

AN INVESTIGATION OF TOURISM EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTION OF WORKPLACE SPIRITUALITY IN TERMS OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Akın Aksu³
Ömür Uçar⁴
Rüya Ehtiyar⁵

Abstract: One of the most important social problems of the modern age is that working life is still far from human and spiritual values. At this point, the concept of “workplace spirituality” is an answer to this question as a new paradigm related to working life in social sciences. As research on the issue continues, the benefits of the concept for organizations, employees and employers are determined and scientific interest in spirituality-based approaches and practices is increasing in the context of the humanization of working life. This study aims to determine whether workplace spirituality of the employees working in tourism establishments differs according to demographic variables. In this context, quantitative research methods were employed and a total of 393 tourism employees were surveyed by using random sampling method. As a result of the study, a statistically significant difference was revealed in the participants' evaluation of workplace spirituality in terms of marital status, job position, income level, work experience, and educational background while no significant difference was found in terms of age, gender and tourism education.

Key words: Business life, Spirituality, Workplace spirituality

INTRODUCTION

In management theories that aim to get the highest productivity from people, the understanding that proposes challenge to managers has already been abandoned. The search for new formulas continues for managers who seek more than what is offered by the currently applied methods from the zero hierarchy that will “make them want to do” to participatory management approaches. One of the methods put forward in this framework and matured is the workplace spirituality approach, which suggests that spirituality should be considered as a management tool (Berzah and Çakır 2015). Research shows that managers, leaders and employees expect much more than economic returns in the workplace (Leigh, 1997: 28; Heaton et. al., 2004: 63; Fairholm, 1996: 11). Problems, risks and worries that undermine the trust environment

³Professor Akın Aksu Akdeniz, University Faculty of Tourism

⁴Assistant Professor Ömür Uçar Giresun, University Faculty of Tourism

⁵Associate Professor Rüya Ehtiyar Akdeniz, University Faculty of Tourism

such as increasing competition in business life, stress, mobbing and job loss can both disturb the employer and the workforce. If a healthy and decent working life is desired by the parties, it is inevitable to apply to spiritual and moral values within the scope of the humanization of working life (Seyyar, 2009: 42). As a matter of fact, for the last 15 years, research has been determining the benefits of the concept to organizations, employees and employers, and in this context, scientific interest in spirituality-oriented approaches and practices has been increasing in the context of the humanization of working life (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003, Mitroff and Denton 1999, Gavin and Mason 2004, Ashmos and Duchon, 2000), Badrinarayanan and Madhavaram, 2008).

In addition to a favourable organizational climate, the meaning of workplace spirituality covers values that are considered sacred by the noble, great people in the organizational environment. Organizational spirituality is a phenomenon that makes the abstract aspects of employees' working life meaningful (Çakıroğlu et al. 2018).

The concept of spirituality covers beliefs and practices that involve individuals' investing and strengthening their internal value judgments and make life more meaningful. When the concept of spirituality is considered or taken into consideration for the business world, organizational spirituality finds a meaning as workplace spirituality or business spirituality (Akgemici et al. 2018). There is a lack of consensus among researchers over the definition of spirituality (Igbal and Hassan, 2016). In this study, it will be considered as the concept of workplace spirituality.

According to Seyyar (2009: 44), spirituality in the organizational dimension is the entire values accepted in labour relations and organizations. Dehler and Welsh (2003: 114), on the other hand, describe organizational spirituality as a search for meaning, in-depth recognition of self and/or progression to a higher level. The meaning of workplace spirituality covers the concepts of personal development, reliability and generosity, learning, responsibility, search for truth and meaning, reaching a high purpose, and mercy in working life (Freshman, 1999: 321). In this context, workplace spirituality requires people to establish a common conscience for a workplace that will enable them to establish a heartfelt relationship, show respect and sincere care for each other, develop reliable relationships and nurture this relationship (Neal and Biberman, 2003: 364). Similarly, Poole reveals that the workplace spirituality approach suggests evaluating employees not only with their bodies and minds, but also with their souls in the production process. According to Poole, if the approach of spirituality is adopted in the workplace, it is inevitable to have positive tangible results. As a matter of fact, this new approach from the west promises to turn problems into profit.

As a matter of fact, empirical and theoretical research on this issue and how spirituality works and affects the individual outcomes of the staff and organizational implications are extensively increasing (Daniel 2012). Fry (2003: 703) states that there are many studies showing that organizations with a strong spiritual structure are more productive, flexible and creative. Organizational spirituality increases the managerial

strength of the organization and promotes leadership and organizational competitiveness and performance (Mitroff and Denton, 1999, Neal 1997, Pandey and Gupta 2008, Rego, Cunha and Oliveira 2008).

When employees have the opportunity to use their spiritual values as they perform their tasks, their creativity increases and this makes them happy and more satisfied in their workplace (Mehran, 2017). Wainaina et al. (2014)'s research results indicate a significant positive relationship between workplace spirituality and organizational commitment. In their study, Neck and Milliman (1994) have found that spirituality affects organizational performance positively. Creativity, satisfaction, team performance and also organizational commitment will increase in organizations that promote spirituality (Fanggidae et al., 2015; Mousa and Alas, 2016; Litzsey, 2006; Luis Daniel, 2010). Similarly, workplace spirituality increases the level of employees' work engagement (Van der Walt's, 2017). Beehner and Blackwell (2016)'s research suggests that the increase in workplace spirituality decreases employee turnover rate. Lowder (2011) puts forward that developing spirituality in the workplace guarantees a variety of outcomes related to organizational performance including high productivity, increased job satisfaction, high endorsement rates, positive ethical values, better attendance rates and high customer satisfaction. (cited in Berzah and Çakır 2015). For example, a study by Georgeanne Lamont has revealed that absenteeism and disease rates are much lower in the employees of spirit-friendly companies such as Happy Computers, Bayer UK, Nat West IMG, Microsoft UK, Scott Bader and Peach Personnel. Broadway Tires, a European company, has managed to reduce the absenteeism rate from 25-30% to 2-3% thanks to such spiritual practices (Berzah and Çakır, 2015). Barack (1999) believes that by creating an atmosphere of trust in the workplace, spirituality can be used as a tool to increase employee's commitment. Reave (2005)'s summary table demonstrating the relationship between spiritual values and variables such as understanding, tolerance, motivation, satisfaction, preservation, ethics and organizational citizenship behaviour is extremely striking. Similarly, Kazemipour et al. (2012) has found a positive relationship between workplace spirituality, organizational citizenship and organizational commitment. Spirituality is based on three principles (Igbal and Hassan, 2016), which are meaningful work or the aim of the work (individual level), having a sense of solidarity (group level), being in line with the values and mission of the organization (organizational level). Fig.1 shows the conceptualizations of workplace spirituality with these dimensions (Mehran, 2017). Milliman et al. (2003) examined the dimensions of organizational spirituality in three meaningful dimensions. These can be listed as meaningful work, having a sense of solidarity, and being in line with organizational values.

Meaningful work (at individual level)	Having a sense of solidarity (at the group level)	In line with the values and mission of the organization (at the organizational level)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy working • Energy from work • A sense of meaning and purpose of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling connected with colleagues • Partners support of each other • Common purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with the organization's goals • Link with organizational values • The organization's consideration towards the staff

Fig. 1: The dimension of spirituality in the workplace (Milliam et al., 2003)

Meaningful Work: It gives employees a sense of purpose and meaning in the workplace. In other words, the work means something for the person. (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Guillory, 2001; Milliman et al., 2003, Fry, 2005). The work is claimed to be the most fundamental element in explaining spirituality. Therefore, employees' questions like "what is my purpose in working in this job?", "where does this work lead me?" explain this dimension of workplace spirituality (Örgeç and Günalan, 2011).

Sense of Solidarity: Workplace spirituality is a framework which establishes the organizational culture that includes organizational values which give and facilitate the feelings of joy and belonging that employees share with each other. In this context, spirituality gives employees a sense of commitment and community (Karakaş, 2010).

Being in Line with the Organizational Values: This dimension refers to being in harmony with the organizational values within the organizational culture, corporate values, having a strong awareness and a work ethic based on the organizational values. All the dynamics described above are also very closely related to tourism establishments, a very important branch of the service sector. As stated by Schmitt and Chan (1998), achieving high efficiency in the sector is only possible with qualified personnel who are identified with the establishment. This is because the fact that tourism employees feel happy in their work and whether they are motivated or not can have an impact on their overall work behaviour and affect their performance at work. In addition, organizations now need employees who make contributions beyond expectations in order to make organizations more sustainable and achieve their goals. However, employees' willingness to perform their duties and their abilities are not sufficient for the continuity of the establishments alone. A mutual strong emotional connection between the employees and the enterprise is necessary for the growth of the enterprises (Bolat and Bolat 2008: 76). This is because the need for the man and hence the labour force is not only economic/material but also spiritual. The labour force employed in today's working life and labour market cannot adequately meet these spiritual needs, alienates, loses the meaning of life and work, and sometimes does not even realize these needs in an intense, excessive and monotonous work order. Although a significant number of employees work and earn money, they cannot be

happy enough, they feel the need to question their work, and they desire a job in which they assign meaning and find peace (Seyyar and Evkaya, 2015).

From this point of view, the study aims to determine whether employees' perceptions of workplace spirituality differ by demographic characteristics. In this context, the main question of the study is as follows: "Do the demographic characteristics (gender, marital status, age, educational background, work experience, job position, etc.) of the individuals involved in the study differentiate their perceptions of workplace spirituality?". It is hoped that the study will ensure the awareness of employees' perceptions of workplace spirituality and provide some clues about managing employees with different demographic characteristics in different ways.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Quantitative research methods were used in the analysis of the data of this study which aimed to determine whether there were differences in tourism employees' perceptions of workplace spirituality based on their demographic characteristics such as gender, marital status, age and educational background. SPSS 22.0 program was used to statistically analyse the data obtained in the study. Descriptive statistics were shown as mean and standard deviation for the quantitative variables determined through measure, and as numbers and percentages for the ones determined through counting. Firstly, Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to assess whether the data was normally distributed or not. As a result of the tests, it was concluded that the data showed normal distribution and parametric tests were used in statistical analysis. T-test was used in pairwise comparisons between two categorical variables such as gender and marital status, and variance analysis was used to determine the differences between three or more categorical variables such as income.

The universe of the research consists of tourism enterprises (hotels and travel agencies) operating in Antalya. In order to reach a higher number of data, convenience sampling method was preferred. In this context, face-to-face surveys were conducted with 393 people from April to October 2018, but 368 of these surveys were considered to be usable. Bryman and Cramer (2001) stated that it would be sufficient if the number of samples was at least 5 times the number of the items included in the survey (cited in Delice and Ergene, 2015: 64). There were a total of 21 items in the survey in the context of this research. Therefore, it is believed that the number of the samples is sufficient.

"Workplace Spirituality Scale" used in the study was developed by Ashmos and Duchon (2000) and adapted by Milliman et al. (2003) for their study. The scale includes sub-dimensions of meaningful work, having a sense of solidarity, and being in line with organizational values and consists of a total of three sub-dimensions and twenty-one items. The scale is entirely comprised of attitude expressions and 7-point Likert-type scale was used to measure these items (1- Strongly Disagree, 7-Strongly

Agree). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the workplace spirituality scale was found to be 0.948. Sadykova and Tutar (2014) determined the KMO value of the scale as ,882 in their validity analysis. Since the validity test of the scale was done before, it was not repeated.

Findings

Table 1 demonstrates that there was no statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the gender of the participants, 66,6% of whom were male ($p > 0.05$).

Table 1: Independent Samples T Test Results according to Gender

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	P
Workplace spirituality	Female	128	5,15	1,13	-0,289	0,773
	Male	240	5,18	1,10		

Table 2 indicates that there was a statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the marital status of the participants, 52% of whom were married ($p < 0,05$). Married participants had higher evaluations of workplace spirituality than single ones.

Table 2: Independent Samples T Test Results according to Marital Status

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	P
Workplace spirituality	Single	175	5,04	1,12	-2,319	0,021
	Married	190	5,30	1,07		

As revealed in Table 3, 45,6% of the participants received tourism education. No statistically significant difference was found in the evaluations of workplace spirituality based on whether the participants received tourism education or not ($p > 0,05$).

Table 3: Independent Samples T Test Results according to Tourism Education

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	P
Workplace spirituality	Yes	168	5,29	1,04	1,951	0,052
	No	199	5,07	1,15		

According to Table 4, there was a statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the educational background of the participants ($p < 0,05$). The individuals with postgraduate education had the highest evaluations and the ones with associate degree had the lowest.

Table 4: Anova (F) Test Results according to Educational Background

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
Workplace spirituality	Primary School	55	5,20	1,12	3,190	0,014
	High School	138	5,10	1,22		
	Associate degree	46	4,92	1,31		
	Bachelor's degree	107	5,20	0,84		
	Postgraduate degree	17	5,99	0,50		
	Total	363	5,16	1,11		

Table 5 shows that there was no statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the age ranges of the participants. ($P > 0.05$)

Table 5: Anova (F) Test Results according to Age Range

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
Workplace spirituality	20 years and below	17	4,63	1,38	1,615	0,171
	21-30	148	5,13	1,12		
	31-40	134	5,19	1,03		
	41-50	55	5,37	1,18		
	Above 50	14	5,38	0,96		
	Total	368	5,17	1,11		

As can be seen in Table 6, there was a statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the work experience of the participants ($p < 0.05$). The highest evaluation was for the individuals with work experience of 10 years or more and the lowest was for the ones with work experience of 1 year or less. Based on Table 6, it can be suggested that as the work experience of the participants increased, so did their workplace spirituality.

Table 6: Anova (T) Test Results according to Work Experience

Work experience		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
Workplace spirituality	1 year and less	43	4,87	1,22	3,816	0,01
	2-5 years	116	4,99	1,17		
	6-9 years	94	5,33	1,00		
	10 years and more	115	5,34	1,03		
	Total	368	5,17	1,11		

According to Table 7, 73.3% of the participants had an income of 1501-2500 TL. There was a statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the income level of the participants ($p < 0.05$). The highest evaluation was for those with an income of 4501 TL and above, and the lowest was for the ones who had an income of 1501-2500 TL. According to Table 7, it is clear that as the income level of the participants increased, their workplace spirituality did, too.

Table 7: Anova (F) Test Results according to Income Level

Income level		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
Workplace spirituality	1501-2500 TL	270	5,10	1,17	3,776	0,011
	2501-3500 TL	64	5,19	0,95		
	3501-4500 TL	14	5,52	0,77		
	4501 TL and more	20	5,89	0,53		
	Total	368	5,17	1,11		

Table 8 indicates that there was a statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality according to the job positions of the participants in the workplace ($p < 0,05$). The highest evaluations belonged to the managers and the lowest ones belonged to the workers. According to Table 8, it was found that as the job position of the participants increased, their workplace spirituality did, too.

Table 8: Anova (F) Test Results according to Job Position

Job Position		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	P
Workplace spirituality	Worker	247	5,08	1,18	5,814	0,003
	Supervisor	89	5,22	0,96		
	Manager	32	5,77	0,62		
	Total	368	5,17	1,11		

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The approach of workplace spirituality, which proposes a management based on spirituality for employers and managers with the promise of achieving tangible results such as higher productivity, more profits, and decrease in employee problems, reminds employees of the sanctity of work and working and promises to seek and reach happiness by trying to understand the meaning of its existence. When the main problem areas of tourism sector are examined, conditions of layoffs, company downsizing, changes caused by competition, stress and burnout experienced by the employees who have to work harder for less wages, job dissatisfaction, increasing employee turnover etc. are frequently observed. This situation prevents a significant part of the employees from being happy and makes them feel the need to question the work they do, thus leading to low productivity and performance in the workplace.

One of the most important arguments in providing service quality in hospitality and travel establishments is labour. Therefore, it is extremely important to create highly motivated and committed employees in the sector and to keep them in business. At this point, it is possible to get the optimum benefit from human resources (labour force) and increase organizational performance thanks to spirituality-oriented managerial practices and business approach. Therefore, workplace spirituality is one of the important issues that need to be emphasized. The scarcity of the scientific studies on "workplace spirituality" in Turkey has been the motive for this study. Whether demographic factors have any effect on tourism employees' perceptions of organizational dynamics has been an issue focused on by the researchers in the relevant literature. In this study, whether the demographic characteristics (gender, marital status, age, educational background, work experience, position held, etc.) of the individuals working in hospitality and travel establishments made a difference in their perceptions of workplace spirituality was determined. The research results can be specified as follows.

- ✓ There was no statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the gender of the participants. This situation shows that male and female employees had similar perceptions of workplace spirituality.
- ✓ There was a statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the marital status of the participants. Married participants had higher workplace spirituality evaluations than single ones.
- ✓ There was no statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the tourism education of the participants.
- ✓ There was a statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the educational background of the participants.

The individuals with postgraduate education had the highest evaluations and the ones with associate degree had the lowest. In our study, it was found that employees with postgraduate education had significantly higher workplace spirituality compared to the ones with associate degree education. Considering that the opinions about workplace spirituality get more positive as the education level increases, the situation in the tourism sector should be re-questioned by the managers, the improvement efforts should be accelerated and research should be conducted on the issue.

- ✓ There was no statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the age ranges of the participants. This shows that the employees in different age ranges had similar perceptions of workplace spirituality.
- ✓ There was a statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the work experience of the participants. The highest evaluation was for the individuals with work experience of 10 years or more and the lowest was for the ones with work experience of 1 year or less. It can

be claimed that as the work experience of the participants increased, so did their workplace spirituality.

- ✓ There was a statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality in terms of the income level of the participants. It is seen that as the income level of the participants increased, their workplace spirituality increased as well. This result shows that better wages can be effective in increasing workplace spirituality.
- ✓ There was a statistically significant difference in the evaluations of workplace spirituality according to the job positions of the participants in the workplace. The highest evaluation belonged to the managers and the lowest one belonged to the workers. It was revealed that as the job position of the participants increased, their workplace spirituality increased, too.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY, FUTURE STUDIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TOURISM ENTERPRISES

The most important limitation of the study is that it consisted only of people working in five-star hospitality and travel establishments. Another limitation is that it was conducted only in the Antalya region. Future studies can be carried out in different regions, different hospitality and travel establishments, and comparisons can be made. In addition, it may be useful to re-conduct the study in different cultures and establishments to be able to interpret broadly.

It is hoped that the study will ensure the awareness of employees' perceptions of workplace spirituality and provide some clues about managing employees with different demographic characteristics in different ways. In this context, it is believed that the development of management strategies for demographic characteristics that differentiate hospitality and travel employees' perceptions of workplace spirituality will affect the performance and productivity of the establishments positively. In addition, the study is expected to contribute to the literature by being a resource for the research to be conducted on the effects of the concept of workplace spirituality.

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