

## An empirical study on spiritual intelligence and quality of life among sales trainers: mediating effect of self-efficacy

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### ABSTRACT

The concept of spiritual intelligence is gaining increasing popularity in the field of management literature. This concept is looked at by scholars, academicians, and practitioners to solve modern-day challenges in organizations. The effectiveness of the components of spiritual intelligence in improving the quality of work-life, while fostering behavioral skills like self-efficacy, is a fairly new concept in the intersection of organizational settings and psychological studies of the workplace literature, particularly among the sales professionals in the context of a developing nation which has not been given much emphasis. The present study addresses the research gap by exploring the concept of spiritual intelligence among sales trainers to empirically analyze the relationship between spiritual intelligence and quality of work-life through the mediating effects of self-efficacy. The relationship between these variables is investigated through mediation analysis. Drawing on a survey conducted among a sample of 233 sales trainers working in the sales department of various organizations in Bengaluru, the study successfully augments literature by suggesting that self-efficacy significantly mediates the relationship between spiritual intelligence and quality of work-life. Spiritual intelligence was reported to significantly influence self-efficacy, which in turn, has a significant positive influence on the quality of work-life. Thus, these findings shed new light on the importance of developing spiritual intelligence among sales trainers to increase their quality of work-life through improving their self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** *Spiritual Intelligence; Self-efficacy; Quality of Work-life; Sales Trainer*

The spiritual dimension of human intelligence, which is interconnected with the health, growth, and development of an individual, is recognized as one of the most prominent dimensions along with social, psychological, and physical dimensions (WHO, 2009; Mishra & Vashyst, 2014). According to Ashmos and Duchon (2000), Spiritual Intelligence (SI) is the acceptance of an inner self that cultivates and is nurtured by meaningful work within the community, corporate, or family settings. Spiritual intelligence combines the concept of spirituality and intelligence into a single framework for recognizing the abilities to use spirituality to make daily life activities more meaningful, to enhance professional performance, and to progress in life (Zohar, 2012; Ramachandaran et al., 2017).

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King and DeCicco (2009) classified four components of spiritual intelligence which include critical existential thinking to analytically think about existential issues like life, death, etc. This is followed by personal meaning production to direct individual intentions towards the purpose of life. The third category includes transcendental awareness to recognize and understand the inspiring traits of self and others in the awakened state of consciousness. The fourth category includes conscious state expansion to enter a superior level of the spiritual state of mind and exit as one wishes.

Spiritual Intelligence at workplace is an emerging area of research among scholars, academicians, and practitioners in the field of management. The spiritual ability to solve existential life issues improves the self-efficacy of a person. Self-efficacy is defined as the belief of individuals about their abilities to conduct different levels of performance and reach perfection (Godwin et al., 2016). People enjoy professional engagement when they have confidence in their abilities to execute work-related activities. This indicates that higher self-efficacy levels lead to greater enthusiasm to participate in work-related activities and generate improved outcomes (Campos, 2016; Lukas et al., 2016). Spiritual intelligence is known to improve daily life compatibility between individuals which subsequently leads to increasing the self-efficacy level in an individual (Emmons, 1999). Zamiri et al. (2016) perceived a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and self-efficacy. Spiritual employees are more confident and have a higher quality of work-life (Mohsenimaram et al., 2018). Recently, the concept of “quality of work-life” has been used by researchers to reduce the job stress of employees and improve the job satisfaction of employees (Kermansaravi et al., 2015). The quality of work-life is perceived to be related to working conditions within organizations. It is also perceived as the most important factor for managing the physical and mental health of employees (Omar, 2009). Considering the importance of the quality of work-life in improving employees’ performance, any attention paid to improve the quality of work-life can lead to improving the level of services. According to Mensah and Lebbaeus (2013) and Ghassabkar and Mirjafari (2018), there exists a positive relationship between self-efficacy and quality of work-life. Therefore, to improve the quality of work-life of the sales trainer, it is recommended to improve their self-efficacy. Therefore, it is perceived that the components of spiritual intelligence have a significant relationship with the behavioral aspects like self-efficacy and employment-related experience like the quality of work-life among individuals. This leads to the requirement of conducting research concerning these constructs.

Organizations, particularly where sales professionals and trainers operate, have witnessed significant changes in recent years like changes in organizational structure, extreme optimization leading to downsizing employees, extreme specialization leading to experiencing low self-esteem among employees, etc (Driver, 2005). Sales professionals and trainers are exposed to high levels of job-related stress owing to the increasing competition to achieve targets (Badrinarayanan & Madhavaram, 2008). In such a crisis, spiritual intelligence is being proposed as one of the most effective remedies for the sales trainers. Previous studies have given primary consideration to observable behaviors and logical constructs in management literature, rather than something elusive like spiritual intelligence (Kaur & Singh, 2013). Moreover, there are extensive management studies on the cognitive and emotional components of the work environment, but there has been limited investigation on the spiritual aspects within organizational settings, particularly in the context of the sales department operating within organizations (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Padigapati & Chandraiah, 2020). Besides, though studies on spiritual intelligence are reported, there is a

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dearth of well-reported empirical and quantitative findings in this field. This stimulated a quest for more logical and empirical exploration concerning spiritual intelligence among sales trainers. Further, in the beginning, empirical studies on spiritual intelligence lacked clarity about constructs of spirituality. While the constructs of spiritual intelligence are being clarified, the concept is visualized mostly through its impact on employees' well-being (Gain & Purohit, 2011; Charkhabi et al., 2014). Various studies have demonstrated the relationship between spiritual intelligence and different levels of employee outcomes (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; Daniel, 2010). Other lines of work demonstrated a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and commitment of employees (Marschke et al., 2011; Bodia & Ali, 2012) as well as between spiritual intelligence and job satisfaction (Chawla & Guda, 2010; Bodia & Ali, 2012). Although spiritual intelligence has significant impacts on professional activities, there is still so much divergence and the effectiveness of the components of spiritual intelligence in improving the quality of work-life, while fostering self-efficacy requires more pertinent exploration, particularly among the sales trainers in the context of a developing nation (Marschke et al., 2011; Schwarzer, 2014). Thus, spiritual intelligence is still under-investigated in professional psychology literature. Against the above-mentioned background, the authors raised an important question- How is spiritual intelligence, self-efficacy, and quality of work-life related to each other? Thus, in the quest of empiricism to address this research gap, an empirical exploration using the concept of spiritual intelligence and its constructs to study the impact of spiritual intelligence on the quality of work-life through self-efficacy of the sales trainers is the focal point of the present paper.

### ***Objectives***

The following objective has been addressed in the present study:

- To study the role of self-efficacy in mediating the relationship between spiritual intelligence and the quality of work-life.

### ***A Framework of the Study***

The following hypotheses have been analyzed in the present study:

H1: Spiritual Intelligence significantly influences the self-efficacy of sales trainers.

H2: Self-efficacy significantly influences the quality of work-life.

H3: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between spiritual intelligence and quality of work.

## **MATERIALS AND METHOD**

The study adopted a descriptive and explanatory approach. The descriptive nature highlighted the causal relationship among the study variables that were based on precise and replicable scientific methods. The explanatory approach intended to explain a problem or a situation in the form of causal relationships.

### ***Research Instrument***

The study adopted a quantitative research method as the current study intended to establish the effects of the mediating variable (self-efficacy) on the relationships between the independent variable (spiritual intelligence) and dependent variable (quality of work-life). A structured survey questionnaire was used as the research instrument. The sales trainers' spiritual intelligence was measured using "*Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory*" (King, 2008), self-efficacy was measured using the "*Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale*" (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) and the quality of work-life was measured using the "*Work Related*

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*Quality of Life*” (WRGoL) scale (Easton & Van Laar, 2018). The degree of perception of sales trainers’ on the questions regarding ‘spiritual intelligence’ and ‘self-efficacy’ have been rated based on a 4-point Likert scale from “not at all true = 1” to “exactly true = 4. Questions regarding ‘quality of work-life’ were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (SDA) to strongly agree (SA).

The study adopted random sampling where the sales trainers across India were considered as the general population. Due to inaccessibility to the entire population, the study population consisted of sales trainers employed in the sales department of organizations in Bangalore. The final sample for the study comprised of 233 valid responses.

### **Data analysis**

The perceptions of the respondents towards self-reported subjective measures, such as spiritual intelligence, self-efficacy, and quality of work-life, were analyzed by using descriptive analysis. The internal consistency of the scales used for the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach’s alpha. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to obtain measure validity and to obtain meaningful sub-factors for the main factors. The influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable through the mediating variable was analyzed with the help of a mediation analysis.

## **RESULTS**

The mean of respondents’ opinions about the quality of work-life ranged between 3.011 and 3.956 (Table 1), indicating that respondents mostly agreed to the majority of the questions concerning the constructs of the quality of work-life. Moreover, the respondents agreed to the questions on self-efficacy (M = 3.432). However, respondents were neutral regarding the effectiveness of the constructs of spiritual intelligence in influencing the self-efficacy and quality of work-life of the respondents.

**Table 1: Descriptive for spiritual intelligence, self-efficacy, and quality of work-life**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
<b>Spiritual Intelligence</b>		
Critical Existential Thinking	2.438	0.633
Transcendental Awareness	2.469	0.554
Conscious State Expansion	2.562	0.898
Personal Meaning Production	2.684	0.686
<b>Self-efficacy</b>	3.432	0.393
<b>Quality of work-life</b>		
Job Career Satisfaction	3.956	0.653
Control at Work	3.770	0.838
General Well-Being	3.557	0.632
Home-Work Interface	3.790	0.846
Stress at Work	3.011	0.980
Working Conditions	3.829	0.839

The EFA analysis results in a total of three factors: spiritual intelligence, self-efficacy, and quality of work-life. For each of the factors, the KMO values of 0.909, 0.828, and 0.895 and Barlett’s test of sphericity values with p-values found to be significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) confirms the adequacy of sampling (Table 2). After removing some rounds of unsuitable variables a total of 53 questions of the questionnaire was considered for factor loadings in the case of

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spiritual intelligence with sub-constructs: critical existential thinking (6 items), transcendental awareness (6 items), conscious state expansion (5 items), and personal meaning production (4 items); self-efficacy with sub-constructs : effort (3 items), persistence (4 items) and, initiative (3 items); and quality of work-life with sub-constructs: job career satisfaction (6 items), control at work (3 items), general well-being (5 items), home-work interface (3 items), stress at work (2 items), and working conditions (3 items).

**Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's test for suitability of factors**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)</b>	<b>Barlett's test of sphericity Chi-square</b>	<b>df</b>
Spiritual intelligence	0.909	2242.567***	210
Self-efficacy	0.828	523.646***	45
Quality of work-life	0.895	2416.266***	231

\*\*significant at  $p < 0.001$

The Cronbach's alpha values for the majority of the constructs and sub-constructs are more than 0.6 indicating the internal consistency of the scales used (Table 3). Among the factors that measured spiritual intelligence, critical existential thinking (38.261% of the variation) formed the most important factor followed by transcendental awareness (9.148% of the variation). Amongst the self-efficacy factors, effort formed the most important factor followed by persistence and initiative (36.352%, 11.135%, and 10.186% of the total variations). In terms of quality of work-life, job career satisfaction emerged as the most important factor (35.951% of the variation) followed by control at work (10.219% of the variation). Moreover, the factor loadings of all the factors under each item had values more than 0.4, which indicated that these factors played an important role in measuring the spiritual intelligence, self-efficacy, and quality of work-life of the sales trainers.

**Table 3: Factor loadings and reliability for spiritual intelligence**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor loadings</b>	<b>% of Variance</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Critical Existential Thinking</b>		38.261	38.261	0.737
I have often questioned or pondered the nature of reality	0.676			
I have spent time contemplating the purpose or reason for my existence	0.703			
I am able to deeply contemplate what happens after death	0.545			
I frequently contemplate the meaning of events in my life	0.535			
I have often contemplated the relationship between human beings and rest of the universe	0.580			
I have deeply contemplated whether or not there is some great power or force (e.g., God, Goddess, divine being, higher energy etc.)	0.570			
<b>Transcendental Awareness</b>		9.148	47.409	0.739
I recognize the aspects of myself that are deeper than my physical body	0.690			
It is difficult for me to sense anything	0.822			

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<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor loadings</b>	<b>% of Variance</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
other than the physical and material				
I am aware of a deeper connection between myself and other people	0.759			
I define myself by my deeper, non-physical self	0.770			
I am highly aware of the non-material aspects of life	0.568			
Recognizing the non-material aspects of life helps me feel centered	0.758			
<b>Conscious State Expansion</b>		6.652	54.061	0.801
I am able to enter higher states of consciousness or awareness	0.706			
I can control when I enter higher states of consciousness or awareness	0.558			
I am able to move freely between levels of consciousness or awareness	0.561			
I often see issues and choices more clearly while in higher states of consciousness/ awareness	0.563			
I have developed my own techniques for entering higher states of consciousness or awareness	0.509			
<b>Personal Meaning Production</b>		5.404	59.465	0.786
I am able to define a purpose or reason for my life	0.618			
When I experience a failure, I am still able to find meaning in it	0.547			
I am able to make decisions according to my purpose in life	0.745			
I am able to find meaning and purpose in my everyday experiences	0.779			

**Table 4: Factor loadings and reliability for self-efficacy**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor loadings</b>	<b>% of Variance</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Effort</b>		36.352	36.352	0.607
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough	0.750			
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events	0.772			
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort	0.647			
<b>Persistence</b>		11.135	47.487	0.712
If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want	0.628			
When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions	0.664			
If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution	0.748			

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<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor loadings</b>	<b>% of Variance</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
I can usually handle whatever comes my way	0.643			
<b>Initiative</b>		10.186	57.674	0.516
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals	0.555			
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations	0.661			
I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities	0.616			

**Table 5: Factor loadings and reliability for quality of work-life**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Factor loadings</b>	<b>% of Variance</b>	<b>Cumulative %</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Job Career Satisfaction</b>		35.951	35.951	0.818
I have clear set of goals and aims to enable me to do my job	0.838			
I have the opportunity to use my abilities at work	0.623			
I am encouraged to develop new skills	0.566			
I am satisfied with the career opportunities available for me here	0.640			
I am satisfied with the training I receive in order to perform my present job	0.791			
I am satisfied with overall quality of my working life	0.675			
<b>Control at Work</b>		10.219	46.170	0.705
I feel able to voice opinions and influence changes in my area of work	0.725			
I am involved in decisions that affect me in my own area of work	0.801			
I am involved in decisions that affect members of the public in my own area of work	0.810			
<b>General Well-Being</b>		7.254	53.424	0.620
I feel well at the moment	0.738			
I am satisfied with my life	0.676			
In most ways my life is close to ideal				
Generally, things work out well for me	0.621			
Recently, I have been feeling reasonably happy all things considered	0.572			
<b>Home-Work Interface</b>		5.567	58.991	0.768
My employer provides adequate facilities and flexibility for me to fit work in around my family life	0.575			
My current working hours/ patterns suit my personal circumstances	0.637			
My line manager actively promotes flexible working hours / patterns	0.689			
<b>Stress at Work</b>		4.806	63.797	0.603
I often feel under pressure at work	0.817			
I often feel excessive levels of stress at work	0.820			

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Factors	Factor loadings	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Cronbach's alpha
<b>Working Conditions</b>		4.007	67.804	0.815
My employer provides me with what I need to do my job effectively	0.873			
I work in a safe environment	0.875			
The working conditions are satisfactory	0.785			

Further, the mediating role of self-efficacy on the relationship between spiritual intelligence and quality of work-life of the sales trainers was analyzed by testing the following hypotheses:

*H1: Spiritual Intelligence significantly influences the self-efficacy of sales trainers.*

*H2: Self-efficacy significantly influences the quality of work.*

*H3: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between spiritual intelligence and quality of work.*

SI → SEY → QWL (spiritual intelligence → self-efficacy → quality of work-life)

***For conducting mediation analysis, the following variables were used in the model:***

Y (Dependent variable) = Quality of work-life (QWL)

X<sub>1</sub> (Independent variable) = Spiritual intelligence (SI)

M (Mediating variable) = Self-efficacy (SEY)

Total effect (C) = ab + c'

where

a = Effect of spiritual intelligence on self-efficacy

b = Effect of self-efficacy on quality of work-life

ab = Indirect effect of spiritual intelligence on quality of work-life through self-efficacy

c' = Direct effect of spiritual intelligence on quality of work-life, when self-efficacy is also present

c = Total effect of spiritual intelligence on quality of work-life

Table 4 provides estimates of the indirect effects, along with the symmetric and 95% bias corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals for the path estimates.

***Table 6: Mediation analysis through self-efficacy as a mediator between spiritual intelligence and quality of work-life***

	Co-eff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	Decision
SI → SEY	0.194	0.044	4.453	0.000	0.108	0.280	Supported
SEY → QWL	0.372	0.087	4.266	0.000	0.200	0.544	Supported
SI → QWL (Direct Effect)	0.064	0.060	1.061	0.290	-0.055	0.183	Not supported
SI → SEY → QWL (Indirect effect)	0.072	0.027			0.030	0.141	Fully supported

Spiritual intelligence (SI) was found to significantly influence self-efficacy (SEY) with estimates of 0.044 ( $p < 0.001$ , Table 4). Similarly, self-efficacy was found to significantly influence the quality of work-life (QWL) of the sales trainers ( $B = 0.372$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, H1 and H2 have been accepted.



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However, the direct effect of spiritual intelligence on quality of work-life was found to be non-significant with  $B = 0.064$  ( $p > 0.05$ ). On the other hand, the indirect effect of spiritual intelligence on the quality of work-life mediated by self-efficacy was found to be positive and significant ( $B = 0.072$ ; LLCI = 0.030, ULCI = 0.141). Since the direct effect was non-significant, but the indirect effect was significant and paths ‘a’ and ‘b’ were significant, the mediation effect was fully supported.

The R2 values and measures of effect size is given in Table 5 and Table 6. The R2 values suggest the power of explanation of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The influence of spiritual intelligence on self-efficacy had a significant R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.079 ( $p < 0.001$ ), the direct effect of spiritual intelligence on quality of work-life had a significant R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.022 ( $p < 0.05$ ), and the indirect effect of spiritual intelligence on the quality of work-life through self-efficacy had a significant R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.094 ( $p < 0.001$ ). From the results, it is understood that the mediation effect of self-efficacy increased the explanatory power of spiritual intelligence on quality of work-life of the sales trainers. Based on the above discussion, H3 has been accepted.

**Table 7: Mediation analysis with self-efficacy as a mediator**

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
SI → SEY	0.281	0.079	0.143	19.826	1	231	0.000
SI → QWL (Direct Effect)	0.148	0.022	0.269	5.164	1	231	0.024
SI → SEY → QWL (Indirect effect)	0.306	0.094	0.251	11.873	2	230	0.000

**Table 8: R-squared mediation effect size (R-sq\_med)**

Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
SEY	0.017	0.021	-0.010	0.078

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Self-efficacy and quality of work-life are the two vital components while fostering spiritual intelligence. The present paper intends to establish a relationship between these constructs by ascertaining the mediation effect of self-efficacy on the relationship between spiritual intelligence and quality of work-life. The findings establish that spiritual intelligence significantly influences self-efficacy, which in turn, significantly influences the quality of work-life. This phenomenon can be explained in the way that the sales trainers with higher levels of spiritual intelligence will be keener to develop self-confidence in doing their work and thus report a higher quality of work-life. Similar outcomes were reported by Marghzar and Marzban (2018), Rahimabadi and Iranyar (2015), and Mensah and Lebbaeus (2013). But the study did not identify a significant link between the direct effects of spiritual intelligence on quality of work-life. These findings are contradictory with the results of Karimi and Karimi (2016) who state a direct effect of spiritual intelligence on quality of work-life. However, we again observe that the indirect effect of spiritual intelligence on the quality of work-life via self-efficacy is significant and positive. This indicates that self-efficacy enhances the impact of spiritual intelligence on quality of work-life, suggesting that it is not possible to achieve the quality of work-life, without institutionalizing spiritual intelligence and self-efficacy at the workplace. Sales trainers who apply their spiritual intelligence can improve their quality of work-life, if they are also self-confident and belief in their ability to accomplish a task. Moreover, the study identified ‘critical existential thinking’ as the most important factor of spiritual intelligence, indicating that the ability to critically perceive the nature of existence might help to locate oneself in relation to the

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existential issues and other unfathomable states of consciousness, which is in line with the study by Rahmanian et al. (2018). Therefore, it is suggested that employees must take initiative to practice spiritual intelligence within organizational settings to extract the true potential of spiritual intelligence in every dimension of work-life. It will help employees to increase their compatibility, appreciate each other, and contribute towards a positive working atmosphere. These all are intended to increase self-efficacy and quality of work-life. Besides, the study identified 'effort' as the most important source of self-efficacy, indicating that employees who put a strong effort can manage to solve challenging problems and develop a deeper interest in their work. Further, 'job career satisfaction' emerged as the most important factor in quality of work-life, implying that higher job satisfaction tends to improve the productivity of employees and the overall quality of working life. Garg (2017) stated that spiritual intelligence should not be considered as a collective solution to improve organizational concerns like employee engagement or performance. Rather, organizations should consider it as a holistic framework that enables employees to understand their true potential, which could be directed to improve organizational effectiveness.

### *Limitations and Future directives*

Despite the significant findings, the present study has certain limitations too. First, the sample selected for the study involves only sales trainers residing in Bangalore; thus, the generalization of the findings may not be possible until sales trainers from around the country are included. Second, a larger sample size would have made the study more meaningful. Future studies may further improve our understanding by theorizing and assessing spiritual intelligence using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Future studies may further explore the integration of spiritual intelligence with other aspects of work outcomes (work-life balance, organizational commitment, attitude, etc.). This could lead to new and interesting findings that can benefit employees as well as organizations. Further, a longitudinal study can more confidently claim on the causal effects of the relationship between the study constructs the methodology used in the study could be replicated in different cultures using different measures of spiritual intelligence.

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