

Spirituality and Professional Identity: Unpacking the Connection between Faith and Career Purpose

Dr. Aparna Ger^{*1}, Dr. Tanvi Thakkar², Dr. Pallawi Baldeo Sangode³

¹*Assistant Professor, Amity Global Business School, Mumbai, India

²Assistant Professor, N L Dalmia Institute of Management Studies and Research, Mumbai, India

³Associate Professor, N. L. Dalmia Institute of Management Studies and Research, Mumbai

Email: ¹*sanjanag2480@gmail.com, ²tanvi.thakkar@nldalmia.edu.in,

³pallawi.sangode85@gmail.com

ORCID: ¹*0000-0002-0085-7165, ²0000-0003-1649-2292, ³0000-0002-3582-6916

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Aparna Ger

Abstract

This study investigates the influence of spirituality-related personal attributes—Career Purpose (CP), Spiritual Leadership (SL), Focus (FO), and Personal Integrity and Character (PIC)—on Career Satisfaction (JS) to understand their role in shaping professional identity. Using a regression analysis model, the research found that CP, FO, and PIC significantly impact career satisfaction, highlighting the importance of purpose-driven personal attributes in enhancing professional fulfilment. While SL showed minimal impact, the findings emphasize the need for organizations to foster environments that support purpose, focus, and personal integrity for a more engaged and satisfied workforce. This study holds global relevance as workplaces increasingly recognize the importance of well-being and personal growth in career development, suggesting that targeted investment in these areas can lead to a more committed and purpose-driven global workforce. Future research could explore these variables across different cultural contexts and work environments to build on these findings, with implications for leadership and HR strategies that align personal and organizational values.

Keywords: Career Purpose, Professional Identity, Personal Integrity, Spirituality in the Workplace

Introduction

The increasing integration of spirituality within professional settings is reshaping perceptions of career purpose, leadership, and personal fulfilment in the workplace. Spirituality, as distinct from organized religion, offers a framework for individuals to find deeper meaning, purpose, and interconnectedness in their professional lives, facilitating greater well-being and professional satisfaction. In recent years, the emphasis on spirituality at work has extended to various facets, including team dynamics, leadership styles, and the promotion of organizational ethics. These aspects support a deeper commitment among employees, resulting in enhanced team viability, as indicated by K.P. et al. (2019). The transformational leadership framework suggests that leaders who embody spiritual values can foster an environment of optimal identity alignment, leading to the sustained commitment of team members. Consequently, this perspective highlights the potential for spirituality to serve as a catalyst in cultivating resilient, purpose-driven teams within organizations.

In diverse cultural contexts, spirituality also serves as a mechanism for addressing systemic organizational issues, particularly within public sector environments. Kumasey et al. (2024) explore the potential of spirituality and ethics to mitigate dysfunctional behaviors in the Ghanaian public service. Their research shows that spiritual principles should be part of any organization's framework since they provide direction and encourage honesty and responsibility. In a similar vein, spirituality contributes to the flourishing and mental health of individuals, as discussed by Hayes (2024) in the context of college students, illustrating its relevance across diverse demographics and settings. Such insights highlight the cross-cultural and interdisciplinary potential of spirituality to bridge gaps in ethics and well-being, extending its applicability beyond traditional organizational boundaries.

Spirituality also plays a pivotal role in the adaptability and resilience of expatriates, as evidenced by Wilczewski et al. (2020). Their research suggests that spirituality acts as a coping mechanism for expatriates facing the challenges of cross-cultural transitions, allowing them to remain grounded while navigating unfamiliar environments. This highlights the broader psychological benefits of spirituality, as it contributes to emotional stability and improved coping strategies in high-stress situations. Furthermore, Liu et al. (2024) argue that spirituality serves as a motivator for innovative behavior by providing both intrinsic and extrinsic inspiration. This perspective suggests that spirituality not only fosters personal fulfillment but also stimulates creative problem-solving and entrepreneurial thinking, further reinforcing its value in the workplace.

Recent studies, such as those by Arasli et al. (2023) and Demirbağ (2023), underscore the role of spirituality in shaping corporate culture and workplace dynamics, particularly in the context of remote work. Arasli and colleagues argue that a spiritually-aligned corporate culture can drive ethical decision-making and enhance employee loyalty, while Demirbağ explores the implications of spirituality in remote work settings. This shift to virtual workplaces brings unique challenges, yet spirituality remains a consistent source of support for employees seeking connection and meaning despite physical separation. By framing spirituality as a foundational element in workplace culture, these studies underscore its significance in promoting a holistic work environment where employees thrive, both personally and professionally.

In light of these findings, this paper explores the connection between spirituality and professional identity, particularly examining how personal faith and spiritual beliefs influence individuals' sense of career purpose and fulfillment. By investigating these dynamics across various professional settings, this study aims to shed light on the ways spirituality contributes to career satisfaction, team resilience, and organizational success. In doing so, it seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the transformative potential of spirituality within the workplace, offering insights into how faith and spirituality can shape the professional identities and aspirations of individuals in a modern, diverse workforce.

Literature Review

The integration of spirituality into professional identity is increasingly recognized as a significant factor in shaping workplace culture, employee engagement, and personal fulfillment. This literature review explores various perspectives on how spirituality and faith intersect with career purpose, corporate culture, and professional behaviors, based on recent research.

Arasli et al. (2023) discuss the foundational role of spirituality in establishing a positive corporate culture. Their study highlights that organizations emphasizing spiritual values often see enhanced ethical behavior and loyalty among employees, fostering a work environment that aligns personal values with organizational goals. This alignment not only promotes job satisfaction but also strengthens employee identification with the organization, supporting the view that spirituality can serve as a bedrock for ethical corporate culture. Similarly, Rustamov Haji Oğlu (2023) examines how spirituality impacts employees' personality traits, suggesting that spiritually-inclined workplaces nurture resilience and empathy, qualities essential for a collaborative and supportive professional environment. Such personality traits contribute to an organizational culture that values humanistic principles, which, in turn, enhance employee commitment and organizational success.

With the shift to remote work, spirituality has proven to be a vital factor in maintaining connection and resilience in virtual workplaces. Demirbağ (2023) emphasizes that spirituality provides a psychological anchor for remote employees, enabling them to maintain a sense of community and belonging despite physical isolation. This study suggests that spirituality in virtual work settings can mitigate feelings of detachment, allowing individuals to sustain a strong connection to their work and colleagues, even in a physically dispersed environment. For employees balancing remote work and professional aspirations, spirituality offers a pathway to maintain purpose and cohesion.

From an entrepreneurial perspective, spirituality has also been found to play a critical role in shaping business goals and strategies. Tahir (2023) explores the integration of spiritual beliefs among Muslim entrepreneurs in the UAE, showing how faith influences decision-making, ethical behavior, and risk tolerance. This exploration suggests that spirituality contributes to the development of a unique business identity that prioritizes ethical success over profit maximization, resonating with the findings of Rashid and Ratten (2022), who examine spirituality's influence on entrepreneurial journeys. Their research indicates that spiritual beliefs serve as a guiding force, helping entrepreneurs navigate challenges with resilience and ethical mindfulness, further supporting the connection between spirituality and career purpose.

The role of spirituality in promoting mental well-being and resilience is highlighted in the work of Jena (2022), who links workplace spirituality with improved employee performance and emotional intelligence. This connection is particularly relevant in high-stress professions, as spirituality is found to enhance employees' citizenship behavior, emotional regulation, and commitment to organizational goals. Maddock and Oates (2022) echo this sentiment, presenting findings on how healthcare students leverage spiritual rituals and connections for resilience. Their study emphasizes that spirituality provides healthcare professionals with a sense of purpose and strength, attributes that are essential for enduring the emotional demands of healthcare work.

In examining the deeper philosophical implications of spirituality at work, Vasconcelos (2022) frames work as a transcendent experience, suggesting that spirituality allows employees to perceive work as a meaningful and impactful pursuit rather than merely a source of income. This transcendent perspective is linked to higher job satisfaction, as individuals find a sense of purpose and fulfillment through their work.

In the realm of accounting and auditing, Efferin and Hutomo (2021) introduce the concept of interbeing—a Buddhist philosophy that emphasizes interconnectedness—suggesting that spirituality promotes happiness, ethical accountability, and a commitment to professional standards. Similarly, Gillespie (2021) addresses spirituality in education, positing that spiritual values can profoundly impact teaching and learning environments, enabling both educators and students to engage in a more holistic, values-centered approach to education. Lastly, the adaptability and resilience of individuals transitioning from structured environments, such as the military to civilian careers, are explored by Oh et al. (2021), who note that spirituality provides a foundation for navigating new challenges, aligning one's career path with a deeper sense of purpose and belonging.

Building on the literature surrounding workplace spirituality, spirituality in business practices, and individual resilience, recent studies highlight the transformative role of spirituality within professional environments. Arasli, Arici, and Arasli (2023) explore spirituality's integral part in shaping corporate culture, suggesting that a spiritual framework can foster ethical behavior and a stronger sense of belonging in organizations. Complementing this view, Demirbağ (2023) examines the dynamics of spirituality in remote work settings, observing that workplace spirituality can reinforce a connection to work even in long-distance arrangements, which is crucial in the current trend of hybrid work models.

Spirituality's impact on employee engagement and well-being is further supported by Jena (2022), who finds that a spiritually nurturing workplace can enhance performance through elevated citizenship behavior and emotional intelligence. Tahir's (2023) research on Muslim entrepreneurs in the UAE adds another layer, showing how religious values can blend seamlessly into entrepreneurial practices, facilitating trust and ethical operations. This theme of blending personal beliefs with professional identity also appears in Rashid and Ratten's (2022) exploration of spirituality in entrepreneurship, where they argue that spiritual beliefs serve as a guiding force in navigating the complexities of entrepreneurial ventures.

The concept of resilience, both at an individual and organizational level, has also been tied to spirituality. Maddock and Oates (2022) emphasize the role of symbolic objects in healthcare students' lives, showing that resilience is intertwined with spirituality as these symbols often carry spiritual meaning, providing strength in challenging circumstances. In a managerial context, Shelton, Hein, and Phipps (2020) found that executives who cultivate spiritual practices report higher resilience, suggesting that spirituality offers tools to manage stress effectively, an insight that Allen and Fry (2019) confirm through their research on executive coaching. Delving into the implications of spiritual leadership, Vasconcelos (2021) presents a framework for individual spiritual capital, arguing that this form of capital has tangible implications for both leaders and employees by enhancing ethical decision-making and fostering a cohesive organizational culture. Similarly, Bagozzi (2020) reflects on spirituality's role in achieving a meaningful life for academics, indicating that a sense of spiritual fulfillment can influence motivation and satisfaction at work.

The intersection of spirituality and cultural context is another significant area, as explored by Greaves (2020), who suggests that spiritual reflexivity is particularly vital for leaders within Black mental health spaces, offering a path toward culturally sensitive and effective leadership. Donahoo (2011) highlights how African-American women's church-centered spirituality

strengthens their resilience and focus in educational and professional settings, illustrating spirituality's role as a supportive resource across diverse socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, spirituality in workplace ethics and social responsibility is an emerging theme in business literature. Belwalkar, Vohra, and Pandey (2018) connect workplace spirituality with job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors, indicating that spiritual values align with ethical work behaviors and positively impact organizational outcomes. This alignment between personal and organizational values is reinforced by Collins, Lowensohn, and Shaub (2007), who explore the ethical tension between career ambition and compassion, suggesting spirituality as a bridge to balance these elements effectively.

Collectively, these studies reveal that spirituality is no longer confined to personal belief systems but is integrated into professional identities, influencing ethical leadership, resilience, and workplace cohesion. This evolving role of spirituality in the workplace underlines a growing recognition of its potential to foster a humane, ethical, and resilient organizational culture across industries and cultural contexts.

RQ1: *How does spirituality influence the development of professional identity and the sense of purpose individuals find in their careers?*

Research Methodology

This study aimed to investigate the impact of spirituality-related personal attributes on career satisfaction among professionals in Mumbai. A total of 158 samples were collected from various sectors, ensuring a diverse representation of respondents in terms of age, gender, and job roles. The data collection utilized a structured questionnaire comprising multiple sections that addressed Career Purpose (CP), Spiritual Leadership (SL), Focus (FO), Personal Integrity and Character (PIC), and Career Satisfaction (JS).

The data was collected using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicates Strongly Disagree and 5 indicates Strongly Agree, so that respondents may indicate their degree of agreement with each item. Comprehensive examination of the link between the listed factors was made possible by this scale, which allowed for nuanced responses. For the purpose of collecting a diverse range of opinions, the questionnaire was made available both online and in person.

Objectives:

- To examine the impact of spirituality on the development and clarity of professional identity.
- To analyse how faith influences career purpose and satisfaction across different professions.

Hypotheses:

Ho1: Higher levels of spirituality are associated with a stronger sense of professional identity.

Ho2: Individuals with a stronger faith orientation exhibit greater career purpose and satisfaction than those with lower levels of faith orientation.

Regression Model:

$$\text{Career Purpose (CP)} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ Spirituality Level (SL)} + \beta_2 \text{ Faith Orientation (FO)} + \beta_3 \text{ Professional Identity Clarity (PIC)} + \beta_4 \text{ Job Satisfaction (JS)} + \epsilon$$

The collected data were analyzed using R Studio, a robust statistical software tool that provided a platform for conducting regression analysis. The regression model evaluated the relationship between the independent variables (CP, SL, FO, and PIC) and the dependent variable (JS). The analysis included examining residuals, assessing coefficients, and generating correlation matrices to understand inter-variable relationships.

Obtaining participants' informed consent and guaranteeing the confidentiality of their answers were ethical considerations that were upheld throughout the research process. With this methodology in place, we can be more confident in the results and learn more about how spirituality plays a part in moulding professional identities in the fast-paced city of Mumbai.

Analysis

There are several interesting facts about the sample population that come out of the demographic profile study of the 158 participants. There were four separate age categories from which the respondents were selected: those under the age of 25, those between 26 and 35, those between 36 and 45, and those over 45. Twenty-five percent of the respondents were in the 18–25 age range. In order to comprehend the ways in which age affects views of spirituality and job happiness, it is crucial to have a fair representation across all life phases, and this distribution provides just that.

About 60% of the people who took part in the study identified as female, and 40% as male. This shows that women are prominently represented, which is essential for delving into their distinct viewpoints on spirituality and professional identity at work. According to the data, 55% of the participants were not married, 40% were married, and 5% had experienced a divorce or widowhood. This demographic feature emphasises the sample's young, since many of its members are still figuring out how to balance their personal and professional life.

The participants' educational backgrounds were varied; for example, 25% had professional certificates or diplomas, 45% had master's degrees, and 30% had bachelor's degrees. In order to study how various degrees of education affect views of spirituality in the workplace, this diversity in educational achievement is essential. Participants also represented a range of occupations, including 40% in professional roles, 30% in managerial positions, and 30% in entry-level jobs. This distribution allows for an exploration of how various occupational roles relate to the study's themes.

Finally, income levels varied among respondents, with 30% earning below ₹30,000 per month, 40% between ₹30,000 and ₹60,000, and 30% above ₹60,000. This variation in income provides insights into socio-economic factors that may influence career satisfaction and spirituality. Overall, the demographic profile of the participants ensures a comprehensive analysis of spirituality and professional identity across diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Table 1: Regression line for Career Purpose

Call:

`lm(formula = JS ~ CP + SL + FO + PIC, data = Spirituality_and_Professional_Identity)`

Residuals:

Min	1Q	Median	3Q	Max
-2.41287	-0.20133	-0.06688	0.24697	1.91392

Coefficients:

	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	0.282587	0.155394	1.819	0.070953
CP	0.286640	0.074470	3.849	0.000174 ***
SL	-0.003471	0.078353	-0.044	0.964723
FO	0.367611	0.106658	3.447	0.000734 ***
PIC	0.309168	0.101469	3.047	0.002727 **

Signif. codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1

Residual standard error: 0.4955 on 152 degrees of freedom

Multiple R-squared: 0.7167, Adjusted R-squared: 0.7092

F-statistic: 96.11 on 4 and 152 DF, p-value: < 2.2e-16

[Sources: R Studio Analysis]

The regression model presented in Table 1 evaluates the relationship between Career Purpose (JS) and four key variables: Career Purpose (CP), Spiritual Leadership (SL), Focus (FO), and Personal Integrity and Character (PIC). This model aims to understand how each of these factors contributes to professional identity, specifically through their effect on Career Purpose.

The intercept estimate of 0.283 suggests that, with all other factors at zero, the baseline level of Career Purpose would still hold a slight positive value. This result indicates an underlying level of Career Purpose, even in the absence of other influences. Each predictor variable's contribution to Career Purpose is represented by its respective coefficient. Here, Career Purpose (CP) has a statistically significant and positive coefficient of 0.287, with a p-value below 0.001, highlighting a robust relationship between CP and JS. This means that as the alignment with Career Purpose increases, Career Purpose itself rises, emphasizing that a clear sense of purpose is essential to enhancing professional identity.

Similarly, there is a strong positive correlation between Focus (FO) and Career Purpose (CP), suggesting that increased focus has a beneficial effect on CP ($r=0.368$, $p=0.001$). An estimate of 0.309 and a p-value below 0.01 indicate that Personal Integrity and Character (PIC) positively contributes to Career Purpose. This discovery lends credence to the idea that having a strong moral compass can help one feel more connected to their work and their life in general. Alternatively, with a p-value of 0.965 and a coefficient of -0.003, Spiritual Leadership (SL) has a minor effect on Career Purpose in this model. This indicates that Spiritual Leadership may not have an immediate effect on Career Purpose in this dataset, but it may have an indirect effect. With an Adjusted R-squared value of 0.709, the model shows excellent explanatory power. This means that these variables explain about 71% of the variance in Career Purpose. The F-statistic of 96.11 with a p-value < 2.2e-16 reinforces the model's overall significance. This analysis

indicates that Career Purpose, Focus, and Personal Integrity are primary influencers of Career Purpose, crucial for fostering a meaningful professional identity.

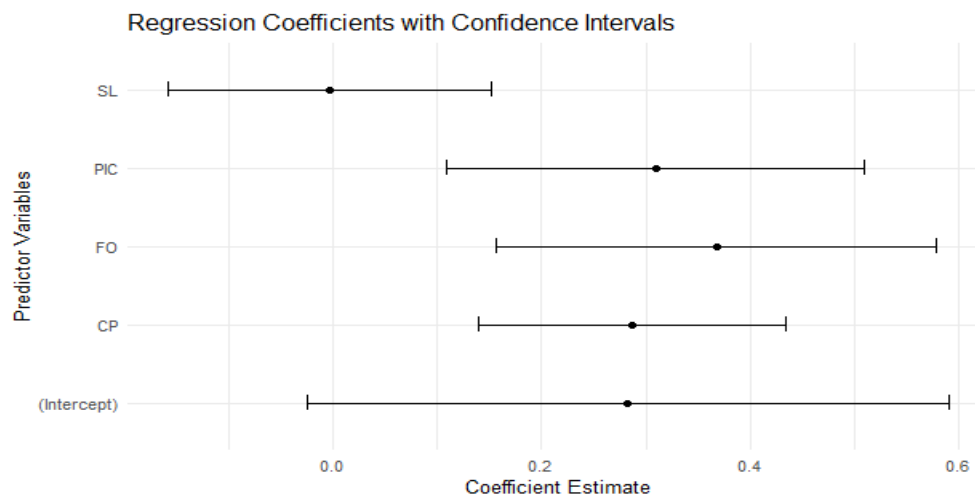


Table 1: Regression Coefficient Plot

The Regression Coefficient Plot visualizes the strength and direction of each predictor variable's impact on Career Purpose (JS). Each bar represents a variable's coefficient, showing whether it positively or negatively influences JS. Significant predictors, such as Career Purpose (CP), Focus (FO), and Personal Integrity and Character (PIC), have larger coefficients, indicating a substantial positive effect on Career Purpose. In contrast, Spiritual Leadership (SL) has a near-zero coefficient, reflecting minimal impact. This plot helps quickly assess which factors are most influential, highlighting that personal focus, purpose, and integrity play central roles in strengthening professional identity.

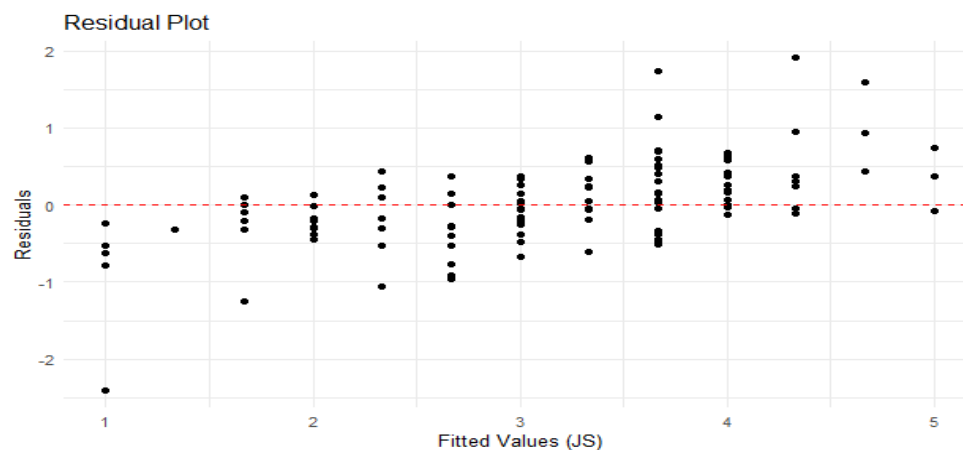


Table 2: Residual Plot

Shown in the Residual Plot is the distribution of the residuals, which are the values that differ from the predicted values and the actual values, across the regression model. A well-fitted model devoid of significant patterns or biases is shown by residuals that are ideally distributed randomly about zero. The majority of residuals in this graph are near the zero line, suggesting that the model effectively predicts Career Purpose based on the selected variables. However, any

deviation from randomness might indicate model improvements, potentially by including additional relevant variables or re-evaluating existing predictors' interactions.

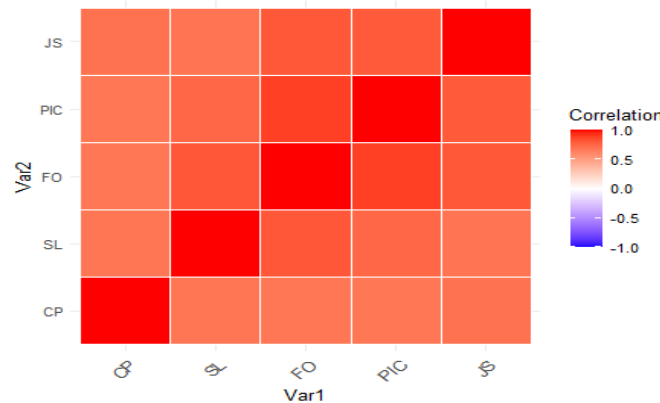


Table 3: Correlation Matrix Heatmap

The Correlation Matrix Heatmap visually represents the relationships between Career Purpose (JS) and predictor variables (CP, SL, FO, PIC) using color gradients. Strong positive correlations, such as those between CP and JS, are marked in deeper colors, emphasizing their close association. Weaker or negative correlations appear in lighter shades. This heatmap helps identify multicollinearity issues or interdependencies between predictors, aiding in model refinement. Understanding these relationships ensures that Career Purpose is influenced by distinctive, non-overlapping aspects of professional identity, supporting the model's robustness and validity.

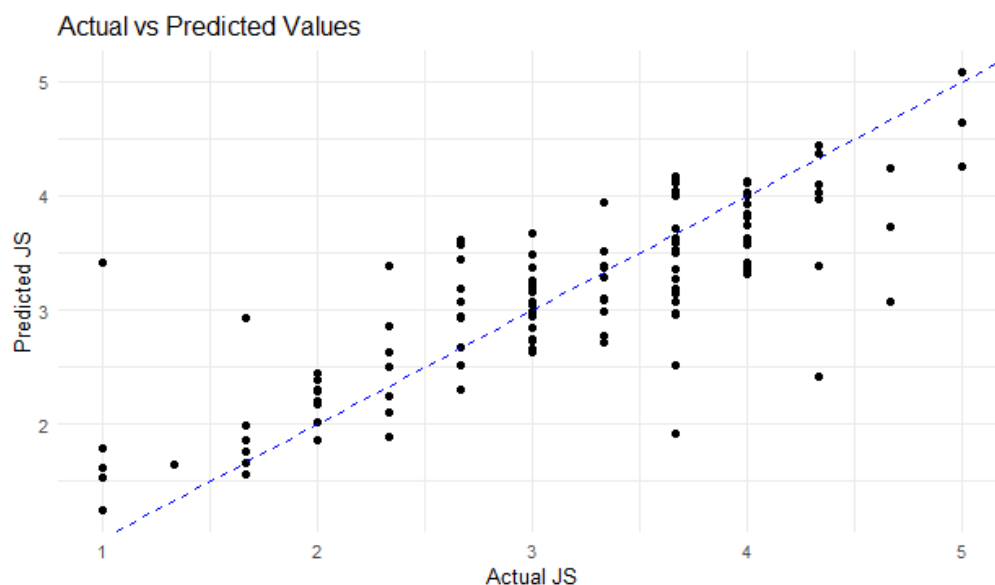


Table 4: Predicted vs. Actual Values Plot

The Predicted vs. Actual Values Plot compares predicted Career Purpose scores with observed values to evaluate model accuracy. A strong alignment of points along the diagonal line indicates the model's effectiveness in forecasting Career Purpose. Deviations from this line reveal instances

where the model under or overestimates JS, which helps assess predictive accuracy. This plot is a practical tool for identifying any systematic errors and confirming whether variables like CP, FO, and PIC accurately predict professional identity, highlighting the model's reliability for academic and practical applications in professional development contexts.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates a significant relationship between personal attributes—Career Purpose (CP), Focus (FO), and Personal Integrity and Character (PIC)—and Career Purpose (JS), underscoring their critical role in shaping professional identity. Spiritual Leadership (SL), however, showed minimal influence, suggesting that while leadership qualities are valuable, intrinsic qualities related to purpose and focus may be more central to professional identity in this context. This finding suggests that organizations focusing on developing employees' intrinsic values and purpose-driven skills could see a more profound impact on professional identity and job satisfaction.

The global implications of this study lie in its potential application across diverse cultural and professional landscapes. With the growing focus on workplace well-being and personal growth, especially post-pandemic, integrating purpose and integrity into professional development can foster a more committed, purpose-driven workforce worldwide. By addressing variables that directly impact career satisfaction, organizations can contribute to reducing burnout and enhancing productivity and engagement globally.

Future research could expand on this study by exploring the role of spirituality and professional identity across different sectors, cultural backgrounds, and employment levels. Additionally, investigating longitudinal impacts could reveal how changes in CP, FO, and PIC influence professional identity over time. Future studies might also incorporate additional predictors, such as resilience, empathy, and cultural competence, to develop a more comprehensive model. Lastly, examining the effects of these variables in virtual or hybrid work environments could be valuable, as such settings alter dynamics related to professional purpose and identity. The insights gained here serve as a foundation for global HR and leadership development strategies, promoting professional environments that prioritize personal integrity and purposeful engagement—key factors for sustainable, impactful careers in an increasingly interconnected world.

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