COUNSELING SERVICES: IMPROVE CLIENTS' EMOTIONS AND SPIRITUALITY ACCORDING TO THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract*: This study was conducted to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence (self-awareness and self-motivation) and spiritual intelligence at one of the counseling agencies in Malaysia. A total of 111 counseling clients responded to the questionnaire. SmartPLS analysis is used to test the hypothesis of the study. The results revealed some important findings: First, there is a positive but insignificant relationship between self-awareness and spiritual intelligence. Second, there is a positive and significant relationship between self-motivation and spiritual intelligence. This study confirms that emotional intelligence is an important variable for building spiritual intelligence. The findings of this study can be used can help practitioners understand the diversity of perspectives on the construction of emotional intelligence that can guide counseling sessions to help achieve and maintain the emotional well-being of the counseling clients.*

Keywords*: Self-awareness, self-motivation, emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligences*

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Introduction
In the 21st century, there is an increasing need for a proactive counseling approach to support individuals facing psychological crises. Counselors play a crucial role in guiding and understanding clients, helping them overcome hardships and promoting their overall well-being in this life and the hereafter (Joanna, 2020; Ardhiana et al., 2019). Trained counselors

effectively employ counseling techniques, actively listen, build strong therapeutic relationships, show empathy, and work towards achieving client goals. Individual counseling addresses various personal issues such as anger, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, relationship problems, educational challenges, and career transitions, providing support and guidance to those in need (Joanna, 2020). In the Arabic language, counseling is known as "irsyād," which encompasses the concepts of guidance, truth, education, and showing the right path to individuals facing life problems. This term accurately captures the essence of counseling (Al-Khūlī, 1981; Al-Rāzī, 2000). The Qur'an references the concept of counseling using various words such as "waẓ" (reminder), "nuṣḥ" (advice), "deliberation" (discussion), and "hudā" (hint), indicating that Islam is a counseling-friendly religion (Al-Mahāmīd & cArabiyāt, 2006; Akhyar Lubis, 2008). The Prophet Muhammad himself engaged in counseling, providing guidance to his companions when they faced psychological challenges (Ahmad, 2001).

Recent studies highlight the close relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence. Emotional intelligence involves understanding and effectively managing emotions to reduce stress, communicate well, empathize with others, overcome challenges, and resolve conflicts. It is considered a set of skills and traits that enhance leadership performance and is associated with general intelligence (Joanna, 2020; Ardhiana et al., 2019; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998). From an Islamic perspective, human beings are composed of five components: spirit, qalb (heart), nafs (self), reason, and body (Al-Ghazāli, 2005). Qalb, which encompasses emotions and cognitive aspects, is closely linked to emotional intelligence (Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1991). It is considered a trait that enables individuals to make sound decisions and control impulsive and aggressive passions. Qalb's significance is mentioned in the Quran, emphasizing the importance of understanding, seeing, and listening with one's heart (al-Acrāf 7:179).

Qalb plays a significant role in analyzing, synthesizing, and attributing meaning to experiences. Different individuals may interpret and react to phenomena differently based on their level of qalb intelligence. It also serves as a center for behavior control, influencing actions and decisions (Tohirin, 2017). Developing a virtuous qalb is essential in shaping an individual's behavior. In Islam, qalb can be transformed towards perfection, reaching a state free from negative feelings and connected to Allah Ta'ala. A cultivated qalb enables individuals to monitor their own and others' emotions, control their behavior, and engage in reflective thinking. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) faced various conflicts and hardships, such as boycotts, the loss of loved ones, and failures in delivering the Islamic message (Al-Mubārakfūrī, 1976). Despite experiencing a range of emotions, the Prophet's reactions were never driven by anger. He exhibited emotional wisdom, maintaining control while fulfilling his responsibility of spreading the message to the community. In summary, according to Islamic teachings, qalb is a crucial component of human beings, closely linked to emotional intelligence and influencing decision-making and behavior. The Prophet Muhammad's exemplary conduct exemplified emotional control in the face of adversity.

Spiritual intelligence refers to beliefs, values, and religious convictions related to goals, serving as a motivating force that goes beyond individualism (Selman, Harding & Speck, 2011; Mc Knight, 1987). It encompasses the ability to recognize and utilize spiritual abilities and resources, leading to problem-solving and enhanced decision-making capacity (Nasel, 2004). Spiritual intelligence distinguishes humans by fostering deep self-awareness of the body, mind, and soul, accelerating mental processes (Sisk, 2002). By leveraging spiritual resources to solve problems, individuals experience increased flexibility in everyday life (Emmons, 2000). Many

believe that spiritual intelligence plays a vital role in addressing existential challenges, finding meaning, and establishing goals in daily actions and life events (Sisk, 2008; King, 2010). Research by Akbarizadeh, Jahanpour, and Hajivandi (2013) demonstrates a significant and positive relationship between spiritual intelligence and general health, with the workplace being the only demographic characteristic showing a meaningful correlation. This finding suggests that developing spiritual intelligence and enhancing tenacity can contribute to the overall health of nurses. Another study by Haditabar et al. (2012) indicates that instruction in spiritual intelligence influences multiple dimensions of quality of life among wives of disabled veterans, including physical function, emotional well-being, and general health.

The prevalence of mental illness is increasing, as indicated by the National Health and Morbidity Survey Report, which suggests that about 40% of Malaysians, out of a population of 32.4 million, may be experiencing mental health issues (Malek et al., 2020). Additionally, 18,336 out of 273,203 individuals seeking healthcare reported mental health disorders such as depression, schizophrenia, and suicidal tendencies (Malek et al., 2020). The alarming rise in suicide cases in Malaysia necessitates immediate attention and proactive measures from stakeholders, such as expanding counseling services, to prevent the spread of such behavior and hinder community development. Consequently, this study aims to explore whether engaging in counseling sessions can enhance spiritual intelligence through the improvement of emotional intelligence.

Literature Review
Emotional intelligence refers to a person's ability to effectively manage their own and others' emotions, leading to rational actions and thoughts (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). It encompasses identifying, using, understanding, and managing emotions (Salovey and Mayer, 1990), or self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1998). Recent studies have focused on two main aspects of emotional intelligence: personal competence and social competence, comprising elements such as self-awareness, self-motivation, emotional regulation, social awareness, social skills, and emotional receptivity (Sandhya & Namrata, 2013).

Self-awareness is the ability to objectively perceive oneself, recognizing positive and negative emotions in different situations. In Islam, self-awareness is emphasized through the practice of muhāsabah, a process of self-assessment to distinguish positive and negative actions (Muhammad Al-Ghazālī, 1987). Muhāsabah can be conducted before and after an action, involving thinking, planning, and evaluating actions based on Islamic teachings (Ibn Qayyim, 1996). Self-motivation entails the ability to remain driven and complete tasks independently, even in challenging circumstances, without relying on external influences. In an Islamic perspective, self-motivation is expressed as hawā, a neutral inclination in the heart that can prompt action (Kadar, 2017). Educated and controlled hawā can lead to a positive impulse, forming a nafs muṭmainnah, an individual who consistently embraces goodness and truth. Islam encourages individuals to improve themselves to attain the level of nafs muṭmainnah (Al-Ghazālī, 2005). Emotional intelligence (EQ) refers to the ability to manage and control one's own and others' emotions, fostering positive relationships and achieving goals (Cooper & Sawaf, 1997; McGarvey, 1997). Spiritual intelligence, proposed by Emmons (1999), encompasses problem-solving abilities in everyday life and includes components such as using spiritual resources, heightened consciousness, sacredness in social activities, transcendence, and virtuousness (Emmons, 2000).

In Islam, spiritual intelligence is based on faith, Shari'a, and morality, integrating these principles for a holistic approach (Adz-Dzakiey, 2004). Two dimensions underpin spiritual intelligence in Islam. The first dimension, known as tauhid rububiyah, involves recognizing God's existence and His role as the creator and sustainer of the universe. The second dimension, tauhid uluhiyah, emphasizes directing all actions and decisions solely toward God (Bensaid et al., 2014).

The unity of faith is crucial in cultivating spiritual intelligence in Islam. It involves associating every aspect of life with divinity, acknowledging that everything happens with God's permission (Adz-Dzakiey, 2004). Additionally, the quality of qalb (heart) plays a significant role, as it enables one to overcome impulsive passions and spiritual ailments (Al-Qusi, 1952). Cognitive activity, closely related to obedience and worship, is another component of spiritual intelligence in Islam. Worship involves obedience, submission, and practicing the pillars of faith and Islam, as well as engaging in good deeds motivated by divine inspiration (Laming, 2000). Studies by Joanna (2020), Ardhiana et al. (2019), Md. Aftab et al. (2018), and Keshtegar and Jenaabadi (2015) have provided empirical support for the intertwining relationship and mutual reinforcement between emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence enhances intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies, which are components of emotional intelligence and promotes positive attitudes like humility, forgiveness, and gratitude.

The discussion leads to the following hypotheses:
Hypothesis 1: Self-awareness has a positive and insignificant relationship with spiritual intelligence.
Hypothesis 2: Self-motivation has a positive and significant relationship with spiritual intelligence.
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Previous studies have primarily focused on the characteristics of emotional intelligence and its direct effects, overlooking the measurement of the two dimensions: self-awareness and self-motivation. Furthermore, these studies have relied on simple correlations and interviews, lacking robust evidence for a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence. Consequently, there is a need for further research to fill these gaps and provide empirical evidence to support this relationship. The findings can guide counselors, educators, and organizational leaders in recognizing the importance of emotional and spiritual intelligence in improving counseling effectiveness analysis of the literature has guided the investigators to frame the conceptual framework for this investigation, as depicted in figure 1.
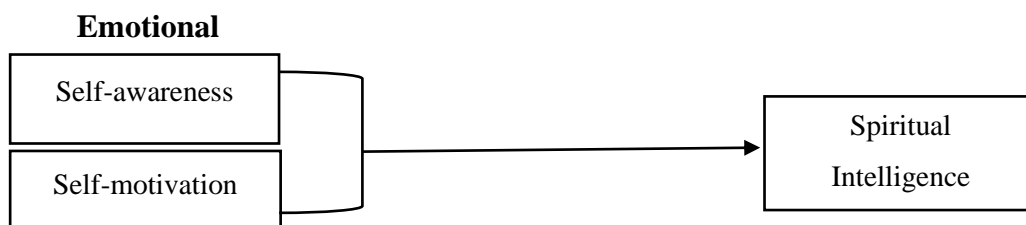
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methods

Study Design

This study was conducted at a government counseling agency in Pahang, Malaysia, with the name of the institution withheld for confidentiality purposes. The selection of this agency is due to the accessibility of the researchers to choose a location that is easy in terms of logistics and where they can help to get study participants easily. This selection is caused by access to counseling clients is quite difficult and confidential. The researchers employed a cross-sectional research survey design to gather accurate and unbiased data, following the recommendations of Sekaran and Bougie (2016). The questionnaire was developed based on existing literature on emotional intelligence, happiness, and psychological intimacy. To ensure compatibility and improve research quality, the survey questionnaire was translated from English to Malay using back-to-back translation techniques (Lomand, 2016).

A sampling method was used to distribute 130 questionnaires to counseling clients at the selected government agency in Pahang. Of these, 111 (85%) usable questionnaires were returned to the researchers. Due to confidentiality restrictions, detailed information about counseling clients was not available from the agency's management, which limited the use of random sampling. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: emotional intelligence, adapted from the study by Sandhya and Namrata (2013), comprising 7 items that assessed six elements of emotional intelligence: self-awareness and self-motivation. Spiritual intelligence was evaluated using 5 items adapted from the study by Abdollahzadeh et al. (2013). A 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" was used for item evaluation. Demographic variables such as gender, age, residence, religion, citizenship, education, occupation, marital status, and monthly income were also included to provide relevant background information about the counseling clients. The collected survey questionnaire data was analyzed using SmartPLS, which allows for latent variable scores, addresses small sample sizes, handles non-normal data, and evaluates complex research frameworks (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2017; Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics, 2009).

Results

Characteristics of the respondent

Based on table 1, the following is a summary of the respondents for this study.

Table 1: Summary of respondent characteristics.

Demographic	Decsription	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	42	37.8
	Female	69	62.2
Age	More than twenty years old	51	45.9
	More than thirty years old	48	43.2
	More than fourty years old	12	10.8
Residence	City	67	60.4
	Rural	44	39.6
Religion	Muslim	103	92.8
	Non-muslim	8	7.2
Education	PMR	2	1.8
	SPM	16	14.4
	STPM/STAM	2	1.8

	Diploma	37	33.3
	Ijazah	46	41.4
	Others	8	7.2
Job	Government	45	40.5
	Private	15	13.5
	Others	51	45.9
Status	Single	46	41.4
	Married	60	54.1
	Others	5	4.5
Income	Below RM1999	59	53.2
	> RM2000	21	18.9
	> RM3000	9	8.1
	> RM4000	9	8.1
	> RM5000	6	5.4
	> RM6000	7	6.3

Reflective measurement model

Based on Table 2, all outer loading values recorded the values as suggested by Hair et.al (2017) which exceeded the value of 0.708. Convergent validity is also seen in the value recorded by AVE which needs to reach at least 0.5. For internal consistency reliability, the defective CR value is >0.708.

Table 2: Reflective measurement model values

Indicator	Convergent Validity		Internal Consistency Reliability
	Outer Loadings	AVE (>0.50)	Composite Reliability
B01	0.819	0.635	0.897
B04	0.798		
B06	0.805		
B09	0.811		
B11	0.751		
B31	0.941	0.891	0.943
B32	0.947		
C04	0.880	0.759	0.940
C05	0.882		
C08	0.848		
C11	0.882		
C15	0.864		

Source: Questionnaire

Table 3 shows the results of the validity and reliability of the construct. The value of the Heterotrait-monotrait correlation ratio (HTMT) for each construct is less than 0.90 (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2009), shows that the construct has met the criteria of discriminatory validity (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2009). The value of the secret interval for each construct indicated in brackets falls below 1 (Hair et al., 2017), indicating that the construct has met the minimum standard of discriminant analysis.

Table 3: Discriminant analysis decisions

Constructs	Self-awareness	Self-Motivation
Self-Motivation	0.743	
Spiritual Intelligence	0.570 (0.108;0.386)	0.616 (0.259;0.541)

Note. The values in the parenthesis are the values of confidential interval at 5% and 95%.

Construct Analysis

Table 4 shows variance inflation factor analysis and descriptive statistics. These results found that the mean values of all constructs ranged from 4.25 to 6.50, indicating that some respondents saw levels of self-awareness, emotional regulation, self-motivation, social awareness, social skills and emotional receptivity between (4) to (7).   On the other hand, the value of the variance inflation factor for the relationship between independent variable (i.e., self-awareness, emotional regulation, self-motivation, social awareness, social skills and emotional receptivity) and dependent variable (i.e., spiritual intelligence) is lower than 5.0, indicating that the data does not have serious collinearity problems (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 4. Analysis of variance inflation factor and descriptive statistics

Constructs	Min	*Standard Deviation*	*Variance Inflation Factor*
			Spiritual Intelligence
Self-awareness	4.110	0.760	1.714
Self-Motivation	4.050	0.835	1.714
Spiritual Intelligence	4.455	0.720	

Structural Model Measurement

Table 5 shows that 35.2 percent changes in SI were described by Self_A and Self_M for direct impression models. This means that 64.8 percent of SI variance is explained by other factors that were not the focus of this study. This R^2 value greater than 0.33 indicates that this model has a great effect. Furthermore, the hypothesis test study showed six important issues: First, Self_A correlated significantly with SI (B = 0.261; t = 3.098; therefore, supporting H1. Secondly, Self_M correlates with SI (B = 0. 390; t = 4.564); with it, supporting H2.

Further, the effect measure (f^2), the appropriate model (SRMR value) and the predictive relevance (Q^2) are tested. The value of f^2 for the relationship between Self_A and Self_M with SI the majority of them is worth 0.061 and 0.137, respectively, thus lower than 0.15 (Hair et al., 2017), indicating that it has a moderate effect. The average balance value of the standard root root (SRMR) is 0.056, which is lower than 0.1, indicating that this model is suitable. The value of Q^2 for SI is 0.258, which is higher than zero, which indicates that the model has relevant forecasts.

Table 5: Structural model measurement analysis decisions

Hyphotesis	Relationship	β	t	Result
H1	Self_A → SI	0.261	3.098	Accepted
H2	Self_M → SI	0.390	4.564	Accepted

Note. Significant at * t >1.68 (one tail testing); Self_A: Self-Awareness; Self_M: Self Motivation; SI: Spiritual Intelligence.

Conclusion and Discussion

Previous studies Joanna (2020), Ardhiana et al., (2019), Md. Aftab, Aahad & Muhammad Sabbir (2018) and Keshtegar and Jenaabadi (2015) have primarily focused on investigating the direct relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence using direct impact models. However, these studies often lacked measurements of the effect size of each element of emotional intelligence as a significant dependent variable for spiritual intelligence. To address this gap, the researchers of this study aimed to explore the intermediate effect of emotional intelligence on spiritual intelligence.

The study developed a conceptual framework based on emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence. Structural models revealed that two elements of emotional intelligence showed a significant association with spiritual intelligence, while self-awareness and social skills did not display a significant association. Through interviews with counselors, it was found that this lack of association was linked to the individual's personality and self-perception. The effectiveness of counseling sessions relied on the client's self-initiative, as counselors incorporated spiritual elements to address emotional changes resulting from self-impact and social interactions. The study emphasized that clients themselves need to make changes, including managing their own emotions, rather than relying solely on the counselor. This insight suggests that counselors can enhance the effectiveness of clients' emotional intelligence by integrating the importance of spiritual intelligence during counseling sessions.

The Islamic perspective reinforces the concept of personal responsibility for change. It is stated in Surah al-Ra'd (Quran 13:11) that Allah will not alter the condition of a people until they change themselves. This highlights the significance of individual initiative and action in bringing about positive transformations (Al-Rāzī, 2000; Ṭanṭāwī, 1997; Ibn cĀshur, 1997). Islam acknowledges human freedom of will and choice, emphasizing the need for active engagement to address problems and avoid fatalism (Mu'ammar, 2011). Guidance is provided to help individuals refrain from harmful actions and manage their natural tendencies toward anxiety and worry (Ibn Kathīr, 1999). Seeking and providing advice are encouraged within the Islamic framework, with a focus on promoting positive actions and discouraging negative ones (Muslim, n.d.; Al-Sacdī, 2000). The story of Prophet Joseph seeking his father's advice illustrates the importance of heeding counsel to avoid negative consequences (Ibn cĀshur, 1997). In summary, this study contributes to the existing literature by exploring the intermediate effect of emotional intelligence on spiritual intelligence. It highlights the role of personal initiative and the integration of spiritual intelligence in counseling to enhance clients' emotional well-being and daily lives. The Islamic perspective emphasizes individual responsibility for change and the importance of seeking and providing guidance.

In this study, the role of counselors in addressing various human problems across different contexts has been established. Various agencies, such as schools, institutions, public and private sectors, NGOs, and communities, have been granted autonomy by the ministry to offer

counseling services for personal development and well-being. Community counseling agencies play a crucial role in providing comprehensive assistance services to improve the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Effective communication and support between counselors and clients are vital for achieving counseling objectives. The majority of participants in the study exhibited low levels of emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and psychological well-being. The study highlights the counselor's role in improving clients' spiritual intelligence through comfortable communication and adequate support, ultimately enhancing emotional intelligence and psychological well-being.

The study has theoretical and practical contributions. The findings confirm the influence of emotional intelligence on spiritual intelligence in counseling clients, aligning with the theories proposed by Bar-On (2006) and Emmons (2000). Bar-On's emotional intelligence model emphasizes the interrelatedness of emotional and social competencies, while Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences recognizes spiritual intelligence as an independent modality of intelligence. Studies by Joanna (2020), Ardhiana et al. (2019), Md. Aftab et al. (2018), and Ahoie et al. (2017) support the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing spiritual intelligence, considering factors such as client personality, needs, expectations, and diverse coaching activities. The efficacy of this approach can improve clients' psychological well-being in counseling agencies. The study provides practical implications for counseling practitioners in enhancing guidance management and counseling effectiveness. The recommendations include designing creative training programs, organizing formal assembly sessions, implementing a peer coaching program, establishing mentoring programs, and broadening the focus of counseling to different aspects of life. These measures aim to cater to diverse client needs, promote personal growth, support well-being, and improve client adaptation and success.

In addition, the study suggests addressing methodological and conceptual limitations in future research. Firstly, exploring important client characteristics such as age, gender, marital status, occupation, income, and education level in future studies would provide a better understanding of how these factors influence counseling sessions in different agencies. Secondly, conducting longitudinal studies would allow for the examination of variable patterns over an extended period, capturing individual changes and assessing the strength and nature of the relationships between variables. Thirdly, investigating the intermediate effects of spiritual intelligence in counseling sessions across various agencies in Malaysia would contribute to a deeper understanding of this construct. Fourthly, further exploration and publication of specific theoretical terms related to spiritual intelligence can establish them as crucial links between emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence. Lastly, considering probability sampling plans, particularly stratified random sampling, can help reduce bias in data collection and enhance the generalizability of study results.

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