CONCEPTUALIZING SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENGE: PHENOMENOLOGY STUDY AMONG WOMEN ACADEMIC LEADERS IN MALAYSIA HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to understand the concept of spiritual intelligence among women academic leaders in higher educational institutions. This study was carried out through an in-depth exploration of the questions on: How do women academic leaders conceptualize spiritual intelligence? A qualitative research methodology and phenomenological approach were selected as these approaches have been decided as the most precise approaches for the study of a phenomenon of this nature. The finding generated four concepts of spiritual intelligence, namely 1) working on purpose and meaning, 2) value people as an important asset, 3) cultivating sense of oneness by being holistic and 4) emphasizing on the importance of values and principles. The study will provide leaders with an understanding of the effective ways of leading people, particularly in a changing environment that will promote a greater sense of meaning and purpose in the workplace. In addition, the study will be a paradigm for women in academic environment, considering that more women will have the opportunities to hold leadership positions in Higher Learning Institutions.

Key word: Spiritual Intelligence, Academic Women Leaders, Higher Educational Institution, meaning making, spiritual leadership, workplace spirituality

Introduction

Spiritual Intelligence is an intangible quality that helps individuals to accept responsibility for bringing meaning and worth to their own lives, as well as to establish new pathways to obtain and use it in daily life. Spiritual Intelligence provides people with a balanced and comprehensive view of reality (Saini, Sumit & Rajan Sharma,2020). The concept of Spiritual intelligence consists of an evolution of the latest intelligence theory, complementing the IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and EQ

(Emotional Quotient) which were previously developed. If IQ is a parameter of classical mathematical and verbal logic intelligence and EQ is a parameter of inter-relationship ability, SQ is defined as a person's ability to transpose two aspects of intelligence IQ and EQ into wisdom and deeper understanding until peace and balance outward and inward (Sastrodiharjo, 2020).

Spiritual intelligence thus, in general can be described as people's capacity to understand the purpose of their existence and their ability to make meaning based on their ideal values or principles. Various scholars conceptualized spiritual intelligence as a mean towards creating meaning by connecting ideas, events, and persons, which will consequently enhance greater personal and organizational transformations (Vasconcelos, A. F.,2019; Mahmood, A., Arshad, M. A., Ahmed, A., Akhtar, S., & Khan, S ,2018; Skrzypińska, K, 2021; Samul, J, 2019). Zohar and Marshall (2005) described spiritual intelligence as an individual's capacity to answer and address issues concerning meaning and purpose and residing people's actions in a broader perspective, and in determining that their course of action is more meaningful than those of others. Implementing spiritual intelligence within workplace environment focuses leaders towards building an atmosphere embedded with elements such as respect, ethics, values, and integrity (Ramachandaran, S. D., Krauss, S. E., Hamzah, A., & Idris, K. (2017). Spiritual Intelligence is one of the major reasons why some organizations are more successful than others (Chin, Raman, Yeow & Eze 2012). SI is significantly relevant in obtaining positive organizational outcomes such as organizational performance (Mahmood et al., 2015; Marques, 2008), organizational citizenship behavior (Hunsaker, 2016; Ryan, 2002), sustainability (Akhtar et al., 2015; Collins, 2010; Stead and Stead, 2016) organizational learning (Hawkins, 1991; Howard, 2002; Pluta and Rudawska, 2016) job satisfaction (Roof et al., 2017) and organizational commitment (Markow and Klenke, 2005; Rego and Pina e Cunha, 2008). Spiritual intelligence thus deals with issues of meaning and value (Kadkhoda & Jahani, 2012) and provides clarifications directed towards the benefit of the whole (Sisk, 2002).

Scholars also have indicated that leaders with spiritual intelligence will be able to embed and to inspire meaning and purpose and call for services that will connect their role towards identifying purpose and embedding meaning within their organizations (Samul, J,2020 ; Krisnanda, P. H., & Surya, I. B. K, 2019; Alregeb PhD, T. Z, 2022) ; Siswanti, D. N., Khairuddin, R., & Halim, F ,2018 ; Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Zohar and Marshall (2011) recognized several attributes of spiritual intelligence such as mindfulness, spontaneity, leading based on vision and value, humility as well as positive use of adversity. The concept of spiritual intelligence has been recognized by several

well-known firms such as Shell, Nokia, Coca-Cola, McKinsey, Hewlett Packard, and Starbucks (Ian Wylie, 2005). However, the challenges remain in which insufficient research has been done on the contributions of spiritual intelligence, specifically in leadership development and practice.

Spiritual intelligence and women leadership

Recent statistics have reported that the number of women joining the workforce has increased dramatically over the past 30 years. More specifically, Hopkins, O'Neil, Passarelli, and Bilimoria (2008) noted that women make up more than half of the managerial workforce, compared to 18% in 1972. Women hold 15.4% of top leadership positions, 2.4% of which are chief executive officer (CEO) of Fortune 500 companies. Women are also noted for being successful in the workforce. However, some scholars pointed out that women and men hold divergent beliefs of what is career success (Hopkins et al., 2008). Women are more likely to classify career success as an "interest in intrinsically rewarding roles, personal achievement, self-development, and work-life balance (Hopkins et al., 2008, p. 348). There is also a prominent dimension of the research of spiritual intelligence in the context of leadership, especially when associating spiritual intelligence and the style of leadership (Sendjaya, 2007; Fry & Wigglesworth, 2013; Attri,2012). The

spiritual intelligence practices that connote women leadership practices are prompted by the nature and skills of women leaders that have been assumed to be comparable to the attributes of spiritual intelligence. Scholars from various studies indicated that the traits and qualities that parallel those attributes of spiritual intelligence will be effective if implemented in a changing environment which requires unique set of talents and capacity to lead (Ramachandaran, S. D., Krauss, S. E., Hamzah, A., & Idris, K (2017).

Women leaders in a study examined by Donaldson (2000), Stiernberg (2003) and Millar (2000) admitted on the significance of spiritual attributes to their achievement and the capacity to move forward regularly in difficult conditions. Other scholars (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Jones-Johnson, 2001; Parrish, 1999; Ward & Hyle, 1999) indicated that women leaders in their study discovered a spiritual perspective designated to be important to for their leadership practice which determines how they lead. In addition, compared with their male colleagues, female leaders tend to express their leadership attributes as bounded by ethical and values-based practices, exploring meaning at workplace, emphasize on the whole individual, mutual vision construction, and empowerment. Incorporating elements of spirituality within leadership practice according to the study thus seems to be a strong suit for female educational leaders. Women leaders are anticipated to have the capacity to lead

effectively if provided with the appropriate emphasis as given to men. Empowering women to lead in an environment of full of challenges, specifically with spiritual intelligence attributes will generate an opportunity for them to disclose their unique talent and capacities (Johnson, C. F, 2012).

Literature Review Conceptualizing Spiritual Intelligence

In leadership practices the concept of spiritual intelligence is much more related to the way leaders apply their attributes, decision making, solving problems as well as creating effective relationship within their organizations. Some of the concepts that have been linked with the field of leadership practices include meaning making, portraying innate human potential or ability, and the tendency to be holistic.

Meaning Making

Scholars have described the concept of spiritual intelligence as a process of meaning making. Personal meaning production is defined as the ability to construct personal meaning and purpose in all physical and mental experiences, including the capacity to create and master a life purpose (David B. King, 2010). In general, meaning making is an approach where people desire to make significant contributions throughout their endeavors. This is accomplished when they can find meaning and purpose throughout their actions. In fact, it is the nature of human beings to have and aspire for meaning and a sense of worth throughout their pursuance.

For example, employees working in an organization would prefer to ensure that their tasks would carry meaning and purpose beyond financial complement. This means that in performing their tasks, they wish to make significant contributions.

Various scholars have thus described spiritual intelligence as a mean where individual will be able to find meaning and purpose throughout their endeavor. Spiritual intelligence (SQ) thus has been depicted as an awareness that individuals possess an inspiring desire for meaning, value and ability to make significant contributions in their endeavor. Some scholars (e.g., Emmons, 2000; Nasel, 2004; Vaughn, 2002; Zohar & Marshall, 2000) proposed that spiritual intelligence enables individuals to stipulate their search for meaning and strive to achieve their personally meaningful ends. Zohar and Marshall (2000) added that individuals embrace spiritual intelligence towards developing their desires and capabilities for meaning, purpose, vision, values. Amram (2007) clarified that meaning in an individual capacity to sense meaning, connecting actions, and experiencing values. It also builds understanding that heightened one's well-being, even amid facing challenges. By constructing meaning individuals will ensure that there exist significant contributions in the role and task that will consequently fulfil their desires and achievements. According to Zohar & Marshall, the principle of spiritual intelligence strengthens vision, purpose,

meaning, and values through the establishment. This in turn will simplify problem solving and accomplishment of the result and promote wealthier and resourceful life (Zohar, 2005; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

Therefore, spiritual intelligence can be outlined as an approach where individuals are aware and conscious of the fundamental purpose of their action, and they are able to derive meaning from it. Seeking purpose and meaning also enables individuals to have passion that will drive them towards fulfilling their determinations or desires. Hence, the dimension of meaning making provides a sense of clear direction for individuals to move towards recognizing their role and purpose. Fletcher (1976) stated that meaning making conveys purpose and enhancement in people's lives. Furthermore, Baumeister (1991) proposed that a meaningful life is experienced when individuals have purpose and directions, sense of self-worth, and set of values that determines their behavior and action.

Considering from the leadership perspective Handy (2008) said that individual needs purpose in life that offers them energy for their journey. Present leaders desire for a sense of meaning in their personal and their professional lives. The things that are significant for leaders that they cherished most are those that inspire them in their lives, in their work, and in their leadership. It provides them with a sense of purpose and direction, clarity in their own lives, and strength. Obviously,

such elements if brought into their relationships, especially in work atmosphere, will motivate and inspire others. In the workplace, the essence of meaning is essentially captured within organizational goals such as vision and values that provide meaning for people and thereby inspire them.

Innate Human Ability and Potential

Scholars have called spiritual intelligence as intrinsic personalities or attributes of an individual which are often portrayed through their behaviors and actions such as being concerned about others, respecting people, and being honest (Vasconcelos, A. F.,2019). Noble (2000) labelled spiritual intelligence as an innate human ability and that it is an inherent ability. Wolman (2001) agreed with Vaughan (2002) and Noble (2001), that spiritual intelligence exists as a potential and innate human ability that can be developed with training and experience. Emmon (1999) used virtuous behaviour as attribute of spiritual intelligence which parallels the term innate qualities. According to Emmon (1999), spiritual intelligence also implies the capacity for an individual for virtuous behaviour such as to display tolerance, convey gratitude, humility, and to demonstrate empathy.

Therefore, spiritual intelligence can be depicted as an innate human quality of an individual's personal characteristics or traits such as problem-solving abilities, discipline, honesty, humble, and respecting others. These personalities are apparent in

individuals having strong charismatic force of qualities that tend to be noticed, influenced, and pursued by others. The concept is also similar to Fry's (2005) spiritual values portrayed by leaders, such as integrity, honesty, and humility.

From leadership studies based on their characteristics, Bass (1990) noted that leadership is innate when they are born with several natural innate capacities, revealed through charismatic styles of leadership. These innate leadership characteristics comprise various behaviors and traits. Charismatic leadership is thus based on the capacity of the leader to practice great inspiration by influencing others' beliefs, values, and performance by being an exemplary individual in his or her own behaviors and beliefs (Sosik, 2001). Attributes of charismatic leaders include emotional articulateness, self-esteem, determination, and moral righteousness (Bass, 1990). Thus, charisma can be reflected as key attributes of natural born leaders. Consequently, if leaders are not born with the characteristics, these attributes of charismatic leaders can be learned and trained.

Likewise, Vaughan (2002) used the concept of spiritual maturity as an innate quality depicted as an expression of developed spiritual intelligence and implied ethical behavior, self-awareness, moral, and emotional maturity. Some of the traits related to spiritual maturity include tolerance, open-mindedness, wisdom, kindness, and compassions. It also includes personal sacrifice and services to others, respect for and a sense of connection with all life, and inner peace or composure amid challenges. Vaughan claimed that the presence of spiritual intelligence or the achievement of spiritual maturity should be reflected and integrated authentically, through thoughts and deeds in all aspects of life. Vaughan also clarified that spiritual intelligence exists as a capacity in every individual, that can be fostered through various practices and training. He added that spiritual intelligence can be nurtured in practice and expressed in culture such as love, wisdom, and service.

Holistic

The concept of spiritual intelligence also has been portrayed as holistic or wholeness. Zohar (2001) when referring to spiritual intelligence as holistic described it as an integrated system in which each part is defined by every other part of the system. Thus, an individual's thinking, feeling and value affect the whole world. In addition, Amram (2009) defined holistic as an attribute of spiritual intelligence which implies systems view by seeing the wholeness, unity, and the interconnections among diversity and differentiation. Noble (2001) added by claiming spiritual intelligence as an openness to unusual and diverse experience extensively and the attentiveness that the whole is always superior to the sum of its parts. Similarly, Vaughan (2002) has coined a concept of spiritual intelligence as transcendence. Additionally, Amram (2009) denoted it as

the ability to go beyond the notion of self as a separate entity and to know and experience connection at all levels of life and universe.

Thus, spiritual intelligence can be denoted as a capability of an individual to view things in a wider perspective and in an interrelated perspective in which everything is connected to one another. Hence, Karakas (2009) said that by being holistic individuals will be able to interpret, synthesize, map, and understand the bigger picture through the implementation of systems thinking and establishing connections or networks among the parts. Thus, spiritual intelligence attribute denotes the individual's capacity to view most of the situations from a more integrated position as they take the whole system into account. Zohar (2001) stated that for the organization to be more operative, it is important to have holistic leaders who have the ability to cultivate collaboration and sense of coherence. Therefore, to be a holistic leader, the individual should have the capacity to recognize how his or her own intra-interacting aspects create a whole that is greater than its sum. Holistic leaders view organization, community, and society as a complex living whole that is evolving, unfolding, and enfolding through a sense of purpose, collaboration and deep sense of inner direction and inspired through respect, integrity, and trust (Molinaro, 1999).

Research Methodology

Qualitative research method is ideally suited to this study because it can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenology and to gain novel and fresh slants on areas about which there is existing knowledge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Qualitative research assumes that all the concepts pertaining to a phenomenon have not yet been identified (Strauss et al., 1990).. According to Creswell (2000) qualitative research is a way of examining and understanding the meaning individuals and groups endorse to a social or human problem. The procedure of the research consists of an evolving inquiries and techniques. Data are usually assembled in the respondents' location. Data are analyzed inductively, accumulating from specifics to a wide-ranging theme. Then, the researcher constructs his or her understanding of the meaning of the data.

Selection of Participants

This study uses purposive sampling. Two types of sampling procedures are commonly used in research, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling intends to generalize finding to a larger population and is frequently used in the quantitative studies. However, non-probability sampling is ideal for qualitative study as the sampling is based on the characteristics of the sample and not the generalizability of the population (Merriam, 1998; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). In addition, non-probability sampling consists of two main types,

namely purposive sampling, and theoretical sampling. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on the criteria relevant to the topic, whereas the theoretical sampling is used to develop grounded theory. The goal of the study is mainly to explore and share participants experience to add to knowledge base related to the phenomenon of spiritual intelligence. Therefore, the study seeks to utilize purposive, criteria-based sampling.

Phenomenological Data Analysis

Analysis was conducted throughout the research process. In this part, the transcriptions, notes and personal documents were gathered and organized into a sequence that tells the story and incident of the experiences from each participant. Willig (2001) suggested reading the transcriptions and making notes based upon initial reactions and observations that may be pursued later. The data in this study were analysed using the modified van Kaam method or Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenology in Moustakas (1991) as a guideline.

Findings

The research depicted several views of women academic leaders on how they define the concept of spiritual intelligence from their leadership know-how. These included working on purpose and meaning, valuing people as an important asset, cultivating a sense of oneness by being whole, and emphasizing on the importance of value and principle.

(a) Theme: Working on purpose and meaning

The outcome of the finding specified that the idea of spiritual intelligence in general can be denoted as way of understanding and interpreting individual's way of being conscious of their ultimate purpose and meaning within their endeavors. From the perspective of leadership, the finding deduced the idea of spiritual intelligent as the capacity of leaders to be mindful of their role and that they can make significant contributions by creating impact in their leadership role. Being a leader is not merely holding a position, power, or influence. However, it is important for them to be aware of their role and influence on others towards creating positive impact. Leaders living and working with purpose will be aware and attentive towards their response to important matters as they are linked to their purpose and thus create meaningful environment.

The concept of spiritual intelligence as depicted by the women leaders is also comparable to Vaughan's interpretation of spiritual intelligence as an individual's capability for deep understanding of existential matters and queries that include questions such as "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" and "What really matters?" (Vaughan, 2002). This concept denotes that spiritual intelligence comprises the idea of understanding people's true purpose by reflecting the meaning and purpose of their presence in this realm. Understanding the true purpose will undeniably direct them

towards executing their decision in a more precise manner, specifically as a leader. Zohar and Marshall (2000) also described spiritual intelligence as an individual realization to access the meaning, vision, values, and a sense of purpose. This similar concept has been added by Nasel (2004) who outlined spiritual intelligence as an individual's capacity to acknowledge and understand meaning and purpose and drive towards accomplishing personally meaningful goals.

This finding has contributed by giving a broad-spectrum of the meaning of spiritual intelligence as a process of individual's capability of generating meaning and purpose. Understanding the concept of spiritual intelligence as a way of constructing meaning and purpose will contribute to give a clear picture of how leaders will be able to employ this idea in their leadership practices towards creating more meaningful working atmosphere.

Nevertheless, despite various literatures supporting the concept of spiritual intelligence as a way of understanding meaning and purpose as declared by the women leaders, there were unclear links of the concept in the field of leadership. The concept that has been provided in most of the studies denoted a general way of individual's ability to construct meaning and purpose. Associating the concept of spiritual intelligence as a way of creating meaning in leadership practices in future probably could lead to better understanding of the idea in leadership

practice. In addition, leaders will be able to understand well how the elements of meaning and purpose could be assembled in a more efficient way by understanding its relationship with effective leadership practice.

In addition, the concept has contributed to give new directions of spiritual intelligence ideas, where it has provided a universal meaning of spiritual intelligence as main key of understanding meaning and purpose of our existence. Many concepts of spiritual intelligence have been identified in various fields by different scholars. However, the finding of this study has contributed to the new understanding of the spiritual intelligence concept which could be applied in various settings, as individuals need to understand their purpose and meaning in their pursuit.

(b) Theme: Value people as an important asset

The concept of spiritual intelligence as described by the women leaders also established the significance of emphasizing on the importance of people as an important asset. This result denotes the importance of sustaining a good relationship with the stakeholders as an important element of spiritual intelligence specifically as a leader. From the perspective of leadership, the women leaders have emphasized on the significant contribution of employee as an important tool in an organization. Therefore, it is important to sustain the relationship by giving more priority for the employee.

People are an important asset and pillars for the growth of women leaders. It is impossible for leaders to achieve their purpose or mission without having the right people to make important contributions to their success as well as to the institution's sustainability. Though leader within an institution or organization may have the most advanced policy, technology or even approaches, their success will be hindered if they do not have the right people. No matter how successful leaders are, they always believe that it is their people that have been sustaining their accomplishments. The statement from the women leaders on the importance of people as an important tool is aligned to the ideas of Boudreau and Ramstad (2007). Boudreau and Ramstad depicted that the consideration of employees as an important resource and the way they were organized has been gradually acknowledged as an important aspect towards strategic success and competitive advantage. Ulrich (2005), on the other hand, expressed the importance of human capital as an intangible asset which exemplifies its value resulting from choices about what happens inside the organization and from how stakeholders value those decisions rather than from its physical assets. It is thus important to create an environment where people are constantly empowered, flourished, and self-actualized. Khatri (1999) stated that people are the key factors that provide flexibility and adaptability in organizations. Rundle (1997) in addition claimed that people are the adaptive instrument which determines the ways in which the organization will confront the competitive environment.

This idea of spiritual intelligence as a way of emphasizing on human capital has contributed towards a better understanding from the leadership perspective on the importance of bringing harmonious relationship by aligning employees together within the workplace, which will create a tremendous performance for the organization. Understanding the importance of people as an important asset from the perspective of leadership will also enable leaders to have the capacity to create an atmosphere in the workplace that will add more values and meaning towards employee's contribution. Since employees contribute to the ultimate achievement of the institutional goals, it is thus important for leaders to better understand the approach of looking after their work force. In that way leaders can ensure that their employees are completely satisfied, and that work is completed smoothly and effectively.

Many of the literatures have supported the importance of emphasizing people as an important asset. However, from the perspective of spiritual intelligence there is a lack of theory and concept that denote directly spiritual intelligence as an idea of emphasizing on people, especially that links it to leadership practice as declared by the women leader. Probably in future there should be more studies that

will contribute to improve the perception of how the idea of spiritual intelligence could be linked directly as way of prioritizing people in the leadership practices. This will enable leaders to be clear on applying the concept towards leading employee in a collective working atmosphere.

In addition to the idea of perceiving people as an important asset in the elements of spiritual intelligence, it also denotes the presence Human Resource Management concept in the spiritual intelligence practices, which also emphasizes on people as the main priority. Therefore, future studies could be done to show that the elements of spiritual intelligence attributes that could be integrated with human resource practices that will enhance the value of people as an important asset. This could generate a better understanding of the concept of spiritual intelligence as tool to manage people in organizations.

The findings would probably give a new direction for human resource management and development to link the concept of spiritual intelligence within their practices as it focuses more towards developing and sustaining people in organization. Understanding spiritual intelligence as a way of prioritizing people will enable human resource personnel to develop various strategies that could enhance the relationship and commitment among people in future. Diverse approaches that have been implemented in human resource activities. Therefore,

spiritual intelligence can be added to the development strategy to promote collective performance.

(c) Theme: Cultivating sense of oneness by being holistic

Spiritual intelligence has been described as an approach of viewing things in a more holistic way. The women leaders in the study believe that spiritual intelligence signifies the capacity for leaders to see things as one instead of as parts. This indicates the concept of being comprehensive and holistic. Therefore, leaders cultivating sense of oneness tend to view institutions or organizations in an integrated approach. It is essential for holistic leadership to understand the interrelationship of the elements that exist in the institution instead of seeing it as incomplete parts. In such a case, any decisions made by them will create tremendous impacts that will affect the whole institution. Enhancing collaboration and accountability will create the sense of oneness as everyone will believe that they are part of the system.

In a study, it was found that spiritual intelligence, and not spirituality, is the predictor of wellbeing (Amran & Dryer, 2008). It affects part of the system of personality and psychosocial domains. Both are among the aspects that can trigger anti-social behavior and influences the level of life adjustment among the adolescents (Devi et al, 2016). The concept of spiritual intelligence as a holistic approach also has been clearly supported by Zohar (2001). She

said that for human enterprises to be more effective, it is important to have holistic leaders who can foster cooperation and sense of oneness. Noble (2001) added by stating that spiritual intelligence comprises an openness to unusual and diverse experience extensively and the consciousness that the whole is always superior to the sum of its part. Thus, it can unite all the stakeholders towards achieving the tasks and missions of the institution. Specifically, in a complex kind of organization the concept of unity will enable everyone to look at the bigger picture. The network of relationship created through the whole idea will thus help everyone to be accountable towards achieving the vision and purpose of the organization. Therefore, viewing institution as a complete whole has been described as a process where leaders are required to look at the bigger picture as well as the small picture. The perception of holistic approach for leadership practices also has been supported by Popper (2004). He stated that by being holistic leaders tend to focus on the relationship that surpasses above the properties of a leader and followers. This is because the meaning of leadership is the relationship that allows an integrative perception of leader, followers, and surroundings. Consequently, it can reduce the bias of giving more priority solely to more to the leader. Similarly, Molinaro (1999) declared holistic from the perspective of leadership which tends to view organization, community, and society

as a complex living whole. This complex living whole entity is evolving, unfolding, and enfolding through a sense of purpose, collaboration, with a deep sense of inner direction, and inspired through respect integrity and trust.

This concept has contributed to the understanding of the spiritual intelligence as a way of understanding everything as one and equal. Holistic concept in general denotes understanding of how individual should see everything as an equal entity. It is the leadership practice that brings the idea of viewing institution in a holistic view that will enable leaders to harmonize the elements of values, vision, as well task and people together in a more integrated approach.

The finding in general described the concept of holistic as part of spiritual intelligence practice which denotes how elements within the institution are perceived to be interrelated to one another. Therefore, the concept is limited to the general idea of what the holistic leadership consist of. However, the concept gives little understanding of how it is actually implemented and what will be the components that could be integrated specifically in higher educational institutions. For example, Taggart (2009) showed a holistic leadership model in which some of the components have been discussed. These components include organizational teaching, personal mastery, reflection, inquiry, stewardship, visionary and strategic action, results orientation,

thought leadership, power-sharing, collaboration, and nurturing. His model also reports a psycho-spiritual triad of personal wellness which focuses on mind, body, and spirit.

Future model or framework could be developed, specifically on the components that could be integrated towards bringing the concept of holistic leadership approach as part spiritual intelligence practice. This could lead to better understanding of leaders on the importance of the concept of spiritual intelligence as a holistic way of viewing the institution. Leaders could strategize on how they could be applied in their institution by referring to the components that will be discovered.

(d) Theme: Emphasize on the importance of values or principle

Spiritual intelligence has been depicted as a way how individuals portray their values or principles through their actions and behaviors. Some of the values that have been emphasized included respecting others, humility, honesty, trustworthy, integrity, human governance, and sense of belonging. This concept of values has also been described as an individual's innate traits. The women leaders in this study declared that spiritual intelligence from the perspective of leadership signifies the importance of portraying ideal values that should be cultivated as part of the institutional culture through their behaviors, actions, and communication. Leaders should be an example to others in the institution. They

should portray good behavior or shared values through their action, speech and thinking. As leaders, it is important for them to act as a role model for others by always emphasizing on positive values and principles.

This similar concept of value has been signified by Reilly and Ehlinger (2007) in their idea of value-based leadership which denotes leadership practices grounded by foundational moral values such as integrity, empowerment, and social responsibility. There are also studies on value-based leadership which established principles on the way people should be treated in the organization and how goals can be accomplished. They developed standards of excellence and showed examples for people to follow. Through their actions, leaders portray their collective values such as honesty, integrity, courage, compassion, and humility which will enable them to earn credits of respectable personality from people (Fry, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In addition, Covey (1991) supported the concept in his principle-centered leadership, in which he mentioned that leader's values should be aligned with the right principles. The value that is being conveyed is integrated throughout leadership action and in their everyday task of leaders such as decision making and problem solving. Emmon (1999) described spiritual intelligence as the ability to involve in virtuous behavior or to be virtuous such as to show tolerance, to express gratitude, humility and compassion.

According to the virtues proposed by Emmon are foundations of human strength which allows people to perform their role successfully in the world.

Understanding the concept of spiritual intelligence as an important attribute towards prioritizing values will enable leaders to be conscious of the essential principles or values that should be portrayed in their leadership practices, especially in decision making and in problem solving. Leaders will also be able to manage employees in a more efficient way by promoting the right values. They can act as a role model among the people in their organization. Having the right values among employees will also enable leaders to create good relationships in the workplace atmosphere with enhanced ethical principles and performance.

Various studies have indicated the importance of values as an essential element in leadership practices. The women leaders emphasized the idea of spiritual intelligence as a way how leaders will be able to portray their innate values in the working environment. These innate values will enhance the institution's righteousness and bring in good relationships. Nevertheless, very little studies have considered spiritual intelligence as an approach of portraying values in leadership practice. Therefore, there should be more studies in future, to convey the element of values as part of spiritual intelligence attributes, which will enable leaders to better understand how those values could be applied towards creating harmonious and virtuous working environment.

The finding has contributed a new direction by providing an understanding of the significant contribution of spiritual intelligence as way of promoting positive and shared values in working atmosphere. These values could prevent diverse ethical issues faced in organizations such fraud and corruptions. Apparently, the new era of globalization and technological advancement has also triggered various ethical problems. Spiritual intelligence concept has brought a new direction on the importance of integrating values as part of the code of ethics that could curb various ethical issues in the workplace by bringing the attributes of shared values.

Discussion

The study accomplishes that better understanding of the concept of spiritual intelligence, which has been universally described as a way of understanding individual's purpose of existence and how they contribute significantly within their pursuit by adding meaning and values and viewing things in broader perspectives. Applying this concept within leadership practices has brought new understanding on how leaders will be able to lead within a changing environment by promoting greater sense of meaning and purpose as well as by sharing values among people within the organization. Nevertheless, since spiritual intelligence is still in its emerging stage of development, more study needs to be conducted to expand a more in-depth

understanding of the attributes of spiritual intelligence practices, the context in which it is more effective and who benefits from spiritual intelligence within leadership practices.

The study has also provided greater understanding of the important contribution of integrating spiritual intelligence into women academic leaders. The findings indicate that the attributes of spiritual intelligence could inspire, motivate, and increase the commitment of employees, when they feel that they are able to make significant contributions within their working atmosphere beyond the routine task. The elements such as meaning, vision, purpose as well as values embedded within the work culture through spiritual intelligence practices will undeniably enable leaders to achieve greater accomplishments towards transforming people as well as the institution to achieve higher institutional credibility and sustainability.

In addition, the study has also provided greater insights for understanding the significant contribution of women leaders within the changing organization. The findings also reveal that the unique characteristic of women leaders as possessing greater capacity to lead in changing environment. The study has also suggested an important paradigm for increasing the number of women within contemporary organizational paradigm, who are anticipated to hold more leadership positions in future. For them,

this study provides an insight on how to lead effectively through better characteristics and attributes.

Nevertheless, since spiritual intelligence is still in its emerging stage of development, more study needs to be conducted to expand a more in-depth understanding of the attributes of spiritual intelligence practices, the context in which it is more effective and who benefits from spiritual intelligence within leadership practices.

Implication for Practice

The information from the findings could be used by leaders to develop potential skills and attributes that could be implemented within the working atmosphere specifically for emerging as well as existing leaders. The findings also show that the spiritual intelligence focuses on the importance of relationship that emphasizes on people and their development. Therefore, the more the characteristic of spiritual intelligence can be fostered within the existing leaders, the more likely that these leaders will take seriously the task of cultivating and developing new leaders to follow their footsteps. This is important, especially in higher educational institutions experiencing tremendous changes and crisis. The attributes of spiritual intelligence may help existing university leaders to take on this task of cultivating future leaders from within their organization in a much more intentional way.

Implication for Theory

The findings support the importance of women leadership and their unique attributes and skills that will suit them to lead contemporary organizations. The emphasis on women as capable to be leaders can be observed within the earlier literature as well as in contemporary leadership theories. The literature indicates that the increasing number of women in leadership have triggered the importance of understanding their main attributes to lead within changing environments. This issue has been supported by the literature in the earliest leadership theories initiated during the era when very few women were given the leadership role, and when leadership was continued to be described from the context of men and thought to be more appropriate for men. However, a growing number of women in the contemporary leadership paradigm have acknowledged that women attributes deserve a higher appreciation and their contributions as leaders deserved to be valued (Belason ,2012). Various literatures supported that women leader possess specific attributes that fit the contemporary leadership attributes. For example, women have been aligned closely with the transformational leadership style, which was grounded with elements such as collaboration, teamwork, lesser control for the leader, and problem solving based on intuition and rationality (Mashele, W., & Alagidede, I. P., 2022).

In terms of the concept of spiritual intelligence theories, the findings have contributed to a new understanding on the idea and concept of spiritual intelligence. In the literature, various concepts have been used to interpret spiritual intelligence in other fields of study. However, the concept of spiritual intelligence in this study has brought into light the universal term of spiritual intelligence as a way of understanding the purpose and meaning of human existence. This concept could be implemented in various settings in which individuals will be able to apply the idea into their personal as well as professional settings.

As such in future the theories could assist towards expanding of study on the understanding of the attributes of women leadership and their role within leadership practices. In addition, the literature review that has been discussed on the women leadership attributes was mostly related to western perspective. Nevertheless, based on these existing theories, scholars in future could have the opportunity to expand the literature review towards understanding women leadership attributes within Non- western or from Malaysian context.

Limitation of the study

The study relies profoundly on women academic leaders as the primary source of data. The women academic leaders who participated in the study hold high positions at their universities. There may be some elements of their works that are similarity to each other's. This is due to the similar position they hold in their

universities. There may also be some elements which are different compared with those of other women leaders because they may not have reached the same higher position.

The study discovered that the self-perceptions of women academic leadership practices regarding spiritual intelligence phenomenon and the data were based on the responses of these women leaders to the interview questions. Therefore, these responses were based on their insight on leadership and experience that could not be verified by others. Hence, it is not possible to see if their perceptions on leadership were in line with how others perceive them.

Furthermore, the women academic leaders were all from Public Higher Educational Institution. They may have been some existing elements that may not have been present if the women leaders were from Private Higher Educational Institution.

Looking at the sample size, the study uses purposive sampling technique and only nine participants have been selected for this study. However, this sample size is considered sufficient for a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, trying to understand the phenomenon of spiritual intelligence provided by such a sample size has its own limitation. Hence, the sampling approach that has been implemented to acquire the sample for this study has limited the

generalizability of the result from this study.

Nevertheless, the information obtained from this study will contribute to the knowledge base of women academic leaders in higher education by providing insights into how these women experienced and integrated spiritual intelligence in their leadership practices. This study uses the qualitative to study the phenomenon of spiritual intelligence. Therefore, the finding cannot be overgeneralized as the goal of a qualitative study is to construe each event uniquely, as opposed to generalizing the findings (Merriam, 1989). Nevertheless, the several elements explored such as the sample and the type of university selected in the study has limited the scope of the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

The finding of the study has contributed to the understanding and knowledge of of women academic leadership on the practice of spiritual intelligence. For future research, the design of study could include a study to explore the perceptions and experiences of employees working with the leaders who have integrated spiritual intelligence practices. Additional research also probably could be conducted on this area by using diverse settings. The employment of various perspective approaches would be effective towards aligning the data assembled from diverse viewpoints and using them for triangulation. This study has focused particularly on women leaders to see how

they integrate spiritual intelligence in their leadership practices. Conducting similar studies with men leaders would probably yield additional insights into phenomena of spiritual intelligence.

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