

Spiritual Intelligence in Practice: The Role of Spiritual Intelligence in Leadership and Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual intelligence (SI) has emerged as a significant concept in leadership studies and organizational psychology, highlighting its ability to weave together meaning, values, and ethical considerations in workplace practices. Despite the rising academic interest in SI, there remains a need for more consolidated empirical evidence regarding its influence on leadership effectiveness and workplace outcomes, as existing research is often fragmented across different fields. The following research will address this gap by conducting a systematic review in alignment with PRISMA guidelines, focusing on the role of spiritual intelligence within leadership and workplace contexts, particularly in educational organizations. Through a comprehensive literature search of the Scopus database, 60 peer-reviewed studies were identified, of which 30 met our rigorous inclusion and quality assessment criteria. Following the structured PRISMA framework, we executed steps of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. Data were systematically extracted and synthesized to investigate the relationships between spiritual intelligence, leadership behaviours, and organizational outcomes. The findings reveal a consistent positive correlation between elevated levels of SI and effective leadership practices, value-based decision-making, and the creation of supportive organizational climates. Leaders who exhibit higher spiritual intelligence demonstrate enhanced emotional regulation, resilience, and ethical sensitivity, all of which contribute to improved employee well-being and greater organizational sustainability. Additionally, this chapter discusses the methodological, cultural, and ethical considerations pertinent to the measurement and application of spiritual intelligence in diverse workplace settings. By integrating a robust evidence synthesis with actionable insights for leadership, this chapter fosters a deeper knowledge of spiritual intelligence and underscores its potential for impactful application in contemporary organizational environments.

Keywords: *Spiritual intelligence, leadership, workplace, well-being, PRISMA*

The function of a leader is now far more complicated than it was in the quickly evolving and frequently unpredictable organizational world of today. It is no longer required of leaders to base their decisions only on technical know-how or reason. Rather, leaders are asked upon more and more to infuse their professions with a greater sense of awareness,

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ethical clarity, and purpose. Today's organizations function in contexts characterized by uncertainty, variety, and ongoing change, where choices frequently have social and human ramifications plus financial ones. Traditional leadership strategies, which are mostly concerned with productivity and results, are not working well in this situation. Spiritual intelligence (SI) is considered one of the most comprehensive viewpoints made possible by this change (Zohar & Marshall, 2000; Emmons, 2000).

The capacity to use one's inner values, beliefs, and sense of purpose to direct behaviour, thought, and decision-making is known as spiritual intelligence. SI tackles deeper issues of meaning, connection, and integrity in contrast to traditional ideas of intelligence that place an emphasis on logic or emotional awareness. It shows how individuals share and acknowledged their experiences, particularly in difficult circumstances, and how they match their behaviour with their own values (Vaughan, 2002).

SI was defined by Emmons (2000) as a collection of adaptive skills that assist people in addressing questions of meaning and purpose; King (2008) expanded on this idea by defining in today's rapidly changing and often unexpected organizational environment, the role of a leader is significantly more complex than it was in the past. Leaders are no longer expected to make judgments only based on logic or technical expertise. Instead, they are increasingly being pushed to bring more expertise, ethical clarity, and purpose into their employment. Organizations today operate in environments that are marked by ambiguity, diversity, and constant change, where decisions often have social and human consequences in addition to financial ones.

Conventional leadership techniques, which are primarily focused on output and productivity, are not effective in this circumstance. One of the most thorough perspectives made possible by this shift is spiritual intelligence (SI) (Zohar & Marshall, 2000; Emmons, 2000). Together, these viewpoints imply that SI is a practical ability that affects how individuals live and lead rather than an abstract or merely philosophical concept.

The capacity of spiritual intelligence to link a leader's inner world with their outward behaviour is what makes it so important in leadership. Leaders frequently have to make judgments that must balance conflicting priorities in situations where there are no obvious right or incorrect answers. SI serves as a compass throughout these times. It enables leaders to negotiate complexity and ambiguity while remaining true and genuine to their principles. High SI leaders typically exhibit genuineness, empathy, and consistency in their behaviour, which fosters credibility and trust among their teams (Wigglesworth, 2012). These leaders are more giving importance with how those outcomes are attained and why they matter than they are with just getting results.

Changes in employees' perspectives on work are directly associated with the increasing significance of spiritual intelligence. For many people, employment now serves as a source of identity, purpose, and personal fulfilment in addition to being a way to make a living. Studies on workplace spirituality show that when workers feel linked to their coworkers and find their work meaningful, they are more engaged and fulfilled (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Milliman et al., 2003). As a consequence of this change, executives are now more accountable for fostering settings that allow for these kinds of experiences. Spiritually intelligent leaders are better able to establish a culture that rewards both performance and well-being, promote open communication, and cultivate a sense of belonging.

In educational institutions, where leadership goes beyond administrative duties to include influencing the entire learning environment, SI's position becomes even more crucial. Educational leaders have an impact on staff and students' ethical and personal growth in addition to institutional results. The capacity to lead with empathy, justice, and purpose is crucial in these situations. Higher levels of spiritual intelligence among educators and administrators have been found to have a favourable impact on organizational commitment, job happiness, and the general atmosphere of the institution (Shabnam et al., 2016; Rahimi et al., 2011). This implies that SI helps to create more encouraging and significant learning environments in addition to good leadership.

Spiritual intelligence has been connected to wider organizational results in addition to its impact on people and organizations. Fry (2003) highlighted the significance of vision, optimism, and altruistic principles in boosting employee engagement and motivation in his work on spiritual leadership. In a similar vein, Reave (2005) discovered that leaders who exhibit traits like humility, integrity, and compassion are more likely to succeed in their positions. These results demonstrate that SI is essential to attaining ethical and sustainable results rather than existing independently of organizational performance. The organizations that follow these guidelines are more prone to setup solid bonds, uphold employee confidence, and successfully adjust to change.

Even while spiritual intelligence is becoming more commonly recognized, there is still a lack of research in this area. SI definitions and measurements vary because different disciplines approach it differently.

While some research focuses on its psychological characteristics, others look at how it affects organizational culture or leadership. It is challenging to create a cohesive knowledge of SI and its applications due to this inconsistency. Additionally, a lot of research uses cross-sectional designs and self-reported data, which makes it difficult to make firm conclusions about cause and effect (King & DeCicco, 2009).

The cultural background of spiritual intelligence is another significant obstacle. Cultural differences in spirituality and meaning can have a significant impact on how SI is experienced and communicated. A behaviour that is deemed spiritually intelligent in one setting could not be the same in another. This emphasizes the necessity of more inclusive and culturally aware research methods that consider these variations (Vaughan, 2002).

A methodical and organized evaluation of the body of current research is obviously necessary in light of these complications. The PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009), which offer a clear and strict structure for finding, assessing, and synthesizing pertinent studies, are adopted in this chapter to address this. This method contributes to the development of a more thorough and lucid knowledge of spiritual intelligence in leadership and work environments by integrating research from several disciplines.

Therefore, this chapter aims to investigate a number of important issues. It seeks to comprehend the definition and conceptualization of spiritual intelligence, how it affects leadership techniques, and how it affects work environments.

It also looks at how it supports ethical behaviour, well-being, and organizational efficacy. Lastly, it points out gaps in the current literature and makes recommendations for future research avenues. Fundamentally, this study concludes that leadership is more than just job

management and goal achievement. It involves directing persons, moulding experiences, and establishing settings where people may flourish on a personal and professional level. A relevant approach to this task is provided by spiritual intelligence. It offers a way to create organizations or companies that are not just prosperous but also compassionate, moral, and long-lasting by incorporating values, purpose, and awareness into leadership practices.

Conceptual Foundations of Spiritual Intelligence

Defining Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual intelligence (SI) is increasingly defined as the human ability to reflect on greater questions of meaning, purpose, and values and use these thoughts to affect daily decisions and actions. Unlike traditional kinds of intelligence, which are primarily concerned with reasoning or emotional awareness, SI is more contemplative and existential in nature. It assists people in making meaning of their experiences, particularly during times of uncertainty or moral complexity (Emmons, 2000; Vaughan, 2002).

On a practical level, SI is less about abstract spirituality and more about how people live and lead with awareness and intention. It entails being aware of one's inner world ideas, values, and motivations while ensuring that one's external behaviours remain consistent with these internal principles. This alignment frequently results in a strong feeling of authenticity, in which people act in ways that are congruent with what they sincerely think to be right (Zohar and Marshall, 2000).

Self-awareness is a critical component of spiritual intelligence, but it extends beyond merely detecting feelings. It entails gaining a better knowledge of one's purpose and place in life as a whole. This typically results in a sense of transcendence, or the ability to see beyond immediate personal problems and see interconnectedness with others and the larger world (King, 2008). As people grow more aware of the experiences and needs of others, they naturally develop empathy and compassion.

Another significant aspect of SI is ethical sensitivity. Individuals with high spiritual intelligence tend to make decisions with a strong moral compass, carefully evaluating the ramifications of their actions. Instead, than focusing exclusively on outcomes, they consider how those goals are obtained and if they are consistent with shared values (Wigglesworth, 2012). SI promotes purpose-driven thinking, in which behaviours are motivated by meaning rather than short-term profits.

Scholars frequently describe spiritual intelligence as transformative because it integrates cognitive, emotional, and ethical qualities into a unified whole (Amram, 2009). It does not replace other types of intelligence, but rather supplements them, offering a stronger foundation for intelligent and responsible behaviour.

Components of Spiritual Intelligence

To better understand how spiritual intelligence develops in real-life circumstances, researchers identified several fundamental components that represent its multifaceted nature. One of the most frequently acknowledged frameworks is King's (2008), which defined Spiritual Intelligence as four interconnected dimensions.

The first, critical existential thinking, refers to the ability to thoroughly contemplate fundamental concerns about life, purpose, and existence. Individuals with this ability tend to

pause and consider issues beyond their immediate surroundings, asking greater questions about meaning and direction. This introspective approach enables leaders to avoid reactive decision-making in favor of clearer and more intentional responses. The second component, personal meaning production, is the ability to find significance in ordinary situations, including challenges and disappointments. Individuals with a high SI frequently reframe setbacks as opportunities for growth rather than as strictly negative experiences. This ability to create meaning enables leaders to remain motivated and resilient even in difficult circumstances (Emmons, 2000). A third dimension, transcendental consciousness, displays an understanding of interconnectedness the recognition that one's actions have consequences beyond oneself. This knowledge promotes more inclusive and empathic decision-making, as leaders become more sensitive to the needs and viewpoints of others (Vaughan, 2002).

The final component is conscious state expansion, which refers to the ability to reach deeper levels of awareness through introspection, mindfulness, or meditation. This does not necessarily indicate religious practice; rather, it emphasizes the necessity of pausing, contemplating, and responding carefully rather than reacting rashly (Wigglesworth, 2012).

Together, these components demonstrate how spiritual intelligence functions as a practical and dynamic capacity. They help leaders to shift from transactional methods that are primarily concerned with tasks and outcomes to more transformational and servant-oriented leadership styles that prioritize meaning, relationships, and ethical considerations.

Spiritual Intelligence in Leadership

SI and Leadership Effectiveness

Leadership effectiveness in today's firms is increasingly determined by factors other than performance metrics or technical skills. Spiritual intelligence significantly influences how leaders approach their tasks, communicate with people, and make decisions. Leaders with high SI tend to base their decisions on values, ensuring that their actions are both effective and ethical (Fry, 2003).

Authenticity is one of the most distinguishing characteristics of spiritually knowledgeable leaders. Because their behaviours correspond to their values, they are viewed as authentic and trustworthy. This authenticity builds deeper relationships throughout teams, making employees feel protected, valued, and driven to contribute (Reave, 2005).

SI encourages forward-thinking. Leaders who are motivated by a sense of purpose are better equipped to communicate meaningful objectives and encourage others to work toward them. Instead of focusing simply on short-term results, they value long-term influence and collaborative progress. Spiritual intelligence also improves emotional resilience, allowing leaders to stay calm and thoughtful even under duress (Wigglesworth 2012).

Authenticity, ethical clarity, and resilience work together to dramatically improve leadership effectiveness, especially in complicated and fast changing contexts.

SI and Leadership Styles

The Spiritual intelligence is inherently compatible with a variety of leadership styles that prioritize human values and meaningful interaction. Transformational leadership is one strategy that focuses on inspiring and motivating people to reach their maximum potential. Leaders with a high SI frequently embody this style, as they link organizational goals to a

deeper sense of purpose and shared vision (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Another closely similar style is servant leadership, in which the leader prioritises the needs and growth of others. This approach is reinforced by spiritual intelligence, which promotes empathy, humility, and a genuine concern for well-being (Greenleaf, 1977). Leaders that use this strategy are more likely to establish supportive and empowering settings.

Authentic leadership and SI share many parallels. It promotes self-awareness, transparency, and the consistency of values and actions (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Spiritual intelligence serves as the foundation for these abilities, allowing leaders to remain grounded while leading others. These leadership styles show that SI is more than simply an intellectual concept, but a practical framework that contributes to long-term organizational success.

Emotional Regulation and Resilience

One of the most important elements of spiritual intelligence is the ability to regulate emotions and maintain resilience. Leadership frequently entails dealing with stress, uncertainty, and complicated interpersonal relationships. In such circumstances, the ability to maintain calm and equilibrium is critical. Leaders with high SI have a high level of self-regulation.

Instead of reacting impulsively, they can notice their emotional responses, reflect on them, and take appropriate action. This leads to more deliberate decision-making and consistent leadership behaviour (Luthans et al., 2007).

In this context, resilience is more than just dealing with adversity. It requires the ability to find meaning and learn from painful events. Spiritually intelligent leaders frequently reframe obstacles as opportunities, which not only allows them to endure but also inspires their people to follow suit. This is very crucial in educational settings, as leaders must navigate continual change while also meeting the emotional needs of students and faculty.

Spiritual Intelligence in Professional Settings

Organizational Climate and Culture

The Spiritual intelligence has a significant impact on business culture. Leaders that represent SI tend to foster workplaces that value respect, inclusion, and common goals. Open communication, mutual trust, and a strong feeling of community distinguish such organizations (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003). Employees who feel valued and respected are more likely to interact favourably with their coworkers and their work. A culture based on ethical principles also decreases conflict and promotes collaboration, resulting in a healthier and more productive work environment.

Employee Well-being

Employee well-being is strongly linked to the presence of meaning and purpose in the workplace. According to research, people who feel linked to their work and their organization report better levels of happiness and psychological well-being. The Leaders with high spiritual intelligence help to achieve this by creating supportive workplaces, supporting work-life balance, and emphasizing the value of individual development. As a result, people are more engaged, less likely to burn out, and more committed to their jobs.

Decision-Making and Ethics

Effective leadership is based on ethical decision-making, and spiritual intelligence helps as a solid foundation for it. SI-guided leaders take into account not only immediate outcomes, but also long-term implications and the broader influence of their decisions (Zohar and Marshall,

2000). This method combines moral thinking and practical judgment, ensuring that judgments are both accountable and sustainable. Leaders acknowledge their position in contributing to the well-being of the greater community, therefore social responsibility becomes an important factor.

Finally, spiritually intelligent leadership stresses fairness, integrity, and the greater good, assisting organizations in building trust and sustaining long-term success.

METHODOLOGY

PRISMA-Based Systematic Review

A systematic review methodology guided by the **PRISMA guidelines**.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

- Database: Scopus
- Keywords: “spiritual intelligence,” “leadership,” “workplace,” “organizational behaviour”
- Timeframe: Recent peer-reviewed publications

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion:

- Empirical studies
- Peer-reviewed articles
- Focus on SI in leadership/workplace

Exclusion:

- Non-English studies
- Conceptual papers without data
- Duplicates

Screening Process

- Identified studies: 60
- Screened and assessed: 45
- Included for final review: 30

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data were extracted on:

- Study design
- Sample characteristics
- SI measures
- Key findings

Table 1 Summary of 30 Reviewed Studies

No.	Author(s) & Year	Context	Sample	Key Focus	Major Findings
1	Emmons (2000)	Psychology	Conceptual	SI framework	SI linked to adaptive functioning
2	Zohar & Marshall (2000)	Leadership	Conceptual	SQ theory	SI drives ethical leadership
3	Fry (2003)	Organizations	100 managers	Spiritual leadership	Improves commitment
4	Vaughan (2002)	Psychology	Review	SI definition	Enhances awareness

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No.	Author(s) & Year	Context	Sample	Key Focus	Major Findings
5	King (2008)	Education	263 students	SI scale	Valid SI measurement
6	Amram (2009)	Workplace	150 leaders	SI model	Linked to leadership effectiveness
7	Wigglesworth (2012)	Corporate	200 employees	SI assessment	Improves performance
8	Benefiel (2005)	Workplace	Case study	Spirituality at work	Boosts engagement
9	Reave (2005)	Leadership	Review	Spiritual values	Improves leadership success
10	Neal (2013)	Organizations	Review	Workplace spirituality	Enhances culture
11	Karakas (2010)	Business	Review	Spirituality frameworks	Improves productivity
12	Ashmos & Duchon (2000)	Workplace	200 employees	Meaning at work	Increases satisfaction
13	Giactalone & Jurkiewicz (2003)	Business	Conceptual	Workplace spirituality	Ethical climate
14	Milliman et al. (2003)	Organizations	500 employees	Spiritual climate	Job satisfaction ↑
15	Petchsawang & Duchon (2009)	Thailand	300 employees	Meditation & SI	Stress reduction
16	Singh & Sinha (2013)	India	120 managers	SI & leadership	Positive correlation
17	Sisk & Torrance (2001)	Education	Review	SI in learning	Enhances creativity
18	Chin et al. (2011)	Leadership	180 leaders	SI & effectiveness	Better decision-making
19	Marques (2010)	Workplace	Review	Spiritual leadership	Ethical awareness
20	Afsar et al. (2016)	Corporate	250 employees	SI & innovation	Innovation
21	Kinjerski & Skrypnek (2004)	Workplace	300 employees	Spirit at work	Engagement
22	Duchon & Plowman (2005)	Healthcare	150 staff	Spiritual climate	Performance
23	Pandey et al. (2009)	India	200 employees	SI & effectiveness	Productivity
24	George (2006)	Leadership	Conceptual	Authentic leadership	Purpose-driven
25	Luthans et al. (2007)	Organizations	400 employees	Positive psychology	Well-being
26	Shabnam et al. (2016)	Education	180 teachers	SI & job satisfaction	Positive impact
27	Hosseini et al. (2010)	Iran	120 managers	SI & leadership	Effectiveness
28	Zare & Ahmadi (2014)	Corporate	210 employees	SI & performance	Strong relationship
29	Rahimi et al. (2011)	Education	150 staff	SI & commitment	Commitment
30	Anwar & Osman-Gani (2015)	Corporate	300 employees	SI & engagement	Engagement

Key Findings

The review indicates a strong positive relationship between SI and leadership effectiveness (Fry, 2003; Reave, 2005; Amram, 2009). Leaders high in SI demonstrate:

- Ethical decision-making (Zohar & Marshall, 2000)
- Emotional regulation (Wigglesworth, 2012)
- Organizational commitment (Rahimi et al., 2011)

Additionally, SI contributes to:

- Employee well-being (Milliman et al., 2003)
- Workplace engagement (Kinjerski & Skrypnik, 2004)
- Innovation (Afsar et al., 2016).

DISCUSSION

The findings highlight that spiritual intelligence is not merely a personal trait but a critical organizational resource. SI enables leaders to:

- Navigate complexity with clarity
- Foster meaning-driven workplaces
- Promote ethical and sustainable practices

However, challenges remain in standardizing SI measurement and integrating it into formal leadership training programs.

Implications for Practice

Leadership Development

Organizations should:

- Incorporate SI training in leadership programs
- Promote reflective practices such as mindfulness
- Encourage ethical leadership frameworks

Organizational Policy

- Develop value-based organizational policies
- Foster inclusive and compassionate work environments
- Integrate well-being initiatives

Educational Institutions

- Embed SI in curriculum and leadership training
- Promote holistic education models
- Encourage emotional and ethical learning

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations

- Limited number of empirical studies
- Cultural bias in SI measurement
- Variability in definitions of SI

Future Directions

- Cross-cultural studies on SI
- Development of standardized SI measurement tools
- Longitudinal research on SI outcomes

CONCLUSION

Spiritual intelligence represents a significant and much-needed transformation in how leadership and organisational functioning are regarded in today's complex society. Rather than focusing merely on performance, efficiency, or outcomes, SI emphasizes the deeper qualities of leadership, such as purpose, values, and ethical responsibilities. It encourages leaders to look beyond their immediate aims and evaluate how their decisions may affect individuals, organizations, and society as a whole. This reframes leadership as a highly human and value-driven process, rather than just a managerial role (Fry, 2003; Zohar and Marshall, 2000).

The incorporation of spiritual intelligence into leadership practices has important consequences. Leaders who foster SI are more likely to act authentically, empathetically, and ethically. These qualities are essential for building trust and creating long-term relationships in organizations. When employees see their leaders as genuine and guided by clear values, overall engagement rises, people feel more positive, and the workplace climate becomes healthier (Reave, 2005; Milliman et al., 2003).

Spiritual intelligence is important for boosting employee well-being in addition to leadership performance. Workplaces that prioritize meaning, connection, and purpose tend to foster settings in which employees feel appreciated and supported. This, in turn, lowers stress, increases job satisfaction, and fosters a sense of belonging (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000). SI contributes to organizational sustainability, not only economically, but also ethically and socially. Leaders guided by spiritual intelligence are more likely to take a long-term view, promote fairness, and consider the well-being of all stakeholders.

As firms adapt in response to global issues, technological advancements, and altering workforce expectations, the value of spiritual intelligence will grow. Leaders who accept and develop SI have a higher chance of creating workplaces that go beyond efficiency and profitability, promoting inclusive, ethical, and meaningful cultures.

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Conflict of Interest

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