



# Evaluating Spiritual Leadership Coherence at a Professional Services Company as a Way to Drive Connectedness and Well-Being in Organizations

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## Abstract

In these challenging times, connectedness has become more necessary than ever before. Meanwhile, research in organizations highlighted the importance of entrainment, a process of synchronizing rhythms over time that drives connectedness within, between, and across rhythmic activities. It is also suggested that an inner life and spiritual leadership coherence can play a key role in this process, out of which spiritual well-being emerges. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the conditions for entrainment through the revised model of spiritual leadership at a professional services company that employs multiple teams simultaneously, as presented by Sandra & Nandram (*Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* 17(4):316–332, 2020). It verifies if inner life and spiritual leadership coherence are jointly sufficient to foster the emergence of spiritual well-being, both at the individual and at the group level. Next, it seeks to understand how teams differ on these variables. To generate a more holistic insight, it uses an explanatory sequential research design as mixed methods approach, integrating and comparing quantitative data from eighty-six participants across fourteen teams with qualitative data from five team leaders. The findings support that inner life and spiritual leadership coherence can be usefully deployed in a consistent way to understand the emergence of spiritual well-being through entrainment. It further supports that developing personal spiritual leadership directly influences the level of spiritual leadership of the group to which the individual belongs. Finally, better performing teams pay more attention to inner life practices, while taking care of their team members.

**Keywords** Spiritual leadership · Spiritual well-being · Entrainment · Coherence

## Introduction

Human beings are born with a need to relate to others, i.e., a strong need for connectedness (Jordan 1997; Lee and Robbins 2000). The review of Townsend and McWhirter (2005) suggests that "researchers are increasingly considering

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connectedness as an important factor in human development and psychology" (p. 192), while the lack of connectedness may have serious implications, such as self-alienation, loss of meaning or purpose. Meanwhile, connectedness has become more necessary than ever before. Think about the challenges that face organizations when several departments and teams spend most of their time working from home. Already in 2012, Pavlovich & Krahnke argued that "connectedness may be one of the defining attributes of the twenty-first century", which demonstrates "a sense of expansiveness that transcends personal, organizational, and geographic boundaries, thus reducing the limitations between self and the other, supporting 'a deeper awareness of self...within a coherent wholeness'" (p. 131). Although entrainment is "a process of synchronization and interconnectedness within, between, and across rhythmic activities" (Sandra and Nandram 2020, p. 317) and researchers in organizational behavior have stressed its relevance (e.g., Ancona and Chong 1996; Perez-Nordtvedt et al. 2008), the phenomenon has not been applied to the leadership arena. Sandra and Nandram (2020) identified this gap and argue that applying the revised model of spiritual leadership throughout an organization can drive organizational entrainment and (inter)connectedness in today's organizations, resulting in increased care and well-being for the people involved. As such, it supports several grounds for humanistic management identified by Melé (2016) – including a calling to flourish, being appreciated and understood – and strengthens humanistic ethos by reinforcing the sense of belongingness, the awareness of shared purpose, and the willingness to make it happen.

Building on Sandra and Nandram's (2020) theoretical paper and Sandra's (2021) pilot study, the purpose of this paper is to evaluate the conditions for entrainment through the revised model of spiritual leadership at a professional services company that employs multiple teams simultaneously. The hypothesis being researched is expressed as follows: IL x CI → SWB, or, in words, Inner Life (IL) and Coherent Interaction (CI) are jointly sufficient to foster entrainment among the spiritual leadership variables through which spiritual well-being (SWB) emerges.

At the individual level:

$$IL \times CI \rightarrow SWB_{ind} \quad [\text{Hypothesis 1}]$$

At the group level:

$$\frac{\sum_i^n (IL \times CI)_i}{n} \rightarrow SWB_{grp} \quad [\text{Hypothesis 2}]$$

The objective of this study is twofold: (1) with a quantitative study, to verify if inner life and spiritual leadership coherence (i.e., the coherent interaction among the spiritual leadership variables: vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love) are jointly sufficient to foster the emergence of spiritual well-being, both at the individual and at the group level; (2) with a qualitative study to identify how teams differ on these variables. To generate a more holistic insight, it uses an explanatory sequential research design as mixed methods approach, integrating and comparing quantitative data from eighty-six participants across fourteen teams with qualitative data from five team leaders. Hence, it responds to the call to use different methodologies and methods to advance spiritual leadership research (Oh and Wang 2020).

## Driving Organizational Entrainment through Spiritual Leadership

Sandra and Nandram (2020) contend that organizational entrainment and connectedness can be driven by applying the revised model of spiritual leadership throughout an organization. Before evaluating the hypotheses, this section zooms in on the core elements of this theory: entrainment and spiritual leadership.

### Entrainment

The word “**entrainment**” originates from the french verb “*entraîner*” which means to drag, to pull (Sandra and Nandram 2020), and, according to Minorsky (1962), it was the Dutch mathematician, Christiaan Huygens, that noted this phenomenon in the seventeenth century. Before researchers used this phenomenon to emphasize the importance of time, pace, rhythm, and business cycles in organizations (e.g., Ancona and Chong 1996; Perez-Nordtvedt et al. 2008), entrainment has been studied in many other areas, including physics (e.g., Sreenivas and Prasad 2000), neurosciences (e.g., da Silva 1991), physiology (e.g., Goldberger et al. 2002), biology (e.g., Aschoff 1979). In their review on how organizations can benefit from entrainment, Sandra et al. (2021) highlight the complexity of entrainment, warn for a complacency effect in specific cases, and argue that entrainment might explain higher levels of theoretical complexities.

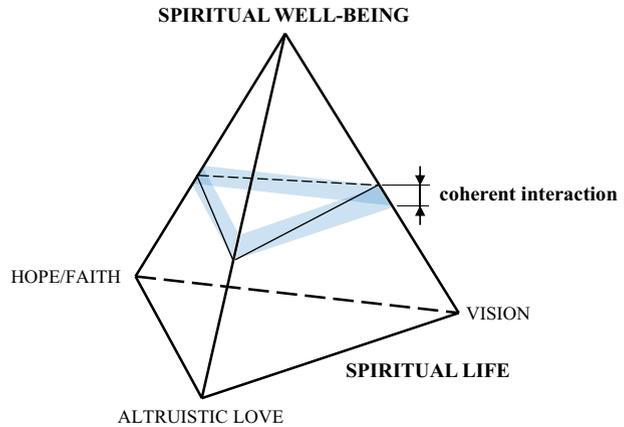
For entrainment to happen, one needs three distinct components: repeated cycles, interaction among these cycles, and adjustment of these cycles – in phase and/or pace – to a more dominant cycle or pacer (Sandra et al. 2021). The basic idea on which entrainment in organization theory is built, is that individuals, groups, organizations, and environments are composed of naturally occurring cycles (Ancona and Chong 1996). These cycles may entrain with one another, driving connectedness resulting in a positive influence on organizational outcomes (e.g., Khavul et al. 2010; Shi and Prescott 2012; Dibrell et al. 2015). As such, entrainment describes a process of synchronization, driving connectedness within, between, and across rhythmic activities (Sandra and Nandram 2020).

### Spiritual Leadership

In their systematic status review, Oh and Wang (2020) note that value-based leadership has been adopted to address emerging issues, such as distrust, lack of morality and courtesy in the workplace, as mentioned by Copeland (2014), and that spiritual leadership has the potential to make a positive difference within organizations. As a result, it quickly gained popularity, with many definitions, applications and validations across several disciplines. Their review gives an overview of the current status, knowledge gaps, critical issues and future research directions in this emerging field. This study, however, focuses solely on the revised model of spiritual leadership, as developed by Fry (2008) and further extended by Sandra and Nandram (2020).

Spiritual leadership theory describes an organizational transformation process – through its variables: vision, altruistic love, and hope/faith – to create an organization that is capable to continuously adapt to the ever changing environment (Fry 2003, 2005; Fry and Whittington 2005; Fry and Slocum 2008). The outcome is an increase in one’s sense of spiritual well-being achieved through calling and membership, i.e., “they experience meaning in their lives, have a sense of making a difference, and feel understood and appreciated” (Fry 2005: 836). The vision paints a picture of the future and is

**Fig. 1** Spiritual Leadership Revised (Sandra & Nandram 2020)



created from the organization’s mission or reason for existence, while hope/faith is the source for the conviction that the organization’s vision/purpose/mission will be fulfilled (Fry 2003, 2005). Having faith is shown through action and is anchored in values, attitudes and behaviors, such as trust, belief, endurance, perseverance, and a willingness to do what it takes to maximize one’s potential and personal best (MacArthur 1998; Fry 2003). Altruistic love is defined as “a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others” (Fry 2003: 712).

In his updated model, Fry (2008) contends that an inner life is a fundamental source of inspiration and insight that positively influences the development of the spiritual leadership variables. It includes “personal practices such as meditation, prayer, religious practices, yoga, journaling, walking in nature, and organizational contexts (e.g., rooms for inner silence and reflection) to help individuals be more self-aware and conscious from moment to moment and draw strength from their beliefs” (Fry et al. 2017: 24). Or, in other words, “inner life is an inward journey of self-discovery and awareness that leads one to the realization that true happiness is not found through self-serving values, attitudes, and behavior based on egoic needs, but rather found in becoming other-centered through hope/faith in a vision of service to others through love, which is the essence of spiritual leadership” Fry et al. (2017: 38). In the meantime, spiritual leadership has been applied and tested in other fields, such as Islamic leadership development (Egel and Fry 2017), character development (Sweeney and Fry 2012), organizational values creation (Ferguson and Milliman 2008), impact on organizational citizenship behavior (Hunsaker 2016; Chen and Yang 2011).

Based on the concept of entrainment, Sandra and Nandram (2020) propose two refinements to the theory of spiritual leadership and argue that applying this revised theory at the individual and group level can positively influence organizational outcomes via entrainment (Fig. 1). First, there should be a coherent interaction between the vision, altruistic love and hope/faith for spiritual leadership to occur (also called *spiritual leadership coherence*). Originally, Fry (2003, 2008) proposed a causal model of spiritual leadership. Second, an effective inner life also enhances the (quality of) interaction among these spiritual leadership variables, out of which spiritual well-being emerges.

Hence, inner life is not only considered as a fundamental source for the development of vision, altruistic love and hope/faith (Fry 2008).

In Boolean terms, Sandra and Nandram (2020) express the revised theory as:  $IL \times CI \rightarrow SWB$ , where Inner Life (IL) and Coherent Interaction (CI) are jointly sufficient to foster entrainment among the spiritual leadership variables through which spiritual well-being (SWB) emerges. This expression is evaluated in this study at the individual and the group level of a team-based professional services company.

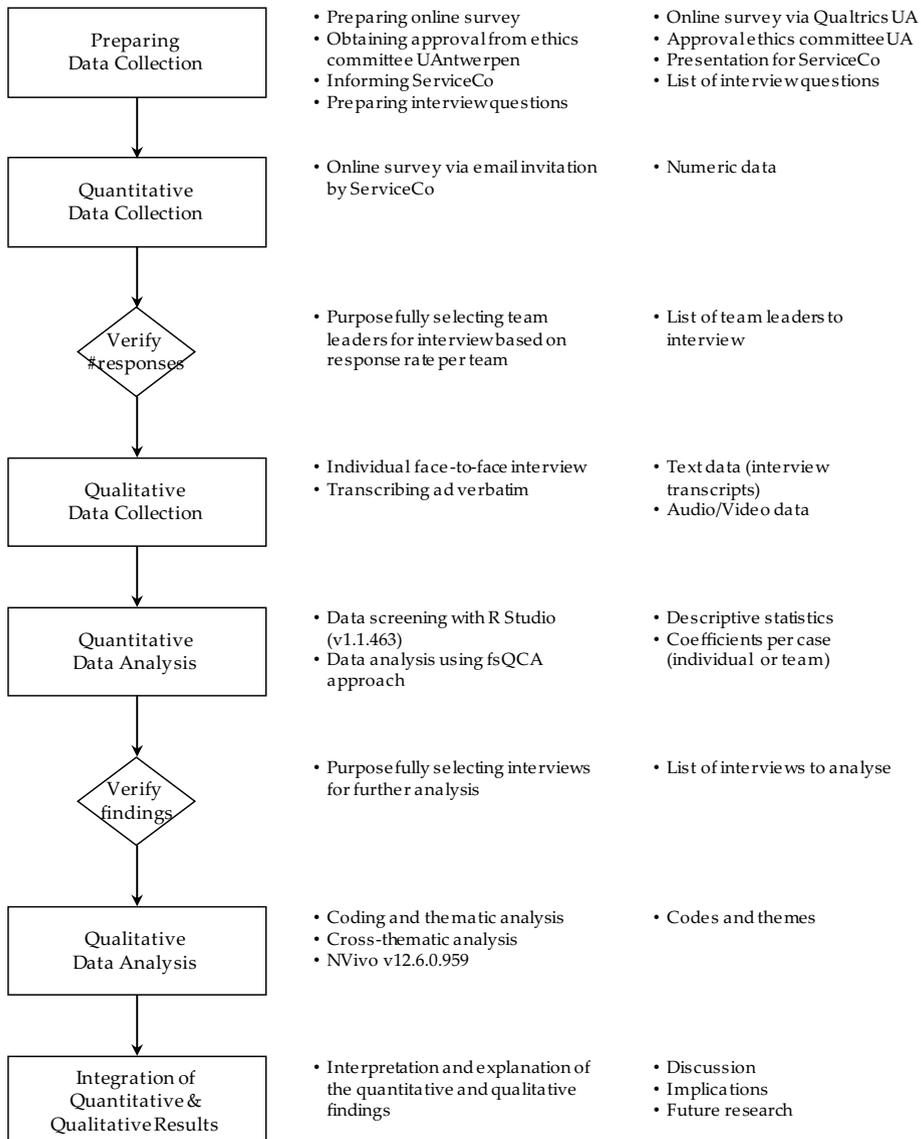
## Methods

### Research Design

This study adopts an explanatory sequential research design as mixed methods approach (cf. Fig. 2), integrating quantitative and qualitative data to yield a more comprehensive understanding of the results (Plano Clark and Ivankova 2016; Creswell 2005; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003).

In the first, quantitative phase of the study, the research question focuses on evaluating the the expression  $IL \times CI \rightarrow SWB$  using a qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) approach with data gathered through existing questionnaires (cf. *Measures & Data Analysis*). QCA techniques allow a systematic comparison of cases, with the use of formal tools and theoretical foundations or conception of cases (Ragin 2000, 2008). It is built on the exploration of set-theoretical relationships between causally relevant conditions and its outcome (Schneider and Wagemann 2009). There are several reasons why this approach is suitable to analyze the research question in this study. First, each case is seen as a complex combination of properties and, as such, integrates a holistic perspective (Rihoux and Ragin 2009). The small number of cases would render insufficiently reliable results using regression analysis. QCA, on the other hand, was developed primarily for small-to-medium N approach. "It can be said that QCA techniques strive to meet advantages of both the 'qualitative' (case-oriented) and 'quantitative' (variable-oriented) techniques." (Rihoux and Ragin 2009: 6). Next, QCA makes it possible to have a rich discourse with theory (Ragin 2000, 2008). Furthermore, the use of a formal Boolean language facilitates this discourse and can be applied at several levels of analysis at the same time (Rihoux and Ragin 2009). Finally, QCA does not ask to specify a particular causal model but leaves room for complexity to determine causal models that exist among the cases being compared (Ragin 1987).

In the second, qualitative phase, data is collected through face-to-face, single, semi-structured interviews to refine, explain or elaborate the findings of the quantitative phase in more detail. Face-to-face interviews have a few advantages. First, they allow both participant and interviewer access to nonverbal data – such as gestures, facial expressions, and body movements – that are able to enrich the verbal data or spoken words (Hiller and DiLuzio 2004; Carr and Worth 2001). Next, when in the same room, they can build the rapport for disclosing their experiences more freely and effectively than in interviews conducted over the phone or internet (Shuy 2003). Finally, the strength of the interviewer-participant relationship determines the data being collected and the data validity (Know and Burkard 2009; Adler and Adler 2002; Kvale 1996; Polkinghorne 1994). However, the



**Fig. 2** Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design approach

single interview approach opted in this study, typical in situations with difficult access to the participants (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006), will limit the amount of data collected (Mishler 1986), as well as their meaning (Patton 1989). Therefore, the interviews follow a semi-structured protocol, using open-ended questions to obtain specific information about the variables of spiritual leadership and to enable comparison across cases. Nevertheless, they allow creativity and flexibility to engage particular areas in more depth that emerge from the interviewee (Hill et al. 2005; Hill et al. 1997).

Ethical approval for this study was granted and all participants were given information about the research, including the guarantee of confidentiality, the right to withdraw from this research at any stage, and the right to see their data being collected throughout the research process. Each participant provided written consent regarding the use of their information.

## Data Collection Procedures

The study was conducted in February 2020 at a medium-sized professional services company in Belgium, hereafter called 'ServiceCo', providing customer interaction services to corporations in the finance and insurance sector. The company is organized in teams, each dealing with a specific product or service and headed by a team leader. The management of ServiceCo took care of the recruitment of participants for this study. An information document was provided, describing the purpose, benefits, risks, and the right to leave the study at any time. Participation to this study was on a voluntary basis only. Those people that were interested, could click on a hyperlink, provided in the invitation, to start the survey, using the Qualtrics online survey application. After their written consent, the data collection could begin.

The sequential process of collecting empirical data was designed to allow a pragmatic approach in selecting the appropriate team leaders for interviewing. Studies of Timmerman (2005) and Allen et al. (2007), for example, note that sampling fewer than all the team members can produce significant distortion of aggregated team findings. Therefore, the management of ServiceCo invited only the team leaders of those teams with a response rate  $\geq 40\%$  for an interview, again on a voluntary basis. The face-to-face interviews took place in a dedicated meeting room at the premises of ServiceCo, where nobody could enter or disturb the interview. After a brief introduction and signing of the consent form, the interviewer-researcher started the interviews following a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview guide), carefully drafted and pretested with an expert outside this study. This protocol started with a general question followed by more focused questions, and finally to close with personal questions. The goal of this approach was to maximize an atmosphere of trust where the interviewee could answer freely and honestly, and to minimize interview bias (e.g., Williams 1964).

## Quantitative Study

### Measures & Data Analysis

**Personal Spiritual Leadership and Well-Being** The level of personal spiritual leadership and well-being were assessed using the Personal Spiritual Leadership Survey (Rev 4/2018). Included questions are "I have the courage to stand up for what I believe in."; "I have a personal vision that is clear and compelling to me."; "I always do my best because I have faith in myself." The questionnaire utilizes a response set, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). This survey is divided in nine sections: vision, altruistic love, hope/faith, meaning/calling, membership, inner life, satisfaction with life, organizational commitment, and productivity. Personal spiritual leadership comprises vision, altruistic love, hope/faith. Personal well-being refers to meaning/calling and membership.

**Team Spiritual Leadership and Well-Being** To assess the level of spiritual leadership and well-being in the group, participants were asked to fill in the revised Spiritual Leadership Survey (Rev 1/2018). Example questions are “My team’s purpose inspires my best performance.”; “I set challenging goals for my work because I have faith in my team members and want us to succeed.”; “The members in my team are honest and without false pride.” The questionnaire utilizes the same response set, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). This survey has the same nine sections: vision, altruistic love, hope/faith, meaning/calling, membership, inner life, satisfaction with life, organizational commitment, and productivity. Team spiritual leadership includes vision, altruistic love and hope/faith. Team well-being refers to meaning/calling and membership.

**Inner Life** The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS; Brown and Ryan 2003) was used to measure levels of dispositional mindfulness. Included questions are “I find myself doing things without paying attention.”, “I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.” Studies provided evidence that “MAAS not only predicts well-being outcomes but also has value in the study of the temporal and situational dynamics of self-regulated behavior and well-being” (Brown and Ryan 2003: 843). The findings of MacKillop and Anderson (2007) largely support the validity of the MAAS and its measure is not related to gender. Hence, in this study, the MAAS score is considered as an adequate indicator for the level of inner life. It is a single factor scale which uses 15 items rated from one (“almost always”) to six (“almost never”). Higher mean scores indicate greater dispositional mindfulness.

**Coherent Interaction** Sandra and Nandram (2020) posit that spiritual leadership occurs through a coherent interaction between the spiritual leadership variables (i.e., shared vision, altruistic love, hope/faith). This interaction can be expressed using the standard deviation  $\sigma$  of the spiritual leadership scores for each variable. To make the measure a coefficient, it is divided by the maximum score (=5). The coherent interaction (CI) is calculated as follows:  $CI = 1 - (2\sigma/5)$ . The coherent interaction at the group level is calculated in the same way with all (team) spiritual leadership scores per team.

The quantitative data from the measures were analyzed using RStudio v1.1.463, including means and standard deviation, normality tests, Cronbach’s alpha, and correlations.

## Sample Demographics

211 team members were invited to participate across fourteen teams. A total of 134 individuals from these teams actually participated in the quantitative study. However, consistency was verified on a number of variables throughout the survey (such as inner life) and 48 responses were excluded (or 36%). This entails a net response rate of 64% or 86 participants in total with age ranging from 18 to 74 years ( $M = 35.3$ ;  $SD = 12.7$ ) and an average company seniority of 2.2 years ( $SD = 2.2$ ). Table 1 displays an overview of the sample demographics.

## Findings

Performance on MAAS, used as an indicator for Inner Life, is normally distributed (Shapiro–Wilk normality test:  $W = 0.98$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.16$ ). Cronbach’s alpha indicates

**Table 1** Sample demographics (quantitative study)

|                          | <i>n</i> = 86 | %         |
|--------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| <b>Gender</b>            |               |           |
| Male                     | 32            | 37%       |
| Female                   | 53            | 62%       |
| Unspecified              | 1             | 1%        |
| <b>Educational level</b> |               |           |
| Primary                  | 1             | 1%        |
| Lower secondary          | 8             | 9%        |
| Higher secondary         | 46            | 53%       |
| Bachelor                 | 21            | 24%       |
| Master or higher         | 10            | 12%       |
|                          | <i>mean</i>   | <i>sd</i> |
| <b>Seniority</b>         |               |           |
| In company (years)       | 2.2           | 2.2       |
| In team (years)          | 1.8           | 2.0       |
| <b>Age (y)</b>           | 35,3          | 12,7      |

**Table 2** Sample means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities

| Variable                      | Mean | SD   | 1           | 2           | 3           | 4 | 5           | 6           |
|-------------------------------|------|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---|-------------|-------------|
| Inner life (MAAS)             | 4.38 | 0.83 | <b>0.93</b> |             |             |   |             |             |
| Personal Spiritual Leadership | 3.85 | 0.45 | 0.29        | <b>0.83</b> |             |   |             |             |
| Personal Spiritual Well-being | 3.74 | 0.51 | 0.30        | 0.54        | <b>0.77</b> |   |             |             |
| Personal Coherent Interaction | 0.80 | 0.11 | -           | -           | -           | - |             |             |
| Team Spiritual Leadership     | 3.62 | 0.47 | 0.25        | 0.29        | 0.31        | - | <b>0.85</b> |             |
| Team Spiritual Well-being     | 3.64 | 0.54 | 0.33        | 0.26        | 0.33        | - | 0.57        | <b>0.79</b> |

*n* = 86. Correlations (Kendall  $\tau$ ) significant at  $p < 0.01$ . Internal reliabilities are on the diagonal in bold

excellent internal reliability,  $\alpha = 0.93$ . The mean performance was 4.38 (SD = 0.83). There is also no significant difference in terms of gender ( $p > 0.8$ ) between women ( $M = 4.37$ ;  $SD = 0.81$ ) and men ( $M = 4.41$ ;  $SD = 0.85$ ). Therefore, no further gender difference is made.

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables. The internal reliabilities, using Cronbach's alpha, are shown on the diagonal in **bold**. Spiritual leadership (SL) is the average of the scores vision, hope/faith and altruistic love from the survey. Spiritual well-being (SWB) is the average of the scores calling and membership. 'Personal' refers to the Personal Spiritual Leadership Survey, while 'Team' refers to the (team) Spiritual Leadership Survey (see [Measures & Data Analysis](#)).

Table 3 shows the sample means at the group level. Note that these figures are calculated with the personal scores. The team coherent interaction refers to the coherent interaction at the group level using the team spiritual leadership scores of the team members participated in the study. Response rate per team varies from 10 to 91% ( $M = 41\%$ ).

**Table 3** Sample means per team

| Team  | Response | Resp.rate | TCI   | TIL  | TSWB |   |
|-------|----------|-----------|-------|------|------|---|
| T1    | 7        | 33%       | 0,704 | 4,30 | 3,72 |   |
| T2    | 8        | 42%       | 0,704 | 4,68 | 4,1  | * |
| T3    | 8        | 38%       | 0,684 | 3,85 | 3,28 |   |
| T4    | 2        | 10%       | 0,564 | 3,95 | 3,26 |   |
| T5    | 5        | 33%       | 0,804 | 4,94 | 3,83 |   |
| T6    | 10       | 91%       | 0,688 | 4,17 | 3,35 | * |
| T7    | 5        | 38%       | 0,668 | 3,84 | 3,13 |   |
| T8    | 4        | 25%       | 0,712 | 4,70 | 3,97 |   |
| T9    | 9        | 69%       | 0,712 | 4,88 | 4,16 | * |
| T10   | 6        | 55%       | 0,688 | 4,30 | 3,73 | * |
| T11   | 4        | 33%       | 0,708 | 4,88 | 3,63 |   |
| T12   | 8        | 62%       | 0,66  | 4,03 | 3,39 | * |
| T13   | 5        | 33%       | 0,72  | 4,36 | 3,58 |   |
| T14   | 5        | 50%       | 0,552 | 4,66 | 3,63 | * |
| Total | 86       | 41%       | 0,792 | 4,38 | 3,64 |   |

*n* = 14. TCI: Coherent Interaction – TIL: Inner Life (MAAS) – TSWB: Team Spiritual Well-Being

\* Response rate  $\geq$  40%, hence, further included in the analysis at group level

**Table 4** Fuzzy set construction

| Variable             | Code | Set construction break-points |      |
|----------------------|------|-------------------------------|------|
| Inner Life           | IL   | Fully in:                     | 6.0  |
|                      |      | Cross-over:                   | 3.0  |
|                      |      | Fully out:                    | 1.0  |
| Spiritual Well-Being | SWB  | Fully in:                     | 4.0  |
|                      |      | Cross-over:                   | 3.0  |
|                      |      | Fully out:                    | 2.0  |
| Coherent Interaction | CI   | Fully in:                     | 0.80 |
|                      |      | Cross-over:                   | 0.60 |
|                      |      | Fully out:                    | 0.40 |

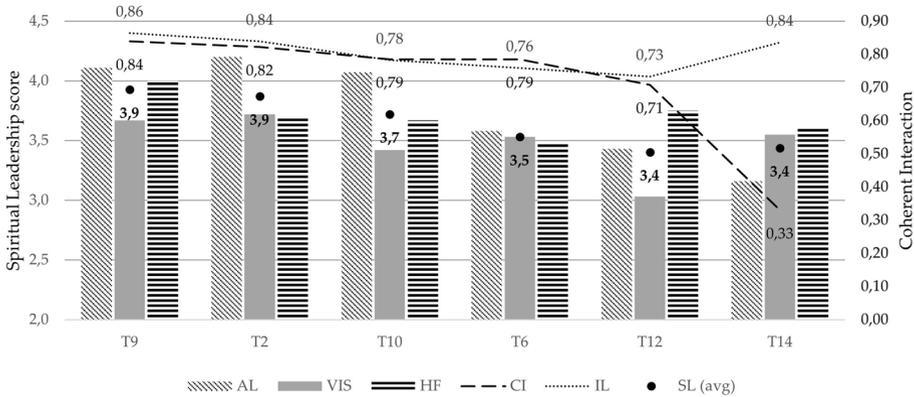
## Calibration

This study uses a fuzzy set QCA approach (Ragin 2008; Fiss 2011; Schneider and Wagemann 2012; Fiss et al. 2013) to evaluate the Boolean expression:  $IL \times CI \rightarrow SWB$ . This implies that data are first calibrated in fuzzy set membership scores between 0 and 1 according to the degree of presence of the condition in a specific case, using a continuous fuzzy set scale. Interval-scale variables are converted into fuzzy set values, using packages QCA v3.4 and SetMethods v2.4 (Oana and Schneider 2018) within RStudio v1.1.463. Unlike standard interval measures, fuzzy sets assign a quality to the variation. Membership has to be “purposefully calibrated” (Ragin 2008: 30). These qualitative anchors “make it possible to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant variation”

**Table 5** Fuzzy set spiritual leadership measures

| Personal Spiritual leadership ( <i>n</i> = 86) | IL_fs | CI_fs | ILxCI |         |
|--|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| Consistency (sufficiency)                      | 93%   | 89%   | 94%   |         |
| Coverage                                       | 86%   | 94%   | 83%   |         |
| Team Spiritual Leadership                      | IL_fs | CI_fs | ILxCI | SWB_fs↓ |
| Team 9   | 0.86  | 0.84  | 0.84  | 0.97    |
| Team 2   | 0.84  | 0.82  | 0.82  | 0.96    |
| Team 10  | 0.78  | 0.79  | 0.78  | 0.90    |
| Team 14  | 0.84  | 0.33  | 0.33  | 0.87    |
| Team 12  | 0.73  | 0.71  | 0.71  | 0.76    |
| Team 6   | 0.76  | 0.79  | 0.76  | 0.74    |
| Consistency (sufficiency)                      | 99%   | 99%   | 99%   |         |
| Coverage                                       | 92%   | 81%   | 81%   |         |

IL: Inner Life; CI: Coherent Interaction; SWB: Spiritual Well-Being; \_fs: fuzzy set



**Fig. 3** Case comparison Spiritual Leadership variables

(Rihoux and Ragin 2009: 92). The fuzzy set anchors used in this study are shown in Table 4 and further explained below.

For the sample being studied, as an indicator for Inner Life, the MAAS score mean is 4.38 (SD=0.83), ranging from 2.1 to 6.0. Studies of Brown and Ryan (2003), however, found a mean of 4.38 (SD=0.65) among active Zen practitioners, and 3.97 (SD=0.64) for their comparison group. Also, MacKillop and Anderson (2007) found a MAAS score mean of 4.0 (SD=0.85) among 727 college students. Therefore, the ‘fully in break-point’ is set at the maximum score of 6, the ‘fully out break-point’ at the minimum score of 1, and the ‘cross-over’ at 3. Spiritual Well-Being (SWB) is the outcome of spiritual leadership. Scores above 4 are satisfactory, while scores below 3 indicate the need for improvement (based on PSL Rev 4/2018). Hence, break-points are set at 2 (fully out) – 3 (cross-over) – 4 (fully in). The break-points for Coherent Interaction are set at 0.4 for being fully incoherent (or fully out) and 0.8 for being fully coherent (or fully in). Cross-over is set at 0.6.

Applying the fuzzy set break-points of Table 4 to the data leads to the figures shown in Table 5 below, for both personal and team spiritual leadership.

Figure 3 gives an overview of the spiritual leadership variables per case (team), presented as bars, as well as the level of coherent interaction (CI) and Inner Life (IL). Note that the average score of spiritual leadership (SL) is independent of the coherent interaction (CI). For example, T9 and T2 have the same SL score but different CI. On the other hand, T10 and T6 have the same CI but different SL. In the revised model of spiritual leadership, CI and IL are taken into account to determine the emergence of spiritual well-being.

## Qualitative study

### Interview Guide & Data Analysis

The face-to-face interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed ad verbatim. Interviews followed a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview guide). Open questions were carefully prepared with the support of an expert in this field. They were structured around the spiritual leadership variables, i.e., vision, altruistic love, hope/faith and inner life, within the context of the onboarding of a new team member. E.g. what do you tell the newcomer about the goals of your team (vision); what do you think is important that the newcomer should know about how to interact with each other (altruistic love); what do you want her/him to know about how you getting things done in the team (hope/faith); what do you tell him/her about how you as a team look at personal growth (inner life practice). The interviewer-researcher adopted an attitude of ‘not knowing’ and ‘non-judgement’, regularly asking for clarifications and illustrations to better understand the underlying meaning of the discourse.

The qualitative data were analyzed according to a four-step approach, with the support of the software NVivo 12. First, one transcript (or case) was read and sentences were coded based on the content of the sentence. Second, the identified codes formed a codebook for the coding of the other transcripts, to which new codes could also be added. Third, codes of all transcripts were grouped into meaningful themes. Finally, the themes were grouped according to the spiritual leadership variables. An independent expert verified step two to four to enhance internal validity. How do teams differ on these variables, is the guiding research question of this analysis.

### Sample Demographics

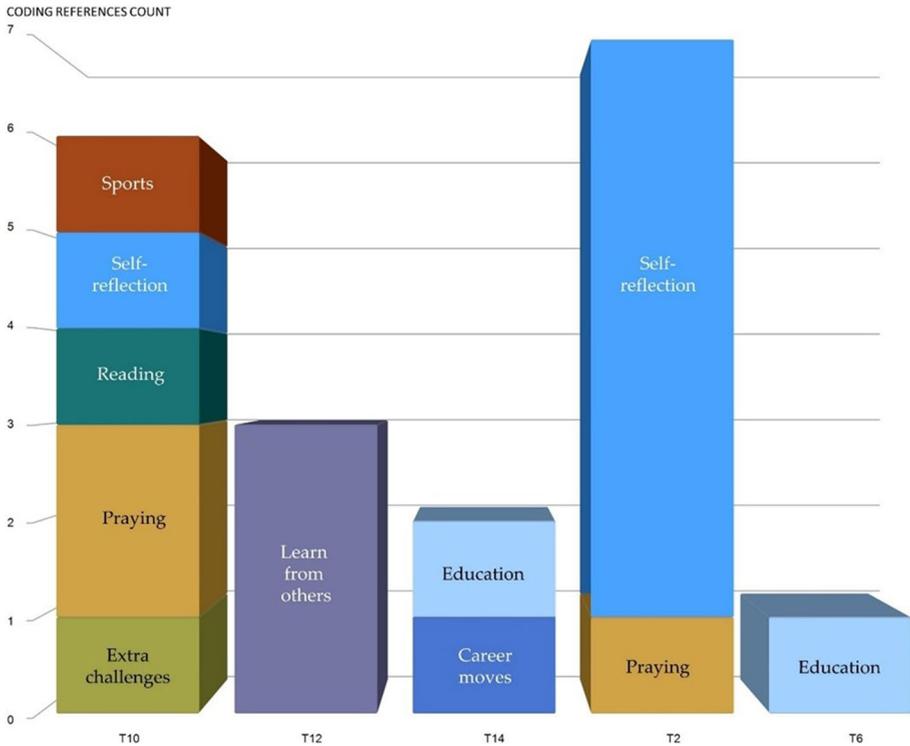
For the qualitative study, seven team leaders participated with age ranging from 26 to 50 years ( $M=34.4$ ;  $SD=8.0$ ) and an average company seniority of 4.7 years ( $SD=3.4$ ). Table 6 gives an overview of these sample demographics. Due to inconsistent data, the case T1 has been excluded based on a too low response rate. In addition, case T9 has been excluded because the team leader was leading the team only very recently. The interviews of the remaining five team leaders (T2, T10, T6, T12, T14) were taken into account for further analysis.

### Findings about Inner Life/Personal Growth of the Team Leaders

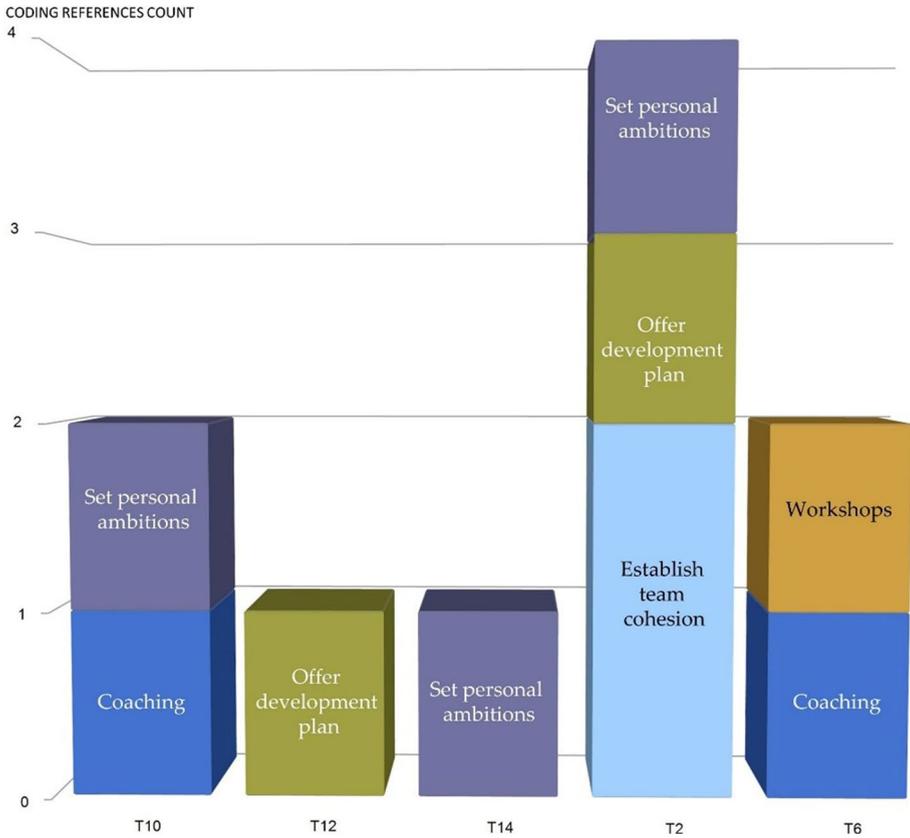
The spiritual leadership variable “Inner Life” describes “the extent to which one has a mindful practice or seeks mindful awareness” (Spiritual Leadership Survey—Rev 1/2018). The

**Table 6** Sample demographics (qualitative study)

|                          | <i>n</i> = 7 | %         |
|--------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| <b>Gender</b>            |              |           |
| Male                     | 4            | 43%       |
| Female                   | 3            | 57%       |
| Unspecified              |              |           |
| <b>Educational level</b> |              |           |
| Primary                  | 1            | 14%       |
| Lower secondary          | 1            | 14%       |
| Higher secondary         | 2            | 28%       |
| Bachelor                 | 2            | 28%       |
| Master or higher         | 1            | 14%       |
|                          | <i>mean</i>  | <i>sd</i> |
| <b>Seniority</b>         |              |           |
| In company (years)       | 4.7          | 3.4       |
| In team (years)          | 3.6          | 2.9       |
| <b>Age (y)</b>           | 34,4         | 8,0       |



**Fig. 4** Findings about Inner Life/Personal Growth—Team Leaders



**Fig. 5** Findings about Inner Life/Personal Growth

quantitative phase of this study highlights the influence and correlation of this variable to the other spiritual leadership variables: vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love (cf. Table 2).

Figure 4 presents the practices that the team leader uses for the development of his inner life and personal growth. The vertical axis refers to the number of coding references.

Team leader T10 uses a variety of practices, while self-reflection was the most important practice of team leader T2:

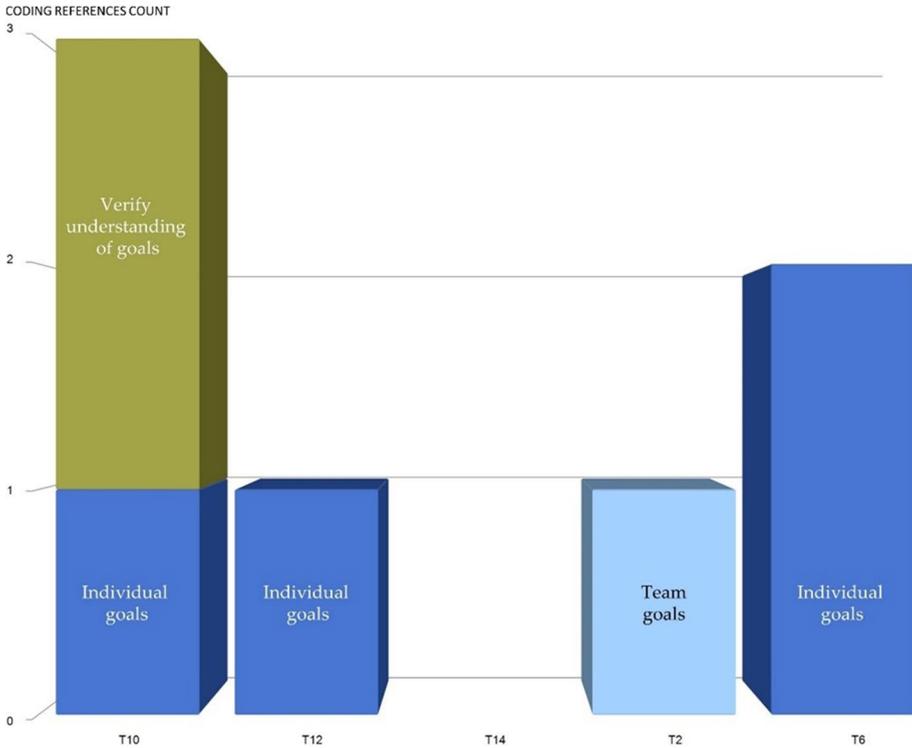
*“Especially the reflection. I mainly see ... I take a lot of reflection moments”* (T2)

*“Reflect, get the points out for myself: what was sincere, what wasn’t for me, and then I will indeed measure ‘is that the growth that I want to experience?’.”* (T2)

Seek feedback and learn from others were the practices of team leader T12. This entails, for example, engaging with experts, feedback conversations with manager for personal growth, but also learn consciously to do a task independently.

### Findings about Inner Life/Personal Growth

Figure 5 presents the ways how ServiceCo and its team leaders support employees in their personal growth efforts from the viewpoint of the interviewee (i.e., the team leader).



**Fig. 6** Findings about Vision

Setting personal ambitions for growth is seen as the main way to support their team members in their personal growth, and, to a lesser extent, coaching and offering a development plan.

*“There is also room for personal objectives: what does the employee himself want to achieve? That is then also asked and we look at it, okay, to what extent can we help?” (T9)*

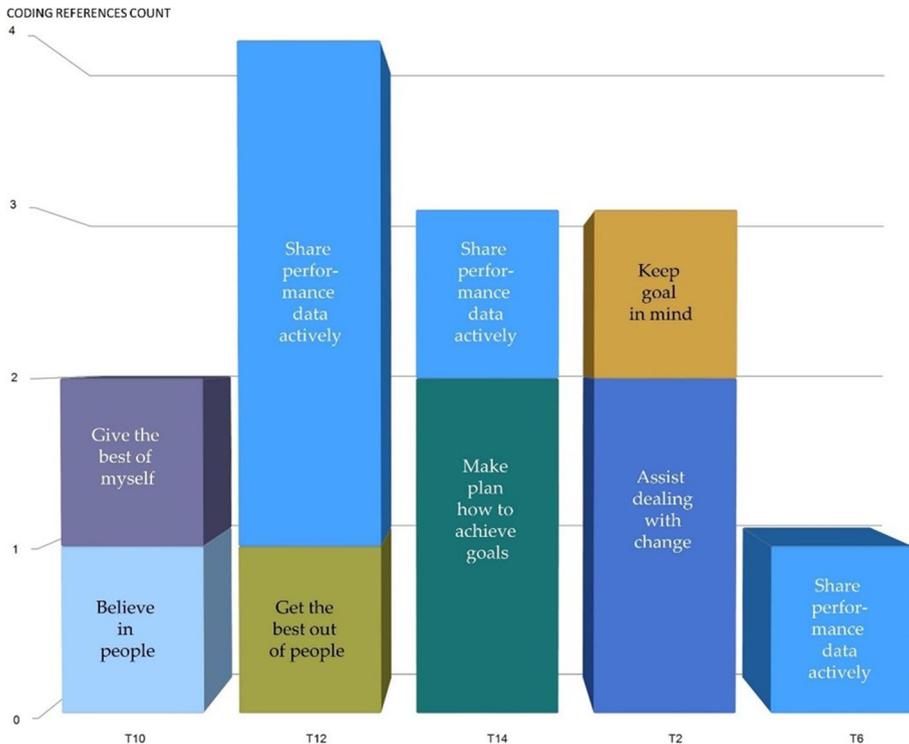
*“I actually include that [setting personal ambitions] in my one-to-ones. We have a one-to-one every month and then I gradually bring it up.” (T2)*

From all interviewees, only team leader T2 paid attention to team growth, through the creation of team cohesion:

*“And then indeed as a team we sat together and said, “look, there’s a proposal from the team that came in from the team meeting, if we were to do this and do that; does anyone have any other ideas?” Then again we create the cohesion again. Then everybody has a say and then you create growth within the team.” (T2)*

## Findings about Vision

The spiritual leadership variable “Vision” refers to “the team’s journey and why we are taking it; defines who we are and what we do” (Spiritual Leadership Survey—Rev



**Fig. 7** Findings about Hope/Faith

1/2018). For this study, the interviews focused especially on the goals that the teams are facing, with the question: “How do you tell him/her about your team goal?”.

Although the focus was on the team, goals at ServiceCo are typically set at the individual level (see Fig. 6). However, team leader T2 mentioned team goals more clearly, as follows:

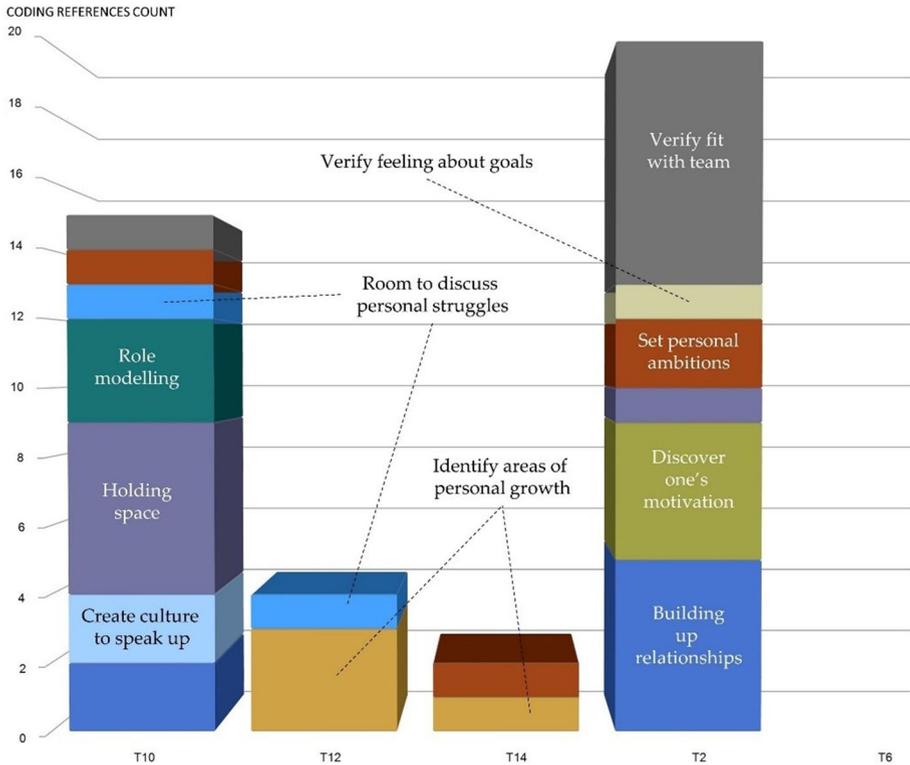
*“As a team leader it is important to me that we have objectives, predefined objectives, which are mapped very clearly. That also, as I said at the beginning, already agreed, that is what we do as a team, that is what we expect, that is what the company expects from us, and again, what role you have in this.” (T2)*

Team leader T10 makes sure that team members are on the same page and responds especially on their body language to intervene:

*“... if I just see agents frowning or doing something like ‘that’ or body language, I pick it up, at that moment, not later, not an hour later, at that moment. Then I ask if it is not clear to you, then I will stop the briefing.” (T10)*

### Findings about Hope/Faith

The spiritual leadership variable “Hope/Faith” describes “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction that the team’s vision/goal will be fulfilled”, which entails



**Fig. 8** Findings about Altruistic Love

demonstrating faith through action, perseverance and exerting extra effort, and setting challenging goals (Spiritual Leadership Survey—Rev 1/2018). The main question used to gauge this is “What do you think is important that she/he knows how to get things done to achieve the team goals?”.

The sharing of performance data actively during team meetings, where the team stands, what is coming, but also how the team made a difference, has been mentioned by the majority of the team leaders for achieving the team goals (see Fig. 7).

*“... some numbers ... we don’t need to know everything because it just doesn’t matter, but you do share the numbers where they made a difference” (T12)*

In addition, some attitudes were mentioned, such as, “give the best of yourself”, “believe in people”, “get the best out of people”, and “keep goal in mind”.

*“If you choose to work with people, you have to give the best of yourself, because those people deserve to look up to a team manager.” (T10)*

### Findings about Altruistic Love

The spiritual leadership variable “Altruistic Love” describes “a sense of wholeness, harmony, and well-being produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others” (Spiritual Leadership Survey—Rev 1/2018).

Throughout the interviews, a variety of such ‘care expressions’ were identified, except with team leader T6, as shown in Fig. 8. Those that were often mentioned, based on the coding references, are:

- **Verify fit with team** entails, for example, assessing what the person knows about team, how he/she experiences the team, how he/she fits in the team, meaning for each other as team, but also listening to his/her expectations towards the team leader.

*“We [the team] ask what that they [newcomers] expect from us. That everyone knows where off and on, from the beginning.” (T1)*

*“First, of course, we’re going to see that the person in question knows where they’ve ended up. We’re going to probe for “are you already aware of what the team does”, “are you already aware of what your job entails”, “what we as a team can mean for each other.” (T2) “And what does the employee himself want to achieve and that is then also asked and looked at, okay, to what extent can we help?” (T9)*

- **Holding space** encompasses offering space to ventilate experiences or feelings, making room for discussion or time alone, responding to body language.

*“Everything is really about discussing within the team and not sitting in a separate cubicle and saying this is how you should do it, but just in the team.” (T2)*

*“I think that we also have to give ourselves space. ... We have to make it clear that if you’re having a difficult time, it’s not a problem to take a break if you need to recover from it.” (T9)*

- **Discover one’s motivation**, because it differs according to one’s perception, and can be measured through the experiences evoked while executing the job.

*“As a supervisor, you actually discover what that motivation is of the person.” (T2)*

*“Motivation, I think the word itself is different in everyone’s perception.” (T2)*

- **Building up relationships**. It is the offering of space and time for the development of relationships and how to interact in a team without much intervention of the team leader.

*“Ultimately, this person is also part of the team. He has to maintain or preserve his individuality in order to continue to feel good in his job, so I am curious as to how that person will approach it.” (T2) “So I think an opportunity like that is nice to know something about each other. ... I like that interaction.” (T10)*

## Discussion

The findings presented in Table 2 show that inner life has a positive influence on the spiritual leadership variables, i.e., a fundamental source for the development of shared vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love (Fry 2008). As a result, the study highlights its importance

for individuals and for organizations in providing a context that fosters an inner life practice, for example, a room for inner life practices (e.g., meditation, yoga, prayer), or personal leadership development opportunities (Fry and Nisiewicz 2013). In addition, it enriches other studies dealing with the role of an inner life practice as the source of spiritual leadership, including the validation studies of Jeon et al. (2013) and Fry et al. (2017), and the studies about cultivating a global mindset of Egel and Fry (2017) and Fry and Egel (2021).

Furthermore, other findings in Table 2 indicate a positive relationship between personal and team spiritual leadership, supporting the theory put forward by Sandra and Nandram (2020). This entails that developing personal spiritual leadership directly influences spiritual leadership at the group level to which the individual belongs. To our knowledge, it is the first study to provide evidence of such a relationship. These findings contribute to the evolution of spiritual leadership theory and more specifically adds support to similar studies about the development of personal spiritual leadership (e.g. Fry and Nisiewicz 2013; Egel and Fry (2017);).

Table 5 gives an overview of the the consistency and coverage<sup>1</sup> measures. The consistency of the set-relationship  $IL \times CI$  is above 94%, while coverage is above 81%, across all cases, both at the individual and group level. The conditions  $IL$  and  $CI$  have also high consistency scores indicating a strong relationship with  $SWB$ . However, there are still cases where the relationship does not apply (e.g., team 6). Hence, the evidence supports the hypotheses that inner life practice and spiritual leadership coherence can be usefully deployed in a consistent way to understand the emergence of spiritual well-being through entrainment, across the individual and group level, using the breaking-points from Table 4. In practical terms, spiritual well-being at the individual or group level can easily be assessed applying the defined fuzzy set break-points (Table 4) to the boolean expression  $IL \times CI \rightarrow SWB$ .

Figure 3 shows the spiritual leadership variables of the different cases (teams), where  $SL$  is the average of the scores Vision, Hope/Faith and Altruistic Love. It clearly illustrates the coherent interaction approach. Although the cases T9 and T2 have the same average for spiritual leadership, the coherent interaction (dashed line) differs due to the variance of the spiritual leadership variables. Case T6 has a relatively high coherent interaction with a moderate spiritual leadership average, while case T14 has a low coherent interaction for a similar average. As an example, looking at the case T9 more closely, the Vision variable is on average lower than the variables Hope/Faith and Altruistic Love; a high variance is identified on the questions “My team’s vision inspires my best performance” and “My team’s vision is clear and compelling to me.” Working on a clear and compelling vision for that team could improve the coherent interaction, and as a result, spiritual well-being.

Now, can the qualitative part of this study explain or elaborate on the findings of the quantitative part? In other words, how do teams differ on inner life and spiritual leadership variables? To investigate this, the table below (Table 7) provides an overview of the differences between teams with higher scores of spiritual well-being (i.e., T2 and T10) and teams with lower scores (i.e., T12 and T14).

<sup>1</sup> Consistency percentage evaluates the degree of support among the cases of a subset. Consistency is to set relationships as p-value is to statistical inference; the higher the consistency, the stronger the set-theoretical relationship (Schneider & Wagemann 2012). Rule of thumb is to look for relationships with consistencies greater than 90% for necessary conditions, and 80% for sufficient conditions; the coverage percentage, on the other hand, evaluates the proportion of the membership scores in an outcome that a particular configuration explains (Ragin 2000; Schneider & Wagemann 2012).

**Table 7** Team differences in spiritual leadership variables

|                 | Higher scores SWB  | Lower scores SWB  |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Inner Life      | More specific inner life practices (e.g., prayer, reflection)              | Especially learning from others                             |
| Altruistic Love | More and diverse way to care for each other                                | Limited to personal growth and ambition of the team members |
| Vision          | Attention for team goals and the verification if goals are well understood | Focus on individual goals                                   |
| Hope/Faith      | Focus on attitude (e.g., believing in people, assisting in change)         | Focus on actively sharing performance data                  |

The major differences are found for Inner Life (IL) and Altruistic Love (AL). Teams with higher spiritual well-being scores pay attention to inner life practices, such as prayer, reflection, and use a diverse set of ways to take care of their team members. These findings are in line with the higher measured team scores for IL and AL, shown in Fig. 3, as well as with higher scores of the team leaders' personal and team SWB scores. However, the individual Inner Life scores of the team members do not reflect this difference. (These individual scores are not shown in the data presented.)

For Vision and Hope/Faith, the differences are less outspoken. However, teams with lower SWB scores focus more on individual goals and sharing of performance data, while the other team leaders pay also attention to certain attitudes, such as believing in people, verification of the goals through body language, and assisting in change. In addition, they have an outspoken practice on a regular basis. These findings are in line with the higher measured team scores for Inner Life and Altruistic Love from the quantitative part.

Both findings contribute to the literature of spiritual leadership theory (e.g., Fry 2008; Fry et al. 2017) and emphasize (a) the importance of having an inner life practice for individuals, and (b) for organizations in providing a context that fosters an inner life practice (e.g., a space for meditation, yoga or prayer; offering personal leadership development opportunities).

Appendix Table 8: Codebook Spiritual Leadership Variables gives a structured overview of all codes used in the qualitative study.

## Final Consideration and Practical Implications for Managers

This study reveals three main findings. First, it provides support that inner life and spiritual leadership coherence are jointly sufficient to foster the emergence of spiritual well-being, both at the individual and group level. Moreover, it shows that spiritual well-being can easily be assessed using a QCA-approach, i.e., applying the defined fuzzy set break-points (Table 4) to the boolean expression  $IL \times CI \rightarrow SWB$ . Next, it adds further support to other studies, such as Jeon et al. (2013) and Fry et al. (2017), that inner life has a positive influence for the development of shared vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love. Finally, this study indicates a positive relationship between personal and team spiritual leadership, supporting the theory of Sandra and Nandram (2020). This entails that developing personal spiritual leadership directly influences the level of spiritual leadership of the group to which the individual belongs.

During the covid-19 pandemic, the Barrett Values Centre (Wiedemann 2020) surveyed nearly 1.400 employees worldwide noticing the several shifts to which this study contributes. At the individual level, well-being shifted in importance from #26 to #5. Making a difference, adaptability, and caring are three other values that emerged in top priority. These four values are at the core of spiritual leadership theory and, as shown in this study, spiritual leadership coherence positively influences spiritual well-being. At the organizational level, caring moved up in importance from #25 to #4, adaptability/agility from #43 to #8, and well-being from #57 to #16. The importance of a shared vision, a key element of spiritual leadership, increased from #93 to #16. Here too, there is a positive influence of spiritual leadership coherence on spiritual well-being at the group level. As such, spiritual leadership coherence strengthens humanistic management highlighting the interplay between shared vision, hope/faith (i.e., willingness to make it happen), and altruistic love (i.e., being appreciated and understood; sense of belongingness). This study highlights a number of practical implications for managers. First, the importance of a personal inner life practice (e.g., meditation, prayer, journaling, spending time in nature) not only influences personal spiritual leadership development, it also influences spiritual leadership of the team. Managers are sought to create an organizational context (e.g., a space for these practices; offering personal leadership development opportunities) that fosters such inner life practices. Second, leadership development programs should help leaders pay more attention to their inner life development and self-reflection, thereby strengthening their personal spiritual leadership. Next, this study invites managers to spend (more) attention to align the shared vision, organizational values and actions (cf. spiritual leadership coherence) more coherently in practice. For example, is the fulfillment of an organization's vision demonstrated through appropriate action and within corresponding values and appreciation for both self and others. The surveys used in the study can help to verify this coherence, as discussed above, and to identify areas for adaptation (not necessary improvement). Fourth, building further on previous implications, managers should reflect (more) in terms of coherence, both on personal and organisational levels. The coherence perspective may show them that sometimes "less is more". Finally, managers are able to intensify connectedness among their people paying attention to adapt themselves and the organisation by creating a shared, safe context where team members can thrive. There is no "one size fits all". For example, applying a diverse set of ways to care for each other; aligning personal and organisational ambition; living the shared values and attitudes.

The research presented in this article brings about a number of limitations. First, the empirical studies have been conducted in a context of a professional customer interaction services organization that tend to be of a higher practical nature, limiting generalization towards more complex service organizations. In addition, surveys were conducted in their original language, English, although the participants are primarily native Dutch speakers. This influences individuals' response, especially when cultural norms and values are assessed (see for example Harzing 2016; Harzing and Maznevski 2002; Ralston et al. 1995). Third, the qualitative data has been collected through informant interviews, which limits the richness of the analysis. Next, sampling fewer than all the team members may lead to several Type II errors, i.e., accepting a false hypothesis (Allen et al. 2007; Timmerman 2005). Fifth, single interviews with whom the interviewer has never met or spoken may also fail to obtain vital contextual information that would more likely surface across multiple interviews (Patton 1989; Mishler 1986). Finally, although the research process has been designed and executed with care, the empirical data and analysis is subject to the unarticulated beliefs and convictions of the researcher.

Future research could address the sampling of all team members and the conducting of multiple interviews, but could also use actual organizational performance indicators that are

equally important across all teams. Another approach for future research could be that of an intervention, where teams are coached or trained in one or more spiritual leadership variables.

## Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview guide

The interview was done in Dutch. After a brief introduction and signing of the consent form, the following interview guide was followed. (Translation of the question in English is provided below each question.)

- Stel, er komt iemand nieuw in uw team en u hebt uw eerste welkom of 'onboarding' gesprek, wat vertelt u hem/haar?

*Imagine, someone new to your team and you have your first welcome or onboarding conversation, what are you telling him/her?*

- Hoe vertelt u hem/haar meer over jullie doel als team?

*How do you tell him/her about your (team) goal?*

- Wat vindt u belangrijk dat zij/hij weet over hoe jullie met elkaar omgaan in uw team?

*What do you think is important that she/he knows how you interact in your team?*

- Wat vindt u belangrijk dat zij/hij weet over hoe jullie zaken voor elkaar krijgen om de teamdoelstellingen te bereiken?

*What do you think is important that she/he knows how to get things done to achieve the team goals?*

- Wat vindt u belangrijk dat zij/hij weet over hoe jullie als team kijken naar persoonlijke groei en ontwikkeling?

*What do you think is important that she/he knows about how you as a team look at personal growth and development?*

- Welk advies geeft u haar/hem om succesvol te zijn in het team

*What advice do you give her/him to be successful in the team?*

- Welk advies geeft u haar/hem om met plezier te kunnen werken

*What advice do you give her/him to work with pleasure?*

- Vanuit uw eigen ervaring, welke ongeschreven regels wilt u doorgeven?

*From your own experience, what unwritten rules do you want to pass on?*

- Vanuit uw eigen ervaring, in uw advies, wat zegt u dat zij/hij moet voor oppassen, van wegblijven, niet doen?

*From your own experience, in your advice, what do you say she/he should watch out, stay away from, not do?*

- Vanuit uw rol als leidinggevende, wat vertelt u over uzelf en uw eigen zingeving?

*In your role as manager, what do you tell about yourself and your own (life) meaning?*

- Vanuit uw rol als leidinggevende, welke rol of leiderschapsstijl neemt u op naar de teamleden? Hoe doet u dit? Hetzelfde voor de nieuwkomer?

*In your role as a manager, what role or leadership style do you have with the team members? How do you do this? The same for the newcomer?*

- Hoe zult u haar/hem motiveren?

*How will you motivate her/him?*

- Hoe belangrijk is persoonlijke groei voor u? Wat houdt dit dan in voor u?

*How important is personal growth to you? What does this mean?*

- Zijn er nog vragen of opmerkingen i.v.m. dit interview?

*Are there any questions or comments regarding this interview?*

**Table 8** Codebook Spiritual Leadership Variables

| Variable / description  | Interviews <sup>a</sup> | References |
|---|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>VISION</b>   |                         |            |
| INDIVIDUAL GOALS  | 4                       | 5          |
| set goals to each team member—team or individual goals                    | 1                       | 1          |
| team goals set individually   | 3                       | 4          |
| TEAM GOALS  | 2                       | 5          |
| explain team goals to team  | 1                       | 1          |
| important to have clear team objectives                                   | 1                       | 1          |
| team goals set along the way  | 1                       | 3          |
| VERIFY UNDERSTANDING GOALS  | 1                       | 4          |
| body language as means to verify understanding goals                      | 1                       | 2          |
| important that agent knows what we are talking about in team meeting      | 1                       | 1          |
| important to have all agents on the same page (TL)                        | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>ALTRUISTIC LOVE</b>  |                         |            |
| BUILDING UP RELATIONSHIPS   | 3                       | 8          |
| giving no tips how to interact in team                                    | 1                       | 1          |
| how to interact is a learning process                                     | 1                       | 3          |
| person needs to self-intervene  | 1                       | 1          |
| realize impact of one's approach  | 1                       | 1          |
| relationship with team members are built up                               | 1                       | 1          |
| team meeting as opportunity to learn something personally from each other | 1                       | 1          |
| CREATE CULTURE TO SPEAK UP  | 1                       | 2          |
| kind of shame of not speaking up by agents                                | 1                       | 1          |
| loosen up meetings  | 1                       | 1          |
| DISCOVERING ONE'S MOTIVATION  | 1                       | 5          |
| measuring experiences to discover one's motivation                        | 1                       | 2          |
| motivation differs according to one's perception                          | 1                       | 1          |
| need to discover one's motivation   | 1                       | 2          |
| HOLDING THE SPACE   | 3                       | 8          |
| make room for discussion in team  | 1                       | 1          |
| offering space to ventilate experiences or feelings                       | 1                       | 1          |
| reading body language   | 1                       | 3          |
| sensing people well   | 1                       | 2          |
| some agents need some time alone  | 1                       | 1          |
| IDENTIFY AREAS OF PERSONAL GROWTH   | 2                       | 4          |
| detect growth possibilities for agent and get started                     | 1                       | 1          |
| indicate areas of personal growth in one-to-one (by TL)                   | 1                       | 1          |
| working together with team manager on personal growth                     | 1                       | 2          |
| ROLE MODELLING  | 2                       | 7          |
| people deserve having faith in their team leader                          | 1                       | 1          |
| people deserve to be able to count on their team leader                   | 1                       | 1          |
| people deserve to look up to their team leader                            | 1                       | 2          |
| role modelling how to approach someone                                    | 1                       | 2          |
| team manager as role model  | 1                       | 1          |
| ROOM TO DISCUSS PERSONAL STRUGGLES  | 3                       | 4          |

**Table 8** (continued)

| Variable / description                                | Interviews <sup>a</sup> | References |
|---|-------------------------|------------|
| discuss people's personal struggles with their work   | 1                       | 1          |
| do something about struggles of team members          | 1                       | 1          |
| listen to struggles of people                         | 1                       | 1          |
| show empathy for personal struggles as TL             | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>SET PERSONAL AMBITIONS</b>                         | 4                       | 7          |
| discuss how to assist with personal ambitions         | 1                       | 1          |
| indicate interests for personal growth to team leader | 1                       | 1          |
| managing of personal ambitions                        | 1                       | 1          |
| need to set goals for personal growth agent           | 1                       | 1          |
| personal ambitions discussed in one-to-one            | 1                       | 1          |
| personal growth discussion in one-to-one              | 1                       | 1          |
| set higher performance levels for growth              | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>VERIFY FEELING ABOUT GOALS</b>                     | 1                       | 1          |
| feeling about work                                    | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>VERIFY FIT WITH TEAM</b>                           | 4                       | 11         |
| assess what newcomer knows about team                 | 1                       | 1          |
| check fit with the role                               | 1                       | 1          |
| how do you experience the team                        | 1                       | 1          |
| how will you fit in the team                          | 1                       | 1          |
| listen to expectations towards team leader            | 2                       | 2          |
| listen to personal ambitions                          | 1                       | 1          |
| meaning for each other as team                        | 1                       | 3          |
| translate personal expectations into own team goals   | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>HOPE-FAITH</b>                                     |                         |            |
| <b>ASSIST DEALING WITH CHANGE</b>                     | 1                       | 3          |
| motivating by dealing with change                     | 1                       | 1          |
| motivation is dynamic                                 | 1                       | 2          |
| <b>BELIEVE IN PEOPLE</b>                              | 1                       | 1          |
| believing in agent as of moment of hiring             | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>GET THE BEST OUT OF PEOPLE</b>                     | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>GIVE THE BEST OF OURSELF</b>                       | 1                       | 1          |
| need give the best as yourself as team leader         | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>KEEP GOAL IN MIND</b>                              | 1                       | 1          |
| keep team goals in mind                               | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>MAKE PLAN HOW TO ACHIEVE GOALS</b>                 | 1                       | 2          |
| establish a plan how to achieve team goals            | 1                       | 1          |
| give insights how to reach goals to team member       | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>SHARE PERFORMANCE DATA ACTIVELY</b>                | 3                       | 6          |
| actively involve team in performance data             | 1                       | 2          |
| communicate actively about performance data with team | 1                       | 1          |
| invite to share their good performance                | 1                       | 1          |
| share current and future situations in team meeting   | 1                       | 1          |
| share performance data where team made difference     | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>INNER LIFE-PERSONAL GROWTH</b>                     |                         |            |
| <b>COACHING</b>                                       | 3                       | 5          |

**Table 8** (continued)

| Variable / description                                       | Interviews <sup>a</sup> | References |
|--|-------------------------|------------|
| extra coaching to support growth                             | 2                       | 3          |
| side-by-side assistance by coaches                           | 1                       | 1          |
| side-by-side important for agent                             | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>ESTABLISH TEAM COHESION</b>                               | 1                       | 2          |
| importing from personal environment in team for growth       | 1                       | 1          |
| team cohesion creates team growth                            | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>OFFER DEVELOPMENT PLAN</b>                                | 2                       | 4          |
| give assistance with their personal development plan         | 1                       | 1          |
| important to map personal growth in company                  | 1                       | 1          |
| personal development plan provides room for creativity       | 1                       | 1          |
| personal growth via development plan                         | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>SET PERSONAL AMBITIONS</b>                                | 4                       | 6          |
| discuss how to assist with personal ambitions                | 1                       | 1          |
| indicate interests for personal growth to team leader        | 1                       | 1          |
| need to set goals for personal growth agent                  | 1                       | 1          |
| personal ambitions discussed in one-to-one                   | 1                       | 1          |
| personal growth discussion in one-to-one                     | 1                       | 1          |
| set higher performance levels for growth                     | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>WORKSHOPS</b>   | 2                       | 2          |
| company organises trainings to improve health                | 1                       | 1          |
| extra training for personal growth                           | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>INNER LIFE-PERSONAL GROWTH TEAM LEADER</b>                |                         |            |
| <b>CAREER MOVES</b>  | 1                       | 1          |
| verify career opportunities for further growth               | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>EDUCATION</b>   | 2                       | 2          |
| evening school for personal growth                           | 1                       | 1          |
| learning something new is useful                             | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>EXTRA CHALLENGES</b>                                      | 2                       | 3          |
| entrepreneurship as way of personal growth                   | 1                       | 1          |
| keep challenging myself                                      | 1                       | 1          |
| personal growth via something extra                          | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>LEARN FROM OTHERS</b>                                     | 2                       | 5          |
| engage with experts to learn from                            | 1                       | 2          |
| feedback conversations with manager for personal growth (TL) | 1                       | 1          |
| growth and development by talking                            | 1                       | 1          |
| learn consciously to do it independently                     | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>PRAYING</b>   | 2                       | 3          |
| praying as personal growth                                   | 1                       | 1          |
| praying is automaticity                                      | 1                       | 1          |
| religious rituals  | 1                       | 1          |
| <b>READING</b>   | 2                       | 4          |
| reading books for personal growth TL                         | 2                       | 4          |
| <b>SELFREFLECTION</b>  | 3                       | 9          |
| do things that are in my blood as personal growth            | 1                       | 1          |

**Table 8** (continued)

| Variable / description              | Interviews <sup>a</sup> | References |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| planning of self-reflection moments | 1                       | 2          |
| self-reflection for personal growth | 2                       | 5          |
| self-reflection sporadically        | 1                       | 1          |
| SPORTS                              | 1                       | 1          |
| more sports for personal growth TL  | 1                       | 1          |

<sup>a</sup>All seven interviews were coded and included in this codebook

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**Data availability** All data necessary to produce the results in this article can be obtained from the author on request.

## Declarations

**Ethical Approval** Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Antwerp on 28 February 2020. All participants were given information about the research, including the guarantee of confidentiality, the right to withdraw from this research at any stage, and the right to see their data being collected throughout the research process. Each participant provided written consent regarding the use of their information.

**Author agreement** The author confirms that there are no other persons who satisfied the criteria for authorship but are not listed.

**Copyright and Plagiarism** The author declares that this manuscript is original and that it has not been published or being considered for publication before.

**Competing Interest** The author declares that there is no competing interest the publication of this manuscript. This research was part of the author's doctoral program at the University of Antwerp, Belgium.

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