

# Spiritual Intelligence: Aspects, Components and Guidelines to Promote It

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## Abstract

During human history, spirituality is crystallized in different ways and there are many discussions about it. Today, one issue respected by behavior and psychology scholars is spiritual intelligence. It is highly respected not only in individual but also in organizational areas while in addition to psychological fields; it is entered into other human science areas including management. In present paper, different definitions are provided on spiritual intelligence and then its components and aspects are studied in the perspective of different practitioners and finally the ways to promote, grow and enhance spiritual intelligence are pointed out. Author's broad investigations indicate that there is no consensus on the aspects and components of spiritual intelligence and he believes that such heterogeneity is due to different definitions by connoisseurs on spirituality and their different values and cultures.

**Keywords:** Intelligence, spiritual intelligence, aspects, components

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Cite this article: Esmaili, M., Zareh, H., & Golverdi, M. (2014). Spiritual Intelligence: Aspects, Components and Guidelines to Promote It. *International Journal of Management, Accounting and Economics*, 1 (2), 162-174.

## Introduction

In recent decades, the concept of spirituality and its applications throughout the world especially in the West is become too important so that such concepts as The

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Divinity, religion, spirituality and so on which considered as private issues are now entered into scientific researches and academic discussion in liberal of arts. Particularly, numerous researches are highly increasing in psychology and management. In the meantime, a number of conferences and workshops are organized in this regard. Well-known psychologists such as Williams James (1902), Carl Yong (1969) and Gordon Alport (1950) have talked about religious experiences and studying them. Spiritual intelligence is a concept merged incrementally through such meetings and conferences.

The importance and necessity of spirituality and religion is fled in modern age through different aspects. One necessity is anthropology is to respect human spiritual aspect in terms of practitioners especially in WHO that have recently defined human as a biological, social and spiritual entity. Another necessity is the re-emergence of spiritual pull and looking for a clearer conception of belief and its applications in daily life as well as the scope of spirituality and religion in all aspects of human life (Sohrabi, 2008). Despite of relative theorizing and conceptualizing in this field, there is no consensus on spiritual intelligence components because of its different and even homogenous components. Present paper attempts to study spiritual intelligence literature in order to investigate this complicated multidimensional concept in the view of various connoisseurs and to provide the ways to promote and grow it.

### **Intelligence definition**

Gardner believes that intelligence is a set of capabilities to resolve problems and to create new products in a valuable culture. According to him, nine types of intelligence include: linguistic, musical, mathematical, spatial, physical – motional, individual (i.e. intra or interpersonal), natural and existential intelligences (the capacity to ask existential questions) (Amram, 2005).

Western Analytic Concept of intelligence is further cognitive which includes information processing while Eastern Synthetic Approach on intelligence involves different components of human performance and experience including cognition, aspiration and emotion in an Integrative relation. Overall, intelligence yields to an individual's adaptability to environment and provides him/her with techniques to confront problems and difficulties. The capability to recognize the problem also includes suggested solution for different life problems (Ghobaribonab et al., 2007, pp. 125 – 147).

### **Spirituality definition**

Spirituality is beliefs and values related to aims plus religious beliefs (Selman, Harding & Speck, 2011, 729). One definition reads: “spirituality is a motivational and driving force in life; an energy which inspires a person toward a given end or a goal beyond individualism (McKnight, 1987, p. 27). Another definition reads: “spirituality is the energy, meaning, goal and awareness in life (Cavangh, 1999, p. 192).

Meyer defines spirituality as below: “spirituality is the continuous seek for finding the meaning and goal of life. It is profound understanding of life value, natural forces and personal beliefs.”

Overall, spirituality is defined as seeking for what links human. Similarly, spirituality is a style by which someone finds and lives with his/her historic character. It is a symbol of religion, philosophy or ethics shown as the most excellent and respectful identity and yields to desired perfection. In another definition, Kazniz defines spirituality as “human sole inner movements toward reality, excellence and divinity.”

Definition on religion by Clark in his book “Religion Philosophy” is identical to concepts and implications on spirituality: “when someone feels a metaphysical phenomenon, the most important attribute of his work can be seen as an inner experience especially when he/she wants to crystallize such experience by active efforts to synchronize his/her life with metaphysics” (McCormick, 1994, p. 6).

Imam Khomeini asserts that “spirituality is a set of traits and actions which creates a strong albeit right and rational enthusiasm in man to move him toward the Divinity” (Bakhtiari, 2010: 135).

### **Principles, Specifications, and components of spiritual intelligence**

Spiritual Intelligence combines spirituality and intelligence structures in a new structure. Whereas spirituality is associated with searching and experiencing sacred elements, peaked intelligence, excellence and essence. Spiritual intelligence requires capabilities which use such spiritual issues in order to making compliance and effective action and producing high-value products and outcomes. Generally the development of spiritual intelligence structure can be considered as using the capacities and spiritual resources in practical situation. It seems that any discussion of spiritual intelligence will be incomplete without understanding the broad range of spiritual experiences. Unlike the logical intelligence which computers are have it and unlike emotional intelligence which Primate have it, the spiritual intelligence is dedicated to human which is the most basic and most important kind of intelligence (Kadkhoda, 2010, p.6).

#### *The Principles of Spiritual Intelligence*

Santos believes that spiritual intelligence is about the relationship with the Creator of the universe. He defines this kind of intelligence as ability to understand the principles of life (spiritual and natural rules) and building life based on these rules. He has provided the following principles for spiritual intelligence:

1. Recognizing and affirming the spiritual intelligence. It means a belief that we are spiritual beings and physical life (in this world) is temporary.
2. Recognition and belief in a higher spiritual beings (it means God).
3. If there is a creator and we are creatures, there should be a guide.
4. The need of detecting the goal of life (something which calls human), and accepting the fact that some skills are genetically encoded.
5. Knowing our position unto God (personality is the reflection of our understanding of God).

6. Understanding the principles of life and recognizing this issue that having a successful life requires building lifestyle and decisions according to these principles (Santos, 2006, p.2).

*The components of Spiritual Intelligence*

Nobel (2001) and Vaughan (2003) believed that the eight components which show developed spiritual intelligence are precision, openness, integrity, humility, kindness, generosity, tolerance and resistance, and desire to meet other needs (Nazel, 2004).

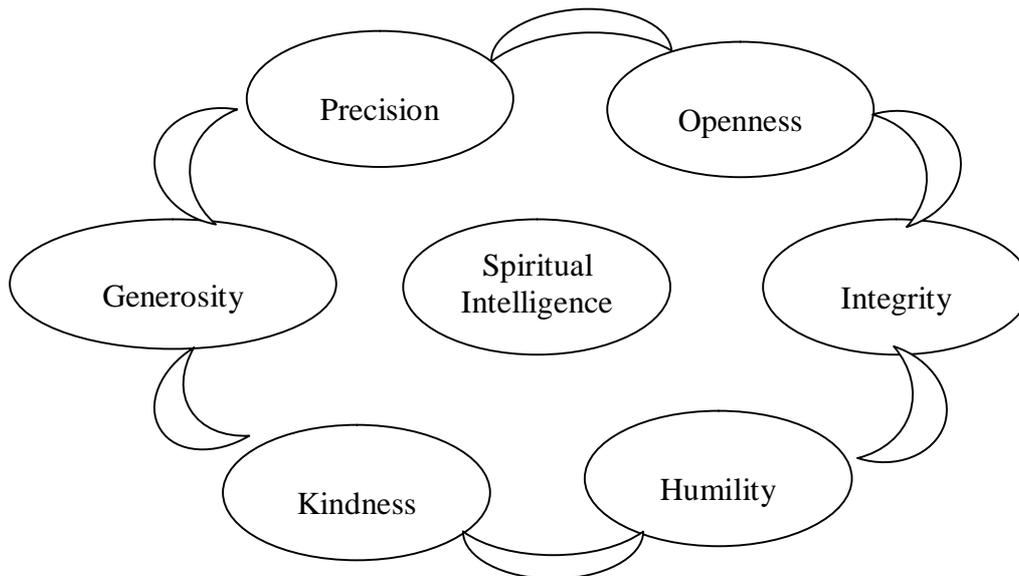


Figure 1: Spiritual Intelligence components from the perspective of Nobel and Vaughan

McMullen (2003) believes that values such as courage, integrity, intuition, and compassion are the components of spiritual intelligence. He also believes that there is a relationship among spiritual intelligence and insight and in contrast, stress is counter-intuitive. He defined the factor of "relaxing focus" as one of the ways to gain insight. He said that concerns are increasing and unsuccessful efforts take place due to delays in decision-making. Noble (2001) also argues that spiritual intelligence is an innate human talents.

He agrees Emmons's main components of spiritual intelligence. But he added two other components:

1. Conscious recognition of this issue that physical reality is formulated continuously within a larger multi-dimensional reality which we deal with it consciously or unconsciously.
2. Conscious pursuit of psychological health not only for ourselves but for all of society.

Marshall and Zohar (2000) also believed that spiritual intelligence is an innate talent which we use it for solving intellectual problem, and put the life in a wide state of richness and meaning. They defined the characteristics of developed spiritual intelligence as follow:

1. A high degree of self-awareness.
2. Having the capacity of flexibility (active and spontaneous adaptation).
3. Having the capacity of dealing with pains and its development.
4. Tend to ask questions of why or how, and search for key answers.
5. Getting inspire of the imaginations and values.
6. The tendency to see the links between different things (being holistic).
7. Unwillingness to injure.
8. Getting away from the context that facilitates unconventional activity (quotes Raghil et al, 2008).

Table 1 Components of spiritual intelligence from the perspective of Zohar and Marshal

<p><b>Ability to deal with adversities and problems and even turn them into opportunities</b></p> <p>Cope with errors and problems and learning from them.</p>	<p><b>Values and vision (Ideals)</b></p> <p>The extremity of our humanity will be specified in our vision and values.</p>	<p><b>Self-awareness</b></p> <p>Know that you are really exist, and how do you communicate with the world.</p>
<p><b>Independency (courage)</b></p> <p>It's a psychological term which means neither compatibility nor coordinating with community but means courage. Having enough courage to act against common tradition (independent of environment)</p>	<p><b>Variability</b></p> <p>Coping with diversity, for example pay attention to the different aspects of each person and encouraging to know these differences, and also thanks for them.</p>	<p><b>Holism</b></p> <p>Observing association between things and affairs: being enthusiastic about everything.</p>
<p><b>Being spontaneous</b></p> <p>Acting according to our own vision and accountable for them, and don't act based on fear and lust.</p>	<p><b>The ability to re-frame of issues</b></p> <p>Observing phenomena in a broader context.</p>	<p><b>Tend to ask why</b></p> <p>Asking fundamental questions and finding fundamental answers.</p>

Source: (Wigglesworth, 2002, p.2)

From the perspective of Vaughan (2002), one of the aspects of spiritual intelligence is understanding and insight of the people about themselves by which they regulate their own emotions. On the other hand, without having a high level of emotional intelligence, the people cannot possess the attributes such as honesty, forgiveness, etc. considered eight components of spiritual intelligence include patience, spiritual and religious beliefs and practices, meaning and having purpose in life, divinity, inner calm, spiritual experiences, self-scrutiny, and forgiveness as the main components of spiritual intelligence in culture of Iran. From the perspective of Woleman, Spiritual intelligence is the human capacity for asking questions about the meaning of life and simultaneously experience the connection between each of us and the world in which we live. In his view, spiritual intelligence is composed of seven factors include:

1. Caring: paying attention to physical processes such as eating, regular meditation, and exercises such as yoga and tai-chi.
2. Enlightenment: involving of mind in reading spiritual issue, sacred texts and analyzing them.
3. Divinity: the sense of connection with God, a higher power, and with a source of divine power.
4. Spirituality in childhood: the intellectual interests and activities in childhood such as attending religious ceremony and reading sacred texts by parents.
5. Ultra-sensory perception: the experiences that are referred to supernatural or sixth sense.
6. Psychological trauma: spiritual awareness which are reached by having painful experiences.
7. Paying attention to community: performing spiritual activities such as donation, or volunteering activities which will be beneficial to the community.

Dimensions of spiritual intelligence, from the perspective of Sisk and Amram, are summarized in following:

1. Internal knowledge.
2. Deep intuition.
3. Self-awareness and integrating with nature and the universe.
4. Ability to solving problems.
5. Inner guidance and using sublimation methods such as intuition to solve problems.
6. Acceptance and love of truth, living in balance with the clergy.

7. Holistic view in order to see the interconnections among thing, etc. (Sohrabi, 2008, p.4) and (Amram, 2009, p.17, quoted Zarei Matin, 2011).

Smith's study (2005) showed that spiritual intelligence is necessary for better compatibility with the environment. So those who have higher spiritual intelligence are more tolerant in dealing with tensions of life, and show high ability to adjust with environment.

He listed ten skills of spiritual intelligence as follow:

1. Spiritual experience: specific activity and religious experience.
2. Coping with stress: using faith and religious beliefs in order to solving problems and tensions of life.
3. Being Purposeful: having a specific purpose in life with particular regard to religious issues.
4. Worship place: the tendency to religious place and religious leaders.
5. Getting out of principles: Getting out of stereotypical principles and beliefs.
6. Focus on beliefs: the impact of religion on behavior and performance (e.g. eating, drinking and clothing).
7. Religious rules: considering religious laws and commands in our life.
8. Praying: praying and doing religious activities in our life.
9. Tolerance: tolerating of beliefs of other religions, and deal with them in a systematic and logical way.
10. Religious concepts: believe in religious concepts (such as God, soul, and afterlife).

Conscious pursuit's institute of have defined six skills for spiritual intelligence in US. These skills are compassion for others, a sense of heavenly, wisdom, ability to listen, reliance on the God, commitment, and faith.

After reviewing the various meanings of spirituality, Friedman and McDonald have provided the major components of it as follow:

1. Focus on the final essence.
2. Being awareness of multiple levels of consciousness and their development.
3. Believe in the sanctity and precious of life.
4. Upgrade yourself to a larger being (Amram, 2005, p.15).

Jahani (2010) extract 15 components of spiritual intelligence from his thesis which include the following:

1. Knowing and believing in God divinity.
2. Making work and life meaningful (for the sake of Allah)
3. Deep self-awareness.
4. Spiritual wisdom.
5. Having lofty goals in life and work.
6. The ability to use the intellectual resources to solve problems in life.
7. The capacity for virtuous behavior (forgiveness, charity, humility, gratitude, etc.).
8. Willingness to serve.
9. The ability to align individual and organizational goals.
10. Having insight, understanding, diagnosing, and distinguishing.
11. Work conscience.
12. Systematic thinking (regarding to dimensions of human spirit).
13. Paying attention to spiritual values.
14. Having positive feelings.
15. The ability to ask fundamental questions and find fundamental answers.

Below table shows spiritual intelligence components in the view of other practitioners.

Table 1: spiritual intelligence components in the view of practitioners

Spiritual intelligence components	Practitioners
Internal knowledge, deep aspiration, self – recognition, synchronizing with nature and world, problem solving capability, inner conduct and using excellence styles such inspiration to resolve the problems, reality acceptance, balances life alongside spirituality and holistic insight to see internal relations among all objects, ... (Zarei Matin, 2011, p. 79)	Cisk and Amram
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Focus on ultimate mean</li> <li>2. Awareness of intelligence different levels and their growth</li> <li>3. Believe in life holiness and precious</li> <li>4. Going beyond oneself and attachment to greater whole (Amram, 2005, p. 15)</li> </ol>	Freedman and McDonald
Correctness, integrity, humility, kindness, generosity, endurance, resistance, sustainability and tend to satisfy the needs of other people (Nazel, 2004, p. 16)	Noble and Vegan
Brevity, integration, aspiration, sympathy are spiritual intelligence components (Zarei Matin, 2011, p. 81).	McMullen
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Awareness of difference</li> <li>2. Surprise, metaphysical feeling and holiness</li> <li>3. Wisdom</li> <li>4. Foresight and the capability to listen (being silent and listen to The Divinity)</li> <li>5. Being calm during turbulences, contradiction and suspicion</li> <li>6. Commitment, philanthropy and belief (Bruce Litchfield, 1999)</li> </ol>	Bruce Litchfield
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Excellence capacity (going beyond physical and material world and making them excellent)</li> <li>2. The capability to go from intelligence to spirituality</li> <li>3. The capability to accompany practices, events and relations of daily life with a holy feeling</li> <li>4. The capability to use spiritual resources to resolve life problems</li> <li>5. The capacity to be involved in virtuous behavior (generosity, gratefulness, humility and kindness) (Emmons, 2000)</li> </ol>	Emmons

*Spiritual intelligence from the perspective of Islam*

In Islam spiritual intelligence has attracted considerable attention implicitly. For example, factors affected spiritual intelligence in Islamic literature is virtue and piety along with daily exercise such as contemplation in creation, contemplation in horizons and introversive, fasting, worship, reading the Qur'an and honest reflection on its verses. Quran has attributed the trait of "Ololalbab" to people who have high spiritual intelligence. It refers to people who realized the nature of truth and passed through the illusions. In general, the key axes of spiritual intelligence are the fundamental principles of religion (Islam) such as achieving unity beyond the apparent diversity, finding answers about the origin of the universe, correct diagnosis of intellectual patterns, and adjusting behavior based on them. We can bring up religious people by increasing spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence teaches people compassion, kindness, integrity in differences, and reliance on essence.

*Characteristics of spiritual intelligence and the procedures to increase it*

Table 3 Characteristics of spiritual intelligence and the procedures to increase it

<b>procedures to increase</b>	<b>Possible characteristics</b>
Allocating time for thinking, and reviewing our behavior Using daybook to record daily events Reading biographies of spirituality finder Learning based on problem solving in actual problems Allocated time for open discussion Planning to integrate our studies Using group to develop activities Studying life of spirituality finder Integration of social science Using "proven" about thinking Using the approach of self-nature, studying of myths and stories The use of social drama Discussion and activities planning Processing of discussions Listen to your intuition and inner voice Considering uniqueness in studies Using what, for what and what model Use meetings of discuss/resolve conflict Studying eminent people's life	Use of internal recognition Efforts to self-discovery Use of analogy and metaphor to communicate Using Intuition Being sensitive to social issues Sensitivity to goals in life Concerns about injustice and inequality Asking great questions Discovering gestalt and great delineation The tendency to distinct The capacity for love Curious about how the world works Love values and compassion Being concern for others Getting attention to nature Using visualization, meditation, and mental images Dependency to mindset, self-observing, consciousness The search for equilibrium (balance) Efforts to self-discovering

Source: (Sisk, 2008)

Finally it can be claimed that the people who have spiritual intelligence, have some attributes which lead them to excellence and orientation towards contributing in humanitarian activities. These people have the ability to cope with hardships, pains and failures. These people have high self-awareness and learn from past failures experiences.

**Promoting spiritual intelligence**

It seems that the definitions of spiritual intelligence are incomplete if they don't contain different ways of knowing. In a recent survey by Robert Forman, people with different ages consider the spirituality empirical rather than rational. Contemplative exercises such as meditation are good to refine spiritual intelligence because it is related to three distinct way of knowing (three ways of knowing: sensory, intellectual, and contemplative). It seems that these three ways of knowing are impartible parts of spiritual intelligence which some people performed them.

Conscious awareness, compatibility with the events and experiences of life, and increasing of self-awareness are the main factors of growing spiritual intelligence. In

addition, some of the techniques, strategies and practices are considered useful for its growth; for example, Vaughan believes that spiritual intelligence increases through increasing breadth and openness, having different points of view, being sensitive to the experience and the facts such as state of excellence (paranormal) and spiritual issues, a deeper understanding of symbols, representation of ancient legends, and undetected unconscious patterns (Nazel, 2004).

Evidence suggests that spiritual exercises which increase awareness and understanding of multiple levels of consciousness (meditation), have a positive impact on performance. By measuring the amount of attention and performing the test of Cognitive Flexibility, Warner showed that meditation (superior meditation exercise or TM) can positively affect mental development. Cranston also showed that TM practice in a two-year period improved IQ scores, learning ability, and reaction time (Amram, 2005).

## Conclusion

Today, one issue respected by behavior and psychology scholars is spiritual intelligence. Perhaps, one of the reasons of respecting this concept in management studies is spirituality suffix and its role in promoting both personal and organization performance. Spiritual intelligence concept involves a kind of adaptability and problem solving behavior which involves the highest levels of growth in different cognitive, ethical, emotional and interpersonal fields and aids the people to coordinate with their surrounding phenomena and achieving internal and external integration. Spiritual intelligence gives people a general insight on life and all of its experiences and events and enables them to configure and re-describe their experiences and deepen their recognition. However, no single and tangible definition on spiritual intelligence is provided yet. The reason is dispersion, heterogeneity and difference in mentioned components by practitioners confirmed by relevant literature. It seems that one of the reasons of such differences is the culture and environment in which such definitions are provided. For instance, spiritual intelligence is radically different in Western and Islamic perspectives due to their definitions on spirituality. Therefore, in present paper, different definitions are provided on spiritual intelligence and then its components and aspects are studied in the perspective of different practitioners and finally the ways to promote, grow and enhance spiritual intelligence are pointed out. The author recommends interested researchers to look for the main reason(s) of such differences in future studies and to study the impact by cultural factors and value, religious and environmental impacts on spiritual intelligence.

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