

The Role of Spiritual Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, and School Principals' Leadership in Improving Teacher Performance through Work Motivation: A Systematic Literature Review

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 2026-07-03

Revised 2026-07-25

Accepted 2026-08-02

Keywords:

Emotional Intelligence

Spiritual Intelligence

Work Motivation

ABSTRACT

This study aims to systematically examine the relationship between spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, principal leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The SLR method was chosen because it can integrate empirical findings transparently and is replicable. The selection process followed the PRISMA 2016-2026 guidelines, starting with 320 articles identified through the Scopus, ScienceDirect, Emerald, and Google Scholar databases, which were then screened based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, resulting in 32 final articles eligible for analysis. The results of the synthesis indicate that spiritual intelligence contributes to shaping teachers' intrinsic motivation and professional integrity, while emotional intelligence plays a role in emotion regulation and interpersonal effectiveness, which in turn impact performance. School principal leadership, particularly the transformational style, was found to be the primary external factor driving teachers' motivation and performance. Work motivation was identified as a key mediating variable bridging the influence of these three factors on teacher performance, as explained within the framework of Self-Determination Theory. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of developing teachers' spiritual and emotional intelligence, as well as strengthening principals' leadership capacity, as strategies for the sustainable improvement of educational quality.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of education is one of the top priorities in human resource development [1]. The success of the educational process is not only determined by the curriculum, facilities and infrastructure, or government policies, but is also significantly

influenced by the quality of teachers' performance as the primary implementers of the learning process [2]. High-performing teachers are able to plan lessons effectively, implement innovative teaching methods, conduct objective evaluations, and contribute to the sustainable achievement of educational goals. Various studies in recent years have shown that improving teacher performance has become a critical concern in many countries because it is directly linked to the quality of instruction, student learning outcomes, and the competitiveness of educational institutions in an era of increasingly rapid change [3]. These conditions indicate that improving teacher performance is a strategic issue that continues to be a focus of research in the field of educational management.

Various studies indicate that both internal and external factors influence teacher performance. Internal factors include individual psychological characteristics, such as emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence, while external factors encompass school principal leadership, organizational culture, the work environment, and the school's reward system. Among these factors, emotional intelligence has garnered increasing attention due to its role in teachers' ability to manage emotions, build interpersonal relationships, resolve conflicts, and adapt to changes in the work environment. Research by Mandela et al. (2026) shows that emotional intelligence has a positive effect on work motivation while directly improving teacher performance. Similar findings were also reported by Oo et al. (2018), who stated that teachers with higher emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate higher work performance compared to teachers with poor emotional regulation skills.

In addition to emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence is also viewed as a key factor in enhancing teachers' professionalism [6]. Spiritual intelligence helps individuals understand the meaning of their work, build integrity, uphold moral values, and strengthen their commitment to the profession. In the context of education, teachers with strong spiritual intelligence tend to cope with work-related stress more positively, maintain professional ethics, and create a more humanistic learning environment [7]. Research by Timang et al. [8] found that spiritual intelligence has a positive influence on improving teacher performance. It should be noted that the study by Zhou et al. [9], which employed a systematic review and meta-analysis approach, examined the relationship between emotional and spiritual intelligence and student achievement, not directly teacher performance. Nevertheless, these findings remain relevant because spiritual and emotional intelligence, which influence student achievement, indirectly reflect the effectiveness of teachers' work; thus, they can serve as supporting references in understanding the roles of these two forms of intelligence in an educational context.

School principal leadership is an organizational factor that significantly influences teacher behavior and performance [10]. School principals serve not only as administrators but also as leaders capable of providing vision, motivation, support, guidance, and setting a positive example for the entire school community [11]. Effective leadership can create a conducive work environment, enhance organizational commitment, strengthen collaboration, and encourage teachers to improve their competencies continuously. Various studies indicate that principal transformational leadership consistently has a positive impact on both teacher motivation and performance [12]. A recent literature review by

Even & Ben David-Hadar [13] also confirms that principal leadership is a key determinant in building a school culture that supports improvements in teacher performance.

Although research on teacher performance has grown substantially, several important research gaps remain. First, most previous studies have examined the effects of emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, or school principals' leadership independently, without providing a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships among these variables within a single conceptual framework. Second, the role of work motivation as a mediating variable in enhancing teacher performance has produced mixed findings, resulting in inconsistent conclusions across different educational contexts. Third, the majority of previous studies have employed empirical quantitative approaches within specific institutional or regional settings, limiting the generalizability of their findings and the development of a comprehensive synthesis of existing evidence. Therefore, this study offers a significant contribution by systematically integrating previous research on the relationships among spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, school principals' leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to systematically analyze and synthesize the existing body of evidence regarding the roles of spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, and school principals' leadership in improving teacher performance through work motivation.

2. METHOD

This study employed a *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize previous research on spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, school principals' leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance [14]. The SLR method was selected because it provides a systematic, transparent, and replicable synthesis of the existing literature while minimizing bias in the study selection process. According to Snyder [15], SLR is an appropriate approach for comprehensively integrating empirical evidence, enabling researchers to understand theoretical developments and identify research gaps. The review process followed the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines. A review protocol was developed prior to the literature search, focusing on three research questions: (1) the relationships among spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, school principals' leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance; (2) the mediating role of work motivation; and (3) the identification of existing research gaps. The literature search was conducted between May and June 2026 using four major scientific databases: Scopus, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar. Search strings were developed using Boolean operators and adapted to the indexing structure of each database.

The inclusion criteria comprised studies involving teachers and/or school principals in primary, secondary, or higher education; conducted within formal educational settings; employing quantitative, *Systematic Literature Review*, *meta-analysis*, or mixed-methods designs; published in English or Indonesian between 2016 and 2026; appearing in peer-reviewed and indexed journals; and addressing at least two of the following variables: spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, school principals' leadership, work

motivation, or teacher performance. Studies were excluded if they were conducted outside educational settings, unavailable in full text, published as editorials or opinion papers without empirical evidence, or demonstrated insufficient methodological quality. Following the PRISMA 2020 framework, the identification stage yielded 320 records, of which 31 duplicates were removed, leaving 289 unique articles. During the title and abstract screening, 237 articles were excluded because they did not meet the eligibility criteria, resulting in 52 articles for full-text assessment. Subsequently, 40 articles were excluded due to failure to satisfy the inclusion criteria, and the remaining 32 studies were included in the final review. The methodological quality of the selected studies was assessed using a modified checklist based on the *Effective Public Health Practice Project* (EPHPP) Quality Assessment Tool for quantitative studies and *A MeaSurement Tool to Assess Systematic Reviews* (AMSTAR-2) for review studies. The assessment considered the clarity of research objectives, appropriateness of the study design, instrument validity, rigor of data analysis, and completeness of results reporting.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following the PRISMA 2020 selection process, a total of 32 studies met the eligibility criteria and were included in the final review. Due to space limitations, Table 1 presents only ten representative studies selected from the final dataset. These studies were purposively selected to reflect the diversity of research contexts, methodological approaches, variables examined, and key findings related to spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, school principals' leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance. Nevertheless, all 25 eligible studies were included in the thematic synthesis and subsequent discussion to ensure a comprehensive and balanced interpretation of the existing evidence.

Table 1. Articles Analyzed in the SLR

No	Title	Author	Year	Journal/Source	Result
1	Adversity Quotient Promotes Teachers' Professional Competence More Strongly Than Emotional Intelligence: Evidence from Indonesia	Widodo, W., Gustari, I., & Chandrawaty, C. [16]	2022	Journal of Intelligence (MDPI)	The results of the study indicate that emotional intelligence has a significant relationship with teachers' professional competence.
2	The Influence of Principal Transformational Leadership on Teacher Performance and Learning Quality in Schools	[17]	2024	International Journal of Educational Dynamics	The results show that a positive principal leadership style can improve teacher productivity and job satisfaction, which in turn has an impact on improving the quality of learning and student learning outcomes.

No	Title	Author	Year	Journal/Source	Result
3	The direct and cascading impacts of school leaders' emotional intelligence on teachers and students: A systematic review	[18]	2025	<i>Education Sciences</i>)	The findings revealed that self-awareness, empathy, and relationship management emerged as core emotional intelligence competencies for school leaders across contexts, and principals with high emotional intelligence positively impacted teachers' emotional reframing, instructional delivery, and collective efficacy.
4	The Influence of School Principal Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and Teacher Well-being on Teacher Performance	[19].	2025	Indonesian Educational Administration and Leadership Journal	The results show that there is a significant joint effect from the variables of school principal leadership, emotional intelligence, and teacher well-being on teacher performance, with an R-squared (R^2) value of 0.570 and an adjusted R-squared value of 0.567.
5	Principals' Leadership Styles and Their Impact on Teachers' Performance at the College Level	Sarwar, U., Tariq, R., & Yong, Q. Z. [20]	2022	Frontiers in Psychology	The results of this study suggest that college principals should adopt a leadership style according to the level of teachers. The leadership style should be changed with specific situations in the colleges.
6	The Influence of the Principal's Managerial Ability, Training, and Spiritual Intelligence on Teacher Performance at SMPN 1 Rantepao	Timang, M., Nadeak, B., & Sihotang, H.[8]	2021	International Journal of Research (Granthaalayah)	The results showed that, referring to the results of double linear regression analysis, it can be concluded that managerial ability, training, and spiritual intelligence have a significant and positive effect on teacher performance at SMP Negeri 1 Rantepao,
7	The relationship between emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and student achievement: a systematic review and meta-analysis	Zhou, Z., Tavan, H., Kavarizadeh, F., Sarokhani, [9]	2024	BMC Medical Education	Emotional and spiritual intelligence are independent predictive factors in educational achievement for university and school students. Therefore, improvements in emotional and spiritual intelligence can promote students' academic achievement.

No	Title	Author	Year	Journal/Source	Result
8	Transformational Leadership and Teacher Performance in Primary Schools: The Mediating Role of Work Motivation	[21]	2025	International Journal of Instruction	The implications of these findings emphasize the importance of strengthening discipline, transformational leadership, and organizational culture directly to improve teacher performance. More effective development strategies should focus on these factors, while work motivation plays a supporting role rather than a primary mediating role.
9	The Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence and the Effectiveness of Principals' Leadership	[22]	2017	International Journal of Psychological and Brain Sciences	There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence together on the effectiveness of public SMA leadership chief in the city of Surabaya, with correlation coefficients together at 0.963 and effective contribution of 92.7%.
10	The Role of Students' Spiritual Intelligence in Enhancing Their Academic Engagement: A Theoretical Review	[23]	2022	Frontiers in Psychology	The study enumerated the existing gaps and offered future directions and implications for educational practitioners and researchers whose awareness of spiritual intelligence and its impact on L2 education and learner-psychology variables can improve.

As presented in Table 1, the reviewed studies consistently indicate that spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, and school principals' leadership play important roles in improving teacher performance. Emotional and spiritual intelligence contribute to teachers' professionalism, adaptability, and instructional effectiveness, while effective principal leadership enhances teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance. Although several studies identified work motivation as a mediating factor, its role remains inconsistent across different research contexts. These findings suggest that a comprehensive synthesis is needed to understand better the relationships among these variables in improving teacher performance.

Spiritual Intelligence and Its Impact on Teachers' Work Motivation and Performance

The findings of the synthesis by Timang et al. [8] indicate that spiritual intelligence has a direct positive influence on teacher performance through the enhancement of moral values, integrity, and a sense of meaning in one's work. Teachers with high spiritual intelligence tend to view their profession as a form of service, enabling them to withstand work-related pressures better and maintain optimal performance. These findings are supported by Zhou et al. [9], who, in a meta-analysis, found that spiritual intelligence is consistently positively associated with individual performance in an educational context. It should be noted that Pinto et al. [24] specifically examined the relationship between spiritual intelligence and student learning outcomes, not teacher performance directly. The relevance of this finding to the present study lies in the assumption that teachers' spiritual intelligence influences the effectiveness of learning, which is ultimately reflected in student achievement as an indirect proxy for teacher performance.

From a work motivation perspective, spiritual intelligence plays a role in shaping teachers' intrinsic motivation, that is, the internal drive arising from the meaning of work and personal goals. Teachers with high spiritual awareness find it easier to derive satisfaction from their work, leading to a natural increase in work motivation. Unlike Andrei [25], who emphasized direct effects, studies referencing Self-Determination place greater emphasis on indirect pathways through intrinsic motivation. This difference is likely due to variations in measurement instruments and sample characteristics, as the study of teachers in a junior high school context yielded more specific findings compared to cross-educational-level studies.

Emotional Intelligence and Its Effects on Teachers' Work Motivation and Performance

D'Amico & Geraci [26] indicate that emotional intelligence significantly influences teachers' work motivation and performance through a mediating effect. Teachers who are able to manage their emotions well find it easier to cope with work-related stress, maintain interpersonal relationships, and create a positive work environment, which ultimately enhances their motivation and performance. These findings align with those of others who explicitly state that the “ ” of emotional intelligence contributes to improved performance through teachers' ability to manage conflicts and adapt to the school environment. Nevertheless, Shengyao et al. [27] found slightly different results, in which the adversity quotient (AQ) was shown to have a stronger influence on teachers' professional competence than emotional intelligence. This difference suggests that the influence of emotional intelligence on teacher performance may be contextual and dependent on moderating factors such as the level of work-related stress, school culture, and educational level. Costa & Faria [28] also emphasized the role of emotional intelligence in individual effectiveness in the field of education, although their focus was on student achievement. As explained earlier, these findings are used as supporting references with full awareness of the limitations of extrapolating them to the context of teacher performance. Thus, emotional intelligence can be understood as an internal factor

that plays a crucial role in building work motivation and improving teacher performance, with the intensity of its influence varying depending on the context.

Principal Leadership on Teacher Work Motivation and Performance

The results of the study by Qi et al. [29] indicate that principal leadership has a significant influence on teacher performance, both directly and through work motivation. The transformational leadership demonstrated by the principal is able to create a supportive work environment, increase teacher engagement, and strengthen commitment to carrying out duties. It is important to note that the study by Parveen et al. [30] was conducted in a *college-level* context in Pakistan; therefore, caution is needed when generalizing these findings to the context of school principals at the elementary and secondary levels. Nevertheless, the principles of transformational leadership that drive individual motivation and performance are believed to hold validity across educational levels.

Work Motivation as a Mediating Variable

Work motivation, particularly autonomous motivation, serves as a key mechanism that bridges the influence of psychological factors and the work environment on teacher performance. Teachers with high work motivation demonstrate higher levels of engagement, perseverance, and productivity in the learning process. Drawing on *Self-Determination Theory*, it is emphasized that intrinsic motivation arising from the fulfillment of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is a key factor in enhancing individual performance. Studies supporting the mediating effect of work motivation include a significant mediating pathway from emotional intelligence and principal leadership through work motivation to teacher performance. Effect of spiritual intelligence on performance without explicitly testing the mediating role of motivation. This difference suggests that the mediating role of work motivation may be stronger for external variables (leadership) than for highly internal variables (spiritual intelligence), as internalized spirituality tends to directly shape work behavior without requiring additional motivational mechanisms.

Teacher Performance from an Integrative Perspective

Teacher performance is the result of the interaction between internal and external factors that influence teachers' work behavior. Kanya et al. [31] state that teacher performance is significantly influenced by the principal's leadership style and the level of work motivation. Meanwhile, Nurabadi et al. [32] add that teacher performance is influenced not only by external factors but also by internal psychological conditions such as motivation and work well-being. These differences in results are likely due to the heterogeneity of performance measurement instruments, differences in cultural contexts and educational systems, as well as variations in sample characteristics. Overall, the SLR results indicate a consistent pattern of relationships: spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence act as internal factors, while principal leadership functions as an external factor, with work motivation serving as the key mediating variable. This relationship model suggests that improved teacher performance can be achieved by strengthening

spiritual and emotional aspects, as well as effective leadership, with work motivation serving as the primary driving mechanism.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions, this Systematic Literature Review demonstrates that spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, and school principals' leadership are important determinants of teacher performance across various educational contexts. Spiritual and emotional intelligence function as internal factors that enhance teachers' professionalism, adaptability, ethical behavior, and instructional effectiveness, whereas effective school principals' leadership serves as an external factor that fosters a supportive work environment and strengthens teachers' commitment to their professional responsibilities. In addition, work motivation emerges as an important mechanism linking these internal and external factors to teacher performance, although the strength of its mediating role varies across studies. Overall, the findings reveal a consistent pattern indicating that improving teacher performance requires an integrated approach that combines the development of teachers' psychological competencies with effective school leadership. This review also highlights that previous studies have predominantly examined these variables separately, leaving limited evidence regarding their simultaneous relationships within a single conceptual framework. Therefore, this study contributes by synthesizing existing evidence and providing a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions among spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, school principals' leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance.

Future research is recommended to empirically examine the integrated relationships among spiritual intelligence, emotional intelligence, school principals' leadership, work motivation, and teacher performance using comprehensive conceptual models. Longitudinal studies, cross-cultural comparisons, and structural equation modeling are encouraged to better explain the causal mechanisms and mediating effects among these variables. Furthermore, future studies should consider additional organizational and psychological factors, such as organizational culture, teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of teacher performance across different educational settings.

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