

## Management of conflicts between Organizational and Religious Values in Workplace

### La gestion des conflits entre les valeurs organisationnelles et les valeurs religieuses en milieu professionnel

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**Date de soumission** : 30/01/2025

**Date d'acceptation** : 04/04/2025

**Pour citer cet article** :

SOUKRI. I. & al. (2025) « Management of conflicts between Organizational and Religious Values in Workplace », Revue Française d'Economie et de Gestion « Volume 6 : Numéro 4 » pp : 473- 497.

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### Abstract

The debates on religion have become increasingly important in the professional world; some employees find themselves in a situation of conflict between their religious values and organizational values. The objective of this exploratory research is to analyze the place of religion in business, and the strategies used by the organization, for managing conflicts of values, as well as the awareness of the importance of integrating religious facts into managerial practices. The study will be carried out within multinational companies, and companies that testify to a religious omnipresence.

**Keywords :** « Religion » ; « Culture » ; « Values » ; « Religious Fact » ; « Cognitive Dissonance ».

### Résumé

Les débats sur la religion occupent une place de plus en plus importante dans le monde professionnel, où certains employés se retrouvent en situation de conflit entre leurs valeurs religieuses et les valeurs organisationnelles. L'objectif de cette recherche exploratoire est d'analyser la place de la religion en entreprise, ainsi que les stratégies mises en œuvre par les organisations pour gérer leurs conflits de valeurs. Elle vise également à sensibiliser à l'importance de l'intégration du fait religieux dans les pratiques managériales. L'étude sera menée au sein d'entreprises multinationales ainsi que d'entreprises où la présence du fait religieux est particulièrement marquée.

**Mots clés :** « Religion » ; « Culture » ; « Valeurs » ; « Fait religieux » ; « Dissonance cognitive ».

## Introduction

The organizational culture is an important element in the operation of a company, which is why it is necessary to question its constitution and especially its conditions. It is influenced by many factors, ranging from the type of organization, through its characteristics and those of its participants, to the type of environment in which it operates. It consists of a set of values that must be shared by the group. These values are seen as guiding principles that guide the choices and efforts of employees towards certain objectives. Organizational values emanate from individual values that are rooted in one's social and cultural identity. What a person values provides him with a framework for deciding what is good, virtuous and ambitious. Values are deeply embedded in our lives and affect the way we interpret our experiences. It must be recognized that religion is a source of values and, in this sense, has a cultural character, becoming one of the pillars of organizational culture. Religious values can affect how employees do their jobs. While some religious values may be invisible to colleagues, others are visible, such as the wearing of a hijab, kippa or turban by some Muslim women, Jewish men and Sikh men. The issue of religion within organizations and their cultures is becoming increasingly important in the context of globalization and economic integration, as individuals become more demanding in expressing their inner self, and to be accepted in their integrity, which can create tensions and conflicts between religious and professional identities that may harm the well-being of employees and individual outcomes. This value conflict awakens a state of psychological discomfort. The individual feels tension and unease, he will be looking for a balance, that his thoughts are following his values, his beliefs, and even with his actions, and the values of his organization. This means that the company will face a problem in managing paradoxical injunctions, and it will seek to implement strategies that will help reduce the dissonance experienced by its staff. Our article aims to prove that religion must be seen as a management component that the company should integrate into its overall strategy, not just an element of cultural diversity (Bah and Ramboarison-Lalao, 2016).<sup>9</sup> It is important to understand how the human resource function of a company whose values or activity may contradict the values or foundations of any religion, regardless of that religion, manages this conflict of cognitions. And so, we will find ourselves facing this article question which is: **How to reduce the effect of dissonance between religious values and organizational values by integrating the religious fact in the company?** To explore this complex interplay between organizational culture, values, and religion, our research follows a structured approach. We begin by examining organizational culture, its role in shaping workplace dynamics, and the

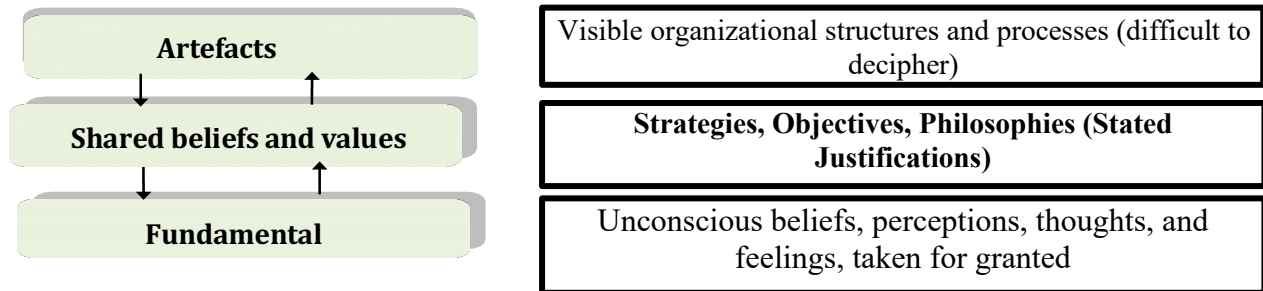
importance of shared values in guiding employee behavior. This leads to a distinction between personal values and organizational values, emphasizing how individual beliefs can sometimes align or clash with corporate expectations. Given that religion is a profound source of values, we delve into the link between religion, work, and business, identifying three distinct postures that organizations adopt regarding religious expression in the workplace. To better understand the psychological tensions that arise from conflicting values, we apply cognitive dissonance theory, including its revisions and contemporary adaptations. The discussion then shifts to the management of religious diversity in organizations, where we outline practical tools for addressing religious issues in a professional setting. To support our analysis, we present our research methodology, followed by a thorough analysis of the results obtained. Finally, we engage in a discussion of these findings, evaluating their implications for organizations seeking to integrate religious diversity while maintaining cohesion and productivity. Through this structured approach, we aim to provide actionable insights on how organizations can reduce cognitive dissonance and foster an inclusive workplace where religious and organizational values coexist harmoniously.

### **1. Organizational Culture**

Culture is a shared phenomenon shaped by individuals' social environments, encompassing different levels such as national, organizational, and job culture. Geertz (1973) defines it as a system of meanings through which people communicate and expand their knowledge. Similarly, Davel, Dupuis, and Chanlat (2008) describe it as practices, values, and symbols shared by a group around common activities. Hofstede and Minkov (2010) explain it as the collective programming of the mind that sets groups apart. Organizational culture, a subset of culture, involves shared norms, values, and rules within a workplace, uniting employees and guiding actions (Meier, 2019). According to Bournois (1996), it reflects organized rules and shared values. D'Iribane (1989) highlights it as a system of shared meaning that influences how individuals perceive and react to situations. Organizational culture shapes decision-making, internal cohesion, and interactions, influenced by factors such as history, beliefs, and symbols. Companies are shaped by multiple cultures—national, regional, professional, and personal—which influence their evolution and members' behavior. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner identify three key cultural influences: national culture, corporate culture, and functional culture, with national culture having the most significant impact. Vinardi (2016) emphasizes that corporate culture transcends the sum of individual group cultures, ensuring cohesion and coherence. Schein (1985) states that corporate culture addresses two key issues: environmental

adaptation and maintaining effective internal relationships. He also explains that organizational culture operates on three levels: fundamental postulates, shared beliefs and values, and artifacts, with the first forming the foundation for understanding the others.

**Figure N°1: The main levels of organizational culture**



Source : Auhtor

**Artifacts** represent the visible practices, rules, and symbols that organize professional and social relations within a company, including the physical environment, language, rituals, and management practices. **Shared beliefs and values** connect visible artifacts to deeper cultural assumptions, shaping behaviors, guiding strategic choices, and defining corporate identity. **Fundamental assumptions**, as Schein (1985) explains, are the unconscious foundations of culture, guiding opinions and behaviors, but are resistant to change. Hofstede (1991) views culture as inherited through group history, encompassing values, traditions, and beliefs, while Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner compare culture to water for a fish, emphasizing its omnipresence and influence on entrepreneurs' actions and aspirations.

## 2. Values vs. Organizational values

Values, as guiding principles in life, influence behaviors, including work-related ones. Rokeach (1973) defines values as “an enduring belief that a mode of conduct or final state of existence is personally or socially preferable to its opposite,” emphasizing their role as antecedents of attitudes and key elements of personality. Meier (2019) highlights that values are organized into ranked systems with emotional significance. Schwartz (1999) explains that values shape workplace behaviors and address basic needs like security, fulfillment, and autonomy. Finegan (2000) notes that values are shared daily between employees and organizations, serving as a management tool to achieve goals. Common corporate values include ethics, CSR, innovation, and customer orientation, reflecting their importance in shaping individual and organizational behavior.

### 2.1. Schwartz's ten core values

Schwartz (1992, 1996) has developed a model of “**basic human values**”, based on the work of Rokeach (1973). He presents values as affect-related beliefs, which are the expression of motivations aimed at achieving specific goals (such as security, and autonomy).

Indeed, Schwartz's (1992) model identifies 10 main types of core values. These values are present in all cultures and reflect the motivations, or goals, of individuals. These ten types of values are grouped into four forms: **Self-transcendence**, which encompasses the values of universalism and benevolence, prioritizes the well-being and interests of others, and is opposed to **Self-affirmation**, which encompasses the values of power and success and emphasizes the pursuit of individual interests. On the other hand, **Openness to Change** includes the values of stimulation and autonomy, and relates to the independence of action, thoughts and sensations, the search for new experiences, and is opposed to **Conservation or Continuity** which includes the values of conformity, tradition, and security, which promote self-restraint, order and resistance to change (Chataigné.C., Bonardi.C., Pantaléon.N, 2016).

The dimensions of Self-Affirmation and Openness to Change express individual interests and needs. Whereas, the dimensions of Self-Transcendence and Conservation bring together all types of values at the service of the collective interest.

All types of values are considered fundamental, as they correspond to three requirements or needs characteristic of the human species: basic biological needs, the coordination of social interactions, and the continuity of society.

### 2.2. List of values from Mcdonald and Gandz (1991,1992)

Research by Mcdonald and Gandz (1991,1992) reveals that diligence, cooperation, moral integrity, openness, and initiative are the 5 most frequently cited values.

The list of values frequently used in the organizational context is that of Mcdonald and Gandz (1991,1992), which contains 24 values relating to the business world and provides an important contribution for management professionals and researchers:

- **Adaptability:** being flexible and changing one's responses to changing circumstances.
- **Aggressiveness:** be aggressive and pursue goals vigorously.
- **Autonomy:** to be independent and free to act.
- **Respect for differences:** Respect different points of view and opinions.
- **Prudence:** Be cautious and minimize risk exposure.
- **Consideration:** Be kind and considerate.

- **Cooperation:** be cooperative and work with others.
- **Courtesy:** to be polite and respectful of the dignity of others.
- **Creativity:** develop new ideas and apply innovative approaches.
- **Development:** achieve personal growth goals, learn, and develop.
- **Diligence:** working hard to achieve results.
- **Economy:** to be thrifty and prudent in spending.
- **Experimentation:** use trial and error to solve problems.
- **Justice:** be fair and provide recognition based on merit.
- **Forgiveness:** be able to forgive and show understanding when mistakes occur.
- **Formality:** to confirm formalities and uphold traditions.
- **Humor:** create fun and be humorous.
- **Initiative:** recognize opportunities and take responsibility without hesitation.
- **Logic:** be rational and think in terms of actions and facts.
- **Moral integrity:** being honest and following ethical principles.
- **Obedience:** toeing the line and complying with rules.
- **Openness:** be direct, sincere, and impartial in discussions.
- **Orderly:** to be neat, tidy, and well-organized.
- **Social equality:** be equal to others and avoid differences in status. (Néron. A, 2008)

### 3. Religion and its link with work and business

Religion has historically been a foundation for human societies, as noted by Rousseau (1762), who argued that no state was ever founded without religion. Éliade (1969) emphasized that humans cannot fully desacralize their identity, with sacred spaces serving as vital landmarks. The globalization of economies and cultures poses challenges for religious expression and diversity in workplaces (Guénette et al., 2018). Religion links societies and individuals, offering psychological and social functions, such as alleviating fears and fostering hope (Ramboari Son and Bah, 2016).

Rey (1985) defined religion as the recognition of a higher power guiding destiny, encompassing beliefs and practices tied to social models. Ferréol (1995) described religion as the beliefs and practices relating to the sacred that unify individuals into a community. Durkheim (1965) viewed religion as an interdependent system of beliefs and practices tied to sacred things, forming a moral community. Kouvouama (2014) emphasized the worship of a supreme force through ancestral or spiritual mediators.

Religiosity, or the personal meaning and practice of religion, reflects individual identification with religious values (Park and Smith, 2000). It predicts life satisfaction, well-being, and happiness (Niang and Amadou, 2019). Allport (1920s) distinguished intrinsic religiosity, tied to tolerance and held as a personal value, from extrinsic religiosity, linked to ethnocentrism and used as a social tool (Galindo and Surply, 2010).

### **3.1. The three postures identified on this subject in companies**

Galindo and Zannad (2012) identify three approaches to managing religious diversity in organizations: refusal, tolerance, and accommodation.

#### **3.1.1. The posture of denial or refusal**

Some companies reject religious diversity to maintain neutrality or avoid proselytizing. Religion is considered a private matter, separated from work life, to ensure ideological or economic neutrality and to prevent negative employee reactions. This stance often reflects a secular view of the workplace, where religion is excluded entirely.



#### **3.1.2. The posture of tolerance or laxity**

This posture embraces employees' religious expressions, aiming to integrate their identities into the workplace. Companies adopting this approach see plural identities as sources of performance and seek to avoid accusations of discrimination. They support employees' religious practices to foster retention, improve reputation, and reduce the boundary between personal and professional lives (Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004).

#### **3.1.3. The posture of accommodation**

Companies following this approach strive for balance, addressing individual needs while safeguarding collective interests. Religion becomes part of corporate culture, managed through policies reconciling professional and personal life. Managers handle cases individually, ensuring coexistence of diverse beliefs. Courau (2013) highlights the "invisible stakeholder," spirituality, as part of creating a fulfilling work environment and enhancing loyalty through social dialogue (Bennani and Barth, 2012).

**Table N°1: The three company postures explained by the three levels of analysis**

Company positions Levels of analysis	Denial/ Refusal	Tolerance/ Laxity	Accommodation
<b>Individual level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Separation of personal and professional identity.</li> <li>- Intrinsic religion.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Integration of personal and professional identities.</li> <li>- Acceptance of the unveiling of religion (extrinsic religion).</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational level</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fear of not integrating employee diversity.</li> <li>- Source of performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work-life balance and diversity management policies are already in place.</li> <li>- A source of performance.</li> </ul>
<b>Societal level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sacred/profane separation.</li> <li>- Secularism is put forward as a principle of neutrality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-discrimination as an issue.</li> <li>- Recognition of the spiritual "present in everything."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognition of the sacred in the workplace.</li> <li>- Secularism is seen as the acceptance of religious differences.</li> </ul>

Source: Author

#### 4. Cognitive dissonance theory

Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (1957) explains how individuals strive for cognitive equilibrium, and disruptions to this balance create tension and motivate efforts to restore coherence. Heider's earlier Balance Theory (1946) introduced the idea that people prefer cognitive consistency. Festinger's research, such as studies on post-earthquake rumors in India, highlighted that people reduce anxiety by justifying inconsistencies, like believing in rumors to regain control over uncertainty (Vaidis & Halimi-Falkowicz, 2007). Cognitive dissonance arises from conflicts between beliefs, behaviors, or attitudes, creating psychological discomfort (Elliott & Devine, 1994; Cooper & Fazio, 1984). This discomfort, described as "arousal" (Joule, 1987), drives individuals to resolve the inconsistency, often through reinterpretation rather than attitude change (Brunnel & Gallen, 2014).

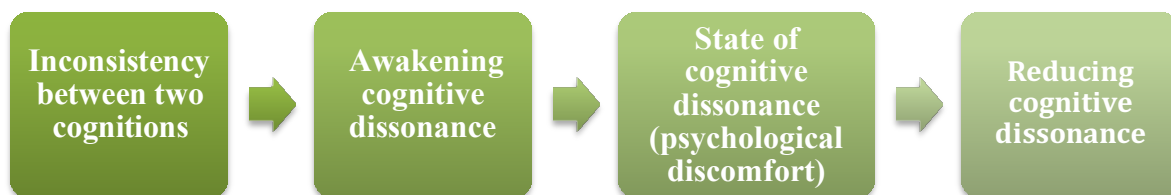
Cognitive dissonance theory, developed by Leon Festinger (1957), explains how individuals strive to maintain cognitive equilibrium when conflicting cognitions arise. Cognitions refer to knowledge, opinions, values, beliefs, or attitudes about oneself, others, or behavior. Dissonance occurs when behaviors or situations contradict an individual's beliefs, creating psychological discomfort that motivates efforts to restore coherence (Festinger, 1962). According to Festinger,

this process applies only to conscious behaviors, attitudes, and situations (Schoeneich & Busset-Henchoz, 1998).

The central premise of the theory is that individuals experiencing incompatible cognitions feel tension, which they resolve by modifying one of the dissonant elements (Bem, 1967). Cooper and Fazio (1984) argue that dissonance arises when individuals feel responsible for behaviors with negative consequences. The intensity of discomfort depends on the importance and value of the conflicting elements (Schoeneich & Busset-Henchoz, 1998).

Cognitive dissonance often manifests in workplace settings when employees' personal values conflict with organizational values, leading to dissatisfaction. The theory highlights a psychological mechanism for reducing anxiety by re-establishing balance, making it relevant to understanding job satisfaction and broader societal issues, including religion (Niang & Amadou, 2019). This timeless theory emphasizes the human tendency to avoid inconsistencies and pursue harmony (Vaidis, 2008; Brunel & Gallen, 2010).

**Figure N°2 : Cognitive dissonance theory**



Source: Brunel, O., Gallen, O., "What if it were cognitive dissonance?", HAL, 2010

#### **4.1. Synthesis of Cognitive Dissonance Theory**

##### **4.1.1. Brehm and Cohen's interpretation (1962)**

Cognitive dissonance arises when commitment and volition are present, linking individuals to their actions and generating a sense of responsibility. This connection creates dissonance, motivating efforts to resolve it.

##### **4.1.2. The psychology of commitment**

Kiesler (1971) assumes that there is a positive linear relationship between commitment and dissonance. The strength of commitment is directly proportional to the intensity of dissonance. Commitment links individuals to their actions, and varying levels of commitment influence the degree of dissonance experienced.

##### **4.1.3. The radical theory of cognitive dissonance**

Beauvois and Joule (1981) proposed a radical revision of Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, emphasizing the role of self and identity. Aronson (1968, 1999) introduced self-

consistency theory, arguing that dissonance arises when actions threaten an individual's self-perception, particularly moral values, prompting efforts to restore a positive self-image. Steele (1988) developed self-affirmation theory, highlighting the importance of self-integrity, with dissonance occurring when counter-attitudinal acts threaten a person's positive self-image. High self-esteem reduces dissonance effects, while low self-esteem intensifies them, as dissonance reduction aims to protect self-integrity (Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2007).

#### **4.1.4. The New-look**

According to Cooper and Stone (1999) This approach highlights personal responsibility and the social consequences of actions as primary causes of dissonance. It downplays self-esteem and cognitive consistency, emphasizing social norms and learned behaviors.

#### **4.1.5. The Self-Standards Model**

The Self-Standards Model (Stone and Cooper, 2001) integrates self-consistency (Aronson, 1968, 1999), self-affirmation (Steele, 1988), and the new-look theory (Cooper & Fazio, 1984) to explain cognitive dissonance. Dissonance arises from threats to the self or violations of social norms, with actions evaluated against a standard of conduct (Vaidis, 2011). This standard can be normative, based on societal beliefs about morality, or personal, aligned with individual expectations and values. Inconsistent actions challenge personal motivations, such as a smoker deciding to quit smoking.

#### **4.1.6. Action-based model of dissonance**

Dissonance stems from inconsistencies that hinder effective action. Cognitions serve as action tendencies, and resolving dissonance helps restore behavioral efficacy.

### **4.2. Reducing the state of cognitive dissonance**

Cognitive dissonance creates psychological discomfort, motivating individuals to reduce it (Brunnel & Gallen, 2014). Festinger (1957) proposed three strategies: changing behaviors, adding new consistent cognitions, or reducing the importance of dissonant elements. Harmon-Jones and Harmon-Jones (2007) added strategies like attitude change, rationalization, trivialization, and denying responsibility. These methods aim to restore coherence and alleviate the discomfort caused by conflicting cognitions.

#### **4.2.1. Festinger's methods of reducing cognitive dissonance**

Festinger (1957) proposes three generic strategies for reducing cognitive dissonance:

- **Changing our behavior**

This method of reducing dissonance can be seen as devaluing the problematic behavior or attitude. It is often used when the initial attitude is significant. By cognitive rationalization, the

individual can modify his initial attitude, provided that it is not central, too important, or too deeply rooted in the individual.

- **Justifying our behavior by adding new cognitions**

Adding new, consistent cognitions means understanding and justifying the causes of behavior, seeking consonant information, or avoiding dissonant information. New concepts, ideas, or behaviors in the same direction as the problematic behavior are added to explain or justify conflicts. The individual finds good reasons to explain their behavior (Brunnel.O., Gallen. C, 2010).

- **Justifying our behavior by changing contradictory cognition**

To reduce cognitive dissonance, individuals may adjust the importance of conflicting elements or justify their behavior by seeking consonant cognitions (Festinger, 1957). For example, a smoker who knows smoking is harmful might quit to align with health beliefs, deny the health risks, or highlight benefits like stress relief to justify continuing (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019). By altering perceptions or emphasizing positive aspects, dissonance is diminished, restoring psychological balance.

#### **4.2.2. Strategies for reducing cognitive dissonance**

Several strategies have been developed in response to Festinger's proposals:

- **Attitude change**

The change of attitude or cognitive rationalization is the reduction method most widely used in research into cognitive dissonance. The individual changes his initial attitude to bring it more in line with the problem behavior. The individuals should be less resistant to change than any other element linked to physical reality (Vaidis.D., Halimi-Falkowicz.S, 2007).

- **The rationalization process in action**

The theorists of the radical version of cognitive dissonance theory (Beauvois & Joule, 1981, 1996) proposed this method of reducing dissonance. The state of dissonance is reduced when, after performing the problematic behavior, the person has the possibility of performing a second behavior in the same direction: this is known as behavioral rationalization. This mode of reduction, which refers to the addition of consistent behavior, occurs in particular when the individual does not have enough time to rationalize on their own in a more traditional way (Vaidis.D., Halimi-Falkowicz.S, 2007).

- **Trivialization**

This mode of reduction, initiated by Simon, Greenberg, and Brehm (1995), not only reduces the inconsistency between two cognitions but also reduces the perceived importance of the

inconsistency. Individuals may devalue their problem behavior or their initial attitude towards it. They will attach little importance to the behavior that has been achieved (Vaidis.D., Halimi-Falkowicz.S, 2007).

- **Causal explanation of behavior**

According to Heider (1958), the causal explanation can be used to reduce dissonance by justifying performing or accepting a problem behavior. The individual uses explanations to justify the reasons that led him to agree to carry out a problematic act, and this helps to reduce dissonance. The arguments mobilized provide a set of consistent cognitions, which help to reduce dissonance (Vaidis.D., Halimi-Falkowicz.S, 2007).

- **Denial of responsibility**

Gosling et al (2006) propose a way of reducing dissonance, which consists of reducing the participant's feeling of responsibility. These researchers showed that denying responsibility for carrying out a problematic act would reduce the dissonance, and the individual would no longer feel the need to change the attitude or trivialize.

## **5. Religious Fact Management**

The workplace is a site of interaction and confrontation between diverse cultures, beliefs, and convictions (Bettin, 2019). Religious expression has become a sensitive issue due to globalization and increased societal diversity. Cases like “Baby Loup” in France (2012), Eweida and Chaplin in England (2013), and “Nur” in the U.S. highlight the complexities of religious visibility at work, involving conflicts over symbols like veils, crosses, and headscarves, with varying legal outcomes.

Honoré and Aïssou (2014) define signs of conviction as visible objects or symbols expressing affiliation with religious, political, or philosophical beliefs, such as headscarves or turbans, whose meaning depends on both intent and perception. According to Honoré (2016), the "religious fact" refers to behaviors in the workplace reflecting established religious practices, values, and norms rather than personal spirituality. *The “ENQUÊTE & CGET”* (2017) guide expands this definition to include diverse religious manifestations tied to culture, identity, and social organization, highlighting their relational and contextual significance. These religious practices increasingly assert visibility, often creating tension in professional contexts when rigorously observed, as they intersect with organizational norms (Volia et al., 2020).

### **5.1. Managing Religious Issues in the Workplace**

Addressing religious issues in the workplace requires a delicate balance. According to Honoré (2017), "one must act firmly in the face of unacceptable behaviors while demonstrating

pragmatism, open-mindedness, and respect for individuals to manage situations that remain low in conflict." This approach led to the creation of internal documents, such as "guides," aimed at helping managers and HR leaders handle religious requests.

Managing religious practices in the workplace requires companies to avoid leaving issues to managers' personal perceptions and ensure no discrimination arises. Employers must balance protecting individual freedoms with their authority to regulate religious requests. Employee representatives (DP) play a key role in conveying individual and collective complaints related, among other things, to working hours or safety. Similarly, the Works Council (CE) and the Health, Safety, and Working Conditions Committee (CHSCT) participate in consultations on work organization and internal regulations, including issues related to dress code restrictions or safety. Companies must comply with anti-discrimination laws while addressing religious requests to avoid complaints and tensions. Approaches vary: some employers enforce neutrality, denying religious expression; others accept all requests; and some handle issues case by case, risking perceptions of inconsistency and weakened cohesion.

To effectively manage religious issues in the workplace, several recommendations from practical guides emphasize fostering inclusivity and minimizing conflicts. Companies should distribute a calendar of religious holidays for different faiths to facilitate planning and recognize employee diversity, which is essential for their personal and professional fulfillment. Inclusive workplace policies addressing religious matters should be developed in consultation with stakeholders and aligned with legal frameworks. Employee representatives, the works council, and the CHSCT should be actively involved in resolving situations related to discrimination or tensions arising from religious beliefs. Additionally, training managers and employee representatives on religious and cultural diversity strengthens their ability to handle such issues effectively, creating a respectful and harmonious work environment.

## **5.2. Tools for Managing Religious Issues**

### **5.2.1. The Principle of Reasonable Accommodation**

Managing religious issues in the workplace partly relies on the principle of reasonable accommodation, which involves reconciling employees' religious requests, where possible, with the company's constraints, such as safety, hygiene, and the smooth operation of activities. This principle acknowledges the right of employees to express their religious beliefs while prioritizing organizational effectiveness.

### 5.2.2. The Internal Regulations

Internal regulations are a fundamental tool for regulating religious manifestations within the company. They must establish clear and impartial guidelines, without targeting any particular religion, to prevent discrimination. These regulations help define the limits of religious freedom while preserving the company's smooth operation.

### 5.2.3. The Employment Contract

Individualizing the employment contract is another effective solution. Including a specific clause related to religious issues can clarify the expectations of both the employer and the employee, providing a framework for respecting religious freedoms in the professional environment. This approach prevents conflicts and ensures better understanding of mutual expectations.

### 5.2.4. The GALINDO and ZANNAD Framework

The research conducted by Galindo and Zannad on managing religious issues in companies identified three main approaches: considering religious issues as personal, organizational, or societal matters. When the company treats religious issues as personal, it allows individuals to freely manage the relationship between their personal and professional identities. If the company views it as an organizational matter, it seeks to integrate religious issues while maintaining a degree of neutrality. Finally, when religious issues are seen as a societal heritage, the management of religious requests will be influenced by societal values related to secularism and the separation of private and professional spheres.

The emergence of religion as a research topic in management is a largely unexplored area to date. In light of its growing significance, organizations must prioritize fostering a culture of coexistence and promoting well-being in the workplace. Religious matters should be approached with neutrality in the context of work performance.

## 6. Research methodology

Our research methodology aims to address the intersection of employee's religious beliefs and organizational values, exploring strategies to reduce dissonance between these dimensions. Given the limited study of this topic in Morocco, an **exploratory qualitative approach** was chosen, incorporating an inductive logic that begins with individual observations to reach general conclusions (Gohau Aster, 1992). The study adopts the interpretive epistemological paradigm to understand phenomena based on the meanings attributed by research actors in their natural environment (Charmaz, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, cited by Savoie-Zajc, 2000).

The research involves a **multiple case study** to provide a broader perspective, as a single case would not suffice (Eisenhardt, 1989). Data collection combines **semi-directive interviews** with HR professionals, allowing for in-depth exploration of behaviors, beliefs, and strategies used to manage dissonance.

Semi-directive interviews focus on open-ended questions framed by a guide developed from previous studies on cognitive dissonance and religious fact. Participant observation facilitates interaction and immersion in the subject's environment, providing detailed insights (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975).

The research is structured into three sections: analyzing **culture and religion in business as a management dimension**; examining conflicts between **organizational and religious values**; and exploring **tools and strategies to manage religious issues**. Data analysis involves **content analysis**, grouping transcribed interview data by pre-identified themes (Thiétard, 2003). This method minimizes cognitive bias and highlights recurring patterns to understand how dissonance is experienced and managed in Moroccan companies.

This study involves 10 companies from diverse sectors to provide a comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics. The selected firms operate in areas such as **auditing and financial services, food manufacturing, digital and marketplace platforms, telecommunications and fixed-line services, automotive manufacturing, customer experience and business process outsourcing, and international air travel company**. These industries represent a mix of global and local players with significant influence in their respective fields, offering varied perspectives for the research.

## 7. Analysis of Results

In this section, we will proceed with the analysis of the results previously collected from interviewees, using semi-structured interview guides. The analysis will focus on the themes identified during our research. Each theme will be divided into two sub-themes.

### 7.1. Religion and Organizational Values

The goal of this first section is to understand how religion is perceived within the organization, based on the values shared by the group members.

The majority of the results indicated a preference for sharing internal values that foster a happy, healthy, and transparent environment. Values such as transparency and communication were emphasized by several interviewees. According to the HR Business Partner of a **marketplace platform**, *"...to build a healthy culture and to highlight uniqueness, as well as to have a transparent environment and a healthy atmosphere,"* and *"We focus on a culture of*

*transparency and communication, giving visibility to all employees, because we are convinced that this visibility will help us anticipate future concerns,"* said the HR Business Partner of an **outsourcing business** when asked about her perception of the company's internal culture. The culture should be centered on listening and communication, based on strong values of inclusion and equity, prioritizing the internal customer, who is the employee, to ensure they do not feel excluded. Based on the interviews, diversity is seen as an asset that will create added value. Human resources should be diverse, both cognitively, culturally, and religiously. Thus, the culture should be *"...a personalized culture based on religious freedom, but with involvement in the firm's project... we can compare ourselves to a small family, where the boy and the girl are equal in rights and obligations, free in their personal choices, but with respect for the parents' guidance, which is the company charter,"* stated the founder of an **auditing and financial** company.

The concept of religion has many definitions, including sacred, profane, spirituality, belief, reference, and a set of practices and customs. The interviewed companies encourage discussions about religious presence and religion in the workplace, but without intruding into the religious life of the employee and with full respect for all religions. According to the Recruitment, Communication, and Training Manager at an **international air travel company**, *"...Speaking from personal experience, I worked in France, and religion was not an issue. I am Muslim, and I worked with Jewish colleagues, Christians, atheists, and Buddhists in a multicultural environment. When I fasted during Ramadan, no one asked me about it, and no one intimidated me."* The company must provide employees with a space to express themselves freely. According to the HR Business Partner of an **outsourcing business**, *"When setting up a policy, one should not be schizophrenic. That means when I set a policy to say that I have the freedom to practice and undertake, then an employee has the full right to want to work under conditions that allow them to thrive in their job."*

## 7.2. Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance refers to a state of psychological discomfort due to a paradoxical relationship between two cognitions. In our study, cognition refers to values, specifically exploring the conflict between religious and organizational values. We seek to understand what might provoke such conflicts and the measures taken by companies to manage this value conflict.

According to the interviews, several factors can be the source of conflict between values. One reason is the manager's awareness—or lack thereof—of the importance of religious life to

employees and the impact it can have on their behavior at work. According to the founder of an **auditing and financial** company "*... if I am a manager and I judge someone's religious choice or refuse to hire a female employee who wears the hijab, the problem comes from me.*" The absence of integration systems for organizational values and culture is also considered a reason for potential conflict, according to some interviewees. According to the HR Business Partner of a **marketplace platform**, "*If we haven't prepared an integration program from the start, its work that needs to be done by the manager and HR... it can block people and create tension.*" The HR Business Partner of an **outsourcing business**, also mentioned that making value judgments can cause conflicts between individual religious values and organizational values. "*For example, I am in a work mode where in my culture, the dress code is specific, so I could shock someone because I don't dress according to their criteria, or I might have practices that could shock people. When you're in a space, for instance, on a site, the important thing is to explain to employees that judging a person who wears a hijab is the same as judging someone who doesn't.*"

Several solutions are perceived as effective in resolving conflicts between religious and organizational values, as cited by the interviewed managers. According to them, it is crucial to take a proactive, not reactive, approach to manage these conflicts. As the People's Lead of a **multinational food manufacturing company** explained, "*We try to anticipate; we are not in a reactive approach, but in a preventive one.*" Other solutions include working on value-based projects and creating new shared values that merge individual and organizational values, she noted, "*...try to understand each other, confront the values, and create a new value that combines both,*" and companies may also provide coaches or psychologists to address employee concerns, "*We have the 'EAP Program,' the 'Employee Assistance Program,' which is entirely focused on employee well-being, with coaches available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, should an employee want to share personal or professional concerns.*" All of these solutions require mutual tolerance and respect, as well as a balance between individual freedoms and the company's rights; "*...When I set up a policy stating that I have the freedom to practice and undertake, then an employee has the full right to work in conditions that allow them to thrive. So, I must make compromises, I must listen to my employee because when we hire someone, they are integrated into the company. Certain details can discourage an employee and impact their motivation on a daily basis.*"

### 7.3. Management of Religious Practices

Several events have highlighted the importance of integrating religious practices within companies, and for some, it has become a necessity. When companies intervene in markets that are not similar to their own, managers must be aware of the role of religion within the company, *"...For example, our firm has operated in more than 20 African countries, and we may encounter an Islamic country like Senegal, which shares similar cultural and human values with us, but we have also worked in Ghana, where the culture is different, with Orthodox Christians, Catholics... it's working in several areas and regions with different cultures, which is a valid reason to trigger the need for managing religious practices"* as advanced by the founder of an **auditing and financial**. Employees are becoming increasingly demanding, and they have more requests or feedback regarding their religious practices within the company. As a result, businesses must focus more on inclusion projects, the People's Lead of a **multinational food manufacturing company** noted that *"In the past 3 years, we had a score showing that people did not respect cultural or diversity values, which gave us the opportunity to work globally on 'diversity and inclusion'."* Companies working with multiple nationalities also confirmed the importance of considering religious practices: *"I believe this applies to all companies that operate globally. At some point, we are obligated to work with colleagues from different nationalities, and this has encouraged managers and leaders to embrace this culture—meaning not blocking diversity, whether cultural or religious."*

Several methods can be used to ensure proper management of religious practices within a company. For instance, companies may prepare surveys to better understand the individual values of their employees. *"In fact, we are working on a 'Culture Diversity' project. We have a platform where we all filled out a questionnaire to share our individual values, and later, the group consolidates them to form new values for our company"* as explained by the HR BP Manager of an **automotive manufacturing group**.

Many companies believe that an internal regulation can be a good tool for managing religious practices. *"Our perspective is that there is an internal regulation that ensures individual freedoms and outlines principles related to the company's charter and values..."* as noted by the Human Resources Director of a **telecommunications** company. Other companies prefer not to include this in their internal regulations *"Not necessarily in the internal regulation, because we are in a Muslim country. We can't impose something that isn't already in the constitution. We can include these values in the company's culture but not necessarily in the internal regulation"* as clarified by the HR Business Partner of a **marketplace platforms**.

## 8. Discussion of the Results

The identity of a company is shaped through its internal culture, which constructs a set of values that each employee can identify with, fostering a sense of belonging to the group. The study revealed that cultures characterized by values such as transparency, tolerance, listening, acceptance, and inclusion are more attentive to the issue of conflicts between religious and organizational values, and even attempt to anticipate such conflicts. These values echo Schwartz's model of 10 values, in which he identifies values that reflect individuals' motivations and objectives, especially values like Benevolence, Tradition, and Universalism, which emphasize respect and acceptance of other cultures and religions, understanding, tolerance, and prioritizing individual well-being and spiritual life. McDonald and Gandz's model also highlight the values of respecting differences, courtesy, and moral integrity, which foster acceptance of individuals in their entirety. When such a culture exists within a company, it encourages greater attention to the "Religion" sphere. Studies have shown that companies can adopt two approaches toward religion: one of "Tolerance," which embraces and integrates all aspects of the individual, maintaining that religion cannot be excluded from the workplace, and another of "Accommodation," which seeks to reconcile professional and private life. These two positions are supported by the theory of Galindo and Zannad regarding corporate stance toward religion. Today, conflicts between organizational and religious values can arise when employees feel uncomfortable in companies that do not take their individual values into account, a phenomenon confirmed by the Radical Cognitive Dissonance Theory and the Self-Standards Theory. These theories suggest that individuals will experience psychological discomfort if their identity and personal integrity are threatened within the company, such as in cases where the display of religious symbols is not accepted. If this behavior contrasts with the individual's personal expectations and what they deem immoral, it triggers a conflict of values. To resolve this conflict, companies either adopt a preventive approach or try to create a new value that links employees' religious values with organizational ones. The latter approach aligns with Festinger's solution for reducing cognitive dissonance through changing problematic cognition. This demonstrates that companies are increasingly prioritizing the religious demands of their employees, making it necessary to integrate religion into the workplace. Galindo and Surply stress that religion cannot be ignored by companies because it is an intrinsic part of the individual at work. Several field studies have addressed the role of religion in the workplace and offered recommendations through guides, such as training managers and employee representatives on the issue of religion in the company, a practice observed by the companies

studied. Another tool that can aid in managing religious matters is the internal regulations. Several companies have emphasized the importance of establishing rules to manage religious issues and ensure respect for them, without infringing on the freedom of employees and without targeting any particular religion or act.

### **General Conclusion**

In this era of globalization, the labor market is characterized by a great cultural diversity that coexists within the same territory. This diversity is perceived as an asset for the company, helping it to succeed in its projects. However, this variety can also lead to issues within the organization, causing conflicts between individual religious values and the organizational values of the company. Companies are increasingly recognizing the importance of religion in the workplace and its impact on individual behavior within the organization. As a result, some companies prefer to incorporate religious considerations into their HR policies from the outset, particularly during the recruitment process, in order to identify profiles that can adapt to and overcome tensions, and have successful careers within the company. Cognitive Dissonance Theory plays a significant role in analyzing organizational and human phenomena, offering solutions to help companies manage this issue through attitude changes, developing an organizational culture that is meaningful to all stakeholders, and integrating religion into the workplace. Additionally, the creation of rules governing religious matters in internal regulations is seen as the most common solution used by companies. Regarding limitations, no research is exempt from them. One limitation was the extensive information in the interview guide, which required substantial time to transcribe and analyze the interviews. Another limitation was the refusal of several companies to respond to the guide due to the sensitive topic, which is still considered a taboo in many cases. Some employees even mentioned that they could not comment on what they perceived as the employer's ethics. It is also important to note that the target sample was limited, meaning the results cannot be generalized to the entire population. This leads us to foresee a quantitative study to deepen our research, which could explore the impact of conflicts between organizational and religious values on work dynamics. Another avenue might be to examine this issue beyond the individual's religion, focusing on their spirituality, or exploring the concept of Psychological Capital, which operates on a deeper level than Human Capital. Furthermore, our study could be extended internationally to strengthen the research.

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