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# Spiritual intelligence research within human resource development: a thematic review

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to synthesize the rich knowledge on spiritual intelligence (SI) research within the framework of human resource development (HRD) research.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Based on the search of multiple electronic databases authors conducted thematic review of the literature on SI and HRD. Themes associated with SI and HRD are extracted while employing the content analysis technique.

**Findings** – Five major themes emerged through the process of content analysis on the body of the reviewed literature. The themes which described the presence of SI-related research within the field of HRD, included: Conceptual connections between SI and HRD; SI Holistic Mechanism; SI and Leadership development, SI measurement tools and, finally, the impact of SI on sustainability.

**Research limitations/implications** – The inclusion and exclusion criteria are that the search for this review has been limited to peer-reviewed journals that are published SI-related articles. This paper excluded all articles on SI that do not explicitly discuss the valuable role of human resources. The key words used are spiritual intelligence (SI) and HRD.

**Originality/value** – This paper offered new-fangled value and insightful understanding on SI and its implications for other areas, more specifically HRD. It suggests that SI is an important component for organizational development. Such interventions nurture the human resources that can lead to better performance as a whole.

**Keywords** Spiritual intelligence, HRD, Holistic, Human resource development, Organizational theory and behavior, SI models, Thematic review

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

In recent times, spiritual intelligence (SI) is gaining great interest of scholars and practitioners (Mamman and Zakaria, 2016; Munawar and Tariq, 2017). The growing importance of SI has changed the meaning of success in organizations (Karakas, 2010). SI emerged beyond the rational and emotional abilities like intelligence quotient (IQ) and emotional quotient (Mahmood *et al.*, 2016; Zohar, 2012). SI has the aptitude to



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re-contextualize the problems faced by organizations and employees, as it would strengthen the prior patterns and thinking being implemented in human resource development (HRD) models, [Ahmed et al. \(2016a\)](#) noted. It also helps employees dissolve the old and previous motivation and replace them with higher and zealous ones ([Amram, 2007](#)). Hence, SI provides the basis for meta-strategic thinking ([King, 2008](#)).

SI is significantly relevant in obtaining positive organizational outcomes such as organizational performance ([Mahmood et al., 2015](#); [Marques, 2008](#)), organizational citizenship behavior ([Hunsaker, 2016](#); [Ryan, 2002](#)), sustainability ([Akhtar et al., 2015](#); [Collins, 2010](#); [Stead and Stead, 2016](#)) organizational learning ([Hawkins, 1991](#); [Howard, 2002](#); [Pluta and Rudawska, 2016](#)) job satisfaction ([Roof et al., 2017](#)) and organizational commitment ([Markow and Klenke, 2005](#); [Rego and Pina e Cunha, 2008](#)). SI associated to a set of learned abilities that are much needed for human resources. According to [Zohar \(2012\)](#), SI is ultimate intelligence that is non-cognitive and non-logical. The role of SI is to improve employee performance and develop themselves for organizational development ([George, 2006](#)). Such characteristics of SI have established an impressive consideration for researchers and practitioners in the field of HRD. HRD has been defined and conceptualized in various contexts or ways; in the context of present research, HRD could be defined as a process of developing and/or unleashing human expertise through organizational development and personnel training and development for the purpose of improving performance ([Swanson, 1995](#)).

HRD plays a key role in the development of organizations in an era of rapid and continuous change ([Jacobs, 1990](#)). HRD recognizes that organizations merely depend on their employees and consider them as prime assets of the organization ([Wilson, 2014](#)). As a discipline, HRD is significantly related with creating a conducive workplace that foster employee self-awareness, sincerity, trust and engagement at work to improved performance ([Garah et al., 2012](#)). Such workplace environment need spiritually intelligent individuals “who are able to behave with values and compassion, while maintaining inner and outer peace, regardless of the situation, and are able to successfully cope with the demands of daily life” ([Wigglesworth, 2006](#)). Therefore, there is an immediate need for investing in human resources through well-framed SI interventions. Nevertheless, the relevance of SI has established in the body of knowledge with relation to the discipline of HRD. The aim of this article is to offer a thematic review and synthesize the findings of main stream literature of SI and HRD.

#### *Studies within HRD Field*

The objective of this research is beyond framing descriptive knowledge on the literature of SI that appears within the discipline of HRD. In this study researchers attempted to integrate the results of thematic categories that have proven the existence of SI-related knowledge in HRD. This logical approach of knowledge exploration within a particular area with the goal for incorporating various independent studies could be considered as an innovative technique which was not taken as a whole in incorporating such mechanism in the past studies.

Further, researchers put an attempt to recognize that studies have dealt with and analyzed in depth the contents of SI literature with respect HRD, thus, confirming the necessity for the present study.

#### **SI theories and definitions**

SI is a fast-developing construct in literature. The first book on SI was published in 1997 by Zohar and Marshall, and since then, the academia has encountered major shift in studying the concept of SI, its models and issues of measurements. [Emmons \(2000\)](#) published a highly acclaimed paper entitled “Is Spirituality an Intelligence? Motivation, Cognition, and the

Psychology of Ultimate Concern". The turn of the millennium saw an explosion of publications on the topic of spiritual intelligence. Most notable was a series of articles published in the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* that devoted an entire issue to the subject in 2000. SI was introduced to the academic world by Howard Gardner (1983, p. 10) in his book "Frames of Mind: The theory of multiple intelligences" wherein he defined SI in five core components:

- (1) capacity for transcendence;
- (2) ability to enter into heightened spiritual states of consciousness;
- (3) ability to invest everyday activities, events, and relationships with a sense of the sacredness;
- (4) ability to utilize spiritual resources to solve life problems; and
- (5) capacity to engage in virtuous behavior or to be virtuous (to show forgiveness, express gratitude, be humble and display compassion).

Based on Howard Gardner's conceptualisation, SI represents critical problem-solving ability involving spiritual aspects. Moreover, scholars explored a broader perspective and explained SI with its significant characteristics and aspects in Table 1:

Till date, three main theoretical models provide a strong base of research on SI. These include Wigglesworth (2012), SQ21: the 21 skills of spiritual intelligence; Ahmed *et al.* (2016a), Holistic human resource development model; and Fry (2003), Model of spiritual leadership.

### Leading theoretical models of SI

#### *SQ21: The 21 skills of spiritual intelligence*

Wigglesworth (2012) integrated the 21 psychological concepts of spiritualism and intelligence into a new concept identified as "Spiritual intelligence". She defines the 21 skills that comprise spiritual intelligence and in doing so, teaches you the steps to begin developing your own spiritual intelligence. Wigglesworth refers to her method as spiritual weightlifting, a process whereby we work to develop our muscles to shift away from thinking with our self-focused ego to behaving from our more loving and peaceful higher self. Her model is both faith-friendly and faith-neutral, and SQ21 offers a way for atheists, people of faith and those who are spiritual but not religious to understand each other and discuss our universal concerns. Based on the model, SI consists four abilities, as given below (Figure 1):

- (1) higher self/ego self-awareness;
- (2) universal awareness;
- (3) higher self/ego self-mastery; and
- (4) social mastery/spiritual presence.

#### *Holistic human resource development model*

The concept Ahmed *et al.* (2016a) on SI paid more attention to HRD compared with that of Wigglesworth (SQ21 model). According to Ahmed *et al.* (2016a), current theoretical and practical base of HRD model missed a spiritual dimension in its application. However researchers have the opinion that an holistic approach was better than the traditional model for HRD. Whereby, in the new world economy, human spirit is a core issue of business paradigm. Moreover, the significance of individual spiritual attributes and competencies in organizational life was treated as a missing attribute in the literature. It is strange that

Author	Spiritual Quotient
Zohar (1997)	The intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and value, the intelligence with which we can place our actions and our lives in a wider, richer, meaning-giving context, the intelligence with which we can assess that one course of action or one life-path is more meaningful than another. (p. 4)
Emmons (1999)	Spiritual intelligence consists of a number of abilities and competencies that are constituent of a person's knowledge base or expertise. Spiritual intelligence is a framework for identifying and organizing the skills and abilities needed for the adaptive use of spirituality. (p. 163)
Sisk and Torrance (2001)	Spiritual intelligence can be described as a deep self-awareness in which one becomes more and more aware of the dimensions of self, not simply as a body, but as a mind-body and spirit. (p. 8)
Wolman (2001)	The human capacity to ask ultimate questions about the meaning of life, and to simultaneously experience the seamless connection between each of us and the world in which we live. (p.83)
Vaughan (2002)	Concerned with the inner life of mind and spirit and its relationship to being in the world. SQ implies a capacity for a deep understanding of existential questions and insight into multiple levels of consciousness. (p. 19)
Sinetar (2002)	Spiritual intelligence is defined as the ability to understand self and others through intuitively making connections between lived experiences and the awakening of inner spiritual qualities such as creativity, responsibility, justice and problem-solving. (p. 9)
Sisk (2002)	Spiritual intelligence as a deep self-awareness in which one becomes more and more aware of the dimension of self, not simply as a body, but as a mind body and spirit
Nasel (2004)	The ability to draw on one's spiritual abilities and resources to better identify, find meaning in, and resolve existential, spiritual and practical issues. (p. 42)
Marks (2004)	Spiritual intelligence encompasses the cognitive and emotional aspects of our being and essence, and all human beings are endowed with this fortune. (p. 170)
(Schuller, 2005)	Spiritual intelligence integrates our way of being so that we can bring focus to our visions and passions, so that we can learn the discipline of a long-term point of view; so that we may unswervingly direct ourselves toward a life of morality and fairness; and so that we may believe in ourselves and others and be willing to make personal sacrifices in the interest of causes larger than ourselves. (p. 11)
Amram (2007)	As the ability to apply and embody spiritual resources and qualities to enhance daily functioning and wellbeing
King (2008)	A set of adaptive mental capacities which are based on nonmaterial and transcendent aspects of reality, specifically those which are related to the nature of one's existence, personal meaning, transcendence, and expanded states of consciousness
Wigglesworth (2012)	The ability to behave with wisdom and compassion, while maintaining inner and outer peace, regardless of the situation
Mahmood <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Spiritual intelligence defines as individuals conscious submission towards righteous efforts which enables them to improve themselves holistically
Ahmed <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Spiritual intelligence refers to individual's ability behaving with wisdom, deepest sense of meaning and sense of community

**Table I.**  
Definitions of  
spiritual intelligence

employee ethical and spiritual motives have been neglected, resulting in the worse effect on an employee's motivation. Hence, spiritual values are a central driving force in adult learning and development. In fact, employee's SI is a key contributor or predictor of work performance and helps build structural relationships among different variables (Rani *et al.*, 2013). Certainly, SI strengthens human integrative perception of wholeness and thinking beyond materialism, which pushes people toward a spiritual path and helps them cope with painful circumstances (Ronel and Gan, 2008).

<p><b>Higher Self/Ego Self-Awareness</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Awareness of own worldview</li> <li>2. Awareness of life purpose (mission)</li> <li>3. Awareness of values hierarchy.</li> <li>4. Complexity of inner thought</li> <li>5. Awareness of Ego self / Higher Self</li> </ol>	<p><b>Universal Awareness</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Awareness of interconnectedness of all life</li> <li>7. Awareness of worldviews of others</li> <li>8. Breadth of time perception</li> <li>9. Awareness of limitations/power of human perception</li> <li>10. Awareness of Spiritual laws</li> <li>11. Experience of transcendent oneness</li> </ol>
<p><b>Higher Self/Ego Self-Mastery</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. 12. Commitment to spiritual growth</li> <li>7. 13. Keeping Higher Self in charge</li> <li>8. 14. Living your purpose and values</li> <li>9. 15. Sustaining your faith</li> <li>10. 16. Seeking guidance from Higher</li> <li>11. Power or Higher Self</li> </ol>	<p><b>Social Mastery / Spiritual Presence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. A wise and effective spiritual teacher/mentor</li> <li>18. A wise and effective change agent</li> <li>19. Makes compassionate and wise decisions</li> <li>20. A calming, healing presence</li> <li>21. Being aligned with the ebb and flow of life</li> </ol>

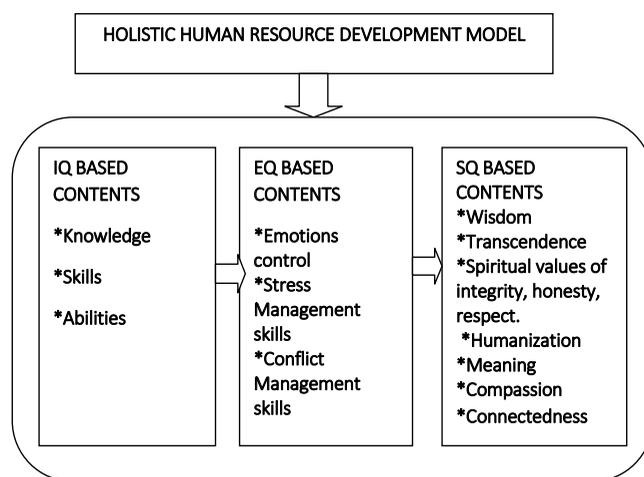
**Figure 1.**  
Model of SQ21

A holistic HRD (HHRD) model should incorporate the elements of IQ, EQ and SQ as their main contents in enhancing the quality and worthy of employees in the organization. The proposed figure of the HHRD model in an organization is presented in [Figure 2](#).

#### *Model of spiritual leadership*

Fry presented a model of spiritual leadership used to determine employees' success in the organization. Indeed, spiritual leadership is necessary for the transformation and continued success of a learning organization (Fry *et al.*, 2017). Spiritual leadership taps into the fundamental needs of both leader and follower for spiritual survival so they become more organizationally committed and productive. Model of spiritual leadership consisted of two domains ([Figure 3](#)):

- (1) Creating a vision wherein organization members experience a sense of calling in that their life has meaning and makes a difference.



**Figure 2.**  
Holistic HRD model

- (2) Establishing a social/organizational culture based on altruistic love whereby leaders and followers have genuine care, concern and appreciation for both self and others.

### *Key Questions of the Research*

Present study implied an integrative and in-depth review of literature to describe the presence of SI-related scholarly research within HRD literature. Three important questions guided the study:

- Q1. What SI studies are published in HRD literature?  
 Q2. What topics of SI are established and what findings are obtained?  
 Q3. What are the major implications for research and practice?

### *Searching process*

To obtain and enrich our knowledge, appropriate studies with keywords on the area multiple electronic databases were searched. For example, Human Resource Abstracts, Education Source, SocINDEX, PsycINFO, Business Source Complete, Education Information Resources Centre, Education Full Text, Academic Search Complete, Central and Eastern European Academic Source, Professional Development Collection, Vocational and Career Collection, Business Abstracts and British Education. These databases were searched using the keywords “Spiritual Quotient” and “HRD” or “Human Resource Development”. The term “Spiritual Quotient” was used instead of “Spiritual intelligence” to capture all SI-related studies.

### *Inclusion criteria*

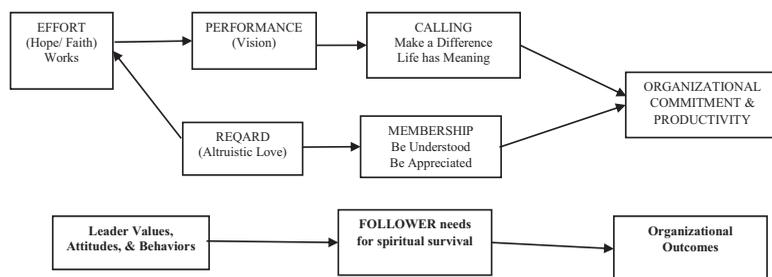
The initial search resulted in 150 entries, which were saved, assigned identification numbers and reviewed. For inclusion in this study, an article had to be:

- Published in a peer-reviewed journal;
- Focused on SI within the context of HRD; and
- Written in English.

Only 33 (21.5 per cent) articles found in the initial search, met the inclusion criteria (refer [Table II](#)).

### *Categorization of themes*

The reference information and identification codes for each of the articles were put in an excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet included columns representing author’s name,



**Figure 3.**  
Model of spiritual leadership

Themes	No.	Journal	Volume (Issue), Year	Authors	Title	Type	Method	Country
Conceptual Connection Between SI and HRD	1	HRMID	14(5), 2006	Mike George	Practical application of spiritual intelligence in the workplace	Conceptual		UK
	2	JTP	40(1), 2008	Natti Ronel	The Experience of Spiritual Intelligence	Conceptual		Israel
	3	JMSR	13(4), 2016	Richard Perogy	Toward a further understanding of work as spiritual	Conceptual		USA
	4	IJPR	13(1) 2003	Anthony C. Edwards	Response to the Spiritual Intelligence Debate: Are Some Conceptual	Conceptual		UK
	5	IJPR	10(1) 2000	John D. Mayer	Distinctions Needed Here? Spiritual Intelligence or Spiritual Consciousness?	Conceptual		USA
	6	JMD	28(5) 2010	Jose Luis Daniel	The effect of workplace spirituality on team effectiveness	Conceptual		USA
	7	JMP	17(3) 2002	Howard, S	A spiritual perspective on learning in the workplace	Conceptual		UK
	8	JBE	78(4) 2008	Gotsis, G. and Z. Kortezi	Philosophical foundations of workplace spirituality: A critical approach	Conceptual		Greece
	9	IJPR	10(1) 2000	Robert A. Emmons	Is Spirituality an Intelligence? Motivation, Cognition, and the Psychology of Ultimate Concern	Conceptual		USA
	10	JMD	25(9) 2006	Joan F. Marques	The spiritual worker: An examination of the ripple effect that enhances quality of life in- and outside the work environment	Conceptual		USA

*(continued)*

**Table II.**  
SI Related articles

Spiritual  
intelligence  
research

Table II.

Themes	No.	Journal	Volume (Issue), Year	Authors	Title	Type	Method	Country
SI Holistic Mechanism	11	JHV	23(3) 2016	Ahmed, A <i>et al</i>	Holistic Human Resource Development: Balancing the Equation through the Inclusion of Spiritual Quotient	Conceptual		Malaysia
	12	JSMH	12(1) 2010	Martin Rovers PhD & Lucie Kocum	Development of a Holistic Model of Spirituality	Empirical		Canada
	13	APMR	26(1) 2016	Ahmed, A <i>et al.</i>	Spiritual Intelligence (SQ): A Holistic Framework for Human Resource Development	Conceptual		Malaysia
SI and Leadership	14	LQ	14(1) 2003	Louis W. Fry	Toward a theory of spiritual leadership	Conceptual		USA
	15	IJLPS	9(3) 2013	Peter Hyson	The spirited leader: the potential of spiritual intelligence to improve leadership	Conceptual		UK
	16	LQ	22(1) 2011	L.W Fry <i>et al.</i>	Impact of spiritual leadership on unit performance	Empirical	Quantitative	USA
	17	JCM	3(4) 2002	Roger Gill	Change management or change leadership?	Conceptual		UK
	18	PI	19(1) 2017	Eleftheria Egel & Louis W. Fry	Spiritual Leadership as a Model for Islamic Leadership	Conceptual		USA
	19	LODJ	35(2) 2014	Eugene Z. Geh	Organizational spiritual leadership of worlds "made" and "found"	Conceptual		USA
	20	LODJ	31(7) 2010	Joanna Crossman	An experiential learning model for "feel"	Conceptual		Australia

*(continued)*

Themes	No.	Journal	Volume (Issue), Year	Authors	Title	Type	Method	Country
	21	HRMR	17(1) 2007	Scott A. Quatro, David A. Waldman b, Benjamin M. Galvin Laura Reave	servant and environmental leadership Developing holistic leaders: Four domains for leadership development and practice	Conceptual		USA
	22	LQ	16(1) 2005	Benjamin M. Galvin Laura Reave	Spiritual values and practices related to leadership effectiveness	Conceptual		Canada
	23	JMSR	2(1) 2005	David A. Cowan	Translating Spiritual Intelligence into Leadership	Conceptual		USA
	24	JMSR	12(4) 2015	Matthew R. Fairholm & Taylor W. Gronau	Competencies Spiritual leadership in the work of public administrators	Empirical	Qualitative	USA
SI Measurement	25	IJTS	28(1) 2009	King, David B	A Viable Model and Self-Report Measure of Spiritual Intelligence	Empirical	Quantitative	Canada
	26	JRH	55(1) 2016	Mohammad-Elyas Amirian, Masoud Fazilat-Pour	Simple and Multivariate Relationships Between Spiritual Intelligence with General Health and Happiness	Empirical	Quantitative	Iran
	27	JMSR	6(3) 2009	Thomas N. Martin & John C. Hafer	Models of emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and performance: a test of Tischler, Biberman, and McKeage	Empirical	Quantitative	USA

*(continued)*

Table II.

Spiritual  
intelligence  
research

Table II.

Themes	No.	Journal	Volume (Issue), Year	Authors	Title	Type	Method	Country
	28	JMI	9(2) 2000	Ashmos, D. P., & Duchon, D	Spirituality at work: A conceptualization and measure	Empirical	Quantitative	USA
	29	IJNS	44(1) 2007	Ke-Ping Yang, Xiu-Ying Mao	A study of nurses' spiritual intelligence:	Empirical	Quantitative	Taiwan & China
	30	IJEM	31(2) 2017	Ramachandaran, S. D. et al	A cross-sectional questionnaire survey on the effectiveness of the use of Spiritual Intelligence in Women Academic Leadership Practice	Empirical	Qualitative	Malaysia
SI and Sustainability	31	WF	66(5) 2010	Mick Collins	Spiritual Intelligence: Evolving Transpersonal Potential Toward Ecological	Conceptual		UK
	32	JMSR	11(2) 2014	Jean Garner Stead & W. Edward Stead	Actualization for A Sustainable Future Building spiritual capabilities to sustain sustainability-based competitive advantages	Conceptual		USA
	33	SBR	12(1) 2017	Katelin Barron & Shih Yung Chou	Toward A Spirituality Mode of Firm Sustainability Strategic Planning Processes	Conceptual		USA

publication year, journal title, study type (conceptual vs empirical), research method (qualitative, quantitative or mixed), study purpose, study findings, SI model used, implications for research and practice and recommendations for further research. To assess the addressed topics and obtained findings, the authors thematically categorized the articles. Five major categories emerged through a process of content analysis describing the presence of SI-related research in HRD. The themes included the following:

- (1) *Conceptual connections between SI and HRD*: Discussions on the links between SI and the theory and practice of HRD.
- (2) *SI and holistic mechanism*: A holistic approach to consider the role and function of human resources in organization with the inclusion of SI in the formulation of HRD programs.
- (3) *SI and leadership*: The role of SI in building leadership capacity and its links to leadership performance.
- (4) *SI Measurement*: Descriptions, analysis, discussions and criticisms related to measuring SI.
- (5) *SI and Sustainability*: The impact of SI training on the sustainability.

## Results

### *SI articles in HRD*

The 33 SI-related articles were published between 2000 and 2017 across 23 peer-reviewed journals (Table II). The publishing journals included *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* (five articles, 16 per cent), *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* (three articles, 10 per cent), *The Leadership Quarterly* (three articles, 10 per cent), *Journal of Management Development* (two articles, 6 per cent), *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* (two articles, 6 per cent), *Human Resource Management International Digest* (one article, 3 per cent), *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (one article, 3 per cent), *Journal of Managerial Psychology* (one article, 3 per cent), *Journal of business ethics* (one article, 3 per cent), *Journal of Human Values* (one article, 3 per cent), *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* (one article, 3 per cent), *Administration & Public Management Review* (one article, 3 per cent), *The International Journal of Leadership in Public Services* (one article, 3 per cent), *Journal of Change Management* (one article, 3 per cent), *Public Integrity* (one article, 3 per cent), *Human Resource Management Review* (one article, 3 per cent), *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* (one article, 3 per cent), *Journal of Religion and Health* (one article, 3 per cent), *Journal of Management Inquiry* (one article, 3 per cent), *International Journal of Nursing Studies* (one article, 3 per cent), *International Journal of Educational Management* (one article, 3 per cent), *World Futures* (one article, 3 per cent) and *Society and Business Review*, (one article, 3 per cent) (Refer Figure 4).

*Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* was the most consistent publisher of SI-related research, containing 16 per cent of the total articles. Further, 60 per cent of the articles were conceptual, and 40 per cent were empirical. The empirical studies were quantitative and qualitative for the measurement of SI. Authors also categorized SI articles by countries (Refer Figure 5).

### *Topics addressed and findings obtained in the SI-related research within HRD*

The five key themes that emerged from the content analysis of the reviewed articles described the presence of SI-related research within HRD. Each theme is discussed in detail in the following sections.

### SI Articles in Journals

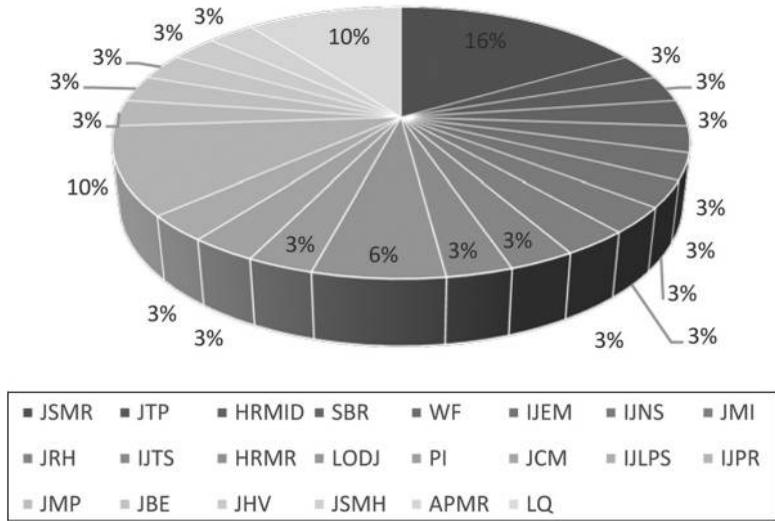


Figure 4. SI articles by journals

### SI Articles by Country

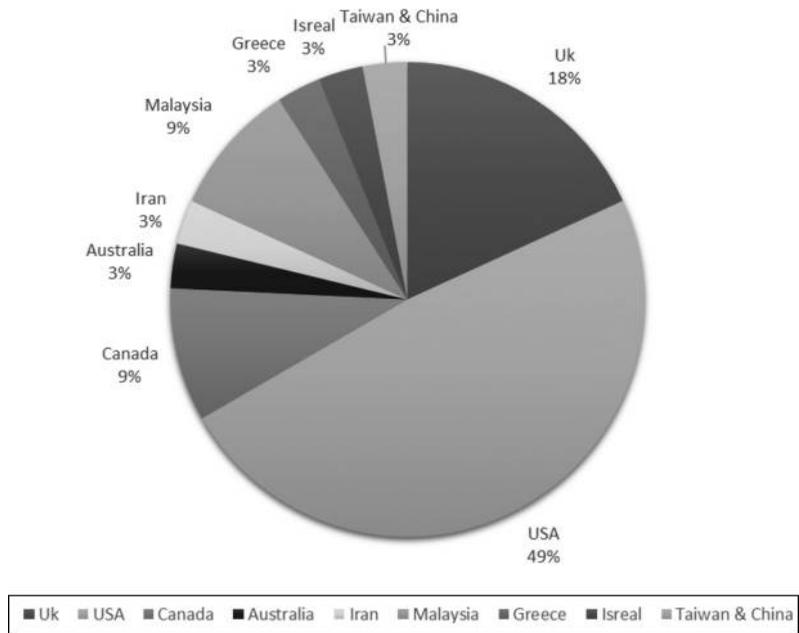


Figure 5. SI articles by countries

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### *Conceptual connections between HRD and SI*

In the new world economy, the human spirit is a core issue in the business paradigm (Mayer, 2000). Also, SI improves workplace productivity. HRD is a field dedicated to unleashing human expertise to improve performance (Emmons, 2000). HRD has moved beyond training and development to encompass an array of needs for preparing, recruiting, developing, supporting and terminating employees and professionals within organizations (Luis Daniel, 2010). Appropriate training programs and activities performed by the organization in line with the SI definitions and scopes are predicted to be the best solution to the said phenomenon (Ronel and Gan, 2008). SI is the ultimate intelligence (Zohar and Marshall, 2004) that is required in the development process of the HRD model. However, there is lack of understanding of SI in the organization (King and DeCicco, 2009; Ronel and Gan, 2008). The reason behind this is that organizations do not have awareness about the value of SI (Dalcher, 2014). The existence of SI in the organization will develop self-awareness, behavior, judgment of self-control, decision power, flexibility, adaptability, vision, consciousness, value, sense and intuition of the employee. Therefore, SI helps employees evolve toward betterment of the organization. In organizational development, the inclusion of SI in the HRD model will provide significant and effectual role of employees in progressing the organization. In addition, at present, it is claimed that SQ-related trainings have not been practiced in the organization (Zohar and Marshall, 2004).

### **SI holistic mechanism**

According to Kuchinke (2013), previous HRD research and theories generally are not based on the holistic and self-directed approach for employees' development at work. However, HRD literature shows that there is lack in holistic understanding of human resources in coming out with a holistic HRD program (Ahmed *et al.*, 2016b). Therefore, there is a great call for redesigning HRD philosophy in a holistic manner to establish greater satisfaction for all stakeholders (Marques, 2005). Rovers and Kocum (2010) perceived that the holistic viewpoint was fundamental to humanistic psychology and existentialism that support organization development, employee training and development in prior theories. The holistic development of employees and building learning communities where the organization exploits spiritual needs of people is considered as a new initiative in the HRD process (Ahmed *et al.*, 2016a; Fenwick and Lange, 1998).

However, to be a successful company in today's world, a combination of both EQ and IQ programs might not be sufficient in producing good results for employees (Cherniss, 2001; Goleman, 2006) because in this age of knowledge and creativity, other intelligence, which is SQ, might be a determining factor (King, 2010).

In the present scenario, the presence of knowledgeable employees in the industry was discovered to be overwhelmed with cognitive capabilities. Employees are becoming better in coping with their emotion while dealing with a chaotic situation, stressful working environment and over demanding tasks. Additionally, there are still organizations struggling with unethical act or behavior of their employees, reckless decisions-making and serious misconduct of their staff, which contributed to a great loss to the organizations' income. These kinds of issues strongly associated with the issues of employee's SQ disparity (Vasconcelos, 2015). This argument was supported by Zohar and Marshall (2000) that SI is evolving as a unique approach in developing and molding higher quality of holistic employees yet getting serious attention of the employers. Despite the view of Goleman (1995), which claimed that organizational success depends on the establishment of 80 per cent EQ and 20 per cent IQ, Zohar and Marshall (2004) further argued that IQ and EQ are not

the only predictor of organization's success because computers have IQ and animals can have EQ. However, SQ would differentiate the abilities of human beings. As a conclusion, organizational sustainability has been proved to fail due to negligence to the SQ element in the organizational development program. The employees who are the main asset of the organization need to holistically develop (IQ, EQ and SQ) in ensuring the organizational sustainability.

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### *SI measurement*

Many instruments of varying value have been developed to measure SI. The three ecumenical instruments that, from the author's viewpoint, are valid and worthy tools for assessing SI are King's Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Scale (SISRI-24), Amram's Integrated Spiritual Intelligence Scale (ISIS) and Wigglesworth's SQ21 – The Twenty-One skills of Spiritual Intelligence. The most comprehensive work on testing SI was by [King \(2008\)](#); this work developed a self-report measure, the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (SISRI-24) with a psychometric and statistical support.

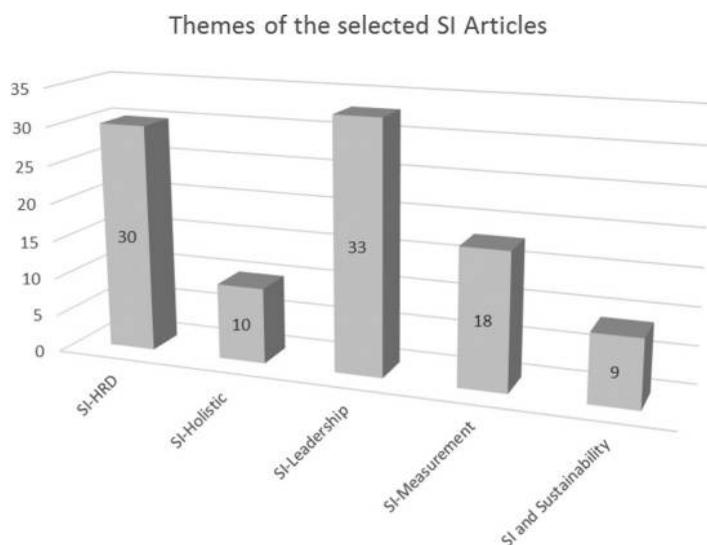
### **SI and leadership**

Leadership is a top priority for organisations and one of the most researched and debated topics in organisational sciences ([Crossman, 2010](#); [Fry et al., 2017](#)). *The Leadership Quarterly journal* served as a vehicle for advancing the field of spiritual leadership as a focused area of inquiry within the broader context of workplace spirituality ([Fry, 2005](#)). Based on [Fry et al. \(2017\)](#), SI highlighted the role of spiritual leadership effectiveness and confronted the conventional thinking that spiritual capabilities had no place in leadership excellence. In addition, [Zohar's \(2016\)](#) published book "The Quantum Leader: A Revolution in Business Thinking and Practice" is observable within the academic literature. While some scholars argued that SI is meaningfully related to the most effective styles of leadership ([Hyson, 2013](#)), there are others who argued that the reported associations between SI and leadership are exaggerated ([Ramachandaran et al., 2017](#)). Both perspectives were demonstrated in articles within this review.

Taking a contradictory perspective, [Fry et al. \(2017\)](#) supported the role of SI in leadership and explained how SI was needed for leaders to get along with the employees and increase their engagement in the workplace. The positive role of SI in leaders' performance was empirically supported by [Benefiel et al. \(2014\)](#) who reported a significant association with certain SI abilities.

### **SI and sustainability**

Sustainability suggests resource conservation and protection of the natural and social environment. However, to reach a sustainable society, it is crucial to take into account the significance of a variety of social issues such as social values, contentment, sharing, goodwill for all and so on ([Stead and Stead, 2014](#)). In the competitive world today, we need to have a spiritual basis for the realization of sustainable development in organizations ([Barron and Chou, 2017](#)). Organizational sustainability requires a true revolution of our basic values, the development of a spiritual core to our organization and building of institutions that direct our actions in harmony with these values ([Collins, 2010](#)). We need an overview, which recognizes the interrelation of things, and view the organization in the most holistic way possible. A spiritual element, which is almost diminished these days in our organizations can help develop a foundation, carrying specific values for these systems, and can motivate us to be sustainable ([Akhtar et al., 2015](#); [Collins, 2010](#)) (Refer [Figure 6](#)).



**Figure 6.**  
Themes of the  
selected SI articles

## Discussion

Scholarly evidence proved that individuals embracing SI are able to contribute in a meaningfully effective way toward the organization in creating the host of positive organizational outcomes. In contrast, the function of HRD is to enhance employee wisdom, their commitment and motivation in organizations. In fact, it is argued that there is a well-established link between the SI and HRD constructs (Brooks and Muyia Nafukho, 2006; Nafukho, 2009). The great pursuit of HRD researchers in identifying SI through learning activities led to the application of quasi-experimental studies. According to the findings, it reveals that individual engagement in SI trainings does not build higher SI among employees (Luis Daniel, 2010; Ronel and Gan, 2008). However, when these trainings are integrated by learning activities with greater coordination, the possibility of change in the system is much higher (Kuchinke, 2013).

Training transfer is a target for any training intervention including SI. Notwithstanding the existence of SI development programs and the implication of such trainings transfer, the exploration in this domain is minimal. The training design and inputs are also essential but missing in the scholarly works. However, researchers failed to design and incorporate SI values in their studies that are not able to depict the details of training interventions communicated to the individuals for the process of spiritual development (Rego and Pina e Cunha, 2008).

The validity and reliability of integrating SI together with the training processes in organizations are rational as SI traits are found strong connection with having certain career development opportunities in organizations. For example, SI has several number of spiritual values of managers required for participants necessary criteria for professionals' development (Rego and Pina e Cunha, 2008).

### *Implications for future research*

This thematic review has offered number of future directions in the area of SI and HRD. Mainstream literature revealed that SI studies focus on the results of pre-tests and post-tests

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training interventions. Within the discipline of training and development, scholars could ascertain some emerging techniques, redesigning the methods of program that assist the expansion of SI. Therefore, conducting research on reframing the content of the learning intervention bring major contribution to the body of knowledge. For instance, such practices must be incorporated in SI interventions to assess and evaluate their larger impact on HRD. Additionally, these practices trigger further research that accounts for individual capacity enhancement through SI training interventions as these antecedents might be significant in boosting the performance of overall programs. Furthermore, there is a strong rationale for employing a meta-analysis mechanism concentrating on the studies that have utilized such interventions in organizations. In fact, present research would contribute to the SI literature and offer a precise evaluation of the reported conclusions to enrich the existing arguments over human development and their spiritual values for organizational growth.

Future researchers might study longitudinal methods that could determine some interesting findings for progress and prosperity of the human resources. Nonetheless, the scarce amount of empirical research on SI and the impact on trainings at workplace also demands more studies (Antunes *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, it also worth noting that the empirical findings on the relationship among SI, leadership and performance are contradictory. Thus, future research might deal with the existing discrepancies and contradictions. To make a major contribution to literature, empirical investigations should incorporate a more solid and accurate methodology. Beside this, the issue with the measurement of concept is still vague as their various definitions and conceptualizations has given. Keeping in mind such prevailing contradictions, future studies should frame a valid and reliable measurement of SI. Another plausible implication of SI is that it requires conducting qualitative inquiry for obtaining detailed and interesting findings. Lastly, in future, qualitative research can capture the role of gender in evaluating the worth of SI within organizations through the experiences of practitioners.

#### *Implications for practice*

Given the significance of SI in improving the performance of employees, HRD professionals are encouraged to design SI modules. Undoubtedly, such changes would improve productivity of employees who require higher levels of SI skills, i.e. managerial and service job positions (Dimitriades, 2007). Additionally, SI can be used in the context of ethics and self-awareness initiatives to assist capacity development.

While integrating SI interventions, HRD practitioners are suggested to employ a strong and effective program that must be based of SI principles. Based on such inputs, the development of human resources with team-based learning might be more efficient. However, HRD practitioners engaged in SI training interventions must have details of their target audience that is being benefited from SI interventions. They should also be careful to defend employees against facing any unconstructive outcomes based on the obtained implications of SI interventions. In addition, HRD practitioners should be mindful of what are the pros and cons of SI program in the larger interest of the organization.

#### *Limitations of the study*

It is worth mentioning that this study was limited to the articles related to SI within area of HRD. The limitation is concerning our selection of SI papers; although authors tried their best to keep more papers in our study, the discipline of HRD includes a

wide range of sub-areas and there might be related publications, which did not hold the keywords of the paper.

## Conclusion

This paper discusses the use of SI interventions in HRD field. However, it should be noted SI component in training programs in organizations would bring steady positive outcomes for all stakeholders. Rather, the improvement of performance is a time-consuming process for organizations to reap the benefits of investing and employing SI interventions. Additionally, SI has been criticized for being inconsistent as per definitions, concepts and theoretical base. Resultantly it has diverse outcomes for researchers as well as practitioners. Despite having the criticisms and ambiguities on the concept of SI, HRD academicians and practitioners are encouraged to promote the notion of SI as creating spiritually intelligent workplaces, perhaps that is a challenging part for HRD to develop research and practice.

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