

Emotional and spiritual quotient for sustainable education's service quality

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Sep 11, 2022

Revised Jul 26, 2023

Accepted Aug 14, 2023

Keywords:

Emotional quotient

Higher education institutions

Service quality

Spiritual quotient

Sustainable education

ABSTRACT

A sustainable ecosystem of universities needs to show outstanding performance in the areas of employability, institutional social responsibility, and creative and performing arts. Thus, this study determined the influential role of emotional quotient (EQ) and spiritual quotient (SQ) on the lecturers' excellence service quality (ESQ), which eventually led to effective classroom teaching. The data of 127 respondents were analyzed using the structural equation model with partial least square. The results confirmed that both types of quotients positively influence the lecturers' teaching progression at the university. EQ and SQ have the encouraging power to motivate the academicians for the best service to the university through a quality learning experience. It can be concise that institutions that practice EQ and SQ values can perform better and blend a harmonious working spirit and tandem with the university's growth. Support for sustainable development goal (SDG-4) via EQ and SQ is now required in humanizing education to ensure academicians' competency and well-being, particularly in the aftermath of the Corona Virus Disease-19 disruption. Policymakers in the university should now capitalize the intelligence through professional initiatives. This study could have been better with a bigger sample size, but the investigation had limited access due to the university's policy on privacy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A sustainable ecosystem of universities needs to show outstanding performance in the areas of employability, institutional social responsibility, and creative and performing arts. Universities frequently demonstrate their initiatives by using communities and technologies to foster student entrepreneurship, transparent governance, and maintain a culture of high-quality teaching and learning [1]. Moreover in post-COVID world, it is essential to observe the efficacy of education [2], [3]. To achieve the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) fourth sustainable development goal (SDG-4) by 2030, universities are now promoting excellent service quality (ESQ) in education through faculty, curriculum, pedagogy, internationalization, research, employability, industry engagement, and social responsibility.

This paper aims to investigate additional considerations for how higher education institutions (HEIs) achieve ESQ through their human capital. ESQ continues to be an important subject in HEIs, where tertiary education is a critical component of human development worldwide to help students develop the skills and knowledge that employers need, creating businesses and jobs, enriching society, and stimulating culture. Students can bring a significant impact when they have a spiritual and emotional intelligence [4]. It is reported in 2018 that the International Ranking Expert Group [5] had published 45 international universities with the best rankings. Currently, Spiritual Quotient World University Rankings, the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, and the Round University Ranking are examples of performance evaluators for the world's leading HEIs.

The 2015-2025 Malaysian Education Blueprint outlines a crucial transformation plan to develop and nurture academics for high-quality education achievements. To ensure the possibility of the blueprint, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has put in place a university rating protocol for all HEIs. MOHE introduced the Malaysian quality evaluation system (MyQUEST) to raise competitiveness through continuous improvement and capacity building for private-owned higher learning institutions. Table 1 demonstrates the criteria of an institutional profile.

Table 1. The criteria of SETARA-2017

General: Institutional profiles	Teaching and learning	Research capacity	Services and income generation
Student quality and diversity	The capacity of academic staff	Critical mass of researchers	Income from commercialization of ideas
Lecturer's capability	Student satisfaction in teaching and facilities	Research income	University Social Responsibility (USR) and Knowledge Transfer Program (KTP)
Academic staff recognition	Quality of graduates	Quantity of publications	Education and training programs
Quality Management System	Internationalization of academic programs	Quality of publications	Other sources of income
Financial sustainability			
Institutional reputation	Program recognition		

Private-owned HEIs are the main focus of this study because expectations and performance of the institutions are highly reliant on the number of students enrolled. Unlike public HEIs, private-owned institutions are not subsidized or funded by the government; therefore, excellent service matters for the reputation of these institutions. Academic performance expectation has given enough stress to the students, hence require the help from the wiser lecturers to perform and also support a social sustainability among the university students [6]. The performance of the staff, particularly academic staff, is closely monitored, creating a tense situation that makes the academic staff easily anxious with their tasks and performance and affecting the quality of the service. Their emotional quotient (EQ) and spiritual quotient (SQ) are also continually tested as these demands have supposedly become a stress source at the workplace [7]. This study, therefore, has two-fold research questions: i) Does the EQ of private HEIs' academicians have a positive and significant influence on ESQ? and ii) Does the SQ of private HEIs' academicians have a positive and significant influence on ESQ?

According to Goleman [8], the EQ can recognize one's feelings better than others. It is also about motivating and managing one's own emotions in relationships. Mayer and Salovey [9] described EQ as the ability to monitor and discriminate between feelings and emotions and use this awareness to guide one's thinking and actions. There is substantial evidence that employees with strong emotional competencies perform better at managing themselves and understanding customer's attitudes in the service interaction. Adetunji and Adeniyi [10] revealed that organizations with administrators that used EQ offered far better services than those that did not use EQ at work. This claim was similar to several research studies [11]–[13], as they also found that EQ skills played an essential role in effective performance in solving problems and making appropriate work decisions.

In the context of Malaysia, Latip, Newaz, and Ramasamy [14] revealed that the motivation of lecturers had positive effects on student loyalty towards eight higher education institutions in Malaysia. It demonstrates the critical nature of maintaining and providing a high standard of service to the institution, primarily through competent lecturers to ensure institutional sustainability. In exchange, students will gain a deeper understanding of the subjects taught, and the institution will likely maintain and increase its positive visibility. Siddique and Taseer [15] also sought similar results, in which EQ significantly impacted their job performance when lecturers could remain calm and focused under pressure. A recent study in vocational schools indicated that teachers need EQ to perform well [16]. The finding showed that teachers with EQ can control their emotions, know the difference between positive and negative emotions, empathize with others, feel motivated, and grow their social skills, which lead to high dedication at work.

Scholars have also addressed the positive impact of EQ in other service industries. Al-Dosarry [17] discovered positive and significant relationships between the EQ dimensions (use of emotion, self-emotion

appraisal, others' emotions appraisal, regulation of emotions) and the quality-of-service dimensions (responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy, and tangible). In a recent study, Sahin and Isik [18] found that emotional expression, appraisal, and recognition of emotion in others and self-regulation of emotion had significant positive relationships with service quality perceptions. After carefully analyzing previous research studies, these researchers conclude that significant ESQ research has already been conducted in various service industries, but is limited to private HEIs. As per the evidence shown by the existing literature, this study hypothesizes that: there is a positive and significant EQ influence on ESQ among the private HEIs' academicians (H1).

Spiritual quotient significantly is an aid in problem-solving and goal attainment on a daily basis [19], [20] and supports in obtaining positive organizational outcomes [21]. Prominent spiritual quotient characteristics also transcend all races, cultures and ideologies [22]. SQ also highlighted the role of spiritual leadership effectiveness as previous researchers [23], [24] found that SQ practices have encouraged women leaders to assist people to grow throughout their careers and enhanced their respective institution's credibility and long-term sustainability. Therefore, organizations need a spiritual basis in order to maintain sustainable development [20], [25].

In the education expanse, studies were carried out on students' SQ. Turi *et al.* [26] revealed that SQ has provided the most significant outcome with regards to Pakistani students' performance. They proposed SQ values for behavior modification after observing that students can improve their academic and daily performance. Similarly, Pant and Srivastava [27] also found that SQ relates significantly to the mental health of arts and science students in India. Based on this, the researchers strongly encourage educators to emphasize SQ as a way of approaching students. While in Jakarta, private school students with strong SQ values demonstrated enhanced academic achievements [28]. In their study, Joshi [29] mentioned how SQ influences rational cognitive processes in achieving academic goals. SQ can also prepare students to solve problems in their academic performance, achieve their life goals, and improve their social life [30]. It is also highlighted by other researchers [31], [32] that studied students' psychological well-being and concluded that SQ values generally enhance students' emotions in a relationship, while also showing more positive behavior and attitude towards others in that relationship. All the research studies lead to the following hypothesis: there is a positive and significant SQ influence on ESQ among academicians in private HEIs (H2).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study's population was determined using recent statistics. In Malaysia, there were 25,877 academic staff in private HEIs [33], as shown in Table 2. Malaysia has 467 registered private universities and 29% of them are in the state of Selangor (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 2018). Therefore, the best population to generalize the current research findings would be the lecturers working in Selangor. There were 20 universities chosen for data collection through a questionnaire survey in December 2018 using the purposive sampling method and received 384 responses [34].

The EQ and SQ questions were adopted and adapted from previous research studies [8], [35]. The ESQ questions, on the other hand, came from Sureshchandar, Rajendran, and Anantharaman [36]. Each item was graded using a six-point Likert scale. The instrument was pretested to four academicians and made necessary adjustments. This study employed the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) for the data analysis. PLS-SEM, which is part of composite-based SEM, is more suitable for testing complex cause-and-effect relationships where the model seeks to predict or explain a particular phenomenon [37]. The PLS-SEM has almost no parameter bias when estimating data from a composite model population [38].

Table 2. Academic staffs in private HEI by academic qualification in Malaysia

	Male	Female
Diploma	272	241
Bachelor	2,539	3,685
Master	5,426	7,828
Doctorate	3,269	2,147
Others ^a	237	233
Total	11,743	14,134

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study prepared a letter to approach the 20 selected institutions. However, several institutions were reluctant or did not reply to participate in this study. As a result, only 127 responses were received and analyzed. The dataset comprised 38 (29.9%) and 89 (70.1%) male and female respondents respectively. A total of 93 (73.2%) are ethnic Malay participants, 14 (11%) Chinese, and 20 (15.7%) Indian. The respondents are

mainly aged between 26 and 35 years old; 86 respondents are married. Furthermore, 40.2% of the respondents have not started a family yet and have not employed any house help (88.2%). Approximately 75% of the respondents have a master's degree. Further, Figures 1(a) and (b) show the percentage distribution of the respondents' position and teaching experience. The position and experience they had confirmed the income stability of a family.

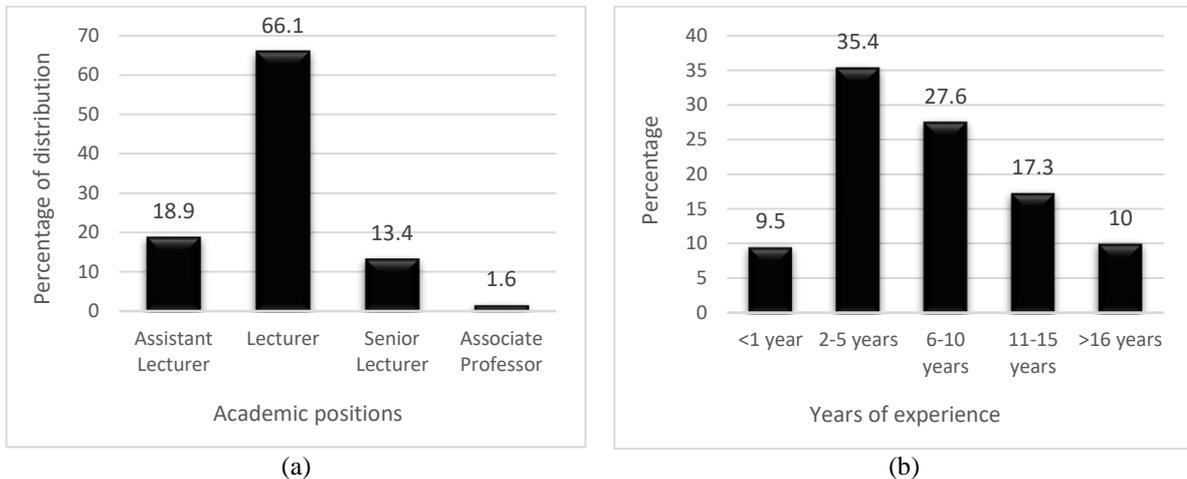


Figure 1. Percentage distribution of the (a) position and (b) teaching experience

Convergent validity refers to the degree to which the assessed multiple items have the same concept and are in agreement. Hair *et al.* [39] defined convergent validity as the amount to which a measure correlates favorably with alternative measures of the same construct. Following the recommendations found in the literature [39]–[41], the examination of the factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) ascertain the convergent validity of the measurement. The recommended values for the loadings and AVE should be >0.5 , and the CR should be >0.7 . Table 3 shows that this study conceptualized EQ and SQ as second-order constructs. Hence, this study follows the repeated indicator approach suggested in the PLS literature to model the second-order factors in the PLS analysis.

Table 3 reveals that CR values, which indicate the extent to which construct indicators imply the latent construct, vary from 0.838 to 0.885, which is greater than the suggested value of 0.7 [39]. Hair *et al.* [39] likewise proposed a cut-off value of 0.5 for AVE. The AVE is the final measurement; it quantifies the variation recorded by the indicators compared to measurement error. Therefore, the cut-off value should be more than 0.5 to justify the use of a construct [42]. Table 3 demonstrates that all loadings, CRs, and AVEs are more than the recommended levels for confirmation, indicating that the measurement model has convergent validity.

After confirming the convergent validity, this study evaluated the discriminant validity using the Fornell and Larcker [43] and Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) methods. Discriminant validity refers to the degree to which items differentiate among constructs or measure distinct concepts. It can be determined by examining the correlations between measurements of the potentially overlapping constructs [44]. This study used the second method to compare the square root of the AVE with the correlations as shown in Table 4. If the square root of the AVE is greater than the values in the row (shown in diagonals) and columns of that particular construct, then it can be concluded that the measures are discriminant. The results in Table 4 indicate that the measures used in this study are distinct and demonstrate adequate discriminant validity.

In addition, the HTMT is proposed to examine the discriminant validity [44]. The discriminant validity of a pair of constructs can be demonstrated by an HTMT value that is significantly lower than 1 or clearly lower than 0.85 [45]. HTMT cut-off values of 0.85 are recommended by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt [44], while Voorhees *et al.* [45] observed that an HTMT cut-off value of 0.75 was more useful. Thus, neither technique incorrectly suggests problems with discriminant validity at the level of inter-construct correlations, which the majority of scholars would consider suggestive of discriminant validity. The discriminant validity assessment based on HTMT shows that not only were all the HTMT values significantly lower than 0.85 [40] as shown in Table 5. Thus, a conservative cut-off point was used to assess discriminant validity for all constructs.

Table 3. Measurement model

First-order constructs	Second-order construct	Item	Loadings	AVE	CR
Self-awareness		SA1	0.753	0.659	0.853
		SA2	0.860		
		SA3	0.819		
Self-regulation		SR1	0.778	0.599	0.857
		SR2	0.768		
		SR3	0.766		
		SR4	0.785		
Self-motivation		SM1	0.841	0.659	0.885
		SM2	0.737		
		SM3	0.831		
		SM4	0.832		
Social awareness		SOCA1	0.798	0.749	0.856
		SOCA2	0.928		
Social skills		SS1	0.904	0.749	0.856
		SS2	0.826		
EQ		Self-awareness	0.746	0.509	0.838
		Self-regulation	0.724		
		Self-motivation	0.826		
		Social awareness	0.749		
		Social skills	0.724		
		Grace	0.844		
Grace		GR1	0.844	0.749	0.856
		GR2	0.887		
Transcendence		TR1	0.899	0.750	0.857
		TR2	0.832		
Meaning		ME1	0.802	0.642	0.842
		ME2	0.716		
		ME3	0.879		
Consciousness		CS1	0.807	0.705	0.877
		CS2	0.817		
		CS3	0.892		
		Grace	0.851		
		Transcendence	0.781		
		Meaning	0.751		
SQ		Consciousness	0.676	0.566	0.839
		Grace	0.851		
		Transcendence	0.781		
		Meaning	0.751		

Notes: AVE=average variance extracted; CR=composite reliability

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker criterion

Constructs	1	2	3
1. ESQ	0.816		
2. EQ	0.590	0.709	
3. SQ	0.594	0.621	0.752

Notes: diagonals represent the square root of the AVE, while the off diagonals represent the correlations

Table 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio

Constructs	ESQ	EQ	SQ
ESQ			
EQ	0.752		
SQ	0.794	0.786	

Note: HTMT<0.85

3.1. Structural model analysis

This study examined the squared multiple correlations (R^2) for each endogenous latent variable and the significance of the structural pathways. The primary assessing a structural model is the coefficient determinant R^2 [46]. The hypothesized relationships are considered supported if the related path coefficients had the desired sign and were significant. R^2 was calculated to evaluate this study's structural models' predictive power. R^2 denotes the amount of variance explained by the exogenous variables [42]. The amount of variation in the construct explained by the model is shown by R^2 findings [47]. The explained variance of the dependent variable in relation to its overall variance is measured by R^2 values around 0.350 are considered considerable, values around 0.333 are considered moderate, and those around 0.190 are considered weak [45]. This study performed bootstrap with a resampling of 500 after computing the route estimates and t-statistics. The two variables explained 42.6% of the variance, as illustrated in Figure 2. This study found a positive relationship between EQ and ESQ as well as SQ and ESQ. Hence, the findings underline the vital role of ESQ at work in this relationship. The structural model analysis in Table 6 indicates that EQ ($\beta=0.337, p<0.05$) and SQ ($\beta=0.393, p<0.05$) are positively related to ESQ and thus support the present research hypotheses.

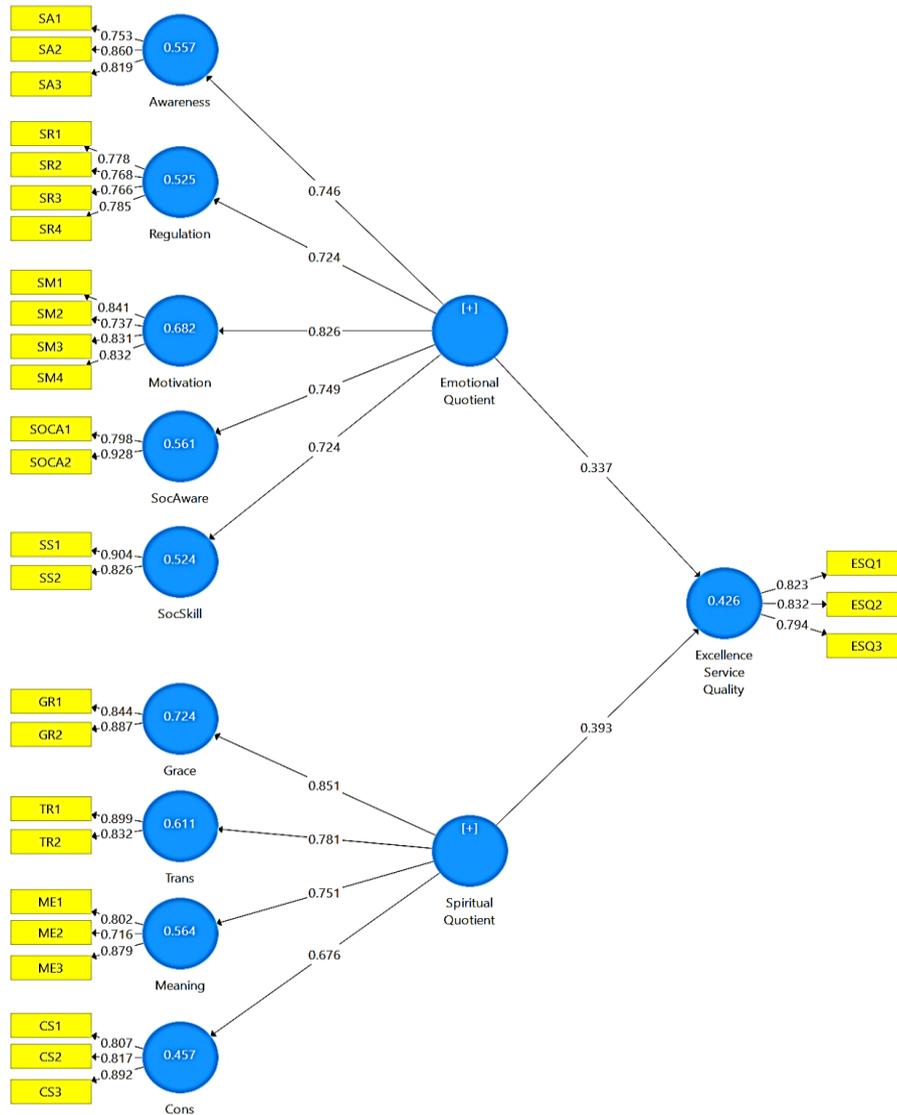


Figure 2. The PLS algorithm results

Table 6. Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Beta	SE	t-value	Decision
H1 EQ -> ESQ	0.337	0.096	3.510	Supported
H2 SQ -> ESQ	0.393	0.095	4.146	Supported

Notes: p<0.05

3.2. Hypotheses testing

Based on the analysis performed on 127 responses, this study aimed to discuss the influence of EQ and SQ of private HEIs' academicians on ESQ. As for EQ, the present study revealed that a lecturer's EQ has a positive and significant influence on their ESQ. The result is consistent with some previous studies [14], [16], [48]. As an academician, a lecturer must have a strong EQ to be committed and persistent in their work, avoid negative emotions, maintain positive emotions, and manage them while delivering their services. As Latip, Newaz, and Ramasamy [14] pointed out, this study reinforces the importance of maintaining and delivering good quality of service to the institution, primarily through competent lecturers, as it will lead to the institution's sustainability. Similarly, the receivers, in this case, students' perceptions are directly influenced by the extent to which service providers exhibit EQ. Al-Dosarry [17]; Sahin and Isik [18] endorsed these arguments,

indicating that service providers who demonstrated a higher EQ level during service delivery will thus benefit from the higher quality of services provided. Consistent with previous findings, this study confirms that EQ is a critical skill to enhance the effectiveness of lecturers' teaching and performance, as teachers with a high EQ tend to motivate themselves and their students. As stated by Asrar-ul-Haqa *et al.* [11], a teacher with EQ can create an effective learning environment that can be used to create a vision while satisfying the students.

As EQ is about being able to express and control one's emotions through the process of interpreting and responding to others' emotions, many professionals consider this an essential ability to predict success in life. At the same time, some argue it is even more essential than the intelligence quotient (IQ). By obtaining EQ, lecturers will enhance ESQ in both students' academic achievements and personal professional excellence. Go *et al.* [49] asserted that an individual's EQ was a critical factor in her success and those with whom she interacted. Thus, educators should develop a high EQ because it demonstrates a significant role in their career in dealing with society.

The results imply that the EQ perception can be used in organizations for maintaining the quality of services. Employers can gain a better understanding of how employees manage their emotions and stress, and how they interact with co-workers and students, by using employees' EQ. Service quality is a crucial part of producing better services for the institution. Therefore, when employees of an organization exercise EQ skills, service quality improves because customers expect service providers to be sensitive and adaptable to their needs and behaviors and respond effectively to customers while also providing a high-quality service.

Additionally, human service employees like teachers require EQ abilities such as empathy, service orientation, and the capacity to work in a team. Therefore, institutions can also adjust their present policies and practices to emphasize the usage of EQ abilities. The two HR activities of recruitment and selection would incorporate EQ by using psychometric testing to choose people in the firm who have a high EQ. The ability approach to emotional intelligence, with a focus on skill development or knowledge acquisition, is used to construct or develop teaching or training programs. Psychometric testing to evaluate candidates with high EQ during the selection process, as well as EQ training, could have a substantial impact on the institutions.

The current results also confirm that SQ is positive and significantly influences the ESQ. The finding is consistent with previous researches [20], [21], [23], [48] emphasizing the critical nature of SQ's role in organizations for high performance at the workplace. It is due to how SQ develops an employee with self-awareness, behavior, the judgement of self-control, decision power, flexibility, adaptability, vision, consciousness, value, sense and intuition [50].

The findings of this present study also revealed the role of SQ in the ESQ of lecturers. The results indicate that lecturers' SQ can directly heighten their ESQ level. A low SQ, on the other hand, lowers their ESQ due to job dissatisfaction and reluctance. Therefore, the organization's top management should take this issue seriously. The enhancement may come in the form of job enrichment, lecturers' empowerment, or adding joy to work similarly to Ali [51], who highlighted happiness in the workplace besides worker competency. Creating a cooperative atmosphere rather than a competitive one can increase job satisfaction and provide a sense of solidarity and unity among employees. Such an investment is clearly worthwhile for any organization.

These measures are intended to increase lecturers' satisfaction and enjoyment of their daily work. An academic working environment that is instilled with spiritual values such as respect, honesty, and connectedness will bring a positive impact to the learning experience [21], [26], [27], [30], [32]. Moreover, they all agree that SQ has a positive influence on a student's academic achievement, where it is posited that students can solve their problems wisely and make better solutions for themselves [28], [29]. With SQ to help their psychological well-being, they will be less stressed and more content with their lives.

The SQ findings from this study may implicate a direct significant relationship between SQ and excellent service and its sustainability in higher education. Besides, many researchers found that self-development and work effectiveness can be improved by enhancing SQ within the employer. Therefore, SQ should be considered in any training involved by academicians. Moreover, if any problem occurred, SQ should also be considered in their intervention.

4. CONCLUSION

This study can support the development of education to meet fourth sustainable development goal, showing the importance of both emotional quotient and spiritual quotient for the excellence service quality of private university lecturers. The support for SDG-4 through EQ and SQ is needed to humanize education for the academicians' competency and well-being, particularly in the wake of the disruption by COVID-19. The findings reflect the emergence of the intangible element of intelligence that will help lecturers manage their careers while maintaining their current responsibilities and accomplishments. Lecturers who are emotionally and spiritually intelligent are aware of their fundamental roles and responsibilities and are able to apply this intelligence effectively in the classroom, which ultimately helps them become an integral part of the university. Since lecturers interact directly with students, the ability to communicate effectively is critical and

academicians must be able to explain their ideas in a clear and approachable manner. Academicians who incorporate EQ into their daily work create a culture in which students feel appreciated, engaged and empowered. Active listening, self-awareness, and empathy are just a few of the skills we can teach our students to help them achieve academically and socially. Students should be reminded that emotional management skills are not fixed but can be improved with the cooperation of spiritual intelligence. This necessitates a significant amount of effort and patience on the part of both the student and the teacher, as it is often a long-term process.

The findings of this study may provide additional insight to university policymakers about the importance of developing intelligence from their capital assets through professional initiatives like increasing knowledge level, skills, abilities, values, and social assets. Human capital with a strong will is a valuable asset for any country nowadays and is an essential element in attracting more investments to make Malaysia an excellent education hub as aspired by the Ministry of Education. Future researchers should expand this study to a bigger population to reconfirm the findings. To further understand EQ and SQ, a university needs to investigate the academic and professional welfare of its students and lecturers, staff recognition, quality management system, financial sustainability, and institutional reputation. In the case of current private HEIs, it is likely that the stability of household income and teaching experience had additional effects on academicians' willingness to accept responsibility and perform well.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study acknowledged the International Islamic University Malaysia and Universiti Malaysia Pahang (RDU200345) for funding assistance. The partial funding from both universities has made this research successfully published.

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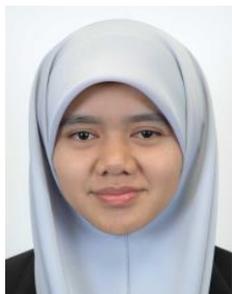
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