

Belonging and Knowledge Articulation in Epistemically Fragile Communities of Practice

Kirsten Garbini¹ and Maria Frahm-Arp²

¹Dineo Pact, Department of Religion Studies, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

²Department of Religion Studies, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

kirsten@dineo.us.com

mariafa@uj.ac.za

Abstract: Organisations operate under conditions of social and technological acceleration, contested knowledge, and epistemic instability. Knowledge articulation is made difficult not only because knowledge is tacit but because the legitimacy of the knower is uncertain. This paper draws upon qualitative research conducted with two women-centered Communities of Practice (CoPs) showing how such spaces, were experienced by the women who participated in them less as formal, professional, knowledge-sharing communities and more as relational spaces for recognition, belonging and epistemic legitimacy. In particular, it reflects on how the spiritually-inflected relational practices of these CoPs enabled women community members to articulate knowledge and experience in ways that they generally found more difficult to do in other more formal settings in their organisations which were characterised by hierarchy, alienation and risk of testimonial injustice. This paper adds to KM scholarship through showing how relational recognition and spiritually-inflected belonging in these two CoPs created conditions in which knowledge became articulate.

Keywords: Communities of Practice, Epistemic fragility, Knowledge articulation, Relational field, Belonging, Post-truth organisations

1. Introduction

Alienation as a historical category has been understood as only arising with industrial capitalism and Marx's critique of labour (Marx, 2009). Yet, some contemporary theorists argue that late or technological capitalism has not overcome alienation but transformed it into other forms, such as acceleration, digitalization, performative labour, and fragmentation of social ties. (Illouz, 2007; Turkle, 2011). In these conditions alienation may be intensified by performance and visibility, rather than by mutual recognition. Digital culture, greater performance pressure, and longer periods of engagement with social media increase hyperconnectivity that is associated with emotional depletion, loneliness, and attenuated social connection (Turtle, 2011; Lawrence et al., 2024). As Turtle (2011) writes, while forms of connection may be increased, relational depth is not automatically increased. At the same time, organisational life is increasingly characterised by uncertainty, living costs have risen, economic conditions have become more volatile and institutional trust has diminished, contributing to a sense of anxiety and meaninglessness (Vervaeke, 2019; Yin and Mahrous, 2022; Mahand and Caldwell, 2023). Consequently, organisations are increasingly arenas in which meaning, recognition and legitimacy have to be negotiated amid uncertainty and mistrust (Neuburger et al., 2023; Winkler & Schoeneborn, 2025). Within this context Rosa (2019) shows that alienation in the workplace, has not gone away in the age of technological capitalism, but rather is an under-recognised reality of contemporary life. This paper explores whether Communities of Practice (CoPs) and, specifically, spiritually-inflected forms of relational engagement within CoPs are able to engender a sense of belonging and a discursive positioning of knowledge within the pervasive alienation and uncertainty that characterise many lives today (Block, 2008; Wenger, 1998; Frahm-Arp, 2014).

Drawing on Fricker's (2007) account of epistemic injustice and Collins's (2000) account of Black feminist epistemology, this paper conceptualises epistemic fragility as a state of affairs where epistemic legitimacy for knowledge as well as for the knower is unstable, contingent, and contestable within a given organisational field. Drawing on these two CoPs, the paper argues that some women experienced spiritually-inflected relational practices as creating conditions of recognition, trust and legitimacy through which forms of knowledge, uncertainty and professional vulnerability which are otherwise inarticulable in organisational life became available. In this sense, the paper suggests that epistemic fragility may shape not only whether knowledge is shared but whether participants experience themselves as legitimate knowers capable of articulation in organisational contexts. The study found that some women experienced these CoPs as relational counterspaces in which organisational pressures, uncertainty, and vulnerability could be interpreted collectively.

2. Literature Review

Knowledge Management literature has long established that relational learning and social conditions affect the sharing of tacit or explicit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Wenger, 1998; Bartol & Srivastava, 2002). In consideration of constructivist theories, KM scholars agree that knowledge is socially constructed, negotiated, and situated in concrete interaction and shared practice (Newell et al, 2009). CoPs were interpreted as relational sites of learning, participation, and knowledge creation and sharing through shared practice rather than through hierarchical relations (Wenger, 1998). The KM literatures also recognized that tacit knowledge has a certain degree of "stickiness", making it difficult to be articulated and transferred (Szulanski, 2000), and that knowledge sharing depends on trust, reciprocity, and the organisational context (Newell et al., 2009, Wang and Noe, 2010). In contrast to Wenger's (1998) definition of CoPs as groups that share practice and identify themselves through their participation in this practice, the data of the present study suggest that the contribution CoPs can make in epistemically fragile organisational environments may lie less in knowledge sharing per se, but rather in their capacity to provide relational space for individuals to articulate their acquired knowledge through recognition.

Turning to the specific context of African women professionals, there is very little research into how these individuals navigate alienation in their organisations. Rudo Gaidzanwa's study of tearooms as counterspaces at the University of Zimbabwe demonstrates how women overcome racial and gendered alienation. She notes that "in the absence of significant material rewards and remuneration for their intellectual labour, they create meaning and support each other through their voluntary association" (Gaidzanwa, 2007 p.78). In this sense, CoPs may operate as voluntary or semi-voluntary bounded groups through which knowledge, meaning, and identity are collectively explored outside of the organisational structures of control.

In organisational literature, workplace spirituality has been framed as a remedy for alienation, fragmentation, and meaninglessness (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Fry, 2003; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003). In North American and European settings, workplaces perceived as spiritually meaningful have also been linked to trust, connectedness, ethical engagement in organisations, employee wellbeing, and knowledge-sharing (Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson, 2003; Padgett, 2008; Khasawneh, 2011). Ashmos and Duchon defined workplace spirituality as "an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work in the context of community" (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000, p. 134). Some researchers have critiqued workplace spirituality as also being vulnerable to instrumentalisation, when spirituality, mindfulness and contemplative practices are detached from their ethical and transcendent foundations, and applied to aims of organisational resilience, productivity, or self-management (Purser, 2018, Ihl et al., 2022). This literature remains conceptually contested, with spirituality understood variably as an inner life, ethical conduct, expression of religion, or manifestation of secular well-being intervention (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002, Eginli, 2017).

Internationally, studies on workplace spirituality have focused on meaning, inner life, community, values, wellbeing, ethics, leadership, organisational commitment, and knowledge-related behaviours. (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000, Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002, Fry, 2003, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003, Milliman, Czaplewski and Ferguson, 2003, Kinjerski and Skrypnik, 2004, Karakas, 2010, Eginli, 2017). Little is known, however, about the role of spirituality in South African workplace settings, especially concerning women's experiences of professional CoPs. South African scholars have examined religion, particularly Pentecostalism, and its impact on professional women, but there is no research on spirituality in South African corporate CoPs for women professionals specifically (Frahm-Arp, 2010, Frahm-Arp, 2014).

3. Methodology

The data presented in this paper is part of the qualitative research project which investigated two Communities of Practice (CoPs) as potential relational sites of resonance, belonging, and spirituality in professional contexts: the Women in Technology Community of Practice (WITCP) and an Enneagram Community of Practice (ECP). The WITCP is for women who are employed in technology occupations at a large company. The ECP members are employed or self-employed people, mostly women, working in a range of fields and professions. Both CoPs are predominantly online groups. For this study two rounds of semi-structured open-ended online interviews with 15 WITCP members and 8 ECP members (interview total of 30 for WITCP and 14 for ECP) were conducted. Additionally, 12 WITCPs and 8 ECPs sessions were observed. This paper only draws upon WITCP and ECP members who describe CoPs as a valuable or useful way of engaging in organisational life. Pseudonyms have been used throughout. Not every participant found the experience to be safe or affirming, with some describing discomfort with spiritual openness and vulnerability, and some noting the persistence of organisational

hierarchy. Thus, epistemic repair can be seen as not necessarily a function of CoPs as such, but rather contingent on participants being able to navigate vulnerability, trust, hierarchy, and relational acknowledgement within CoPs.

Social constructivism and hermeneutic phenomenology were used as philosophical perspectives for the research. Hermeneutic phenomenology was considered appropriate for the study to explore how participants made sense of their lived experiences of belongingness, alienation, spirituality, and articulation of knowledge in organisational contexts. (Churchill and Bly, 1999). The study was interested in the meaning-making involved by CoP participants regarding their participation and the way this informed perceived recognition, legitimacy and relationality. Feminist epistemology was the underlying epistemological basis for the selection of both the sampling and the interpretive and analytical frames for the research, as well as for consideration of voice, legitimacy and power in organisational knowledge practices.

As with any hermeneutic phenomenology, the goal was not about objectivity or universalisable claims, but about interpreting what participants said in terms of their understanding and accounts of their lived experiences in particular organisational and relational contexts. The interviews were interpreted as interpretive encounters through which meaning was articulated, and sometimes newly recognised. Themes of belonging, legitimacy, spirituality, alienation, and articulating knowledge emerged through an iterative process of analysis and considering how participants narrated and made sense of their lived experiences in relation to their organisational and relational contexts.

4. Findings

The initial assumption was that WITC would be performative and inauthentic because it is mono-organisational with leaders from the organisation included in the group. The founders of both CoPs indicated that the groups' value lay primarily in teaching and learning, with the WITCP offering additional strategic retention benefits for the corporation. Against this backdrop of formal intent, the actual data were surprising.

As members joined the online fora, both CoPs used centring language, encouraging presence and embodiment, such as: "Let's become aware of our bodies in the room" (Thandi, 28 Jan 2026). This emerged as a normative opening ritual for both groups and a means of delineating the space for the gathering. Collins (2000) characterises alternative sites of knowledge as sites of resistance and collective sanctuaries for knowledge production. However, a shift in focus occurred as the prevalence and depth of discussions regarding spirituality became noticeable. Specifically, members' consistent engagement in spiritual discourse, including prayers, songs of worship, meditation, centring silence, and the spiritual reading of texts and poetry, extended beyond the groups' initial framing as knowledge-sharing communities.

During gatherings, members of both CoPs engaged with one another outside their designated identities and hierarchies. One member said: "In that space I am not my job title, I can actually show up as who I am" (Naledi, 22 September 2025). Within the WITCP group, the absence of explicit hierarchy allowed a diverse membership, from executive leaders to staff members who have newly joined the organisation, to engage in mutual recognition and personal disclosure. Participants discussed their identities, spiritual encounters and insights, and the erosion of women's sense of competence in the workplace. Ayanda observed: "We talk about being women in tech, women at home, women in the wider community, and it feels like we bring our home communities in with us at some level. They are listening too because we are all women being women" (12 September 2025). In the ECP community, women's experiences and challenges also foregrounded many conversations: "We need to dig so deep to survive as women, with debt, work and global financial instability. This space brings us grace" (Yumna, 20 February 2026).

These results suggest that spirituality in the case of these CoPs worked as a site for the negotiation of recognition, vulnerability, legitimacy, and belonging. The spiritual discourse created spaces within the CoP that allowed participants to make available to each other experiential forms of knowledge sometimes rendered inexpressible in performance-based, testimonial risk environments. On the other hand, some people spoke of the discomfort produced by the vulnerability of these spiritually-inflected forms of openness. Several participants reported that they remained quiet, and/or that the spaces in which they found themselves were emotionally unsafe or too exposing, and described these factors as contributing to their dropping out of the CoPs. This reinforces the argument that epistemic repair in CoPs is contingent, uneven, and relationally negotiated.

WITCP members reported that structured opportunities for discussing technical knowledge often took place outside WITCP meetings, and requests for knowledge assistance were shifted to one-to-one meetings. As

Kgomotso (12 September 2025) explained, "There is freedom to ask for help because it's based on a connection that won't judge. Asking a non-CoP colleague for help might be humiliating because not knowing is frowned upon in specialist circles". Within the ECP members said that they stayed quiet when they did not know about the topic "It often goes over my head, so I just listen" (Lindiwe 15 September 2025). Coaching and knowledge articulation occur outside of community meeting times, however, in the weekly CoP, teaching in a more formalised manner also occurs.

These findings suggest that the formal CoP gatherings establish trust, recognition and legitimacy that enable participants to take the risk of reaching out for help, expressing uncertainty and negotiating forms of tacit or vulnerable knowledge in more private relational spaces. Thus, in this sense, it appears that knowledge articulation depended less on formalised knowledge-sharing mechanisms and more on participants' confidence that they would not be exposed, diminished, shamed or otherwise professionally degraded for being not knowing.

The members of both CoPs sought validation that they were not alone in experiencing exclusion, inadequacy or diminished professional standing within organisational life. Participants repeatedly used the phrase "is it just me or.." (Quinette, 22 October 2025; Zanele, 3 November 2025; Carol, 27 November 2025; Stephanie, 7 February 2026) to preface their descriptions of being ignored, weakened, excluded or made to feel professionally deficient. Participants also reflected on identity beyond their formal roles and titles, sharing fatigue with performance expectations and challenges with workplace hierarchies. The findings therefore suggest that these CoPs enable participants to narrate, and legitimate their own experiences collectively.

For WITCP members, a key concern was how to succeed in a male-dominated technology environment, with Iris (6 March 2026) noting: "I have noticed if I don't get a man's sponsorship for an idea it won't go anywhere". The challenges introduced by members during gatherings were rarely technical in nature. Instead, they focused on identity, shared reflection, and meaning-making. Examples included navigating social exclusion from informal organisational decision-making sites, such as "Padel" matches (Wilma, 4 December 2025), and the difficulty of gaining professional recognition from supervisors who might categorise working mothers into a "mom-box" (Nolwazi, 9 January 2026).

More than half the respondents in both CoPs used spiritual framing to describe their participation, viewing it as a personal journey alongside peers they trusted and respected both personally and professionally. For these women, the CoP was a refuge against workplace alienation. Zanele asserted that the space provided "deep nourishment" for her spiritual path (3 November 2025). Stephanie further highlighted this reorientation of identity, noting: "I get my priorities reordered, and remember I am a child of God, not an employee" (7 February 2026). Sally described the community as a space of "transformation", where members feel "unashamed to speak" and thus are able to share their lives with one another at a "deeper, more personal" level (12 September 2025).

Participants referred to the CoPs as spaces in which they felt able to speak more openly about exhaustion, inadequacy, work pressures, structural inequity, and organisational alienation. Sally described the community as a space of "transformation" in which members felt "unashamed to speak" and were therefore able to engage one another at a "deeper, more personal" level (12 September 2025). These consisted of confession, sensemaking, and emotional repair, as well as addressing overwork, worthlessness, organisational mismatch and exclusion based on gender. Data from this analysis shows how the collective forms of practice could not only be therapeutic disclosure but also a form of collective recognition and legitimation of experiences related to the organisational conditions.

Kgomotso framed the gatherings as experiences of "holding holy knowledge together" (12 September 2025), suggesting a movement away from highly individualised understandings of knowledge toward relational and spiritually-inflected forms of knowing. She explained: "We pray together, we cry together and we remember who we really are unbelittled by the voice of the organisation." Others said they felt a sense of "being seen and heard" (Ray, 12 September 2025). They felt this was a space in which they were less interrupted and/or shown more respect than in the organisation (Quinette, 22 October 2025). Nothanda explained that she could feel like shea real person not just an entity that gets paid: "I can feel like I am me, in all that I am, not just the me on the payroll" (2 February 2026).

These findings suggest that the CoPs eased epistemic recognition through which participants experienced themselves as legitimate knowers who were able to articulate experiences of difficult topics often disguised, or suppressed in organisational life. Spirituality appeared less as doctrine than as a shared interpretive framework

by which participants understood their experiences of stress, exclusion, precarity and uncertainty. In contrast, participants reported openness within the CoP context. As Kgomotso put it, "I can't say to my boss, I have too much work, I have to say how excited I am to take on new work, otherwise I will get branded" (12 September 2025). Yet in the CoP she felt she could actually express how overwhelming her work load was.

Some participants expressed discomfort with the level of vulnerability and religiosity of the WITCP group. Julia said, "It's difficult when you've shared something personal, and then you have to sit in a performance meeting with that same person. She decides my increase, and she is my boss, and I can't turn that off" (3 February 2026). Palesa said, "I like to watch and listen, but when they start to criticise the organisation, I become anxious" (5 December 2025). There were also concerns to do with authority, legitimacy, and spirituality in the ECP. Some participants expressed discomfort with performative modes of spiritual knowledge-sharing and with members' attempts to position themselves as having greater spiritual knowledge or access to "truth" (Joan 20 March 2026). These dynamics produced new hierarchies of authority within the group that counteracted the CoP's potential to produce an unqualified space of epistemic openness.

These findings suggest that the value of these CoPs may lie in the relational/spiritual conditions in which participants are epistemically recognised, and able to articulate forms of knowledge and experience otherwise silenced in organisational life. They also indicate that tacit knowledge may be resistant to articulation not only because it resists codification, but also because articulating that knowledge in organisational contexts is a risky professional act. However, due to social hierarchies and varying abilities to embrace the CoP conditions, not all participants were able to integrate the relational dimensions of the CoPs.

5. Discussion

Knowledge Management researchers have suggested that sharing tacit and explicit knowledge usually requires contextually appropriate social conditions (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995, Polanyi, 1967). In a similar sense, knowledge articulation could result from participation in a shared practice (Wenger, 1998), although it does not automatically result in knowledge sharing or transfer (Bolisani & Scarso, 2014). While Polanyi's (1967) writing on tacit knowledge goes towards an explanation of why some forms of knowing are intractable to formal and explicit articulation, the current study's findings regarding epistemic and relational conditions indicate that participants in this study did not feel themselves to be legitimate knowers who can speak freely about their knowing and experience in the context of organisational life as employees or as consultants in organisations. In this sense, the findings complicate KM approaches that treat knowledge articulation mainly as a matter of codification, transfer, or practice-sharing.

The findings suggest that in certain contexts, spirituality may be a catalyst for creating these relational conditions. Within the WITCP and ECP, a willingness to share "messiness" and uncertainty emerged as a possible indicator of psychological safety that bypasses some formal hierarchies. This suggests that the relational field may be more than a backdrop for shared practice; it may be a mechanism for "epistemic repair". By "holding holy knowledge together", some members co-created a counterspace where the legitimacy of the knower could be restored, moving beyond the professional reciprocity described by Bartol & Srivastava (2002) toward a more spiritualised alignment.

Consequently, the role of the CoP in these contexts may shift from a functional tool for efficiency toward a site of ontological security. By providing a spiritualised form of trust, these communities may allow participants to navigate aspects of organisational life with less fear of being "branded" or diminished. In this context, spirituality appears to be a constitutive element that potentially allows the knower to re-emerge and contribute to the collective knowledge repository.

The re-emergence of the knower may be particularly relevant in contemporary organisational contexts characterised by competing knowledge claims and the accelerating technology and compressed temporality described by Rosa (2019). These conditions, often associated with the instability of beliefs in a "post-truth" era (Keyes, 2004), can create a context in which the legitimacy of both the knower and the knowledge is contested. In such environments, automated systems, metrics, and performance dashboards may be prioritised over individual interiority and meaning-making. Spiritually sustaining CoPs can foster belonging and recognition, enabling individuals to articulate experiences and engage in active epistemic participation. However, these communities are not without their own challenges. They may also contain mechanisms that exclude or block accessibility, thereby potentially manifesting internal forms of alienation.

The findings may be further interpreted through Biesta's (2010) distinction between qualification, socialisation, and subjectification. While CoPs are typically associated with qualification, the development of specific

knowledge and skills, the interactions observed in this study appear to align more closely with processes of subjectification. Within these spiritualised exchanges, some participants may experience themselves as recognised agentic subjects, capable of speaking and acting within and beyond their organisational roles (Biesta, 2010). Fisher (2009) similarly argues that contemporary organisational systems can create conditions that narrow expression, potentially limiting their capacity to engage with alternative ways of being and knowing. These CoPs, therefore, appear to offer a space where alternate epistemic approaches can be experienced. However, this perspective does not fully account for the complexities of epistemic injustice, which may persist despite these relational shifts.

Fricker (2007) characterises epistemic injustice as a form of injustice which weakens a person's capacity as a knower in the world. This research has found that women in this study have said they work in organisations where their knowledge was ignored, interrupted, or weakened relative to male colleagues. In addition, one outcome of the presence of epistemic injustice may be that it becomes difficult for members to give testimony, knowledge claims are silenced or are made difficult to articulate. For this reason, testimony in the CoPs may have been an important mechanism through which re-interpretation of subdued experiences helped in undoing the loss of trust in the group as an epistemic agent. The findings contribute to extending Fricker's theory of epistemic injustice by suggesting that epistemic repair may be achieved interpersonally through recognition and collective testimony rather than through formal corrections of under-representations of credibility. Fricker's distinction between testimonial and hermeneutical injustice provides a clear conceptual analysis of the organisational credibility deficits articulated by the participants.

The difficulties participants had in re-legitimising themselves as knowers may be understood as an application of Collins' (2000) thesis regarding women as marginalised actors in epistemic practices, pointing to the tendency for women to be subject to heightened scrutiny, distrust, and rejection, leading to a reluctance to share even explicitly shareable knowledge due to social and professional costs. Collins' (2000) assertion that marginalised women constantly negotiate whether their knowership is legitimate is echoed in participants' expectations of being interrupted, belittled, excluded, or sullied due to providing alternative meanings within their organisations.

The data suggests epistemic fragility, where power and hierarchy undermine women's knowledge in contested spaces. For many participants, and particularly Black women in South Africa, this reflects a broader historical continuity. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) and de Sousa Santos (2015) suggest, a post-apartheid context still rooted in coloniality often continues to assign status to certain forms of knowing while marginalising others. This study illustrates how these dynamics are often reproduced within the organisation, as members frequently had to negotiate the specific conditions under which they felt able to speak. Epistemic fragility within organisations is likely to be layered across the historical context rather than simply being an effect of being within the organisation.

The role of spirituality in these CoPs might also be understood in light of what Frahm-Arp (2014) observed in the South African context, namely, that the sacred often "finds its way into many corners of everyday life" (p.7), even in normally secular spaces. The findings suggest that spirituality in CoPs also acted as a relational and interpretive resource through which participants made sense of exclusion, precarity, exhaustion and organisational precarity. In this respect the findings support Fricker's (2007) argument regarding the centrality of the invalidation of knowers' credibility to epistemic injustice, and this study suggests that collective testimony and mutual recognition in CoPs are ways in which partial forms of epistemic repair are practiced. These results suggest that the repair was contingent, incomplete and distributed unevenly across the sample.

According to Taylor (2007, pp.31), the modern world is an "immanent frame": a world in which organisational and social life has to be effective and meaningful in its own right, without any reference to transcendence. This poses a challenge in the South African context. The participants did not bracket religion or spirituality in relation to work, the practice, or their peers. Spirituality was not peripheral to organisational participation in these CoPs. It was constitutive of how the workplace generates meaning as well as legitimacy and articulation. The workplace, in the South Africa context at least, is for many a context where spirituality informs the way they self-conceive and how they engage with their work, consistent with spirituality as a lived and enacted dimension of professional practice (Frahm-Arp, 2014).

These findings suggest that when the relational field is interpreted as a spiritualised space, it may provide the necessary conditions for individuals to navigate the constraints of contemporary organisations and potentially engage in a process of epistemic repair. This study, therefore, contributes to KM literature on factors that

influence the effectiveness of CoPs by indicating the importance of relational and epistemic dimensions through which members consider themselves as legitimate knowers who can articulate their knowledge.

6. Conclusion

These CoPs were formally established as spaces of professional learning, and participants' storytelling, spirituality, and sense-making were part of how they made sense of their experience of organisational life. It was through these practices that some women were able to articulate and share their experiences of alienation, exclusion, and uncertainty.

This paper argues that while the CoPs in this study are sites of knowledge sharing, they are also sites where epistemic legitimacy is negotiated and sometimes even partially remade. It conceptualises these conditions as epistemic fragility, the condition where the legitimacy of both the knower and the knowledge they hold is contingent upon relations of power, recognition and context. In this sense, the findings suggest that relational, affective and epistemic conditions may shape the way tacit knowledge is articulable within organisational contexts. The study contributes to KM literature by articulating that knowledge-sharing can be (re)produced not only as a technical or procedural phenomenon but as a relational capacity premised on legitimacy, belonging and interpretive trust. Across both CoPs, spirituality is a relational resource some participants draw upon to negotiate these relations of legitimacy, belonging and interpretive trust. For some CoP participants, spirituality functions as a relational resource that enables them to repair some of the epistemic damage they have experienced at work and to some extent enhance their ability in knowledge production, consumption and creation.

Ethics Declaration: This study received ethical clearance from the Faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of Johannesburg on the 6th of September 2025. All research activities were conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines and requirements stipulated by the committee.

AI Declaration: AI tools were used for language refinement, structural organisation, and clarity of expression. All substantive components of the work, including the research design, empirical data, analytical processes, theoretical framing, and conclusions, are the original intellectual work of the authors. The authors retain full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the content.

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