

## Understanding Spiritual Intelligence and Affective Commitment Among Police Officers in Malaysia: The Mediating Role of Work Engagement

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the direct relationship between spiritual intelligence and work engagement as well as the relationship between work engagement and affective commitment. In addition, this study also aims to examine the role of work engagement as a mediator on the relationship between spiritual intelligence and affective commitment. As there is scarce empirical evidence with regard to the role of work engagement as a mediator, particularly between spiritual intelligence and affective commitment, this study contributes towards enriching this field of study. The study was conducted on a sample of 372 police officers in five states, namely Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor, Sarawak and Sabah. Hypothesis testing was analyzed using PLS-SEM analysis. Results indicated that: (1) three dimensions of spiritual intelligence consisting of critical existential thinking (CET), personal meaning making (PMP) and transcendental awareness (TA) has a positive direct and significant relationship with work engagement; (2) one dimension of spiritual intelligence consisting of conscious state expansion (CSE) has non-significant relationship with work engagement. (3) Work engagement has a positive and significant direct relationship with affective commitment; (4) Work engagement has a significant role as mediators between the relationship of the three dimensions of spiritual intelligence (CET, PMP and TA) with affective commitment. (5) Work engagement has non-significant role as mediators between the relationships of one dimension of spiritual intelligence (CSE) with affective commitment. Results of this study have proven that work engagement was significant in the role of mediator to influence spiritual intelligence in the relationship with affective commitment. Findings of the study also indicate the importance of spiritual intelligence in influencing loyalty and commitment of the police officers.

**Keywords:** Spiritual Intelligence; Work engagement; Affective commitment; Police Officers.



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### 1. Introduction

According to (Snyder and Lopez, 2008), religion and spirituality are terms that have distinct meanings where as religion is associated with a theological system (the science concerned with the divine), faith, ritual prayer, rituals, customs, beliefs and formal practices ; the term spirituality is related to the quality of human life, including positive psychological concept, love and compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, self-responsibility and respect of the environment. According to (Zohar and Marshall, 2000), spiritual intelligence indicates spiritual aspects correlated to intellectual intelligence and emotional intelligence. Spiritual intelligence can also be defined as an individual intelligence, which assists individual in healing and developing themselves in a more holistic manner. Work engagement refers to the aspect that embodies positive emotions and overall engagement in the work, which is characterized by three dimensions including vigour, dedication, and absorption of work (Schaufeli W. et al., 2002). While affective commitment is closely linked to the willingness to be emotionally involved and fully engaged to shared organizational goals (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Previous research on public sectors has found that commitment among civil servants was low compared to workers in the private sector (Brunetto et al., 2010); (Trincherio et al., 2014). Police officers have also been found to be lacking in commitment due to dissatisfaction on with the goals and values that have been practiced in their organization particularly in terms of employee's well-being, which have not been given attention by their organizations; issues related to salary and promotion; issues in employees' job equipment; issues in management style of the organizations; and recognition and reward systems by the organizations (Parsons et al., 2011).

According to (Haarr, 1997) organizational commitment in the field of policing is often associated with a variety of issues in which police officers were found to be less committed as they are more likely to engage in manipulating work tasks, attempt to avoid implementing tasks, receiving informal remuneration (for example; unpaid food and discounts) and involved in misconducts such as embezzlement, corruption, absenteeism and sexual harassment. According to a study conducted in Australia policing organization by (Parsons et al., 2011), senior police officers has been found to be less committed and felt unappreciated and frustrated with the leadership of the organization which induced them to leave the organization. (Haarr, 1997) argued that the low level of commitment among police officers consequently leads them to hiding corrupt practices among their colleagues as well as using unethical approach to solve problems. The objectives of this research are to study the direct relationship between the four dimension of spiritual intelligence and work engagement and relationship between work engagement and affective commitment. Moreover, this study also seeks to investigate the role of work engagement as mediator on the indirect relationship between the four dimension of spiritual intelligence and affective commitment.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Relationship Between Spiritual Intelligence and Work Engagement

The study of the relationship between spiritual or religious element with work engagement's variables are lacking and rarely studied by scholars (Torabi and Javadi, 2013). However, several studies had examined the relationship between the abovementioned variables (Bickerton, 2013); (Miner et al., 2015); (Rothmann and Buys, 2011); (Saks, 2011); (Torabi and Javadi, 2013). (Saks, 2011) argued that spirituality in the workplace can be a powerful predictor of work engagement. Whereas according to (Rothmann and Buys, 2011), individual with strong faith and approached God to seek guidance, strength and support is predicted to be more psychological prepared and engaged to their work. (Milliman et al., 2003) suggested that spiritual intelligence in the workplace (among individuals, groups and organizations) are closely linked with the five elements in organizational behaviour such as organizational commitment, low intention to quit, intrinsic job satisfaction, job engagement, and organization-based self-esteem (OBSE).

In a previous study by Torabi and Javadi (2013) examining the direct relationship between dimensions of spiritual intelligence and dimensions of work engagement, found that the dimensions of spiritual intelligence such as Critical Existential Thinking (CET), Personal Making Production (PMP) and Conscious State Expansion (CSE) has a positive and significant relationship with work engagement. Therefore, the hypotheses proposed in this study are:

H<sub>1</sub> The dimension of critical existential thinking (CET) has a positive and significant relationship with work engagement.

H<sub>2</sub> The dimension of personal making production (PMP) has a positive and significant relationship with work engagement.

H<sub>3</sub> The dimension of transcendental awareness (TA) has a positive and significant relationship with work engagement.

H<sub>4</sub> The dimension of conscious state expansion (CSE) has a positive and significant relationship with work engagement.

### 2.2. Relationship Between Work Engagement and Affective Commitment

According to Hallberg and Schaufeli (2006), elements of job involvement, work engagement and affective commitment are complementary component of work attachment and are empirically distinct construct from work engagement. Based on Conservation of Resources Theory (COR), available workplace resources could potentially generate affective commitment through the creation, maintenance and accumulation of resources as well as work engagement which is determined by environmental and individual factors (Hobfoll, 1989). Employees with high level of affective commitment has been perceived to have a sense of belonging and the active involvement in various organizational activities, willingness to achieve organizational goal and have a desire to remain with the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Saks (2006) found that work engagement plays an important role to determine job satisfaction, willingness to quit job, and affective commitment. Work engagement was evidently found to serve as a predictor of organizational commitment (Andrew and Sofian, 2012); (Moshoeu and Geldenhuys, 2015). Empirical evidence provided proof that indicated work engagement has a positive and significant relationship with organizational outcomes such as job performance (Andrew and Sofian, 2012); (Bakker A. B. et al., 2010) and organizational commitment (Andrew and Sofian, 2012); (Biswas and Bhatnagar, 2013); (Herman, 2013); (Saks, 2006); (Schaufeli W. B. and Salanova, 2007). In the context of this study, there are a number of previous studies have found that work engagement has a positive and significant relationship with affective commitment (Albdour and Altarawneh, 2014); (Albrecht and Andreetta, 2011); (Ferrer and Morris, 2013); (Scrima et al., 2013); (Parzefall and Hakanen, 2010). Therefore, the hypothesis proposed in this study are:

H<sub>5</sub> Work engagement has a positive and significant relationship with affective commitment.

### 2.3. The Role of Work Engagement as a Mediator

Work engagement's role as a mediator between personal resources and positive outcomes was discovered to be positive and significant in studies by Hakanen J. J. et al. (2006) and Llorens et al. (2006). In the context of this study, personnel resources refers to spiritual intelligence, while positive outcomes refers to affective commitment. One of the model in Conservation of Resources Theory (COR), Job Demands Resources Theory (JD-R) explained in great detail with regard to the position of work engagement in influencing individual commitment and performance.

Bickerton (2013) have identified Job Demands Resources Theory (JD-R) as the underlying theory in describing the role of work engagement as a mediator in the relationship between personal resources with positive outputs through employee motivation. The motivational process from personal resources can promote work engagement and have positive impact on the behavioural outcomes such as commitment and job performance (Bickerton, 2013). Past researchers recognized that the source of personal resources such as spiritual intelligence (Bickerton, 2013); (Miner *et al.*, 2015); (Saks, 2011); (Torabi and Javadi, 2013) could affect the work engagement, while the outcomes of work engagement are associated with work output such as affective commitment (Albdour and Altarawneh, 2014); (Albrecht and Andretta, 2011); (Ferrer and Morris, 2013); (Scrima *et al.*, 2013); (Parzefall and Hakanen, 2010). Based on this relationship, this clearly demonstrates that work engagement can play a role as mediator in the relationship between variables of spiritual intelligence, and variables of affective commitment. Nevertheless, there is still scarcity in studies that specifically examined the role of work engagement as mediator in the relationship between spritul intellingence with affective commitment, especially in the field of policing.

Nevertheless, there are previous studies that used work engagement as mediator in the relationship between other variables (Andrew and Sofian, 2012); (Biswas and Bhatnagar, 2013); (Ferrer and Morris, 2013); (Parzefall and Hakanen, 2010); (Scrima *et al.*, 2013). The hypotheses proposed in this study are:

H<sub>6</sub> Work engagement has mediation effect on relationship between the dimension of critical existing thinking (CET) and affective commitment.

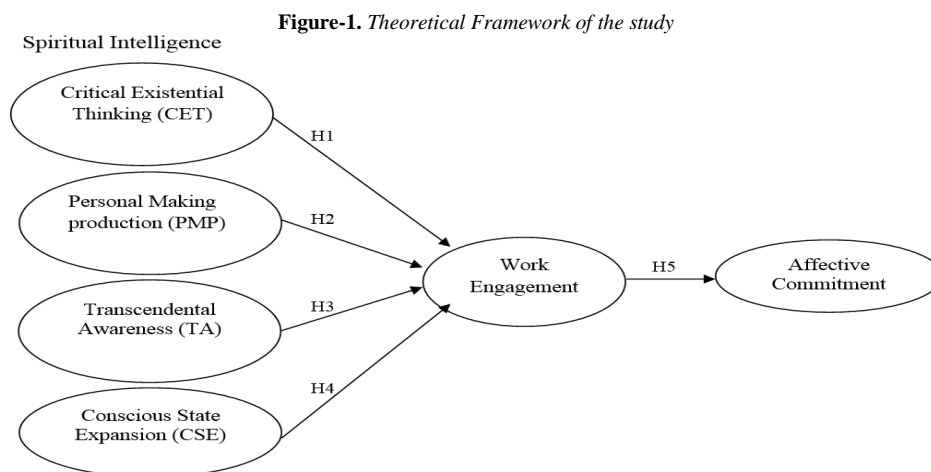
H<sub>7</sub> Work engagement has mediation effect on the relationship between the dimension of personal making production (PMP) and affective commitment.

H<sub>8</sub> Work engagement has mediation effect on the relationship between the dimension of transcendental awareness (TA) and affective commitment.

H<sub>9</sub> Work engagement has mediation effect on the relationship between the dimension of conscious state expansion (CSE) and affective commitment.

## 2.4. Theoretical Framework of the Study

Based on Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989) and Job Demand Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker A.B. and Demerouti, 2008); (Hakanen J. J and Roodt, 2010), along with emperical findings of previous studies, the current study develops a theoretical framework to visualize the relationship between spritual intellingence, work engagement, and affective commitment as depicted in Figure 1.



## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Sampling and Procedure

This study uses a quantitative approach in the the form of surveys that involve collecting data through questionnaires distributed to respondents. This quantitative method gives an advantage in the collection of large amount of information at one time, low cost and easy to manage (Creswell, 2008); (Hofstede *et al.*, 1990). The sampling method used in this study is Non-Probability sampling technique, specifically the study utilizes Purposive based sampling technique. Purposive based sampling techniques refers to sampling procedure in which a group of subjects that have certain characteristics are identified as the respondent for the research (Chua, 2011). In this study, the selection of respondents is based on their State postings, due to the number of records of disciplinary action, which is higher, compared to the other State contingents. The states chosen are five different states. The respondents composed of policed officers who serve in the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) in the State contingents of Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor, Sarawak, and Sabah. This study focuses on police officers as respondents based on the large size of Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) in terms of postings, branches and levels of operations denoting that the massive impact the Royal of Malaysian Police (PDRM) has on Malaysian community as the leading agency in law enforcement in Malaysia. A total of 1000 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in the abovementioned States after obtaining permission from the management of the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM).

### 3.2. Research Instrument

The study utilizes survey instrument as the main tool for data collection (Ibrahim et al., 2016). Measurement of the variables such as spiritual intelligence, work engagement, and affective commitment used in this study was adopted from the measurements that have been developed in English language by previous scholars and translated into Bahasa Malaysia using backtranslation technique. All of the three instruments were measured based on five point Likert scale that ranged from 1 to 5; where 1 = Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4= Agree; and 5 = Strongly Agree. Measurement items for demographic information contained ten questions related to gender, age, race, religion, academic qualification, marital status, rank, length of service, salary, and location of posting.

The measurement instrument for spiritual intelligence construct is adopted from DeCicco's (2009) Spiritual Intelligence Self-Inventory (Bisri-24) containing 24 items divided into four dimensions of spiritual intelligence construct including 1) Critical Existential Thinking (CET) (7 items); 2) Personal Making Production (PMP) (5 items); 3) Transcendental Awareness (TA) (7 items); and 4) Concious State Expansion (CSE) (5 items). The measurement instrument for work engagement construct is adopted from (Saks, 2006) Job Engagement Scale which consisted of 5 items. While the measurement instrument for affective commitment construct is adopted from Allen and Meyer (1990) Affective Commitment Scales consisting of eight items. Composite Realibility (CR) has been used in this study to measure the realibility of the measurement scale. Composite reliability (CR) is more suitable than the Cronbch's Alph because it is not influenced by the existence of a number of items in each scale and used loadings which had been extracted from the actual model that is analyzed (Barroso et al., 2010). Composite reliability for the four dimension of spritual intelligence construct are CET: CR = 0.959; PMP: CR = 0.924; TA: CR = 0.867 and CSE: CR = 0.918. While for work engagement construct, composite realibility value is CR = 0.888; and for affective commitment construct, composite realibility value is CR=0.896.

## 4. Results and Findings

A total of 1000 questionnaires were distributed to 1000 police office from five states of Malaysia including Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor, Sarawak and Sabah and 402 questionnaires were returned indicating 40.2 percent rate of return. However, only 372 from 402 of the returned questionnaires can be used for data analysis because the remaining did not fill in the questionnaire completely.

### 4.1. Respondent's Profile

The majority of respondent in this study were male (84.1%) while the rest are women. Most of the respondents were aged 26-35 years (38.2) percent). The majority of respondents were Malays (72.8 percent) and were Muslims (80.9 percent). While more than half of the respondents has obtained SPM (Malaysian Certificate of Education) as their highest academic qualification (59.9 percent). Majority of respondents were married (77.4 percent). With regard to the ranking of police officers, the police officers from the rank of Corporal represent the majority (37.4 percent). Most of respondents have service experience of 11-20 years (26.6 percent) and has salaries below than RM3000 (45.5 percent) as well as based in Selangor (25.5 percent).

### 4.2. Hypothesis Testing

Data for the study for spiritual intelligence construct, work engagement construct, and affective commitment construct was analyzed using PLS-SEM via SmartPLS 2.0 software. The data was assessed in a two-step process. The first step is the measurement model and the second step is the structural model (Hair et al., 2014). Table 2 below shows the summary of the relevant measurement model related to reliability and validity of the assessment instrument. Based on Table 2, generally the items in the measurement model exhibited loading that exceed 0.5 (recommended value) ranging from a lower bound of 0.637 to an upper bound of 0.912 after seven items have been deleted (*TA4SQ*, *TA5SQ*, *TA7SQ*, *CSE5SQ*, *KA5*, *KA7* and *KA8*) because these items have value below than the recommended value (Hair et al., 2014). Meanwhile, for composite reliability value for each construct ranging from 0.867 to 0.959 which exceed the threshold value of 0.7 Hair et al. (2014). Thus, based on Table 2, all the items used for this study have demonstrated satisfactory indicator reliability.

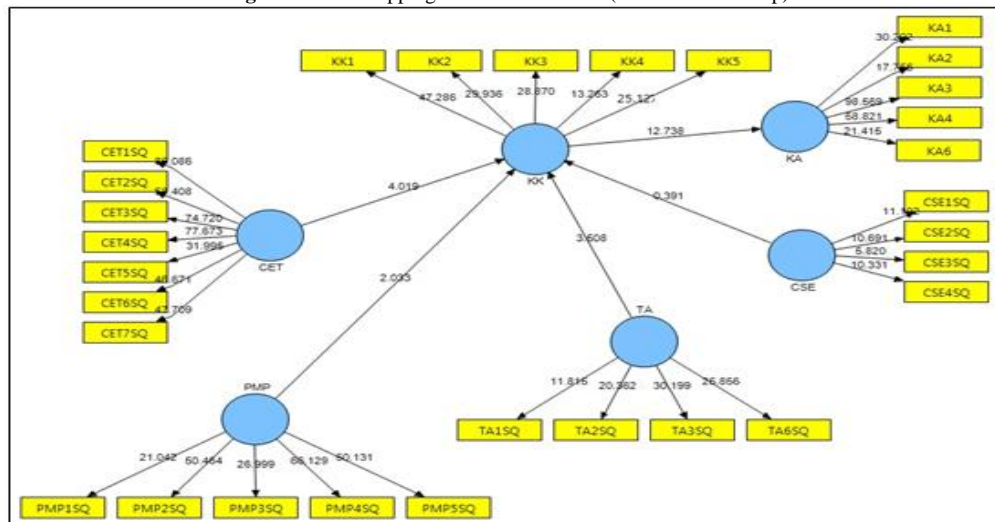
Table-2. Measurement Model

Construct	Items	Loading	AVE	CR	Discriminant Validity
Critical Existential Thinking (CET)	CET1SQ	0.892	0.772	0.959	Yes
	CET2SQ	0.877			
	CET3SQ	0.901			
	CET4SQ	0.906			
	CET5SQ	0.855			
	CET6SQ	0.855			
	CET7SQ	0.863			
Personal Meaning Making (PMP)	PMP1SQ	0.731	0.710	0.924	Yes
	PMP2SQ	0.910			
	PMP3SQ	0.783			
	PMP4SQ	0.912			
	PMP5SQ	0.861			
Transcendental Awareness (TA)	TA1SQ	0.637	0.624	0.867	Yes
	TA2SQ	0.793			
	TA3SQ	0.882			
	TA6SQ	0.826			
Concious State Expansion (CSE)	CSE1SQ	0.877	0.737	0.918	Yes
	CSE2SQ	0.903			
	CSE3SQ	0.764			
	CSE4SQ	0.882			
Work engagement (KK)	KK1	0.838	0.614	0.888	Yes
	KK2	0.823			
	KK3	0.803			
	KK4	0.663			
	KK5	0.778			
Affective Commitment (KA)	KA1	0.759	0.635	0.896	Yes
	KA2	0.678			
	KA3	0.906			
	KA4	0.847			
	KA6	0.774			

Note: TA4SQ, TA5SQ, TA7SQ, CSE5SQ, KA5, KA7 and KA8 were deleted due to low loading <0.5 (Hair et al., 2014).

For the structural model analysis, the bootstrapping function generated 5000 samples from 372 cases. The validity of the structural model was assessed using the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) and path coefficients. Figure 2 demonstrates the bootstrapping of path coefficient of each constructs. Based on Figure 2, majority of the direct relationship between each constructs has positive significant relationship except CSE→KK, which found otherwise. Thus, four research hypotheses were supported in this study and only one hypothesis was rejected for the direct relationship for each constructs. Table 3 demonstrates a summary of hypotheses testing that was carried out in this study.

Figure-2. Bootstrapping of Path Coefficient (Direct Relationship)



**Table-3.** Summary of Bootstrapping Results (Direct Relationship)

Hypotheses	Direct Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	T Value	Decision
H1	CET → KK	0.233	4.019***	Supported
H2	PMP → KK	0.092	2.033***	Supported
H3	TA → KK	0.184	3.508***	Supported
H4	CSE → KK	-0.039	0.391 <sup>NS</sup>	Not Supported
H5	KK → KA	0.475	12.738***	Supported

**Note:** Level of Significant = \*\*\*p<0.01; \*\*p<0.05; \*p<0.10; <sup>NS</sup>Non Significant  
 CET= Critical Existential Thinking; PMP= Personal Meaning Making (PMP); TA= Transcendental Awareness; CSE= Concius State Expansion; KK= Work Engagement; KA= Affective Commitment

While, Table 4 shows the analysis of R Squared (R<sup>2</sup>) and Effect Size (f<sup>2</sup>) for each studied constructs. Based on Table 4, the coefficient of determination R<sup>2</sup> value for each constructs fall within moderated level based on the rule of thumb which categorized value 0.75 (strong), 0.50 (moderate), and 0.25 (weak) (Hair et. al., 2014). While for the computation process of Effect Size (f<sup>2</sup>), Cohen (1988) has categorized f<sup>2</sup> value to f<sup>2</sup>< 0.019 = No Effect; 0.02 < f<sup>2</sup>< 0.149 = Weak Effect; 0.15 < f<sup>2</sup>< 0.349 = Moderate Effect; f<sup>2</sup>> 0.35 = High Effect.

**Table-4.** Coefficient Determination R2 and Effect Size f<sup>2</sup>

Construct		R <sup>2</sup>		f <sup>2</sup>	Level (Effect Size)
		Included	Excluded	(Effect Size)	
Spiritual Intelligence	CET	0.4101	0.3724	0.064	Weak
	PMP	0.4101	0.4042	0.010	No Effect
	TA	0.4101	0.3886	0.036	Weak
	CSE	0.4101	0.4090	1.865	High

**Note:** Effect size f<sup>2</sup>< 0.019 = No Effect; 0.02 < f<sup>2</sup>< 0.149 = Wek; 0.15 < f<sup>2</sup>< 0.349 = Moderate; f<sup>2</sup>> 0.35 = High (Cohen, 1988)

CET= Critical Existential Thinking; PMP= Personal Meaning Making (PMP); TA= Transcendental Awareness; CSE= Concius State Expansion; KK= Work Engagement; KA= Affective Commitment

Subsequently, the mediation effect of work engagement was analyzed and the result demonstrate that work engagement has a mediation effect of indirect relationship between three dimensions of spiritual intelligence construct (CET, PMP, and TA) with affective commitment construct. As indicated by Preacher and Hayes (2008), if the value of lower limit of boot confidence interval (LLCI) and the upper limit of boot confidence interval (ULCI) do not straddle a 0 value in between, the mediation effect has occurred.

**Table-5.** The mediation effect analysis of work engagement

Hypotheses	Mediator's Role	T Value	BC 95% CI			Decision
			SE	LLCI	ULCI	
H6	CET→KK→KA	3.82***	0.0204	0.054	0.168	Supported
H7	PMP→KK→KA	1.986***	0.0197	0.0006	0.0087	Supported
H8	TA→KK→KA	3.567***	0.0220	0.039	0.135	Supported
H9	CSE→KK→KA	-1.109 <sup>NS</sup>	0.0210	-	-	Not Supported

**Note :**Level of Significant = \*\*\*p<0.01; \*\*p<0.05; \*p<0.10

SE=Standard Error; LLCI= Lower limit of boot confidence interval; ULCI= Upper limit of boot confidence interval;CET= Critical Existential Thinking; PMP= Personal Meaning Making (PMP); TA= Transcendental Awareness; CSE= Concius State Expansion; KK= Work Engagement; KA= Affective Commitment

## 5. Discussion & Conclusion

Results of the study posit that seven hypotheses are supported while only two hypotheses indicated otherwise. The three dimensions of spiritual intelligence including Critical Existential Thinking (CET). Personal Meaning Making (PMP), and Transcendental Awareness (TA) have been found to have direct positive and significant relationship with work engagement. This finding supports previous studies by highlighting spritual intelligence has a positive and significant relationship with work engagement (Bickerton, 2013); (Miner et al., 2015); (Saks, 2011); (Torabi and Javadi, 2013). Furthermore, this study also confirmed that Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, by proving that personal resources such as spiritual intelligence has a direct relationship with work engagement (Bakker A.B. and Demerouti, 2008); (Hakanen J. J and Roodt, 2010).

In line with the findings of the study, it can be implied, that police officers have the ability to remain composed and focused in the face of crisis surrounding originating from their stressful working environment. Spirituality is an important internal aspect of an individual which can lead to composedness and creativeness and productive thinking for each police officers. Hence, the results of this study has proved that police officers who possessed high level of spritual intelligence can improve their level of engagement with the organization. The results of the analysis on the relationship between work engagement with affective commitment were found to be consistent and in line with findings by Albdour and Altarawneh (2014), Albrecht and Andreetta (2011), Ferrer and Morris (2013), Scrima et al. (2013) and Parzefall and Hakanen (2010) in which work engagement can influence of employee's affective commitment level toward organization. This means that, when a police officer has a high level of work engagement,

it will directly affect their affective commitment level to the organization. Consequently, the relationship between spiritual intelligence, work engagement and affective commitment are intertwined with each other. In addition, findings of the study also revealed that there is indirect relationship between spiritual intelligence and affective commitment when work engagement was included as a mediator. This finding supports Job Demands-Resources model by demonstrating that the mediating effect of work engagement on the relationship between personal resources with positive outputs of organization (Bakker A.B. and Demerouti, 2008); (Hakanen J. J and Roodt, 2010).

In general, this study has provided a clear picture and understanding of the importance of the relationship between the aspects of spiritual intelligence, work engagement and affective commitment. The results of this study could broaden the existing literature by presenting empirical findings to support the conceptual approach by previous scholars; this is because researchers recognized that studies regarding the behavioural aspect of law enforcement personnel has not received much attention particularly with regard to organizational commitment factors (Aremu, 2005); (Dick, 2011); (Metcalf and Dick, 2001). In fact, studies related to spiritual intelligence, work engagement and affective commitment aspects of law enforcement agency such as policing organizations are still lacking compared to others fields of work (Dantzker, 1994).

Furthermore, the contribution of the study can provide important insights into organizational management pertaining to the aspect of spiritual intelligence and work engagement and the important role they play in increasing the level of work commitment among employees particularly police officers. Thus, organizations will able to devise a course or training to improve the level of spiritual intelligence among employees as well as create awareness and confidence among employees of the organization. In fact, the organization will also be able to enhance commitment among employees through the element of spiritual intelligence via work engagement. Additionally, the management may also make further improvements in the recruitment of police officers in the selection of new officers who have high levels of spiritual intelligence by conducting intelligence tests on candidates.

This study has limitations in terms of time and financial constraints, which has limited the extensiveness of the research to all State contingents throughout Malaysia. This study only choose five policing contingents from the five states of Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor, Sarawak and Sabah because it has been recorded to have the largest membership and the largest numbers of employees with disciplinary records. In addition, this study relies heavily on quantitative survey; therefore, the researchers propose that future research is to be conducted using qualitative methods to gain insights that are more detailed.

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