

# The influence of spiritual leadership on work engagement

Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono

Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah  
Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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### Corresponding author:

Dessy Triharjanti  
[dessy.triharjanti03@gmail.com](mailto:dessy.triharjanti03@gmail.com)

### Author's email:

[herukurnianto@umy.ac.id](mailto:herukurnianto@umy.ac.id)

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Center for Islamic Economics Studies  
and Development, Faculty of Business  
and Economics, Universitas Islam  
Indonesia

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aimed to analyze the influence of spiritual leadership on work engagement with psychological empowerment as an intervening variable at Muhammadiyah Junior High School in Yogyakarta.

**Methodology** – The subject in this study, a sample of 129 respondents, was selected by the census method. The analysis tool used is path analysis, which is calculated using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis technique operated using the AMOS program.

**Findings** – The results indicated that a higher level of spiritual leadership will increase psychological empowerment and work engagement for Yogyakarta teachers in Muhammadiyah Junior High School.

**Implications** – In this study, the researcher gave respondents questionnaires through the school's deputy head or curriculum sector. Owing to the tight schedule of the respondents, the researchers did not accompany them in filling out the questionnaire. This allowed the researcher to know whether the respondent filled out the questionnaire correctly, so there was no potential for bias in filling out the questionnaire.

**Originality** – This research model includes independent variables, dependent variables, and mediation. The independent variables describe spiritual leadership, the dependent variable describes work engagement, and the mediation variable describes psychological empowerment.

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## Introduction

Successful organizations possess critical elements for achieving their goals. A pivotal aspect of any organization involves functional control, specifically emphasizing human resources. Educators play a vital role in delivering quality education. The 2018 PISA results revealed that Indonesia's education system is among the lowest 10 out of 79 participating countries.

Consequently, the quality of education in Indonesia could be improved. Teachers have emerged as primary contributors to the enhancement of educational quality. In line with Policy PUSPENDIK No. 3 of 2021, insights from group discussions suggest that improving teacher competence and teaching preparation will elevate teachers' enthusiasm for their work. As Herawati and Tjahjono (2020) emphasized, education plays a pivotal role in Indonesia's future growth and warrants consideration in further research on human resource management. The role of school principals is equally pivotal in motivating teachers to achieve optimal performance.

Yogyakarta, boasting numerous educational institutions catering to early childhood education (PAUD) and special needs education (SLB), requires specific attention from the local

government to elevate educational standards. In this context, raising educational standards for teaching staff is crucial and serves as a critical determinant in shaping the quality of graduates.

According to Al-Dmour et al. (2018), work engagement encompasses an emotional connection and a positive attitude toward one's job and organization, coupled with a determination to achieve goals. Work engagement plays a crucial role in the organizational context and contributes to accomplishing desired objectives. Syahrul (2020) and Tjahjono et al. (2018) define leadership empowerment as a leader's behavior that influences employee performance by providing authoritative support, including coordination, information sharing, motivation, and supporting the development of inspiration.

Consequently, work engagement becomes a critical factor in determining teaching quality, which in turn influences students' overall quality of education. Researchers are intrigued by this issue as they seek to understand the implementation of a spiritual leadership system in the educational context and the impact of psychological empowerment on teacher engagement in the learning process. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of spiritual leadership on work engagement.

## Literature Review

### Work Engagement

Work engagement is defined as a positive state of mind related to the work. According to Susanto et al. (2016), work engagement refers to organizational members actively taking responsibility for their jobs by using and expressing themselves both cognitively and emotionally. According to Schaufeli (2012), engagement is a positive and satisfying state of mind associated with work that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Unlike specific moments and circumstances, engagement refers to more persistent and persevering cognitive states that are not focused on specific objects or behaviors.

### Hypotheses Development

#### Spiritual leadership, work engagement and psychological empowerment

Spiritual leadership is necessary to inspire oneself and others to find meaning or purpose in life. Fry (2003) defined spiritual leadership as a set of values, attitudes, and behaviors needed to naturally inspire oneself and others so that they feel spiritual continuity through calling and membership. Therefore, according to Zhang and Yang (2021) definition, spiritual leadership can internally inspire employees by sharing an inspiring mission and vision, and meeting their basic spiritual needs based on calling and membership. Fry (2003) formulated that spiritual leadership consists of three main components: vision, hope, and altruistic love.

Spiritual Leadership refers to a collection of values, attitudes, and behaviors needed to intrinsically motivate oneself and others to experience spiritual life through meaning and membership. In a study conducted by Saripudin and Rosari (2019), empirical evidence from the Islamic hospitality industry in Yogyakarta showed that spiritual leadership significantly affects work Engagement. Spiritual and religious values continue to be internalized by employees, shaping a sense of meaningful work for employees and cultivating sincere thoughts oriented primarily towards God. Research conducted by Wu and Lee (2020) shows that spiritual leadership positively affects work engagement. Nursing leaders should be aware of the role of spiritual leadership in promoting work engagement.

A study by Yusefi et al. (2022) showed that spiritual leadership is significantly related to Psychological Empowerment. Empowerment is an effort to increase employee participation in the decision-making process and encourage employees to participate more actively throughout the organization. This study closely matches the research conducted by Febrianto et al. (2019) in his research which indicated that psychological empowerment and Islamic spiritual leadership have a significant effect on intrinsic motivation and organizational commitment. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: Spiritual leadership has a positive effect on work engagement.

H<sub>2</sub>: Spiritual leadership has a positive effect on Psychological Empowerment.

### Psychological empowerment and work engagement

Spreitzer (1995) defined psychological empowerment as a process or psychological condition characterized by four cognitions or roles: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Together, these four cognitions create an active approach to job function rather than a passive one. Syahrul (2020) defines psychological empowerment as leadership collaboration that encourages members to develop self-management skills with member motivation. Thus, psychological empowerment is viewed as empowering, implying the creation of situations that increase the desire to complete tasks by cultivating a strong sense of personal competence or sharing resources. The following four dimensions of psychological empowerment, meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer, 1995), are adopted from the dimensions of empowerment developed by Thomas and Velthouse (1990). According to Ahmad and Gao (2018) show that Psychological Empowerment positively affects work engagement. This study closely matches the research conducted by Alotaibi et al. (2020) in the research shows that psychological empowerment has a significant positive relationship with work engagement. From this description, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H<sub>3</sub>: Psychological Empowerment has a positive effect on Work Engagement.

### Spiritual leadership, work engagement and psychological empowerment as intervening variables

According to Zhang and Yang (2021), employees who feel empowered tend to be motivated to improve their work engagement. Ahmad and Gao (2018) state that psychological empowerment positively affects work engagement. This study closely matches research conducted by Alotaibi et al. (2020), who found that psychological empowerment has a significant positive effect on work engagement. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H<sub>4</sub>: Spiritual leadership and work engagement positively affect psychological empowerment as intervening variables.

The research model can be illustrated in Figure 1 as follows:

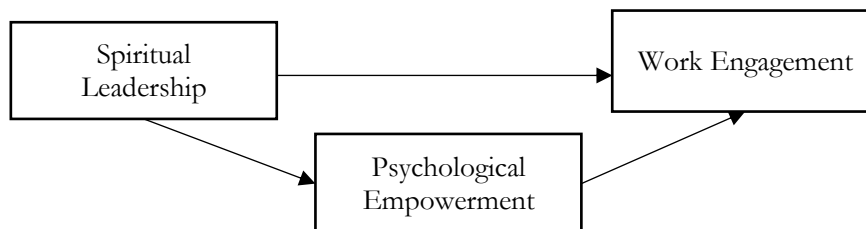


Figure 1. Research Model

### Research Methods

The approach used in this study is quantitative and uses primary data to distribute the questionnaires. The subjects of this research were teachers at Muhammadiyah Junior High School in Yogyakarta. The sampling technique used for distributing the questionnaire was a census sampling technique, meaning that all the population members were used as samples. The sample size for this research estimation model, Maximum Likelihood (ML), in the calculations of this study is the total number of accepted respondents, which is 129. The items in this study were measured on a five-point scale to avoid a central tendency. The scale ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

This study explains the relationship between spiritual leadership, psychological empowerment, and work engagement. According to Fry (2003), spiritual leadership can be determined using three indicators: vision, selfless love, and hope. Meanwhile, Spreitzer (1995) states that there are four indicators of psychological empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. In the meantime, Schaufeli (2012) suggests that there are three indicators of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption.

## Result and Discussion

### Descriptive Analysis

The distribution of the 129 respondents is presented in Table 1. The table shows 30 male (19.7% of the total) and 122 female (80.3%) respondents. As shown in Table 1, there were significantly fewer males who responded than females. There were two ages included in the table below: 20-40 years (41.9% and 41-60 years (58.1%). There were three lengths of work in the table below: >1-5 years 45.7%, >5-10 years 27.1%; and > ten years 27.1%. The table below lists four classifications of the most recent education: SMA 2.3%, D3 1.6%, S1 84.6%, and S2 11.6%.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Respondent

Characteristics	Description	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	43	33,3
	Female	86	66,7
Age	20-40 years	54	41,9
	41-60 years	75	58,1
Length of Work	> 1-5 years	59	45,7
	> 5-10 years	35	27,1
	> 10 years	35	27,1
Last Education	SMA	3	2,3
	D3	2	1,6
	S1	109	84,6
	S2	15	11,6

### Instrument and Data Quality Test

**Table 2.** Validity Test

Variables	Symbols	Factor Loading	Cut-off Value	Explanation
Spiritual Leadership	SL1	0,819	> 0,5	Valid
	SL2	0,667		Valid
	SL3	0,624		Valid
	SL4	0,749		Valid
	SL5	0,705		Valid
	SL6	0,719		Valid
	SL7	0,742		Valid
	SL8	0,609		Valid
	SL9	0,709		Valid
	SL10	0,707		Valid
	SL11	0,581		Valid
Psychological Empowerment	PE1	0,832	> 0,5	Valid
	PE2	0,867		Valid
	PE3	0,819		Valid
	PE4	0,866		Valid
	PE5	0,743		Valid
	PE6	0,726		Valid
Work Engagement	WE1	0,765	> 0,5	Valid
	WE2	0,788		Valid
	WE3	0,776		Valid
	WE4	0,589		Valid
	WE5	0,602		Valid
	WE6	0,622		Valid
	WE7	0,681		Valid
	WE8	0,742		Valid
	WE9	0,741		Valid
	WE10	0,717		Valid
	WE11	0,695		Valid
	WE12	0,769		Valid
	WE13	0,619		Valid

The capacity of indicators to be used as measuring instruments in assessing constructs or variables is known as test validity (Tjahjono, 2015). A validity test is used to test the item so that the accuracy and validity of a research instrument can be determined (see Table 2). The item was considered valid when the significance value was  $> 0.50$ . The results of the validity test are as seen in Table 2.

After testing the validity of the 30 statement indicators using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the results show that all statement indicators have a CFA  $> 0,5$ . Therefore, all the statement indicators in this study can be used. Furthermore, a reliability test demonstrated the reliability of the measuring instrument (see Table 3). The degree to which each indication suggests a general form is measured by reliability, which measures the internal consistency of the indicators in a form variable (Tjahjono et al., 2021). Reliability testing in this study uses Construct Reliability (CR), which has the criterion that if the CR value is  $> 0,7$ , the variable can be reliable.

**Table 3.** Reliability Test

Variable	Indicator	Standard Loading	Standard Loading <sup>2</sup>	1-Standard Loading <sup>2</sup>	Construct Reliability
Spiritual Leadership	SL1	0,825	0,680625	0,319375	0,91683941
	SL2	0,691	0,477481	0,522519	
	SL3	0,633	0,400689	0,599311	
	SL4	0,743	0,552049	0,447951	
	SL5	0,73	0,5329	0,4671	
	SL6	0,706	0,498436	0,501564	
	SL7	0,756	0,571536	0,428464	
	SL8	0,615	0,378225	0,621775	
	SL9	0,726	0,527076	0,472924	
	SL10	0,726	0,527076	0,472924	
	SL11	0,617	0,380689	0,619311	
Psychological Empowerment	PE1	0,821	0,674041	0,325959	0,92780501
	PE2	0,811	0,657721	0,342279	
	PE3	0,855	0,731025	0,268975	
	PE4	0,871	0,758641	0,241359	
	PE5	0,795	0,632025	0,367975	
	PE6	0,799	0,638401	0,361599	
Work Engagement	WE1	0,762	0,580644	0,419356	0,92680931
	WE2	0,769	0,591361	0,408639	
	WE3	0,761	0,579121	0,420879	
	WE4	0,575	0,330625	0,669375	
	WE5	0,597	0,356409	0,643591	
	WE6	0,616	0,379456	0,620544	
	WE7	0,697	0,485809	0,514191	
	WE8	0,768	0,589824	0,410176	
	WE9	0,703	0,494209	0,505791	
	WE10	0,75	0,5625	0,4375	
	WE11	0,72	0,5184	0,4816	
	WE12	0,772	0,595984	0,404016	
	WE13	0,619	0,383161	0,616839	

## Result

After all SEM assumptions were met with various criteria, the next step was to test the overall model fit. Based on the results in Table 4, there are two data results: before and after. Two different data points are displayed because the result data with the research model shown in the measurement do not reach a fit value. Modification indices are determined by correlating the measurement error or adding a particular path. According to Yamin (2021), several models do not reach a fair value; therefore, the next step is to start with respect to. The response of the model was carried out at the

measurement or CFA model stages. One way of respecifying the model is to determine whether there is a large standard residual (SR).

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is a measure that attempts to improve the statistical tendency of the chi-squared model with many samples. The RMSEA value in this research model is 0.076. This value indicates that the research model fits because it meets the recommended value level of  $\leq 0.08$ . The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is a non-statistical measure whose values range from 0 to 1. It shows the overall level of fit of the model, which is calculated from the squared residuals of the predicted model compared with the actual data. The GFI for this research model was 0.758. This value indicates that the research model is a marginal fit because it is close to the recommended value of  $\geq 0.90$ .

The adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) is a development of the GFI, which is adjusted to the ratio between the degrees of freedom of the null model. The AGFI results for the model in this research are 0.704. This value indicates that the research model is a marginal fit because it is close to the recommended value of  $\geq 0.90$ . Furthermore, CMIN/DF is the chi-square value divided by the degrees of freedom. The CMIN/DF values in this research model were 659.637. This value indicates that the research model fits because it meets the recommended value of  $\leq 2$ . The Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) is an index of conformity that is less affected by sample size. In the present study, the TLI value was 0.887. This value indicates that the research model is a marginal fit because it is close to the recommended value of  $\geq 0.90$ . The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is not affected by sample size because it is perfect for measuring the level of acceptance of the model. The CFI result for this research model is 0.901. This value indicates that the research model is fit because it is close to the recommended value of  $\geq 0.90$ .

**Table 4.** Goodness of fit result

Goodness of fit index	Cut-off Value	Before		After	
		Research Model	Model	Research Model	Model
Chi-square	Expected small	994.333	Unfit	659.637	Unfit
Probability	$\geq 0.09$	0	Unfit	0	Unfit
RMSEA	$\leq 0.08$	0,107	Unfit	0.076	Fit
GFI	$\geq 0.90$	0,666	Unfit	0.758	Marginal Fit
AGFI	$\geq 0.90$	0,614	Unfit	0.704	Marginal Fit
CMIN/DF	$\leq 2$	2.473	Unfit	1.731	Fit
TLI	$\geq 0.90$	0,773	Unfit	0.887	Marginal Fit
CFI	$\geq 0.90$	0,79	Unfit	0.901	Fit

Table 4 displays the results of the goodness-of-fit test, it can be seen that the two criteria are declared fit. Hence, the researcher refers to the principle of parsimony proposed by Fatmawati and Fauzan (2021); if one or two criteria are declared fit, then the overall model can be declared good or accepted. This principle serves as a reference for researchers to continue the following analysis. Based on the overall measurement of the Goodness of Fit above, the model proposed in this study is acceptable.

Hypothesis testing was conducted to answer this study's questions or to analyze the model's structural relationships. The hypothesis data analysis can be seen from the standardized regression weight value, which shows the coefficient of influence between the variables in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Hypothesis Result

	Estimate	S.E	C.R.	P	Hypothesis
Spiritual Leadership $\rightarrow$ Work Engagement	0,354	0,077	4,577	***	Positive
Spiritual Leadership $\rightarrow$ Psychological Empowerment	0,529	0,087	6,097	***	Positive
Psychological Empowerment $\rightarrow$ Work Engagement	0,738	0,118	6,229	***	Positive

The output parameter estimation results for spiritual leadership and work engagement had a standardized regression weight coefficient of 0.354. This indicates that the relationship between

spiritual leadership and work engagement is positive. The higher the level of spiritual leadership applied, the better work engagement. Testing these two variables showed a probability of  $0.001 < 0.05$ . So, hypothesis 1 is accepted, and it can be stated that spiritual Leadership positively influences work engagement.

The output parameter estimation results between spiritual leadership and psychological empowerment had a coefficient value of the standardized regression weight of 0.529. This indicates that the relationship between spiritual leadership and psychological empowerment is positive. The higher the level of spiritual leadership applied, the better the psychological empowerment. Testing these two variables showed a probability of  $0.001 < 0.05$ . So, hypothesis 2 is accepted, and it can be stated that spiritual leadership positively influences psychological empowerment.

The output parameter estimation results for psychological empowerment and work engagement had a standardized regression weight coefficient of 0.738. This indicates that the relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement is positive. The higher the level of psychological empowerment, the better the work engagement. Testing these two variables showed a probability of  $0.001 < 0.05$ . Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was accepted, and psychological empowerment positively affected work engagement.

Tables 6 and 7 show that the influence of spiritual leadership on work engagement with psychological empowerment as an intervening variable was as follows:

**Table 6.** Standardized Direct Effect

	Spiritual Leadership	Psychological Empowerment	Work Engagement
Psychological Empowerment	0,641	0,000	0,000
Work Engagement	0,366	0,629	0,000

**Table 7.** Standardized Indirect Effect

	Spiritual Leadership	Psychological Empowerment	Work Engagement
Psychological Empowerment	0,000	0,000	0,000
Work Engagement	0,403	0,000	0,000

The effect of spiritual leadership on work engagement with psychological empowerment as an intervening variable by looking at the value between direct and indirect effects. The results of testing the relationship between the two variables indicate a value of  $0.366 < 0.403$ . In this study, the value of the standard direct effect is smaller than that of the standard indirect effect. The higher level of spiritual leadership that is applied will increase psychological empowerment and work engagement. Therefore, hypothesis 4, with the psychological empowerment influence of spiritual leadership and work engagement, is accepted.

## Discussion

Spiritual leadership positively impacts work engagement; the higher the level of spiritual leadership applied, the better the work engagement. Superiors' level of spiritual leadership can influence teachers' work engagement at Muhammadiyah Junior High School in Yogyakarta, as this school is one of Muhammadiyah's social efforts in education. The teachers working there have a vision and hope to advance the Muhammadiyah organization through education. Therefore, superiors' level of spiritual leadership can affect work engagement at Muhammadiyah Junior High School in Yogyakarta. Previous research results, as conveyed by Saripudin and Rosari (2019) shows that spiritual leadership has a significant positive effect on work engagement. This is similar to the research conducted by Wu and Lee (2020) demonstrated that spiritual leadership positively influences work engagement.

The results indicate that spiritual leadership has a positive effect on psychological empowerment. Superiors' level of spiritual leadership can influence the psychological empowerment of teachers at Muhammadiyah Junior High School in Yogyakarta in their work. In

this case, spiritual leadership behavior is demonstrated by the nature of superiors who care about their subordinates, so that teachers feel empowered by their superiors. When teachers feel empowered by their superiors, they are highly motivated to do work. This finding is consistent with research by Yusefi et al. (2022), who stated that spiritual leadership has a significant relationship with psychological empowerment. This study also aligns with the research conducted by Febrianto et al. (2019), who found that psychological empowerment and Islamic spiritual leadership significantly affect intrinsic motivation and organizational commitment. In this study, the relationship between psychological empowerment and work engagement was positive.

Therefore, hypothesis 3 was accepted, and it can be stated that psychological empowerment positively affects work engagement. Work engagement at Muhammadiyah Junior High School in Yogyakarta is evident from the enthusiasm and dedication of teachers to carry out their tasks in educating students. This spirit, arising from within, impacts the education of the next generation and the progress of the Muhammadiyah organization in education. Empowering leadership factors also enable teachers to perform their duties with the best performance. Ahmad and Gao (2018) state that psychological empowerment positively affects work engagement. This study is consistent with the research conducted by Alotaibi et al. (2020), who found that psychological empowerment has a significant positive relationship with work engagement.

Spiritual leadership is an action necessary to inspire oneself and others to find meaning or purpose in life. Psychological empowerment is an increase in everyone's drive toward work. The effect of spiritual leadership on work engagement with psychological empowerment as an intervening variable by examining the value between the direct and indirect effects. In this study, the value of the standard direct effect is smaller than that of the standard indirect effect. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 in this study, with the mediating influence of psychological empowerment on spiritual leadership and work engagement, is accepted, stating that there is an indirect effect. This indicates that if the level of spiritual leadership at Muhammadiyah Junior High School in Yogyakarta is high, motivation for work will increase. Highly dedicated teachers will be enthusiastic about their work, leading to improved performance and achieving the organization's vision. Thus, spiritual leadership enhances employees' sense of psychological empowerment by encouraging them to participate actively, thereby increasing their work engagement. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis of Zhang and Yang (2021), which suggests that employees who feel empowered tend to be motivated to improve work engagement. Ahmad and Gao (2018) also stated that psychological empowerment positively affects work engagement, in line with the results of research conducted by Alotaibi et al. (2020).

## Conclusion

The research results indicate that the higher the level of spiritual leadership applied, the more it enhances psychological empowerment and positively influences work engagement among teachers at Muhammadiyah Junior High School in Yogyakarta. The research method involved distributing questionnaires to respondents through the deputy heads of the school or curriculum department. Due to the respondents' busy schedules, the researchers did not accompany them while they filled out the questionnaires. This approach allows researchers to ensure that questionnaires are filled out accurately, thereby minimizing potential biases in the completion process.

It should be noted that only 129 questionnaires were completed by the teachers, while several other questionnaires were not completed for various reasons. This was due to the high workload of the teachers, leading to the need for more time to complete the questionnaires correctly. Nevertheless, the gathered data still provide valuable insights into the impact of spiritual leadership on psychological empowerment and work engagement in the Muhammadiyah Junior High School environment in Yogyakarta.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono

Data curation: Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono



Formal analysis: Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono  
 Investigation: Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono  
 Methodology: Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono  
 Project administration: Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono  
 Supervision: Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono  
 Validation: Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono  
 Visualization: Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono  
 Writing –original draft: Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono  
 Writing –review & editing: Dessy Triharjanti, Heru Kurnianto Tjahjono

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