

SELF-REPORTED DIMENSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE AND PERCEIVED TEAM PERFORMANCE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY AMONG ROMANIAN MANAGERS AND LEADERS

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Abstract

Spiritual intelligence has increasingly been examined as a potential resource for value-based leadership and organizational functioning. However, the construct remains conceptually heterogeneous, and existing measurement approaches differ considerably in the dimensions they include. The present study therefore does not claim to measure spiritual intelligence through a validated scale, but examines an exploratory composite score derived from self-reported dimensions associated with the construct. The study investigates the relationship between this composite score and perceived changes in team performance among managers and leaders in Romania. A quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive, and correlational design was employed. Data was collected from 49 valid respondents between January 24 and February 5, 2026. Four conceptual dimensions: meaning and purpose orientation, reflective awareness and cognitive flexibility, value integration and ethical discernment, and relational awareness and inner balance, guided the organization of 14 items. Because these dimensions did not demonstrate sufficient reliability as separate subscales, the items were combined into a single exploratory composite score, which showed acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha=.768$). Perceived team performance was measured through respondents' assessment of changes in overall team performance during the previous 12 months. Spearman's rank-order correlation indicated a positive and statistically significant association between the composite score and perceived team performance ($p=.356$, $p=.012$). The findings suggest that stronger self-reported orientations toward meaning, reflection, values, relational awareness, and inner balance are associated with more favorable perceptions of team performance. Given the small non-probability sample and self-reported data, the findings should not be interpreted causally or generalized beyond the investigated sample.

Keywords: spiritual intelligence, leadership, perceived team performance, self-report, values-based leadership

JEL Classification: M12, M14

1. Introduction

Team performance is influenced not only by formal structures, technical expertise, and organizational resources, but also by the way leaders understand their role and respond to complex situations. Managers shape how employees interpret priorities, deal with uncertainty, communicate difficulties, and connect individual responsibilities with collective objectives. Leadership effectiveness therefore depends partly on capacities that extend beyond conventional cognitive skills, including self-reflection, ethical judgment, consistency between values and actions, emotional balance, and awareness of the broader consequences of managerial decisions [16], [1].

Within this context, spiritual intelligence has gained increasing attention as a framework for understanding how individuals construct meaning, connect their actions with deeper values, and maintain coherence between personal principles and professional conduct. Vaughan [20] associates spiritual intelligence with the capacity to understand existential meaning, develop spiritual awareness, and recognize the interconnectedness between the individual and wider systems of life. Zohar and Marshall [22] emphasize the ability to access fundamental values and purposes and to use them as a basis for judgment and action. From this perspective, spiritual intelligence may be relevant to organizational leadership because it supports decisions informed not only by short-term efficiency, but also by ethical responsibility, long-term purpose, and consideration of the effects of managerial actions on others.

However, literature does not present spiritual intelligence as a fully uniform construct. King and DeCicco [9] conceptualize it as a set of mental capacities involving critical reflection on existential questions, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. Other approaches place greater emphasis on the behavioral expression of spiritual intelligence: Wigglesworth [21] for example, describes it through the ability to act with wisdom and compassion while maintaining inner and outer balance under difficult circumstances. These differences indicate that spiritual intelligence includes several related cognitive, ethical, relational, and adaptive dimensions. They also require caution when selecting indicators and interpreting self-reported measures.

In organizational settings, the relevance of spiritual intelligence lies less in abstract beliefs and more in the way meaning, values, reflection, and self-regulation are translated into leadership behavior [21]. A manager who can reconsider an initial position, remain composed during conflict, evaluate the wider consequences of a decision, and act consistently with declared values may contribute to more stable conditions for coordination and collective performance. Previous research has associated spiritual values and practices with leadership effectiveness, particularly through integrity, ethical conduct, respect for others, and the communication of shared purpose [16]. Other studies have suggested that spiritual intelligence may contribute to effective business leadership and may be positively associated with organizational and financial performance [1], [2], [10].

Nevertheless, existing findings should be interpreted carefully. Research in this field frequently relies on self-reported assessments, while organizational outcomes are often measured through the perceptions of the same respondents rather than through independent performance indicators. This creates the possibility that favorable self-evaluations may be accompanied by similarly favorable assessments of team outcomes. In addition, characteristics such as honesty, responsibility, openness, and concern for others are socially valued, particularly among respondents in leadership positions. High scores may therefore reflect both genuine behavioral tendencies and an idealized professional self-image.

The present study adopts an exploratory and explicitly limited approach. It does not claim to measure spiritual intelligence through a validated psychometric scale. Instead, it uses a composite score based on fourteen self-reported items associated with four broad conceptual domains identified in the literature: meaning and purpose orientation, reflective awareness and cognitive flexibility, value integration and ethical discernment, and relational awareness and inner balance. These domains were used to establish the theoretical relevance and content organization of the items. They were not treated as empirically validated subscales.

The purpose of the study is to examine the association between this composite score and perceived changes in team performance among managers and leaders in Romania. Team performance is assessed through respondents' evaluation of how the overall performance of their teams changed during the previous twelve months. The study therefore focuses on perceived performance development rather than objective financial or operational indicators.

Drawing on previous findings linking spiritual intelligence with leadership effectiveness and organizational performance [16], [1], [2], [10], the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1. The composite score of self-reported dimensions associated with spiritual intelligence is positively associated with perceived improvement in team performance.

The research uses a quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive, and correlational design. The analysis is based on 49 valid responses collected from individuals with managerial or leadership responsibilities. The relationship between the exploratory composite score and perceived team performance is examined using Spearman's rank-order correlation. The study does not aim to establish causality or validate a new measurement scale. Its more limited contribution is to provide exploratory evidence regarding the relationship between a self-reported managerial profile characterized by meaning, reflection, value orientation, relational awareness, and inner balance and the perceived development of team performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual foundations of spiritual intelligence

Spiritual intelligence has been developed as an attempt to explain capacities that are not fully captured by conventional accounts of cognitive ability [20], [22], [3], [9]. Whereas traditional approaches tend to focus on reasoning, adaptation, and problem solving, spiritual intelligence concerns the way individuals interpret meaning, understand their values, and connect inner awareness with conduct in everyday life. This broader perspective became possible as theories of intelligence moved beyond a strictly cognitive framework, particularly following Gardner's [4] multiple-intelligences model. Subsequent approaches to emotional, social, moral, and existential intelligence further expanded attention toward dimensions of human functioning that involve self-awareness, relationships, ethical judgment, and purpose [17], [7], [6], [19]. Within this conceptual evolution, spiritual intelligence can be understood as a framework that brings together meaning, values, compassion, and behavioral coherence. Its relevance lies not only in reflection or awareness, but also in the capacity to express these orientations through consistent, ethical, and considerate conduct across different situations. The concept does not refer exclusively to religious belief. Rather, it addresses a broader set of abilities related to purpose, self-reflection, ethical discernment, transcendence, and the integration of personal experience.

Vaughan [20] approaches spiritual intelligence as the integration of the inner dimensions of the person with practical engagement in the external world. Her perspective emphasizes that spiritual development involves several forms of understanding rather than a single cognitive process. Discernment, personal inquiry, and the capacity to translate inner awareness into wise and compassionate action are central to this view. Applied to organizational life, this perspective suggests that professional decisions cannot be separated entirely from the meaning and values through which individuals interpret their responsibilities.

Zohar and Marshall [22] also place meaning and values at the centre of spiritual intelligence. They describe it as the capacity through which individuals address fundamental questions of purpose and evaluate their choices within a broader frame of reference. From this standpoint, spiritual intelligence helps people examine whether their actions remain consistent with their deeper principles. Its organizational relevance lies in the possibility of connecting strategic and operational decisions with ethical coherence, long-term purpose, and responsibility toward others. Spiritual intelligence therefore extends the idea of effective action beyond the immediate achievement of objectives and includes consideration of why those objectives matter and how they are pursued.

Emmons [3] conceptualizes spiritual intelligence in more explicitly adaptive terms. He examines spirituality as a set of abilities that may support the resolution of problems and the attainment of meaningful goals. His initial model includes the capacity to move beyond an exclusively material perspective, experience heightened states of awareness, assign sacred or profound meaning to ordinary experiences, use spiritual resources when confronting difficulties, and engage in virtuous conduct. The model is particularly relevant to organizational research because it connects spirituality with practical functioning rather than treating it only as a system of beliefs. At the same time, the inclusion of virtuous behavior as an ability has generated debate, since moral qualities do not necessarily meet the same criteria as cognitive capacities.

A more structured approach was proposed by King and DeCicco [9]. Their model defines spiritual intelligence through four related capacities: critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. Critical existential thinking refers to the capacity to reflect on fundamental questions concerning existence, reality, and purpose. Personal meaning production concerns the ability to construct meaning from experiences and use it to guide action. Transcendental awareness involves recognizing dimensions of experience and interconnectedness that extend beyond the immediately visible or individual level.

Conscious state expansion refers to the ability to access or regulate heightened states of awareness. These dimensions formed the basis of the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory, developed and tested through two empirical studies.

King and DeCicco's model [9] is important because it offers a clear psychometric structure, but it also illustrates why spiritual intelligence cannot be inferred from any general collection of values-based items. A study that does not reproduce the validated instrument or cover all four capacities should not claim to measure the complete construct. In the present research, for example, the items address meaning, reflection, values, relational awareness, and adaptive functioning, but they do not directly assess all aspects of transcendental awareness or conscious state expansion. The study therefore examines dimensions associated with spiritual intelligence rather than applying the full model proposed by King and DeCicco [9].

Wigglesworth [21] provides a more behavioral interpretation, placing particular emphasis on wisdom, compassion, and the capacity to preserve internal and relational balance in difficult circumstances. This perspective shifts attention from what individuals believe toward how they behave when they face stress, conflict, uncertainty, or competing demands. Within leadership, spiritual intelligence can consequently be observed through fairness, emotional composure, openness to other viewpoints, and the ability to act consistently with one's values even under pressure. This approach is especially relevant to managerial contexts because it links inner awareness with visible conduct.

Despite their differences, these perspectives share several recurring elements [20], [22], [3], [9], [21]. The first is the search for meaning and purpose. The second is reflective awareness, including the ability to examine personal assumptions and reconsider one's perspective. The third is the integration of values into judgment and action. The fourth concerns awareness of relationships and interdependence, often expressed through empathy, responsibility, and balanced interaction with others. A further recurring element is adaptive functioning: the capacity to respond constructively to uncertainty, tension, or complex problems.

Based on this theoretical overlap, the fourteen items used in the present study were organized around four broad domains: meaning and purpose orientation; reflective awareness and cognitive flexibility; value integration and ethical discernment; and relational awareness and inner balance. These domains provide a framework for establishing the content relevance of the items. They are not treated as separate validated subscales, because the empirical results did not support sufficient reliability for such an interpretation. Instead, the items are combined into a single exploratory composite score.

2.2. Spiritual intelligence and work-related performance

The organizational relevance of spiritual intelligence depends on whether the capacities associated with it are reflected in leadership and work-related outcomes. Reave's [16] review of more than 150 studies identified substantial overlap between values traditionally associated with spirituality and characteristics linked to effective leadership. Integrity, honesty, humility, fairness, respectful treatment, attentive listening, concern for others, recognition of employee contributions, and reflective practice were repeatedly associated with leadership success. The outcomes considered in the reviewed studies included employee attitudes, trust, retention, ethical behavior, group productivity, performance, and the achievement of organizational objectives. Importantly, this line of research focuses on values as expressed in conduct rather than on declared spirituality alone.

More recent studies have examined spiritual intelligence in direct relation to professional or organizational performance. Moradi, Salehi, and Mozan [11] investigated different forms of intelligence among auditors working in Iraqi audit firms. Their sample included 198 auditors, and the relationships were tested through partial least squares modelling. Spiritual, emotional, and organizational intelligence were each positively and significantly associated with organizational

performance. The proposed mediating role of social capital was not supported. Although this study addresses organizational rather than team performance, it provides evidence that spiritual intelligence may be relevant within a professional environment where judgment, responsibility, and the quality of work are central.

Ram and Srivastav [15] studied 75 employed participants in India and examined the relationships between spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, and individual work performance. They reported a positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and work performance, $r=.599$. This result is relevant because both variables were measured at the individual level through questionnaires, making the methodological structure closer to self-report studies of managerial perceptions. However, the sample was selected through convenience sampling, and the outcome concerned individual rather than team performance.

Özyurt, Yükselen, and Tosun [14] investigated spiritual intelligence within a model of salespeople's work performance. Their study examined whether spiritual intelligence changed or explained the relationships between sales orientation, customer orientation, and performance. Spiritual intelligence did not operate as a moderator, but the authors reported a mediating role within the proposed model. This finding suggests that spiritual intelligence may be relevant not only as a direct correlate of performance but also as part of the mechanism through which professional orientations are translated into work outcomes.

Taken together, these studies indicate that spiritual intelligence has been associated with several types of work-related results, including leadership effectiveness, individual performance, sales performance, and broader organizational performance [16], [15], [13], [14], [11]. Nevertheless, the evidence is not fully comparable across studies. The samples differ substantially, as do the instruments used to measure spiritual intelligence and the definitions of performance. Some studies assess individual work behavior, others rely on perceived organizational results, while others examine performance within more complex mediation models. The strength and meaning of the reported relationships must therefore be interpreted within the methodological boundaries of each study.

Another recurring limitation is reliance on self-reported data. When the same respondent evaluates both personal characteristics and performance, the observed relationship may partly reflect a general tendency to provide consistently favorable answers. This issue is particularly relevant for spiritual intelligence because many of its associated characteristics, such as integrity, responsibility, openness, compassion, and self-awareness, are socially desirable. A high score may reflect actual tendencies, but it may also capture an idealized understanding of the respondent's professional identity. For this reason, the present study treats both the predictor and the outcome as perceived and avoids causal claims.

2.3. Self-reported dimensions associated with spiritual intelligence and team performance

The relationship examined in this study is based on the assumption that the broad capacities associated with spiritual intelligence may support managerial conduct relevant to team functioning. Meaning and purpose orientation may help leaders maintain a clearer sense of direction and connect routine decisions with longer-term priorities. This does not mean that a personal sense of purpose automatically produces higher performance. It suggests, more cautiously, that leaders who understand the broader significance of their role may evaluate and communicate objectives with greater coherence.

Reflective awareness and cognitive flexibility may also be relevant to team performance. Managers regularly operate under conditions in which information is incomplete, goals compete, and initial decisions require revision. The capacity to examine one's reactions, recognize defensiveness, consider alternative viewpoints, and adjust a position when new information becomes available may support more adaptive decision-making. These capacities are consistent

with theoretical approaches that connect spiritual intelligence with discernment, meaning construction, and the integration of inner awareness into practical action [20], [9].

Value integration and ethical discernment concern the extent to which decisions remain aligned with principles such as honesty, fairness, and responsibility. Consistency between declared values and managerial action may increase predictability and trust within the team. Reave's [16] synthesis indicates that integrity, fair treatment, respect, and reflective practice are repeatedly associated with effective leadership and positive group outcomes. These findings support the inclusion of value-related items in the exploratory composite score, although they do not demonstrate that ethical orientation is identical to spiritual intelligence.

Relational awareness and inner balance may influence the way leaders manage disagreement and pressure. A manager who remains composed during difficult discussions, seeks to understand another person's position, and acknowledges a stronger alternative may create better conditions for communication and coordination. Wigglesworth's [21] behavioral approach is particularly relevant here because it presents spiritual intelligence as visible in the quality of action and interaction, especially when circumstances are difficult.

The four domains are conceptually distinguishable, but the present data do not support their treatment as reliable independent subscales. Consequently, the study does not test separate hypotheses for meaning, reflection, values, or relational balance. The domains are used to justify the theoretical content of the fourteen items, which are combined into one exploratory composite score. This decision reduces the risk of presenting unstable dimensions as established measurements and maintains a direct analytical model.

Existing research has linked spiritual intelligence with individual work performance, leadership effectiveness, sales performance, and organizational outcomes [15], [13], [16], [14], [11]. However, less attention has been given to the relationship between a leader's self-reported profile on dimensions associated with spiritual intelligence and that leader's perception of change in team-level performance. The present study addresses this narrower question.

RQ1. To what extent is the composite score of self-reported dimensions associated with spiritual intelligence related to perceived changes in team performance?

Drawing on the theoretical arguments and the positive relationships reported in previous studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. The composite score of self-reported dimensions associated with spiritual intelligence is positively associated with perceived improvement in team performance.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research design and participants

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive, and correlational research design. Its purpose was to examine the relationship between a composite score derived from self-reported dimensions associated with spiritual intelligence and perceived changes in team performance. The research was exploratory and was not designed to establish causal relationships or to validate a new psychometric instrument.

Data were collected through an online questionnaire administered between January 24 and February 5, 2026. The target group consisted of individuals occupying managerial and leadership roles and having responsibility for coordinating employees, teams, or organizational activities.

A non-probability sampling procedure was used. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and the anonymous treatment of their responses. A total of 50 questionnaires were recorded. One response was excluded because the participant did not provide consent for participation, although the participant did answer the questionnaire. Consequently, for ethical reasons, the final analytical sample consisted of 49 valid respondents.

The inclusion of managers and leaders was consistent with the objective of the study, as these respondents were expected to have direct knowledge of both their own managerial orientations and the development of the teams they coordinated. However, given the small size and non-probability character of the sample, the results were interpreted only in relation to the investigated group and were not generalized to the broader population of managers and organizational leaders.

3.2. Measures

The questionnaire included 14 self-report items referring to orientations and behaviors theoretically associated with spiritual intelligence. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Higher scores therefore indicated stronger agreement with the statements.

For conceptual purposes, the 14 items were organized around four domains:

1. meaning and purpose orientation;
2. reflective awareness and cognitive flexibility;
3. value integration and ethical discernment;
4. relational awareness and inner balance.

Meaning and purpose orientation referred to the respondents' tendency to understand their professional activity within a broader framework of significance, direction, and personal purpose. Reflective awareness and cognitive flexibility covered self-examination, openness to alternative perspectives, and the capacity to reconsider an initial position. Value integration and ethical discernment concerned consistency between personal principles, ethical judgment, and managerial action. Relational awareness and inner balance referred to awareness of interpersonal dynamics, emotional composure, and the capacity to respond constructively under pressure.

The four domains were used to organize the theoretical content of the items. They were not treated as validated empirical subscales. Preliminary analysis indicated that the domains did not demonstrate sufficient internal consistency when examined separately. Therefore, separate domain scores were not used for hypothesis testing.

Instead, the 14 items were combined into a single exploratory composite score. For each respondent, the composite score was calculated as the mean of the 14 item scores. Higher values indicated a stronger self-reported orientation toward meaning, reflection, value consistency, relational awareness, and inner balance.

The resulting measure was interpreted as a composite score of dimensions associated with spiritual intelligence. It was not presented as a validated measure of spiritual intelligence itself, because the questionnaire did not reproduce an established spiritual intelligence scale and had not undergone a complete psychometric validation process.

Perceived team performance was measured through one separate ordinal item. Respondents were asked to assess how the overall performance of their team had changed during the previous 12 months. The response options represented five progressively more favorable categories:

1. substantial decline;
2. slight decline;
3. relatively unchanged;
4. slight improvement;
5. substantial improvement.

Higher values therefore represented a more favorable perceived change in team performance.

The performance item captured the respondent's subjective assessment of team-level development. It was not based on objective indicators such as productivity, sales, profitability, error rates, or independently assessed performance outcomes.

3.3. Data analysis

Data processing and statistical analyses were conducted using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the study variables. Cronbach's alpha was calculated from item-level and total-score variances, while Spearman's rank-order correlation was computed from ranked values. Statistical significance was evaluated using a two-tailed test at the .05 level.

The analysis was conducted using the 49 valid responses. Before the statistical procedures were performed, the dataset was checked for participant eligibility, and the response without participation consent was excluded.

A composite score was calculated for each respondent by averaging the answers to the 14 items associated with spiritual intelligence. The mean was used instead of the sum so that the resulting score remained expressed on the same response scale as the original items.

The internal consistency of the 14-item composite was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. This coefficient was used to determine whether the items demonstrated sufficient coherence to support their inclusion in one exploratory composite score. Cronbach's alpha was interpreted only as an indicator of internal consistency. It was not considered evidence of construct validity or of the existence of four empirically distinct dimensions.

The internal consistency of the four conceptual domains was also examined during the preliminary stage of the analysis. Because the resulting coefficients did not support their use as reliable separate subscales, no domain-level hypotheses were tested. The main analysis was therefore conducted using only the complete 14-item composite score.

The relationship between the composite score and perceived changes in team performance was examined using Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient. Spearman's correlation was selected because the team-performance outcome was measured on an ordinal scale. The method also did not require the assumption that both variables followed a normal distribution.

The coefficient was used to determine whether respondents with higher composite scores also tended to report more favorable changes in the overall performance of their teams. The direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of the relationship were considered together.

Because the study was cross-sectional and both the predictor and the outcome were reported by the same respondents, the results were interpreted as evidence of association rather than causation. No conclusion was drawn regarding whether the dimensions associated with spiritual intelligence directly produced changes in team performance.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive results

The exploratory composite score was calculated as the mean of the 14 items for each of the 49 valid respondents. The score had a mean of 4.601 and a standard deviation of 0.329. The median was 4.643, while the observed values ranged from 3.571 to 5.000. These results indicate that respondents generally reported high levels of agreement with the statements included in the composite measure.

Regarding perceived team performance, one respondent (2.0%) reported a substantial decline during the previous 12 months, while three respondents (6.1%) reported a slight decline. Thirteen respondents (26.5%) indicated that performance had remained relatively unchanged. A slight improvement was reported by 17 respondents (34.7%), and 15 respondents (30.6%) reported a substantial improvement. Overall, 65.3% of the sample perceived an improvement in team performance.

The concentration of both variables toward the upper end of their response scales should be considered when interpreting the subsequent analysis, as the restricted variation may have influenced the observed association.

4.2. Internal consistency of the exploratory composite score

The internal consistency of the 14-item exploratory composite score was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. As shown in Table 1, the coefficient obtained for the 49 valid responses was $\alpha = .768$. This value supported the use of the items as a single composite score for the purposes of the present exploratory analysis.

The coefficient was interpreted exclusively as an indicator of internal consistency. It was not considered evidence that the questionnaire represented a validated measure of spiritual intelligence or that the four conceptual domains constituted reliable empirical subscales.

Table 1. Internal consistency of the exploratory composite score

Measure	Number of items	Valid cases	Cronbach's alpha
Exploratory composite score	14	49	.768

Source: Authors' own research.

4.3. Association with perceived team performance

Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to examine the relationship between the exploratory composite score and respondents' perceptions of changes in their teams' overall performance during the previous 12 months.

The analysis indicated a positive and statistically significant association between the two variables, $\rho = .356$, $p = .012$. Respondents with higher levels of agreement with the 14 statements associated with spiritual intelligence tended to report more favorable changes in team performance. The coefficient indicated a modest association within the investigated sample.

Table 2. Correlation between the exploratory composite score and perceived team performance

Variables	N	Spearman's ρ	p-value
Exploratory composite score and perceived team performance	49	.356	.012

Source: Authors' own research.

Because the correlation was positive and statistically significant at the .05 level, H1 was supported within the sample investigated. The result indicates an association between the variables and does not establish that the dimensions included in the composite score produced the reported changes in team performance.

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretation of findings

The present study identified a positive and statistically significant association between the exploratory composite score of self-reported dimensions associated with spiritual intelligence and perceived changes in team performance. The magnitude of the relationship was modest, indicating that respondents with higher composite scores tended to report more favorable developments in their teams' performance, without suggesting that the investigated orientations represent a dominant explanation of team outcomes. Team performance is shaped by numerous individual, relational, structural, and contextual factors, and the present result should be interpreted within this broader framework.

The finding is generally consistent with previous research connecting spiritual intelligence with work-related outcomes. Positive associations have been reported with individual work performance [15], [13], while other studies have examined its role in sales performance [14], and broader organizational performance [11]. However, these studies differ substantially in their samples, measurement instruments, analytical models, and definitions of performance. The present study extends this line of inquiry by focusing specifically on Romanian managers' and leaders'

perceptions of change in team-level performance rather than on individual performance or objective organizational indicators.

Nursyamsi et al. [13], for example, found a positive and statistically significant relationship between spiritual intelligence and work performance among 60 British Propolis Indonesia partners. Their measure of performance included behavioral characteristics such as discipline, creativity, cooperation, loyalty, and honesty. The result is relevant to the present research because it connects spiritual intelligence with self-reported professional functioning. However, it concerns individual work performance rather than changes in collective performance and therefore cannot be treated as a direct replication of the present finding.

The result may be understood partly through the role of values-based and reflective leadership. The literature on workplace spirituality emphasizes that credible leadership requires more than the formal declaration of organizational principles. Leaders must examine their own assumptions and demonstrate consistency between the values they communicate and the choices they make. Posner's foreword to the *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance* places particular emphasis on leadership grounded in principles and on the alignment between internal convictions and observable conduct [5].

From this perspective, meaning orientation, reflective awareness, and value integration may become relevant to team performance when they are translated into coherent managerial conduct. Leaders who reconsider their initial judgments, acknowledge alternative viewpoints, and maintain consistency between stated values and actual decisions may be perceived as more credible and predictable [5]. Such consistency can support trust and reduce uncertainty within teams. It cannot be inferred from the present data that these mechanisms produced the reported performance changes, but they provide a theoretically plausible interpretation of the observed association.

Sass [18] offers a related organizational perspective, identifying value alignment, personal spirituality, and relationship-based organizing as central characteristics of organizational spirituality. These characteristics suggest that workplace spirituality is not limited to individual beliefs, but can also be reflected in the way relationships and organizational values are constructed and maintained. In relation to the present study, this framework supports the idea that personal orientations toward meaning and values may acquire organizational relevance when they are visible in interpersonal behavior and everyday management practices.

The present finding may also be considered in relation to adjacent research on workplace spirituality and organizational citizenship behavior. Although these constructs are distinct from spiritual intelligence and were not measured in the present study, they provide a possible explanation of how meaning-oriented and value-consistent organizational conditions may become relevant to performance. Jena [8] found that workplace spirituality was positively related to employee performance and that organizational citizenship behavior mediated this relationship in a sample of 761 employees. At the group level, Nielsen, Hrivnak and Shaw [12] reported a positive association between organizational citizenship behavior and collective performance across 38 independent samples $\rho=.29$. These findings suggest that meaning, shared values, and relational awareness may support collective outcomes partly through cooperative and discretionary behavior. However, this mechanism remains theoretical in the present study because neither workplace spirituality nor organizational citizenship behavior was measured directly.

The descriptive results also require attention. The mean composite score was high, and nearly two-thirds of respondents reported either slight or substantial improvement in team performance. This concentration toward the favorable ends of both measures may indicate that the sample included participants who perceived themselves and their teams positively. It may also reflect social desirability, restricted response variability, or a tendency among managers to provide internally consistent evaluations of their own characteristics and team outcomes.

Because the predictor and the outcome were reported by the same individuals, the association may have been influenced by common-source effects. A respondent who evaluates

personal reflection, ethical consistency, and relational behavior favorably may also be more inclined to evaluate the team's development positively. The significant correlation therefore cannot be interpreted entirely as evidence of an external relationship between leadership characteristics and independently observed performance.

5.2. Practical implications

The findings suggest that leadership-development initiatives may benefit from including practices focused on reflective judgment, clarification of purpose, value consistency, and relational self-regulation. These elements may help managers examine how their principles are translated into communication, decisions, and responses to tension.

Organizations could incorporate structured reflection, values-based decision exercises, feedback processes, and discussions about the broader purpose of work into leadership-development programs. Attention could also be given to the way leaders respond to disagreement, revise decisions when new evidence emerges, and maintain consistency between declared standards and actual conduct.

These implications should remain proportionate to the evidence. The present study does not establish that training in spiritual intelligence will improve team performance. It indicates only that a self-reported profile combining meaning, reflection, values, relational awareness, and inner balance was associated with more favorable perceptions of team-performance development. Any organizational intervention based on these ideas should therefore be evaluated through stronger designs and independent performance measures.

5.3. Limitations

Several limitations restrict the interpretation of the findings. First, the final sample consisted of only 49 valid respondents and was obtained through non-probability sampling. The results cannot therefore be generalized to Romanian managers and leaders, as a whole.

Second, the study used a cross-sectional design. The predictor and outcome were measured during the same data-collection period, making it impossible to determine temporal order or causality. Higher composite scores may be associated with more favorable performance perceptions, but the study cannot establish whether the orientations included in the composite preceded changes in team performance.

Third, both variables were self-reported by the same respondents. This creates the possibility of common-method bias, social-desirability effects, and consistency in favorable self-evaluation. Team performance was measured through one ordinal item and was not supported by objective indicators, employee assessments, supervisor evaluations, or organizational records.

Fourth, the 14-item composite was exploratory and was not based on the complete administration of a validated spiritual-intelligence scale. Cronbach's alpha supported the internal consistency of the overall score but did not establish construct validity. The four theoretically defined domains did not demonstrate sufficient reliability to be treated as separate empirical subscales.

Finally, both the composite score and perceived performance were concentrated toward the upper end of their respective scales. This restricted variation may have affected the magnitude and stability of the observed correlation. Future research should use larger and more diverse samples, validated multidimensional measures, longitudinal or multi-source designs, and objective or independently assessed indicators of team performance.

6. Conclusions

This exploratory study examined the relationship between a composite score of self-reported dimensions associated with spiritual intelligence and perceived changes in team performance among managers and leaders in Romania. The results indicated a positive, statistically significant, but modest association between the two variables. Respondents who reported stronger orientations toward meaning, reflection, value consistency, relational awareness, and inner balance also tended to perceive more favorable developments in their teams' performance.

The finding supports the possible relevance of these orientations in managerial practice, while remaining insufficient to establish causality or to explain team performance independently of other organizational factors. The study therefore contributes exploratory evidence rather than a confirmatory model of spiritual intelligence and performance.

A further contribution lies in the cautious treatment of measurement. The 14 items were combined into a single composite score only after the conceptual domains proved insufficiently reliable as separate subscales. By distinguishing between a theoretically informed exploratory composite and a validated spiritual intelligence instrument, the study avoids overstating the psychometric status of the measure and provides a transparent basis for refinement in future research.

The study also adds evidence from a Romanian managerial sample, a context that appears less represented in empirical research on spiritual intelligence and team-related outcomes. Although the findings cannot be generalized beyond the investigated group, they indicate that the relationship warrants further examination in local organizational settings.

Overall, the results suggest that self-reported orientations associated with spiritual intelligence may be relevant to perceived team development. Future studies should test this relationship using larger samples, validated multidimensional instruments, longitudinal designs, and independent measures of team performance.

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