



# The Relationships between Leadership Styles and Spiritual Intelligence among School Principals

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** In the present descriptive-correlational study, the relationships between leadership styles and spiritual intelligence were studied among a group of school principals. **Methodology:** The population included all school principals working in Tehran's fourth educational district throughout the school year 2011-2012. Out of the whole population, 156 subjects were selected through stratified random sampling method. Data were collected by means of 'the Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire' (Sohrabi & Naseri, 2007) and 'the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire' (Bass & Avolio, 2000) and analyzed through multiple regression analysis and Cronbach's alpha coefficient. **Results:** The results indicated positive significant relationships between transactional and transformational leadership styles and spiritual intelligence and that transcendental self-consciousness alone can predict almost %36.2 and %14.6 of variations in transformational and transactional leadership styles respectively. **Conclusion:** Moreover, a significant relationship was observed between the non-interference leadership style and spiritual intelligence so that %2.9 of variations in this style could be predicted by self-consciousness and %3.2 by patience.

## 1. Introduction

The concept of leadership has long been noticed by leading thinkers in the field of management. The main reason for their focus on the leadership issue is that leadership plays a vital role in the dynamics and development of organizations and that success in many organizations has been achieved by their powerful and effective leaders (quoted by Teymouri & Mohammad Ismael, 2007). The concept of transformational leadership was initially introduced by Burns and then developed by Bass (1985) (quoted by Hoseini Sarkhosh, et al., 2009). Bass believed that transformational leadership seeks to connect individual and collective interests and lets subordinates try to achieve their noble goals (Humphreys, 2005). Bass defined a transactional leader as someone who prefers a leader-follower transactional relationship and tries to meet the followers' needs and basic expectations in return for their performance (Yaghoubi, et al., 2009). He also talked about non-transactional or non-interference leadership style (laissez-faire) which is the most passive type of leadership. A non-interfering leader refuses to make decision and hands over all responsibilities to the followers; thus, motivation and satisfaction of followers are minimal and the leader's prudence disappears (Moghli, 2004).

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type of leadership. A non-interfering leader refuses to make decision and hands over all responsibilities to the followers; thus, motivation and satisfaction of followers are minimal and the leader's prudence disappears (Moghli, 2004).

One of the keys to leadership is the leader's spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence (SI) consists of sense of meaning, purpose and sanctity in life and optimism about an improvement in the world's situation (Amram, 2007). The most important applications of SI are provision of peace of mind, creation of connections between personal security and management process, improvement of communication in the workplace and elimination of the barriers (George, 2006). SI is a practical aspect of spirituality in the workplace and contrary to the thinking of many people who believe that there is no spirituality in work and life. Three applications for spirituality in work can be considered: personal safety and efficacy in life, creation of interpersonal understanding and change of management methods and setting noble goals (Abdullah Zadeh, et al., 2009). Based on Stevens (1996) and Sinetar (2000) definitions of SI consistent with the Bible and Islamic religious texts, Sohrabi and Naseri (2007) have offered four components of SI:

### **1.2 Transcendental self-consciousness**

Transcendental self-consciousness is the ability to identify the spiritual aspects/patterns in oneself (e.g. transcendental self), others and the material world through natural states of consciousness and to recognize their relationships with one's self and nature (King, 2007).

### **1.3 Patience**

Patience never means enduring miseries or being defeated by humiliation or failures; but, it means perseverance and determination in the face of every problems and incidents (quoted by Naseri, 2007).

### **1.4 Spiritual experiences**

Spiritual experiences are a set of beliefs about life, death and the afterlife leading to people's adherence to a set of spiritual and religious practices (Emmons, 2000).

### **1.5 Mercy**

Mercy means the ability to release anger without breaking the privacy of others which happens when love, strength and limitations are appropriately balanced. The results of this balance are forgiveness of self and others, expression of sympathy, empathy with others, helping others, respect for others privacy, etc. (Mir Shamsi, 2008; quoted by Yaghoubi, et al.).

In education, management and leadership are interdependent. Education leaders along with their decision makings and leadership styles play a very important role in the development of students' talents and teachers' job satisfaction, motivation and teaching styles. In a study on middle managers and their leadership styles, Fairholm (1996) concluded that spiritual rewards are as important as economic rewards and in turbulent conditions, the integration of spirituality, leadership and management is a source of creation and ongoing construction of meaning and leads to more efficiency in the workplace. Furthermore, leaders' patience along with employees' self-consciousness are very crucial factors in performing the duties efficiently. Since many aspects of spirituality and SI are related to the dimensions of effective leadership, the following questions were raised in the current investigation:

1. What are the relationships between the school principals' leadership styles and SI components (self-consciousness, patience, spiritual experiences and mercy)?
2. Can SI components affect the school principals' selection of a specific leadership style?
3. Which SI components are more correlated with the school principals' selection of a specific leadership style?

## **2. Materials and methods**

### **2.1 Methodology**

In the present descriptive-correlational study, the relationships between leadership styles and spiritual intelligence were studied among a group of school principals. The population included all school principals working in Tehran's fourth educational district throughout the school year 2011-2012. Out of the whole population, 156 subjects were selected through stratified random sampling method. All 156 participants answered the questionnaires; but, 18 of them were excluded from the study due to providing defective data. Thus, the statistical operations were carried out on the data obtained from the remaining 138 participants.

### **2.2 Instruments**

#### **2.2.1 The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)**

The 36-item MLQ, developed by Bass and Avolio (2000), consists of 9 subscales for measuring transformational, transactional and non-interference (Laissez-fair) leadership styles. To answer and score the MLQ, a five-point Likert scale is used. Using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the reliability of this questionnaire has been reported 0.85.

#### **2.2.2 The Spiritual Intelligence Questionnaire (SIQ)**

The 97-item SIQ, developed by Naseri and Sohrabi (2007), measures the four SI components (transcendental self-consciousness, patience, spiritual experiences and mercy). To answer and score the SIQ, a four-point Likert scale is used. Using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the reliability of this questionnaire has been reported 0.98.

#### **2.2.3 Data Analysis**

Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the test and multiple regression analysis was conducted to analyze the data.

### 3. Discussion and results

Based on table (1), the average weights of all components are larger than the average score (2.5) except for the ‘patience’. Comparison of the SDs shows that the school principals’ scores in the ‘transcendental self-consciousness’ had the lowest dispersion.

**Table 1. Means and SDs of Spiritual Intelligence Components (n=138)**

| Components                        | Mean | Standard Deviation (SD) |
|-----------------------------------|------|-------------------------|
| Transcendental self-consciousness | 3.27 | 0.19                    |
| Spiritual experiences             | 3.19 | 0.29                    |
| Patience                          | 2.18 | 0.31                    |
| Mercy                             | 3.12 | 0.35                    |

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics through a stepwise method**

| model | Predictor variables in the model  | Correlation coefficient | Square of the correlation coefficient | Adjusted correlation | Significance level |
|-------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1     | Transcendental self-consciousness | 0.602                   | 0.362                                 | 0.358                | 0.01               |

As seen in table (2), ‘transcendental self-consciousness alone can predict almost %36.2 of variations in the ‘transformational leadership style’ and in explaining the ‘transformational leadership style’, variables of ‘spiritual experiences’, ‘patience’ and ‘mercy’ have been removed from the model.

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics through a stepwise method**

| model | Predictor variables in the model  | Correlation coefficient | Square of the correlation coefficient | Adjusted correlation | Significance level |
|-------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1     | Transcendental self-consciousness | 0.382                   | 0.146                                 | 0.140                | 0.01               |

Based on table (3), ‘transcendental self-consciousness’ can explain almost %14.6 of variations in the ‘transactional leadership style’ ( $R^2=0.146$ ) and in explaining the ‘transactional leadership style’, variables of ‘spiritual experiences’, ‘patience’ and ‘mercy’ have been removed from the model.

**Table 4. Descriptive statistics through a stepwise method**

| model | Predictor variables in the model           | Correlation coefficient | Square of the correlation coefficient | Adjusted correlation | Significance level |
|-------|--|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1     | Transcendental self-consciousness          | 0.171                   | 0.029                                 | 0.022                | 0.05               |
| 2     | Transcendental self-consciousness/Patience | 0.246                   | 0.061                                 | 0.047                | 0.05               |

Based on table (4), almost %6.1 of variations in the ‘non-interference leadership style’ can be explained through the two variables of ‘transcendental self-consciousness’ (%2.9) and ‘patience’ (%3.2) and in explaining the ‘non-interference leadership style’, variables of ‘spiritual experiences’ and ‘mercy’ have been removed from the model.

### 4. Conclusion

The first hypothesis regarding the existence of a relationship between the transformational leadership style and SI was confirmed. It was indicated that among the four predictor variables, transcendental self-consciousness alone could predict almost %36.2 of variations in the transformational leadership style. This finding was consistent with the findings from other studies done by Abedini (2009), Zohar and Marshall (2000) and Smith (2005). To explain this result, it can be said that being aware of the situation, appropriate decision-making and having the courage to do activities are among the features of a transformational manager. Self-consciousness helps managers take the right direction by knowledge of their inner selves and adhere to principles such as respect, admiration, loyalty and passion for excellence. In a study, Farhangi and colleagues (2009) showed that self-consciousness, holism and spiritual experiences affect the transformational leadership style and among the SI components, transcendental self-consciousness has the greatest impact on the selection of transformational leadership style.

The second hypothesis concerning the existence of a relationship between the transactional leadership style and SI was confirmed. The results indicated

that transcendental self-consciousness alone could predict almost %14.6 of variations in the transactional leadership style. This finding was in line with the results of other studies conducted by Farhangi and colleagues (2009), Moghli (2003), Wigglesworth (2000) and Amram (2007). To explain this finding, it can be stated that since self-consciousness helps people identify the spiritual patterns within themselves, others and the material world and recognize the relationships between their inner selves and the world around them, being self-conscious leads to appropriate decision-making in different situations.

The third hypothesis about the existence of a relationship between the non-interference leadership style and SI was also confirmed. The results showed that almost %6.1 of variations in the non-interference leadership style could be predicted by the two variables of transcendental self-consciousness and patience (%3.2). This finding was in agreement with the results obtained in other studies (Abedini, 2009; Sanjaghi, 2001; King, 2007; Smith, 2005). The results indicated that almost %3.2 of variations in the non-interference leadership style could be predicted by the patience variable. To explain this finding, it can be said that given the existence of individual differences among the personnel, the occurrence of a turbulent situation is probable at any moment. Accordingly, patience is an important feature of an effective leader in order to understand and respect followers' individual differences, be associated with each one of them and motivate them through more responsibility assignments.

Given the results of the present study, it can be concluded that the school principals' self-consciousness can play an important role in the selection of their leadership style. Consequently, it is recommended to consider issues related to the components of spiritual intelligence in the development of school textbooks and hold special training courses for the school principals to develop their spiritual intelligence.

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