The Effects of Spiritual Leadership on Employees' Corporate Reputation and Mediating Effect of Organizational Sacralization: A Resource Conservation Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Although corporate reputation studies are considered the most important intangible resource for organizations that have increased in the last 20 years, it is stated that they have not reached sufficient maturity in the context of internal stakeholders and especially within the scope of antecedents. Therefore, this study aims to quantitatively measure the mediating effect of organizational sacralization on the effect of spiritual leadership behaviors on employees' perceptions of corporate reputation based on the assumption that leadership behaviors are the leading actors of values and radical perceptual changes in organizations. A quantitative research method was used in the study. Research data were collected from 538 white-collar employees. The data were analyzed using SPSS 27.0 and AMOS 26.0. According to the results of the analysis, spiritual leadership behaviors positively affect employees' perceptions of corporate reputation and organizational sacralization. In addition, organizational sacralization partially mediates the effect of spiritual leadership on the corporate reputation context of resource conservation theory. This research is the first study to determine that employees' corporate reputation can be increased through spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization in the context of resource conservation theory. In addition, the relationship between organizational sacralization and other concepts was tested for the first time in this study.

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Resource-based theory posits that organizational competitive advantage and sustainability depend on valuable, rare, and inimitable resources (Keskin et al., 2016). Corporate reputation, considered a critical intangible resource (Abimbola & Vallaster, 2007), provides a competitive advantage when it is positive (Roberts & Dowling, 2002) and affects organizational performance and consumer behavior (Bartikowski et al., 2011; Caruana & Ewing, 2010; Yoon et al., 1993). Academic interest in corporate reputation has surged in the last two decades (Şengüllendi & Şehitoğlu, 2021), and it has been studied in various areas related to critical parameters.

Research links corporate reputation to financial performance (Fryxell & Wang, 1994), image and communication (Gray & Balmer, 1998), and organizational identity (Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). Positive corporate reputation correlates with higher innovative work performance, innovation behavior, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, and lower turnover intentions among employees (Babić-Hodović & Arslanagić-Kalajdžić, 2019; Deniz, 2020; Esenyel, 2019; Frare & Beuren, 2021; Javed et al., 2020; Jawad et al., 2023; Mehtap & Kokalan, 2013). It is stated that employees who perceive their organizations as more reputable have increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment and find their organizations more attractive (Backhaus et al., 2002; Carmeli & Tishler, 2005; Glavas & Godwin, 2013). The perception of their organizations as reputable also leads employees to exhibit higher levels of innovative behaviors and extra-role behaviors (Smidts et al., 2001). In line with the knowledge that employees play a critical role as external representatives of the corporate brand, a positive employee reputation positively impacts organizational sustainability (Helm, 2007). Another important point is that perceived corporate reputation has a positive effect on performance, and therefore, this effect can be used as a strategic resource (Nguyen et al., 2021; Pham & Tran, 2020). In addition to all these, although it is stated that the perception of corporate reputation is a strategic resource for organizations, not enough studies have been conducted on this issue (Da Camara, 2013).

In studies on employees' corporate reputation, some researchers have specifically mentioned the lack of research on the antecedents of the concept (Ali et al., 2013). Corporate reputation is one of the most important resources for an organization (Singh & Misra, 2021). The most significant role and responsibility in forming and managing organizational resources belongs to leaders (Grojean et al., 2004). In this direction, studies in the literature examine the relationship between leadership and corporate reputation. In particular, ethical, authentic, strategic, and transformational leadership styles have been found to have positive effects on corporate reputation, as evidenced in studies by Kızıl and Naktiyok (2019), Men and Stacks (2013), Naktiyok (2019), Onakoya et al. (2018), and Zhu (2014). There is no research examining the relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation. Spiritual leadership differs from other types of leadership in that it has both a value-oriented and meaning-oriented theoretical basis. Spiritual leadership focuses on ethical and moral values by including the dimensions of calling and membership to meet the spiritual needs of leaders and followers (Fry, 2003; Fry et al., 2005). In this respect, although it includes similar ethical values found in other leadership theories, it aims to increase spiritual well-being in the organization, which is not found in other leadership theories (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Reave, 2005). Spiritual leadership has similarities with ethical leadership, authentic leadership, strategic

leadership, and transformational leadership, which have been investigated in relation to organizational reputation. However, spiritual leadership is based on enabling employees to find a more profound sense of meaning and community rather than being a moral role model (Ferguson & Milliman, 2008). In addition, altruistic love refers to the leader's unconditional concern for self and others, and unlike other leadership models, this value is considered a central element of spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003). It is also notable that spiritual leadership, categorized as a 5th generation style (Fairholm, 2011), is characterized by its value-oriented nature that integrates elements from other established leadership styles (Fry, 2003). Spiritual leadership has a unique paradigm compared to other leadership approaches in that it focuses on employees' spiritual well-being and finding meaning in their work lives. Research by Avolio and Gardner (2005), Brown and Treviño (2006), Fry (2003), and Reave (2005) highlight how spiritual leadership differs from ethical, servant, transformational, and authentic leadership approaches. Spiritual leadership builds on values common to many leadership theories (e.g., integrity, trust, and inspiration) but places these values in a more profound spiritual context. Spiritual leadership makes an important contribution to the literature by emphasizing the power of leadership to give meaning to employees' lives and connect organizational success with spiritual values (Samul, 2024). Despite its solid theoretical foundation, the influence of spiritual leadership on corporate reputation remains an unexplored facet within current research.

Spiritual leadership is hypothesized to positively influence corporate reputation by focusing on holistic well-being, values, and a sense of belonging. However, this can also be achieved through organizational sacralization; as Conger (1994) states, "workplaces have become the social structure in which most people spend most of their time, and workplaces, because of this situation, satisfy the existential needs of their employees by satisfying them spiritually. Based on his knowledge, this can also be achieved through organizational sacralization. Organizational sacralization is a new concept, and, like many assumptions underlying some management theories, it emerged from the institutionalization of Protestant ethics (Dyck & Schroeder, 2005). Organizational sacralization is the process of sacralizing the values that lead an individual to join an organization in line with their search for meaning by attributing them to an entity within the organization and gaining legitimacy through this sacralization of the organization by being approved by external stakeholders (Harrison et al., 2009). As a result of organizational sacralization, organizational members believe that the sacredness of the organization is now the only factor that distinguishes it from other organizations. Organizational sacralization, which is related to the cultural management of internal stakeholders, is crucial. The shift from materialism to spirituality in management emphasizes organizations' search for meaning and creates significant values (Harrison et al., 2009).

Türkiye has a social structure with culturally conservative values, which also affects management approaches in the workplace (Bayighomog & Araslı, 2019; Tutar & Oruç, 2020). Turkish employees' search for meaning, sense of belonging to the community, and the need to work harmoniously with organizational values are important in Turkish work culture (Bayighomog & Araslı, 2019). Investigating how spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization can influence employees' perceptions of corporate reputation has important implications for Türkiye's organizational culture. First, given the high-stress levels, mobbing, and alienation in Turkish workplaces (Tutar & Oruç, 2020), spiritual leadership can improve organizational climate by reducing such problems. Moreover, the value systems of Turkish

society based on strong community and belonging ties are in harmony with the sense of community dimension offered by spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization. This increases the likelihood of employees in Türkiye adopting spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization practices. In countries like Türkiye, where social ties are important in business life, further examination of the impact of spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization may help employees see their organizations as more meaningful and valuable thanks to their theoretical background based on building strong ties with employees. In this context, this study aims to investigate the impact of spiritual leadership on corporate reputation by examining the potential mediating role of organizational sacralization. The study's originality lies in uncovering significant relationships that theoretically and practically contribute to the field.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development
Spiritual Leadership and Corporate Reputation

Numerous leadership models have been developed in the literature, all aimed at influencing employees to change perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors for organizational advancement (Yukl, 2010). Fairholm (2011) categorizes leadership styles into five generations, with the 4th and 5th generations focusing on "value" orientation in leadership behaviors. The 4th generation emphasizes leaders' thoughts and values, while the 5th generation prioritizes the holistic well-being of the organization, employees, and leaders. Ethical, authentic, servant, interactionist, and transformational leadership fall under Generation 4, while spiritual leadership is classified under Generation 5.

Research highlights the positive impact of leadership behaviors on employees' perceptions of corporate reputation (Dowling, 2004). For example, Men and Stacks (2013) examine the effects of transactional and transformational leadership on corporate reputation, finding that transformational leadership positively affects employees' perceptions directly and indirectly through empowerment. In another study, Men (2014) explores the impact of authentic leadership and transparent communication on corporate reputation, emphasizing the role of authentic leaders in shaping positive employee perceptions. Zhu (2014) investigates the mediating effects of managerial competencies on the relationship between managerial values, ethical leadership, and corporate reputation, highlighting the role of leaders in shaping organizational culture. With commonalities to ethical, authentic, transactional, and transformational leadership, spiritual leadership focuses on values, moral modeling, altruism, followers' dignity, and inspiration. Javed et al. (2020) reported that responsible leadership positively affects employees' perceptions of corporate reputation and that corporate reputation mediates the relationship between responsible leadership and financial performance. Javad et al. (2023) conducted a study on 11,901 female employees working in 100 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). They found that corporate reputation strengthens the relationship between leadership support and innovative work behavior. In a study conducted by Yazici and Öztırak (2023) on 405 healthcare employees in Türkiye using cluster analysis, it was concluded that organizational culture has a mediating role in the effect of charismatic leadership on corporate reputation. Despite the parallels with other leadership styles, there is a gap in the literature regarding the direct or indirect testing of the impact of spiritual leadership behaviors on employees' perceptions of corporate reputation. This study addresses this gap, considering

spiritual leadership within the framework of the conservation of resources theory, which emphasizes individuals' efforts to obtain, protect, and increase personal, social, and environmental resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Unlike traditional models, spiritual leadership protects and develops resources by emphasizing intrinsic motivations and values, contributing to employees' search for meaning and personal development.

H1: Spiritual leadership positively affects corporate reputation.

Spiritual Leadership and Organizational Sacralization

Organizational sacralization has three dimensions. The first of these is the "seeking meaning" dimension, which is based on existential concerns. It pushes individuals to the organization in line with their search for meaning by receiving signals from the institutional environment and the organization and keeping them in the organization. The concept of organizational sacralization explains this dimension in the context of normative control theory. In this dimension, individual ideals, values, and goals enable the individual to stay in the organization. After joining an organization in their professional lives, individuals receive the first signals about organizational functioning and culture from their managers. At this point, individual-organization fit comes into play. Individual-organization fit is defined as the mutual compatibility between the values of the individual and the organization (Carless, 2005). Most studies have based individual-organization fit on "values" (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Chatman, 1989). The degree of similarity between individual values and organizational values increases this fit. Some studies in the literature show that leadership behaviors affect individual-organization fit (Boon & Biron, 2016; Jung & Takeuch, 2014; Kerse, 2021; Seong & Choi, 2019; Tremblay et al., 2017).

The second dimension of organizational sacralization is "providing meaning". With the factor of providing meaning in the sacralization process, organizations impose whatever is sacred in the organization (symbol, person, behavior, ideal, goal) in accordance with the etymology of the concept of "sacred" (unchangeability, non-negotiability, extreme respect) in the whole or a determined part of the organization. The important point at this stage is that the "values" that bring individuals together with the organization are embedded in the foundation of the sacralized entity(ies). At the stage of providing meaning, what is sacralized becomes the most fundamental and deeply meaningful value of the organizational culture. Studies in the literature (Adla et al., 2020; Day & Hudson, 2011) show that the inspirations of leaders' beliefs and/or personal values are related to organizational values.

The third dimension of organizational sacralization is " Legitimating Meaning ". In this dimension, what the organization calls sacred is legitimized by the institutional environment. With the dimension of legitimating meaning, the organization achieves "existence" and "acceptance" by the institutional environment through its sacredness. The organization's sacredness is compatible with social values and gives the organization identity and prestige. Organizational managers and employees carry traces of the society they live in in every aspect of their lives. Since leaders and employees live in the same society, it is thought that leader behaviors will affect employees' perceptions of the legitimacy of the organization by the institutional environment. This indirect interaction cycle can be discussed in the context of resource conservation theory, social learning theory, higher echelons theory or leader-member interaction theories.

As organizations increasingly face turbulent environments and intense competition, they are turning to normative control systems (ideals, values, beliefs) to achieve organizational goals, encouraging participation and replacing hierarchy with ideology to influence employees' thoughts and actions (Harrison et al., 2009). Spiritual leadership behaviors are based on spirituality (Fry, 2003). In this context, spiritual leadership behaviors can be considered to facilitate organizational sacralization and positively affect employees' perceptions of organizational sacralization in the context of "conservation of resources theory". According to this theory, the communication between employees and their leaders is based on factors such as values, attitudes, personality traits, and expectations of both parties (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). The quality and intensity of communication ensure that the resources of both parties are protected and expectations are met. While leaders expect high performance from their employees, they expect social support, promotion, and attention in return.

When this theory is considered in the context of the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization, it is predicted that the vision, hope/belief, and altruism behaviors of the leaders in the spiritual leadership model will positively affect organizational sscralization, which has a positive effect on the employees' individual search for meaning, their acquisition of belief, and the acceptance of the organization they work for by the society, and their perceptions in this direction at the point of providing meaning/calling and instilling membership consciousness through individual and organizational values. In light of the information and theoretical predictions explained above,

H2: Spiritual leadership positively affects organizational sacralization.

Organizational Sacralization and Corporate Reputation

According to Olmedo-Cifuentes et al. (2014), there are factors such as organizational culture and ethical decisions for managing corporate reputation from the employees' perspective. It is stated that good management of these factors by the organization will increase the organizational reputation of employees. These factors are also thought to be related to the concept of organizational sacralization. What the concept of "sacred" adds to the management literature is how basic organizational elements such as identity (who are we?), culture and ideology (what do we value and believe in?) and strategy (what are our goals and how do we achieve them?) are perceived, thought and exhibited in the organization (Harrison et al., 2009).

The internalization of common values and norms in organizational culture by employees and their perception as integrated with the organization positively affect employees' perceptions of corporate reputation (Olmedo-Cifuentes et al., 2014). The "seeking meaning" and "providing meaning" dimensions of organizational sacralization are related to the structure, values and norms of the organization. Therefore, it is thought that organizational sacralization may be related to organizational reputation.

Although whether an organization behaves in an ethical manner is considered an aspect of culture, most researchers treat ethics as a reputational dimension in its own right. Business ethics can be defined as 'the set of moral principles and standards that guide behavior in business' (Dahlin, 2007) or 'the study of business situations, activities and decisions that address issues of right and wrong' (Crane & Matten, 2004). The ethics of a business is related to its legitimacy and credibility, which builds trust among stakeholders; consequently, business

should not only behave as prescribed by law but also develop a moral conscience. In the category of ethics, transparency, clear commitment of top management to ethical practice, active prevention of corruption and fraud, and evidence of the promotion of ethical behavior among employees are ethics-related indicators of the perception of the organization as reputable from the perspective of employees (Olmedo-Cifuentes et al., 2014). Ethical values may be related to the concept of organizational sacralization. One of the reasons that pushes the individual to work in the organization is the concern for existence. When considered in this context, it is unthinkable that individuals would want to work in organizations that do not show ethical behaviors.

In addition, pride in organizational membership will increase when individuals who join the organization in search of individual meaning perceive the harmony between their own values and organizational values. Helm (2011) stated that pride in organizational membership will positively affect employees' perceptions of corporate reputation. However, the unethical behaviors of the organization will negatively affect the last step of organizational sacralization, which is the stage of gaining legitimacy by the institutional environment in the context of the organization's sacrality. Because organizations that resort to organizational sacralization are considered to position themselves in a different place from their peers (Harrison et al., 2009). Pandey et al. (2015), in their study of 150 managers and team members working in 24 different organizations in India, concluded that leaders' spiritual connections do not directly impact teams' perceptions of spiritual climate. This deficiency can be overcome by the fact that organizational sacralization is based on the process of perceiving the norms, values, and activities of an organization as "sacred" or "highly significant," which theoretically can create a stronger sense of organizational belonging on employees, and ensures that the activities of the organization are associated with a high purpose or value (Şengüllendi & Şehitoğlu, 2023). Therefore, the hypothesis that organizational sacralization will affect employees' perceptions of corporate reputation is discussed in the context of resource conservation theory. In this hypothesis of the research, one of the parties in the context of the reciprocity principle of this theory is the organization, and the other is the employees. By engaging in organizational sacralization, the organization supports employees in meeting their meaning-seeking needs through its sacrality, allows employees to work in an organization that has common values with their own values, and makes employees feel like they are part of a more sacred whole. It is thought that the return of providing such important factors for employees by the organization will be that employees perceive their organizations as more reputable. In light of this information and theoretical predictions,

H3: Organizational sacralization positively affects corporate reputation.

Spiritual Leadership, Organizational Sacralization and Corporate Reputation
The transition from materialism to spirituality, as seen in the field of management in recent years, is characterized by a paradigm shift. This new focus responds to the individual search for meaning and purpose of employees in organizational life (Narcıkara, 2017, p. 123). In organizations where spiritual leadership behaviors are seen, it is stated that organizations are more profitable and employees show higher performance, as advocated by spiritual leadership theory and stated in empirical studies (Narcıkara, 2017). According to the spiritual leadership

theory, the dimensions of spiritual leadership such as altruism, hope/belief, and visioning behaviors, enable employees to develop a sense of commitment (membership) to their organizations. Altruism, hope/belief, and visioning behaviors also enable employees to find purpose and meaning in their organizations (Pandey & Gupta, 2008). Employees who find meaning and purpose in their organizations and develop a sense of commitment to their organizations are expected to perceive their organizations as more reputable.

Organizational sacralization theory is based on pragmatism (Harrison et al., 2009). While the organization becomes a part of a more sacred whole at both the organizational and employee levels thanks to its sacredness, it also wants to be approved by the corporate environment and gain a competitive advantage. In other words, there is a perception and effort for transcendence at both employee and organizational levels.

There is no research in the literature that directly examines the relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation. It is thought that organizational sacralization can explain the relationship between these two variables. Because it is stated that employees' perceptions of corporate reputation can also be shaped through interaction with external stakeholders. In other words, it is seen that factors such as organizational structure, organizational culture, and ethics, as stated by Olmedo-Cifuentes et al. (2014), are internal organizational factors that affect employees' perceptions of reputation. However, Kattara et al. (2008), Kennedy (1977), and Susskind et al. (2007) stated that employees' perceptions of corporate reputation can also be shaped through their interactions with external stakeholders. At this point, the legitimization of meaning, one of the dimensions of organizational sacralization, is related to the way the organization is perceived in the institutional environment. Therefore, it is thought that organizational sacralization has a mediating role in the relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation. Spiritual leaders' being employee-oriented and responding to employees' individual search for meaning and purpose will enable employees to perceive their organizations as more reputable with the "sacred/s" in the organization. This triple interaction in the research model can be considered in the context of resource conservation theory. Spiritual leaders' emphasis on values may increase employees' commitment to these values. This commitment may strengthen organizational culture by nurturing organizational sacralization, which in turn may create a positive perception of corporate reputation among employees. In short, in the context of Resource Conservation Theory, spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization may positively affect corporate reputation by supporting individuals' efforts to protect their values. Spiritual leadership creates powerful psychological resources within the organization by enabling employees to give meaning to their work and feel a strong sense of belonging (Fry, 2005). This leadership style allows individuals to see themselves as part of a job and a larger social or ethical mission (Reave, 2005). According to Resource Conservation Theory (RCT), individuals tend to conserve and increase their available resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Organizational sacralization strengthens employees' psychological resources by identifying the organization with ethical values and perceiving it as a sacred or significant structure by employees. These perceptions enable them to make more positive reputation evaluations of their organizations (Pawar, 2016). In light of this information and theoretical predictions;

H4: Organizational sacralization mediates the relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation.
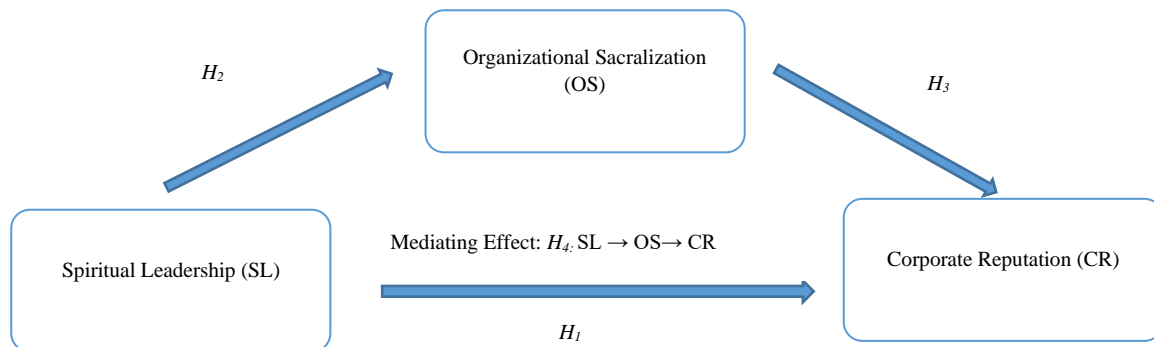
The research model in Figure 1 shows the relationships between spiritual leadership, organizational sacralization, corporate reputation, and the related hypotheses.

Method

A relational survey method was used in this quantitative study, which aims to obtain precise and generalizable results through numerical data. The research design primarily consists of a relational survey that aims to uncover the relationships between multiple variables (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2016, p. 109). The research technique used was a survey, and the sampling technique used was random sampling. The study population consists of employees, and 601 questionnaires were collected from 273 large-scale organizations, including NGOs, private sector companies, and public/local government agencies. Ethics committee approval was first obtained for the study before data collection. Then, along with the ethics committee approval document, an application for permission to collect data was sent via e-mail to the identified NGOs, private sector companies, and public/local government organizations. The questionnaires were collected face-to-face from some organizations that agreed to participate in the study and from others through the online survey link. Large organizations were selected due to their importance in national economies, effective management practices based on division of labor and specialization (Koçel, 2011), and significant efforts to establish a positive corporate reputation (Tuna & Tuna, 2007). 23 incomplete or incorrectly completed questionnaires were excluded from the research, resulting in a total of 578 valid questionnaires. The sectors represented include non-governmental organizations, local governments, and large private sector companies, primarily in the banking, automotive, finance, and logistics sectors. Data was collected through face-to-face and online surveys using random sampling. The procedures outlined in Kotrlik and Higgins (2001) were followed to ensure the representativeness of the collected questionnaires for the population. As a result, it was determined that the 578 questionnaires collected from employees were adequate for the scope of the research.

Scales Used in the Research

The questionnaire employed in this study comprises four sections. The first segment gathers demographic information concerning the organization and participants. The second part

employs Fry's (2003) Spiritual Leadership Scale, encompassing five dimensions and 21 items, to assess participants' perceptions of spiritual leadership. The scale consists of 4 items for the vision dimension, 4 for hope/belief, 5 for altruistic love/altruism, 4 for call/meaning, and 4 for membership. The third section employs a 7-item, single-dimensional scale by Mael and Ashforth (1992) to gauge participants' perceptions of corporate reputation. In the fourth section, the questionnaire utilizes the Organizational Sacralization Scale developed by Şengüllendi and Şehitoğlu (2023) to measure participants' perceptions of organizational sacralization. The scale encompasses three dimensions and 13 items, including 4 items for Seeking Meaning, 4 for Providing Meaning, and 5 for Legitimating Meaning. All scales responses are measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree - 5=Strongly Agree).

Results

In this section, the data set collected from the participants was subjected to validity and reliability tests to determine the suitability of the hypothetical analysis. Then, the hypotheses within the scope of the research model are tested, and the results are reported.

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

The distribution of the participants' age, gender, education level, types of organizations, total work experience, and experience in their current organization are given in this section. The findings are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Profile of the Respondents (n=578)

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	245	42.4
Male	333	57.6
Age (Years)		
18-25	62	10.7
26-33	194	33.6
34-41	170	29.4
42-49	84	14.5
50 or older	68	11.8
Education		
Two-year college	54	9.30
University	341	59.0
Graduate school	183	31.7
Current Firm Tenure (Years)		
0-5	288	49.8
6 or over	290	50.2
Tenure (Years)		
0-10	295	51.0
11 or over	283	49.0
Title		
Senior Manager	55	9.50
Middle Manager	103	17.8
Junior Manager	58	10.0
White-collar (Non-manager)	362	62.6
Firm Type		
Private Sector	211	36.5
Non-governmental organisation	159	27.5
Local Government/Public	208	36.0
Total	578	100

According to Table 1, 57.6% of the participants are male; 33.6% are between the ages of 26-33; 59% have a bachelor's degree; 50.2% have 6 years or more experience in their current organization; 51% have a total work experience of 10 years or less; 62.6% are non-managerial white-collar workers and 36.5% work in the private sector.

Validity and Reliability Analyses

In the study, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was initially conducted on all scales simultaneously. Principal component analysis with Varimax Rotation was applied to assess the appropriateness of the observed items in forming the factor structure. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy test and Bartlett's sphericity test were performed to evaluate the suitability of the given factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010). EFA provides insights into the optimal number of latent variables describing a theoretical construct and the contribution of observed variables to this construct. However, it does not validate the theoretically predicted structure. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) complements EFA by assessing the fit of the theoretical construct with the dataset. Serving as an extension of EFA, CFA tests whether the factor structures derived from EFA align with the covariance matrix representing the observed variables' covariances (Koyuncu & Kılıç, 2019, p. 362). In essence, the structure outlined by EFA needs confirmation through CFA (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 2
EFA, CFA, Reliability and Validity Values

Construct	Items	EFA loadings	CFA loadings	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
Spiritual Leadership	vision3	.77	.66			
	vision4	.72	.87		.89	.68
	vision2	.72	.91			
	vision1	.61	.83			
	hope/faith3	.83	.91			
	hope/faith2	.81	.92		.93	.78
	hope/faith4	.76	.88			
	hope/faith1	.75	.82			
	altruistic4	.81	.89			
	altruistic2	.80	.88			
	altruistic1	.76	.89	.95	.94	.78
	altruistic3	.74	.89			
	altruistic5	.71	.87			
	calling2	.79	.90			
	calling3	.76	.89		.92	.74
	calling1	.69	.73			
	calling4	.67	.90			
	membership3	.75	.88			
	membership1	.73	.91		.93	.78
	membership2	.71	.91			
	membership4	.69	.82			
Organizational Sacralization	LegitimatingMeaning5	.76	.76			
	LegitimatingMeaning3	.76	.83			
	LegitimatingMeaning4	.73	.86		.91	.67
	LegitimatingMeaning2	.68	.81			
	LegitimatingMeaning1	.62	.82			
	ProvidingMeaning1	.80	.58	.92		
	ProvidingMeaning2	.72	.83		.79	.50
	ProvidingMeaning3	.67	.71			
	ProvidingMeaning4	.63	.67			
	SeekingMeaning2	.72	.77			
	SeekingMeaning1	.71	.80		.85	.59
	SeekingMeaning3	.54	.69			

	SeekingMeaning4	.54	.79			
	Reput3	.80	.82			
Corporate	Reput4	.79	.88	.89	.78	.68
Reputation	Reput2	.78	.80			
	Reput1	.71	.79			

For EFA; Principal Component Analysis with Promax Rotation, Total Variance Explained: 77.98; KMO: .95

For CFA; All factor loadings are statistically significant at < .001

CR; Composite Reliability, AVE; Average Variance Extracted

Model Fit: X2/df = 2.67, CFI = .946, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .05, PClose = .01

Based on the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) results, it was observed that items 5, 6, and 7 of the corporate reputation scale formed a distinct factor structure separate from the others, disrupting the intended factor structure. Consequently, these items were excluded from the study (Hair et al., 2010). Subsequent EFA results (Table 2) indicated that the total explained variance exceeded the 50% threshold (77.987%), the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value surpassed the desirable .70 threshold (.95), and Bartlett's test was significant at .001. These findings affirm the suitability of the data for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010). Additionally, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, assessing the internal consistency of the factors, exceeded 0.70 for each factor. To validate the EFA results and assess the reliability of the research scales, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted using the Maximum Likelihood estimation method. The model fit index values were X2/df = 3.19, CFI = .92, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .06, PClose = .000. The PClose value did not meet the specified condition, leading to an examination of modification indices and the removal of error values with high modification values in the same factor (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Post-adjustment, the model fit index values improved to X2/df = 2.67, CFI = .94, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .05, PClose = .01. These final model fit values are considered very good (Gaskin & Lim, 2016; Hu & Bentler, 1999). In CFA, convergent validity was established as all factor loadings were significant based on the theoretically expected factor structures (Bagozzi et al., 1991). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each factor exceeded .50 (Ahmad & Daud, 2016; Berthon et al., 2005; Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and Composite Reliability (CR) values were above .70 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2010).

Correlation Analysis and Discriminant Validity

Correlation analysis examines the relationships between variables, determining their direction and strength (+/- signifies direction, proximity to -1 or +1 indicates strength) (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2016, p. 263). Table 3 displays the correlation coefficients indicating the relationships between the research variables—spiritual leadership, organizational sacralization, and corporate reputation. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Test (HTMT) of inter-factor correlations. A criterion of an inter-factor HTMT ratio below .90 indicates the achievement of discriminant validity between the constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). As depicted in Table 3, the HTMT ratios between constructs were found to be below .90. Thus, it is confirmed that divergent validity has been attained (Gaskin et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 3
Correlation Analysis and Discriminant validity

Construct	Spiritual Leadership	Organizational Sacralization	Corporate Reputation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Spiritual Leadership	1	.52	.66	3.89	.78
Organizational Sacralization	.76	1	.61	3.73	.77
Corporate Reputation	.66	.57	1	3.93	.75

Note. Above the diagonal are the correlation coefficients, below the HTMT values. All correlation coefficients values are statistically significant at $p < .01$.

[Table 3](#) presents the mean and standard deviation values of the research variables. Accordingly, the means of spiritual leadership, organizational sacralization, and corporate reputation scales are 3.89, 3.73, and 3.93, respectively. In addition, the standard deviation values of the scales are .78, .77, .75. [Table 3](#) indicates significant and positive relationships among the variables. There is a statistically significant positive relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation ($r = .61$; $p < .001$). Additionally, a significant positive relationship exists between spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization ($r = .66$; $p < .001$), as well as between organizational sacralization and corporate reputation ($r = .52$; $p < .001$).

Structural Equation Modelling and Hypothesis Testing

Structural equation modeling was used to test the hypotheses of the research model ([Table 4](#)). According to the result of the related analyzes, while spiritual leadership affects corporate reputation positively ($\beta = .58$, $p < .01$). Accordingly, H_1 is supported. In this context, the behavior of spiritual leaders instilling hope, creating a vision and raising membership awareness by making sacrifices on behalf of their followers and through a spiritual call ensures that the followers perceive the institution they work for as the best, most respected institution in the industry and an institution where everyone wants to work. In addition, H_2 is supported because spiritual leadership significantly affects organizational sacralization in a positive way ($\beta = .79$, $p < .001$). It has been observed that organizational sacralization positively and significantly affects corporate reputation ($\beta = .15$, $p < .01$) which means that H_3 is supported.

Table 4
Structural Equation Modelling and Hypothesis Testing

IV		DV	Direct Effect Std β	Indirect Effect[a] Std β	Bias Corrected CI Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Spiritual Leadership	→	Corporate Reputation	.58***	.25**	.07	.25
Spiritual Leadership	→	Organizational Sacralization	.79***			
Organizational Sacralization	→	Corporate Reputation	.15**			

Note. Mediator: Organizational Sacralization. ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$, a: 5000 Bootstrap sample in 95% CI

Model Fit: X2/df = 3.19, CFI = .97, SRMR = .03, RMSEA = .06, PClose = .03

The possible mediator effect of organizational sacralization on the relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation has also been inquired in the research model. The bootstrap method was used to test the relationship and indirect effects were examined among

5000 samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Due to the presence of significant indirect effects with a 95 % reliability level ($\beta_{Reputation}= .25$; $p < .001$), the presence of mediator effect has been concluded. According to these results, organizational sacralization has a mediator effect on spiritual leadership and corporate reputation. Therefore, H4 is supported.

Discussion

The study assesses the mediating role of organizational sacralization in the relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation. H1, which states that spiritual leadership increases employees' perceptions of corporate reputation, was tested. The results show a positive effect, consistent with those observed for values-based leadership styles such as ethical, authentic, and transformational leadership. So, H1 is supported. Leaders who clarify purpose, inspire hope, encourage honest communication, and promote mutual love and respect contribute to employees' perceptions of organizational reputation. Since no research in the literature examines the effect of spiritual leadership on corporate reputation, this finding is a preliminary and original contribution.

H2, proposing that spiritual leadership behaviors positively influence employees' perceptions of organizational sacralization, was supported by linear regression analysis. Organizational sacralization, a significant value embedded in the organization, is shaped by leaders (Grojean et al., 2004). Contextualizing this finding in terms of the research problem, the organizational sacralization model suggests that employees' existential concerns form the basis of their association with and commitment to the organization, which is influenced by the spirituality factor of spiritual leadership. The impact of spiritual leadership on the dimensions of seeking meaning and providing meaning is consistent with the etymology of sacralization and shapes employees' perceptions of the sacred. Another facet is the legitimization of meaning, where the entity recognized as sacred gains legitimacy in the institutional environment, linking spiritual leadership behaviors to legitimizing meaning in the societal context. Because leaders, employees, and constituents coexist in the same society, spiritual leadership may influence organizational sacredness, given the influence of social culture on organizational culture. H3, which states that organizational sacralization increases employees' perceptions of corporate reputation, is supported by linear regression. Internalizing organizational values and perceiving them as integral positively affects corporate reputation, consistent with organizational sacralization, which declares assets as significant values (Harrison et al., 2009; Olmedo-Cifuentes et al., 2014).

After supporting the first three hypotheses, the final hypothesis (H4) on the mediating role of organizational sacralization in the relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation was tested. It was concluded that organizational sacralization mediates the relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation. Spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization enhance employees' perceptions of corporate reputation. Even if managers do not fully exhibit behaviors specific to spiritual leaders, organizational sacralization can partially compensate for the lack of enhancing effect on employees' perceptions of corporate reputation.

This is consistent with resource conservation theory, which posits that organizational sacralization mediates the effect between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation based on reciprocity. Statistical analysis confirms the mediating role of organizational sacralization,

which is supported by resource conservation theory. Positive behaviors of spiritual leaders, combined with organizational sacralization that responds to employees' search for individual meaning, lead employees to perceive their organizations as more prestigious. This reciprocal positive behavior is consistent with resource conservation theory and highlights the interconnectedness of spiritual leadership, organizational sacralization, and employees' positive perceptions of organizational reputation.

The research findings contribute to the theoretical and practical aspects of the relevant variables. The theoretical contributions include filling a gap in the literature on corporate reputation by exploring the concept through internal stakeholders and investigating its antecedents. The study identifies and substantiates the impact of spiritual leadership behaviors on employee perceptions of corporate reputation. Leaders' efforts to create a vision, instill hope, prioritize employees' interests, mentor individual existence, and foster a sense of organizational belonging contribute to more favorable perceptions of the organization.

Conclusion

Existing literature has extensively examined the impact of authentic, transformational, responsible, and transactional leadership styles on corporate reputation (Javed et al., 2020; Men, 2014; Men & Stacks, 2013; Zhu, 2014). Men and Stacks (2013) showed that the impact of transformational leadership on employees is reflected in corporate reputation in direct and indirect ways. Zhu (2014) examined the mediating role of managerial competencies in the relationship between ethical leadership and corporate reputation. However, the impact of spiritual leadership's unique dimensions of altruistic love, calling, and membership on corporate reputation has not been addressed in studies. This study fills this gap in the literature by addressing the direct effects of spiritual leadership and identifying that by enabling employees to find a more profound sense of meaning and community, a leader's unconditional concern for followers can enhance their perceptions of corporate reputation.

Organizational sacralization encompasses employees' search for meaning at work, sense of belonging, and perception of organizational norms as sacred values. However, the relationship between this concept and leadership styles has not been investigated. However, some studies in the literature have examined the impact of leadership behaviors on individual organizational fit and organizational culture (Boon & Biron, 2016; Jung & Takeuchi, 2014). Although the literature has examined how individual-organization fit is shaped through leadership, the impact of this fit on the sacralization process has been addressed in a limited and theoretical way. By testing the impact of spiritual leadership on organizational sacralization, this study bridges the gap between spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization and contributes to the literature by empirically proving it.

Corporate reputation is shaped by employees' identification with values, norms, and ethical principles (Olmedo-Cifuentes et al., 2014). However, the impact of organizational sacralization on corporate reputation has not been explicitly examined in the literature. How the identification of organizations with ethical and moral values is reflected in employees' perceptions of corporate reputation has been theoretically discussed but not empirically tested. This study fills this theoretical gap by testing the impact of organizational sacralization on corporate reputation. The mediating role of organizational sacralization in the relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation is completely missing in the literature. Studies such as

Pandey et al. (2015) suggest that leaders' spiritual connections do not directly affect teams' perceptions, but other variables may mediate this relationship. In this context, this study fills this gap in the literature by testing how organizational sacralization mediates the relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate reputation within the framework of resource conservation theory. Therefore, this study brings a new perspective to the management literature by empirically proving the relationships between leadership behaviors, organizational culture, and employee perceptions in a unique model.

As the first to elucidate the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational reputation, the study makes a significant theoretical contribution. In addition, the study introduces organizational sacralization, a pragmatic concept based on sacrality in organizations, and the existential satisfaction that underlies it as a measurable concept. Conservation of Resources Theory provides a strong theoretical framework for the test research model in the context of spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization, as it focuses on individuals' efforts to protect and develop their physical, social, psychological, and spiritual resources. By supporting employees' resources, such as meaning, belonging, and spiritual fulfillment, spiritual leadership enables individuals to better cope with stress and reduce the perception of resource loss. This is supported by the leader's vision and altruistic love, allowing employees to preserve their existing resources. At the same time, organizational sacralization makes the work environment and the organization meaningful and valuable for employees, leading them to experience a more spiritually and psychologically satisfying work environment. This process supports individuals in both conserving and expanding their existing resources. In this study, the Resource Conservation Theory suggests that the spiritual and psychological resources individuals gain through spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization can positively affect corporate reputation. Employees' satisfaction with these resources contributes to more significant commitment to their organizations and positive perceptions about the organization's reputation. This creates a positive reputation cycle for both internal and external stakeholders and makes the organization's reputation a sustainable resource. Therefore, Resource Conservation Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for this research by explaining the relationship between spiritual leadership, organizational sanctification, and corporate reputation.

The practical contributions of the research can be listed as follows: First, the research concluded that spiritual leadership behaviors enable employees to perceive their institutions as more reputable. Therefore, in terms of corporate reputation management, employers are recommended to hire employees with spiritual leadership behaviors in management positions or to establish a hiring policy related to spiritual leadership aptitude for candidates who can be directly appointed to management positions from outside. In addition, organizations can organize in-house training for their current managers to provide them with spiritual leadership skills. However, organizations may need help finding and training managers with spiritual leadership behaviors. At this point, organizational sacralization, which partially mediates the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational reputation, may be activated. In other words, if organizations cannot find spiritual leaders to enhance their employees' perceptions of corporate reputation, or if existing leaders cannot fully exhibit spiritual leadership behaviors, they may resort to organizational sacralization. Since organizational sacralization partially mediates the relationship between spiritual leadership and corporate

reputation, it can partially tolerate the lack of spiritual leadership in increasing employees' perceptions of corporate reputation.

The research also has strengths and weaknesses. The strengths of the research are that it is the first study to examine the relationship between spiritual leadership, organizational sacralization, and corporate reputation using quantitative research methods in the context of various theories. A strength of the research is that all participants voluntarily participated. Voluntary participation of research participants in the study increases the validity of the research (Moshagen et al., 2010). The research's first weakness is that the sample consists of a wide range of sectors. Different leadership behaviors may lead to different outcomes in different sectors. For example, a leadership style with weak supervisory and disciplinary functions may lead to undesirable outcomes in the military hierarchy. In this regard, it is recommended that the relationship between spiritual leadership, organizational sacralization, and corporate reputation be reexamined on a sector-specific basis. The second is the cultural context of the research. The relationship between the research variables was examined and interpreted in the context of Turkish culture. While Turkish culture is dominated by high power distance and low individualism, just like the cultures of Japan and South Korea, countries such as Germany, Switzerland, England, and the USA have low power distance and high individualism (Yusuf Yahyagil & Begüm Ötken, 2011). Considering that social culture will be felt in organizational cultures since spiritual leadership and organizational sacralization are concepts based on "values," replicating the research in different cultures is necessary regarding the generalizability of the research results across cultures.

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