A Synthesis of Spiritual Intelligence Themes from Islamic and Western Philosophical Perspectives

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A Synthesis of Spiritual Intelligence Themes from Islamic and Western Philosophical Perspectives

Shamsiah Banu Hanefar¹, ⁴ · Che Zarrina Sa’ari² · Saedah Siraj³


Abstract  Spiritual intelligence is an emerging term that is widely discussed and accepted as one of the main components that addresses and solves many life problems. Nonetheless there is no specific study being done to synthesize the spiritual intelligence themes from Western and Islamic philosophical perspectives. This research aimed to identify common spiritual intelligence themes from these two perspectives and elucidated its contents by the view of two well-known Islamic scholars; al-Ghazali and Hasan Langgulung. Seven spiritual intelligence themes were identified through thematic analysis; meaning/purpose of life, consciousness, transcendence, spiritual resources, self-determination, reflection-soul purification and spiritual coping with obstacles. These findings will be the groundwork for centered theory of spiritual intelligence themes that synthesize the Islamic and Western philosophical perspectives. It is hoped that this study will contribute significantly to the development of valid and reliable spiritual intelligence themes beyond the social and cultural boundaries.

Keywords  Spiritual · Intelligence · Thematic analysis · Spiritual intelligence themes · Al-Ghazali · Hasan Langgulung
Introduction

Spiritual intelligence is a term that is gradually emerging. With the current preoccupation of spirituality especially in the Western world, spiritual intelligence has started to evoke academic and professional interest, particularly within philosophical, religion and psychological views (Amram and Dryer 2008; Emmons 2000a; King and DeCicco 2009; Zohar and Marshall 2000; Kwilecki 2000; Noble 2000). Nonetheless, in the context of Islamic society as well as the academic world, spiritual intelligence is relatively new and not widely discussed. Spirituality is mainly viewed within the boundary of religion (Bensaid et al. 2014; Hamzah et al. 2010; Hosseini et al. 2010). According to Emmons (2000a), spiritual intelligence should be viewed as a complete intelligence that contributes significantly to the positive life orientation which protects individuals against non-adaptive or negative behaviors in society or in personal life.

Spiritual intelligence is the central and most fundamental of all intelligences, because it becomes the source of guidance for others, being an integrating intelligence, linking our rational and emotional intelligences. Spiritual intelligence is chosen as the main concern of this study as it is the core value in guiding other intelligences such as intellectual, emotional and physical (Covey 2004).

Intelligences

The most used and discussed intelligence is intellectual intelligence (intellectual quotient) which has formed a noticeable aspect of the psychological sciences for nearly a century. Intelligence test is an assessment that determines the intellectual intelligence of individuals, as an estimate of their relative cognitive abilities (Richardson 2002). It is a theoretical construct used by psychologists within standardized tests created to describe a subset of human functioning that they believe to be subjectively important in modern society (Grohol 2015). However, having a high intellectual intelligence per se is insufficient to measure an individual’s success even though intellectual intelligence is still being used as an indicator for standard intelligence (Goleman 1995). Cognitive ability is not just a matter of a rational brain but it also involves the emotional brain or emotional intelligence.

In Islamic literature, intellect is normally translated from the Arabic word ‘aql (Armstrong 2001). Al-Ghazali (Faris 1970) viewed this intellect as the place from where knowledge develops (Noor Shakirah 2008). Once intellect develops the capability to work smart, brilliant and wise in receiving knowledge, which in accordance to al-Ghazali (Faris 1970; Che Zarrina 2007; Noor Shakirah 2008) the knowledge (‘ilm) of the true nature of things (haqiqah al-shay‘), it will be known as intellectual intelligence. In this regard, this kind of intellect has a similar sense with another Arabic term, qalb literally meaning “heart.” It is also known as inner heart or inner self that represents the whole human personality in relation to this world and world to come (Che Zarrina 2007). Al-Ghazali (Che Zarrina 2007; Faris 1970) said, that “it is the heart which enables man to attain the knowledge of God (ma’rifah Allah), to draw near Him, to work for Him and labor toward Him. It is the heart which rejoices in proximity to Him and prospers when man has purified it and it is the heart which is disappointed and miserable when man has defiled and corrupted it” (Al-Ghazali 1973, pp. 226–227; McCarthy 1980, p. 364). When this intelligence that represents the whole human personality is discussed in Islamic traditions, the scholars related it with emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence (Naail et al. 2012;
Hawa 2004). Thus it could be understood that human being are in need of these three intelligences to become a true vicegerent of God.

In Western perspective, Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence (emotional quotient) as “the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and other’s feelings and emotions to discriminate among them and to utilize this data to guide one’s thinking and actions” (p. 189). According to Goleman (1995), emotional intelligence is vital to the life of an individual and is deemed more powerful than intellectual intelligence. He further stated that intellectual intelligence only contributes 20% to success in life, while other factors including emotional intelligence contribute the rest. In Islamic teachings, emotions are given their appropriate place of importance as fundamental elements of human soul. In dealing with emotions, Islam teaches moderation (wasat) and commands people to avoid extremes in negative or positive emotions, as any extremism are destructive if left uncontrolled (Ibrahim 1989). The ability in controlling these emotions will lead to good conducts, and it is regarded in Islam as emotional intelligence.

Having intellectual intelligence or emotional intelligence per se for human being would be inadequate. Neither intellectual intelligence, emotional intelligence nor any other intelligence, combined or separated can lead toward understanding the full potential of a human being (Zohar and Marshall 2000). All intelligences are interrelated as suggested by the findings on brain lateralization (Dew 1996; Smalley and Trent 1990; Zohar and Marshall 2000). The similar view is shared from Islamic perspective by Bagheri et al. (2013) in their research on “Identification of factors affecting employees’ spiritual intelligence and providing solutions”, and Aswati et al. (2011) on “Investigating IQ, EQ and SQ Components of Malay Muslim Moral Structure in the Course of Psychological Dilemma.”

Even though multiple dimensions of intelligences (intelligent quotient, emotional intelligence, social intelligence and others) are believed to contribute to the betterment of a human being and building the human capability (Flynn 2000; Gardner 2003; Goleman and Sutherland 1996; Mayer et al. 2004; Sternberg 1985), but spiritual intelligence is understood to contribute significantly in guiding individuals to achieve success and excellence in one’s life (Amram and Dryer 2008; Emmons 2000a; King and DeCicco 2009; Zohar and Marshall 2000), especially as a vicegerent of God (Fazlul Karim 1991; Langgulung 1986; Naquib Al Attas 1999; Baba 2004).

Many of the Western scholars and psychologists are involved in researching about SI and majority of the scholars including White (2014), King and DeCicco (2009), Wigglesworth (2012), Mayer (2000), Vaughan (2002) and Zohar and Marshall (2000) are being secular in the sense that they exclude their discussion from Islamic philosophical viewpoint. It is hoped that this study will be the foundation for centered theory of spiritual intelligence that synthesizes the Islamic and Western philosophical perspectives of spiritual intelligence themes. This paper is initiated to create a harmonious relationship between Western and Islamic view of spiritual intelligence beyond the social and cultural boundaries in which future researchers should see these two views as integrating rather than opposing each other.

**Spiritual Intelligence from Islamic and Western Philosophical Perspectives**

In Islam, human being is regarded as a vicegerent of God; a noble position given by God the Almighty to administer the world truly and, to be successful in this life and afterlife (Che Zarrina 2007). Understanding this unique position will allow the human being not just
to have and to use the normal five senses (see, taste, touch, hear and smell) but enable the connection of these senses with the inner self to gain deeper understanding about one’s existence and realize the purpose of life in this world and afterlife. This understanding of human nature is gained through an intelligence known as spiritual intelligence (Hussain 2014; Bagheri et al. 2013).

Like Western scholars, many Islamic scholars discussed and brought forward their views on spiritual intelligence. Most of them associated spiritual intelligence with the closeness of oneself to God. In some research (Muhammad 2004; Ary Ginanjar 2001; Zainab et al. 2011; Elmi and Zainab 2013), spiritual intelligence is concluded as one’s ability to achieve the level of excellence in his relationship with God as well as fellow human beings and nature by doing good and prevent evil (‘amr bi al-ma’ruf wa nahy ‘an munkar). This kind of intelligence can be achieved through true faith, sincere worship, obedient and adherence in performing worship, noble behavior and avoid evil and shameful deeds. Fallah et al. (2015, p. 46) learned that spiritual intelligence “leads human toward spiritual enlightenment and shows ways for being free from bonds and limitations that make heart dark and suppress the inner voice.” In this case as mentioned above, the heart (qalb) plays a vital role in determined the capabilities of one’s spiritual intelligence (Al-Ghazali 1973; Fallah et al. 2015). For instance, in Islam, praying five times daily is an obligation. As a religious person, one will practice it according to the teaching of Islam. In Islam any deed or action is not merely done physically, but it involves inner self or the heart (qalb) to perform the worship solemnly and acquired the influences of its practices (Zainab et al. 2011). Only a person with high spiritual intelligence will be able to achieve this. Fallah et al. (2015) suggested man who has spiritual intelligence is a faithful man whose moral sublimity has been manifested in his character and acts.

A spiritually intelligent person is able to match earthly and heavenly spirituality (Hosseini et al. 2010). Earthly spirituality is referred as one’s existence in the world and the positive relationship built with other creations of God meanwhile heavenly spirituality is referred as one’s life purpose and the relationship with God and the afterlife. From the Islamic perspective, both are related to Divinity. According to Bensaid et al. (2014), Muslim spirituality is geared to synchronize the inner and outer make-up of emotional, rational and behavioral exercise in light of revelatory norms, thus, guiding Muslims to enhance their inner peace, uphold healthy wellness, and sustain the motivation to do good.

From Western perspective, the understanding of human nature was pioneered by Socrates. Socrates was the first Western philosopher to focus on issues related to the human self, finding answers to questions such as: “who one is”, “who one should be” and “who one will become.” According to Socrates, in addition to our physical bodies, each person possesses an immortal soul that will survive beyond the death of the body (Chaffee 2011).

This is supported by his student, Plato who said the soul and body are two separate substances. The dualism concept is discussed by Plato in Phaedo. A man is identical with his soul. The man is essentially his soul, but not his body. The soul to the body is as a driver to a car. The driver drives the car, but the driver is a being that is distinct from the car and can exist when not in the car. Plato argued that soul cannot be destroyed. “All unseen things are unchanging, they do not have parts (simple)” (Lacewing 2009). Since the soul has no parts and is unchanging, it cannot be destroyed as how a body is perished.

Plato further explained the concept of the soul in which he divided the soul or self into three interrelated parts (Chaffee 2011, p. 93):

1. Reason—our divine essence that enables us to think intensely, make prudent choices and achieve a true understanding of eternal truths.
2. Physical appetite—our basic biological needs such as hunger, thirst and sexual desire.
3. Spirit or passion—our basic emotions such as love, empathy and anger.

Human beings have a tendency to ask some fundamental questions as to how they are created, who created them, where they are heading in life, how long they will be in this world and so on. Human beings as well seek to know if there is a body, mind and soul connection. These questions and others related to the human self are being answered through an intelligence known as spiritual intelligence. In the modern Western world, the term spiritual intelligence was coined by Zohar and Marshal (2000). Later followed by many including White (2014), Wigglesworth (2012), King and DeCicco (2009), Mayer (2000) and Vaughan (2002).

From both Islamic and Western perspectives, spiritual intelligence is viewed in accordance with human nature and existence. As being said by one of the well-known Islamic scholars, Ibn Sina, the ability of a person to reflect upon oneself is the presence of existential intelligence (the first and highest level of intelligence) (Heath 1992). The capacity of a person to contemplate their existence and relate to Divinity is reflected by spiritual intelligence. Fallah et al. (2015) concluded many experts considered spiritual intelligence as the assurance for the highest stage of cognitive, moral and emotional growth and put continuous endeavor in answering one’s life whys.

Materials and Methods

The study aimed to explore and identify the most common themes used and employed by scholars in their discussion of spiritual intelligence from Islamic and Western philosophical perspectives. The literature review found that the themes proposed and used by scholars were diverse and varied, though the contents related to each other. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a foundation for centered theory of spiritual intelligence themes that synthesize the Islamic and Western philosophical perspectives.

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<td>6. Producing the report</td>
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This study employed thematic analysis to identify common spiritual intelligence themes from Islamic and Western philosophical perspectives. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for “identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data…”. This method is used as it is flexible, relatively easy and quick to analyze data and very useful to highlight the similarities and differences across a data set. In this study priority was given to identify the similarities across the data set. Table 1 outlined the steps done in this study as being suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

A Brief Outlook of Spiritual Intelligence Themes from Western Philosophical Perspective

From the Western perspective, King and DeCicco (2009), Amram and Dryer (2008), Zohar and Marshall (2000) and Emmons (2000a, b) were chosen. Many similarities were found between their studies. King (2008) in King and DeCicco (2009) defined spiritual intelligence as “a set of mental capacities which contribute to the awareness, integration, and adaptive application of the nonmaterial and transcendent aspects of one’s existence, leading to such outcomes as deep existential reflection, enhancement of meaning, recognition of a transcendent self, and mastery of spiritual states.” King identified four main components of spiritual intelligence: (1) critical existential thinking, (2) personal meaning production, (3) transcendental awareness, and (4) conscious state expansion. In this study, the first two components were categorized under the first theme; meaning/purpose of life. The third and fourth components were considered under the theme transcendence and consciousness, respectively.

Meanwhile, Emmons defined spiritual intelligence as “the adaptive use of spiritual information in facilitating problem solving and goal attainment” (2000a). To Emmons, spiritual intelligence is similar to spirituality. Spiritual intelligence according to him is characterized by (1) the capacity for transcendence, (2) the ability to enter into heightened spiritual state of consciousness, (3) the ability to invest everyday activities, events, and relationships with a sense of the sacred, (4) the ability to utilize spiritual resources to solve problems in living and (5) the capacity to engage in virtuous behavior or to be virtuous; in other words, to show forgiveness, gratitude, to be humble, to display compassion (Emmons 2000a). These components of spiritual intelligence were claimed by Emmons to be in the majority of cultures around the world. Emmons (2000b) later modified his model by excluding the fifth component after taking into consideration arguments from Gardner (2000) and Mayer (2000).

The first two components are discussed in similar terms in which both components deal with the capability of an individual to engage in heightened and extraordinary forms of consciousness. The aspects of mysticism are included in the second component. Emmons (2000a) believed that individuals with high level of spiritual intelligence will possess skills to enter into heightened and extraordinary forms of consciousness. Responding to this, Gardner (2000) argued that the components are simply in the state of controlling one’s physical body as in meditation, so it is fair to say it is best thought of as expressions of bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

Amram developed an ecumenical grounded theory of spiritual intelligence based on thematic analysis of 71 interviews in relation to themes or components considered as spiritual intelligence by the interviewees. Amram defined spiritual intelligence as “the
ability to apply and embody spiritual resources and qualities to enrich daily functioning and well-being.” Seven major themes emerged which are universal across the traditions and cultures: consciousness, grace, meaning, transcendence, truth, peaceful surrender of self and inner-directedness (Amram and Dryer 2008). Three items directly related to this study are consciousness, meaning and transcendence. The item peaceful surrender was reclassified as soul purification in this study.

Zohar and Marshall (2000) defined spiritual quotient (spiritual intelligence) as “the intelligence with which we address and solve problems of meaning and value, the intelligence in which we place our actions and lives in a wider, richer, meaning-giving context, the intelligence with which we can assess that one course of action or one life-path is more meaningful than another” (pp. 3–4). Spiritual intelligence was described as an ultimate intelligence beyond the emotional intelligence and conceptual intelligence (intellectual intelligence) because neither emotional intelligence nor intellectual intelligence is able to explain the full complexity of human intelligence and the soul. Zohar and Marshall (2000) further outlined 10 indications of high spiritual intelligence: (1) flexibility, (2) self-awareness, (3) the capacity to face and use suffering, (4) the capacity to face and transcend pain, (5) the quality of being inspired by vision and values, (6) reluctance to cause unnecessary harm, (7) the tendency to see the connection between diverse things, (8) tendency to ask why, what if, and to seek answers, (9) facility to work against convention and (10) servant leader.

Table 2 illustrates the similarities and differences between spiritual intelligence themes discussed by the respective authors.

A Brief Outlook of Spiritual Intelligence Themes from Islamic Philosophical Perspective

Many studies were conducted on spiritual intelligence and its themes/components by Muslim scholars. However, uniform themes of spiritual intelligence are not found because every single researcher built the themes based on the needs of their research. Muhammad (2004) used unity of God (tawhid), worship and moral as spiritual intelligence themes, whereas Ahimsa (2005) related the spiritual intelligence term to the first source of Islamic
teaching which is Qur’an, acquire and understand its knowledge, have firm and solemn relation with God and perform obligatory prayer five times daily. While Fallah et al. (2015) set forth two general themes which are self-control and emotions, and self-control and individual ability. Elmi and Zainab in their study (2013) approached spiritual intelligence term through few domains; domain of spirit (ruh), heart (qalb), soul (nafs), intellect (‘aql), unity of God (tawhid), worship (‘ibadah) and moral (akhlaq). Meanwhile, Hussain (2014) in His book titled, “Seven Steps to Spiritual Intelligence” described spiritual intelligence in regards to how to come closer to God in seven steps: through genuine seeking of God, discipleship of a spiritual director, learning and understanding spiritual intelligence, simplicity and contentment, striving to practice, remembering God and praying to Him, and self-inspection and self-control.

It is found that though many scholars discussed on spiritual intelligence themes from Islamic perspectives, the themes presented were very diverse. Nevertheless, most of their proposed themes can be categorized under at least one of the themes defined and named in this study; meaning/purpose of life, consciousness, transcendence, spiritual resources, self-determination, reflection/soul purification and spiritual coping with obstacles.

Table 3 illustrates the similarities and differences between spiritual intelligence themes discussed by the respective Islamic authors:

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Spiritual Intelligence Themes Based on al-Ghazali and Hasan Langgulung

Hence the main purpose of this research is to explore and identify the similarities between the two philosophical perspectives to form a set of integrated spiritual intelligence themes beyond the social and cultural boundaries. The development of these themes enables a better understanding of the concept of spiritual intelligence and its benefits that could be practiced as the real potentials of a human being that are naturally embedded within oneself. These identified spiritual intelligence themes as a synthesis of Islamic and Western philosophical perspectives able other researchers to work on this subject matter thoroughly and do further research which will be beneficial to the societies.

To achieve these purposes, al-Ghazali, the most influential Muslim scholar lived in the end of eleventh century was chosen as his book, *Ihya ‘Ulum al-Din* was the most widely
referred text by other Muslim scholars and general Muslims. Since the original text of *Ihya Ulum al-Din* is in Arabic language, the translated version by Fazlul Karim (1991) was used. Book 3 of it was specifically used since it was closely related to the need of this study. Hasan Langgulung who is a well-known contemporary scholar in Malay Archipelago was also chosen. His book *Manusia dan Pendidikan* (Man and Education) (1986) was very much related to spirituality and intelligence and many of his writings are related to the concept discussed by al-Ghazali. These two sources were chosen to reflect the similarities between the traditional view and contemporary view of spirituality and intelligence. The major criteria for the above selection are the spiritual intelligence components. Although there was no single word or term of spiritual intelligence used by both scholars in their works, the finding showed that every single aspect of their writing related to spirituality and intelligence. The following discussion highlighted the synthesis of spiritual intelligence themes of Islamic and Western philosophical perspectives.

1. **Meaning/purpose of life**

   Life without purpose is a journey without direction. Having a meaningful life will lead oneself toward higher spirituality. An individual with high spiritual intelligence is able to contemplate the purpose for being in this world and realize his or her connectivity to Divinity. As the Qur’an said, “And I did not create the genie (jinn) and mankind except to worship Me (God Almighty)” (Chapter al-Dhariyat, 51: verse 56)

   The main purpose of creation is to worship God. For Muslims, worshipping has a close relationship to the ‘Five pillars of Islam.’ As quoted by al-Bukhari, (Muhsin Khan 1997) God’s Messenger said: Islam is based upon five principles:

   1. To testify that none has the right to be worshipped but the one and only God and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is God’s apostle/messenger
   2. To offer the (compulsory congregational) prayers dutifully and perfectly.
   3. To pay Zakat (i.e., obligatory charity).
   4. To observe fast during the month of Ramadan.
   5. To perform Hajj (i.e., Pilgrimage to Mecca).

   Accepting oneself as a servant of God and worshipping Him is a sign of appreciation from humankind to God the Almighty. A person with higher spiritual intelligence will understand that “this world is the seed ground for the next world and a station of guidance” (Fazlul Karim 1991, p. 3). Besides worshipping God, the purpose of a human being to be created is to be the vicegerent of God. As the Qur’an said, “And (mention, O Muhammad), when your Lord said to the Angels, Indeed I will make upon the earth a successive authority” (Chapter al-Baqarah, 2: verse 30).

   A successive authority is referring to mankind as the vicegerent of God who has the responsibility not just toward God but also toward other creations. Mankind is chosen as the vicegerent of God, since the human soul has a unique attribute of knowing the truth which other creations did not possess. This trust that God has given to mankind is called Divine knowledge, and this is a basic and natural form of spiritual intelligence. Having a high spiritual intelligence will allow human beings to receive *tawfiq*. *Tawfiq* is defined as “success or good fortune (that originally received from God)” (Cambridge English-Arabic Dictionary Online n.d.). When men understand the purpose and the meaning of creation, and act in accordance with the responsibility bestowed upon them by God, they have a high tendency to do good deeds and avoid bad deeds. According to al-Ghazali (Fazlul Karim 1991), good conduct is half of a religion. God gives strength through good conduct and
benevolence and the best of good conduct among human beings is Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him (pbuh).

As stated by Langgulung (1986), the nature of human beings involved four important aspects: (1) the role of mankind in this life, (2) power that belongs to the human origin, (3) the extent to which the environment is able to shape human behavior; and (4) the ability of a man to learn and gain new experience. These four aspects are very critical to be addressed and adopted by humans to achieve a high level of spiritual intelligence. In Islam, by understanding the purpose and meaning of life, individuals will realize their role as the servant of God and be successive in fulfilling the duty of vicegerent of God, move toward a positive way of life which can benefit them and other creations of God.

2. Consciousness

Persons with high spiritual intelligence are conscious of themselves and live purposefully with a clear mind and refined awareness. Al-Ghazali in his Ihya’ Ulum al-Din (Fazlul Karim 1991) clearly mentioned that knowledge of the soul is the root to the knowledge of God, creating consciousness of God. He outlined four basic aspects of soul; heart (qalb), spirit (ruh), soul (nafs) and intellect (’aql). There are two definitions of qalb. First, it is a piece of blood in the left breast called heart. The second definition is, it is an immaterial thing or formless element which is connected to the heart. It received the knowledge of God and the spiritual world (Fazlul Karim 1991; Che Zarrina 2007).

Meanwhile ruh is a material within the heart which vibrates the whole body like the current electricity and runs through the veins of the body, called life. It has the power of five senses; touch, hear, sight, smell and taste. Besides that, ruh is as well defined as part of the human body in the form of latifah (abstract and cannot be seen by external eyes) which has the power to know and to absorb knowledge (Fazlul Karim 1991; Che Zarrina 2007).

The third term used by al-Ghazali is nafs. According to him (Fazlul Karim 1991) nafs is a passion or lower self; greed, anger and other evil attributes. There are three types of nafs, al-Nafs al-Ammarah (the soul that urges evil) that ‘exhorts one to freely indulge in gratifying passions and instigates to do evil’, al-Nafs al-Lawammah (the soul that blames) that is ‘the conscience that directs man toward right or wrong’, and al-Nafs al-Mutma’innah (the soul at peace) that is ‘a self that reaches the ultimate peace and will assume calmness by removing all the evil attributes’ and suggested as has similar meaning with the inner heart (qalb). The higher the consciousness level, the more the individual will be able to control their nafs and move toward al-Nafs al-Mutma’innah.

The fourth and last term associated with the soul is ’aql. According to al-Ghazali (Fazlul Karim 1991) ’aql can be defined as “intellect or power to understand the secrets of different learning, which is called knowledge.” ’Aql is referred to approximately fifty times in the Qur’an. Most of these verses are pertaining to the physical universe, which point to God’s knowledge, will, wisdom, and compassion. People with high spiritual intelligence will have a high level of consciousness about their own creation and possess a high ability to understand and gain the knowledge of the heart and soul. When individuals have the knowledge of the heart and soul, they can gain the knowledge of God and His attributes. This description is summarized in Fig. 1.

Transcendence

Transcendent originates from the Latin verb ‘transcendere’ which means climbing over. It is defined by beyond or above the range of normal or physical human experience (Oxford English Dictionary Online n.d.). Spiritual intelligence represents a process that involves orienting the individual’s awareness and experience to the transcendent realm and to the
spiritual aspect of the self (Vaughan 2002). In the context of this study, as discussed by al-Ghazali and Hasan Langgulung, transcendence is related to recognizing God’s existence, attributes and actions, and the interconnectedness to man’s attributes and potentials. According to al-Ghazali, for a soul (mankind) to gain more Divine knowledge, the soul must be free from things other than God (for example worldly things) (Fazlul Karim 1991). In further explaining the Divine knowledge, al-Ghazali in his book, *The Alchemy of Happiness* (Field 1910) stated that man’s attributes is the reflection of God attributes thus from the creation of man, he came to know the existence of God, as God said in the Qur’an, “And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My (created) soul….” (Chapter al-Hijr, 15: verse 29).

The above verse clearly showed that human creation is from the spark of God in which God gives man a few potentials or abilities in accordance with God’s nature not only for his own use, but also for the use of other human beings and other beings (Langgulung

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Fig. 1  Consciousness to gain the knowledge of God and his attributes adapted and modified from al-Ghazali’s *Ihya’ Ulum al-Din*—Book 3 (Fazlul Karim 1991)
God’s nature given to mankind should be considered as a trust and a great responsibility, so any action made by human beings should be related to God. As stated in the Qur’an, “Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my life and my death are all for Allah, Lord of the worlds” (Chapter al-An’am, 6: verse 162).

From the Islamic perspective, human attributes or potentials are conceded based on the nature of God the Almighty which are the 99 names of God known as *al-Asma’ al-Husna*. The ability to develop God’s attributes within oneself will lead to a high level of spiritual intelligence. For instance the most used and widely applied attributes to one’s life are *al-Rahman* and *al-Rahim* which means The Most Compassionate and The Most Merciful. In the Islamic teaching, it was encouraged for Muslims to begin any actions, activities or obligations by saying “In the name of God, The Most Compassionate and The Most Merciful.” By saying this in every action they surrender to God and hope for the blessing of God. Besides that, these attributes taught Muslims to be merciful and compassionate to other human beings and other creations of God to create a harmonious life full of love and trust. So to reach a high level of spiritual intelligence through the aspects of transcendence, individuals should strive to develop 99 God’s attributes within themselves.

4. **Spiritual resources**

Ability to consume spiritual resources to overcome problems is reflecting the existence of spiritual intelligence in oneself (Emmons 2000a). In the context of Islam, spiritual resources were not merely used for solving problems, but as a whole to guide individuals to achieve a successful life. A few examples of spiritual resources have been noted by Heintzman (2008) such as higher power, spiritual practices and faith community. Spiritual resources can be in any form of inputs used to search and gain sacred, moral and ethical values in life, for instance, it can be in the form of people (spiritual gurus, imams, teachers), materials, books, holy text, the Qur’an, the Sunnah/the Hadith (the actions and words of Prophet Muhammad), audios, visuals, places, experience, environments and surroundings.

From the Islamic perspective, the two important spiritual resources are the Qur’an and the Sunnah/the Hadith (Langgulung 1986). Resources are considered as inputs which are required to produce outputs. Output in this study refers to spiritual intelligence, the ultimate intelligence. As discussed by al-Ghazali (Fazlul Karim 1991), one of the main resources in the search for the sacred is the human body itself. He explained about the external human body related to the five senses known as the armies of the soul; eyes—power of sight, ears—power of hearing, nose—power of smell, tongue—power of taste, and skin—power of touch. These five senses should be used for good purpose. For instance, in Islam, every deed done for the purpose of getting blessing from God is known as ‘*ibadah* or worship. ‘*Ibadah* is actualized when all these five senses are related to the internal human body which is *qalb*.

Individuals with high spiritual intelligence will truthfully lead their life according to the Qur’an and the Sunnah/the Hadith and act upon every deed as an ‘*ibadah*. Langgulung (1986) also stressed the importance of walking through the passage of life by the guidance of the Qur’an and the Sunnah/the Hadith. This view was also agreed by al-Faruqi (Langgulung 1986, p. 36) who said “truth is gained through the reading of God’s revelation, the Qur’an.”

5. **Self-determination**

From the Islamic perspective, the ultimate concern of an individual as a servant and vicegerent of God is determined to achieve the best in the eyes of God not just physically...
but the most important is through spirituality. Individuals should have a high determination which involved cognitive personality ability. They are motivated to achieve the ultimate goal in gaining Divine knowledge.

Al-Ghazali considered will as one of the important elements in one’s life in moving toward success. Self-determination is a form of will. Al-Ghazali believed a person with strong will should be able to reach God and His attributes and be honored by God the Almighty. Once individuals are able to use their intelligence accordingly, they possess a will to understand any action of theirs and how this action can bring goodness to their lives. With this in mind, self-determination is being cultivated in their life. Besides that, they are able to keep themselves under control and have a high will power to control passion, anger and pride (Fazlul Karim 1991) and have high determination to gain Divine knowledge that is the ultimate knowledge. The high spiritual intelligence persons will be able to make choices in their life that can bring benefit to them and others (Langgulung 1986). As stated in the Qur’an: “And say, the truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills, let him believe, and whoever wills, let him disbelieve. Indeed, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire whose walls will surround them. And if they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like murky oil, which scalds (their) faces. Wretched is the drink, and evil is the resting place” (Chapter Al-Kahf, 18: verse 29).

Spiritual intelligence has a great impact on human life, and it is a personal choice. Humans have the freedom to make choices; the freedom to choose their own behavior, the choice to be a believer or not. As God said in the above verse, the wrong choice will be punished and obviously the good choice will be rewarded (worldly reward and afterlife reward). This clearly proved that spiritual intelligence has gone beyond one’s cognition of the surroundings and has entered into the realm of vision and higher view point of an individual (Bolghan-Abadi et al. 2014). As worshipping God is the highest level of fitrah (human nature) development, it is a form of self-actualization and it will be done by individuals who have high self-determination. As Watt (1969, p. 172) in Langgulung (1986, p. 79) said, “More decisive yet, certainty (determination) or belief that one’s life is determined from outside or external forces, is not included in the teaching of Muhammad (self-determination is more about will from internal-self).”

6. Reflection-soul purification

According to Zohar and Marshall (2000), for individuals to reach a high level of spiritual intelligence, they should reflect upon themselves and be motivated to search for meaning in life. In Islam, reflection means to think deeply, in detail and systematically or known as tafakkur in Arabic language. Reflection is the illumination in the heart and soul that allows a believer to differentiate positivity from negativity, good from evil, and benefit from harm (Gullen 2007; Che Zarrina 2007). It is the golden key to reach God. From the Islamic perspective, reflecting on oneself and reaching God the Almighty needs the person to purify his or her soul. As stated in the Qur’an: ‘Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest’ (Chapter Al- Ra’d, 13: verse 28). Ibn Kathir (Abdullah 2012) described rest as a heart which is good, pure; a heart that depends upon God and gains calmness through acceptance of God the Almighty as the Protector. Believers whose hearts are at rest in God are able to differentiate between good and bad. With calmness, they are able to make good decisions which give a positive impact and lead to a successful life.

According to al-Ghazali (Fazlul Karim 1991), a believer who is firm in religion, pure in faith and treats other creations of God with kindness is one whose soul is pure and dwells with the remembrance of God. In Islam, the manifestation of soul purification is through the remembrance of God (dhikr [remembering], fikr [contemplating] and pious actions). By
remembering God, they will be able to pacify the devil within and fight against worldly passions and temptations (Fazlul Karim 1991).

Practicing the remembrance of God either through dhikr, fikr and pious actions will lead the heart and soul to become firm and tranquil. Once the heart attained tranquility the impurity of the heart and soul could be removed. As Ibn Taymiyyah said, “remembrance of God is to the heart what water is to fish” (Ahmad Farid 1995). The Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh) said, “The difference between the one who remembers his Lord and the one who does not is like the difference between the living and the dead” (Al-Nawawi 1983). Remembrance of God is sustenance for the soul that is able to drive away the devil thought and bad actions hence bringing success in life (Chapter Al-A’la, 87: verse 14).

7. Spiritual coping with obstacles

Coping involves cognitive capability, and it is a process in which individuals try to control or manage their mental pressure. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping is defined as ongoing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific (external and/or internal) demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the individual’s resources. Coping does not just involve rational thinking (Vago and Silbersweig 2012) but emotional (Lazarus and Folkman 1984; Lazarus 2000) and spiritual thinking (Gall et al. 2005; Pargament 2001; Pargament and Raiya 2007) as well. Coping is the act of the human body, mind and internal-self.

Religious or spiritual coping is a search for significance in times of stress in ways related to the sacred (Pargament 2001). Spiritual coping involves the element of spirituality and connecting to God for support and guidance during the time of difficulty through Divine knowledge. Al-Ghazali (Fazlul Karim 1991) outlined many obstacles that should be controlled and possibly be avoided, for instance anger, sexual passion, greed, hatred and love for fine things. Ability to cope is not just a matter related to one’s own self, but also involves other human beings, other beings, life events and the environment (hunger, deficit in resources, destruction of human morality etc.) (Higgins 1978, in Langgulung 1986). Individuals with high spiritual intelligence possess a high ability to cope with these situations and positively direct the final outcome. Spiritual coping is unique from standard measures of secular coping. According to Pargament (2001), when religion or spiritual is entered into the coping equation, it increases the ability to predict outcomes beyond the effects of secular coping (Pargament 2001).

Based on these seven themes and the discussion in relation to the work of al-Ghazali and Hasan Langgulung, groundwork for centered theoretical framework of spiritual intelligence beyond the social and cultural boundaries is established.

Conclusion

This study focused on the spiritual intelligence themes developed through thematic analysis on Islamic and Western philosophical perspectives, while the description of these themes was viewed from the perspective of well-known Islamic scholars al-Ghazali and Hasan Langgulung. The term spiritual intelligence in this study is portrayed by seven themes, meaning/purpose of life, consciousness, transcendence, spiritual resources, self-determination, reflection-soul purification and spiritual coping with obstacles. The synthesis of spiritual intelligence themes through Islamic and Western philosophical views has resulted toward a richer theoretical framework by weaving together some of the best of
which each culture had to offer. It is hoped that in the future this theoretical framework could be utilized to develop viable and reliable spiritual intelligence themes and discussed in a wider scope beyond the social and cultural boundaries.

References


