

How Workplace Spirituality Translates into Prosocial Motivation: Mediating Role of Ethical Climate in Higher Education

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Abstract

Grounded on Social Cognitive Theory, this study examines the influence of workplace spirituality on prosocial motivation among university teachers through the mediation of ethical climate. The study adopted an explanatory research design, and data were purposively collected from 259 university teachers across higher education institutions in Kathmandu Valley. Data was analyzed using covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM). The findings reveal that workplace spirituality positively influences both ethical climate and prosocial motivation. Furthermore, ethical climate fully mediates the relationship between workplace spirituality and prosocial motivation. These findings extend ethical theory by explaining how workplace spirituality translates into prosocial motivation and offer practical insights for leaders and policymakers seeking to promote ethical and spiritually supportive workplaces. This study introduces a moral-spiritual convergence perspective and extends prior findings while enhancing understanding of spirituality, ethics, and prosocial behavior in the higher education context.

Keywords: Ethical climate, higher education, prosocial motivation, social cognitive, workplace spirituality

Introduction

In contemporary higher education systems, the role of university teachers extends far beyond knowledge transmission, encompassing mentorship, ethical guidance, and the cultivation of socially responsible graduates (Ocupa-cabrera et al., 2025). In this context, prosocial motivation, defined as the intrinsic desire to benefit others through one's work, has emerged as a critical determinant of employee effectiveness (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017), particularly in knowledge-intensive settings such as higher education. Studies across organizational psychology and education demonstrate that employees with higher prosocial motivation are likely to demonstrate ethical engagement, collaboration, and discretionary behaviors in supporting others, which are crucial in service-intensive institutions (Nath, 2025).

In universities, teachers are not only responsible for teaching and knowledge dissemination but are also expected to contribute to students' holistic development, including their personal growth, ethical orientation, and future career readiness (de Moraes et al., 2024). However, the increasing pressures of academic productivity, administrative burden, and changing socio-political dynamics have created significant challenges for sustaining such positive behavioral orientations among faculty members, particularly in developing economies where institutional support systems remain constrained.

Early organizational behavior and social psychology research, specifically from ideas of altruism, self-determination, and public service motivation, is where the study of prosocial motivation had its theoretical start (Liao et al., 2022). Over the past decades, scholars have stressed that the motivation in the workplace is not only driven by extrinsic rewards, but also by internalized values and meaning-oriented work experience (Tandukar et al., 2024; Chapagain et al., 2025). In parallel, workplace spirituality emerged as an important construct in the late 1990s and early 2000s, particularly through foundational work by Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003), who conceptualized it as a framework of organizational values that fosters meaningful work, interconnectedness, and a sense of purpose. Since then, workplace spirituality research has expanded rapidly, focusing on how meaningful work environments shape employee attitudes and behaviors (AI Iman et al., 2025).

Empirical evidence suggests that employee well-being and prosocial behavioral outcomes are increasingly influenced by organizational contexts that either enable or constrain meaningful work experiences (Liao et al., 2022). At the same time, the contemporary global work environment, marked by uncertainty, performance pressure, and institutional instability, has intensified the need for organizational mechanisms that sustain employee motivation, ethical conduct, and relational engagement (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017). While this challenge is evident across both developed and developing contexts, its intensity is particularly pronounced in developing countries, where higher education systems often operate under resource limitations, governance complexities, and growing performance expectations compared to their developed counterparts.

In response to these challenges, workplace spirituality has emerged as an important organizational construct that emphasizes meaning, purpose, and interconnectedness at work. Workplace spirituality is defined as a framework of organizational values that

fosters employees' sense of connection with others, creating feelings of completeness and joy while enhancing their experience beyond the ordinary through the work process (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). When employees perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with deeper values, they are more likely to demonstrate positive psychological states and engage in behaviors that benefit others, including prosocial motivation.

The growing scholarly interest in workplace spirituality has led to an expanding body of research examining its implications for employee attitudes and behaviors. Existing studies have primarily focused on positive work-related outcomes such as job satisfaction (Lee et al., 2014), employee engagement (Roof, 2015), organizational commitment, reduced turnover intention (Gatling et al., 2016), and reduced deviant behaviors (Ahmad and Omar, 2014). However, despite this optimistic framing, scholars have cautioned against an overly instrumental use of spirituality in organizational settings, arguing that its commercialization may distort its intrinsic ethical and humanistic essence (Kamoche & Pinnington, 2012; Houghton et al., 2016). This critique highlights the need for a deeper examination of not only individual-level outcomes but also relational and group-level behavioral consequences of workplace spirituality.

Despite growing interest, empirical evidence on workplace spirituality remains fragmented and underdeveloped, particularly in explaining its behavioral mechanisms and contextual relevance (Gatling et al., 2016; Pawar, 2014). Scholars have repeatedly emphasized the need for stronger theoretical integration and empirical validation of workplace spirituality within organizational behavior research (de Klerk, 2005; Sheep, 2006; Giacalone, 2012). In particular, although prior literature suggests that workplace spirituality may foster ethical organizational climates and enhance prosocial behaviors (Parboteeah & Cullen, 2003; Lee et al., 2014; Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020), there remains limited empirical validation of these relationships, especially in higher education contexts.

Moreover, existing studies have largely overlooked the psychological and contextual mechanisms through which workplace spirituality translates into behavioral outcomes. Recent research has specifically called for greater attention to mediating processes, particularly the role of ethical organizational climate in shaping employee behavior (Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020). This gap is especially critical in understanding how spiritual values embedded in workplace environments influence prosocial motivation among employees.

Geographically, the literature is also heavily skewed toward developed Western economies, particularly the United States, where workplace spirituality has been more extensively studied within organizational culture frameworks (Geigle, 2012). In contrast, limited empirical attention has been given to South Asian contexts, including Nepal, where cultural, institutional, and organizational dynamics differ significantly. Furthermore, studies focusing specifically on university teachers remain scarce, despite their central role in shaping educational quality and societal development.

To address this empirical gap, the present study investigates the influence of workplace spirituality on prosocial motivation among university teachers, with ethical climate as a mediating mechanism. By situating the study within the Nepalese higher education context, it seeks to extend existing theoretical and empirical understanding of workplace spirituality and test its relevance in a culturally distinct and under-researched setting.

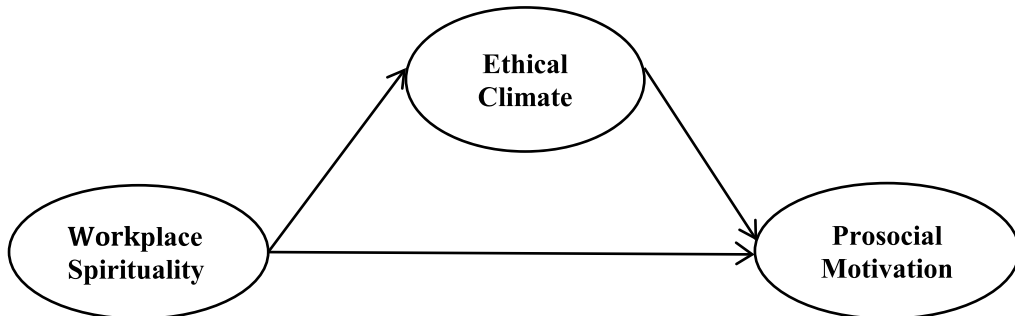
Literature Review

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), originating in the health sciences, posits a human agency model in which individuals actively self-reflect, self-regulate, and self-organize (Bandura 1989). According to Martin et al. (2014), "SCT estimates the ability of an individual to engage in a targeted behaviour, based on internal and external parameters and their interrelationships" (p. 2). A key concept of this theory, known as triadic reciprocity, refers to the dynamic interaction among personal, environmental, and behavioral influences (Bandura 1986), acting as a self-regulatory mechanism that shapes human behavior (Otake-Ebede et al. 2020). In organizational settings, these interactions shape employees' moral reasoning, ethical judgments, and behavioral responses.

More specifically, SCT suggests that various variables (both internal and external inputs to the system) serve as stimuli that influence behavioral regulation (Martin et al. 2014). Based on this theory, external cues (workplace spirituality) and internal cues (individual spirituality) can influence employee behaviors like engaging in pro-social motivation and making morally guided judgments (Otake-Ebede et al. 2020). In a professional setting, these cues can shape employees' values, sense of connectedness, and meaningful engagement, thereby encouraging ethical and prosocial behaviors. Similarly, an ethical work environment is likely to shape employee behavior by encouraging actions aligned with moral values, such as making ethical decisions. Wood and Bandura (1989) suggest that personal beliefs (such as spirituality and internal motives) form the foundation for value judgments like ethical climate and morality. Hence, organizational ethical climate fosters employees' perceptions of acceptable conduct and reinforces behaviors aligned with organizational moral standards (Domino et al. 2009).

Drawing on SCT, this study argues that workplace spirituality, as an external environmental cue, influences university teachers' prosocial motivation directly and indirectly through the development of an ethical climate. According to Bandura (1986), individuals continuously regulate their behavior by evaluating their personal standards of conduct against the surrounding environmental conditions, including the prevailing ethical climate (Domino et al. 2009). It suggests that such cues shape the environmental context in which behavior takes place. Consequently, when employees perceive their colleagues' behavior as ethical, it reinforces their view that the organization fosters an ethical climate, thereby prompting ethical outcomes such as pro-social motivation, moral judgment (Otake-Ebede et al. 2020). Hence, SCT provides a suitable theoretical foundation for explaining how workplace spirituality influences pro-social motivation through the mediation of ethical climate among university teachers.

Figure 1**Research Model*****Workplace Spirituality and Ethical Climate***

Grounded in SCT, employees' ethical behavior is shaped through the reciprocal interaction of personal values, observed behaviors, and organizational environmental cues (Bandura, 1986). Employees working in spiritually enriched environments are more likely to perceive ethical norms, observe ethical role modeling, and develop shared expectations regarding appropriate conduct. Such processes contribute to the emergence of an ethical organizational climate, defined as employees' collective perceptions of ethically appropriate practices and behaviors within the organization (Victor & Cullen, 1988). Empirical studies have consistently reported a positive association between spirituality and ethical behavior (Jackson, 1999; Gull & Doh, 2004; Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020), suggesting that workplace spirituality can foster ethical decision-making and strengthen ethical organizational values.

Evidence from service-oriented organizations further indicates that spiritually grounded workplaces promote trust, cooperation, and ethical conduct among employees, thereby contributing to a stronger ethical climate (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; McGhee & Grant, 2008). Similar arguments are particularly relevant in educational institutions, where teachers are expected to uphold ethical standards, act as role models, and prioritize students' well-being. Through social interaction and observational learning, two central mechanisms of SCT, employees internalize the ethical behaviors displayed by colleagues and leaders, reinforcing collective ethical norms.

Nevertheless, some scholars argue that spirituality may remain a personal experience that does not necessarily translate into organizational-level ethical outcomes unless supported by formal ethical systems and leadership practices. This suggests that the spirituality–ethical climate relationship may vary across organizational contexts. However, prior empirical evidence generally indicates that workplace spirituality provides an important foundation for the development of ethical workplace norms and shared moral expectations (Lee et al., 2014; Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020).

Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Workplace spirituality positively influences the organization's ethical climate among university teachers.

Workplace Spirituality and Prosocial Motivation

SCT suggests that employees develop behavioral tendencies through the interaction of personal values, social learning, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1986). Within spiritually oriented workplaces, employees are encouraged to experience meaningful work, interconnectedness, and concern for others, which shape their behavioral standards and motivations. Through observing colleagues and leaders who demonstrate care, cooperation, and ethical conduct, employees learn and internalize prosocial behaviors that benefit others. In this way, workplace spirituality creates a social environment that reinforces helping behaviors and strengthens prosocial motivation (Grant, 2008). Empirical evidence supports this view, showing that workplace spirituality is associated with greater compassion, empathy, organizational citizenship behavior, and helping behavior among employees (Milliman et al., 2003; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2009; Otake-Ebede et al., 2020).

Evidence from service-sector organizations further suggests that employees who perceive greater meaning, connectedness, and purpose in their work are more likely to engage in behaviors that support colleagues, customers, and other stakeholders (Michel et al., 2023). Teachers who view their work as meaningful and socially significant often demonstrate greater commitment to students' development, as meaningful work has been consistently associated with higher levels of work engagement, commitment, and positive work-related outcomes (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009; Allan et al., 2019).

Likewise, service employees working in spiritually supportive environments tend to exhibit stronger customer-oriented and helping behaviors, as workplace spirituality has been linked to customer-oriented boundary-spanning behaviors and prosocial workplace conduct (Bayighomog & Arasli, 2019; Baker & Lee, 2020). However, some scholars argue that spirituality does not automatically translate into prosocial motivation because helping behaviors are also shaped by contextual and individual factors, including organizational pressures, reward systems, workload, and personal differences (Kamoche & Pinnington, 2012; Dik et al., 2024). Despite these potential constraints, SCT suggests that when workplace environments consistently model and reinforce caring and cooperative behaviors, employees are more likely to adopt prosocial goals and actions (Otake-Ebede et al. 2020). Therefore, workplace spirituality is expected to enhance employees' prosocial motivation, and it is hypothesized that:

H2: Workplace spirituality positively influences prosocial motivation among university teachers.

Mediating Role of Ethical Climate

Spiritual individuals and spiritually oriented workplaces are generally driven by the pursuit of meaningful goals, which leads them to place strong emphasis on ethical behavior (Johnson, 2009). Workplace spirituality functions foster shared values emphasizing meaning,

interconnectedness, compassion, and concern for others, which influence how employees interpret and respond to workplace situations. In an organizational context, these shared practices collectively promote employees' perception of what constitutes appropriate and morally acceptable behavior.

When ethics is prioritized, individuals are more likely to consider and safeguard the well-being of others in the workplace (Parboteeah & Kapp, 2008). Furthermore, when employees perceive that their organization cares for people, it enhances group cohesion and reinforces community feelings (Parboteeah & Cullen, 2003). Such ethical environments cultivate supportive and caring workplaces in which individuals are more sensitive to others' needs and are motivated to offer help and assistance (Otaye-Ebede et al. 2020). Empirical studies have shown that ethical organizational climates are positively associated with helping behavior, organizational citizenship behavior, and other prosocial outcomes, particularly in service-oriented environments where interpersonal interaction is central to performance. Therefore, workplace spirituality does not merely encourage prosocial motivation directly; it fosters an ethical environment that reinforces employees' moral standards and channels their spiritual values into prosocial intentions and actions. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

H3: Organizational ethical climate mediates the relationship between workplace spirituality and prosocial motivation among university teachers.

Research Method

Study Context

Nepal's higher education system comprises 24 recognized institutions, consisting of 17 universities and 7 specialized medical academies accredited by the University Grants Commission (UGC, 2024). As the nation's educational center, Kathmandu plays a significant role in higher education activities. Within Bagmati Province, there are a total of 624 campuses, including 44 constituent campuses, 167 community campuses, and 413 privately operated institutions (UGC, 2024).

This region provides access to a diverse and information-rich sample of university teachers from both public and private institutions. Although exact figures vary, reports from the UGC Nepal suggest that Nepal has several thousand higher education faculty members, with a significant proportion located in the Kathmandu Valley due to institutional clustering and urban academic development. The target population comprised university teachers, conceptualized as white-collar professionals engaged in knowledge-intensive and service-oriented work. White-collar occupations are characterized by cognitive, professional, and service-based tasks rather than manual labor, and are typically associated with higher education and professional expertise (Mills, 1951; Wright Mills, 1951; Orzack, 1959; Morse & Weiss, 1955; De Klerk et al., 2006, 2009). This group is particularly relevant for studying workplace spirituality, as teaching involves continuous interpersonal interaction, ethical responsibility, and value-based contribution to student development.

Research Design and Approach

This study adopted an explanatory, cross-sectional design, appropriate for examining the causal relationships among workplace spirituality, ethical organizational climate, and prosocial motivation. The target population comprised university teachers, conceptualized as white-collar professionals engaged in knowledge-intensive and service-oriented work. This group is particularly relevant for studying workplace spirituality, as teaching involves continuous interpersonal interaction, ethical responsibility, and value-based contribution to student development. The population comprised university teachers from the higher education institutions across Kathmandu Valley (i.e., Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur).

A quantitative survey approach was employed, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered both online and in printed form over a defined data collection period. The sampling frame comprised university teachers from selected higher education institutions in the Kathmandu Valley, including affiliated colleges.

Respondents were selected using purposive sampling based on inclusion criteria: minimum one year of teaching experience, full-time or part-time academic employment, and affiliation with higher education institutions; in contrast, administrative staff and non-teaching personnel were excluded. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, of which 270 responses were received, yielding a response rate of 90%. After screening for missing data and unengaged response patterns (e.g., constant, binary, or patterned responses identified using statistical screening techniques), the final sample comprised 259 valid responses.

In terms of socio-demographic profile, respondents' average age was 37.18 years ($SD = 7.95$) and average teaching experience 7.81 years ($SD = 5.77$), with 40.5% female. The educational qualifications of respondents range from a master's degree to Ph.D. with academic positions from lecturer to professor. Similarly, ethical approval was obtained before data collection, and informed consent was ensured with confidentiality and voluntary participation guaranteed.

The study employed covariance-based SEM to examine the relationships among constructs. SEM was used because it enables simultaneous assessment of direct and indirect effects among latent variables while accounting for measurement error. Following Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-step approach was applied: first, the measurement model was evaluated for reliability and validity; second, the structural model was tested for hypothesis verification.

Measures and Instruments

Workplace Spirituality: Workplace spirituality was assessed using two dimensions developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) and later adapted by Milliman et al. (2003). The scale captures employees' perceptions of a supportive work community and their alignment with organizational values, goals, and mission. A sample item is: "*In this organization, working cooperatively with others is valued.*" Responses were measured on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The overall reliability value of the scale items was .70.

Ethical Climate: Ethical organizational climate was assessed using a 3-item scale originally developed by Mayer et al. (2013) and later adapted by Hansen et al. (2016). Following Hansen et al. (2016), this scale was selected because it assesses respondents to evaluate the ethical environment based on the behavior of their coworkers, which helps minimize socially desirable responses. A sample item is: “*Employees support me in adhering to my company’s ethical standards.*” Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The overall reliability value of the scale items was .75.

Prosocial Behavior: The study measured prosocial motivation using a five-item scale adopted from Grant and Sumanth (2009), which was originally developed based on earlier measures of prosocial motivation (Grant, 2008a) and work goal orientation (VandeWalle, 1997). In the present study, as customers were the primary beneficiaries of employees’ work, the term “others” in the scale was operationalized to refer specifically to customers. A sample item is: “*I feel energized when working on tasks that can benefit others.*” Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The overall reliability value of the scale items was .86.

Result and Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Common method bias was assessed using Harman’s one-factor test, with the first factor accounting for 22.6% of the variance, below the 50% threshold, indicating no serious CMB concern. In addition, variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranged from 1.21 to 2.34, well below the recommended cutoff of 5 (Hair et al., 2010; O’Brien, 2007), confirming the absence of multicollinearity. Normality was examined through skewness and kurtosis statistics, with skewness values ranging from $-.89$ to $.74$ and kurtosis values from -1.02 to 1.18 , falling within acceptable limits (± 2 ; George & Mallery, 2010; Hair et al., 2010), indicating that the data were approximately normally distributed. Thus, these diagnostics confirm that the dataset meets key assumptions for SEM.

Furthermore, results (see Table 3) also indicate that respondents reported a moderately high level of workplace spirituality ($M = 3.92$, $SD = .81$), suggesting generally positive perceptions of meaning and spirituality at work, though with some variability among individuals. The ethical climate was rated higher ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .61$), reflecting a strong and relatively consistent perception of ethical practices within the institution. Prosocial motivation showed the highest mean score ($M = 4.27$, $SD = .61$), indicating a strong tendency among respondents to engage in helping and supportive behaviors toward others.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Following the criteria of .60–.70 recommended by Hair et al. (2019), the item reliability was assessed. Table 2 revealed that all factor loadings are above .70, demonstrating acceptable convergent validity, except for one item, which was slightly below the threshold but retained due to its theoretical relevance. The measurement error variance is within acceptable limits (generally $< .60$), indicating that each underlying construct accounts for a significant portion of its variance.

Similarly, the AVE scores of all constructs are above .50, ensuring adequate convergent validity (see Table 3). Overall, the indicator loadings, error variances, and AVE values confirm that the measurement model is suitable for subsequent structural analysis.

Table 1

Measurement Model			
Constructs	Items	Loadings	Measurement Error Variance
Workplace Spirituality	WPS_1	.71	.50
	WPS_2	.79	.37
Ethical Climate	EC_1	.63	.60
	EC_2	.76	.42
	EC_3	.58	.66
Prosocial Behavior	PSB_1	.71	.50
	PSB_2	.81	.34
	PSB_3	.63	.60
	PSB_4	.79	.37
	PSB_5	.69	.52

Model Fit Assessment

Following EFA, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to corroborate the factor structure between observed variables. The model fit was analyzed from two perspectives (i.e., goodness of fit and badness of fit). The study found the validity of the proposed measurement model of a total of 10 items satisfactory as ($X^2 (34) = 103.44, p < .001$; GFI = .93 (= .90); RMSEA = .03 (< .08); and CFI = .92 (> .90)) is acceptable except for the chi-square, which is significant. Assessing the overall model fit merely based on chi-square is not appropriate because the chi-square value is sensitive to sample size (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 1993; Bentler and Bone, 1980). The measurement model produced a chi-square to DF ratio of 3.04, which was below 5, indicating the “reasonable fit” of the model (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 1993).

Table 2**Measurement Model: Goodness-of-Fit and Badness-of-Fit Indices**

Model	Absolute Fit Indices					Incremental Fit Index
	Goodness-of-Fit Index	Badness-of-Fit Indices				Goodness-of-Fit Index
		GFI	X²	DF	X²/DF	
Three-factor	.93 (>.90)	103.44	34	3.04 (<5)	.03 (<.08)	.92 (>.90)

Note(s). GFI = Goodness-of-fit Index; X² = Chi-square; DF = Degree of Freedom; RMSEA = Root Mean Square of Approximation.

Reliability, Validity, and Correlation Matrix

Composite reliability values were all above the .70 threshold (see Table 3), indicating strong internal consistency. Discriminant validity was also supported, with the square roots of AVE for each construct greater than the corresponding inter-construct correlations. Convergent validity was established, as the AVE values, derived from standardized factor loadings, exceeded .50 for all constructs (see Table 1). Thus, these findings demonstrate that the measurement scales were both reliable and valid for subsequent structural model testing.

Table 3

Construct	Mean	St. Dev.	Measurement Model				
			Construct Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Correlation Matrix		
					1	2	3
1. WPS	3.92	.81	.71	.54	.74		
2. EC	4.02	.61	.79	.53	.73***	.76	
3. PSM	4.27	.61	.85	.55	.59***	.50***	.83

Note(s). *** $P < .001$. * $P < .05$; Value on the diagonal of the correlation matrix is the square root of AVE. WPS = Workplace Spirituality. EC = Ethical Climate. PSM = Prosocial Motivation.

Structural Model

The postulated hypotheses were tested using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 iterations and structural equation modelling with a maximum likelihood estimation approach. Similarly, the estimated path coefficients are derived from the path diagram shown in Figure 2. The model's paths were then assessed. The associated standardized regression coefficient and t-values were used to examine the hypothesized associations in this regard. The findings of the hypothesis testing are displayed in Table 5.

Two direct and indirect hypotheses were examined in the study. Specifically, WPS was expected to have a positive effect on ethical organizational climate and prosocial motivation (H1, H2), and ethical organizational climate was proposed to mediate the relationship between workplace spirituality and prosocial motivation (H3).

The findings revealed that workplace spirituality significantly influences ethical organizational climate ($\beta = .73, p < .001$), followed by the significant impact of workplace spirituality on prosocial motivation ($\beta = .16, p < .05$). Hence, both direct hypotheses, H1 and H2, were supported.

H3 examined the mediating role of ethical organizational climate in the relationship between workplace spirituality and prosocial motivation. Direct effect of workplace spirituality was found to be insignificant ($\beta = .47, p > .05$), however, the indirect effect of workplace spirituality on prosocial motivation through ethical organizational climate was found to be significant ($\beta = .12, p < .05$), calculated as the product of the standardized coefficients ($.73 \times .16$), which reveals the full mediation of ethical climate in relationship between workplace spirituality

and prosocial motivation. The indirect effect was significant, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .10 to .35, excluding zero, indicating significant mediation. This finding supports H3 and indicates that workplace spirituality supports prosocial motivation indirectly by enhancing ethical organizational climate.

Figure 2
Path Diagram

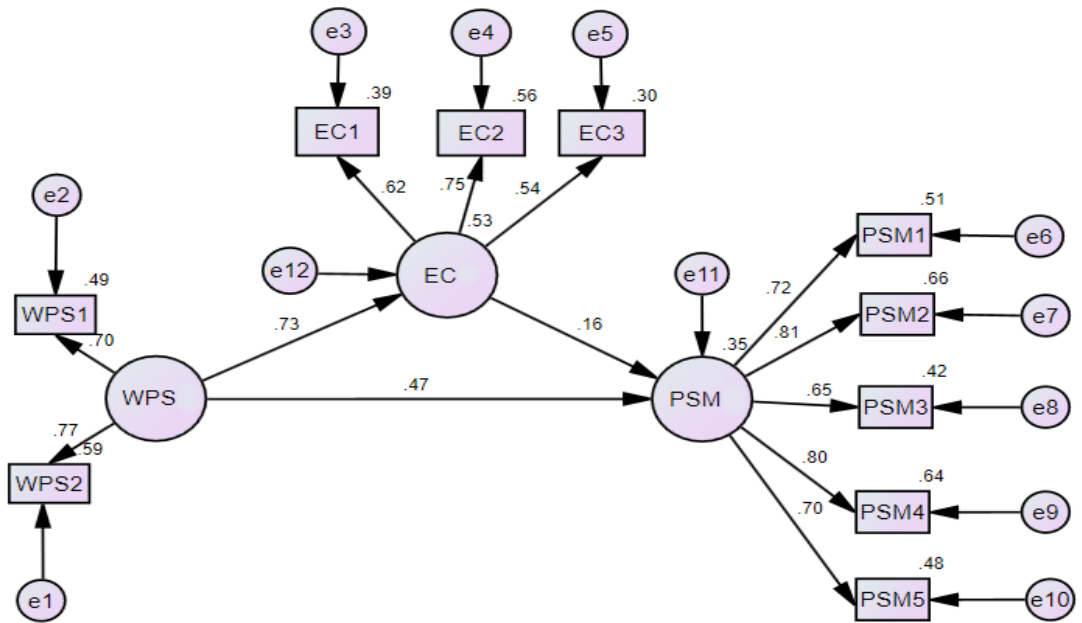


Table 5
Path Analysis Results (Direct and Indirect Effect)

Path	Standardized Path Coefficient		p-value	Decision
	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect		
H1: WPS→EC	.73***	-	<.001	Supported
H2: EC→PSM	.16**	-	<.01	Supported
WPS→PSM	.47	-	>.05	-
H3: WPS→ EC→PSM		.12**	<.01	Supported

Note(s). ***P < .001. *P < .01. WPS = Workplace Spirituality. EC = Ethical Climate. PSM = Prosocial Motivation. WPS → EC = Path from WPS to EC. EC → PSM = Path from EC to PSM. WPS → PSM = Path from WPS to PSM. To test the statistical significance of the indirect effect, the z-score is calculated as $Z_{ab} = ab/seab$.

Discussion

Based on SCT, this study examined the influence of workplace spirituality on prosocial motivation among the university teachers in Kathmandu Valley, through the mediating role of ethical climate.

The findings indicate that workplace spirituality contributes to the development of an ethical organizational climate and directly promotes prosocial motivation among employees. These results are consistent with prior research demonstrating that spiritually enriched workplaces foster ethical work environments and encourage employees to engage in behaviors that benefit others (Milliman et al., 2003; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2004; Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020).

The findings further reinforce the argument that workplace spirituality extends beyond employees' personal experiences of meaning and purpose to shape broader organizational processes (Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020). Specifically, the positive association between workplace spirituality and ethical organizational climate suggests that spiritual values embedded within organizational practices act as a socio-cultural driver of an ethical work environment. This finding aligns with previous studies that have identified workplace spirituality as an important antecedent of ethical conduct and organizational integrity (Zhang, 2020). Moreover, the findings provide support for the growing body of literature suggesting that spirituality can serve as a foundation for ethical workplace relationships and positive employee outcomes.

The significant relationship between workplace spirituality and prosocial motivation also corroborates earlier findings that spiritually oriented workplaces encourage employees to demonstrate greater concern for the welfare of others (Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020). It highlights that a spiritually enriched environment fosters intrinsic concern for others. The findings also align with the previous research, highlighting the role of value congruence and meaning in shaping pro-social behavior (Syahir et al., 2025). Although some scholars have argued that prosocial behaviors may be constrained by situational factors such as workload, performance pressures, or reward systems, the present findings suggest that workplace spirituality remains an important motivational resource even within such organizational realities. This indicates that spirituality may function as an internalized value system that encourages employees to pursue actions benefiting colleagues, students, and other stakeholders.

Similarly, ethical organizational climate mediated the relationship between workplace spirituality and prosocial motivation, highlighting its role as a contextual transmission mechanism. Consistent with prior research (Parboteeah & Cullen, 2003; Parboteeah & Kapp, 2008; Otaye-Ebede et al., 2020), the findings suggest that workplace spirituality influences prosocial motivation indirectly through employees' perceptions of an ethical work environment. This result highlights ethical organizational climate as an important contextual mechanism through which spiritual values are translated into employee motivations. Ethical climate thus operationalizes spirituality into observable behavioral expectations, which employees internalize through social learning processes consistent with SCT.

In the Nepalese university, the findings may reflect the interaction between collectivist cultural orientations and institutional value systems, whereby shared moral expectations strengthen the influence of workplace spirituality on ethical perceptions and prosocial motivation. From a theoretical perspective, the findings provide support for SCT by illustrating how environmental conditions shape employee cognition and motivation. Workplace spirituality represents an important social context that influences employees' perceptions of organizational norms, while ethical organizational climate functions as a regulatory mechanism through which these environmental cues are interpreted and internalized. In turn, these perceptions influence employees' motivational orientations toward helping and supporting others. Thus, the findings extend SCT by demonstrating how spiritual and ethical workplace conditions jointly contribute to the development of prosocial motivation in higher education settings.

Conclusion and Implications

This study examined the relationship between workplace spirituality, ethical organizational climate, and prosocial motivation among employees in Nepalese universities. Findings indicate that workplace spirituality positively influences both ethical organizational climate and prosocial motivation, while ethical organizational climate significantly mediates this relationship. Thus, workplace spirituality enhances prosocial motivation directly and indirectly through an ethical organizational environment.

Conceptually, the study identifies ethical organizational climate as a key mechanism through which spiritual values are translated into employee motivational outcomes, advancing understanding of behavioral processes in higher education settings. The main contribution is the confirmation that workplace spirituality enhances prosocial motivation primarily through the development of an ethical organizational climate. In the Nepalese university context, the findings highlight the importance of integrating spirituality and ethics in organizational practices to foster employees who are motivated toward the well-being of colleagues, students, and the broader academic community. Thus, the study emphasizes that spiritually supportive and ethically grounded workplaces are vital for strengthening positive employee motivation and behavior in higher education institutions.

Additionally, this study makes important theoretical contributions to the literature on workplace spirituality, ethical organizational climate, and employee motivation. First, it extends SCT by illustrating how cognitive factors (workplace spirituality) and environmental factors (ethical organizational climate) jointly shape employee motivation, thereby supporting the reciprocal interaction between personal meaning systems and contextual influences. Second, it advances the ethical climate literature by conceptualizing ethical organizational climate not only as a contextual feature but also as a key mechanism through which workplace spirituality is translated into prosocial motivation. Third, it contributes to the workplace spirituality literature by clarifying the mediating pathway linking spirituality to employee outcomes, shifting emphasis from direct effects to underlying processes. Finally, it extends prior research by examining these relationships among university teachers in Nepal, thereby enhancing the applicability of existing theories in higher education settings within a developing-country context.

Moreover, the findings of this study offer important implications for leaders and administrators in higher education institutions. Workplace spirituality can be leveraged as a strategic organizational resource to strengthen ethical organizational climate and enhance teachers' prosocial motivation by helping faculty connect personal values with the broader mission of education, thereby fostering meaning, commitment, and responsibility. Building a strong sense of community is essential; practices that promote collaboration, participation, trust, and mutual support can strengthen interpersonal relationships and encourage collective responsibility toward students and colleagues. Universities should also align organizational values with HR practices such as recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and reward systems to ensure consistency between institutional principles and daily practices. Given the mediating role of ethical organizational climate, leadership is critical: university leaders and department heads should model fairness, transparency, accountability, and ethical decision-making to shape positive perceptions of the organizational climate.

Finally, the findings suggest important policy implications for higher education governance in Nepal. Universities and the concerned government authorities and regulatory bodies, like UGC, can strengthen institutional effectiveness by integrating formal ethics frameworks into higher education policies and governance structures. Promoting a value-based academic culture through national guidelines can help reinforce workplace spirituality and ethical organizational climate across institutions. Additionally, ethical climate indicators can be included in institutional quality assurance and accreditation systems to assess not only academic performance but also behavioral and cultural dimensions of universities.

Limitations and Future Research

These findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, despite theoretical grounding in SCT; longitudinal studies are needed to examine causal pathways and changes of perception over time. Second, contextual influences such as leadership and administrative practices may affect workplace spirituality, ethical organizational climate, and prosocial motivation; future research should examine leadership as a potential moderating or mediating variable. Third, the focus on university teachers limits generalizability, so replication in other occupational and cultural contexts is recommended to enhance external validity.

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Conflict of interest statement

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