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Leader's spiritual intelligence and religiousness: Skills, factors affecting, and their effects on performance (a qualitative study by grounded theory)

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Spiritual intelligence has received increasing quantitative research interest, while there is still no attention regarding to investigate spiritual intelligence with applying qualitative methods, especially grounded theory design. This study aimed to detect the skills, affecting factors, and the effects of spiritual intelligence and religiousness on performance. The qualitative analysis of the data collected through the in-depth interview of the participants after encoding and classification, and the continuous comparison of the data by encoding and data by axes, resulted in these data can be coded in three axes: leader's spiritual intelligence skills, factors that affect leader's spiritual intelligence, and the effects of leader's spiritual intelligence on performance. The results revealed that there are five skills of leader's spiritual intelligence: work-life balance skill, consists of (5) sub-skills, leadership transcendence skill includes (6) sub-skills, leadership meaning and purpose production skill includes (4) sub-skills, leadership mindfulness skill consists of (9) sub-skills, and the fifth skill is leadership virtue behavior includes (8) sub-skills. And also, the results indicated that there are many factors that impact the leader's spiritual intelligence, were classified into three objects: personal (three factors), social and family (two factors), and work factors (4 factors). All participants were agreed unanimously that the leader's spiritual intelligence and religiousness are determined and affect the performance of the leader and his subordinates, these were classified into two objects: The first object is a leader's work-performance, consisting of (16) indicators, and the second object is a workers performance includes (12) indicators. In light of these results, the study recommended the necessity of developing leaders' awareness of the importance of passion of spiritual intelligence skill and their impacts on performance. Thus, these findings shed new light on the importance of developing leaders' spiritual intelligence skills to resolve leadership problems, and increasing productivity, creativity, and well-being among leaders and workers in Arab World.

1 | INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND REVIEW

The studies of psychologists in the present era have taken a steady step towards positive psychology in their study of positive experiences and characteristics in human personality, such as: happiness, optimism, self-organization, personal competence, hope, perfection, forgiveness, emotional intelligence, and spiritual intelligence. The human mind is designed by the Creator to avoid problems, pain, tension, and stress, and strive to realize pleasure, comfort, calm, and serenity, and this is what makes us motivated to improve our capabilities and develop our physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual capabilities, and we commit ourselves to do our utmost to exploit our potentials and energy to live a happy (Arnout, 2015; Arnout, 2019a).

This century requires human beings who possesses characteristics and capabilities in terms of physical, psychological, educational, and spiritual levels, so that they can live in happiness and peace, and makes them able to overcome the negative voice whispering within them, as they are directed toward themselves, life and the other, depend on this voice whispering within them and listening to it (Arnout, 2019b; Arnout & Alkhatib, 2019; Arnout, Latyshev, & Alkhatib, 2019; Arnout, Alkhatib, Abdel Rahman, & Pavlovic, 2019; Arnout et al., 2019).

According to Gardner's theory, the leaders use different types of intelligence to solve work problems. Among the intelligence leaders are use is spiritual intelligence that appeared in the year 2000 in an article published by Emmons, in which he indicated that intelligence is a type of intelligence and he called it spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence in modern society is low. The prevailing culture in today's society is characterized by materialism, utilitarianism, self-centeredness, lack of meaning, and lack of commitment (Arnout, 2015; Arnout & Alkhatib, 2019; Wigglesworth, 2012).

Vaughan (2002) referred that spiritual intelligence is more than just one mental ability. It connects the person with the creator and the soul with others. Spiritual intelligence transcends traditional psychological growth, it opens the heart, enlightens the mind, inspires the soul, and enables the person to distinguish between reality and imagination, discovering the hidden springs of love and joy under conditions of stress and problems of daily life, and we can also see things as they are away from unconscious distortion, and can express it through any culture as love, wisdom, and service.

Attention to the spiritual aspect and its role in solving life problems and giving value and meaning to life began at a time when James published his book entitled (*Variety of spiritual intelligence*), where he assume that the spiritual aspect makes a person's life have meaning, makes him use the logical behavior and adhere to him in life, it also makes his relationships with others based on faith, and then the individual have a positive orientation towards himself and others (Sohrabi, 2006).

From the above, we can say that spiritual intelligence is the center and source of guidance for other human intelligence, as it is the compass for life. Therefore, we must pay attention to our spiritual intelligence, the interest of those who will die tomorrow, attention to physical intelligence, attention of those who suffered a heart attack yesterday, and God has survived them, attention to social intelligence, the interest of those who know that others will take care of everything he says to them, and finally attention to those who know that what he collected from information that will expire after 2 years. And if we notice the seven things that according to "Gandhi" would destroy us: wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without personality, trade without ethics, knowledge without humanity, worship without sacrifice, and politics without principles. It is the ego at the expense of everyone and without anyone's consideration, and we will undoubtedly realize the importance of spiritual intelligence in our world today (Amram, 2009; Covey, 1999; Wigglesworth, 2012).

Spiritual intelligence considered as the most important type of intelligence due to its ability to influence people and change in cultures and societies. Therefore, interest in developing spiritual intelligence helps individuals adopt a positive view and achieve inner peace, as it improves the motivation for self-control, in addition to high stress of contemporary life in school, home, and work (Arnout, 2007, 2008, 2015, 2016, 2019b).

As well as, religiousness is important for human beings. According to Parker, Roff, Kelmmack, Koeing, and Baker, P& Allman, R. (2003)) religiousness is the extension to which persons believe, follow, and practice according to a religion, these beliefs influence the way in which an individual is interacting with others. Parker et al. (2003)) and Vitorino, Lucchetti, Leão, Vallada, and Peres (2018) found that religiousness related positively with both spirituality and mental health. Therefore, religiousness determines the leadership style, as well as, it specifies the nature of his relations with them, which may have an impact on the work environment. Thus, religiousness and spiritual intelligence are determinants of a leader's behavior in the work environment, the level of his performance, and the performance of his followers.

Leadership in any organization is extremely important, as it serves as a link between employees, the organization's plans and future visions. And because it is the melting pot in which concepts, policies, and strategies are fused, controlling problems and crises within the institution and developing solutions to treat them. Hence, it can be said that leadership is responsible for developing, training, and caring for workers, and to keep abreast of the changes and developments that surround the organization and employ it for the benefit of the institution. Leadership is a human process that motivates individuals toward achieving the aims of the organization. A successful leader is the one who can win the cooperation of his group members and convince them that they achieve the goals of the organization is a success for them and achieve their personal goals. Consequently, the leader's primary job becomes to achieve harmony and harmony between the needs and desires of his group and the needs and desires of the organization to which they all belong, and to make a positive impact on the morale and productivity of individuals and strike a balance between the goals of individuals and the goals of the organization. So this indicates that the leader must have special personal characteristics that allow him to play this essential role (Alkhatib & Arnout, 2019; Arnout, 2008, 2017).

Arnout (2017) defined the quality of leadership as "the judgment of the individual in general on the leadership style that prevails in his workplace as good and effective and following the principles and ethical rules in the work and influencing followers to achieve the vision, mission and goals of the institution through possessing leadership skills and emotional and spiritual intelligence skills that enable it to be effective." From this, it can be said that the leader's use of his multiple intelligences allows him to follow quality leadership styles that are positive and effective.

Arnout (2008) mentioned that the multiple theories of leadership have been emerged. Theory of leader traits, which argued that the leaders enjoy with characters that qualify them to reach higher leadership skills levels. As well as the position theory, which focuses on the social entrance. Also the interactive theory of leadership was developed combined the two aspects with the traits and position, adding a third important dimension, which is the followers (workers). The theory of leadership styles such as transformational leadership has also emerged. Therefore, we can argue that all of these leadership theories emphasize the need for a leader to have the skills and characters that would qualify them to succeed in their work, such as spiritual intelligence skills. As a result of these recent perspectives, which combine the characteristics of a leader, attitude and adherence, the importance of leader's spiritual intelligence skills in the work context has been emerged.

Therefore, Hunter, Bedell-Avers, and Mumford (2007) assert that leadership is actually synonymous with an influence, which includes the exploitation of employee minds and ideas. Leadership is influencing employees to work wholeheartedly with all their hearts, minds, spirits, creativity, and excellence in giving everything they have for their teams. Leadership is getting people of all wills to commit to the mission, to bear everything, and to be all they can be. The most successful and effective teams are groups of all their leaders, each of whom bears personal responsibility for the success of the team, and therefore leadership is influencing people so that they adhere to the mission and goals. The real test of a leader's success and effectiveness is, did they follow you better when they leave you from their condition when they came to you, the leader always leaves his mark, but what kind of fingerprint does he leave? Thus, it is useful for leaders to possess the skills and capabilities of spiritual intelligence.

Leader's intelligences influence his leadership style. Arnout (2008) found a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership styles. In the same context, Al-Masry (2017) found a correlation between spiritual intelligence and transformation leadership. As same, Al-Abadi's (2013) study found a relationship between spiritual intelligence and moral leadership.

In view of the reality of leadership in educational institutions, we found that the necessary need for leaders to possess spiritual intelligence skills and competencies that enable them to perform their roles and tasks and to meet the administrative and technical needs of workers and dealers, as well as looking at the difference in the level of leadership performance, the current study problem arises in the investigation of spiritual intelligence among administrative leaders to know

its skills, factors affecting it, and the effect of spiritual intelligence on performance.

The importance of the current study in addressing spiritual intelligence among leaders, which have an occupational impact on the progress of the worker's life. Therefore, there is an urgent need to conduct the present study, that dealt with spiritual intelligence among leaders by using a qualitative approach to detect the skills of leaders' spiritual intelligence skills, factors affecting them, and its effects on workers' performance. In this study, we try to answer these questions: what are the leader's spiritual intelligence skills?, what are the factors that affect leader's spiritual intelligence? and what are the effects of leader's spiritual intelligence on performance?.

2 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, we used the qualitative approach to detect the spiritual intelligence skills among leaders, determine the factors impact leader's spiritual intelligence and to get to know about the effects of leader's spiritual intelligence on performance. According to Abu-Allam (2012) qualitative approach provides an opportunity to study individuals in their natural settings. Arnout, Al-Shehri, Asiri, and Al-Qadimi (2019) mentioned that qualitative research methods provides descriptions of the phenomena under study that are rich, expansive, and illuminate what it means to be a person in a particular situation or experience. Qualitative methods are especially useful for exploring the full nature of a poorly understood or conceptualized phenomenon. Qualitative research includes five main research methods: ethnography, phenomenology, narrative, grounded theory, and case study method (Abu-Allam, 2012).

This study applied the grounded theory research design (Straus & Corbin design) to extrapolate data from in-depth interviews. Abu-Allam (2012) mentioned that the grounded theory design is used to construct a theory to explain a process, action, or interaction with a detailed object and at a broad conceptual level.

Purposive sampling was adopted to sample (7) School principals in Asser Education Department. In-depth interviews were conducted and open-closed questions related to the research topic were asked. According to Abu-Allam (2012) the qualitative data analysis involves such processes as data reduction, display, conclusion drawing, and verification, involves developing a detailed description of each case and situating the case within its context.

A list of the questions that revolve around the pivotal phenomenon in question, around: What are the skills of spiritual intelligence among leaders? What are the factors that impact the leaders' spiritual intelligence?; and are the leaders' spiritual intelligence and religiousness affect performance?. Data were collected from the participants in the research and organized and then analysed after reading several times and classified and coded openly, then classified into categories, and by using the method of continuous comparison in saturation and comparison of data with encoding and categories to ensure accuracy of encoding, and the collection of similar encoding in subjects. In light

of this, the main axes of similar data were codified in groups and by using optional encoding and refining the axial encoding model, they were adapted to answer the research questions, and then after making sure that all the research questions were adequately answered by reviewing the saturation of the categories, the unnecessary data was deleted.

3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study has reached the following results through collecting, regularization, analyzing, classifying, and encoding the data gathered from the in-depth interviews by asking participants closed-open questions related to the study problem which is the leader's spiritual intelligence, the results are as follows:

The answer to the first question: What are the skills of spiritual intelligence among leaders?. To answer this question, we applied the interview and asked open-ended questions, and recorded the responses of the participants about them, then organized these answers and categorized the responses according to the participants in a table, to facilitate data encoding and classification in categories and axes, and by using the continuous comparison strategy for encoding with data and then data with the categories, it was confirmed that the categories were saturated, and refining the encoding model, which resulted in the consensus of the participants on a set of skills related to the spiritual intelligence among leaders, these skills were classified into five objects (see Figure 1): The first object is a work-life balance skill, consists of (5) sub-skills, the second object is a leadership transcendence skill includes (6) sub-skills, the third object is
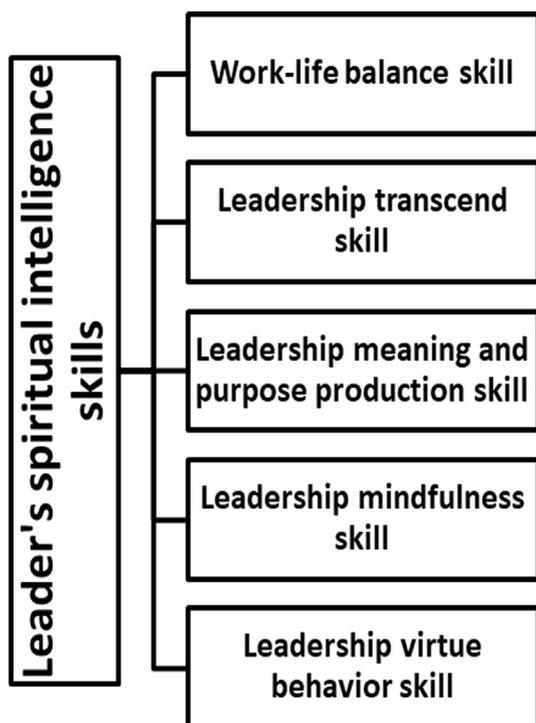
FIGURE 1 Leader's spiritual intelligence skills

a leadership meaning and purpose production skill includes (4) sub-skills. The fourth object is a leadership mindfulness skill includes (9) sub-skills, and the fifth object is a leadership virtue behavior skill includes (8) sub-skills. These objects and their sub-skills are as follows.

3.1 | Objects

3.1.1 | The first object: (1) work-life balance skill (5 sub-skills)

The work-life balance as leaders' spiritual intelligence skills from the participants of view refers to *"the leader's ability to attentive balance between work and life and to develop balanced ambitions for the work, personal and family life in order to achieve a physical, mental and social balance that make him happy, enjoying his work, family and personal life and he/ she characterized by personal, work and psychological well-being"*. All the participants agreed that this skill consists of (5) sub-skills, namely:

1. Attentive balance between work and life.
2. Ability to develop balanced ambitions for the work, personal and family life.
3. Possession of mental health components.
4. Feeling happy and enjoying work and other life aspects.
5. Personal, work, and psychological well-being.

3.1.2 | The second object: (2) leadership transcendence skill (6 sub-skills)

The participants mentioned that the leadership transcendence as spiritual intelligence skills, is mean " *the ability to distinguish between reality and imagination and see things as they are without distortion, the ability to excel and transcendence, the ability to engage in deep spiritual states of thinking such as meditation, reverence, intuition, the ability to transcendence above materialism, maximize the experiences of daily work life which enables the leader to understanding his relationships with all beings"*. The participants agreed that this skill consists of (6) sub-skills:

1. A conscious awareness of things in reality as they are.
2. Relatedness with all beings.
3. Deep spiritual state of thinking such as sacredness, mediation, and reverence.
4. Intuition.
5. Holism.
6. Higher self and transcendence above materialism.

3.1.3 | The third object: (3) leadership meaning and purpose production skill (4 sub-skills)

The participants mentioned that the leadership meaning production as spiritual intelligence skills from the their point of views is *"the leader's*

ability to sense the meaning, linking actions, activities and experiences with the his/ her values forming interpretations in a way that increases his/ her effectiveness and happiness even in times of adversity and dangers, increases his sense of purpose from his life and satisfaction with his work and his entire life and merging with the course of work life in accordance with the purposes of life and his values all these will lead to open leader to others". The participants agreed that this skill consists of (4) sub-skills, namely:

1 Sense with the meaning and purpose of life.
2 satisfaction with his work and overall life.
3 Openness.
4 Awareness of personal and professional values.

3.1.4 | The fourth object: (4) leadership mindfulness skill (9 sub-skills)

The participants mentioned that the leadership mindfulness as spiritual intelligence skills, is mean "the leader's ability to consciously pay attention to anything in the work environment surrounding him, enabling them to make effective decisions, manage their feelings successfully and focus their attention on the overall picture of the work, which allows him to work more efficiently and increases his ability to creativity and innovation." All of these lead to take an optimistic direction and look at the difficulties and challenges of a positive perspective, which improves his relationships with others and makes his leadership style more effective. All the participants agreed that this skill consists of (9) sub-skills, namely:

1 Close attention to every detail in the work environment.
2 The ability to make critical and effective work decisions.
3 Manage his feelings and control the feelings of others in work environment.
4 Increasing ability to work creativity and innovation.
5 Optimism and positivity in facing work challenges.
6 See work with a more holistic view.
7 Future thinking.
8 Good work relationships with others.
9 Effective leadership style.

3.1.5 | The fifth object: (5) leadership virtue behavior skill (8 sub-skills)

The participants mentioned that the leadership virtue behavior as spiritual intelligence skill means "*the leader's ability to act with wisdom, discernment, passion, gratitude and tolerance for himself and others, whatever the working conditions he is going through and makes his leadership style ethical*". All the participants agreed that this skill consists of (8) sub-skills, namely:

1 Discover the hidden springs of love and joy under stressful conditions and the problems of daily life.

2 Tolerance for self, others and circumstances.
3 Receive and give gratitude to others in the work environment.
4 Act wisely in times of crisis.
5 Discernment and understanding of what he/she is doing.
6 Passion with others in the work environment.
7 Altruism.
8 Respecting the views of others.

The answer to the second question: **What are the factors that impact the leaders' spiritual intelligence?**. To answer this question, we applied the in-depth interview with participants and asked them the open-ended questions, and recorded the responses of the participants about these questions, then organized these answers and categorized the responses to facilitate data encoding and classification in categories and axes. Then, by using the continuous comparison strategy for encoding with data to confirm that the data categories were saturated, and to refining the encoding model, which resulted in the consensus of the participants on a set factors that impact the spiritual intelligence among leaders, these factor were classified into three factors: personal, social, family, and work factors, as follows:

3.1.6 | The first factor: Personal factors, include (three factors) as showed in Figure 2

1 Experiences: The leaders who are more experience the more spiritual intelligence and effective leadership style.
2 Personality traits: such as extrovert, sociality, acceptancy, openness, self-esteem, self- affirmation, self-confidence, resilience, perseverance, hardness, honesty, commitment, patience, forgiveness,
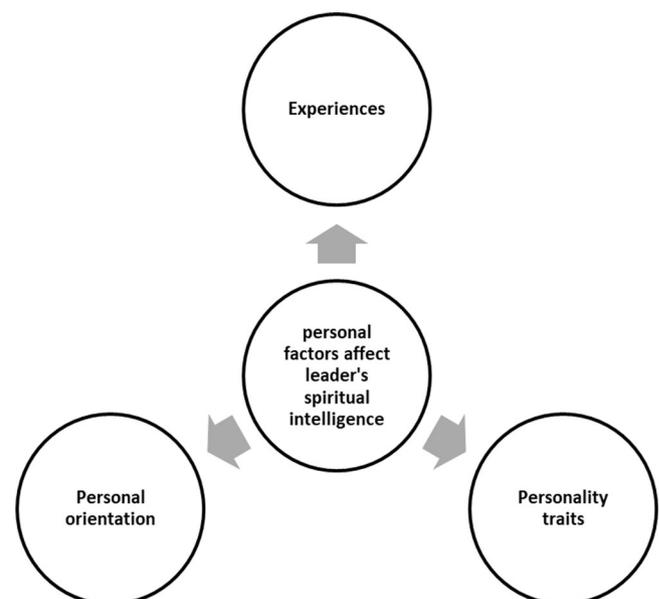
FIGURE 2 Personal factors affecting leader's spiritual intelligence

gratitude, religiousness, etc. Leaders who possess positive personality traits is high in spiritual intelligence skill.

3 The leader personal orientation: toward work and life: Whether the leader is optimistic or pessimistic. Optimistic leaders are higher in spiritual intelligence than pessimists.

3.1.7 | The second factors: Social and family factors, include (two factors), as showed in Figure 3

1 Socialization: Leaders who were brought up with positive parental treatment methods, such as love, interest, acceptance, and guidance, may be higher in spiritual intelligence skills than those who were raised using negative methods from parents or caregivers of rejection, lack of direction, punishment, blame, reprimand, and abuse.

2 Community culture and values: Leaders who live in societies of a culture of inclusion, friendliness, brotherhood, support, and


FIGURE 3 Social and family factors affecting leader's spiritual intelligence

rejection of violence, have more spiritual intelligence skills than those who live in societal conflict, violence, and hostility.

3.1.8 | The third factor: Work factors, that include (four factors) as showed in Figure 4

1 The culture of the institution, its goals and values: The institutions that concerned with the profits and material rather than workers and their health, there is no doubt that their leaders and workers are less on the spiritual intelligence skills than institutions that are concerned with workers and productivity alike and are concerned with the ethics and values.

2 Professional and technological increasing development: The greater the development of occupations, the leaders cannot keep pace with it, and thus affect their mental and psychological serenity and increase their awareness of the work stress, distract them and lead them to live in a conflict that robs them of their physical and psychological well-being.

3 Work stress and increased struggles: That would reduce leaders' possessing the spiritual intelligence skills, reduce their managerial competence, and render their leadership style ineffective.

4 Lack of justice and increasing conflicts, violence, and bullying in the work environment: As the work environment in which such negative feelings prevail reduces leaders' possession of the skills of spiritual intelligence, and it is an unfavorable environment for exercising his leadership tasks efficiently, therefore it inevitably reduces creativity and innovation.
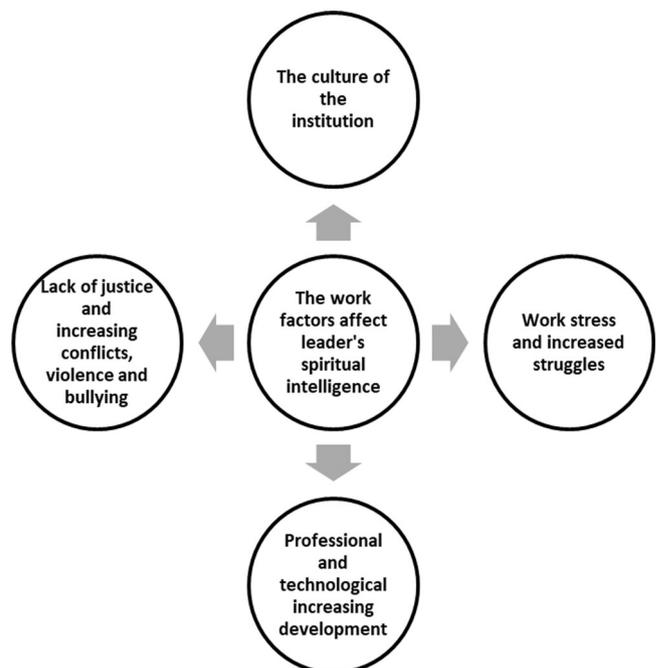
FIGURE 4 The work factors affecting leader's spiritual intelligence
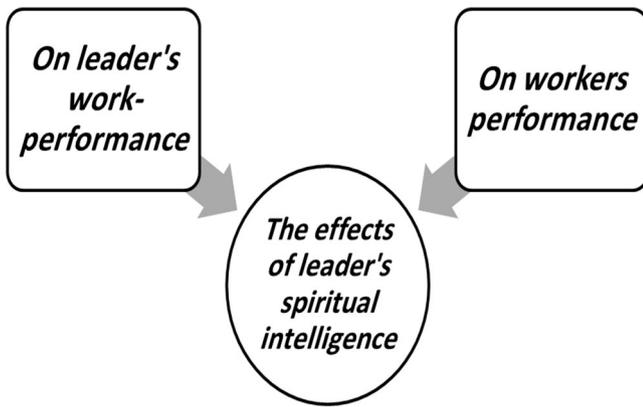
FIGURE 5 The effects of leader's spiritual intelligence on performance

The answer to the third question: Are the leaders' spiritual intelligence and religiousness effect the performance?. To answer this question, we applied the depth interview with participants, and recorded their responses. After that, we organized the participants' answers and categorized it to facilitate data encoding and classification in categories and axes, and by using the continuous comparison strategy. The findings refer to all participants were agreed unanimously that the spiritual intelligence and religiousness of the leader affects the professional performance of the leader and his subordinates. These effects of leader's spiritual intelligence and religiousness on performance, were classified into two objects: The first object is leader's work-performance, consisting of 16 indicators, and the second object is workers performance includes 12 indicators (see Figure 5). These objects and their indicators are as follows:

3.2 | Objects

3.2.1 | The first object: (1) leader's work-performance (16 indicators)

1. Leadership style.
2. Leadership self-efficacy.
3. Vocational gratitude.
4. Commitment to organizational values and principles.
5. Commitment to professional ethics and ethical leadership.
6. The physical, psychological, and occupational well-being.
7. Ability to achieve the foundation's goals, vision, and mission.
8. Ability to make critical career decisions.
9. Relationships with others in and outside the work environment.
10. The ability to balance professional, family and social life.
11. The ability to solve work problems and face its challenges.
12. Ability to dealing with work and life stress effectively.
13. Ability to creativity and innovation.
14. The professional mindfulness of the leader.
15. The leader embraces and acceptance his/ her self.
16. Effective Communication.

3.2.2 | The second object: (2) workers performance (12 indicators)

1. Productivity
2. Compliance with labor laws and regulations.
3. Adherence to daily working hours and reduced sick absences.
4. Favorable work environment, lack of abuse, violence and bullying.
5. Physical and psychological well-being.
6. Professional luxury.
7. Ethical work environment.
8. Creativity and innovation.
9. Sense of justice in the work.
10. The ability of workers to face the work stress and challenges.
11. Work love, be assimilated, and feel a sense of belonging.
12. Positive relationships among workers.

4 | CONCLUSION

From these findings, the spiritual intelligence and religiousness are the key to successful and effective leadership. These results are consistent with what Buzan (2001) mentioned that spiritual intelligence helps us see the joyful and fun side of things, and increases our inner peace with ourselves, which makes us more able to control ourselves and relieve the stress that we face in our life. Spiritual intelligence, as Arnout (2007) pointed out, produces results that other intelligence cannot produce. In the same context, Parr and Hunter (2013) found that the results indicated that leadership has a great effect on employee attitudes and performance. The leaders who possess high spiritual intelligence skills, maintaining positive relations with others and high level of physical, psychological, and vocational well-being, which impact their performance and productivity of workers who work with them. The main role of the leader's spiritual intelligence is to be the liaison between the leader and the Creator, the leader and those working with him, and the entire universe. This enables the leader to carry out his multiple tasks in an ethical way in the light of moral virtues and values. Leader's spiritual intelligence frees him from work difficulties and enables him to face work problems and stress if the vicious circle of the work routine gets out of his control.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of this study declare that they have no conflict of interest in this manuscript.

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