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TITLE   The Relationship Between Spirituality, Spiritual Intelligence, and Leadership Practices in Student Leaders in the BYU-Idaho Student Activities Program

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OBJECTIVE   The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between spirituality, spiritual intelligence, and leadership practices in student leaders in the BYU-Idaho Student Activities Program.

METHODOLOGY

The entire population of student leaders serving in the Student Activities Program during the winter 2011 semester at BYU-Idaho were invited to participate in this study (N = 317) and 150 completed the Student version of the Leadership Practices Inventory, the College Students' Beliefs and Values Survey (Astin, Astin & Lundholm, 2010), and the Spiritual Intelligence Self-Report Inventory (King & DeCicco, 2009). Most of the respondents were female (55%), single (82%), between the ages of 21-24 (55%), upper-division (61%), and had served 1-3 semesters in a leadership position (78%). Internal reliabilities for the Student LPI in this study were .75 Model, .80 Inspire, .78 Challenge, .76 Enable, and .80 Encourage.

KEY FINDINGS

No significant differences were found on any of the five leadership practices on the basis of gender, marital status, college affiliation, age, year in school, leadership level, or length of service. The author comments that this is significance as it "implies that leadership transcends" such considerations (p. 122).

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Regression analysis, with the 10 spirituality and spiritual intelligence measures predicting each of the five leadership practices, indicated that Charitable Involvement and Transcendental Awareness significantly predicted Model the Way; Equanimity and Charitable Involvement significantly predicted Inspire a Shared Vision; Spiritual Quest and Charitable Involvement significantly predicted Challenge the Process; Spiritual Quest, Ecumenical Worldview, and Transcendental Awareness significantly predicted Enable Others to Act; and Ecumenical Worldview significantly predicted Encourage the Heart. Unrelated to any of the five leadership practices was Spiritual Identification, Ethic of Caring, Critical Existential Thinking, Personal Meaning Production, or Conscious State Expansion. The regression model containing all 10 measures accounted for large effects on four of the leadership practices: 23 percent of the variance in Model, 30 percent in Inspire, 29 percent in Challenge, 34 percent in Enable; and a small effect (13%) in Encourage.

Of the 50 correlations between the five leadership practices and 10 measures of spirituality and spiritual intelligence sixty-four percent were statistically significant, and all were positive. The author concludes: "The number, strength, and statistical significance of these correlations provide strong support for the association of spirituality and spiritual intelligence to leadership among BYU-Idaho student leaders" (p. 124).

The relationship between Spiritual Quest and the leadership practices of Challenge and Enable were the only significant inverse predictive relationships. "Being too internally focused," explains the author, "may counter a student leader's ability to frequently engage in leadership practices that require risk taking, goal setting, and initiative (Challenge the Process) as well as relationship building, cooperation, and empowerment (Enable Others to Act)" (p. 152).

The author cautions that the homogeneity of the population makes generalizations limited

outside of either BYU-Idaho or non-LDS populations. Still, the author concludes: "More particularly, the development and expression of certain spiritual qualities and abilities, namely, Equanimity, Charitable Involvement, Ecumenical Worldview, and Transcendental Awareness, influence the frequency with which student leaders engage in leadership practices… and the findings of this study (within the context established) provide ample evidence for the association and contribution of spirituality to leadership" (pp. 138-139).