stimulate employees' intrinsic work motivation and initiative to perform positive work behaviors that are conducive to the development of the organization by satisfying their spiritual needs (Fry, 2003). Although spiritual leadership is a concept from Western culture, it is equally applicable to the Chinese cultural context (Yang et al., 2019) and is widely used in various industries such as education (Li et al., 2023; Tsui et al., 2019), healthcare (Zou et al., 2020), hotel (Wang et al., 2021), and energy (Wang et al., 2019). Previous research have shown that spiritual leadership is associated with positive psychological variables such as psychological ownership, life satisfaction, and job satisfaction (Arshad & Abbasi, 2014; Mahmood & Huma, 2012; Wahid & Mustamil, 2017). Spiritual leadership will influence the organizational identity of their subordinates (Chou et al., 2019), enhance their organizational commitment (Karadag, 2009), and significantly increase their work engagement level (Deng, 2016). Simultaneously, several research have revealed that spiritual leadership significantly affects staff well-being and the psychological well-being of nurses (Hunsaker, 2019; Caldeira & Hall, 2012; Zou et al., 2020). Some studies show that in Pakistan, spiritual leadership positively predicts teachers' professional well-being (Samar & Chaudhary, 2021). However, in the Chinese field, there are fewer studies on spiritual leadership on teachers' professional well-being (e.g. Li & Ju, 2023).

National development has always attached great importance to the core value of "Remain True to Our Original Aspiration and Keep Our Mission Firmly in Mind". Career calling is a concept that has received much attention in strengthening and improving the professional ethics education of teachers in China. Education authorities and school leaders hope to improve teachers' professional ethics and promote the generation of positive professional psychology and behavior by enhancing primary and secondary school teachers' career calling (Liao et al., 2019). Individuals with career calling are motivated to work based on a strong sense of intrinsic direction, which enhances job performance (Markow & Klenke, 2005). Li et al. (2023) found spiritual leadership was a positive predictor of teachers' professional calling. Teachers with a high career calling have a stronger responsibility for their work, are better able to find meaning and purpose, are more likely to realize their self-worth, and have greater professional well-being (Zhang et al., 2020). So, is it through career callings...
that spiritual leadership influences teachers' professional well-being? The literature review revealed a lack of studies on the influence mechanism between the three variables of spiritual leadership, career calling, and teachers' professional well-being in the Chinese context. The question of whether there is only a direct correlation between them or whether there is some kind of indirect relationship has not been verified.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence mechanism of principals' spiritual leadership on primary and secondary school teachers' professional well-being in the Chinese context, and examine whether career calling plays an intermediary role in which, to promote primary and secondary school teachers' professional well-being to provide new insights and enlightenment.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Spiritual Leadership and Teachers’ Professional Well-being

Spiritual leadership is a new hot spot in leadership research. Spiritual leadership is a model of leadership behavior that integrates vision, hope/belief, and altruistic love and internally inspires oneself and others and gives employees spiritual satisfaction (Fry, 2003). As Fry (2003) points out, spiritual leadership has three characteristics: vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love. Teachers' professional well-being refers to the continuous happiness experience that teachers need to be satisfied, to realize their professional ideals freely, and to develop their potential along with the growth of their strengths. By describing the vision of the organization, spiritual leadership unifies individual development with the destiny of the organization, so that employees can feel the significance and value of their work and improve their professional well-being (Schulte & Vainio, 2010). Employees with full hope and firm faith in work can withstand the pressure and challenges of work, reduce anxiety and frustration, and help to improve their positive emotions, enhance their sense of control and competence for work, and thus improve their professional well-being (Charalampous et al., 2019). Spiritual leadership conveys altruistic love to employees, close the working relationship between employees and leaders and others, enhances their positive emotions, suppresses negative emotions, improves their emotional experience at work, and thus improves employees' professional well-being (Guerci et al., 2022). Research has indicated that a strong relationship exists between the spiritual leadership of principals and teachers’ well-being in the workplace in Pakistan (Samar & Chaudhary, 2021). Li and Ju (2023) found that the vision and hope/belief dimensions of spiritual leadership positively and significantly affected teachers' workplace well-being in a Chinese context. Spiritual leadership in education integrates school development planning and
teachers' professional development, and it helps teachers to translate school vision into personal aspirations. Simultaneously, spiritual leadership instills hope and faith in teachers, allowing them to achieve the school's vision and personal goals while also improving their professional competence. Spiritual leadership also fosters a relaxed and cheerful, united, and mutually beneficial environment for teachers, resulting in active endogenous motivation for work and life and an improvement in teachers' professional well-being. On the basis of the above literature, hypothesis 1 is as follows:

H1: Spiritual leadership positively and significantly influences teachers’ professional well-being.

2.2 Spiritual Leadership and Career Calling

Career Calling refers to a positive mental condition where individuals combine work with personal and social significance, expect their work to be worthwhile to society, and experience internal fun and self-realization during their career (Dik & Duffy, 2009). It is an intrinsically positive emotional experience and value identity (Dik & Duffy, 2009). In modern society, work is not only a means of earning a living but also an important vehicle for realizing the value of life and gaining a sense of spiritual fulfillment. Spiritual leadership promotes people to build the correct work values and sense of professional mission by satisfying employees' spiritual needs (Ma, 2021). Spiritual leadership works by creating meaningful visions for subordinates to enable them to experience meaning in their work and life and feel a sense of purpose (Wu & Lee, 2020). Rosa and Ancok (2020) found that spiritual leadership helps to enhance employees' sense of belonging and teamwork, and improves career calling. Wang et al. (2021) found that the three dimensions of spiritual leadership, vision, hope/belief, and altruistic love, all positively and significantly influenced calling. Liu et al. (2023) also proved that spiritual leadership is positively predictive of employee career calling. As a result, we believe that in the sphere of education, principals' spiritual leadership is favorable to enable primary and secondary school teachers to find the aim and meaning of their work, realize their self-worth, and experience their career calling while serving others and society. Hypothesis 2 is based on the preceding literature:

H2: Spiritual leadership positively and significantly influences teachers’ career calling.
2.3 Career Calling and Teachers’ Professional Well-being

Prior research has found significant inherent links between career calling and positive psychological characteristics such as occupational health, life well-being, and job satisfaction (Pei & Zhao, 2015; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012). In accordance with self-determination theory, when individuals' basic psychological needs are met, internal motivation is stimulated, the sense of will to act is significantly enhanced, and the quality level of behavior is higher, all of which contribute to improved physical and mental health (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Individual work motivation and career calling are inextricably linked. Motivated by career calling, primary and secondary school teachers love work from the bottom of their hearts and stimulate their inner motivation to recognize the significance of work, which improves the general cognitive appraisal of work and professional well-being (Zhang et al., 2020). Studies have shown that career calling has a positive and significant effect on the professional well-being of company staff (Ahn et al., 2017), police (Zhou & Li, 2020), healthcare staff (Emerson, 2017), and teachers (Lee et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Hence, the following hypothesis is developed:

H3: Career calling positively and significantly influences teachers’ professional well-being.

2.4 The Mediating Effect of Career Calling

Career calling may be the mediating variable between spiritual leadership and teachers' professional well-being. In the school setting, principal spiritual leaders instill hope and confidence in teachers by establishing school goals, allowing teachers to discover the significance and worth of their job and to pursue their career vocation (Liu et al., 2022). When teachers are called upon to confront their ownership in the organization, they engage in more virtuous behaviors that consider the organization as well as out-of-role behaviors (Meng et al., 2018). Therefore, primary and secondary school teachers are driven by their career calling to love their work from the bottom of their hearts, to maximize their ability, and to fulfill their career goals in order to increase teachers' professional well-being (Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, the current study proposes the following hypotheses:

H4: Career calling mediates the relationship between spiritual leadership and teachers’ professional well-being.
2.5 Conceptual Framework

Self-determination theory provides a theoretical framework for research related to leadership style and well-being (Forner et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2021; Kanat-Maymon et al., 2020; Manganelli et al., 2018). Deci and Ryan (2013) proposed self-determination theory as a motivational process hypothesis for individual self-determination behavior. It explains the causes of human behavior from the perspective of intrinsic motivation and reveals the effective pathways through which the external environment influences an individual's internal motivation. External environmental factors refer to environmental conditions that affect an individual's internal motivation and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2013). Self-determination theory argues that the external environment can reinforce individuals' internal motivation, facilitate the internalization of external motivation, and assure healthy growth by bolstering the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs of individuals: autonomy, competence, and relationships. In school organizations, principals' leadership styles have a positive effect on school development and teachers' individual behaviors and attitudes (Tian et al., 2021). Spiritual leadership is a style of leadership that intrinsically motivates and fulfills the spiritual needs of employees (Fry, 2003). Spiritual leadership promotes the fulfillment of teachers' basic psychological needs through vision, hope/belief, and altruistic love (Haque et al., 2022), which enhances teachers' internal motivation and may lead to a strong career calling, which in turn affects teachers' professional well-being. Therefore, this study constructs a conceptual framework based on self-determination theory, takes spiritual leadership as an external environmental factor and career calling as an intrinsic motivation, and explores the influence mechanism on teachers' professional well-being. Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model.

Figure 1: Hypothesized model
3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design
The quantitative research design of this study was conducted using a web-based survey method with primary and secondary school teachers in Heze City, Shandong Province, China. The web-based questionnaire was delivered using the Questionnaire Star network platform, and the teachers voluntarily filled it out anonymously, taking about 6 minutes for each individual.

3.2 Participants
This study utilized a non-probability convenience sampling method with 380 participants. To determine the necessary sample size for this study, a priori power analysis was performed utilizing the G*Power software as outlined by Faul et al. (2009). Considering a medium effect size, a significance level (α) of 0.05, and a desired power of 0.80, the recommended minimum sample size for this study was 92 respondents. With 380 respondents, the study comfortably surpassed the minimum sample size for examining the research model.

The proportion of male and female teachers among all respondents was 22.89% and 77.11% respectively. The percentage of teachers aged under 30 years old, 31-45 Years old, and Over 46 years old were 27.89%, 47.63%, and 24.47%, respectively. The percentage of teachers with teaching experience of 1-5 Years, 6-10 Years, 11-15 Years, 16-20 Years, 21-25 Years, and More than 26 years were 33.16%, 21.05%, 11.05%, 6.32%, 7.89% and 20.53% respectively. Teachers with titles of primary, intermediate, deputy senior, and senior were 56.32%, 29.74%, 13.68%, and 0.26%. Educational qualifications in junior college education, undergraduate, and master's degree were 11.05%, 81.32%, and 7.63% of teachers. The percentages of teachers from primary schools, junior middle schools, and senior middle schools were 56.84%, 33.68%, and 9.47%, respectively. Teachers from the city and rural areas are 53.42% and 46.58% respectively.

3.3 Measures
The three scales of spiritual leadership, career calling, and teachers' professional well-being in this study all used the maturity scale and transformed the setting under the educational scenario.

3.3.1 Spiritual Leadership
The spiritual leadership scale is the Chinese version of Fry’s Revised Spiritual Leadership Scale (SLS) translated by Tang et al. (2014). It has 14 items in three dimensions: vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love. The scale has been revised to reflect the educational context,
such as "understand and commit to the school's vision," "persistent and willing to make extra efforts to help my school succeed because I have faith in my school," "school leaders will communicate with teachers on an irregular basis to understand teachers' ideas," and so on. Cronbach’s alpha values were 0.942, 0.955, and 0.919, respectively. It demonstrates that the Chinese version of the spiritual leadership questionnaire is reliable and valid. The scale is scored using Likert-5 points (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), with the higher the score reflecting a more obvious spiritual leadership style.

### 3.3.2 Career Calling

Zhang (2015) employed the brief calling scale (BCS) created by Dik et al. (2012) in the Chinese validation. It consists of a BCS-presence scale and a BCS-search scale each with 2 items. The scale is changed according to the educational setting, such as: "I have a feeling of mission in the teaching profession" and "I am looking for my own mission in the profession". Cronbach's alpha was 0.920 in one case and 0.951 in the other. The scale uses Likert-7 points to score (1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree); the greater the score, the stronger career calling.

### 3.3.3 Teachers’ professional Well-being

The professional well-being scale is a subscale of the employee well-being scale developed by Zheng et al. (2015). It has six items, such as “In general, I feel fairly satisfied with my present job.” “I find real enjoyment in my work.”. The Cronbach's alpha value was 0.954. The scale uses Likert-7 points for scoring (1 = strongly inconsistent, 7 = strongly consistent). The higher the score is, the stronger the teachers' professional well-being is.

### 4.0 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

To test the measurement and structural models, this study adopted partial least squares modeling (PLS-SEM) (Hair & Alamer, 2022; Chin et al., 2003) and Smart PLS 4.0 (Ringle et al., 2022) as a statistical tool. PLS-SEM is a method for running both measurement and structural models that combines confirmatory factor analysis and linear regression. SmartPLS 4.0 is an essential tool for analyzing PLS-SEM and has been employed by numerous scholars (Deng & Yu, 2023; Li et al., 2023). Anderson and Gerbing (1988) define model validation as two steps: measurement model validation and structural model validation.
4.1 Common Method Bias
When respondents answered questions regarding both exogenous and endogenous variables, i.e., when data were acquired from a single source, common method bias (CMB) is likely to arise (Ngah et al., 2015; Podsakoff et al., 2012). To avoid CMB, the authors processed the data using procedural and statistical methods. In terms of the procedures, the researchers informed the respondents that the data was anonymous and that the answers were not correct or incorrect. Furthermore, the scales have different scoring ranges (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012), with the exogenous scale having a range of 1-5 and the endogenous scale having a range of 1-7. In terms of statistical analytic methodologies, the authors employed Kock’s (2015) full-collinearity test. If the variance inflation factor (VIF) value is greater than 5, the CMB is a major issue (Hair et al., 2011; Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019). As shown in Table 1, the VIF values for each indication were less than 5, showing that there was no CMB problem in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AL</th>
<th>HO</th>
<th>PR</th>
<th>PWB</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.067</td>
<td>4.024</td>
<td>1.936</td>
<td>2.436</td>
<td>1.224</td>
<td>2.441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: VI=Vision, HO=Hope/faith, AL=Altruistic Love, PR=Presence, SE=Search, PWB=Professional Well being.

4.2 Measurement Model
For this study, all low-level constructs were reflective, while among the high-level constructs, spiritual leadership (Fry et al., 2011; Tang et al., 2014; Yang & Fry, 2018) and career calling (Dik et al., 2012; Zhang, 2015) were formative. Therefore, this study assessed the reflective measurement model and formative measurement model.

According to Henseler (2017), the two key factors used to determine measurement goodness are validity and reliability. According to Hair et al. (2019), indicator loadings were applied to assess indicator reliability. As to examine items loading, all remaining items have loadings that are above the acclaimed criterion of > 0.708. The loading values of the study items ranged from 0.867 to 0.980, indicating that all remaining items are loaded strongly on their own constructions and less on the other constructs, as shown in Table 2 (Henseler, 2017). Unfortunately, due to low loading, items VI4 and VI5 were removed from the study model and were not included in the next step process. Cronbach's alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR) were utilized to assess internal consistency reliability. Table 2 shows the CA and CR.
results for vision (0.942, 0.963), hope/faith (0.955, 0.965), altruistic love (0.919, 0.943), presence (0.920, 0.961), search (0.951, 0.976), and professional well-being (0.954, 0.963). Convergent validity can usually be determined employing average variance extraction (AVE) with an acceptable minimum AVE of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017). The findings in Table 2 indicated that the AVE value for all dimensions ranged from 0.805 to 0.953, demonstrating a satisfactory degree of convergent validity.

Table 2: Convergent validity and reliability assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Item Code</th>
<th>Outer Loading</th>
<th>CA</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>VI1</td>
<td>0.933</td>
<td>0.942</td>
<td>0.963</td>
<td>0.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VI2</td>
<td>0.965</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VI3</td>
<td>0.942</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HO</td>
<td>HO1</td>
<td>0.915</td>
<td>0.955</td>
<td>0.965</td>
<td>0.847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HO2</td>
<td>0.945</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HO3</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HO4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HO5</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>AL1</td>
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<td>0.919</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AL2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AL3</td>
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<td></td>
<td>AL4</td>
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<td>PR</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PR2</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>PWB1</td>
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<td>0.954</td>
<td>0.963</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>PWB3</td>
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<td>PWB6</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note1: VI4 and VI5 were deleted due to low loading

Note2: VI=Vision, HO=Hope/faith, AL=Altruistic Love, PR=Presence, SE=Search, PWB=Professional Well-being
We investigated discriminant validity utilizing the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlation criterion to determine that the constructs are different from the other constructs in the research framework. If the HTMT result is less than or equal to 0.9, discriminant validity is confirmed (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019; Henseler et al., 2015). Table 3 reveals that all HTMT values were less than 0.9, demonstrating the constructs' discriminant validity within the research framework.

Table 3: Discriminant validity assessment (HTMT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>AL</th>
<th>HO</th>
<th>PR</th>
<th>PWB</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>VI</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HO</td>
<td>0.880</td>
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<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>0.571</td>
<td>0.637</td>
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<td>PWB</td>
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<td>0.665</td>
<td>0.777</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: VI=Vision, HO=Hope/faith, AL=Altruistic Love, PR=Presence, SE=Search, PWB=Professional Well-being

Spiritual leadership is a formative higher-order construct, according to the measurements of Fry et al. (2011), Tang et al. (2014), and Yang and Fry (2018), and vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love are lower-order constructs. Career calling, according to Dik et al. (2012) and Zhang (2015), is a formative higher-order construct of BCS-presence and BCS-search. Chin (1998) suggests employing redundancy analysis to evaluate convergent validity in formative measurement models. According to Hair et al. (2019), the relationship between formative measurement constructs and single global items should be greater than 0.70. The relationships of spiritual leadership and career calling with the single global item were 0.916 and 0.960, respectively, which were higher than the specified thresholds, indicating that favorable convergent validity had been established. Also, with VIF values less than 5, covariance is not an issue (Hair et al., 2017). This study tested the significance of indicator weights by assessing the t-value (Hair et al., 2019). According to Hair et al. (2019), a t-value higher than 1.960 (two-tailed test) when assuming a significance level of 5% indicates that the indicator weights are statistically significant. As can be seen in Table 4, the t-value of the low-order structure of spiritual leadership and career calling is greater than 1.960, which indicates that the indicator weights are all significant, except for AL. Hair et al. (2017) proposed that where an indicator's weight is not significant but the accompanying item loading is relatively high (i.e., ≥0.50), or
statistically significant, the indicator should be preserved. Table 4 shows that the p value of AL is 0.472, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that the weight of AL is not significant. However, because the AL loading value (0.827) is more than 0.50, the indicator can be kept, as suggested by Hair et al. (2017).

Table 4: Convergent validity for formative higher-order construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs higher-order</th>
<th>Lower order</th>
<th>Outer Weight</th>
<th>T Value</th>
<th>P Value</th>
<th>Outer Loading</th>
<th>VIF</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>0.688</td>
<td>7.947</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.984</td>
<td>3.798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HO</td>
<td>0.288</td>
<td>2.756</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.930</td>
<td>0.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AL</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>0.720</td>
<td>0.472</td>
<td>0.827</td>
<td>3.243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>PR</td>
<td>0.927</td>
<td>24.843</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.989</td>
<td>1.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0.162</td>
<td>2.436</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td>1.173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SL=Spiritual Leadership, CC=Career Calling.

4.3 Structural Model

The structural model is evaluated by calculating the significance of the relationships between variables and whether the model hypothesis is supported (Hair et al., 2019). Before testing the study hypothesis, the researchers verified that multi-collinearity was not serious because all of the VIF values were all less than 5 (Hair et al., 2017). Since spiritual leadership and career calling are formative higher-order constructs, a disjoint two-stage approach was adopted (Sarstedt et al., 2019). We used the Smart PLS 4.0 to evaluate the structural model using a bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Table 5 and Figure 2 show the outcomes of direct and indirect effects in the study. According to the PLS-SEM results, (H1) spiritual leadership positively and significantly affects teachers' professional well-being (β = 0.542, t = 10.465, p = 0.000). (H2) Spiritual leadership positively and significantly affects career calling (β = 0.643, t = 20.027, p=0.000). Furthermore, (H3) career calling positively and significantly affects teachers’ professional well-being (β =0.316, t = 5.640, p = 0.000). According to Chin (1998), the values of determination of coefficient (R²) should be greater than 0.1. The results show that all R² values are all within the defined threshold. This study revealed that 61.1% variance occurred in teachers' professional well-being, explained by spiritual leadership and career calling, and 41.2% variance occurred on career calling by spiritual leadership. As suggested by Cohen (1988),
effect size is determined by the $f^2$ value, and effect size is described as small, medium and large when the $f^2$ value is 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35. The results reveal that spiritual leadership have a large effect size on teachers' professional well-being ($f^2 = 0.445$) and career calling ($f^2 = 0.704$), and the effect size of career calling on teachers' professional well-being ($f^2 = 0.152$) is medium. The findings support hypotheses H1, H2 and H3.

To identify the mechanism that triggers an observed relationship between spiritual leadership and teachers' professional well-being, the mediation variable (career calling) was introduced within the research framework. According to Preacher and Hayes (2008), determining whether indirect effects hold requires examining if the findings reveal the lack of zero between the lower and upper levels of the confidence range. The results indicate that (H4) the indirect effects of spiritual leadership on teachers' professional well-being were positive and significant ($\beta = 0.203$, $t = 5.156$, $p = 0.000$). Hypothesis H4 is supported since there is no zero between the lower and upper levels of the results.

Table 5: Hypotheses testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>Se</th>
<th>T values</th>
<th>P values</th>
<th>LL</th>
<th>UL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>SL -&gt; PWB</td>
<td>0.542</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>10.465</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.443</td>
<td>0.644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>SL -&gt; CC</td>
<td>0.643</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>20.027</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.568</td>
<td>0.697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>CC -&gt; PWB</td>
<td>0.316</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>5.640</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.201</td>
<td>0.419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>SL -&gt; CC -&gt; PWB</td>
<td>0.203</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>5.156</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>0.278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.0 DISCUSSIONS

This study presented a mediation effect model based on prior research, with spiritual leadership as the predictor variable, career calling as the mediating variable, and teachers' professional well-being as the outcome variable. A statistical study of questionnaire data from 380 Chinese primary and secondary school teachers validated this mediation effect hypothesis.

Previous research has found that transformational leadership, distributed leadership, authentic leadership, and servant leadership have a positive impact on teachers' professional well-being (Clarence et al., 2021; Shie & Chang, 2022; Tian et al., 2021), but there have been few studies on the impact of spiritual leadership on primary and secondary school teachers' professional well-being. This study discovered that spiritual leadership positively and significantly affects teachers' professional well-being and demonstrated the importance of spiritual leadership in the process of enhancing teachers' professional well-being based on the self-determination theory. Excessive class schedules, heavy administrative work, lack of support from leaders and students' parents, and heavier after-school service work have become the main sources of stress for primary and secondary school teachers in China (Yu et al., 2023), which has led to low professional well-being among teachers. In a school organization, the principal is the manager of the school, and the leadership style of the principal plays a key role in teachers' work behaviors and attitudes (Luo, 2019). Spiritual leadership, as a new type of leadership style, focuses on transmitting a positive value and giving it an attitudinal and behavioral dimension to the individual, thus giving the individual a sense of spiritual presence.
and membership belonging (Fry et al., 2005). In the field of education, principals' spiritual leadership strengthens teachers' confidence by establishing the future prospects of the school and conveying the hope and belief that the school's vision will be realized. Even when teachers encounter stress and challenges, they are able to make positive efforts to complete their teaching work, gain value and meaning from their work, and experience professional well-being. At the same time, principals who practice a spiritual leadership style can also create a favorable work atmosphere and work environment by giving selfless love and trust to their teachers, thus enabling them to build friendly interpersonal relationships. These can have a positive impact on teachers' professional well-being.

The study discovered that spiritual leadership significantly positively affects career calling, confirming hypothesis 2. This study's findings are consistent with those obtained by Ma (2021) and Wu and Lee (2020). This suggests that career calling as a positive work attitude and professional value orientation is positively influenced by spiritual leadership as a leadership style. Currently, China is moving towards an affluent society, and people's material living standards have been significantly improved. Despite the increasing material wealth of society, relying on material incentives alone can no longer meet the needs of teachers' professional growth, let alone the spiritual needs of primary and secondary school teachers (Yao & Zhang, 2022). As a result, the spiritual leadership style, which emphasizes intrinsic motivation and spiritual guidance, has gradually attracted extensive attention from scholars (Haque et al., 2022). In contrast to previous leadership theories that focused on performance and effectiveness, spiritual leadership pays more attention to the satisfaction of employees' spiritual needs in addition to the organizational vision to achieve harmony between organizational expectations and personal values (Fry, 2003). Intrinsic motivation based on spiritual needs is a lasting driving force for teachers' professional growth and progress (Wang, 2018). Spiritual leadership inspires teachers to match their own goals with those of the school, to work energetically, to seek work value, and to advance their career calling. The greater the level of spiritual leadership, the stronger the career calling of teachers (Li et al., 2023). Spiritual leadership can be a great tool in assisting individuals in discovering and pursuing their career calling. Therefore, principal spiritual leadership should be responsive to the changes of the times, focus on spiritual guidance, meet the spiritual needs of teachers, and continuously improve the teacher's career calling and spiritual power in the workplace.

The findings also supported hypothesis 3. Career calling has a significant and positive impact on teachers' professional well-being. The stronger the career calling, the greater teachers' professional well-being. This is in line with the findings of Zhang et al. (2020).
important professional psychological quality, career calling is an antecedent variable of teachers' professional well-being. Career calling is expressed as a strong feeling of an individual towards the career he or she is engaged in, and individuals with a high career calling can experience a strong meaning in the career they are engaged in (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). In the field of education in China, education departments and schools have been paying special attention to teachers' career calling (Liao et al., 2019). This is because Teachers with a high career calling have more professional identification with and internalization of their educational career and have a greater responsibility for their work (Tian & Ge, 2020). They pay less attention to money benefits and more attention to internal incentives, particularly the worth of the vocation in self-realization and social sense (Zhang & Gao, 2023), and they have a greater level of professional well-being. However, if teachers have a weaker career calling, they are not as positive and do not invest a lot of time and energy in their work, and therefore, are prone to burnout (Li et al., 2023). Moreover, teachers with low career calling are more likely to give up and get stuck in their jobs when they encounter frustrations and challenges in teaching and learning, which results in lower achievement, job satisfaction, and professional well-being (Lee et al., 2020). Therefore, career calling is of high value in helping primary and secondary school teachers to achieve professional well-being.

The mediation effect test results demonstrated that career calling mediated the prediction effect of spiritual leadership on teachers' professional well-being, confirming hypothesis 4. This shows that the reason why spiritual leadership can significantly and positively predict teachers' professional well-being is largely through the intermediary role of career calling. Teachers' career calling model was used to validate the relationship between spiritual leadership and professional well-being. Spiritual leadership attaches importance to the construction of values in the organization, and can subconsciously form intrinsic motivation for individuals through their behaviors so that individuals develop a sense of mission and belonging to the organization (Meng et al., 2018). Principals who practice a spiritual leadership style can convey a clear and uplifting vision to their teachers, prompting a strong sense of calling (Malone & Fry, 2003). Moreover, principal spiritual leadership adheres to the human-centered philosophy, empowers teachers with more attention and support and binds the whole organization together, infects teachers with spirit, love, and warmth, and activates the sense of mission within them (Liu et al., 2022). Teachers' original aspiration and mission, is the attitude and spiritual pursuit of educational work. Teachers who are motivated by their original aspirations and mission in a school organization will be more likely to achieve alignment between organizational expectations and self-expectations during their career development and
self-growth (Ma, 2021). Teachers with career calling always maintain a high degree of self-
requirement and a rigorous work attitude in their work, constantly improve their professional
skills and quality, and make unremitting efforts to realize their personal values and school goals
(Zhang, 2021). As a result, they are more willing to enjoy the fun brought by their work and
have higher professional well-being.

6.0 CONCLUSION
Based on self-determination theory, this study explored the mechanisms of principals' spiritual
leadership on primary and secondary school teachers’ professional well-being in the Chinese
context, using spiritual leadership as an external environmental factor, and verified that career
calling plays a mediating role. The findings of the empirical study were as follows: (1) Direct
effects. The findings indicated a positive correlation between spiritual leadership, career calling
and teachers' professional well-being. (2) Indirect effects. The results indicated that career
calling mediated the relationship between spiritual leadership and teachers' professional well-
being.

This study adds significant theoretical contributions to previous research. First, while
there have been previous studies on the effects of various leadership styles on employee well-
being, there are still few studies on the impacts of spiritual leadership on well-being,
particularly among teachers. This study investigates the mechanism of spiritual leadership's
influence on teachers’ professional well-being in Chinese primary and secondary schools,
expands awareness of the internal relationship between leadership style and well-being, and
adds to the literature on spiritual leadership. Second, the majority of the literature reflects
studies carried out in a Western setting, and this study not only adds new insights from China
to the literature on the professional well-being of spiritual leadership in the faculty group.
Therefore, this study validates career calling as a mediator between spiritual leadership and
teachers' professional well-being, giving us a better knowledge of how spiritual leadership
influences the process of teachers' professional well-being.

This study's results have implications for organizational management practice. First,
cultivate the principal's spiritual leadership style and play a constructive role of spiritual
leadership. Spiritual leadership not only enhances teachers' professional well-being directly but
also has an indirect impact on teachers' professional well-being through career calling. It
advises that superior departments emphasize and promote the formation of spiritual leadership
in principals, as well as build spiritual leadership style through special training, theoretical
learning, and practical actions. Second, spiritual leadership behavior should be completely
shown in school management practice to increase teachers' professional well-being. Based on a thorough understanding of the school's educational development characteristics, the principal should construct the school's long-term strategy and development plan, as well as establish high-performance expectations for teachers through a shared vision. Principals should value teachers' work, respect and care for their feelings and needs, foster a healthy working environment, reinforce teachers' career callings, increase their confidence and sense of accomplishment at work, and improve teachers' professional well-being.

We discovered various limitations in the study after reflecting on the entire research process. This study used a cross-sectional questionnaire. More longitudinal research or well-designed experiments could be utilized in the future to investigate the causal relationship between spiritual leadership and teachers' professional well-being. Although this study is concerned with the significant predictive effect of spiritual leadership on teachers' professional well-being, spiritual leadership has more to that for the teacher group. The effect of spiritual leadership on the organization and management system will also enhance the work enthusiasm of teachers. Therefore, researchers may pay more attention to the positive effect of spiritual leadership in the future, and investigate more diverse and effective strategies to promote teachers' professional well-being.

REFERENCES


