Original Article

Managers' perceptions of spirituality in the context of brazilian organizations towards sustainability

A percepção dos gestores sobre espiritualidade no contexto das organizações brasileiras com vistas à sustentabilidade

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To identify managers' perceptions of spirituality with a view to sustainability in Brazilian organizations.

Method: 10 interview groups were carried out with 35 managers from different types of organizations (private companies, public universities, private universities, city halls, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), civil police, and military police). The interview was developed with the open question: What do you understand by spirituality? The qualitative approach to the data was based on the thematic analysis technique (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings: Regarding the theme Spirituality, 19 categories were identified in the interviewees' statements: energy, purpose/meaning, connection, empathy, leadership, values, relationships between people, care, faith, relationship with religion, decision, welfare/well-being, transcendence/beyond the material, God/ universe, strength, resilience/improvement, belief/beliefs, work/organization, harmony/balance. It was identified, according to the interviewees' statements, that spirituality is a way of living based on an energy, linked or not to religion, which understands human transcendence, which provides well-being, which helps to overcome challenges and difficulties of life, which welcomes the other, conducts work valuing people and looking at them in their entirety through values, beliefs, faith, God, self-knowledge, connection with oneself and with something greater, and the constant search for purpose and meaning for life.

Originality: Understanding, from the perception of managers of different types of organizations, how spirituality can impact sustainability is interesting both from the point of view of the employee and the organization and from the point of view of the future, society, and the Planet.

Keywords: Spirituality; Sustainability; Management; Organizations

RESUMO

Objetivo: Identificar a percepção dos gestores sobre a espiritualidade com vistas à sustentabilidade em organizações brasileiras.

Método: Foram realizados 10 grupos de entrevista com 35 gestores de diferentes tipos de organizações (empresas privadas, universidades públicas, universidades privadas, prefeituras municipais, Organizações Não-Governamentais (ONGs), polícia civil, polícia militar). A entrevista foi desenvolvida com a pergunta aberta: o que vocês entendem por espiritualidade? A abordagem qualitativa dos dados foi baseada na técnica de análise temática (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Resultados: Em relação ao tema Espiritualidade, foram identificadas 19 categorias nas falas dos entrevistados: energia, propósito/sentido, conexão, empatia, liderança, valores, relacionamento entre as pessoas, cuidado, fé, relação com a religião, decisão, bem/bem-estar, transcendência/além do material, Deus/universo, força, resiliência/melhoria, acreditar/crenças, trabalho/organização, harmonia/equilíbrio. Identificou-se, segundo as falas dos entrevistados, que a espiritualidade é um modo de viver com base em uma energia, vinculada ou não à religião, que entende a transcendência humana, que proporciona o bem estar, que ajuda a superar os desafios e dificuldades da vida, que acolhe o outro, conduz os trabalhos valorizando as pessoas e as olha em sua integralidade por meio de valores, crenças, fé, Deus, autoconhecimento, da conexão consigo e com algo maior e da constante busca pelo propósito e sentido para a vida.

Originalidade: Entender, a partir da percepção dos gestores de diferentes tipos de organizações, como a espiritualidade pode impactar na sustentabilidade é interessante tanto do ponto de vista do funcionário e da organização como do ponto de vista do futuro, da sociedade e do Planeta.

Palavras-chave: Espiritualidade; Sustentabilidade; Gestão; Organizações

1 INTRODUCTION

Stop for a moment. Deep breath. Look inside yourself. Look at the environment. Reflect on actions related to yourself and others. Connect with nature. Think about purpose in life and society. Why should I live? Why do we wake up every day? Why must I work every day? What is the purpose of life? These attitudes and questions lead to reflection on each person's purpose in life, making them special and important not only in their specific and limited context, but in realizing how much it is possible to impact a global scenario, by taking into account how much difference a single person can make, whether in the lives of one or two people, or dozens or thousands. Still, it's not just about helping others, about making a difference.

In a broader context, caring for the Planet is important and all human beings must take care of it, as it is the Planet that we enjoy daily, it is from it that we take all

the resources for our survival. Not only natural resources, which obviously need a lot of attention, but all resources, especially social ones: hunger, poverty, diseases, wars, and situations that harm the planet so much. And how to take care of the health of the Planet? Or better yet, how can we take care of the health of the Planet if we do not take adequate care of our health? Still, what can be done to improve our health (mainly mental and psychological) without involving doctors, pharmacies, and medicines?

The right to life is perfected as the most important right of the individual, in the same way, health is considered an indispensable right, so that one can enjoy the other fundamental and social rights prescribed in legal diplomas, as well as in the Federal Constitution of 1988 (Brazil, 1988). Health is a basic human right, in addition to being an indicator of sustainability. Healthy ecosystems underpin healthy societies, providing adequate and safe food, clean air, quality water, pleasant climate, medicines, as well as cultural and spiritual values that contribute to livelihoods and local economic development. Biodiversity can be appreciated as a basis for human health, sustaining ecosystems and offering spiritual and aesthetic enrichment (Patz et al., 2012).

It is also about going to the doctor, having periodic exams, and paying attention to any physical or mental changes. And also to prevent diseases. Take care of your health, physical, mental and spiritual. Does the rush of everyday life allow you to take intensive care of your health? Is there time for this during the 24 hours of a day? What do you need to do to avoid illnesses? It seems inevitable to change: changing lifestyles, changing the perspective of illness/health, changing our daily investments (am I investing only in work? How much is invested in health? Are we seeking daily happiness? But, people are not responsible solely for one's own happiness, security, and life. There is a shared responsibility, which is inherent to our context of life, and this responsibility is often forgotten, as there is a commitment to protect and care for everything that promotes living existence. Happiness is living well and acting well, the noblest and most pleasant of things in the world (Aristotle, 1991); it is living pleasantly, and it is the greatest and most precious good that man can desire, and can

be considered a heritage of humanity (Aristotle, 1976). Happiness, for Plato, is based on justice. Furthermore, virtue, the common good, knowledge, and social solidarity are concepts related to happiness for Plato (2001).

It is amidst these initial reflections that the theme arises: spirituality. Spirituality, in this research, is studied to establish how it impacts or is impacted by sustainability. Spilka and McIntosh (1996) present spirituality as a personal phenomenon, linked to personal transcendence and meaning. Spirituality is a personal process of seeking meaning and purpose in life, and may or may not be linked to religion (Tanyi, 2002). Spirituality considers existential philosophical questions essential: what is a happy life? How to achieve it? How to deal with sadness? How to face life's difficulties, such as illness and death? What is the meaning of life? These are doubts related to human existence, its possibilities and limitations (Nepomuceno, 2015), after all, "life is also a question that the universe asks itself in the form of the human being" (Margulis & Sagan, 2002, p. 66). For Fialho (2022, p. 3), based on a literature review, spirituality can be considered "(1) a characteristic of the human individual, dynamic; (2) expressed through beliefs, practices, and experiences in the search for connection with something that promotes meaning and personal growth; and (3) led to the development of positive internal feelings and values."

According to Rego, Cunha, and Souto (2007, p. 21), "human beings are complex beings, composed of reason, emotion and spirit. For a long time, investigations and action in organizations paid almost exclusive attention to reason, neglecting the fact that human beings are also endowed with emotions." It is in this sense that it becomes necessary to study beyond reason, productivity, profit, and the employee. It is necessary to deal with emotions, well-being, quality of life, and the person.

Spirituality can be considered a potential to boost more conscious development, as it promotes resilience, commitment, and spirituality in people. For this, spiritual models and education are needed from childhood, in family, friends, and in society (Gupta, Agrawal, & Sharma, 2016). Regarding organizations and society in general,

citizens must develop ethical and moral behavior that reflects a new stance and new attitudes toward the complexity of social problems and their consequences (Madruga, 2009). This complexity is also related to another topic mentioned previously but without this name: sustainability – health, life, and continuity of the planet. The most important characteristic of a sustainable society is the appreciation of what is produced and the people responsible for this production (Faria, 2014).

Healthy people help in sustainable development: they are able to learn and contribute positively in the economic and social context in which they live; Likewise, sustainable development contributes to human health: better transport conditions, housing, and physical activities, among others (WHO, 2012). It is a relationship of reciprocity: people contribute to a better world, and the better world contributes to people. Furthermore, sustainability is the harmonious relationship of balance between social, economic, and environmental elements (Elkington, 1994).

The need to achieve sustainable development, including sustainability, is presented in the 2030 Agenda, drawn up by heads of State and Government and senior representatives, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and proposed by the United Nations (UN). The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda reflect the need to act in crucial areas such as People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

The effort to achieve the SDGs is a continuous project of commitment from each individual, organizations, and society. Understanding how organizations promote spirituality at work can help in building a sustainable world, and this is the great social impact that an organization can make: in addition to its intrinsic tasks, its mission, vision, values, and planning, encompassing a function broader social dimension, which is essential for society, and demonstrates a concern for the future of people and the Planet.

Based on this, the objective of this research is to identify managers' perception of spirituality with a view to sustainability in Brazilian organizations.

The social contributions of the results of this research can help promote the construction of a sustainable future, in which individuals combine their work in organizations with their own purposes and propose to act, contribute, and collaborate for the sustainability of the world, promoting harmony of private life, work in the organization and the needs of society, considering how management understands spirituality at work and how this topic can be addressed in organizations to guarantee better results for individuals and institutions. Therefore, this research seeks to answer: what is the perception of managers of Brazilian organizations about spirituality with a view to sustainability? It is not intended to exhaust the discussion on the topic, but to present a valid concept for the context of organizations that aim at sustainability.

2 RELEVANT LITERATURE

The constitution of the human person occurs on physical and psychological bases, among the latter are personality and character attributes. Spirituality is a dimension of man that constitutes him as a person, along with the biological, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions (Pinto & Pais-Ribeiro, 2007). Among the attributes of spirituality are purpose and meaning in life and a search for relationships and situations that give a sense of value and reason for living (Howden, 1992); It has different meanings for different people, that is, the definition of spirituality is determined by each person, uniquely. Therefore, it is difficult to understand spirituality through observation of attitudes and actions or by asking questions (Koenig et al., 2004).

Spirituality is a personal experience that can exist within or outside a religious context (Vaughan, Wittine, & Walsh 1998) and is conceptualized as a state of peace and harmony (Hungelmann et al., 1985); It is a way of finding answers to questions of life, illness and death (Highfield & Cason, 1983); It is built based on the noble values of human beings - love and compassion, patience, tolerance, ability to forgive, contentment, notion of responsibility, and notion of harmony - qualities that guarantee

happiness for the person and others. It is possible to dispense with religion, but it is not possible to dispense with these spiritual values (Gyatso, 2000).

The characteristics of spirituality allow the understanding of not doing to others what is not desired for oneself (Dhiman, 2016). Furthermore, spirituality is about feeling that there is a connection with something greater than oneself (Mcclung et al., 2006).

The spiritual well-being scale has the following elements: belief in a power greater than oneself; purpose in life; faith; trust; prayer; meditation; group spiritual activities; ability to forgive and apologize; ability to find meaning in suffering; and gratitude for life, which is perceived as a gift (Hatch et al., 1998).

The purpose of life is the connection with the predetermined objective, always being in movement in search of achieving this objective (Kumar, 2011). Thus, it is necessary to consider life and all its movements, whether at work, in everyday life, at college, or in the home routine, that is, spirituality is contemplated in this movement, in doing, in what happens. It is necessary to seek the purpose of life through action. Spirituality, therefore, is characterized by doing and being: being what you do and what you want to be (Boff, 2000). Spirituality makes up the human being, being subjective, abstract, and multidimensional; It is mainly characterized by the fact that human beings search for their meaning in life.

From a social point of view, spirituality helps people explore their maximum potential and ensures appropriate attitudes and behaviors to promote healthy relationships (Vasconcelos, 2008). This characteristic refers to the issue of reaching the maximum potential of individuals compared to the previous reference of achieving their ideal being (Tanyi, 2002). Also portraying the social and collective context, spirituality is the ability to understand that there are greater reasons for everything that happens, and that immediate things which are not an end in themselves. Everything that human beings do has a meaning, and the conception of humanity is collective, with an understanding of belonging to this collective.

When analyzing the context of organizations, studies and analyses aim to improve the results obtained, whether linked to profit or not. In this scenario, a topic that can help in resolving individual conflicts that impact the organization is spirituality. This theme retains scope in the context of work, as spirituality in organizations is related to carrying out meaningful work, integrated into the community, with joy and respect for inner life (Rego, Cunha, & Souto, 2007). According to Ferreira et al. (2022, p. 5), "the quality of life at Work is associated with the satisfaction of the worker's needs, as well as the individual's creativity, flexibility and motivation in the work environment". Furthermore, according to the authors, spirituality in organizations can promote a healthy environment, sharing and reducing competition, and a propensity to change, thus being an element in favor of quality of life at work.

Spiritual aspects, aimed at a holistic view of life, are a resource used to bring people closer to their essence, to their interior, after a mechanistic era, based on domination and manipulation of one another and disrespect for life (Godoy, 2011). They are also elements of spirituality: positive emotions; connection with something bigger; need for a greater purpose; gratitude; mutual help; broad sense of community; building relationships with nature; and reactions to a materialist worldview (Jurin & Matlock, 2014). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), through Manifesto 2000, established the culture of peace and non-violence for the construction of a world with dignity, justice, and sustainable development. Among the responsibilities set out in this manifesto are: respect for people's lives and dignity; the practice of non-violence; generosity in sharing time and natural resources; the defense of freedom of expression and cultural diversity; promoting responsible consumption that respects all forms of life and preserves nature; and the contribution to local development, through the participation of women, respect for democratic principles, and the construction of new forms of solidarity (UNESCO, 2000).

The human spiritual dimension is related to knowing each individual's place in the biosphere, and understanding the human moral responsibility that exists in

conserving the environment and maintaining biodiversity (Horton & Horton, 2019). The world's social, economic, environmental, and political problems pose moral challenges that can be solved by defining the ethical and spiritual dimension of global problems; Morality is fundamental to a healthy spiritual life. Sinai et al. (2019) point out that individualism, selfishness, materialism, and competitiveness contribute to an economically, socially, and environmentally unsustainable culture.

Based on previous literature, the following proposition is presented to be verified in the study: managers understand spirituality as an evaluative conception of the individual, of the subjective field. This proposition will be revisited in the results section.

3 METHOD

This section is dedicated to outlining the method of this research.

3.1 Research delimitation and design

This research constitutes constructivist work, of a descriptive and exploratory nature based on a qualitative approach (Mattar, 2014; Malhotra, 2011; Gil, 2010; Flick, 2009).

3.2 Population and sample

Ten interview groups were carried out with 35 managers from different types of organizations in Brazil (private companies, public universities, private universities, municipal governments, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), civil police, and military police). Each group was organized to include 4 or 5 managers, according to their agendas, and to be diverse in terms of types of organizations within the same group. The managers were chosen through nomination and invitation. The meetings took place specifically to address the research topic. The intention to address different types of organizations is related to encompassing a broader perspective on organizations in general.

3.3 Data collection instrument and procedures

Given the lack of studies on the topic, and because it is an exploratory work, in search of a provisional concept, based on theory, a question arises: what do organization managers think about the topic of spirituality? With that, the broader question: what do you understand about spirituality? This question was sent by email along with the invitation, the date and time of the interview, and the interview was developed based on this single question. The interviews were carried out via Google Meet. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants for later analysis. The interviews were conducted in Portuguese, so in the results section there is an adaptation in English of parts of it.

## 3.4 Data processing and analysis procedures

The qualitative data approach was based on the thematic analysis technique proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) as they considered it more appropriate for the study. Braun and Clarke (2006) consider some phases: familiarizing yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Based on these authors' procedures, the statements were synthesized and read more than once. The most relevant ideas were identified to compose the categories; the speeches were organized into documents in text format. 3 files were used: the first with all the statements, the second already selecting the statements with a direct relationship with the theme, and the third with the categories with in-depth analysis. The categories were identified, and the corresponding statements were allocated to each category. Respondents were coded with the acronyms E1 to E35. The main research findings are presented in the following section.

The categories that emerged from the statements were: empathy, leadership, decision, strength, and resilience/improvement. The other categories had already been identified in previous literature. All study categories can be considered a construct for spirituality in the world of work.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section seeks to meet the research objective – to present the understanding of organizational managers about the concept of spirituality – and to verify the proposition presented. Regarding the theme of Spirituality, 19 categories were identified in the interviewees' statements.: energy, purpose/meaning, connection, empathy, leadership, values, relationships between people, care, faith, relationship with religion, decision, well-being, transcendence/beyond the material, God/universe, strength, resilience/ improvement, believe/beliefs, work/organization, and harmony/balance.

Figure 1 – Categories of Spirituality
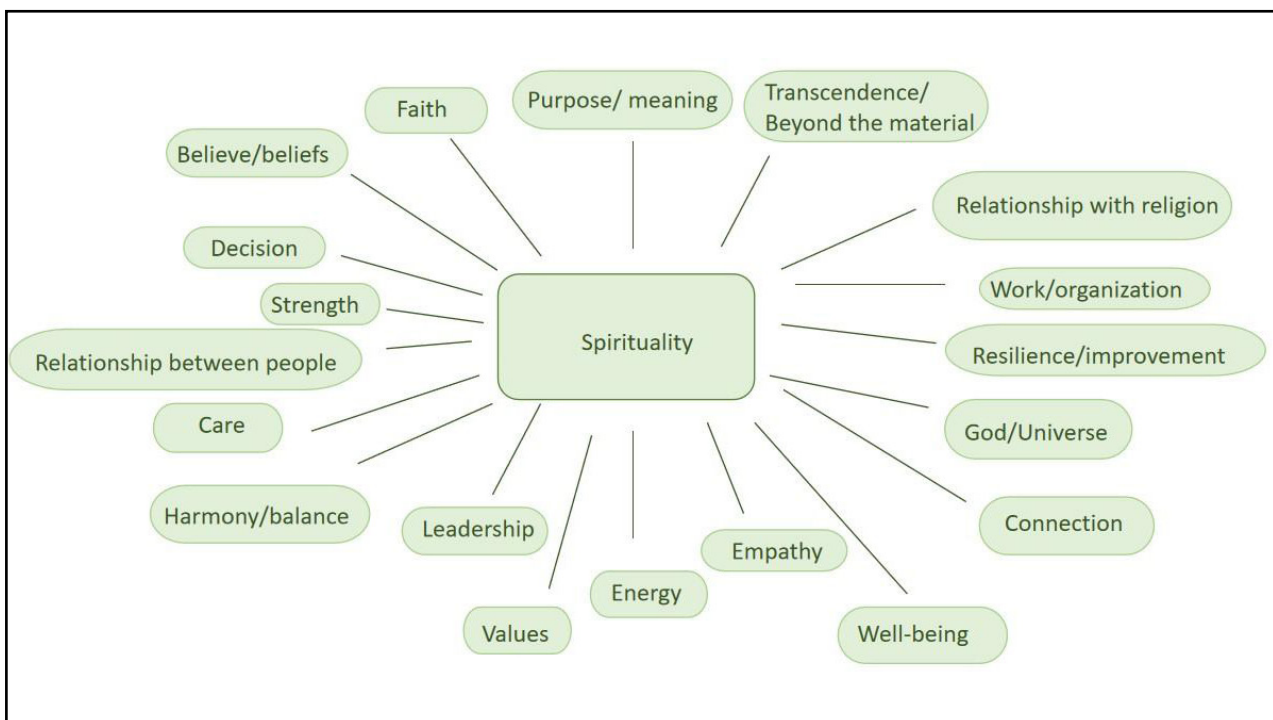
Source: Prepared by the authors based on empirical research

The first category highlighted in this research related to the theme of spirituality was Energy. Concerning energy, Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2006) pointed out that the Spirit at Work is composed of mystical elements that have to do with a positive and vital energy, related to joy, happiness, transcendence, and the search for perfection. Boff (1996, p. 139) points out that the "spirit in its original sense does not constitute a part of the

human being, in distinction from the body. It is an expression to designate the totality of the human being as energy, meaning and vitality" and even though "spirit is a name to describe the energy and vitality of all human manifestations" (Boff, 1996, p. 165).

With this, spirituality as energy can be considered an element that favors the existence and continuity of life, a factor that makes life possible, as E12 states: "I take spirituality to an energy that moves me and makes me believe and have hope in the human being as a whole" and E7 states that "spirituality and love are very linked and you only realize this when you give up your life for someone else's. I would exchange my life for my son's, and when we give up our lives for someone else's, it is something much greater that your materiality does not justify. It's a cosmic energy that I believe in, otherwise, I even lose the reason to face some challenges."

Regarding the purpose/meaning category, Tanyi (2002) shows that spirituality is a path to the search for meaning and purpose in life. Godoy (2011) highlights that spirituality is determined by the search for meaning. E10 corroborates this idea by stating that "a human search for some meanings in life would be justifications that we try to bring into our daily lives", E11 comments "I think that spirituality is closely related to a condition of perception of the world, a question of evolution, as we live and reflect on our experiences. Good or not, we expand this condition by perceiving the world and life not from the perspective of the individual, but of the collective, and then we begin to understand the reason for our existence: why are we here? What is our essence as a human being?", and E32 highlights that "spirituality is a state of mind, it involves understanding who we are, where we came from, where we are going to".

Silva and Siqueira (2009), Karakas (2010), and Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2006) address connection as an element of spirituality. Therefore, connection was a category already foreseen in the research by the propositions of the authors studied. Interviewee E8 highlights that "we need to connect a lot with ourselves" and E26 comments that "in the professional world, it has to do with the ability to empathize, get out of the comfort zone, our narrow vision and try to connect with others from feelings, from

things that are less real, less concrete, but which are equally important or even more important". The connection that is related to the theme of spirituality is broad. According to Puchalski et al. (p. 887, 2009), "spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connection to the moment, to themselves, to others, to nature and to the meaningful or sacred."

Still regarding connection, Rajagopal et al. (2020) propose a series of health care tools. Among these tools is spiritual care. For spiritual care, some strategies are recommended: internal connection, with oneself (taking time to pray, meditate, reflect, be silent; reflect on what can be changed at home, read, do manual work, think about desires in terms of medical care, reflect on life and values); external connection with others (using social media apps to communicate with people, donating time, money or expertise to help others) and with nature (spending time in the garden, planting and/ or caring for plants indoors, putting water for the birds, giving water to the street dogs and cats, feeling the sun for some period of the day, feeling the breeze); connection with the higher (seeking connection with God, with religion, with the universe, with the cosmos, with something higher, and connecting back to one's own valuesand beliefs, practicing compassion and altruism and seeking meaning and purpose of life) (RAJAGOPAL et al., 2020).

Reimer (2022, p. 131) points out the need to "propose a human society of mutual help that is expressed in various forms of shared care, a society that places debate and dialogue as one of the bases for building Good Living" and that this shared care can help ensure a healthy and sustainable life.

The fourth category of spirituality identified in the study was empathy. Oliveira (2008) points to empathy as part of the vital quadrant of human sustainability. E14 states that "we have an obligation as human beings in relation to an extremely important word which is empathy" and E34 comments that "I started to have very strong practices

of seeing others, of thinking about others, so I think that it is an improvement of the spirit, an application of spirituality."

Liberato (2019, p.28) highlights that empathy "works as a facilitator of understanding others, feelings of solidarity, and sharing of experiences". Empathy was not a very apparent element in the literature review, however, considering the concept and elements of spirituality (respect, justice, forgiveness, love, compassion, among others), empathy became an expressive category in the empirical part of this research.

Leadership was also a category that emerged related to spirituality. This is a category not highlighted in the research literature, but directly linked to the management of organizations and what was proposed by those surveyed in relation to spirituality. For Araújo (2006), leadership is a skill valued by companies that seek results; promoting leadership is related to spirituality at work (Teixeira, 2015); Paulino et al. (2011) highlight that spirituality in companies is directly related to leadership and people management.

Leadership stands out in statements such as what is pointed out by E23: "applying spirituality is being able to conduct work in a way that you do not stand out alone, but rather with the group, that you can involve the group, strengthen teamwork, valuing the thought and opinion of each person and showing that it is important" and E25 highlights that "personal life must have meaning and the objective of building something collectively. No one is a leader alone, people are leaders with other people: aggregation. I must recognize myself with this ability, to lead, to add and at the same time make this leadership human, empathetic, being able to see myself in others [...] Leaders must be spiritual, must be with their team, must add, and must think about the collective."

Values is a category presented in this research and already expected, as spirituality is nothing more than a set of values. In relation to this category, Gyatso (2000) highlights the human being composed of spiritual values; Tanyi (2002) and Puchalski (2014) present spirituality as a set of values. E24 points out that "I think

it is necessary for me to act, in my daily life, within these values, respecting these values" and E25 highlights that "spirituality is, at first, linked to the religious issue, but it has to do with a dynamic of attributing more meaning to the activities we develop, objectives that go beyond the pragmatic issue, the main and obvious object of the activity, bringing feelings and values to both those who perform and those who receive that service or that action, is to give a level of importance, of meaning, of the objective to what is done".

In relation to the category of relationships between people, Howden (1992) highlights that among the attributes of spirituality are purpose and meaning in life and a search for relationships and situations that give a sense of value and reason for living. Fisher (2011) points out that quality relationships contribute to spiritual health. E1 highlights that "spirituality has to do with our way of relating in all spheres" and E34 comments that

> spirituality is immediately linked to the spirit. I understand that the spirit is the essence of the human being, we are a spirit, and we are here on this plane, being faithful custodians of this body, we are here seeking an improvement, a perfection, each of our attitudes, the greater the degree of spirituality, leads us to transform ourselves into better human beings. By being better, we will certainly be impacting our environment, our surroundings. We improve ourselves, we improve our environment, our surroundings, our coexistence, and certainly this, in addition to transforming us into better people, will make the people we live with, family, company, employees, clients, and friends, be impacted by this feeling of spirituality. We can find this spirituality in religion, but not necessarily only in religion (E34).

Relationships between people are an element already highlighted in previous literature in the context of spirituality, considering spirituality a factor that contributes to healthier relationships between people, and mainly, highlighting the importance of spirituality in interpersonal relationships.

The next category that was identified in this research is care. Samul (2020) comments that spirituality at work encompasses caring for others and the environment. Araújo and Azevedo (2011) comment that spirituality is care for nature, for others, for

oneself. E2 states the need to "seek care for myself, for others and for the world" and E31 highlights that:

> So, this issue of spirituality goes beyond the material, it goes beyond my body, it transcends, it goes further, and the material that is close to me also goes further, it has a meaning, it has a feeling, it has an emotion, and if you do, it's because I'm going to take care of you, I'm going to treat you in a way that guarantees your continuity. Spirituality is not just me with myself, it is me with myself, me with the other, and me with what is with me, I need to express feelings, I need to relate, talk to what is around me, and feel like part of it, and the things that are around me are part of myself (E31).

Naturally, care is an element strongly related to spirituality, as it seeks to care for oneself, others, and the world in a way that maintains a healthier environment for everyone.

Faith is another category identified in spirituality, and it was also expected to be found in this research, as faith is one of the elements that make up spiritual well-being (Hatch et al., 1998). Gyatso (1999) and Tanyi (2002) also highlight faith related to spirituality. E7 states that "faith is very strong, as long as it is not to the point of leading us to attitudes without security, without conscience, but it gives us a lot of energy to face difficult moments and overcome challenges" and E17 comments:

> it is very linked to faith, to what we believe about being good. I am Catholic, but I believe and respect some other theories, one of them is doing good, the main thing, regardless of whether it is God, whether it is Oxalá, whether it is the name that we can give, do good, respect people, think about others, is the greatest thought, apparatus of faith that we can have, we always think when we take some action, whether at work, in our lives. It's thinking about how this will impact the other, the next person, that's what I have in terms of spirituality (E17).

One of the most commented categories in the interviews carried out was the relationship between spirituality and religion. Some respondents did not talk about this relationship. Others stated that spirituality can be considered religion. However, of the statements related to religion, most comments highlight that religion is different from spirituality, that they can coexist, but one does not necessarily depend on the other. Tanyi (2002) highlights that spirituality may or may not have a link with religion,

and Mueller et al. (2001) highlight that spirituality is broader than religion. E13 points out that "I see spirituality as not directly related to religion" and E27 confirms that "spirituality is not necessarily linked to religion, it would be more of an understanding and improvement of the spirit, some universal human values, which we must share or at least encourage".

Many authors bring spirituality and religiosity as synonyms. Mota et al. (2020, p. 41) present that "despite the differences between spirituality and religiosity, they are commonly understood as synonyms". E16 states that "spirituality is religiosity [...] it is a triplet between religion, philosophy and science" and E29 highlights that "in terms of spirituality I understand that there is a direct connection with religion, with belief, with faith and from then on, each person, respecting individualities, applies this in a way they see fit."

Decision was one of the categories highlighted by the participants in this research, being considered as a new element to be related to spirituality. Levy (2000, p. 130) highlights that he understood "that at the root of the relationship between spirituality and leadership in business is the recognition that we all have an inner voice and that it is the ultimate source of wisdom we turn to in the most important business decisions." Altaf and Awan (2011) present the benefits of spirituality in organizations; among them is better decision-making. This vision is complemented by the speeches of E25, who highlights that "it is difficult to remain spiritual in the context exposed by the Brazilian Military Police participant, a less democratic, less collective context. But we have to make decisions, and decisions are individual" and E28 states that

> Spirituality is closely linked to self-knowledge, the way I know myself, and the way I understand that relationships with people have the power to transform, it is these experiences as a manager, it is the experiences we have that also affect decisions to be taken in your professional career, in everyday challenges. We can think not only about good experiences, but also about bad experiences, and this helps us, as managers, to transform these situations (E28).

About the good category, the literature studied already pointed out the relationship between people's welfare and well-being, as spirituality is directly linked

to the good of people and the world. Hatch et al. (1998) present the spiritual well-being scale (belief in higher power, purpose, faith, and trust) and Tanyi (2002) highlights that spirituality has to do with the sense of physical and emotional well-being. Well-being is also related to the spirituality of work (Paulino et al., 2011; Kinjerski; Skrypnek, 2008; Karakas, 2010). E6 comments that spirituality "aims at the well-being of the person, whatever good they achieve in their life, and this well-being or good in their life involves their private, personal life, work, and all of this is part of a sphere greater than spirituality and that has to do with something that is not attainable but that is possible to seek" and E16 relates well-being with the organization:

> understand people as they are at work. If the employee is unwell, the boss must notice and talk to him, without invading his privacy. Doing this means being concerned about the individual, but also concerned about the efficiency of the work that this individual will carry out in the organization. This care for employees guarantees efficiency at work and in service. This is spirituality at work. The importance of the employees being on good terms with themselves and the team (E16).

Transcendence and what is considered beyond the material constitute another category of spirituality identified through the interviews; These are categories already highlighted in the literature and which are consolidated with the respondents' comments. Spilka and McIntosh (1996) relate spirituality to personal transcendence; Fisher (2011) highlights spiritual health with good relationships in the transcendental sphere and points to transcendence as a characteristic of spirituality; and Segura (2017) understands the transcendence linked to spirituality as an ability to understand that there is something greater in people's lives (Segura, 2017). Concerning the interviewees, E15 highlights that "spirituality is this possibility for us to transcend the rational" and E9 comments that "spirituality is an essential dimension of our life. It is very difficult to think about our life in a way that is disconnected from our soul, from what is beyond the material".

God/universe was also a category highlighted by the study. Titone (1991) denotes that spirituality may or may not include belief in God and that it is an experience of connection with others and the universe. Interviewees E20 and E12 comment on these

topics. E20 highlights that "spirituality is this connection with God, and this God can be any supreme force, I don't have a vision of what this God is like, but it is a force that acts on me" and E12 highlights that "I take spirituality as an energy that moves me and makes me believe and have hope in human beings as a whole. This allows me to receive these energies from the universe, and I'm not going to call it God, I call it the universe, and I believe in God."

God and the universe are components that denote the immensity of the scope of spirituality, that is, thinking and talking about God and the universe is admitting that spirituality is related to something or someone much superior to the human entity.

Strength was also a category found in the research, but this category has two meanings: one as Simsen and Crossetti (2004) of spirituality as a driving and motivating force and another as Gomes (2010, p. 190) highlights: "spirituality is a dynamic force that moves inside the person, gives them vitality and helps them give meaning to life, transcending it beyond a biological fact", as E21 presents:

> And bringing this to the company, I think that if you can relate spirituality to the business environment, you have a very great strength, which is the strength of having a greater reason for you to be working, the so-called purpose, but I think that this relationship would be: you believe in something, and it moves you, and this has everything to do with business, if you can bring spirituality to the company, if you can run the company based on spirituality (E21).

And the other meaning, as an agent of superior power, as E3 focuses on "this force, which you cannot see but which you know exists". Kale (2006) mentions that spirituality is associated with the idea of supreme power, superior being and transcendental force that imparts a sense of purpose to everything and everyone. Strength is a relevant category in relation to spirituality and, although it is directly linked to the topic, it was not assumed in the research.

The capacity for resilience and improvement was identified as a category related to spirituality. E23 denotes that "spirituality can help improve this situation. Having spirituality puts you in a position of more patience and more resilience. Resilient

people adapt better, have greater flexibility in the face of problems and challenges, and think about well-being" and E25 contributes by commenting that spirituality is the "ability to rebuild, reformat life. Perceiving the other with a careful look at feelings."

Vieira (2010, p. 26) states that "spirituality, internal strength and resilience can be understood as closely interconnected concepts, connected to the idea of a meaning and a greater purpose in life, as a source of motivation and overcoming". For Chequini (2007), spirituality, as it is characterized by the search for meaning and meaning in human existence and because it has the power to cause feelings of well-being, is the cornerstone for resilience.

Resilience and the search for improvements were not emphasized in the literature review, but the relationship of this element with spirituality is clearly perceived, because spirituality tends to be a driver for the most positive capabilities of human beings, and resilience is one of them. Furthermore, the search for improvements is essential, trying to be better, to act more positively, and transform the world around you.

Another category was based on the issue of believing, of having beliefs. This is a long-awaited category, as it has been widely exposed in the literature: Tanyi (2002), Puchalski (2014) and Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2006) indicate that spirituality is a set of beliefs. E29 reveals that:

> still, within the spirituality aspect, I'm mixing it with faith and religion, we need to believe a lot in some things to be able to do what we do Our work requires believing, having faith, believing in the ability to change human beings in some aspect We can never stop believing in this [...] My spirituality I understand that there is a direct connection with religion, with belief, with faith and from there, each one respecting individualities, applies this in a different way as you see fit (E29).

Furthermore, E4 portrays that it is necessary to "believe in the superior being that assists in times of difficulty by sending messages/guidance through insights about the path to follow" and E7 highlights that "we believe in something greater".

Work/organization was a category that was highly highlighted in the interviews. As reported in E26's statements, "in the professional world, it has to do with the ability

to empathize, to get out of our box, our narrow vision and try to connect with others based on feelings, less real things, less concrete, but which are equally important or even more" and from E21:

> And bringing this to the company, I think that if you can relate spirituality to the business environment, you have a very great strength, which is the strength of having a greater reason for you to be working, the so-called purpose, but I think that this relationship would be: you believe in something, and it moves you, and this has everything to do with business, if you can bring spirituality to the company, if you can run the company based on spirituality [...] I believe that spirituality is bringing to your company this issue of believing in something greater, relating it to faith. I think you can, in addition to bringing a stronger purpose, you can also be a better, more human leader, and this reflects on your business (E21).

Spirituality at work/in organizations is emphasized by several authors such as Bell and Taylor (2004), Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2006), Karakas (2010), Boff (1993), Rego, Cunha and Souto (2007), and Bezerra and Oliveira (2007). With this, it becomes a category highlighted and already observed as an element related to spirituality.

The last category revealed in this research was harmony/balance. E20 highlights that "it's this balance in relationships, it's about us finding our place" and E12 corroborates the idea that "the human being, being holistic, needs to be in balance on the physical, spiritual, emotional and mental plane. In any of these, if I'm not well, it will influence me as a human being." Harmony is presented as an element of spirituality by Gyatso (1999; 2000), Souza, Furtado and Costa (2017), and Hungelmann et al. (1985), among others.

Dezorzi and Crossetti (2008, p. 5) state that "you need to be aware of yourself to seek balance in spirituality for life, including work" and Alminhana and Noé (2010) highlight that spirituality can act on each person through balance, self-esteem and health. Considering the concepts and definitions, it is understood that spirituality, in general, provides harmony and balance in relationships and in the world.

About the 19 categories identified in the research, many were already predicted categories, including what is expressed in the literature. Basically, 5 categories highlighted consist of research findings for the topic of spirituality:

- Empathy: despite not appearing explicitly in the literature used, empathy is a sphere that can even represent spirituality in relationships with others (as spirituality deals with relationships with oneself, with others, and with the planet). Empathy is the ability to put yourself in another's shoes and express many elements that make up spirituality: respect, justice, forgiveness, harmony, love, compassion, patience, and tolerance, among others.

- Decision: this category was a very special finding in the research, as it is an essential tool in management, and one of the manager's major responsibilities. Thinking about spirituality within the manager's decisions appears, then, as a relevant contribution to ensuring that organizations are better thought of and managed, and seeking concern not only with decisions that directly or indirectly affect the organization in which one is working but also considering results, effects and consequences – positive or negative – on society and the Planet.

- Leadership: when considering the context of management, leadership is a capacity that becomes fundamental for any manager. Delving deeper into the topic of spirituality, and relating it to leadership and management, is a very timely and convenient topic, as it is possible for the elements of spirituality to directly assist all the demands that a leader has regarding his management.

- Strength: as an impulse to face the challenges inherent to all individuals and as an understanding that there is a superior entity that acts on people's lives, strength is a category to be related to spirituality, as it becomes a trigger of enthusiasm and vigor for life, for work, to seek better solutions to the problems that arise in the demands of all people.

- Resilience/improvement: by understanding that resilience is the ability of each human being to adapt to the different situations that life presents to them, there is obviously an idea that this makes human beings increasingly better, for themselves, for others, and for the world. Developing this potential means being directly linked to the skills that spirituality provides to individuals, as the search for well-being and constant improvement are purposes that spirituality proposes. Therefore, resilience and the

search for human improvement constitute a category that very strongly reflects the effects and benefits of spirituality.

The only question to be answered by the interviewees was: what do you understand by spirituality? Then, the answers characterized concepts for the topic based on the respondents' perceptions. This set of spirituality concepts was synthesized to facilitate understanding and according to the interviewees' perception, what is understood by spirituality: a way of living based on energy, linked or not to religion, that understands human transcendence, that provides well-being, that helps to overcome life's challenges and difficulties, that welcomes others, conducts work, valuing people and looks at them in their entirety through values, beliefs, faith, God, self-knowledge, connection with oneself and with something greater and the constant search for purpose and meaning in life. Regarding the proposition, it was observed, in this research, that managers understand spirituality as a valuing conception of the individual, of the subjective field.

About sustainability, as a harmonious relationship of balance between social, economic and environmental elements (Elkington, 1994), spirituality contributes to this balance, through values, the search for the meaning of life, relationships between people, empathy, decisions to care for the planet, the search for well-being among the beings that inhabit the universe and the search for harmony and balance in people's lives. The connection between spirituality and sustainability aims to achieve the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda both in the context of work and in the individual context that is constructed by each person based on their values. Furthermore, it is possible to understand that, based on the perception of managers from different types of organizations, spirituality can impact sustainability both from the point of view of the employee and the organization and from the point of view of the future, society, and the Planet.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In relation to the understanding of organizational managers about the concept of spirituality with a view to sustainability, it was identified, according to the interviewees' statements, that spirituality is a way of living based on energy, linked or not to religion, that understands human transcendence, which provides well-being, helps to overcome the challenges and difficulties of life, welcomes others, conducts work, values people, and looks at them in their entirety through values, beliefs, faith, God, self-knowledge, the connection with yourself and with something greater, and the constant search for purpose and meaning in life.

Furthermore, 19 categories were found in the research for this topic: energy, purpose/meaning, connection, empathy, leadership, values, relationships between people, care, faith, relationship with religion, decision, well-being, transcendence / beyond the material, God/universe, strength, resilience/improvement, believe/beliefs, work/organization, harmony/balance. Of these categories, 5 were considered research findings: empathy, decision, leadership, strength and resilience/improvement. Furthermore, the proposition is confirmed that managers understand spirituality as a valuing conception of the individual, of the subjective field.

Many managers did not hesitate to comment on their personal lives, relating them mainly to spirituality. What was most surprising in the interviews was that most managers do not perceive spirituality as utopian or distant, but rather in a very tangible, applicable and mainly necessary way for organizations and the future of the planet.

As for the implications of the results of this research for the field of management, there is the perspective of working on spirituality and its values for the individuals who make up organizations as a way of expanding not only organizational development but also human development and sustainable development.

For future work, a research agenda in organizations is suggested to better understand how the topic of spirituality can be discussed and developed in a way that brings benefits to everyone (people, organizations, and society).

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1. Definition of research problem	√	√	√		
2. Development of hypotheses or research questions (empirical studies)	√	√	√		
3. Development of theoretical propositions	√	√	√		√
4. Theoretical foundation / Literature review	√	√		√	√
5. Definition of methodological procedures	√	√			
6. Data collection	√			√	√
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8. Analysis and interpretation of data	√	√			
9. Critical revision of the manuscript	√	√	√	√	√
10. Manuscript writing	√	√	√	√	√
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