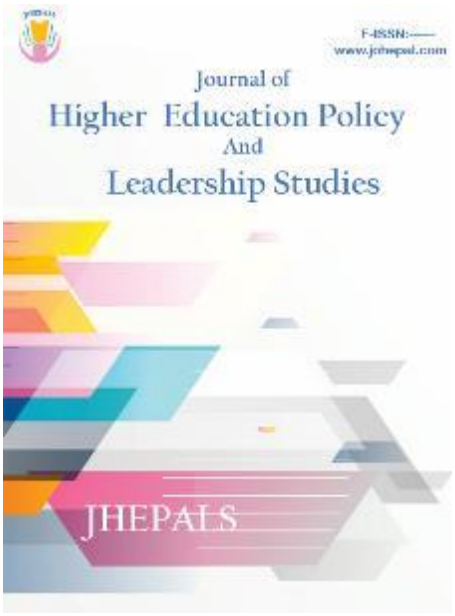
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The Mediating Role of Spiritual Intelligence and Teaching Experience in Perceived Leadership Styles of EFL Teachers: A Structural Equation Modelling Analysis



Masoomeh Estaji
Department of English Language & Literature, Faculty of Persian Literature & Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University (ATU), Tehran, Iran
Email: mestaji74@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8014-9491

Parisa Pourmostafa
MA Graduate in TEFL, Allameh Tabataba'i University (ATU), Tehran, Iran
Email: p.pourmostafa@gmail.com

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Masoomeh Estaji *

Parisa Pourmostafa

Abstract

As a less-attended area in the research context of Iran, the predictive power of teachers' Spiritual Intelligence (SI), as an inner element, and teaching experience for their perceived Leadership Styles (LS), as an external element, was investigated in this study. Moreover, the perceptions of EFL teachers with high and low level of SI regarding LS and its components were explored. To this end, a structural model was designed and two questionnaires of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ, Avolio, & Bass, 2004) and Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI, King, 2008) were distributed among 236 Iranian EFL teachers. To complement the quantitative data, 10 EFL teachers from both high and low SI groups were requested to partake in a semi-structured interview. The results of quantitative analysis, using regression analysis, revealed that the components of spiritual intelligence and teaching experience significantly predicted the perceptions of leadership styles. Likewise, through Path Analysis, it was evinced that the suggested model, in this study, had a proper fit with the data. Additionally, the content analysis of the data showed that teachers with various levels of SI pointed to the typical characteristics of a teacher leader differently. The results of this study can raise Iranian EFL teachers' knowledge and awareness of SI and LS and provide an in-depth understanding of the concepts and their relevant components.

Keywords: EFL teachers; Leadership style; Path analysis; Spiritual intelligence; Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), Teaching experience

*Corresponding author's email: mestaji74@gmail.com

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Introduction

To many people involved in education system, effective teachers are usually known as good instructors, but not all good or even excellent instructors are remembered as effective teachers in the minds. To many educators, performing the responsibilities with great level of commitment is the basis of successful and excellent education (Grigsby, Schumacher, Decman, & Simieou, 2010; Hill, 1990; Jusoff, Kareem, Bing, & Awang, 2011; Porter & Brophy, 1988). So far, studying different views of leadership characteristics has been aimed at distinguishing leaders from followers (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015) and shifting their attention from conventional trait or personality-based theories to a situation theory wherein the leadership skills and characteristics of a leader determine the situation of leadership exercise (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). According to Amanchukwu et al. (2015), recent theories of leadership follow three standpoints: Leadership as a process or relationship, as a mixture of traits or personality features, and leadership as particular behaviours which are usually spoken of as leadership skills. From the viewpoint of more noticeable theories of leadership, leadership is best seen as a process which includes impact with a cohort of individuals toward the fulfillment of their objectives (Wolinski, 2010).

As another significant factor in any educational setting, teachers' individual characteristics have been commonly embraced as influential in different aspects of education. As a case in point, spiritual Intelligence evolves from our primary need for the grasp of meaning, essential purpose, and our most significant values. Moreover, it focuses on how such issues result in a deeper, wiser, and more challenging life which affects our educational decisions and experiences (Zohar, 2010). Spiritual Intelligence concerns the inner life of mind, spirit, and its association with being in the world. It entails an ability for a profound appreciation of existential questions and insights into various consciousness levels (Vaughan, 2002). In simple terms, spiritual intelligence points to the ability to behave and perform wisely and compassionately, while preserving inner and outer harmony, irrespective of the circumstances (Wigglesworth, 2006). It emerges from deep awareness of matters like: Life, body, mind, soul, and spirit which, in turn, operates as the point of being or as the innovative life force of development. It is also considered to be over and above an individual's mental ability and it goes beyond the conventional psychological development.

Spiritual Intelligence with its emphasis on teachers' personal meaning production of life experience and critical thinking –as two significant components in King's (2008) spiritual intelligence questionnaire- sounds to be able to create a good atmosphere where full potential of teachers gets flourished. The interconnection of EFL teachers' Spiritual Intelligence and Leadership Style as a crucial issue in language teaching has caught little attention among researchers in Iran. As put by York-Barr and Duke (2004), teachers are constantly considering leadership roles; however, there is a drift in the association of such roles to the abilities, performance, and understanding of teacher-leadership. Most of the studies carried out on leadership styles have focused on the principals' leadership styles at school or educational organizations (Afshari, Ghavifekr, Siraj, & Ab. Samad, 2012; Aliakbari & Sadeghi, 2011; Jalilizadeh, Abbasi, & Mohammadi, 2013). As for SI, copious investigations have been done in diverse domains like psychology, neurology, anthropology, and cognitive science, however as far as the researchers are concerned, no research has been found on SI in the field of ELT.

Fueled by this shortcoming, the current study is deemed significant in that it can raise Iranian EFL teachers' knowledge and awareness of the determinant effects of LS and SI and their components in the process of instruction. Teachers with high SI are believed to be more confident

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in taking action in life and are able to adapt themselves to any condition, and they are more sensitive to their environments. Therefore, they can create a promising situation that enhances educational achievement (Hassan, 2009). Likewise, teachers as good leaders can have the experience, expertise, commitment, tolerance, and most necessarily the negotiation and cooperation skills to achieve their goals (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015).

To examine the interconnection between EFL teachers' Leadership Style and Spiritual Intelligence, using structural equation modelling, the present study investigates the contribution of teaching experience and EFL teachers' SI to their LS.

Literature Review

For decades, leadership has been considered as a fundamental component of government structure and business promotion. However, there has been an attention shift toward education leadership in the last 40 years (Hairon & Dimmock, 2012). As a specific form of leadership, teacher-leadership has been described under education and school leadership. Historically, as DeHart (2011) puts it, there have been three waves of evolution in teacher leadership over the past three decades. More particularly, within the first wave appearing in 1980s, formal roles like department head or grade level chair were considered. Leaders worked as directors who worked to improve the adequacy of the organization operations. In the second wave which emerged in the mid-1980s, teacher leadership was concerned with teachers' pedagogical knowledge. Teachers were chosen by the chief principals as curriculum directors, staff developers, as well as advisers for novice teachers. The third wave of leadership that emerged in the late 1980s was concerned with the teachers in the leadership roles, who collaborated with their colleagues in their best practices, involved in authoritative and organizational obligations together with the principal, and took part in the general decision-making processes of the organization.

The term teacher-leadership is rather regarded as a concept than a practice due to the intricacies involved in determining teachers as leaders. However, from Phelps' (2008) perspective, for any education system and school to promote, one should encourage teachers to act as leaders. Teacher leadership refers to the formal leadership roles which teachers take, entailing both management and pedagogical duties (Muijs & Harris, 2006). Formal and informal leadership are quite different. As Berliner (1983) pinpointed, informal leadership includes classroom related functions such as planning, sharing goals, adjusting activities, creating an enjoyable workplace milieu, supervising, inspiring those supervised, and assessing the performance of those supervised. Moreover, they refer to sharing knowledge, being willing to take new projects, and offering novel notions to the school (Wasley, 1991). On the other hand, formal leadership is employed by those in charge like lead teacher, master teacher, department head, and school union or council. In an impeccable school, teachers assume different levels of leadership for themselves. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) suggested that in education, successful school administrators do not rely on volunteerism and instead ask teachers to take both formal and informal roles in their instruction.

One of the excellent types of leadership which can alter people is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership emerges once one or more individuals collaborate with others in a manner that leaders and followers elevate one another to higher motivation and morality levels (Afshari et al., 2010; Kent, Crotts, & Azziz, 2001). As noted by Northouse (2009), transformational leaders bring about changes within organizations. Similarly, Bass and Riggio (2006) put emphasis on the crucial role of transformational leaders, who respect their employees' feelings and emotions, in

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the process of augmenting their confidence by aiding them to promote as individuals and showing them various paths to achieve the goals. Hence, the advocates of this form of leadership will be both intrinsically motivated and more innovative (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). To conclude, Northouse (2009) argues that motivated leaders can motivate their followers by the inspiration to become devoted to the organization.

Furthermore, transformational leaders who manifest individual concern provide a helpful atmosphere, listen prudently to the followers' needs and wants, and escalate the employees' enthusiasm to perform their tasks better (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). Additionally, intellectual stimulation leaders encourage supporters to be creative and passionate in undertaking their task efficiently. This is well- substantiated by Shin and Zhou (2003) who carried out a research on transformational leadership and creativity amongst Korean students. They figured out that intrinsic motivation plays a mediating role in the relationship between transformational leadership and learners' creativity. In simple terms, transformational leadership can impact students' creativity via intrinsic motivation. The teaching strategies that they utilize to extend their knowledge can change students' attitudes toward learning and motivate them to accomplish the tasks better.

Various theories have been proposed for leadership style. According to the behavioural theory, great leaders are created, not born. Individuals can end up as leaders by instruction and observation. In this theory, attention to the leaders' behaviour has been driven by a logical comparison of dictatorial and democratic leadership styles (Naylor, 1999). In the relationship and transformational theory, leadership is regarded as the process through which an individual communicates with others and is capable of establishing a connection that leads to higher motivation and ethicality in both disciples and leaders. Relationship theories are typically compared with charismatic leadership theories wherein leaders with specific features such as self-esteem, sociability, and clearly determined values are found as the most significant ones to inspire disciples (Lamb, 2013). Relationship or transformational leaders inspire and stimulate individuals by assisting group members in perceiving the significance and value of the task. These leaders concentrate not only on the group members' performance but also on each individual to reach up his or her potential level. It has been contended that leaders who pursue this style generally take advantage of higher ethical and moral norms (Cherry, 2019).

In the skills theory, the learned knowledge and acquired skills/abilities have momentous roles to play in any effective leadership practice. Skills theory by no means denies the link between innate traits and the capacity to lead efficiently, it rather suggests that the learned abilities and acquired expertise are crucial in leadership performance. A firm conviction in this theory is that substantial effort and resources are required to be devoted to leadership training and development (Wolinski, 2010). Akin to the Great man theory, the trait theory postulates that individuals come into certain traits or leadership qualities. Trait theory usually focuses on the same personality or behavioural characteristics of leaders. A feature that distinguishes it from the previous theory is that this theory can discuss why some people possess those qualities but are not leaders, or how we can explicate the association between leadership traits and leadership efficiency.

A myriad of studies have been conducted to examine teachers' leadership style in different educational contexts. In a groundbreaking study, Tang (2012) differentiated various efficient teacher leadership styles for classroom management, which comprised handling the classroom climate. He ran a cross-cultural research between China and Malaysia and made use of a quantitative research design to gather the necessary data from the partaking schools. The research explored the visions and execution of teacher leadership practice of special education instructors in generating energy in

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the classroom, building capacity, securing milieu, expanding insight, facing and mitigating crisis, and searching and delineating development facets. The data were analyzed and the findings indicated that the special education instructors highly implement all the six aspects of teacher leadership in both countries studied.

In a rather different study, Muijs and Harris (2006) conducted a qualitative case study with the aim of investigating the ways in which teacher leadership can affect school and teacher growth, and determining the in-school factors which can assist or preclude the advancement of teacher leadership at schools. Likewise, the examination of the collected data evinced that various formal and informal features which were regularly facilitated by joining in external programs represent teacher leadership characteristics. It was revealed that teacher leadership empowers teachers. Moreover, Muijs and Harris (2006) recognized three chief groups of impediments: The external accountability instructional systems, teachers' shortage of time to get involved in tasks outside the classroom, and in some cases the role of high-ranking managers.

Furthermore, Koosha, Liaghat, and Sadeghdaghighi (2015) analyzed Iranian EFL teachers' leadership in English Language centers by means of a questionnaire created by Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009). They concluded that the majority of EFL instructors practised and employed a standard level of instructor leadership in their classes. Aliakbari and Sadeghi's (2011) findings also identified major differences in teachers' conceptions of teacher leadership practice in light of their educational qualification and proficiency level they instruct. Nonetheless, no significant difference was identified in teachers' perceptions considering their age, gender, and instructional experience. Khany and Azimi Amoli (2013) investigated the influence of leadership style, thinking style, and job satisfaction on the retention of Iranian EFL instructors. The findings of Structural Equation Modeling analysis (SEM) endorsed the hypothesized model of relationships among the variables. The final model of associations among factors also demonstrated significant correlations among different sub-scales of the research.

Andiliou and Murphy (2010) maintained that an open, malleable, unfamiliar, and learner-centered context can be created by teachers who act as transformational leaders. Thus, environment can develop personality traits, thinking styles, knowledge, and skills needed for creative thinking. The spiritual capacity of teachers to solve problems (SI) can also have a crucial role in the classroom. The concept of spiritual intelligence has been introduced by Zohar (1997) in her book titled "Rewriting the Corporate Brain". Zohar (2010) has defined spiritual capital as the affluence, strength, and impact that we acquire by performing based on an in-depth sense of meaning, our deep-rooted morals, and an impression of higher goal, which are all represented through a life style committed to service. Zohar (2010) also argued that spiritual intelligence plays an essential role in improving our motivations to the higher levels of exploration, cooperation, self- and situational-mastery, creativity, and service. Regarding the importance of spiritual intelligence in higher education particularly in such current global economic crisis, Zohar (2010) has emphasized the role of teachers in encouraging students to reflect on the wider aspects of why and how they are inspired to be at the service of the society in significant and decent ways so as to insert value to their societies.

King (2008) considers spiritual intelligence as a set of mental capacities that assist in raising consciousness, assimilation, and adjustable use of the non-physical and extraordinary facets of an individual's existence. He determined four crucial abilities for the spiritual intelligence:

1. Critical existential thinking: The ability to critically ponder on the nature of existence, truth, the world, space, time, mortality, and other existential or metaphysical matters.

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2. Personal meaning production: The knack to create personal meaning and goal in the entire physical and intellectual experiences, comprising the power to generate and meet a life objective.
3. Transcendent awareness: The ability to recognize extraordinary aspects of personality (e.g., a transpersonal or transcendent self), of others, and of the physical universe (e.g., non-materialism, holism) amid the typical and raising state of awareness followed by the ability to spot their connection to one's self and the physical universe.
4. Conscious state development: The skill to include and exclude higher/spiritual states of awareness (e.g. genuine awareness, universal awareness, solidarity, unity) at one's own wisdom (such as in deep inspection or pondering, meditation, prayer, etc.).

To explore the concept and contribution of spiritual intelligence to teachers' personality traits, perceptions, practices, various research studies have been conducted. In a recent study, Emma, Ambarita, and Situmorang (2018) investigated the impact of work discipline and spiritual intelligence on teacher teamwork and work commitment in a State primary school. Using Path analysis, the results of the study revealed a positive and direct impact of spiritual intelligence on teamwork and work commitment, and that with higher effect of work discipline, spiritual intelligence, and teamwork, the work commitment of teachers would boost. In addition, Zhaleh and Ghonsooly (2017) examined the relationship between EFL teachers' spiritual intelligence and their level of burnout. The results of their study evidenced a significant negative correlation between EFL instructors' spiritual intelligence and their burnout level. In the study, no statistically significant difference was found between EFL teachers' spiritual intelligence and their burnout in terms of gender. Similarly, Zareei Mahmoodabadi and Sedrpooshan (2015) found a negative correlation between spiritual intelligence and some of the burnout subscales like emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. In another study, Azizi and Azizi (2015) accounted for a positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and EFL teachers' critical thinking ability.

What motivated this study, was the fact that although there have been many studies conducted on SI in different areas such as psychology, neurology, anthropology and cognitive science, empirical research on SI in the field of language teaching has remained a tough nut to crack and few studies, if any, have examined such an issue in the EFL context of Iran. In an attempt to gain insight into the role of perceived leadership styles of Iranian EFL teachers and their spiritual intelligence, the current study addressed the following research questions.

1. Do the components of spiritual intelligence and teachers` experience predict EFL teachers` leadership styles?
2. How do EFL teachers with high and low level of spiritual intelligence perceive leadership style and its influential components?

Methodology

Participants

The target participants of this study were 236 Iranian EFL teachers, selected from among 280 participants from both genders with their age ranging from 20 to 60. They were part time or full time EFL teachers, working for various language institutes in Tehran with different ranges of teaching experiences. The participants' selection was based on their willingness to participate in the study

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and they were selected non-randomly, based on convenience sampling (also called availability sampling). Moreover, based on the participants' willingness and responses in the first phase, in the qualitative phase of the study, 10 participants were picked up for an in-depth semi-structured interview.

Instrumentation

Two research instruments were employed in the present study based on the theoretical principles proposed for research in this domain in the available literature. The instruments were teachers' questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires were in English and were designed to be distributed among EFL teachers.

Teachers' Demographic Information Questionnaire

To provide a sound picture of the participants' related background information, the researcher developed a teacher demographic questionnaire which included a section related to the participants' general information such as gender, age, and prior teacher education, type of institution, years of experience as a teacher, current level of education and the age of the learners he/she teaches most often.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 6s

To meet the demands of the study, the researcher employed a questionnaire which was developed by Avolio and Bass (2004). It was comprised of 21 descriptive statements on the basis of a 5-point Likert scale in which 0 was indicative of "Not at all" and 4 signified "Frequently, if not always". This questionnaire measures one's leadership according to seven factors concerning transformational leadership. The score for each factor was determined by the summation of three specific items on the questionnaire. As for the reliability index of the questionnaire, the results of Cronbach's alpha as a measure of internal consistency was reported to be 0.95 (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The reliability of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was also measured in this study, and the overall reliability index of 84 was found.

The Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24)

To measure this variable, the researcher adopted King's (2008) inventory which included 24 items presented on a 5-point Likert scale with 0 representing "not at all" "true to me" and "4" representing "completely true to me". More specifically, it contained 4 subscales: Critical Existential Thinking (CET), Personal Meaning Production (PMP), Transcendental Awareness (TA) and Conscious State Expansion (CSE). As for the reliability index of this scale, the results of Cronbach's alpha indicated to be 0.92. (King, 2008). Likewise, the reliability of this questionnaire was measured in this study (alpha=.90).

Teacher Interview

After gathering the data from the questionnaires, the participants whose SI scores based on King's (2008) questionnaire were determined as low and high were interviewed orally. To achieve the aim

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of the study, 10 teachers were interviewed on the related issues for 15 to 20 minutes. A set of interview questions on the teachers' perspectives of leadership style and spirituality in a teacher were developed by the researcher. As for the content validity of questions, expert judgment approach was proposed; the language and content appropriateness of the questions were checked by 3 language experts in the field of Applied Linguistics. Interviews were also recorded to pave the way for accessibility of the document when needed. Moreover, the researcher ensured the participants of the anonymity and received their consent for audio recording of their voice.

Data Collection Procedure

At the start of the study, to collect the required data, the teacher demographic questionnaire along with the leadership questionnaire and the spiritual intelligence inventory were distributed among the participants. To this end, a pilot test was administered on 35 participants to ensure the reliability of the instruments. After gathering the participants' consents to participate in the main phase of the study, the questionnaires were distributed through convenience sampling among 236 Iranian EFL teachers. It was critical to note that the instruments were given to the participants in both online and printed versions. The participants were asked to give their names, their email addresses, or phone numbers in case of being willing, to take part in the interview phase of the research. Having the quantitative data gathered and classified as low and high, based on the participants' score on the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24), 10 teachers (both male and female); 5 high level of Spiritual Intelligence and 5 low level of Spiritual Intelligence were asked to join in a semi-structured interview in the qualitative phase. The interview included questions, examining the teacher participant's leadership style beliefs and practices and the role that spirituality in determining their LS.

Data Analysis

As for the quantitative data, the analysis was carried out on the basis of the data collected from both questionnaires. To this end, in the first phase after computing descriptive statistics and checking the assumptions of normality tests, a linear Regression Analysis through Backurred method was conducted to analyze the level of prediction among the components of SI, LS, and teacher experience. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha as well as Factor Analysis (Confirmatory) were computed to estimate the internal consistency reliability and construct validity respectively. Concerning the qualitative research question of the study in the second phase, content and thematic analyses were conducted. The analysis of the qualitative data was a process which sorts out the data through organizing content into patterns, classifications, and descriptive units (Patton, 1988). It should be noted that firstly, all interviews were transcribed, summarized, categorized, and analyzed. Then the most common themes were coded and analyzed using frequency count. Finally, descriptive statistics were used for an accurate and better interpretation of the obtained results.

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Results

Predictive Power of the Components of SI and Teacher Experience for EFL teachers' LS

The first research question investigated the degree to which the components of Spiritual Intelligence and teachers' experience predicted EFL teachers' Leadership Styles. To do so, descriptive statistics were primarily calculated for all variables of the study (Table 1).

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics for the research variables of the study

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Critical	236	12	35	24.21	4.99	24.93
Personal	236	5	25	18.33	3.62	13.12
Transcendental	236	16	35	25.81	4.18	17.47
Conscious	236	5	25	16.85	3.55	12.61
Idealized	236	6	15	11.33	1.96	3.85
Inspirational	236	5	15	11.18	2.11	4.47
Intellectual	236	4	15	10.38	2.34	5.50
Individual	236	6	15	11.06	2.17	4.71
Contingent	236	6	15	11.15	2.12	4.52
Management	236	5	15	11.16	2.09	4.40
Laissez	236	4	15	9.06	2.17	4.71
MLQ	236	55	105	75.31	10.34	106.99
SISRI	236	54	120	84.92	13.81	190.83

As illustrated, the Mean and SD for the total SISRI are 84.92 and 13.81, and for MLQ are 75.31 and 10.34 respectively. To analyze the data, a linear Regression through the Backward Method was also run to predict the total perceptions of Leadership Styles by using the components of the levels of Spiritual Intelligence and teaching experience. All predictors entered the model on the first step to predict 3.68 percent of perceptions of Leadership Styles (R = 0.60, R2 = 0.36, F = 26.79, p = 0.00) (Table 2). That is to say; the components of the levels of Spiritual Intelligence and teaching experience significantly predicted 36.80 percent of the perceptions of Leadership Styles.

Table 2.
Model Summary; Predicting Total Leadership Styles through Experience and Levels of Spiritual Intelligence

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
0.60[a]	0.36	0.35	8.31	0.36	26.79	5	230	0.00	
0.60[b]	0.36	0.35	8.32	-0.00	1.53	1	230	0.21	1.75

a. Predictors: (Constant), Experience, Transcendental, Personal, Conscious, Critical
b. Predictors: (Constant), Experience, Transcendental, Personal, Critical
c. Dependent Variable: MLQ

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The Conscious State Expansion was removed from the Regression model on the second step to reduce the percent of prediction to 36.4; i.e. (R=0. 60, R2= 0.35). In other words, Conscious State Expansion had 0.004% contribution to the Regression model which was not statistically significant (F= 1.53, p= 0.21). It is noteworthy that the assumption of independence of error residual was met. The Durbin-Watson index of 1.75 lied between one and three, which indicated that the error residuals were not correlated.

The results displayed in Table 3 can be used to build the Regression Equation. That is to say; in order to predict any participant's total score on the perceptions of Leadership Styles, the following formula can be used; Predicted perceptions of Leadership Styles = Constant + (Critical existential thinking * 0.41) + (Personal meaning production * 0.73) + (Transcendental awareness * 0.52) + (Teaching experience * 0.54).

Table 3.
Regression Coefficients [a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	35.94	3.53		10.18	0.00
	Critical	0.33	0.16	0.16	2.11	0.03
	Personal	0.69	0.20	0.24	3.48	0.00
	Transcendental	0.46	0.21	0.18	2.19	0.02
	Conscious	0.27	0.22	0.09	1.23	0.21
	Experience	0.50	0.27	0.10	1.84	0.06
2	(Constant)	36.18	3.52		10.25	0.00
	Critical	0.41	0.14	0.20	2.83	0.00
	Personal	0.73	0.19	0.25	3.73	0.00
	Transcendental	0.52	0.20	0.21	2.56	0.01
	Experience	0.54	0.27	0.10	2.01	0.04

a. Dependent Variable: MLQ

Although the normality of the data has been ensured, the P-P Plot Figure 1 also proves that the Regression model enjoyed normal distribution. A great majority of the dots fell on the diagonal.

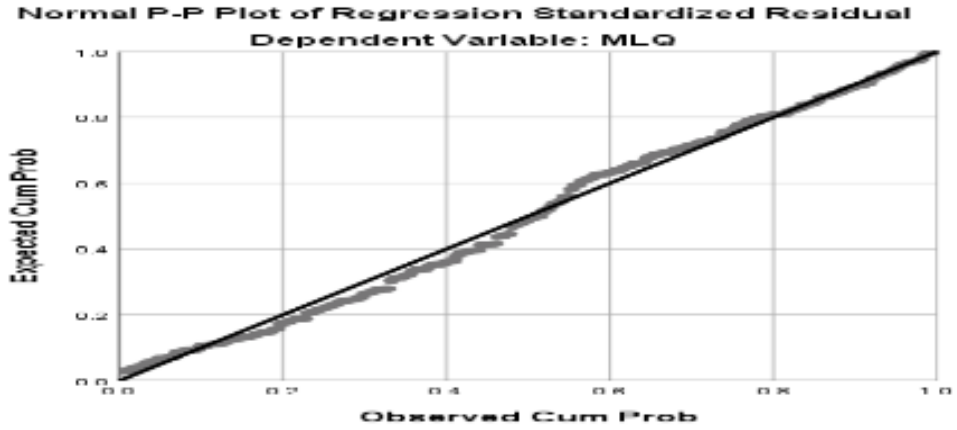


Figure 1. Normal P-P Plot, Testing Normality of Regression Model

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Spiritual Intelligence & Leadership Styles

The assumption of linearity and homoscedasticity can be checked using Scatter Plot (Figure 2). The distribution of dots did not form a curve shape, indicating that the assumption of linearity was met. They also did not show a funnel shape; i.e. wide at one end and narrow at the other. Thus, it can be concluded that the variables enjoyed homogenous variances (homoscedasticity).

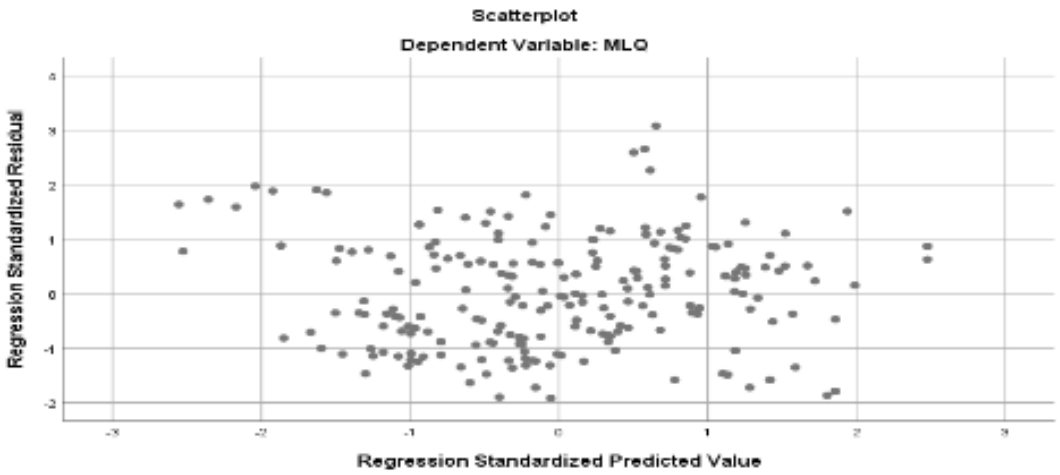


Figure 2. Scatter Plot, Testing Linearity and Homoscedasticity of Regression Model

Two assumptions should be checked when running correlation or regression; i.e. linearity and homoscedasticity both of which can only be tested through scatter plots (Figure 3). If the spread of dots does not form a curve, it can be concluded that the relationships between the variables are linear; and if the spread of dots do not form a funnel shape – narrow at one end and wide at the other end – it can be claimed that the assumption of homoscedasticity is retained.

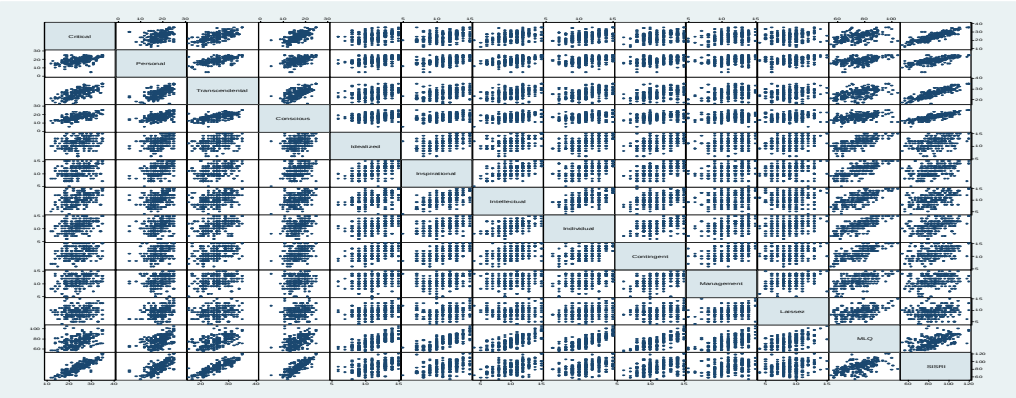


Figure 3. Linearity and Homoscedasticity both of which can only be tested through scatter plots

The matrix of scatter plots indicates that both assumptions are met. Two assumptions should be checked when running correlation or regression; i.e. linearity and homoscedasticity both of which can only be tested through scatter plots. If the distribution of dots does not shape a curve, it can be concluded that the associations between the factors and variables are linear; and if the distribution

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of dots does not create a funnel shape, it can be claimed that the assumption of homoscedasticity is retained. The matrix of scatter plots indicates that both assumptions were met.

To further examine the mediated contributions of SI and teaching experience to teachers' LS, Path Analysis was used. In the field of statistics, path analysis is employed to depict the coordinated associations across a group of factors. The hypothesized model is shown in Figure 4.

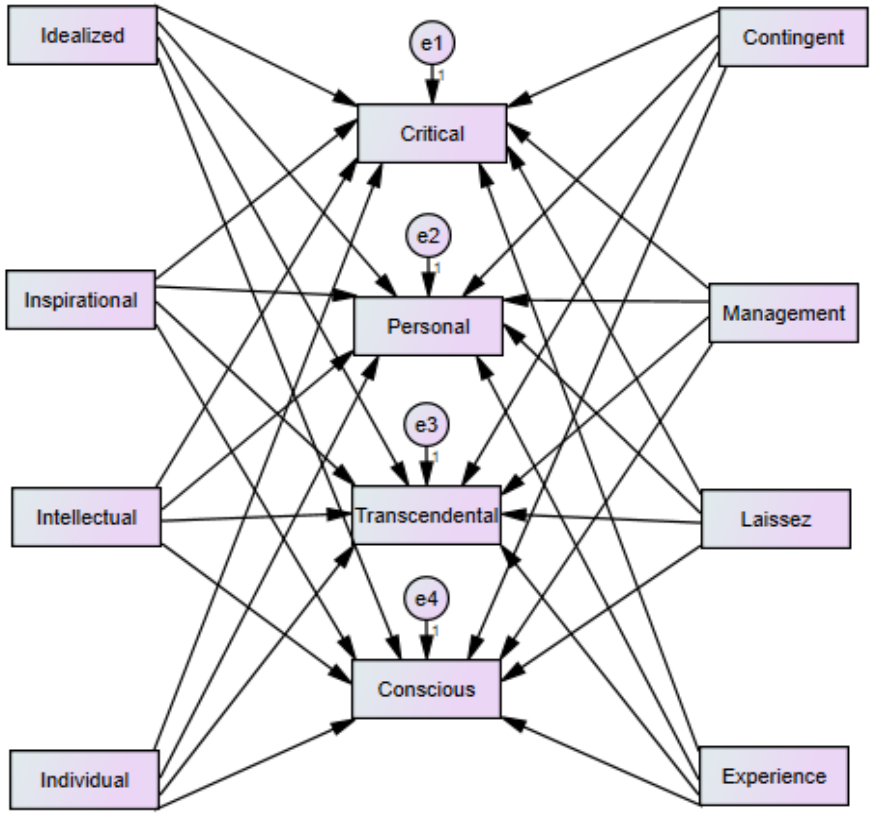


Figure 4. The Hypothesized Model

To scrutinize the structural relationships, the suggested model (Figure 4) was assessed using Amos 24 statistical software. A set of fit indices were inspected to test the model fit: The chi-square degree which should not be significant, Chi-square/*df* ratio which should be lower than 2 or 3, the Normed Fit Index (NFI), the Good Fit Index (GFI), and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) with the cut index larger than 0.90**,** and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of around 0.06 or 0.07 (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006). To examine the power of associations among the components, the standardized estimates were measured. Figure 5 shows the path analysis of the interrelationship among teacher's perceptions of leadership styles, level of spiritual intelligence, and their level of experience.

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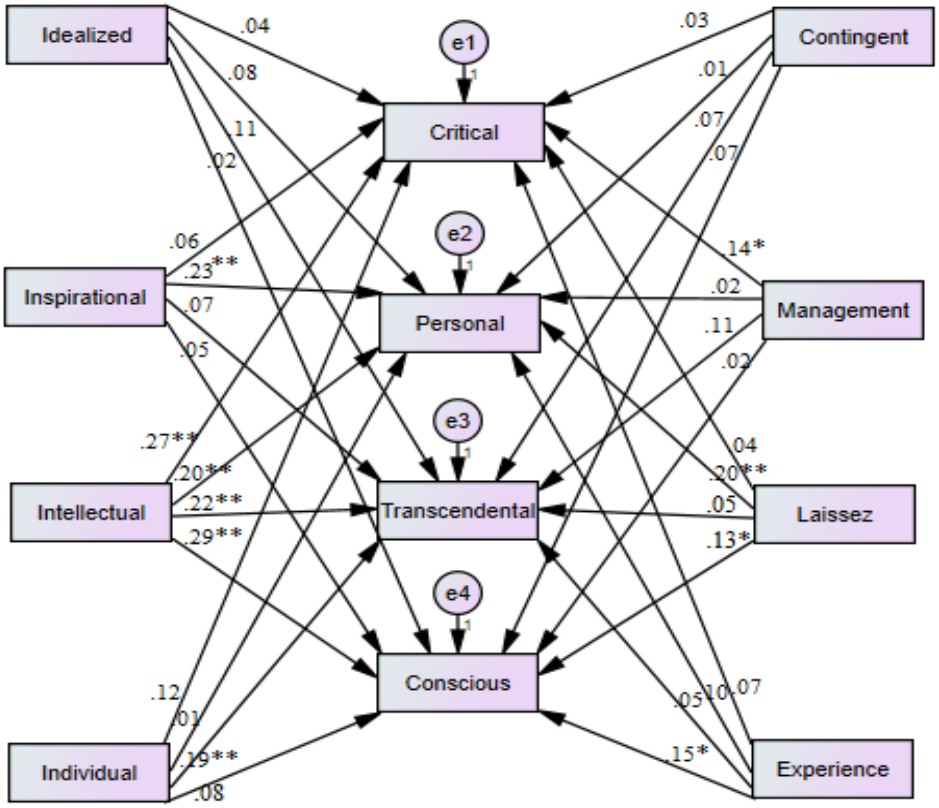


Figure 5. The Path Analysis of the Interrelationship among Variables before Modification

As depicted in Figure 5, an estimate is presented on each path. This standardized measure is the standardized coefficient or beta coefficients (*β)* eventuated from a scrutiny done on independent variables which have been standardized. It determines the predictive power of the independent variable and the effect size. Table 4 displays the goodness of fit indices before modification.

Table 4.
Goodness of Fit Indices before Modification

	X2/df	GFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit	<3	>.90	>.90	>.90	<.08
Model	3.32	0.81	0.85	0.84	0.091

As demonstrated in Table 4, (the chi-square/df ratio (3.32), RMSEA (0.091), GFI (0.81), NFI (0.85) and CFI (0.84)), the entire fit indices do not reach the acceptable fit limits. Hence, the model demands some changes. To adjust the model, non-significant paths were eliminated. Figure 6 displays the model after modification.

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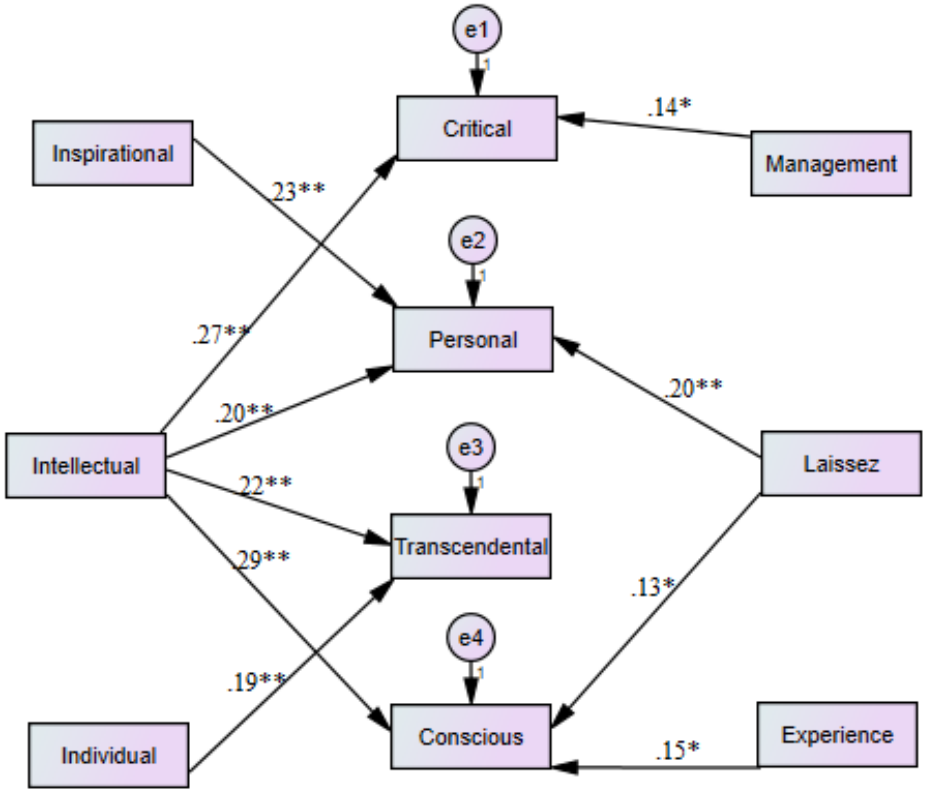


Figure 6. The Model after Modification

As the figure demonstrates, among four sub-constructs of teacher's perceptions of leadership styles, Critical Existential Thinking is predicted positively and significantly by Intellectual Stimulation (β= 0.27, p<0.05), and Management-By-Exception (β= 0.14, p<0.05). Moreover, Personal Meaning Production is predicted positively and significantly by Inspirational Motivation (β= 0.23, p<0.05), Intellectual Stimulation (β= 0.20, p<0.05), and Laissez-Faire (β= 0.20, p<0.05). In addition, Transcendental Awareness is predicted positively and significantly by Intellectual Stimulation (β= 0.22, p<0.05) and Individualized Consideration (β= 0.19, p<0.05). Finally, it was found that teachers' experience positively and significantly predicts Conscious State Expansion (β= 0.15, p<0.05). Table 5 illustrates Goodness of Fit Indices after modification.

Table 5.
Goodness of Fit Indices after Modification

	X2/df	GFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit	<3	>.90	>.90	>.90	<.08
Model	2.41	0.91	0.94	0.91	0.071

As demonstrated in Table 5, the chi-square/df ratio (2.41), RMSEA (0.071), GFI (0.91), NFI (0.94) and CFI (0.91), all the fit indices lie within the acceptable fit thresholds. Therefore, it can be concluded that the proposed model had an acceptable fit with the empirical data after modification.

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Perceptions of EFL Teachers with High and Low Level of SI Regarding LS

The second question of the study dealt with EFL teachers', with high and low level of SI, perceptions of LS. In the qualitative phase of this study, there were 10 EFL teachers; five teachers with low level of Spiritual Intelligence and five with high level of Spiritual Intelligence. Based on the content and thematic analysis of the interview data, several themes were extracted on EFL teachers' LS. The extracted themes are categorized in two groups. The first category of themes involves: 1. creating an inspiring vision of the future, 2. Motivating students to engage with that vision, and 3. Directing delivery of vision. These three themes represent the key features of transformational Leadership style. The second category of themes includes: Decision-making capabilities, features like to be strict, patient, committed, friendly, flexible, fair, trustable, conscious, respectful to different cultures, good communicators, and the authority. Table 6 and Table 7 and Figure 7 on LS show the frequency and percentage of each extracted theme for teachers with high and low SI.

Table 6.
The perception of EFL Teachers, with High and Low Level of SI, on LS

Q1	Themes	High SI(N)	Low SI(N)	High SI(F)	Low SI(F)
How do EFL teachers with low and high level of SI Perceive LS?	Creative and inspiring vision of the future	5	4	100%	80%
	Motivating students to engage with that vision	5	4	100%	80%
	Directing delivery of vision	5	1	100%	20%
	Three features of transformational leadership style.				

Table 7
The Features of Teacher Leaders from the Perception of EFL Teachers with High and Low SI

Q1	Themes	High SI(N)	Low SI(N)	High SI(F)	Low SI(F)
How do EFL teachers with low and high level of SI Perceive LS?	Decision – making capabilities	3	2	60%	40%
	Being strict	4	3	80%	60%
	Being Patient & commit	4	3	80%	60%
	Being friendly	4	2	80%	40%
	Being flexible	2	2	40%	40%
	Being fair	1	2	20%	40%
	Trustable (knowledgeable)	4	5	80%	100%
	Conscious	4	4	80%	80%
	Respectful to the different cultures	3	2	60%	40%
	Good communicator	4	5	80%	100%
	Authority	2	2	40%	40%

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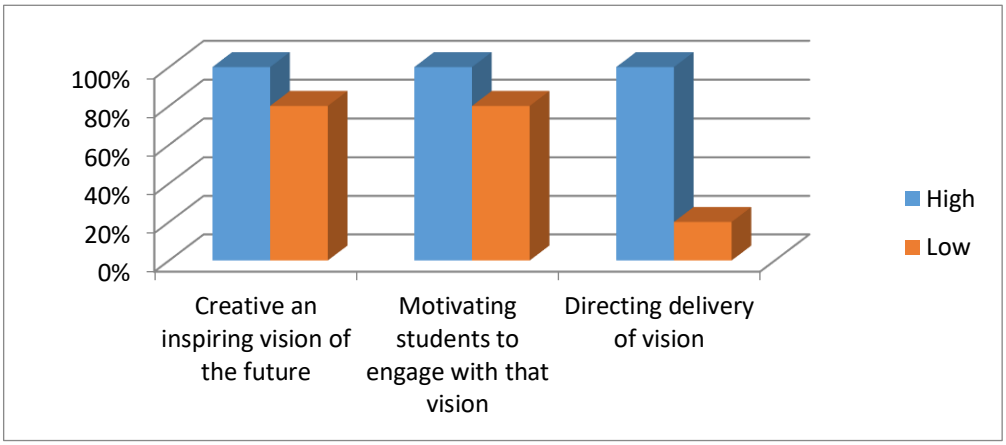


Figure 7. EFL Teachers' Perceptions of LS with low and high level of SI (The first category)

Based on the results, all the teachers (novice and experienced) with high level of spiritual intelligence (SI) referred to the 3 features of transformational Leadership Style to be used in their class, and as for the teachers with low level of SI, the vast majority (80%) focused on the first and second themes, creating an inspiring vision of the future and motivating students to engage with that vision as transformational leadership features. The third feature, directing delivery of vision, was found in the leadership style of just 20% of low level SI teachers (Figure 7). A sample from a low-SI-experienced teacher is presented here.

> *I am of the conviction that teacher's role is very crucial throughout a society. As far as an instructor is the first person in child's life, he or she would be the first role model. A teacher should keep away his or her positive and negative personal experiences when they socialize with students. They have to improve their knowledge both generally and professionally. In case they aren't up to date, they will pass wrong information and face the learners with fossilization. (Teacher 4)*

> *I would tend to raise learner's intrinsic motivation and train how to learn and study. I believe that we need to be interested in learning at first then by practising we could form a new language. As an Iranian learner, I personally find out that teacher is like a trigger.* (Teacher 6)

The following excepts have been extracted from a high SI-experienced teacher.

> *I think teacher's leadership is a teacher's art of managing large number of factors and variables to achieve the ultimate educational goal to inspire the students in learning, to motivate them. I think teacher's leadership is a teacher's art of managing large number of factors and variables to achieve the ultimate educational goal to inspire the students in learning, to motivate them.* (Teacher 3)

> *When I review my past, I prominently observe that my leadership style was love and high commitment in teaching. The most prominent characteristics of a teacher as a leader in the class are his or her own authority, being beneficial to his or her students, and being a good mentor.* (Teacher 7)

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Spiritual Intelligence & Leadership Styles

With regard to the features of LS, teachers with high and low SI considered the following aspects of teachers and teaching as presented in these samples of teachers' remarks with high and low level of SI (Figure 8).

> *My strengths include my kindness, devotion, patience, and using humour in teaching. And my weak points do not depend on a fixed lesson to end and paying too much attention to each student's questions and problems during teaching.* (Teacher 2: High SI and Experienced)

> *As a leader in the class something which is very significant is being fair and responsible to my students, (Teacher 8: High SI, and Experienced)*

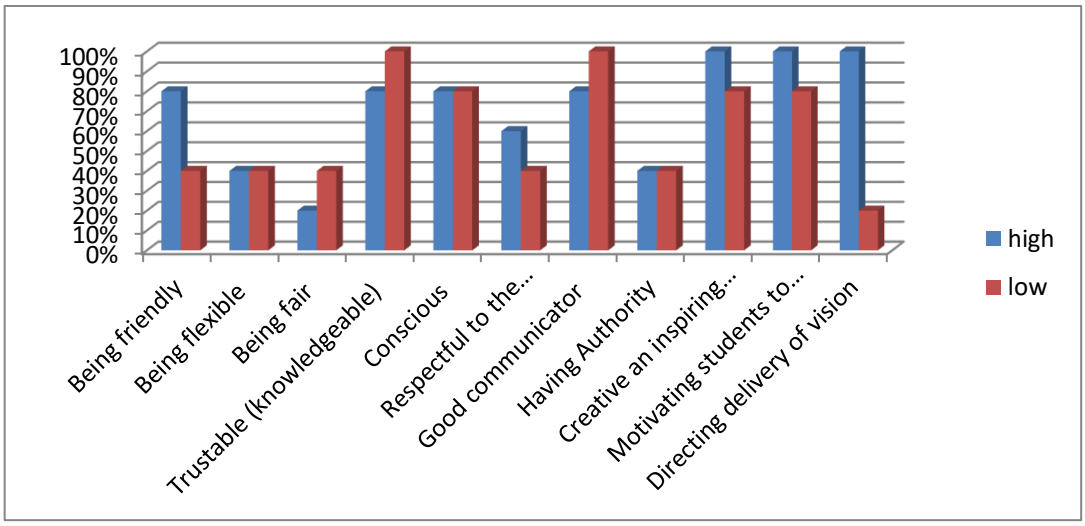


Figure 8. EFL Teachers' Perceptions of LS with low and high level of SI (The Second Category)

From among teachers with high level of SI, more than a half (60%) of them pointed to some characteristics such as decision-making capabilities and being respectful to the different cultures. The vast majority (80%) of them referred to some characteristics like being strict, patient and committed, a friend, trustworthy, knowledgeable, conscious, and good communicator. Being flexible and having authority was mentioned by less than half of the participants (40%). 20% of them emphasized on observing fairness in their use of LS in the class (Figure 8). However, from among teachers with low level of SI, 40% of them referred to characteristics like decision making capabilities, being friendly, flexible, fair, respectful to different cultures, and having authority. To them (60%), being strict, patient, and committed received higher priority. The main concern was to be reliable, knowledgeable, and a good communicator. The overall findings showed that teachers with high SI enjoyed a higher perception of LS, referring to all sub-scales and aspects of Transformational Style. However, teachers with low SI just identified the first two factors represented in Transformational LS.

Discussion

The purpose of the current research was to scrutinize the predictability of Iranian EFL teachers' LS through their teaching experience and level of spiritual intelligence. Concerning the first research

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question, the results revealed that the components of spiritual intelligence and teaching experience significantly predicted 36.80% of the teachers' perceptions of leadership styles. A great deal of theoretical research has provided support for the relationship between spiritual intelligence and transformational leadership in education (Gieseke, 2014; Hafner & Capper, 2005; Woods & Woods, 2008). A possible reason for such a connection might be that "leadership is one of the domains in which SI seems to function as an important variable" (Alam, 2014. p. 2). From the view point of Zohar and Marshal (2ooo) and Amram (2009), many researches consider the association between leadership and SI as an applied dimension of spirituality, though it has scarcely been investigated. This finding is also in agreement with those of Dargahi, Rajabnezhad, and Reshadatjou (2017), who argued that there is a significant relationship between spiritual quotient and years of experiences.

Christ-Lakin (2010) also reported a significant positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and transformational leadership. He identified a comparable Spearman's rho score of 0.41 ($p<0.001$) in a sample of a non-profit leadership committee. Similarly, Amram (2009) studied the relationship between spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, and leadership efficiency in a business situation. Although this study did not concentrate on transformational leadership, Amram (2009) found a significant positive but slightly weak correlation between leadership efficiency and spiritual intelligence (0.17, $p = 0.016$). This could be due to spiritual intelligence which forms an association more straightly with a specific type of leadership (i.e., transformational leadership) and less robustly with leadership efficiency. It could also be attributed to the diverse research tools utilized to gauge spiritual intelligence (Gieseke, 2014, p. 124).

Dougherty (2011) investigated the correlation between spiritual intelligence, spirituality, and special leadership activities among university students. Though not examining transformational leadership distinctly, the leadership traits examined showed resemblance with transformational leadership. Such similarities included modelling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. All associations were positive, and that 64% of the associations were regarded as statistically significant. In the same manner, the findings are in tune with those of Alam's (2014) study, which demonstrated significant multiple correlations between SI components (critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion) and transformational leadership style ($F=5.21$, $P<0.05$). Consequently, SI components could explain 17% of variance in transformational leadership style. Transcendental awareness has had a higher predictive power in anticipating the transformational leadership style. This is in accord with the findings of Bagherpour and Abdollahzadeh (2012) as well. A potential justification for such a result might be that EFL instructors or classroom managers are mindful of non-material dimensions of life. Concentrating on their internal abilities, they can decide more efficiently when they encounter troubles or challenges.

The results of the current study are somehow similar to Gieseke's (2014) findings in which examining the sub-scales showed that personal meaning production as one of the spiritual intelligence sub-scales was positively correlated with the entire transformational leadership sub-scales, especially the idealized influence-behavior ($r=.57$), inspirational motivation ($r=.47$), and individual consideration ($r= .40$). This sub-scale also generated a fairly high Pearson's r score with the total transformational leadership scale score ($r = 0.53$). These associations have been well supported by the extant literature on transformational leadership and personal meaning production. In the current study, looking more closely at the sub-scales, it can be also seen that personal meaning production produced the highest correlation with transformational leadership style (0.73), followed by transcendental awareness (0.52), and critical existential thinking (0.41), which showed the lowest

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one. As put by King (2008), personal meaning production revolves around the individual's capability to form and master a life objective, and transformational leaders concentrate on values and goals, developing insights and objectives for their organization (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Gieseke (2014) also contends that this dedication to goals and values is portrayed for their disciples, in the expectation that they will come to realize and acknowledge the objectives and missions too (Stewart, 2006). Moreover, transformational leaders play a fundamental role in inspiring the disciples to rely on their purposes and joint values (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009).

Having the interview data being analyzed, in the qualitative phase of the study it was found that all of the teachers with high SI declared three features in their perceptions of leadership style. All of the high-SI-teachers' leadership style was claimed to be the transformational style. The results are in tune with Cherry (2019), who believed that transformational leaders give individuals incentives by assisting members of the group perceive the significance and value of the task. These leaders concentrate on both the group performance level and each individual to reach his or her potential level. Leaders benefiting from this style regularly have high moral and ethical norms. Additionally, it was found that the teacher participants of the study paid attention to the typical characteristics of teacher leader differently. In fact, priority was given to personal characteristics of teachers as leaders and in some cases their definitions of various characteristics were different. For example although features like being reliable and good communicators were the most cited, it was discovered through interviews that teachers with high and low SI have different interpretations for being trustworthy. High-SI-teachers referred to it from emotional perspectives, and low SI-teachers defined it as a knowledgeable and up-to-dated teacher. It was also claimed by the low SI-teachers that good communicator leaders are those who know the methods or techniques to manage the class or even present the materials of the course well. However, high-SI-teachers considered a good communicator, as an essential element in expressing one's empathy and flexibility or as an ability in the creation of humour and as a tool for understanding feelings and problems of the students which can lead to decisions about the class or the students. In fact, in the high-SI-teachers' views, this feature can assist teachers in obtaining skills for controlling the class and teaching the lessons in an effective way.

Besides being trustworthy and good communicators, being strict, patient, committed, friendly, and conscious were the other features for being an effective teacher leader in the class from teachers' perspectives with high SI. High-SI- teachers asserted that teacher leaders should be conscious about the students' problems and they should have a good sense of humour in the class. Similarly, one of the low-SI-teachers called himself a psychologist who was so conscious of the students' personalities and moods. It is interesting that some of the low-SI-teachers mentioned age and gender as prominent factors to be considered in coping with different students (for example noisy, rude, shy, or nervous) and in controlling the class. High-SI-teachers have defined conscious teacher leaders differently. They considered a conscious teacher leader as a teacher who can not only recognize the students' feelings, moods, learning problems, and personalities but also can act more effectively even beyond the class requirements for the students' future academic lives. As Vaughan (2002) has stated, spiritual intelligence offers the ability to observe a point from more than one angle and identify the associations between conceptions, notions, and behavior. The majority of people are required to consider the consequences of their behaviours, but not for notions or conceptions, though these are thoroughly interrelated. It is commonly believed that enlightening any type of intelligence necessitates teaching and convention and spiritual intelligence is by no means an exception here.

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Regarding the prominent characteristics of teacher leaders, 80% of high-SI-teachers and 60% of low-SI-teachers have declared both being strict, patient, and responsible. It seems that being serious and strict about the rules and assignments or tasks has been considered so significant for both groups of teachers. Spiritual intelligence empowers individuals to resolve problems and achieve goals. Spirituality has been recommended as a component of intelligence as it anticipates functioning and adaptation (Emmons, 2000). Decision making capabilities and being respectful to different cultures (60% of high-SI and 40% of low-SI-teachers), being flexible and the Authority (the same in both kinds of teachers, 40%), and fair (20% of high-SI and 40% of low-SI teachers) were the other significant features which were mentioned in the study. It is evident that both groups of high and low SI teachers have had a good but variant perceptions of LS. However, teachers with high level of SI take actions in a broader, richer, and meaningful context. SI is the intelligence in evaluating a course of action or even a life-pattern in a meaningful manner (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Zohar (2010) also argued that spiritual intelligence plays an essential role in improving our motivations to higher levels of exploration, cooperation, self- and situational-mastery, creativity, and service. Then she argued that service is not necessarily something done in a large scope. It is not required to be sturdy or significant to establish spiritual capital and present it to the world. Basic behaviours like sympathy, kind-hearted and compassion are representations of SI.

Investigating the findings showed that teachers with low and high level of SI have different perspectives toward their leadership style. All of them have worked with their inner capabilities to handle the challenges faced in the class. Some challenges like decision making problems, ignoring the rules, lack of energy, losing confidence, losing flexibility, becoming impatient, facing lack of time, and depending on fixed lessons. In analyzing the teachers' challenges, being experienced or novice also played an important role. For example, novice teachers especially with low SI found lack of confidence, flexibility, and patience as the main challenges. However, experienced high-SI-teachers considered their feelings toward their students and lack of time for teaching the materials of the course as the main concerns. Overall, the teachers' individual characteristics and their inner capabilities were also found different.

Conclusions and Implications

This study investigated the extent to which the components of spiritual intelligence and teachers' experience predicted EFL teachers' leadership styles. A linear regression through the backward method was run to predict the total perceptions of leadership styles by using the components of spiritual intelligence and teaching experience. All predictors entered the model on the first step to predict 36.80% of perceptions of leadership styles (R= 0.60, R2= 0.36, F= 26.79, p= 0.00). That is to say; the components of spiritual intelligence and teaching experience significantly predicted 36.80% of teachers' leadership styles.

Regarding the teachers' perceptions of LS, all the teachers with high level of SI claimed to be using the three features of Transformational Leadership Style in their class, namely 1. Creating an inspiring vision of the future. 2. Motivating students to engage with that vision. 3. Directing delivery of vision and about teachers with low level of SI, the vast majority (80%) referred to the first and second constructs 1. Creating an inspiring vision of the future. 2. Motivating students to engage with that vision), as transformational leadership features, but not the third one i.e. directing delivery of vision. Among teachers with high level of SI, some characteristics for teacher leaders such as

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decision-making capabilities and being respectful to the different cultures; being strict, patient, committed, friendly, trustworthy, knowledgeable, conscious, and good communicators were mentioned. Being flexible, the authority in the classroom, and fair received second level priority in the perceptions of high SI teachers. As for teachers with low level of SI, it is interesting to mention that being reliable, knowledgeable, and good communicators were considered as the most prominent characteristics of teacher leaders.

All in all, the research results revealed that the components of spiritual intelligence and teaching experience significantly predicted the teachers' perceptions of leadership styles. Additionally, in the qualitative phase, it was found that creating an inspiring vision of the future, motivating students to engage with that vision, and directing delivery of vision have been considered as the key features of leadership style which are indicators of Transformational leadership style. From the perspective of high and low SI teachers, some other prominent features like decision-making capabilities and being strict, patient, committed, friendly, flexible, fair, trustworthy, conscious, respectful to different cultures, good communicator, and the authority were found as other critical elements in EFL teachers' LS.

Considering the mediating contributions of SI and LS in the academic milieus, the findings of the current study inject novel insights into the existing literature. Moreover, the results provide important information with respect to the theories of spiritual intelligence, mainly workplace spirituality when it comes to language education. It is suggested that workplace spirituality can be cultivated to produce better organizational performance (Duchon & Plowman, 2005; Elm, 2003; Garcia-Zamor, 2003). Focusing on the theories LS, one can deepen the search and the vision of management possibilities within the walls of the classroom.

The results of the study are of help for EFL teachers in that they can raise Iranian EFL teachers' knowledge and awareness of the determinant effects of SI and teaching experience on teachers' LS. More particularly, teachers with high SI are believed to be more confident in taking action in life and are able to adapt themselves to any condition and are more sensitive to their surroundings. Therefore, they can create a good situation that boosts achievement in education (Hassan, 2009). It is also believed that SI offers a sense of personal wholeness, goal, and direction in individuals (Ker-Dincer, 2007). Teacher educators and supervisors can also take advantage of the results by considering the teachers' SI and LS in the system of employing, preparing, and training English teachers in different contexts from language institutes to universities. Spiritual intelligence of EFL teachers can be also raised through training in both the personal and interpersonal domains. Additionally, the authorities and language policy makers can take measures to promote spiritual intelligence at the personal, group, and organizational level.

One of the limitations of this study lay in its generalisability scope, and care had to be taken in interpreting the results as human qualities are so complex and profound so that hardly are they truly measured by any standardized test and assessment instrument. Even the most properly designed assessment could obtain very limited and superficial information about the full potential of the participants (Hajhashemi, Akef, & Anderson, 2012). Hence, as there are still further doors to open in this research domain, this study has proposed interesting areas for EFL researchers. As this study was limited to Iranian EFL teachers' SI and LS, future researchers can run cross-cultural and comparative studies using the mentioned variables. Likewise, further studies can be done on EFL teachers' SI and LS and their impacts on their pedagogical performance at higher levels of education. More studies can be also conducted on the predictability of teachers' SI and LS in contexts other than EFL like ESL, EAP, or EOP.

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Dr. Masoomeh Estaji is an associate professor of Applied Linguistics at Allameh Tabataba'i University (ATU), Tehran, Iran. She holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from Allameh Tabataba'i University. She has presented and published numerous papers on methodology, testing, and second language acquisition (SLA). Her research interests include teacher education, language testing and assessment, and ESP.

Parisa Pourmostafa is an MA graduate in TEFL from Allameh Tabataba'i University. Her areas of interests are teacher education, teacher psychology, and contrastive analysis.

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