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Article

Beyond the algorithm: The role of Spiritual Intelligence in fostering job satisfaction in Sri Lankan IT professionals

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Abstract: Spiritual Intelligence (SI) has become a key contributor towards enhancing employee well-being and job satisfaction (JS) in the modern competitive business world. This study examines the impact of SI on JS among Sri Lankan IT professionals, considering gender's role in this relationship. Analyzing data from 383 respondents using Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the study reveals a strong positive correlation between SI and JS, with no moderating effect on gender. The study highlights the importance of embedding SI into HR and organizational policies to enhance workforce resilience and retention while contributing to broader industry development and global competitiveness in the IT sector.

Keywords: Spiritual Intelligence; job satisfaction; gender; IT sector

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction (JS) is crucial for reducing employee absenteeism and turnover, enhancing commitment, and boosting productivity (Bezdrob and Sunje, 2021). High JS leads to reduced stress, increased loyalty, and better work quality (Chen, 2006). Among many prevailing factors affecting the JS of employees, Spiritual Intelligence (SI) is gaining popularity in the area of management, with its relatedness to many positive consequences at work (Mohamed et al., 2020). Spiritual Intelligence refers to an internal capability that enhances self-awareness, enabling individuals to discern right from wrong, confront challenges, and adapt to various situations (Skrzypinska, 2021; Zohar and Marshall, 2000). Therefore, by encompassing SI within, it could lead an employee towards a deeper understanding of rationality and organizational circumstances, face challenges boldly, and act effectively and meaningfully in workplaces which would promote superior employee behavior leading to satisfaction in the jobs they do (Chin et al., 2011).

Despite the growing interest in SI and its impact on JS, previous research has largely focused on traditional, people-centric sectors such as academia, banking, and healthcare (Kulshretha, 2017; Meghana and Mohan, 2020; Ravikumar and Dhamodharan, 2014; Vem et al., 2024). In people-centric professions, the emotional component of an employee's work directly impacts JS. This is equally true for high-tech industries such as Information Technology (IT) (Bezdrob and Sunje, 2021). As one of the emerging sectors in the global economy, the IT industry's growth and the realization of its benefits largely depend on having satisfied employees (Dhanshetti et al., 2021). While researchers agree that JS in this sector profoundly influences

productivity and overall sector development, the specific factors contributing to satisfaction of IT sector employees remain unclear (Storey et al., 2019). Nevertheless, extant studies have not extensively explored the high-tech, rapidly evolving IT industry, particularly in the context of Sri Lanka, where the industry is of relatively high relevance concerning economic relevance and job security. Adding to this, given the high-stress and fast-paced environment of the IT sector, it is crucial to investigate how SI might influence job satisfaction among IT professionals. Despite existing literature highlighting SI as a key determinant of JS and considering the IT sector's critical role as a high-growth industry, the lack of studies examining the impact of SI on IT professionals' JS presents a notable empirical gap. Additionally, while gender has been examined as a potential moderator in other sectors (Vem et al., 2019; Weeratunga and Singh, 2019), its role in the IT industry remains unclear, with limited empirical evidence. This study addresses the said gaps by examining the relationship between SI and JS among IT professionals in Sri Lanka. Additionally, it explores the moderating role of gender, providing insights into whether SI-driven interventions can be effectively applied across diverse workforce demographics.

In this perspective, the present study holds significance in multiple ways. On the theoretical front, it contributes to the growing body of literature on SI and its impact on employee well-being, specifically in the IT sector, where research is scarce (Storey et al., 2019). In fact, it examines the potential moderating role of gender in the relationship between SI and JS, a factor that has been largely overlooked in previous research (Vem et al., 2019; Weeratunga and Singh, 2019). On a practical level, the findings of this study reveal valuable insights to Human Resource (HR) managers and organizational leaders in the IT sector about the potential benefits of integrating SI into employee development programs. Additionally, the findings are expected to be instructive for practitioners in the IT industry. By demonstrating a strong positive relationship between SI and JS among IT professionals, this research highlights the importance of harmonizing SI development into organizational practices. The lack of gender moderation suggests that SI training can be universally applied across diverse workforce demographics, making it a valuable tool for enhancing employee well-being and performance. Accordingly, these insights provide a clear directive for the said parties to incorporate SI-focused training programs to foster a more engaged, satisfied, resilient and productive workforce, particularly within the context of Sri Lanka's the rapidly evolving IT sector.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Spiritual Intelligence

Spiritual Intelligence is the capacity to solve issues and create systems that effectively achieve goals and objectives (Meghana and Mohan, 2020). Historically, human intellect has been associated with the Intelligence Quotient (IQ), but SI encompasses attributes such as compassion, integrity, wisdom, love, creativity, and peace. Developing SI enhances self-awareness and broadens the capacity for meaningful action, aligning one's life with their true self (Negi and Khanna, 2017). SI fosters a stable self-perception in workplace settings and helps align personal

values with a sense of purpose (George, 2006). It is a modern concept that shapes attitudes and personalities, aiding individuals in making wise decisions and enhancing their abilities (Hammouri and Alenzi, 2016). SI is further defined by a person's ability to observe the world, themselves, and how they want to live their lives (Ronel and Gan, 2008). It involves creating a deep understanding of life's causes and using this insight to address problems (Khorshidi and Ebaadi, 2012). According to King (2008), SI consists of flexible mental skills based on transcendent and immaterial aspects of reality, particularly those involving awareness, integration, and adaptability. Spirituality, often linked with SI, involves the formation of aspirations and personal ideals, and the belief in a higher power. It is described as the search for the divine, emphasizing the significance of discovering one's unique path to enlightenment (Negi and Khanna, 2017). Spirituality constructs value and culture within the workplace, contributing to peace, delight, and love (Awais et al., 2015). SI combines traits that help individuals solve daily problems and maintain a positive outlook on life (Meghana and Mohan, 2020).

Spiritual Intelligence is increasingly recognized for its role in enhancing job satisfaction across industries, particularly in high-stress environments like the IT sector. Studies suggest that SI fosters resilience and reduces burnout, improving overall well-being and performance (Sreeja et al., 2023). Research on SI in the IT industry emphasizes that employees with higher SI are better equipped to handle the rapid technological changes and tight deadlines key characteristics of this sector, leading to improved JS (Aftab et al., 2022). Moreover, SI has been shown to foster creativity and problem-solving, key drivers of innovation in IT professionals (Sreeja and Mukherjee, 2018).

According to King (2008), SI entails four constructs namely, *Critical Existence Thinking, Personal Meaning Production, Transcendental Awareness and Conscious State Expansion.* Critical existence thinking is the ability to consider existential and metaphysical questions, such as time, space, reality, and the nature of existence (Oxford University Press, 2001). This construct involves perceiving value and meaning in concrete situations and helping others find purpose and meaning in life (Halama and Strizenec, 2004). Personal meaning production is the ability to construct personal meaning and purpose in all events, serving as a coping mechanism in stressful situations (Kiesling et al., 2006; King, 2008). This construct helps individuals create meaning-based solutions, aiding in problem-solving and enhancing understanding of human cognition. Transcendental awareness entails recognizing transcendent dimensions of oneself and the physical world while in a normal state of consciousness (Hamel et al., 2003). It includes the awareness of a spiritual center, or self, and the realization of a unitive consciousness (Maslow, 1943). Arnold (2018) emphasized that transcendent awareness helps young people channel self-awareness into meaningful activities and advocacy, strengthening their commitment to core values and societal contributions. Conscious state expansion is the ability to enter and exit spiritual states of consciousness at will, such as during meditation or prayer (King, 2008). This construct involves intentional cognitive processes leading to higher states of awareness, which can enhance self-actualization and performance (King, 2008). It is crucial for employees to enhance JS and productivity in the workplace. As such, SI is traced as a multifaceted intelligence that

collectively contributes to an individual's ability to navigate life's challenges with a deeper sense of purpose and meaning, fostering personal and professional growth.

In the context of the IT sector in Sri Lanka, fostering SI through leadership programs and organizational culture can significantly enhance JS. Moreover, SI development, when integrated into employee training, promotes emotional intelligence, ethical decision-making, and a sense of purpose, all of which contribute to JS (Essandoh et al., 2023). This is especially important in a sector characterized by high burnout rates and staff turnover.

2.2. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as the extent to which employees are content with their jobs, encompassing various aspects such as satisfaction with coworkers, managers, organizational policies, and the impact of work on personal life. Chen (2006) describes JS as the emotional response and attitude towards the workplace, influenced by factors like supervisor relationships, work environment, and job fulfillment. When individuals achieve more job outcomes than expected, they experience satisfaction, resulting in a pleasant emotional state due to the fulfillment of intended values (Emmons, 2003). Hence, JS reflects positive and favorable emotions, evaluated after assessing the holistic work context (Luthans, 2021; Reddy and Kulshretha, 2019; Robbins and Sanghi, 2006). JS is categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction. Intrinsic satisfaction focuses on the nature of the work and responsibilities, while extrinsic satisfaction centers on work conditions, including the environment, supervisors, pay, and colleagues (Baylor, 2010). Satisfied employees exhibit positive attitudes toward their jobs, whereas dissatisfied employees display negative attitudes (Armstrong, 2006; Mohan and Vasumathi, 2024).

According to Qazi and Kaur (2017), JS is crucial for organizational health and performance, as it is fundamentally linked to employee behavior and attitudes in fulfilling workplace responsibilities. JS is related to various job aspects, including pay, rewards, career development, workplace culture, and relationships with coworkers (Mueller and Kim, 2008). It encompasses both favorable emotional and behavioral aspects (Bernstein, 2008; Rajput; 2023). Board (2007) states that appropriate incentives improve employee performance and satisfaction. Opportunities and rewards as incentives significantly influence employee motivation and satisfaction. Moreover, intangible incentives improve performance, encouraging "thinking smarter" and supporting goal achievement (Broad, 2007; Tiwari et al., 2023). Danish and Usman (2010) confirm a significant relationship between reward, recognition, motivation, and satisfaction. Moreover, Ali and Ahmed (2009), suggest that changes in employee awards or recognition directly impact work motivation and satisfaction. Employees are more satisfied when their work environment aligns with their needs and values (Abraham, 2012). The nature of work plays a crucial role in JS. Research indicates that improving the physical work dimensions enhances firm job satisfaction (Buhai et al., 2008). Singh and Slack (2016) note that motivational factors, such as the nature of work and responsibility contribute to job satisfaction of employees. Supervision is a key factor in JS (Nguyen et al., 2014). Qureshi and Hamid (2017) argue that supervisory support helps employees perform tasks

effectively, providing feedback and performance reviews, leading to JS. As such, opportunities and rewards, the nature of work, and supervision are insinuated in literature as dimensions reflective of JS. The above explained literature supports the hypothesis derived below.

Hypothesis 1: Spiritual Intelligence Significantly Impacts JS.

2.3. Gender as a moderator between SI and JS

The extant research insinuates instances where gender moderates the relationship between spiritual intelligence and job satisfaction across different professionals. In a recent study conducted considering academics, Vem et al. (2019), claim to observe a difference in how SI impacted JS among male and female academics. Moreover, research involving millennial workers found that spiritual intelligence significantly influenced job satisfaction, with gender being a notable moderating factor in this relationship, suggesting that gender roles and expectations might shape how spiritual intelligence impacts job satisfaction (Weeratunga and Singh, 2019). Affirming this, organizational commitment is seen to be influenced by factors like SI that significantly impacts JS, and this relationship is moderated by gender, highlighting that females might derive more JS from SI compared to males (Sherer et al., 1982).

Hence, the below hypothesis is derived based on literature insights explained above.

Hypothesis 2: Gender moderates the relationship between SI and JS.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Participants

Data related to this study were collected from a sample of 450 respondents drawn from the sample population of 81,741 IT professionals employed in IT companies across all provinces in Sri Lanka (Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka, 2021), based on a snowball sampling technique (Lonska et al., 2021). Snowball sampling was selected for this study due to its effectiveness in accessing a niche population of IT professionals in Sri Lanka, who may not be easily reachable through conventional sampling methods. Given the close-knit nature of the IT industry, where professionals often operate within well-established networks, this method allowed the researchers to leverage personal connections for recruitment. Moreover, the snowball sampling method facilitated faster data collection within the limited timeline, ensuring a representative sample while maintaining privacy and discretion for participants. Additionally, this method proved useful in overcoming the challenge of reaching professionals spread across various IT organizations and roles, making it an apt choice for this research context. Out of the total respondents approached, 420 reverted. Since 37 out of the collected responses were incomplete, these were disregarded. Accordingly, only 383 responses were considered as the analytical sample which capped the effective response rate at 91.2%.

3.2. Instrument

The data collection instrument used for this study was a well-structured questionnaire, meticulously developed based on extant literature pertinent to the research issue. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions, where Likert Scale-based answers were entertained. The questionnaire was administered in English, as all participants were conversant in the said language. Therefore, no translation into the local language was required. Spiritual Intelligence was measured in light of four dimensions: Critical existential thinking (five indicators from CET1-CET5), Personal meaning production (five indicators from PMP1-PMP5), Transcendental awareness (four indicators from TA1-TA4) and Conscious state expansion (five indicators from CSE1 to CSE5) on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where "1" denoted "strongly disagree" and "5" denoted "strongly agree", adopted from the Scale of Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (King, 2008). Job Satisfaction was measured in the light of 3 dimensions namely, Opportunity and Rewards (four indicators from OR1 to OR4), Nature of Work (three indicators from NOW1-NOW3), and Supervision (three Indicators from SU1-SU3), similarly to a Likert scale from 1 to 5 as explained before adopted from The Job Training and Job Satisfaction Survey Technical Manual (Schmidt, 2004).

3.3. Research model and statistical analysis

The model prepared in the present study (See **Figure 1**) is referenced to ascertain if the JS of an employee is impacted by the SI of the respective employee. Moreover, the model attempted to determine if gender moderates the afore relationship. As such, SI serves as the independent variable (which was operationalized~~/tested~~ via quadruple dimensions of Critical existential thinking, Personal meaning production, Transcendental awareness, and Conscious state expansion). Job satisfaction was measured via triple dimensions of Opportunity and Rewards, Nature of Work and Supervision.

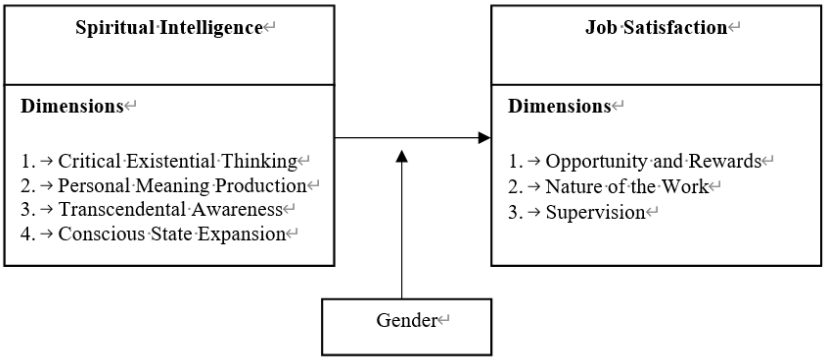

Figure 1. Conceptual model developed based on prior literature support.

In this study, the Partial Least Square approach to Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was utilized to analyze survey data. This approach was employed as it is particularly effective for confirmatory research where multiple latent constructs are being examined. Moreover, PLS-SEM encompasses the ability to handle complex

models with multi-dimensional constructs like SI and JS while working with a sample size that is suitable and viable for this method (Hair et al., 2013). This analysis used a dual-phase model construction approach, as suggested by several scholars (Hair et al., 2013; Rigdon et al., 2010). The initial phase consisted of assessing the measurement model, where reliability and validity were determined by assessing factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for scales with multiple items. Prior to model verification, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the construct validity and discriminant validity of the research measures (Rönkkö and Cho, 2022). Furthermore, Harman's single-factor test was employed to rule out any potential common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The structural model was then examined to see how the proposed relationships fit into the research framework.

4. Results

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic statistics related to the study sample. **Table 2** presents the descriptive statistics of the variables, and **Table 3** presents the reliability and validity of the constructs used in the study.

Table 1. Sociodemographic results related to the research sample ($N = 383$).

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Female	114	29.80%
Male	269	70.20%
Age		
20–29 yrs	248	64.80%
30–39 yrs	120	31.30%
40–49 yrs	15	3.90%
Province/Territory		
Central Province	52	13.60%
Eastern Province	9	2.30%
North Central Province	10	2.60%
North Western Province	4	1.00%
Northern Province	14	3.70%
Sabaragamuwa Province	3	0.80%
Southern Province	27	7.00%
Uva Province	2	0.50%
Western Province	262	68.40%

Source: Compiled based on authors' research.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics.

Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Critical Existential Thinking	4.0200	0.67158	0.451
Conscious State Expansion	3.9100	0.88973	0.792
Transcendental Awareness	4.1900	0.71350	0.509

Table 2. (*Continued*).

Dimensions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Personal Meaning Production	4.2000	0.74066	0.549
Nature of the work supervision	4.3200	0.71941	0.518
Opportunity and Rewards	4.1200	0.67458	0.456
Supervision	3.4100	0.80773	0.702

Source: Smart PLS results.

Table 3. Construct reliability and validity.

	Construct	Indicator reliability		Internal Consistency Reliability		Convergent Validity
		Loadings	t-statistic	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
1.	Critical Existential Thinking					
	CET1	0.710	4.057	0.806	0.864	0.560
	CET2	0.789	7.385			
	CET3	0.708	6.366			
	CET4	0.789	6.860			
2.	Conscious State Expansion					
	CSE1	0.806	5.182	0.882	0.909	0.626
	CSE2	0.792	4.578			
	CSE3	0.819	5.332			
	CSE4	0.794	3.111			
	CSE5	0.775	6.086			
3.	Transcendental Awareness					
	TA1	0.745	6.616	0.822	0.909	0.636
	TA2	0.742	5.727			
	TA3	0.758	7.376			
	TA4	0.801	8.704			
4	Personal Meaning Production					
	PMP1	0.726	6.586	0.862	0.904	0.655
	PMP2	0.831	7.897			
	PMP3	0.891	10.011			
	PMP4	0.760	7.636			
	PMP5	0.827	10.779			
5	Nature of the work					
	NOW1	0.798	5.956	0.825	0.884	0.656
	NOW2	0.871	7.839			
	NOW3	0.814	6.685			
6.	Opportunity and Rewards					
	OR1	0.862	6.016	0.880	0.911	0.673
	OR2	0.821	5.707			
	OR3	0.814	7.376			
	OR4	0.824	5.704			

Table 3. (*Continued*).

Construct	Indicator reliability		Internal Consistency Reliability		Convergent Validity
	Loadings	**t-statistic**	**Composite reliability**	**Cronbach's alpha**	**AVE**
7. Supervision					
SU1	0.842	5.182			
SU2	0.756	4.578	0.817	0.919	0.666
SU3	0.854	8.332			

Source: Smart PLS results.

The descriptive statistics of the variables, as presented in **Table 2**, indicate that the mean values are approximately 4. Additionally, the standard deviation of all variables was around 1, suggesting that the data exhibit low dispersion and are closely clustered around the mean.

Indicator reliability measures how well individual items reflect their constructs, using factor loadings and t-statistics. Internal consistency reliability evaluates uniformity within a construct via composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, with composite reliability offering a more precise estimate. Convergent validity assesses a construct's correlation with alternative measures, using Average Variance Extracted (AVE). An AVE of 0.5 or higher indicates sufficient convergent validity, meaning the construct explains over half the variance in its items.

Assessing SI on the previously explained four constructs, indicator reliability for the Critical Existential Thinking construct was demonstrated through loadings ranging from 0.708 to 0.789, with significant t-statistics between 4.057 and 7.385. This indicates strong correlations between individual items and the underlying construct. The internal consistency of this construct was high, as evidenced by a composite reliability of 0.806 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.864, suggesting that the items consistently measure the same concept. The AVE was 0.560, supporting the convergent validity of the construct by explaining a substantial portion of the variance in its items. The Conscious State Expansion construct showed robust indicator reliability, with loadings between 0.775 and 0.819 and t-statistics ranging from 3.111 to 6.086, confirming reliable item-construct relationships. Internal consistency reliability was excellent, with composite reliability of 0.882 and Cronbach's alpha of 0.909. The AVE of 0.626 further confirmed good convergentvalidity, indicating that the construct captures the bulk of the variance of the variance in its indicators. Transcendental Awareness demonstrated reliable measurement with loadings from 0.742 to 0.801 and t-statistics between 5.727 and 8.704. Internal consistency was robust, with a composite reliability of 0.822 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.909. The AVE for this construct was 0.636, indicating adequate convergent validity by showing that the construct explains a significant portion of the variance in its items. For Personal Meaning Production, indicator reliability was strong, with loadings ranging from 0.726 to 0.891 and t-statistics between 6.586 and 10.779. The internal consistency of this construct was high, reflected in a composite reliability of 0.862 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.904. An AVE of 0.655 indicated good convergent validity, suggesting that the construct captures a substantial portion of the variance in its items.

Assessing JS based on the previously explained three constructs, The Nature of the Work construct exhibited reliable measurement with loadings from 0.798 to 0.871 and t-statistics between 5.956 and 7.839. Internal consistency was high, with a composite reliability of 0.825 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.884. The AVE was 0.656, indicating adequate convergent validity and confirming that the construct explains a majority of the variance in its indicators. Opportunity and Rewards showed strong indicator reliability with loadings between 0.814 and 0.862 and t-statistics from 5.704 to 7.376. The internal consistency of this construct was excellent, with a composite reliability of 0.880 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.911. An AVE of 0.673 confirmed good convergent validity, suggesting that the construct captures a significant portion of the variance in its items. The Supervision construct demonstrated reliable item-construct relationships with loadings from 0.756 to 0.854 and t-statistics between 4.578 and 8.332. Internal consistency was high, as evidenced by a composite reliability of 0.817 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.919. The AVE of 0.666 confirmed adequate convergent validity, indicating that the construct explains a significant portion of the variance in its items.

The subsequent assessment of the structural model focused on the two hypotheses related to the study. The path coefficient for the SI variable was 0.295, indicating a positive linear relationship between SI and JS among IT professionals. The *t*-value of 2.939 for this path coefficient with a corresponding *p*-value of 0.003 (p-value < 0.05), demonstrated a significant positive relationship between SI and JS among IT professionals. Hence, hypothesis 1 (H1) was accepted, confirming that SI significantly impacts JS.

The second hypothesis (H2) was dedicated to determining the moderating impact of gender on the relationship between SI and JS. The testing for the moderating impact of the hypothesis calls for an initial verification of a significant direct relationship, upon which the indirect relationship is tested. Here, H2 claimed a significant direct relationship ($p < 0.05$), which subsequently tested the significance of the indirect relationship. The indirect relationship marked a path coefficient of 0.127 indicating a p-value of 0.656 (p-value > 0.05) which is insignificant, hence the hypothesized moderation was not supported. Accordingly, the result proved that gender does not moderate the relationship between SI and JS of IT professionals.

5. Discussion

The study explored the how SI of employees impacts their job satisfaction, whilst considering the moderating role of gender related to the said relationship. Aligning with the research objective, the study intended to answer two key research questions. The first, whether the SI of an employee impacts his/her JS, based on hypothesis 1 (H1). The findings of the current study confirm the existence of a significant positive relationship between the SI among employees and their JS. However, an examination of previous studies related to SI and JS reveals mixed results. Consistent conclusions to the present study's findings were reached by Mohomad et al. (2020), Yahyazadeh-Jeloudar and Lotfi-Goodarzi (2012), Khorshidi and Ebadi (2012), Nodehi and Nehardani (2013), Van Der Walt and De Klerk (2014),

and Awais et al. (2015). Contrarily, Rastegar et al. (2012) and Azad Marzabadi et al. (2014) argued there is no meaningful association.

Secondly, the study questioned if gender denoted a moderation impact on the relationship between the SI of employees and their JS. The current study's findings confirm the absence of a moderating impact from gender on the relationship between the SI of employees and their JS. One contributing factor for this finding could be the sampling method employed. Since the study adopted the snowball sampling technique which relies on references provided by survey participants, the researchers could not specifically filter for the gender aspect as the referrals were outside their direct control. This may have resulted in a lower proportion of female participants (29.80%), influencing the outcomes related to the tested moderation impact from gender on the relationship between the SI of employees and their JS. Additionally, the underrepresentation of women in the sample could be reflective of the Sri Lankan IT workforce, which tends to be predominantly male. According to recent industry reports, the IT sector in Sri Lanka has historically exhibited gender imbalances, with women comprising a smaller proportion of the workforce (Lakshila, 2023). Given this context, it is plausible that the gender differences in JS may not be as pronounced in this sector as in other industries, where gender disparities are more evident.

Almost all studies conducted so far on the subject of gender claim that SI has found no gender-related differences that are statistically significant (Hammouri and Alenzi, 2016; Pant and Srivastava, 2017; Siddiqui, 2013). Besides, research on JS and employee gender has produced mixed results, with some showing that women are more content with their jobs than males and vice versa (Oshagbemi, 2000). Regression analysis results for the current study showed that the *p*-value of the gender moderating relationship is greater than 0.05, which denotes statistical insignificance. Therefore, in the link between SI and JS, there was no statistically significant difference identified between males and females. There have been relatively few studies done in the past to determine the impact of gender on the relationship between SI and JS. However, the present study discovered that its conclusion is compatible with the study findings of Kauor (2013). As such, the overall study results denote that, regardless of the employee's gender, higher levels of SI which include aspects like critical existential thinking, personal meaning, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion, result in higher levels of employee JS.

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that SI significantly enhances JS among IT professionals. Consequently, it is recommended that managers and HR practitioners in the IT sector integrate SI development programs into their training and development initiatives to positively influence employee JS. By creating an environment that nurtures spiritual growth, organizations can improve employee well-being, probably resulting in higher levels of JS, enhanced performance, and reduced employee turnover rates. Moreover, the study's findings suggest that gender does not moderate the relationship between SI and JS, highlighting the universal benefits of SI across diverse demographic groups. Therefore, organizations are encouraged to adopt a holistic approach to employee development that incorporates SI as a fundamental component, regardless of gender.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the existing literature on the relationship between SI and JS by providing empirical evidence from the IT sector. The significant positive correlation between SI and JS underscores the necessity of incorporating spiritual factors into job satisfaction models. This research also challenges previous assumptions about gender disparities in the impact of SI on JS, demonstrating that gender does not serve as a moderating factor. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of developing robust measures of SI and its various dimensions, which can further enrich theoretical frameworks and practical applications in organizational behavior and human resource management in the contemporary setting.

6. Practical implications

The study explored the impact of SI on JS among Sri Lankan IT professionals, with much focus on understanding the role of gender in this relationship. The findings offer practical guidance for organizational leaders and HR practitioners in Sri Lanka's rapidly growing IT sector, whilst emphasizing broader implications for relevant policymaking and industry development.

Firstly, the strong positive correlation between SI and JS suggests that Sri Lankan IT companies should prioritize SI development as a fundamental element within their HR and organizational policies to enhance employee well-being and engagement. Given the high-stress, high-demand nature of the IT industry—characterized by tight deadlines, long working hours, and rapid technological changes—employees with higher SI can better manage workplace stress and find meaning in their job roles. By integrating SI training into HR policies related to leadership development, employee onboarding, and ongoing professional development, organizations can create a structured pathway to enhance decision-making, agility, and resilience among employees. Furthermore, embedding SI into organizational policies can institutionalize these practices, ensuring alignment with long-term strategic goals and fostering a culture of adaptability and innovation. Such policies not only strengthen the alignment of personal and organizational values but also provide a comprehensive framework for sustaining employee engagement, reducing turnover, and creating a supportive workplace environment critical for the success of the IT sector. This holistic development can lead to improved JS, reduce stress-related attrition, and foster greater commitment and productivity among IT professionals. Moreover, SI-driven leadership development can help IT organizations create leaders who are better equipped to handle digital agility, in the fast-paced, volatile environment of the tech industry. By aligning SI initiatives with tech industry policies and infrastructure, organizations can build leadership capabilities that foster innovation, enhance digital transformation, and support the sustainable growth of the sector. Leaders with high SI are likely to exhibit better decision-making, empathy, and interpersonal skills, which are crucial in retaining talent, managing diverse teams and reducing employee turnover. Embedding these qualities into employee retention policies ensures a systematic approach to nurturing a stable and committed workforce in a highly competitive sector like IT. Additionally, Spiritual Intelligence in leadership could play a pivotal role in shaping organizational

policies and practices that prioritize employee well-being while driving technological innovation, creating a workplace culture that balances human-centric values with business goals.

Secondly, the lack of a gender-based moderating effect suggests that SI initiatives can be applied universally across employee groups in the IT sector. This finding simplifies the design and delivery of SI programs, enabling IT organizations to develop standardized, scalable training policies and adjunct programs that can be effective for employees industry-wide, regardless of gender. Given the gender imbalance in Sri Lanka's IT workforce, where male employees tend to dominate, this approach ensures inclusivity and equal access to the benefits of SI training across the workforce.

Thirdly, fostering SI can serve as a strategic tool to address the high burnout rates prevalent in the IT sector. The industry's dynamic and often stressful work environment can lead to employee fatigue, disengagement, and higher employee turnover rates. By promoting a culture that integrates spiritual growth with professional development, supported by well-defined HR policies, IT companies can systematically reduce the risk of burnout, improve employee retention, and boost engagement. Embedding SI principles into organizational policies ensures that initiatives targeting employee well-being are institutionalized, providing a framework for sustainable workforce management. Employees who feel more connected to their work through SI are likely to be more motivated, innovative, and resilient in the face of workplace challenges. This is particularly crucial in the Sri Lankan IT sector, which is increasingly participating in global markets and must meet international standards of productivity and creativity, further necessitating alignment with policy-driven workforce strategies.

Additionally, cultivating SI within IT professionals can enhance innovation and problem-solving, key drivers of success in the technology industry. Spiritual Intelligence fosters self-awareness, creativity, and a broader perspective, enabling employees to think beyond technical challenges and contribute to more holistic, innovative and agile solutions. This is particularly relevant for IT professionals engaged in areas such as software development, project management, and cybersecurity, where complex problem-solving and strategic thinking are essential for organizational success. By investing in SI development, Sri Lankan IT companies can build a workforce that is not only technically skilled but also emotionally intelligent and adaptable, enabling them gain a competitive edge in both local and global markets.

Fourthly, the study's findings encourage Sri Lankan IT companies to incorporate SI into regular employee satisfaction surveys and use the resulting data to customize training interventions. By doing so, organizations can ensure that SI initiatives are not only implemented but also continuously refined to meet the evolving needs of their workforce. This data-driven approach will provide the setting for IT companies to optimize the positive impact of their SI programs, ensuring that the latter contribute to higher JS, improved retention rates, and enhanced organizational performance.

Finally, the broader economic implications of integrating SI into Sri Lanka's IT industry should also be considered. The IT sector is a key driver of economic growth

in Sri Lanka, contributing significantly to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and international trade. By investing in employee well-being through SI initiatives, Sri Lankan IT companies can improve overall productivity and sustainability, ensuring that the industry remains competitive on the global stage. Furthermore, promoting SI aligns well with Sri Lanka's cultural values of mindfulness and spiritual well-being, making it a natural fit for the country's organizational culture. How SI is embraced will determine the extent to which SI is a seamless fit within the IT industry in the local context.

7. Limitations and future research

Although the present study offers valuable insights into the impact of SI on JS, several limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the generalizability of the findings is limited by the sample's demographic composition, as the data primarily represents young workers, making it less applicable to senior-level employees. Secondly, using the snowball sampling technique restricted the researchers' ability to control for gender distribution. They relied on referrals provided by survey participants, thus resulting in a lower proportion of female respondents. This might have contributed to the non-significant result in the gender moderation analysis. Moreover, this sampling method may have introduced further potential biases that could have affected sample representativeness. This method has a propensity for the considered sample to be less diverse and skewed towards certain demographics or professional groups, potentially over-representing individuals with similar experiences or backgrounds in the IT industry. Thirdly, the quantitative survey method used constrained the ability to gather qualitative information, limiting the depth of the investigation. Moreover, the cross-sectional design of the study restricted the observation of changes over time.

Accordingly, by addressing these limitations, future researchers could capitalize on this to progress further studies. The study population could be expanded to include a broader demographic representation covering multiple age tiers. Moreover, to control gender distribution biases, future research should aim to incorporate a more balanced sample by using alternative sampling methods, or by examining sectors where gender disparities in JS are more pronounced. Additionally, conducting similar studies in other sectors such as healthcare, tourism, telecommunications, and education can improve the generalizability of the finding's understanding of the context in focus. Future studies would further benefit from using a mixed-method approach, integrating qualitative data alongside quantitative data, to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the context. Moreover, future researchers could explore the modalities of SI and its interplay with elements related to other critical organizational behavior outcomes such as work performance, employee loyalty, commitment, and citizenship behavior. By addressing these limitations and exploring new directions, future research can build on the current findings to provide more robust and generalizable insights into the relationship between SI and crucial organizational behavioral outcomes.

8. Conclusions

This study provides compelling evidence of the crucial role that SI plays in enhancing JS among Sri Lankan IT professionals. The strong positive relationship between SI and JS demonstrates that fostering spiritual growth within the workplace is not just advantageous but necessary for cultivating a satisfied and productive workforce in the demanding IT sector. The finding that gender does not influence this relationship further supports the broad applicability of SI initiatives, enabling organizations to implement these programs universally across all demographic groups. By integrating SI into employee development strategies and embedding it into HR and organizational policies, Sri Lankan organizations can create a systemic framework to effectively address critical challenges such as employee burnout and turnover. These policies can further support a more resilient and high-performing workforce by institutionalizing practices that prioritize employee wellbeing. The practical insights from this research offer a strategic advantage for HR practitioners and leaders aiming to enhance organizational effectiveness through a holistic approach to employee well-being. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the potential for SI to inform broader tech industry policies and workforce infrastructure development, contributing to the sector's sustainability and global competitiveness. Additionally, this study makes a case for investing in SI and lays the groundwork for future research to explore the broader impacts of SI on other key organizational outcomes, solidifying its importance in modern human resource management.

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