



## **The Relationship between Spiritual Intelligence and Transformational Leadership in Sports Managers**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aimed to investigate the relationship between spiritual intelligence and transformational leadership in the sports managers in Alborz province, Iran. The study adopted a descriptive-correlational method. The research population consisted of 101 sports managers with Alborz province Office of Sports and Youth in 2012. Since the population was limited in size, all managers were considered as the research sample. The data was collected using Linda Hildebrandt's Spiritual intelligence questionnaire (2011) and Bass's Multifactor Leadership questionnaire (1985). The reliability of the scales was calculated to be 90% and 73% for the Spiritual intelligence questionnaire and Multifactor Leadership questionnaire, respectively, using Cronbach's alpha formula. SPSS software was used to do statistical analysis. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics including mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores, Pearson correlation formula and multiple regression analysis. The results revealed significant positive correlations, both simple and multiple, between spiritual intelligence and transformational leadership style in the sports managers in Alborz province. From among the core abilities of spiritual intelligence, transcendental awareness was a stronger predictor of transformational leadership in the sports managers. As spiritual intelligence is an applied aspect of spirituality, it is recommended that spirituality be strengthened in sports managers in order to improve their spiritual intelligence and transformational leadership style.*

*Keywords: Spiritual intelligence, Transformational leadership, Sports managers*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Bass was the originator of transformational leadership theory in 1998 that can be considered as the conscious process of exerting influence on people or groups in order to create intermittent changes in the status quo and organizational functions as a whole (1). Effective managers are the most essential and rarest assets of an organization. An organization's failure to achieve optimal productivity may be somewhat associated with ineffective leadership (2). Although leadership is considered as the inherent ability to influence others through controlling the behavior of other group members, there is more to full-fledged leadership styles than influence so much so that they address such issues as creating motivation and ability in people to achieve organizational goals (3). The contemporary research mainly focuses on the discovery of behaviors contributing to effective leadership. Transformational leadership consists of the behaviors addressing certain common behavioral properties such as reinforcement of teamwork and subordinates' skills as well as providing support for the individuals in reaching goals. This is characteristic of an original transformational leader since it contributes to commitment and productivity in members of the organization (3). Bass defines a transformational leader as one who empowers his followers, motivates them to act beyond their expectations and encourages them to pursue collective rather than personal benefits. De Cremer and vandijike (2007) believe that fair decision-making and organizational procedures creates positive perceptions in the employees toward the organization and managers. These perceptions underlie transformational leadership. Bass (6) contends that leaders create changes in their followers through transformational leadership behaviors. That is, the followers are transformed into committed group members rather than being self-centered. Thus, they can perform beyond the levels commonly expected of them. Transformational leaders provide a foundation for long-term organizational changes that facilitate the achievement of higher-order organizational goals. In sum, the works of Bass and his colleagues provided a clear context for scientific study of transformational leadership (5).

Past studies have shown that intelligence is one of the important variables in leadership. However, experience dictates that while apparent intelligence has increased in human over the course of history, he

has increasingly been facing anomalous tendencies, erroneous choices, problems and crises. Initially, the psychologists defined emotional intelligence in an attempt to compensate for this deficiency. Subsequently, they introduced new varieties of intelligence including spiritual and existential intelligences that address such concepts as life and death in order to complement their definition (7). As defined by Emonz (8), professor of psychology at Harvard University, and Zohar and Marshal (9), two pioneers of the application of quantum thinking in management and leadership, spiritual intelligence (SI) is defined as the ability to create meaning based on a deep understanding of existential questions as well as to use multiple layers of consciousness in problem-solving (10). The concept of SI involves a kind of adaptation and problem-solving behavior that constitutes the highest levels of growth at cognitive, ethical, emotional and interpersonal domains. It helps the individual adapt to his environment and attain internal and external integrity. SI provides a perspective on life, experiences and events and prepares the individual to reframe and reinterpret his experiences and deepen his knowledge and understanding (11). We use SI to solve the problems of meaning and values. SI sets our life and activities into a wider, richer and more meaningful context. It helps us decide what measures or paths are more meaningful, which is also referred to as ultimate intelligence. SI is used for problem solving as well as the issues pertaining to the meaning of life and values. SI is demonstrated through questions such as what is our value? What is the goal and meaning of my life (12 & 13)? Where do we go? Why do we go? What is the meaning in life and death? Does my job contribute to my perfection in life (14 & 15)? Why do you want to be a good manager or leader (16)?

Recently, there have been studies on the effect of spirituality on organizations and improved individual performance (17). Research has shown that spiritual values not only improve the quality of employees' working life (18) but also can promote the organization at large. Thus, spirituality has recently been introduced into jobs and professions, which can contribute to the improvement and competence of employees and organizations (19). Leadership is one of the domains in which SI seems to function as an important variable. Researchers have conceptualized the association between leadership and SI as an applied dimension of spirituality (9 & 20) though it has scarcely been investigated. In this regard, Howard and White (21) studied the relationship between spirituality and transformational leadership. They reported a positive correlation between spirituality and transformational leadership. Abdullah Zadeh and Bagherpur (2010) examined the relationship between SI and leadership style in managers and found a significant positive correlation between SI and mixed leadership style (high morale and high productivity). However, there was no significant correlation of SI with rule-based and relation-based leadership styles. Farhangi et al. (22) studied the relationship among SI, emotional intelligence (EI) and transformational leadership. They reported that both SI and EI exerted a considerable effect on transformational leadership. Considering the previous studies and since organizational leaders need to have certain characteristics to adapt to changes and survive, it seems that SI is one of the main characteristics that can help leaders respond to the changes. Thus, the present study aims to address the questions: how much do sports managers care about spiritual affairs both inside and outside the organization? What is the relationship between SI and transformational leadership in sports managers? Can increased SI lead to increased transformational leadership in sports managers?

## METODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive-correlational method. The research population consisted of 101 sports managers with Alborz province Office of Sports and Youth in 2012. Since the population was limited in size, all managers were considered as the research sample. The data was collected using Linda Hildebrandt's Spiritual intelligence questionnaire (23) and Bass's Multifactor Leadership questionnaire (1985). The reliability of the scales was calculated to be 90% and 73% for the Spiritual intelligence questionnaire and Multifactor Leadership questionnaire, respectively, using Cronbach's alpha formula. SPSS software was used to do statistical analysis. Both descriptive and inferential statistics including mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores, independent t test, Pearson correlation formula and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data.

## RESULTS

The results showed significant positive correlations, both simple and multiple, between SI and transformational leadership style in the sports managers. From among the core abilities of spiritual intelligence, transcendental awareness was a stronger predictor of transformational leadership in the sports managers (Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of sports managers

Demographic characteristics		No.	Percent
Sex	Male	53	52.47
	Female	48	47.52
Marital status	Single	9	8.91
	Married	81	80.19
	No answer	11	10.89
Education	Diploma and lower	16	15.84
	Associate degree	28	27.72
	B.S	45	44.55
	M.S and higher degrees	12	11.88
Work experience	Less than 5 years	49	48.51
	6-10 years	4	13.86
	11-15 years	11	10.89
	Over 15 years	9	18.81
	No answer	8	7.92
Total		101	100

Table 2. Mean, SD, minimum and maximum scores of transformational leadership and SI

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	No.
Transformational leadership	3.32	0.73	1.23	4.88	110
SI	2.18	0.72	0.05	3.95	
Critical Existential Thinking	2.31	0.82	0	4	
Personal Meaning Production	2.24	0.94	0	4	
Transcendental Awareness	2.11	0.72	0.20	3.80	
Conscious State Expansion	2.09	0.92	0	4	

Table 3. Simple correlation coefficients of SI and its components with transformational leadership in sports managers

Criterion variable	Predictor variable	r	P	No.
Transformational leadership	SI	0.380	0.0001	101
	Critical Existential Thinking	0.257	0.0001	
	Personal Meaning Production	0.321	0.0001	
	Transcendental Awareness	0.380	0.0001	
	Conscious State Expansion	0.353	0.0001	

Table 4. Multiple regression coefficients of predictor variables (SI components) with transformational leadership in sports managers

Predictor variables	R	R <sup>2</sup> Coefficient of determination	F	P	$\beta$	t	P
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Critical Existential Thinking	0.422	0.17	5.21	0.001	0.076-	0.54-	0.58
Personal Meaning Production					0.12	0.93	0.353
Transcendental Awareness					0.24	2.070	0.04
Conscious State Expansion					0.17	1.32	0.18

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings showed a significant positive correlation between SI and transformational leadership style in sports managers ( $r=0.380$ ,  $P=0.0001$ ). In other words, increased SI led to increased transformational leadership style in sports managers. The results also revealed a significant positive correlation of the components of SI including critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness and conscious state expansion with transformational leadership style in sports managers. This is consistent with the findings of Abdullah Zadeh and Bagherpur (2010), Farhangi et al. (22), Luckcock (24) and Howard and White (21). Still, it seems that there should be more studies on this topic before one could interpret these findings with certainty. Specifically, there is no consensus among researchers about the conceptualization and an inventory for the measurement of SI. Thus, this line of research is in its infancy yet. Nevertheless, the consistency between the present and previous findings suggests that SI exerts a significant effect upon transformational leadership. The likely clarification, conceptualization and development of new SI scales in future may prove SI a more important determinant of transformational leadership than EI. This is because EI operates within the borders and makes situations guide behaviors. On the contrary, SI encourages individuals to ask why they have been exposed to such a situation. SI deals with the borders but not within the borders. Thus, rather than being guided by the situation, it creates and guides the situation itself. SI helps us understand what measures or paths are more meaningful. People use their SI to perceive their status and actions within a broader context so that they will be able to replace the rules and change the borders. It is thus reasonable to consider SI as a key factor in predicting transformational leadership. It is the transformational nature of SI that distinguishes it from other types of intelligence, particularly EI (22).

The present findings also revealed significant multiple correlations between SI components (critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness and conscious state expansion) and transformational leadership style in sports managers of Alborz province ( $F=5.21$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). Accordingly, SI components could account for 17% of variance in transformational leadership style in the sports managers. Transcendental awareness had a greater share in predicting transformational leadership style in sports managers. This is consistent with the findings of Abdullah Zadeh and Bagherpur (2010). Therefore, it seems that the managers who are aware of immaterial aspects of life consider their internal capacities as deeper than their physical being, perceive their deeper interpersonal relations, have working conscience and can make adequate decisions when problems occur. Awareness of their transcendental properties such as self-transcendence can help such managers use their entourage and the mundane world to manage the organization and employees. By increasing conscious state expansion, which is pure awareness or cosmic consciousness, they can increase spirituality in their employees, hence the betterment of employees' individual and organizational performance.

Considering the present findings on the significant correlation between SI and transformational leadership style in sports managers and since SI is an applied aspect of spirituality, it is recommended that spirituality be enhanced in sports managers and employees. This spirituality can hinge on such principles as love for human being, finding meaning in work, systemic and holistic thinking, perceived sacredness in doing various activities, awareness of and thanking for personal and individual blessings, doing spiritual practices and meetings to review organizational measures. This type of spirituality cannot be peculiar to only religious people but involve the whole organization.

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