



## Spiritual Competency and Its Impact on Job Satisfaction Among Employees: A Qualitative Exploration from the Employee Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how spiritual competency contributes to job satisfaction among employees at Perumda Dharma Jaya, an Indonesian public enterprise operating under high job demands, public accountability, and bureaucratic procedures. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, data were collected from four participants representing managerial, supervisory, staff, and intern roles through semi-structured interviews lasting 60-90 minutes, workplace observations, and document review. Manual thematic analysis generated four main themes: (1) alignment between personal and organizational values, (2) ethical self-regulation and resilience during work pressure, (3) empathy, mutual respect, and mentoring as relational sources of satisfaction, and (4) tensions caused by policy-practice gaps and uneven cultural inclusivity. The findings show that spiritual competency is not identical to religiosity, spiritual leadership, workplace spirituality, or ethical behavior; rather, it is an employee capability that enables meaning-making, ethical judgment, respectful relationships, and adaptive coping. Practically, the study recommends inclusive values-based HR policies, leadership training, transparent feedback mechanisms, and employee-led spiritual development programs that balance professional expectations with diverse spiritual needs.

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### INTRODUCTION

Employees in public enterprises are expected to meet operational targets while remaining accountable to public stakeholders. At Perumda Dharma Jaya, these expectations are experienced through high work demands, formal procedures, and the need to adapt to policy and market changes. Such conditions can influence employees not only through workload, but also through their perception of whether their work has meaning, whether workplace relationships are respectful, and whether organizational practices are consistent with declared values (Zaim et al., 2022; Triharjanti & Tjahjono, 2023).

Spiritual competency is relevant in this context because it concerns the capability to recognize spiritual or meaning-related needs at work and to translate values such as integrity, empathy, self-

awareness, and purpose into daily behavior. The concept is narrower than workplace spirituality and broader than isolated ethical conduct. It does not refer only to religious rituals or to the spiritual style of leaders. Instead, it describes a set of employee capabilities - knowledge, skills, and attitudes - that enable individuals to interpret work as meaningful, maintain ethical self-control, respect colleagues with different beliefs, and cope constructively with pressure (Pearce et al., 2019; Alshakhshir et al., 2024).

Previous studies have linked spiritual leadership, workplace spirituality, and organizational commitment, especially in education, healthcare, and faith-based organizations (Siswanto et al., 2023; Lalani et al., 2021). However, fewer studies explain how spiritual competency is experienced by employees themselves in Indonesian public enterprises. This gap is important because public-sector workplaces are shaped by hierarchy, formal accountability, and cultural-religious diversity. A top-down leadership view may overlook how employees interpret spiritual values in their own roles and how those values contribute to job satisfaction (Bakhri, 2021; Iskanto et al., 2022, 2024; Naini & Riyanto, 2023).

This study therefore asks: How do employees at Perumda Dharma Jaya understand spiritual competency, and how does it shape their job satisfaction? The study contributes by clarifying the conceptual position of spiritual competency, developing an employee-centered framework, and showing how spiritual competency operates through meaning, ethical alignment, resilience, and relational support. The practical aim is to support human resource management (HRM) strategies that strengthen job satisfaction without reducing spirituality to one religious tradition or using spiritual language as a substitute for fair employment practices.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual positioning and operational definition

A central weakness in earlier drafts of this study was conceptual overlap among spiritual competency, spiritual leadership, workplace spirituality, religiosity, and ethical behavior. This revision positions spiritual competency as an employee-level and manager-applicable capability consisting of knowledge, skills, and attitudes for integrating meaning, ethical awareness, empathy, and respect for spiritual diversity into workplace action. It is operationally indicated by: (1) awareness of personal and organizational values; (2) ability to communicate honestly and empathetically; (3) capacity for ethical self-regulation under pressure; (4) openness to diverse spiritual or religious backgrounds; and (5) ability to transform spiritual meaning into constructive work behavior.

*Table 1. Conceptual boundaries of spiritual competency*

Concept	Core focus	Distinction from spiritual competency
Spiritual competency	Employee capability to apply meaning, values, ethical self-awareness, empathy, and spiritual sensitivity in work.	Main construct of this study. It is observable through knowledge, skills, and attitudes in daily work behavior.
Spiritual leadership	A leadership approach that uses vision, hope/faith, altruistic love, and calling to influence followers.	Leadership is a source or facilitator of spiritual competency, but spiritual competency can also be enacted by non-leaders.
Workplace spirituality	A broader organizational climate that supports meaningful work, community, and value alignment.	It describes the work environment; spiritual competency describes individual capability within that environment.



Religiosity	Commitment to beliefs, rituals, and practices associated with a religion.	Religiosity can inform spiritual competency, but spiritual competency must remain inclusive of different beliefs and non-ritual expressions.
Ethical behavior	Compliance with moral principles, rules, and professional standards.	Ethical behavior is one outcome or expression of spiritual competency, but does not capture meaning-making, empathy, and resilience.

### Theoretical synthesis

Spiritual competency theory emphasizes that spiritual concerns at work can be understood as capabilities rather than as abstract beliefs. In this view, competency includes awareness, knowledge, and skills that help employees respond to value conflicts, stress, and interpersonal issues. Workplace spirituality theory complements this by explaining that employees are more likely to experience meaningful work when the organization supports purpose, community, and congruence between personal and institutional values (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). Together, these perspectives suggest that spiritual competency is both individual and contextual: employees may possess spiritual capabilities, but their expression depends on organizational support (Ananda et al., 2024; Lathiifa & Chaerudin, 2022; Supriadi et al., 2022).

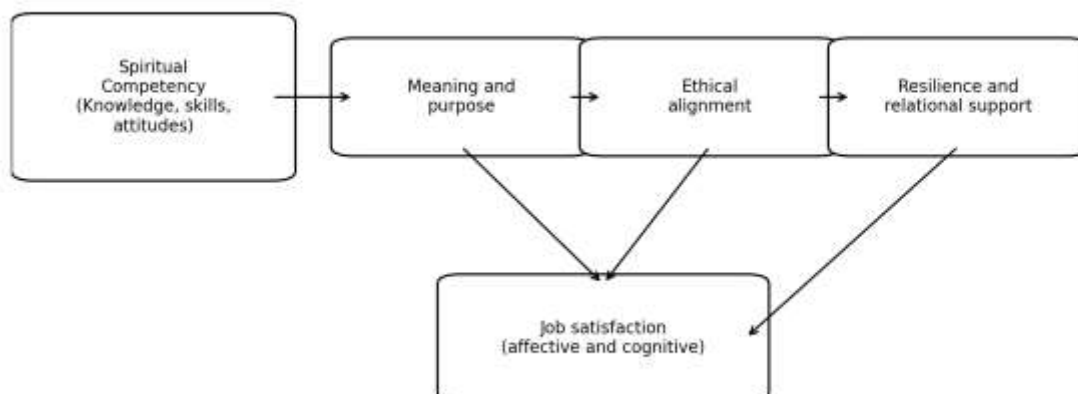
Job satisfaction theory provides the outcome logic for this study. Locke (1976) defines job satisfaction as a positive emotional state resulting from appraisal of one's work and work experiences. Herzberg's two-factor theory distinguishes motivators such as achievement, recognition, and responsibility from hygiene factors such as policies and working conditions (Herzberg et al., 1959). The Job Characteristics Model further argues that meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results influence motivation and satisfaction (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Spiritual competency is therefore expected to affect job satisfaction by strengthening meaningfulness, ethical coherence, supportive relationships, and resilience, while its effect can be weakened when policies, hierarchy, or exclusionary practices contradict the values being promoted.

The research gap addressed here is not simply whether spirituality is beneficial at work. Rather, the gap concerns how employees in an Indonesian public enterprise interpret spiritual competency as a practical capability and how that capability influences job satisfaction under bureaucratic and culturally diverse conditions. Prior research often treats spirituality as leadership style or organizational climate. This study extends that discussion by locating spiritual competency in employee experience and by examining both positive and problematic consequences.

### Conceptual framework

The framework guiding the study proposes that spiritual competency influences job satisfaction through four mechanisms. First, value awareness helps employees connect personal meaning to organizational purpose. Second, ethical alignment enables employees to make decisions that feel morally coherent. Third, resilience helps employees cope with pressure without losing motivation. Fourth, relational support strengthens empathy, respect, and belonging. The effect of these

mechanisms is conditioned by organizational context, particularly policy-practice alignment, leadership support, and cultural inclusivity.



*Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking spiritual competency and job satisfaction*

## **METHOD**

### **Research design and site**

This study used a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of employees regarding spiritual competency and job satisfaction. Phenomenology was appropriate because the purpose was not to measure the statistical strength of relationships, but to understand how employees make sense of spiritual values in daily work. The research site was Perumda Dharma Jaya, a public enterprise in Indonesia whose employees face public accountability, operational demands, and formal administrative procedures.

### **Participants and sampling**

Participants were selected purposively to represent different organizational positions and exposure to daily work practices. The inclusion criteria were: involvement in Perumda Dharma Jaya work activities, direct experience with organizational values and workplace interactions, willingness to participate voluntarily, and ability to reflect on job satisfaction and meaning at work. Four participants were included: Leonardi (IT Manager), Ilham (Supervisor), Arul (Staff), and Gustian (Intern). The participant labels are used consistently across the Method, Results, and Discussion sections.

*Table 2. Participant profile and selection rationale*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Selection rationale</b>
Leonardi	IT Manager	Represents managerial responsibility, coordination, and strategic view of values in organizational practice.
Ilham	Supervisor	Represents middle-management mediation between policy expectations and frontline realities.
Arul	Staff	Represents regular employee experience in daily operations and team collaboration.
Gustian	Intern	Represents a newcomer perspective on organizational



		culture, mentoring, and belonging.
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Although the sample was small, it was adequate for this bounded phenomenological inquiry because the aim was depth and role diversity rather than broad generalization. Saturation was assessed as thematic sufficiency: after the fourth interview, no new first-order codes emerged beyond the categories already identified, namely value alignment, ethical self-control, relational respect, resilience, and policy-practice gaps. Member checking confirmed that these themes reflected participants' experiences. The study therefore treats the findings as context-specific and transferable only to settings with similar public-sector and cultural characteristics.

### Data collection and interview protocol

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. Each participant was interviewed individually, and clarification questions were asked when necessary to deepen the description of lived experience. Observations of workplace interactions and review of available organizational materials were used as supporting data to contextualize the interview accounts. Informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were emphasized before data collection.

*Table 3. Sample interview protocol*

Focus area	Sample questions
Understanding of spiritual competency	What does spiritual competency mean to you in daily work? Which values or behaviors show it most clearly?
Job satisfaction	What workplace experiences make you feel satisfied or dissatisfied? How do values, meaning, or relationships affect this feeling?
Ethical self-regulation	Can you describe a work situation in which patience, honesty, or self-control helped you respond to pressure?
Relational support	How do respect, empathy, mentoring, or communication influence your motivation at work?
Inclusivity and policy-practice alignment	Are spiritual values applied consistently in the organization? Do any practices feel inclusive or exclusive?
HR implications	What programs or policies would help employees develop spiritual competency while respecting diverse beliefs?

### Data analysis and trustworthiness

Data were analyzed manually using Miles and Huberman's interactive model: data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. Interview transcripts and observation notes were read repeatedly. Meaningful statements were assigned initial codes, similar codes were clustered into

categories, and categories were developed into themes. A coding matrix was used to compare evidence across participants and to separate descriptive findings from interpretation. No specialized qualitative software was used; coding was conducted through a structured spreadsheet and analytic memos.

*Table 4. Coding framework and theme development*

<b>Illustrative raw data</b>	<b>Initial code</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>
"kesadaran nilai pribadi" and "kejujuran dalam komunikasi"	Value awareness; honest communication	Personal-organizational value congruence	Value alignment and work motivation
"kontrol diri dan kesadaran nilai" during work pressure	Self-control; reflective response	Ethical self-regulation	Resilience under pressure
"lingkungan kerja saling menghargai"	Mutual respect; belonging	Relational support	Empathy, respect, and mentoring
Concern that spiritual activities may privilege one tradition	Exclusion risk	Cultural inclusivity	Limits of spiritual competency
Gap between stated values and daily policy practice	Rhetoric-practice inconsistency	Policy-practice alignment	Limits of spiritual competency

Trustworthiness was strengthened through four strategies. Credibility was addressed through member checking and the use of direct participant quotations. Dependability was supported by documenting the interview protocol, coding steps, and theme development. Confirmability was supported through triangulation of interviews, observations, and documents. Transferability was supported by describing the organizational context, participant roles, and limits of the sample.

## **RESULTS**

The Results section presents empirical findings only. Interpretation and comparison with previous studies are reserved for the Discussion section.

### **Theme 1: Alignment of personal and organizational values**

Participants associated job satisfaction with the feeling that their personal values were consistent with the values practiced at work. Leonardi described spiritual competency as "kesadaran nilai pribadi" and "kejujuran dalam komunikasi." He also stated, "Ketika kita sejalan dengan nilai pribadi, lebih termotivasi bekerja" (when we are aligned with personal values, we are more motivated to work). This indicates that value alignment was experienced as a source of motivation rather than as an abstract principle.

Ilham similarly described spiritual competency as "sikap dan nilai yang dibawa saat bekerja" (attitudes and values brought to work), including integrity, empathy, and self-control. For Ilham, satisfaction was not based only on position or task completion, but on contribution to others and to the organization. Arul connected spiritual values with patience and mutual respect, while Gustian emphasized that a supportive environment helped him feel accepted as an intern.

### **Theme 2: Ethical self-regulation and resilience under pressure**

Participants reported that spiritual competency helped them manage work pressure by encouraging reflection before action. Ilham described the importance of "pemikiran matang dan kreativitas" (mature thinking and creativity) when resolving technical or team challenges. He also emphasized "kontrol diri dan kesadaran nilai" (self-control and value awareness) as important for maintaining team morale during difficult situations.

Arul linked spiritual competency to values practiced in daily life, including patience, discipline, and responsibility. These values helped him remain calm when facing routine work demands. Gustian



described learning from senior colleagues who encouraged him to "menghargai usaha orang lain" (value others' efforts), which helped him understand workplace expectations and respond more constructively to feedback.

### **Theme 3: Empathy, mutual respect, and mentoring**

A repeated finding was that spiritual competency appeared in interpersonal behavior. Participants described job satisfaction as stronger when employees felt heard, respected, and supported. Gustian stated that "lingkungan kerja saling menghargai" (a mutually respectful work environment) was important for his comfort and satisfaction. Leonardi emphasized "menjadi contoh bagi tim" (being a role model for the team), suggesting that spiritual competency was enacted through daily conduct and not only through formal policies.

Ilham used the expression "bangun manusia, bukan hanya sistem" (build people, not only systems) to describe the importance of mentoring and developing colleagues. Arul also identified empathy and personal awareness as values that strengthened collaboration. These accounts show that relational support was a visible form of spiritual competency in the workplace.

### **Theme 4: Policy-practice gaps and inclusivity concerns**

Participants also identified limitations. Arul noted that spiritual language or programs could feel inconsistent when daily practices did not reflect the same values. This was experienced as a gap between organizational rhetoric and operational reality. Participants also raised concerns that spiritual initiatives could be interpreted as too closely associated with one religious tradition if not designed inclusively.

These findings indicate that spiritual competency supported job satisfaction when it was practiced through fairness, empathy, and respect. However, participants were less positive when spiritual values were not integrated into formal HR policies or when they appeared to marginalize employees with different beliefs or levels of religious expression.

*Table 5. Key empirical findings on spiritual competency and job satisfaction*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Empirical evidence</b>	<b>Relevance to job satisfaction</b>
Value alignment	Participants connected motivation with congruence between personal values and organizational values.	Alignment increased meaning, commitment, and willingness to contribute.
Ethical self-regulation and resilience	Self-control, patience, and reflective judgment were used to manage pressure and conflict.	Employees felt more capable of coping with demands and maintaining morale.
Empathy, respect, and mentoring	Participants emphasized mutual respect, role modeling, and mentoring as daily expressions of spiritual competency.	Supportive relationships enhanced belonging and emotional satisfaction.
Policy-practice gaps and inclusivity	Participants noted inconsistencies between stated values and practice, and possible exclusion when	Inconsistency and exclusion reduced trust and limited the positive effect of spiritual competency.

	programs privilege one tradition.	
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## **DISCUSSION**

### **Interpretation of findings**

The findings show that spiritual competency contributes to job satisfaction through meaning, ethical coherence, resilience, and relational support. This supports job satisfaction theory because employees appraise their work more positively when the work environment enables meaningful contribution and respectful relationships (Locke, 1976; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). It also aligns with workplace spirituality theory, which argues that meaningful work and community are central to positive employee experiences (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000).

At the same time, the study demonstrates that spiritual competency is not automatically beneficial. Its positive effect depends on whether organizational practices are consistent with declared values. When spiritual values are promoted rhetorically but not reflected in fairness, communication, or HR systems, employees may experience the initiative as symbolic rather than supportive. This finding extends prior studies on spiritual leadership and HRM by showing that employee perceptions of authenticity are crucial in public-sector contexts (Sapta et al., 2021; Zaim et al., 2022).

The inclusivity finding is particularly important for Indonesia's culturally religious workplace context. Spiritual competency may be informed by religious values, including Islamic concepts such as trust, patience, and self-purification. However, in an organizational setting it must be framed in a way that respects diverse beliefs and avoids equating spirituality with a single religious identity. This distinction clarifies the conceptual difference between religiosity and spiritual competency. Religiosity is one possible source of values, whereas spiritual competency is the practical and inclusive capability to enact those values ethically and respectfully.

### **Theoretical contribution**

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it clarifies spiritual competency as an employee-level capability rather than treating it interchangeably with spiritual leadership, workplace spirituality, religiosity, or ethical behavior. Second, it extends workplace spirituality theory by showing how spiritual competency functions in a bureaucratic public enterprise where values must operate alongside formal rules, hierarchy, and public accountability. Third, it proposes an employee-centered framework in which spiritual competency influences job satisfaction through four mechanisms: value alignment, ethical self-regulation, resilience, and relational support.

The findings also suggest a revised conceptual framework: spiritual competency should be understood as a situated capability. It produces positive outcomes only when supported by inclusive culture and policy-practice alignment. This revision prevents the simplistic conclusion that spiritual initiatives always increase satisfaction. Instead, it shows that spiritual competency must be embedded in fair, inclusive, and credible organizational systems.

### **Practical implications for HRM**

For Perumda Dharma Jaya and similar public-sector organizations, the findings imply that spiritual competency should be incorporated into HRM without replacing conventional HR responsibilities. Values-based training can help managers and employees practice reflective communication, ethical decision-making, and empathy. However, such programs must be connected to recruitment, performance management, grievance handling, career development, and employee support systems.

Four HR actions are recommended. First, develop inclusive spiritual competency training that uses universal values such as integrity, empathy, meaning, and service while respecting different religious



or non-religious backgrounds. Second, create feedback mechanisms so employees can report whether spiritual initiatives are genuinely reflected in daily practice. Third, encourage employee-led programs, such as mentoring circles or reflective discussions, so spiritual competency is not only top-down. Fourth, balance spiritual programs with tangible HR improvements such as fair workload, transparent communication, and professional development opportunities.

## CONCLUSION

This study found that spiritual competency enhances job satisfaction among employees at Perumda Dharma Jaya when it helps employees connect work with meaning, act ethically under pressure, build respectful relationships, and feel supported by the organization. The study also found important limitations: spiritual competency can lose credibility when organizational practices contradict stated values or when spiritual programs appear culturally exclusive.

The revised contribution of this study is the development of an employee-centered understanding of spiritual competency in an Indonesian public enterprise. Rather than presenting spirituality as a universal solution, the study shows that spiritual competency is a situated capability whose effectiveness depends on inclusive culture, policy-practice alignment, and credible HR support. This argument responds to the need for clearer conceptualization, stronger theoretical positioning, and more rigorous presentation of qualitative findings.

The study remains limited by its single-site design and small number of participants. The findings should therefore be understood as analytically transferable rather than statistically generalizable. Future research should use comparative case studies or mixed methods to test whether the four mechanisms identified here - value alignment, ethical self-regulation, resilience, and relational support - also explain job satisfaction in other public enterprises and culturally diverse workplaces.

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