



The Transformative Effect of the Relationship Between Student Leadership and Spiritual Maturity

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Abstract— Spirituality is deeply woven into the fabric of Filipino culture, significantly influencing the beliefs and behaviors of individuals. This study explores the intricate relationship between spirituality and student leadership among Filipinos, focusing on how spiritual experiences shape leadership styles. The investigation is rooted in the Bolman and Deal Four Frames Model, which categorizes leadership into structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames. Using the Spiritual Experience Index-Revised (SEI-R) and a leadership survey based on the Bolman and Deal model, the research evaluates student leaders' spiritual maturity and leadership preferences at De La Salle University.

The study aims to fill gaps in existing literature by providing a nuanced understanding of how spirituality interplays with leadership development in a Filipino context. It employs Pearson's correlation coefficient to analyze the relationship between different leadership styles and levels of spiritual maturity. Findings indicate that higher spiritual maturity correlates positively with symbolic and human resource leadership, suggesting that spiritually mature students are more likely to use cultural and symbolic means to inspire and lead others. Conversely, a negative correlation was found between spiritual maturity and structural leadership and political leadership.

These insights contribute to the broader discourse on leadership development, emphasizing the importance of integrating spiritual values into leadership training programs. The results underline the necessity for educational institutions to foster environments where spiritual and leadership growth can fuse, ultimately preparing students to be more effective and ethically grounded leaders.

Keywords— Student Leaders, leadership styles, spirituality, student-led spiritual activities.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Spirituality has always been an integral part of Filipino culture. It is deeply embedded in the daily lives of individuals and plays a significant role in shaping their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. As such, it is not surprising that spirituality also plays a crucial role in the development of positive character among Filipino adolescents. The connection between spirituality and student leadership is an essential topic for educators, student affairs practitioners, researchers, and student leaders. This field of study is still relatively new, and consequently, there are differences in definitions, understanding, concepts, and other fundamental characteristics. Most of the existing literature on this subject has been in general publications rather than academic ones, and as a result, it may need more austerity (Dent, Higgins, & Wharff, 2005). The interest in spirituality and leadership has significantly



increased in the past decade, attracting the attention of academe, organizations, institutions, and researchers. The conceptual origins of spirituality and leadership are varied, with some scholars attributing their development to the perspective of Judaism and Christianity, while others attribute it to Indian ethos. Despite debates about its roots, there is consensus among researchers that interdisciplinary fields have shaped and expanded the concept of spirituality and leadership over recent years (Elias, Cole, Wilson-Jones, 2018).

The study gives the researchers an idea of the student leaders' current leadership styles and the Spiritual Experience Index. It presented different literature related to the study, the limitations, and the gap that it seeks to address further. We chose a good number to run the questionnaires from among the many student leaders of the University. Using the Spiritual Experience Index - Revised (SEI-R) instrument, we measured students' thoughts and feelings as they experienced their own spirituality. The researchers also used Bolman & Deal's (1991) four frames of leadership development to identify the leadership frames for student leaders.

Spirituality

Spirituality can be broadly defined as the search for meaning and purpose in life, a pursuit of wholeness, and a connection with a transcendent and higher entity (Hage, 2006, p. 303). Similarly, spirituality is often described as a bond or connection with and faith in a Higher Power and an amalgamation of values and beliefs with actions in daily life; the focus is on the personal aspects of the relationship with a Higher Power and less on the organizational or institutional beliefs and practices associated with religion (Zinnbauer, et al., 1997).

Belief in something beyond the material world, the significance individuals attribute to their life events, and the importance of these beliefs and meanings are all part of spirituality (Hill et al., 2000). Fukuyama (2003) mentioned that these beliefs and values serve as frameworks that shape how people understand different phenomena and how they behave in their daily lives.

Spirituality holds various meanings for different individuals and is expressed uniquely across various cultures. Zinnbauer, et al. (1997) emphasized the importance of investigating the relationship between spirituality and religion in the definition of spirituality. Certain people identify as both religious and spiritual, while others consider themselves spiritual but not religious. Currently, more studies are needed to explore the interpretation of spirituality in specific contexts or cultures, particularly among Filipinos. Through continued research, it is hoped that a deeper, more meaningful comprehension of spirituality, as it is perceived, communicated, and experienced within distinct sociocultural settings, can be achieved (de la Peña & Ouano, 2015).

Leadership

Developing strong leadership skills during adolescence can have a lasting positive impact on individuals as they enter adulthood. It equips them with essential tools such as communication, decision-making, and conflict resolution, which are vital in both personal and professional settings. Additionally, incorporating spiritual values into leadership development can foster a sense of purpose and ethical decision-making, promoting a more holistic approach to leadership.



Studies on leadership have been diverse, involving an assessment from various viewpoints (Bennis, 1995). Leadership is the capacity to assist and empower a group of individuals to achieve a shared objective (Hoy & Misekl, 2001). Yukl (1998) perceived leadership as a social progression in which members can impact the determination of objectives, procedures, and results and may even reshape the dynamics of power relationships within the institution. Leadership among students in educational institutions is a unique area in both academic study and co-curricular aspects because education is fundamentally a moral undertaking (Bolman & Deal, 2008). However, recent developments over the past few years have indicated a renewed emphasis on nurturing crucial leadership skills in students, driven mainly by the growing demand for measurable learning outcomes (Dugan and Komives, 2007).

Student Leadership

Student leadership represents a unique domain in both research and practice for youth formators. The study of Tam and Adams (2018) examined the leadership styles of student leaders in Malaysian secondary and postsecondary schools using Bolman and Deal's Leadership Orientations Survey (LOS-self). The analysis focused on four leadership styles: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. Demographic factors such as gender, age, and ethnicity of the student leaders were also considered.

The findings revealed notable differences in leadership styles between genders, between secondary and postsecondary school students, and among the three primary ethnic groups of student leaders. The human resource frame emerged as the most prevalent, followed by the structural frame. This study underscores the significance of understanding and developing multi-frame leadership styles, as the application of multiple frames is associated with greater leadership effectiveness. While the study's model aids in enhancing student leaders' comprehension of various leadership frameworks, advancing leadership capabilities to be effective leaders within the organization, this current study highlights the need for a better understand how different leadership styles can be applied in diverse cultural contexts such spirituality and its impact on student development through the activities they initiate and conduct.

The current study hopes to shed light on the role of mentoring and how it can enhance leadership in the context of spiritual development among students.

Student Spirituality and Spiritual Activities

Spiritual development is essential for young adults as it helps them cultivate independence, strength, and accountability. This vital aspect of human life drives individuals to seek safety, purpose, fulfillment, and a sense of faith (Bual & Cena, 2021). The development of the spiritual well-being of young adults is best nurtured in schools, making them the ideal institutions for this purpose. These institutions are well-suited to cultivate students because they integrate values education into the curriculum (Aguas, 2019). Kotaiah (2024) highlighted the positive influence of value-based education on students' spiritual aspects. Therefore, it's crucial to recognize that the nurturing and development of students' spiritual well-being are facilitated by incorporating values education within the school curriculum (Johnson, 2001).



Although past efforts have reviewed the existing literature on student leadership and spirituality, their purposes have varied. In the study of Manshukhani and Resurreccion (2009) which utilized a thematic content analysis to analyze data from focus group discussions, revealing that family, friends, teachers, and the community influence adolescents' spirituality through exposure to religious beliefs and practices. Challenging personal experiences and negative models can hinder spiritual development, while spiritual experiences such as divine encounters and altruism contribute positively. The findings highlight the importance of spirituality in shaping positive character traits among Filipino youth. Identifying the relationships between student leadership and spirituality helps formulators develop an appropriate intervention in terms of leadership and spirituality programs.

The University Student Government (USG) and the Council of Student Organizations (CSO) of De La Salle University (DLSU) are urged to create and oversee a variety of spiritual events for the student population. In the academic year 2022 - 2023, they have executed a total of 33 activities centered on spirituality.

Leadership Activities

DLSU SLIFE is the arm of the university that caters to students' leadership development and involvement. SLIFE formulators are attuned to developing student leadership, which involves key qualities like informed decision-making, collaboration, compassion, agility, intentionality, discernment, and accessibility. These traits help student leaders make positive impacts in their communities and prepare them for future roles. Student leaders have the potential to make significant positive impacts in their communities by demonstrating transformative traits such as informed decision-making, collaboration, compassion, agility, intentionality, discernment, and accessibility (Buenvinida & Ramos, 2019; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Encouraging students to develop these qualities fosters a supportive, inclusive, and innovative environment, inspiring them to lead with purpose and become the resource for the next set of student leaders (Foster, 2005).

The leadership activities of DLSU SLIFE include programs designed for new student leaders, seasoned student leaders, and those who have been elected to leadership roles.

The Framework

The framework used in the study, The Transformative effect of the relationship between student Leadership and Spiritual Maturity is based on the Bolman and Deal Four Frames Model. This model, developed by Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal in 1991, provides a comprehensive approach to understanding leadership and organizational dynamics by presenting four different perspectives or "frames" through which leaders can view and interpret situations.

The four frames in the Bolman and Deal model are: (1) Structural Frame: Focuses on organization and structure, emphasizing clarity, roles, goals, and rules; (2) Human Resource Frame: Emphasizes people and their needs, skills, relationships, and empowerment; (3) Political Frame: Views organizations as arenas of power and competition, highlighting conflict, negotiation, and influence, and (4) Symbolic Frame: Focuses on culture, meaning, and symbolism within organizations, emphasizing values, beliefs, and rituals.



In this study, the researchers used a survey instrument based on the Bolman and Deal model to assess the leadership frame preferences of student leaders from USG and CSO. The survey included questions related to each of the four frames, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of how student leaders approach leadership in their student government and student organizations.

The reliability and validity of the instrument were established through expert review and statistical analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha values for each frame indicated high internal consistency, suggesting that the survey was a reliable tool for measuring leadership frame preferences.

By applying the Bolman and Deal Four Frames Model, the study aimed to provide insights into the leadership styles and preferences of DLSU student leaders, as well as to identify any potential areas for improvement in leadership development programs. The framework allowed for a nuanced understanding of how student leaders perceive and approach their roles within educational settings, shedding light on the complex dynamics of student leadership.

The researchers used the Spiritual Experience Index (SEI) developed by Vicky Genia. It is a scale developed to measure spiritual maturity in individuals of diverse religious and spiritual beliefs. The SEI consists of 23 items that are rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The internal reliability of the SEI was found to be high, with a Cronbach's alpha statistic of .87 after eliminating some items with negative correlations. Higher scores on the SEI are associated with lower levels of dogmatism and intolerance of ambiguity.

The SEI is grounded in a developmental conceptualization of faith rather than a multidimensional approach. It is designed to assess an individual's level of spiritual maturity rather than categorize them into specific religious types. The scale aims to measure adaptive spiritual functioning and is considered a strong indicator of spiritual maturity compared to other existing scales.

In summary, the SEI provides a reliable and valid measure of spiritual maturity by assessing individuals' responses to 23 items related to spiritual experiences. Higher scores on the SEI indicate greater spiritual maturity, lower levels of dogmatism and intolerance of ambiguity, and a potential positive correlation with self-esteem.

2. METHODOLOGY

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and spiritual maturity among students. These studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between leadership styles and spiritual maturity. This paper explores the relationship between students' leadership styles and their level of spiritual maturity using Pearson's correlation coefficient (Pearson r). By providing a numerical estimate, this correlational study clarifies how these two variables are interconnected. The analysis delves into the nature of the relationship and examines the types of spiritual activities that are initiated.

2.1 Profile of Students

The survey respondents showcased a diverse range of ages, predominantly in their early twenties. Most participants, specifically five out of seven, were 20 years old, while others were either 21, 22, or 23 years old, with one respondent being notably younger at 19 years old.



Gender representation was relatively balanced, though slightly skewed towards female participants, who comprised 71.4% of the respondents. The remaining 28.6% were male, indicating a diverse yet predominantly female group.

In terms of leadership experience, respondents displayed varying years of service. Two participants had 1 year of leadership experience, and another two had 2 years of experience. One respondent specifically noted having 2 years of leadership experience at DLSU. Meanwhile, one individual reported having no leadership experience, and another stood out with an impressive 9 years of service. This variety highlights a mix of emerging leaders and those with substantial experience.

2.1 Instrument

In the context of the Bolman and Deal Four Frames Model, the four frames (Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic) can be measured using various methods to assess leadership preferences and behaviors. The researchers used surveys or questionnaires based on the key concepts of each frame to assess individuals' preferences.

Participants rate their agreement with statements related to each frame, providing insights into their dominant frames. By employing these measurement approaches, researchers and organizations can gain valuable insights into how leaders perceive and enact leadership through the Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic frames, as outlined in the Bolman and Deal Four Frames Model.

The measurement of the Bolman and Deal Four Frames Model in the study *The Transformative Effect of the Relationship Between Student Leadership and Spiritual Maturity* involves assessing how student leaders apply the Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic frames in their leadership practices. The study utilizes a structured approach to measure the preferred leadership frame of the student leaders.

The researchers utilized the Four Frames Model, the questionnaire was prepared using Google forms and distributed online by sharing the target respondents' links. The thoughts and feelings of the respondents were explored by asking them about their thoughts and feelings on their spiritual maturity and leadership styles.

Data obtained from the instrument were kept in the Google drive of the proponents subject to the data privacy guidelines of the University.

2.2 Data Analysis

This study employs Pearson's correlation coefficient (Pearson r) to analyze the relationship between four types of leadership—Structural Leaders, Human Resource Leaders, Political Leaders, and Symbolic Leaders—and the level of spiritual maturity, measured on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 6 (highest).

Pearson r provides a numerical estimate of the degree and direction of the correlation between these variables. The analysis reveals how each leadership style correlates with varying levels of spiritual maturity, shedding light on the strength of these relationships and the types of spiritual activities initiated by students.



3. RESULTS

The main goal of the present study was to find the relationship of the leadership styles and spiritual maturity of the student leaders from De La Salle University.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Spiritual Maturity	4.4823	.90512	16
Structural Leader	16.1875	3.78098	16
HumanResource Leader	20.4375	2.96578	16
Political Leader	11.6875	2.65126	16
Symbolic Leader	13.8750	2.18708	16

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics provided a summary of the central tendency and variability of the variables related to different leadership styles.

Spiritual Maturity. The mean Spiritual Maturity score is 4.4823 with a standard deviation of 0.90512. This indicates that, on average, the participants scored close to 4.5 on Spiritual Maturity, with a relatively low variability around this mean.

Structural Leader. The mean score for Structural Leader is 16.1875, with a standard deviation of 3.78098. This suggests that the participants' scores for Structural Leadership varied more compared to Spiritual Maturity.

Human Resource Leader. The mean score for Human Resource Leader is 20.4375, with a standard deviation of 2.96578. This indicates that the participants' scores for Human Resource Leadership clustered around 20 with less variability.

Political Leader. The mean score for Political Leader is 11.6875, with a standard deviation of 2.65126. Participants' scores for Political Leadership were lower on average compared to other leadership styles.

Symbolic Leader. The mean score for Symbolic Leader is 13.8750, with a standard deviation of 2.18708. Participants' scores for Symbolic Leadership fell between the scores for Political

Table 2. Frames of Leadership and Spiritual Maturity

		Spiritual Maturity
Spiritual Maturity	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	N	16
Structural Leader	Pearson Correlation	-.273
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.307
	N	16



Human Resource Leader	Pearson Correlation	.114
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.675
	N	16
Political Leader	Pearson Correlation	-.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.914
	N	16
Symbolic Leader	Pearson Correlation	.388
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.138
	N	16

**Correlation is not significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2 correlations provide insights into how Spiritual Maturity may be associated with different leadership frames, highlighting both positive and negative relationships among the leadership qualities examined in the study.

The correlation between Spiritual Maturity and Symbolic Leader is 0.388. This positive correlation suggests that as individuals' Spiritual Maturity increases, there is a tendency for them to exhibit more Symbolic Leadership qualities.

Structural Leader and Spiritual Maturity: The correlation between Structural Leader and Spiritual Maturity is -0.273. This negative correlation indicates that as Spiritual Maturity increases, there is a tendency for individuals to exhibit fewer Structural Leadership qualities.

Political Leader and Spiritual Maturity: The correlation between Structural Leader and Spiritual Maturity is -0.029. This negative correlation indicates that as Spiritual Maturity increases, there is a tendency for individuals to exhibit lesser Political Leadership qualities.

Human Resource Leader and Spiritual Maturity: The correlation between Human Resource Leader and Spiritual Maturity is 0.114. This positive correlation implies a slight tendency for individuals with higher Spiritual Maturity to also exhibit Human Resource Leadership qualities.

4. DISCUSSION

The correlation between Spiritual Maturity and Symbolic Leadership is 0.388. This positive relationship indicates that as student leaders' Spiritual Maturity increases, they tend to exhibit more Symbolic Leadership qualities. Both frameworks emphasize values, beliefs, and symbolism within organizations. Spiritual maturity includes developing one's own set of spiritual practices and beliefs as well as developing one's sense of purpose, empathy, compassion, and self-awareness. Using culture, meaning, and rituals to inspire and drive followers toward a common objective is known as symbolic leadership. Symbolic leadership involves utilizing culture, meaning, and rituals to inspire and motivate followers toward a common goal.

The correlation between Structural Leadership and Spiritual Maturity is -0.273, indicating a negative relationship. This means that as Spiritual Maturity of our student leader's increases, they are likely to display less Structural



Leadership characteristics. In other words, those who are more spiritually mature may not manifest rigid leadership structures as much. This aligns with the Human Resource and Symbolic frames, which both tend to focus on the importance of giving importance to people and their beliefs within their organization.

The correlation between a Human Resource Leader and Spiritual Maturity is 0.114. A Human Resource Leader with a high level of spiritual maturity is someone who not only possesses the needed specialized skills for their role, but also has a very good understanding of human behavior and emotions. This allows them to effectively develop their own spirituality by building relationships, while having the capacity to resolve conflicts within the organization.

A negative correlation (-0.029) between political leaders and spiritual maturity suggests that as student leaders assume higher roles, their level of spiritual maturity decreases. This could be due to the demands and compromises that come along in political life. These may be in conflict with the principles of spiritual growth and ethical standards. Generally, having spiritual maturity could become increasingly difficult for political leaders.

5. CONCLUSION

The importance of having a grasp of the level of spiritual maturity of our student leaders is of priority to teachers, student affairs formators and parents. This is vital in creating formation programs and activities that would harness not only the leadership potentials of our student leaders, but also their personal spiritual maturity.

Findings indicate that higher spiritual maturity correlates positively with symbolic and human resource leaders, suggesting that spiritually mature students are more likely to maximize human potentials and values and traditions as means to inspire and lead others. Conversely, a negative correlation was found between structural leadership and political leaders. These students are more concerned with fixed and established structures, guidelines and policies, and they are more a believer of traditional and conventional politics.

6. RECOMMENDATION

To enhance the impact of student leadership programs and activities on both the development of leadership abilities and personal spiritual maturity, it is recommended that educational institutions integrate a multi-faceted approach that emphasizes the development of spiritual maturity alongside leadership skills. Specifically, educational institutions could:

Reinforce Spirituality into Leadership - enhance existing programs and modules that explore the intersection between spirituality and leadership can provide student leaders with the knowledge and tools to understand how their spiritual growth affects their leadership style.

Deepen Reflective Practices - enrich the experience of student leaders by deepening their practice of meditation, journaling, or retreats that allow them to reflect on their personal growth, leadership experiences, and the role of spirituality in their lives

Create Mentorship Programs - pair student leaders with mentors who exemplify spiritually mature leadership styles. Provide them with role models and guidance, such as mentorship programs on balancing structural



leadership demands with spiritual values, navigating the complexities of leadership in political contexts, and using symbolic leadership effectively.

To end, supportive Student Affairs programs will surely contribute to the development of student leaders' styles for leadership and their spiritual maturity. The offices concerned should develop programs that will balance both their capacity to lead and to maturely enhance their spirituality.

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