



## Linking Spiritual Leadership with Project Success in Software industry of Pakistan: Using Employee Engagement as mediator and Self-Efficacy as moderator

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**Abstract**

In the project management literature, project success has considered the key topic during the last few years. This study has proposed a model to observe the influence of spiritual leadership on success of IT projects with mediator employee engagement and moderator self-efficacy by drawing theoretical model from self-efficacy theory and spiritual leadership theory. Data was collected from employees of software industry in Pakistan and proposed associations were tested through structural equation modelling SMART-PLS software. The results indicated that spirituality of leaders has not direct influence on project success but it has indirect influence through mediation of employee engagement. Moreover, self-efficacy has not any moderating influence on the association among spiritual leadership and project success. Self-efficacy has not moderation effect on the association between employee engagement and project success. Based on the spiritual leadership theory and self-efficacy theory, this research showed that how spiritual leadership creates employee engagement which further leads to project success.

## **1. Introduction**

Over the last few years, Project management has given significant importance to project success. Researcher has also done extensive research on the essential factors that can create project success. Project success is known as the timely completion of projects with assigned budget and scope. Further ethical behavior of project manager is essential because project have various task that is assigned to employees. So ethical behavior of employees that is only possible in case of ethical leadership which increases the project success (Mubarak et al., 2021). In the success of organizations or projects leadership plays an essential part. There are various leadership styles such as shared, inclusive, humble, entrepreneurial and ethical leadership have investigated previously with respect to project success (Mubarak, Khan, Safdar, Muhammad & Riaz, 2021).

After review of existing literature, it has found that there is little research which statistically tested the influence of spirituality of leaders on project success. In fast changing world now individuals have needed leadership values more. So spiritual leadership means creating value for the organization. The idea of spirituality in work has got considerable importance in the last era. (Aydi & Ceylan, 2009). Spiritual leadership is rooted in theory of spiritual leadership as it is considered a casual leadership theory for organizational revolution which is considered to develop a naturally motivated and knowledge organization. The spiritual leadership theory comprises “vision, hope and altruistic love” and this theory lies within an intrinsic motivation model. The spiritual leadership theory has created within an intrinsic motivation model that includes vision, hope/ faith and altruistic love (Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005).

Individual’s belief about their capabilities to do particular task required to fulfil specific demands is known as self-efficacy. Therefore, self-efficacy is particularly as a key element in the specific accomplishment related with any type of company objectives such worker performance.

Employees are attempt to achieve their goals with the self-efficacy belief as it effects their feelings of competency and confidence that is required to complete a particular task. Furthermore, self-efficacy beliefs motivate the employees to perform better by enhancing their sense of control over their life circumstances. Employees with high self-efficacy are expected to be more intense in their work and pursue for more challenging goals (Bandura, 1977).

A positive belief of work related attitude that has described by energy, devotion and concentration is known as employee engagement. It is identified that work attitude also called employee engagement function as the driver of helpful work outcomes comprising task, efficiency and performance. Employee engagement is also an individual's sense of purpose and vitality that is obvious to others in the expose of adaptability effort, personal advantage and determination directed toward firm performance (Schaufeli, Salanova, & Gonz, 2002).

In the project management literature, project success has considered the key topic during the last few years. Project success principles are criteria which are applied to assess the project success or failure. Project is known as an exclusive and brief effort that should be completed within particular scope, time and budget. Project success has divided into two sections; first section includes factors of project success that are associated to criterion variables which add to the project attainment and another section includes the project success measures which are applied to measure the project's success and failure. Furthermore, project success is influenced by many factors in various categories of projects. So the use of project management tools and methods perform an important part in creating project success (Jugdev, Perkins, Fortune , White, & Walker, 2013).

There are hard and soft success criteria for different projects in project based organizations. Hard criteria include the facts such as “cost, time, performance, quality and economic success”. Soft criteria indicating various stakeholder perceptions. Therefore, it is identified that the aspect of cost, time, performance, client use and satisfaction are considered as the important project success criteria (Albert, Balve, & Spang, 2017). Basically, projects are considered as a powerful strategic guns that are introduced to create economic value. Therefore, project managers as the new strategic leaders control the business results for projects. It has also identified that there is a multidimensional framework for assessing project success. Four main project success dimensions are “project efficiency, customer influence, business success and future preparation”(Shenhar, Dvir, Levy, & Maltz, 2001).

Therefore, current study purposes to test the positive influence of spiritual leadership on project success in software industry of Pakistan. In developing a theoretical framework associating spiritual leadership and project success, this research proposes an employee engagement as a mediator which hypothetically describes the association between leader's spirituality and success of project. Moreover, this research proposes the self-efficacy as moderating the association among spiritual leadership and project success. Further, self-efficacy also supports the link of employee engagement and project success. The main

objective of this study is to observe the influence of spiritual leadership on project success with mediator employee engagement and moderator self-efficacy.

These are the objectives intended by researcher:

1. To study the association of spiritual leadership and success of IT projects in Pakistan
2. To inspect the association of self-Efficacy and success of IT projects in Pakistan
3. To check the link of leader's' spirituality and workers' engagement
4. To examine the association of worker's engagement and success of IT projects in Pakistan
5. To measure the mediating impact of employee engagement between the link of leader's spirituality and success of projects
6. To observe the moderating influence of self-efficacy among the association of spirituality of leaders and success of projects
7. To observe the moderating influence of self-efficacy among the relationship of employee engagement and success of IT projects in Pakistan

## **2. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Creation**

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

Theoretically our model is based on the spiritual leadership theory and self-efficacy theory. Bandura's self-efficacy theory means a belief of individual that he or she is capable of performing a particular task or job. So higher the self-efficacy greater the individual's confidence and work harder to perform. Therefore, self- efficacy motivates individual to perform and creates work engagement which can leads to project success in project based organizations like software companies. Furthermore, it proposes that spiritual leadership cannot efficiently utilize the employees until leader does not have self- efficacy. Self- efficacy creates the moderated link between spiritual leadership and project success. Fry's Spiritual leadership theory also supported our model as it also lies in intrinsic motivation model that includes vision, faith and altruistic love which leads to performance and commitment of organization. In this study organization performance is project success which can enhance by spirituality of leaders. Furthermore, underpinning theory is self-efficacy and supporting theory is spiritual leadership theory.

## **2.2. Spirituality of Leaders and Success of project**

Project success means the timely project completion in the predefined scope and assigned budget. Project is consisted of various task activities which has assigned to project employees. Further, mostly project failures occur due to unethical exercises which highlight the importance of ethical leadership in project success (Müller et al., 2014). In various projects of different type, size, scope and setting need a unique leadership style because leadership has a direct association with the success of projects. Shared leadership is important because projects need a collaborative approach between members with different duties and the shared leadership process within group has created positive features such as sense giving, sense making and motivating team members ( Imam & Zaheer, 2021).

There are different types of projects so these projects have different completion time period according to their nature. There is a need of such leadership which is based on these norms and values that are developed at work to allow openness to their staff. Furthermore, inclusive leadership provides employees a value based environment in which they are able to find solution of their problems quickly, ultimately project completion has done timely which enhances the project success (Khan, Jaafar, Javed, Mubarak, & Saudagar, 2020).

In the different leadership styles, humble leadership is stated in terms of three key features: “1. Ready to view oneself perfectly, 2. An admiration of other’s strength, 3. Openness to new concepts and response”. Generally, it suggests that the team leader humility via positive relational value can enhance the team performance which eventually leads to the project success (Ali, Li, Khan, Shah, & Ullah, 2020).

In this digital world organizations have confronted with quick changes with the development and fast moving innovation, normal leadership cannot be a substitute but entrepreneurial leadership is the reaction to survival and achievement for today’s organizations. Entrepreneurial leadership is the behavior that can boost growth and performance in difficult and destructive condition (Latif, et al., 2020). Furthermore, satisfaction has positive influence on organizational culture and spiritual leadership (Aydin & Ceylan, 2009). Multilevel model that is based on theory of leader’s spirituality and intrinsic motivation explore the positive effect of spirituality on employee performance (Wang, Guo, Ni, & Sh, 2019). Therefore, it has investigated that workplace spirituality has positive influence on work engagement and person-organization fit mediates the association among workplace spirituality and work engagement (Iqbal, Adawiyah, Suroso, & Wihuda, 2020). So this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Spirituality of leaders is significantly positively related with success of IT projects in Pakistan

H2: Spirituality of leaders is significantly positively related with employee engagement.

### **2.3. Self-efficacy and Success of projects**

Leadership has positive effect on the success of any project. Inclusive leadership have positive impact on success of project through self-efficacy. There is a partial mediation of self-efficacy between the association of inclusive style of leadership and success of project (Rehman, 2020). Furthermore, environmental changes have effect on the world. Leadership styles have positive influence on environmental organizational citizenship behavior through the mediating effect of self-efficacy (Ullah, et al., 2021). It has indicated that self-efficacy has positive influence on employee performance. Employee engagement and career development does not influence on employee performance but self-efficacy positively influence employee engagement in case of nurses (Pronajaya, Anindita, & Pamungkas, 2021).

Business settings are changing quickly these days and competition is also growing due to globalization, amount of work and acquisitions internally and externally in companies. Therefore, it is an extraordinary task for organization to increase employee self-efficacy and workplace spirituality. In the IT industry, it has identified that workplace spirituality and self-efficacy have positive relationship with moderating effect of age and experience (Tiwari , Srivastava, & Pathak, 2017). Therefore, it can be proposed that:

H3: Self-efficacy is significantly positively related to project success.

### **2.4. Mediation role of employee engagement**

Employee engagement can be described as psychological state engagement, behavioral engagement and trait engagement. Job attributes and leadership have main impact on state and behavioral engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Self-efficacy positively affects the worker performance within an organization (Hydara & Arumugam, 2022). Engaged and committed employees are important for organization performance. Job resources have direct and indirect influence on employee engagement and self-efficacy (Albrechta & Martyb, 2017). Servant leadership is considered as an effective style of leadership in project based organizations (Nauman, Musawir, Malik, & Munir, 2022).

Employee performance has considered an essential element for organizations because employee performance has strong relationship with company performance. Spiritual leadership

has positive impact on employee performance directly and indirectly through employee engagement (Heryawan, Suyono, Aini, Elisabeth, & Sukaris, 2021). Furthermore, it has investigated that spiritual leadership has increased employee engagement and organizational commitment. Therefore, organizational commitment has affected by the mediating influence of employee wellbeing and employee engagement. It has identified that employee engagement and organizational commitment has enhanced when organization and its leaders uses spirituality in their work (Hunsakera & Jeongb, 2020)

Therefore, this study has hypnotized the following:

H4: Employee engagement have significant positive relationship with project success.

H5: Employee engagement significantly mediates the association of spiritual leadership and project success.

### **2.5. Moderation role of Self-efficacy**

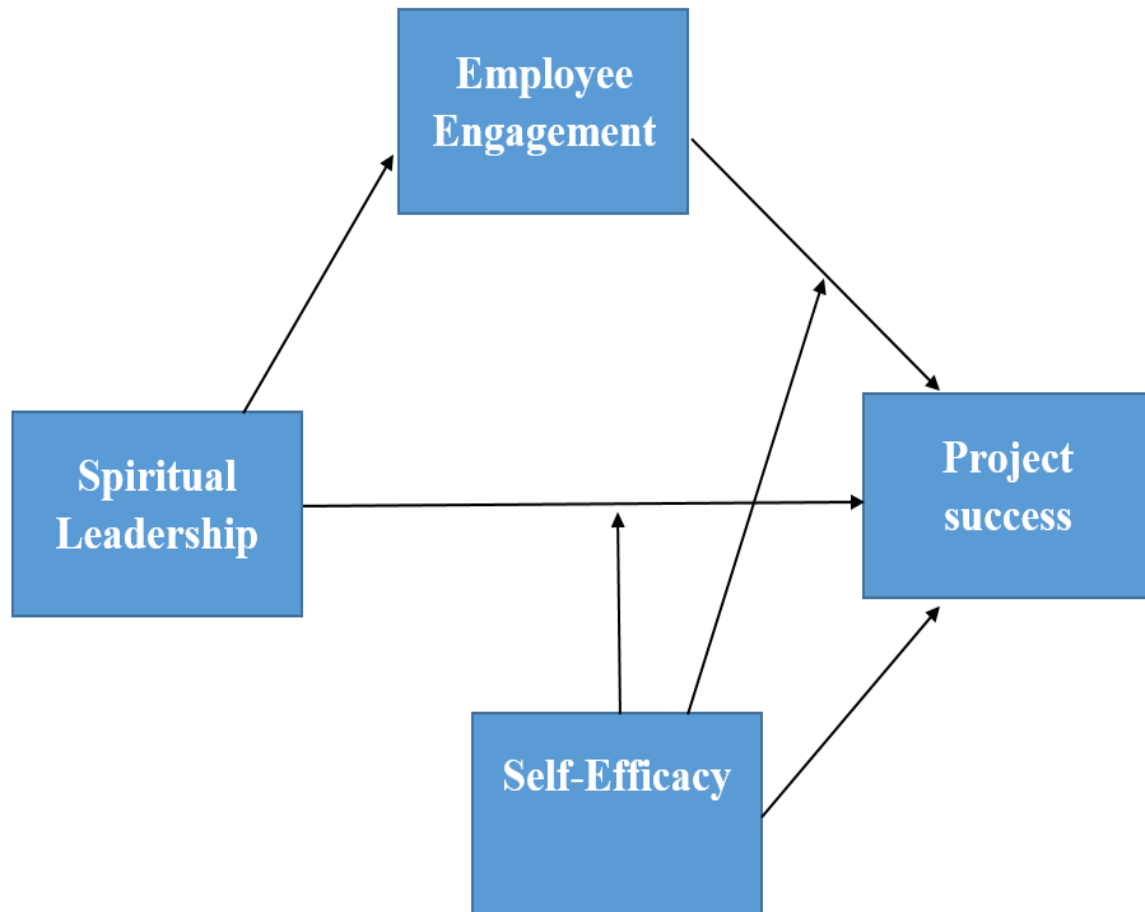
Individual's belief about their capabilities to do particular task required to fulfil specific demands is known as self-efficacy. Therefore, self-efficacy is a particularly key element in the specific accomplishment related with any type of company objectives such as worker performance. Employees attempt to achieve their goals with the self-efficacy belief as it effects their feelings of competency and confidence that is required to complete a particular task. Furthermore, self-efficacy beliefs motivate the employees to perform better by enhancing their sense of control over their life circumstances. Employees with high self-efficacy are expected to be more intense in their work and pursue for more challenging goals (Bandura, 1977).

Self- efficacy and job performance are positively related with each other at individual level in organizational settings. Further employee engagement also enhances the job performance (Cartera, Nesbitb, Badham, Parkerc, & Sung, 2016). Self-efficacy has a moderating influence on the association of inclusive leadership and success of project (Rehman, 2020). Therefore, it has suggested that ethical leadership has positive influence on job satisfaction and workplace spirituality and a positive association among workplace spirituality and job satisfaction has also identified. Workplace spirituality partially mediates and self-efficacy positively moderates the association between ethical leadership and job satisfaction in the it industry (Aftab, et al., 2022). This study can propose following hypotheses:

H6: Self-efficacy significantly moderates the association among employee engagement and success of project.

H7: Self- efficacy significantly moderates the association among spiritual leadership and success of project.

Following is the theoretical framework researcher intended.



### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Population and sampling

Respondents of this research were employees of project based organizations within software industry of Pakistan. There were more than 10,000 registered software companies' with 500,000 employees in the securities and exchange commission of Pakistan (SECP). According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size for population 100,0000 or more must be 384. Further, researcher approached the heads of HR department and described the main purpose of current research and got permission for data collection. A total 384 questionnaires



were simple randomly distributed to employees of software houses of Lahore. Therefore, main focus of this study was on the employees that are working on projects and have some experience on project working. Data was collected through personally administered questionnaire and online google form.

**3.2 Measures**

The five point likert scale was used with strongly agree= 5 to strongly disagree=1. Spiritual leadership was tested by three dimensions’ scale adopted by Fry (2005). Project success was measured by 14 items adopted by Aga, Noorderhavenn and Vallejo (2016). Self-efficacy was measured by scale adopted by Chen, Gully and Eden (2001). Finally, employee engagement was tested by He, Zhu, and Zheng (2014).

**4. Results**

It includes the analysis of data through SEM smart PLS. Two models have used measurement model and structural equation modelling for reliability, validity and hypothesis testing respectively.

**4.1 Measurement Model**

Measurement model includes the reliability and validity of variables. Measurement model was tested reliability through cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability and validity through convergent validity and discriminant validity. Internal consistency reliability was tested through cronbach alpha and composite reliability must be more than .7 (Hair et al., 2017). Therefore, convergent validity was tested through the value of AVE that must be 0.5 or higher. Discriminant validity was assessed through square roots of AVE lies on diagonal which should be more than squared correlation (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**Table: 1 Measurement model**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Cronbach’s Alpha</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>	<b>Average variance extracted (AVE)</b>
Employee Engagement (EE)	0.929	0.940	0.591
Project Success (PS)	0.917	0.930	0.508
Self- Efficacy (SEC)	0.914	0.930	0.627
Spiritual Leadership style (SES)	0.937	0.945	0.571

Table 1 indicates those values of cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability and average variance extract AVE to meet the acceptable criteria. Therefore, results indicate the existance of internal consistency, composite reliability and convergent validity.

**Table:2 Discriminant Validity**

Table 2 of discriminant validity indicates that square roots of AVE lies on diagonal is greater than squared correlation which meets the criteria of discriminant validity.

**4.2 Structural Model**

This model was used to test direct and indirect relationships through bootstrapping in the Smart PLS. T and P value indicated the significance of the relationships among variables. T value should be greater 1.96 and p value should be less than 0.05 in case of 95% confidence interval. Further coefficient beta value showed the direction of association (Hair et al., 2017).

Construct	EE	PS	SEC	SES
Employee Engagement (EE)	<b>0.778</b>			
Project Success (PS)	0.671	<b>0.713</b>		
Self- Efficacy (SEC)	0.689	0.680	<b>0.792</b>	
Spiritual Leadership style (SES)	0.701	0.688	0.691	<b>0.756</b>

**Table 3:** Direct Relationship

Hypothesis	Direct Relationship	Path Coefficient	T Value	P Values	Decision
<b>H1</b>	SLS→PS	0.194	1.480	0.140	Insignificant
<b>H2</b>	SLS→EE	0.749	13.798	0.000	Significant
<b>H3</b>	SEC→PS	0.110	0.990	0.323	Insignificant
<b>H4</b>	EE→PS	0.557	4.081	0.000	Significant

*Note: Spiritual leadership style (SLS), Project Success (PS), Employee Engagement (EE), Self- Efficacy (SEC)*

Table 3 of direct relationship indicates that H2 and H4 is significant but H1 and H3 is insignificant. Therefore, it shows that spiritual leadership is positively related with employee engagement and further employee engagement is positively related with project success.

Spiritual leadership is not directly related to project success and self-efficacy does not have direct effect on project success.

**Table 4:** Indirect Relationship

Hypothesis	Indirect Relationship	Path coefficient	T Values	P values	Decision
H5	SLS → EE → PS (Mediation)	0.417	4.142	0.000	Supported
H6	EE*SEC → PS (Moderation)	0.126	0.658	0.511	Not- Supported
H7	SPL* SEC → PS (Moderation)	- 0.222	1.215	0.225	Not- Supported

Table 4 of indirect relationship indicates that H5 is significant and H6, H7 is insignificant. Moreover, it shows that mediation effect has supported but moderation has not supported. Employee engagement mediates the association between spritual leadership and project success. Self-efficacy has not moderation influence on the association between spritual leadership and project success. Self-efficacy has not any moderating influence on the association between employee engagement and project success.

### 5. Conclusion and Discussion

Previous studies has indicated that spritualality of leaders has positive link with employee task performance. Model is based on “spritual leadership theory and intrinsic motivation theory” which describe that sprituality of leaders is an essential source to increase employee task behavior (Wang, Guo, Ni, & Sh, 2019). In project based organizations, the factors encouraging project success has gained extensive importance. This study has investigated the project success in software industry of Pakistan. The objective of this paper is to find out the influence of leader’s sprituality on the success of IT projects through mediation of employee engagement and moderation of self-efficacy. The results of the study indicate that there is no moderation effect of self-efficacy on the association of spritual leadership and project success. Self-efficacy has not any moderation influence on the association between employee engagement and project success. Therefore, spritual leadership has not any direct effect on project success but spritual leadership has influence on project success with mediation of employee engagement. Spritual leadership has positive influence on employee engagement and further employee engagement has positive effect on project success.

#### 5.1. Implications

##### 5.1.1 Academic Implications

Drawing on spritual leadership theory and self-efficacy theory theoratical model of this study contributes theoratically in two ways. Firstly it focuses on the association of spritual leadership and project success and secondly it examines the intervening role of employee engagemnt and moderarting role of self-efficacy that left unanswered in the project management literaure. Therefore, this study provides new insight in the existing literature about how project success increases from the use of spritual leadership.

### **5.1.2. Managerial Implications**

This study has an important administrative implications as it supports to administrators in encouraging a spritual leadership style to enhance project success. This study expands the idea to follow spritual leadership in order to engage employees which further leads to project success. In the fast changing world now individuals have needed leadership values more. So spritual leadership means creating value for the organization. The idea of spirituality in work has got considerable importance in the last era. (Aydi & Ceylan, 2009).

### **5.2. Boundaries and Recommendation**

This study has several limitations which can be addressed through future researches. Firstly, data is cross sectional in nature, future studies should consider longitudinal data collection to get deeper accepting of the phenomenon. Secondly, sample of this study is employees of software industries of Pakistan; future studies should consider other industry and country like construction industry of china. Future research is also essential to study with different mediators like psychological capital, project planning, risk management among the association of leadership and success of IT projects in Pakistan. Qualitative or mixed method can also be used to assess project success.

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