

Spirals of Spirituality: A Qualitative Study Exploring Dynamic Patterns of Spirituality in Turkish Organizations

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Received: 14 March 2016 / Accepted: 21 June 2017 / Published online: 30 June 2017
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Abstract This paper explores organizational spirituality, uncovers it as spiralling dynamics of both positive and negative potentialities, and proposes how leaders can shape these dynamics to improve the human conditions at the workplace. Based on case study of five Turkish organizations and drawing on the emerging discourse on spirituality in organizations literature, this study provides a deeper understanding of how dynamic patterns of spirituality operate in organizations. Insights from participant observation, organizational data, and semi-structured interviews yield three key themes of organizational spirituality: reflexivity, connectivity, and responsibility. Each of these themes has been found to be connected to upward spirals (inspiration, engagement, and calling) and downward spirals (incivility, silence, and fatigue). The study provides a detailed and holistic account of the individual and organizational processes through which spirituality is enacted both positively and negatively, exploring its dynamic and dualistic nature, as embodied in the fabric of everyday life and culture.

Keywords Organizational spirituality · Organizational dynamics · Spirals

Introduction

In an increasingly global and complex world of work, workplace spirituality has become more important than ever before. With the post-secular turn, organizations have started to accommodate and incorporate spirituality in the workplace in order to promote employee well-being, engagement, and productivity, as highlighted by organizational scholars (e.g. Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Mitroff and Denton 1999; Petchsawang and McLean 2017). At the same time, there is increasing evidence and body of research documenting potential detrimental effects of spirituality used by organizations as a tool for increasing employee performance (Houghton et al. 2016).

Employees do not just leave their spirituality at the door when they come to work. Instead, they proactively maintain, grow, shape, limit, or expand their spirituality at work. Although most theory and research have focused on leadership and management, and their spirituality, in the past decade organizational research on spirituality of individual employees in organizations has blossomed. Recent organizational research provides extensive evidence of the different ways in which employees contribute to organizational outcomes through their spirituality at work, including increasing employee satisfaction and organizational commitment (Lee et al. 2014), supporting innovative work behaviour (Afsar and Badir 2017), increasing employee engagement (Roof 2015), reducing workplace stress (Pandey 2014), nurturing an organizational learning culture (Sorakraikitikul and Siengthai 2014), reducing deviant behaviour at work (Ahmad and Omar 2014), enabling creativity (Shinde and Fleck 2015), developing compassion (Karakas and Sarigollu 2013), increasing meaningful work (Molloy and Foust 2016), and fostering organizational trust (Kurt et al. 2016). Karakas (2010) has

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introduced three perspectives on how spirituality benefits employees and supports organizational performance: (a) spirituality enhances employee well-being and quality of life; (b) spirituality provides employees a sense of purpose and meaning at work; (c) spirituality provides employees a sense of interconnectedness and community. These various streams of recent research, which portray a wide range of positive outcomes associated with spirituality at work, can be regarded as the positive or affirmative perspective on workplace spirituality. This perspective argues for the inclusion and incorporation of spirituality into organizations because of its benefits for stakeholders. Scholars in this camp focus on the significance of employees finding meaning at work and bringing whole selves to work (Sheep 2006).

On the other hand, there is a growing critical literature on workplace spirituality (Bell 2008; Lips-Wiersma et al. 2009; Mirvis 1997) that points to the dangers of incorporating spirituality into workplace and warns against the use of spirituality as a manipulative tool of organizational control and employee exploitation (Bell and Taylor 2004; Gotsis and Kortezi 2008; Kamoche and Pinnington 2012). Critical scholars underline the dark side of spirituality and warn about the dangers of workplace spirituality being hijacked as a tool of ideological control and manipulation (Case and Gosling 2010; Cullen 2008; Nadesan 1999; Tourish and Pinnington 2002). Brown (2003) stresses that earlier optimism on workplace spirituality has been replaced by greater questioning of its corporate aspect as sceptics consider spirituality as a management fad that repackages organizational change and development initiatives. The critical perspective also underlines problems with the scholarship on workplace spirituality, arguing that much of the existing literature is descriptive, draws superficially on theory, relies on ambiguous definitions, and is limited in its explanatory power (Lips-Wiersma et al. 2009; Liu and Robertson 2010).

There is a wide gap between positive and critical perspectives on workplace spirituality (Lips-Wiersma and Mills 2014). Extant research on organizational spirituality typically adopts either an overly critical (Bell and Taylor 2004; Tourish and Pinnington 2002) or overly positive (Biberman and Tischler 2008; Gull and Doh 2004) perspective. Although both of these streams have grown rapidly, they have grown largely in isolation from each other. The divide between these two streams of literature is obvious in the lack of conversations across them (Lips-Wiersma and Mills 2014). As a result, we have learned much about the diverse representations and consequences of spirituality, but we know little about the individual and organizational dynamics that might govern workplace spirituality. How can positive and critical perspectives on workplace spirituality be bridged? We

think that one way to bridge the gap would be to comprehensively theorize and focus on the organizational dynamics, focusing on the movements from positive to negative and vice versa. We view spirituality not static or fixed, but rather a dynamic process of meaning making through autopoiesis or self-styling, which involves constant complex negotiations with one's own self and values, as well as continuous interactions with others in the social system. What is needed therefore is a more balanced kind of analysis that links positive and negative representations of spirituality in organizations and a more diversified approach that includes different needs of diverse employees. Progress in the field of workplace spirituality will benefit most from explicit recognition of diverse perspectives representing diverse needs of people, and delineation of how organizations and leaders can satisfy those needs. This paper uncovers the collective dynamics of workplace spirituality emerging from the interplay between its positive (liberating) as well as negative (repressive) aspects, which we denote as spirals. Expanding the concept of upward spirals (Frederickson 2003), the paper proposes that spirals can move downward (negatively) as well as upward (positively) depending on emergent patterns of organizational spirituality and discusses how leaders can support and enhance positive expressions of spirituality at work.

There is a gap in theory and research which illustrates the dynamic nature of spirituality in organizational systems. To our best knowledge, no studies have explored the individual and organizational processes through which spirituality is enacted both positively and negatively in organizations. The dynamic aspects of spirituality have suffered from long-term and systematic neglect in organizational theory and practice. This paper is a step towards filling that gap. Whereas the positive and critical perspectives on workplace spirituality have been described in the past literature, the contribution of this article lies in articulation of the processes linking positive and negative representations of workplace spirituality as well as the interplay of processes working dynamically together to shape and change organizational spirituality. The article explores organizational spirituality, uncovers it as spiralling dynamics of both positive and negative potentialities, and proposes how organizations support positive expressions of spirituality at work. Recent contributions to business ethics emphasize a broader re-imagining of the field wherein organizations have responsibilities and potential for contributing to the betterment of the world (Melé 2012). This study falls within the business ethics literature suggesting systems level and industry-wide changes that require rechanneling the primary focus from

profit generation to human welfare and social well-being (Collins 2010; Melé et al. 2011; Melé 2012).

Organizational Spirituality

Organizational spirituality has been conceptualized in diverse and contradictory forms such as ‘reflecting an individual’s perception of the spiritual values within an organizational setting’ (Kolodinsky et al. 2008: 467); the shared understanding and enunciation of congruent spiritual beliefs and behaviours among organizational members (Konz and Ryan 1999); the value congruence among organizational, team, and individual values (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003). At the organizational level, the most extensive and systematic empirical exploration of spirituality was conducted by Mitroff and Denton (1999) who place workplace spirituality at the organizational or strategic level, as a descriptor of the organization as an entity.

Although these researchers address spirituality at the organizational level, they mostly overlooked the collective dynamics associated with spirituality. Given that spirituality is also about belonging to a community, the interpersonal and collective dynamics of spirituality at work are very critical (Tong 2017). In fact, some field-level reviews (e.g. Biberman and Tischler 2008; Lund-Dean et al. 2003) have called for conceptual and empirical research to elucidate the dynamics and effects of organizational spirituality. Yet research to date has left us with a limited understanding of the dynamic and complex role of spirituality in organizations at the collective level. Theory and research on spirituality in organizations have primarily focused on its static antecedents or consequences. Most traditional models have presumed that human behaviour is expressed by linear functions, ignoring the nonlinearity of collective dynamics. In particular, negative dynamics have largely been ignored in spirituality at work literature. Moreover, there is no empirical research that inquires how leaders can make sense of and manage dynamics of organizational spirituality at work.

Accordingly, there is a need for: (a) deeper understanding of positive and negative forms of spiritual organizing at work; (b) qualitative insights into the collective spiritual dynamics in organizations; (c) inquiring how these spiritual dynamics can be managed. The current study contributes to the fields of spirituality at work, organizing for purpose, and ethical leadership by exploring the collective dynamics of spirituality in organizations; describing the triggers and dynamics of upward and downward movements; and drawing implications for managing spiritual dynamics at work. Furthermore, the current study expands the study of organizational spirituality beyond the mainstream empirical sources that inform much of its

literature as the cultural context of this study, Turkish organizations, is quite different. Finally, the current study uses innovative multidisciplinary and nonlinear qualitative inquiry as it combines ethnographic, visual, and textual analysis based on rich metaphors and narratives from diverse walks of organizational life.

Methods

This research is based on a case study of five selected organizations in Turkey and utilizes several qualitative research methods: Open-ended interviews, participant observation, and documental analysis. The unit of analysis is the organization. Five organizations were studied to increase understanding of the collective dynamics of spirituality at work and outcomes associated with it. Issues probed are listed in Appendix 1.

Theoretical sampling was used to select three companies and two non-profit organizations in Turkey. Each of these organizations is known (and reported in media) to be implementing or incorporating or accommodating spirituality successfully and innovatively in their work contexts. They are also reported to be impactful in improving the human condition at work, and they have been chosen among the most admired companies in Turkey. Two of them are known to be moderately religious (the founders have religious identities and motives); however, all these organizations claim to be open to spiritual diversity and tolerant of individual differences at work. We have tried to incorporate diversity in terms of organizational size, age, sectors, and also in spirituality practices, while still being able to locate common patterns across a variety of organizational settings (Miles and Huberman 1994). The small company is a family-owned manufacturing firm with 38 employees; it produces and sells only in Turkey. The medium company employs 93 people and exports high-quality kitchenware to European countries. The large corporation employs more than two thousand people. One of the NGOs is an international aid and solidarity association that employs 154 people, 18 thousand volunteers and operates in more than 20 countries. The other one is a professional association devoted to ethics and values in business and has more than 2000 members. Although diverse, these may not be representative of all organizations, which implement spirituality at work in Turkey. Nonetheless, it is hoped that they will provide a good initial basis for inquiring dynamics of spiritual organizing.

Data Collection

First, participatory observation was used for an in-depth understanding of the organizational climate. The first

author partook in ethnographic inquiry to study real-world situations in each organization as they naturally unfold. Ethnographic research methods provided space for rapport between the researcher and his/her interlocutors and to develop even further queries questions as the fieldwork progressed. This made space for genuine research and for questions and findings to emerge from the field (Erlandson 1993). A minimum of 20 h were spent in each organization in the role of a participant observer to gain the necessary depth of understanding of organizational spirituality dynamics at work. In addition, the first author accompanied organizational members as they moved between business meetings, lunches, tea gatherings, community events, and business trips. In particular, the researcher attended to moments of reflexivity in which organizational members have talked about spirituality, values, and organizational culture. In total, more than 180 h of participant observation was conducted over the course of 2 years. The first author conducted the fieldwork, taking extensive observational notes in diaries to explore the nature and dynamics of organizational spirituality in these organizations. In particular, reflective commentaries on the shared meanings, values, and practices in each organization were documented in detail to produce thick descriptions (Geertz 1973). This resulted in over 160 pages of text aimed at generating a rich understanding of shared spirituality practices and dynamics in each organization.

Second, primary and secondary source documents (such as strategic reports, HR policies, websites, meeting agendas, and bulletins) were collected from each organization for documental analysis. In addition, artefacts of internal communication regarding spiritual retreats, business trips, and tea gatherings were included. Documental analysis helped us document the positive outcomes of organizational spirituality themes and dynamics. For example, one email included lists of participants and their pledge of donations during the tea gathering. This document provided support for how spirals of calling led to acts of volunteering and generosity.

Third, eight open-ended interviews were conducted in each organization with the following stakeholders: (a) CEO or founder, (b) a top manager or a high-level executive, (c) one manager (or a middle-level manager), (d) HR director, (e) two employees (e.g. a service representative, secretary, or blue-collar worker), and (f) two external stakeholders (e.g. customer, partner, or consultant). Multiple respondents enabled data triangulation through comparison of reports and interpretations of various respondents. The interviews lasting about 40–60 min each were conducted face to face in Turkish. The interviews focused on ‘slices of spirituality’—particular experiences and key moments of spirituality at work, lenses on inspirational and aspirational processes that underlie acts or

moments of organizational spirituality. The interview protocols are given in Appendix.

In addition to narrative methods, this study utilized visual methods which have become popular in organizational research (Margolis and Pauwels 2011). Participants were provided blank sheets at the end of the interview and asked to reflect on shared values and discourses that characterize the spirit of their organizations using visual exercises. They could draw pictures, concept maps, or create a collage of cuttings and images from old magazines or newspapers that symbolize the spirit of their organization. Alternatively, they could choose among diverse metaphors that best describe the spiritual characteristics and dynamics of their organizations: an inner journey, a roller coaster trip, a jazz song, a battle, a maze of learning, or more. If participants did not feel comfortable in drawing, we took time to make them feel at ease with alternatives such as grouping and listing themes or choosing metaphors that they think are salient (Richards 2011). Visual methods in this study complement qualitative and narrative methods (Margolis and Pauwels 2011) to reveal connections between organizational spirituality and interpersonal dynamics as well as unpacking unique insights on different visions and representations of spiritual organizing. The current multidisciplinary and nonlinear qualitative inquiry constitutes a methodological innovation as it combines ethnographic, visual, and textual analysis based on rich metaphors and narratives from diverse walks of organizational life.

Data Analysis

First, thematic analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994) was used to examine interview data. Transcribed interviews were read to get an overview of the responses. They were re-read and first-level codes were assigned to data by two researchers independently. These first-level codes were then clustered into themes. The data were again reviewed to ensure that the content fit the identified categories. The themes were reworked until two researchers reached agreement and all coded data fit into the identified themes. Two research assistants, blind to this study’s scope and different from the original coders, coded all interviews into these themes, and the Cohen’s kappa across coders was 0.82. These constitute the basis for the themes described in Findings.

Then all the qualitative materials and data were reviewed using constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and the following blocks were produced: (1) memos that capture similarities and differences in leaders’ and other stakeholders’ perspectives of organizational spirituality; (2) a catalogue of values, shifts, movements, and changes regarding spirituality in the organization; (3) a

set of memos that capture the richness, texture, and interaction of positive and negative forms of spiritual organizing, (4) an inventory of all metaphors, meanings, and symbols in visual data (participant drawings). The data obtained from these blocks confirmed the themes identified in the thematic analysis.

This study did not begin as a study of triggers and upward and downward dynamics of organizational spirituality. Rather, it grew out of an inquiry into what organizational spirituality entails, how it shapes organizational life, and how leaders view it, but what emerged were narratives about spirals and dynamic movements. Although the grounded research approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) guided the data collection and analysis in this study, we have not approached organizational spirituality with a blank mind as we are already familiar with the literature. However, rather than trying to fit our study to the confines of the extant literature, most of which is developed in the Western context, we opted to gain fresh insights directly from our data. Following the model of Plowman et al. (2007), we have iteratively moved between the data and the extant research that could guide our data analysis. This iterative moving between the findings/emergent themes on the one hand and relevant frameworks, theories, and published research on the other hand characterized our approach in data analysis. Although the grounded research approach guided our analysis, we present the theoretical findings in a traditional manner for the sake of clarity and comprehensibility as suggested by Suddaby (2006).

Findings

Insights from participant observation, organizational data, and semi-structured interviews provided a detailed and holistic account of the individual and organizational processes through which spirituality was enacted both positively and negatively, exploring its dynamic and dualistic nature, as embodied in the fabric of everyday life and culture.

The data analysis revealed three overarching themes representing implicit notions the stakeholders seemed to hold about what organizational spirituality entails and how it looks like in their organization. They are: (1) a shared sense of a collective search for deeper meaning (reflexivity); (2) building high-quality connections with each other (connectivity); and (3) a shared responsibility for the impact of the organization's actions on the spiritual well-being of stakeholders (responsibility). Furthermore, the evidence for each theme appears to have both positive and negative aspects, which are best conceptualized as spirals. These aspects provide basis conducive to triggering upward spirals of inspiration, engagement, and calling; and downward spirals of incivility, silence, and fatigue. We call

these emergent patterns as 'spirals' because they signify self-reproducing and self-reinforcing mechanisms that mutually and continuously strengthen each other. Organizational leaders who can diagnose and understand the dynamics of these spirals can be better equipped to shape the direction and movements of these spirals, i.e. to deter downward spirals and to prompt upward spirals.

The manifestations and representations of organizational spirituality we have encountered in the data seemed to be very diverse and dynamic. The concept of spirals captures the nonlinear and dynamic quality of spiritual phenomena in organizations. The nature of these upward and downward spirals is depicted in Fig. 1.

The spiral metaphor here can be conceived as an extension of Kegan's (1982)'s dynamic spiral lens to the organizational level to analyse how organizational members think about spirituality in their organizations, how they position themselves in relation to independence and mutuality, and how organizations incorporate meaning-making activities in the workplace. Accordingly, our visual depiction of spirals in Fig. 1 was inspired by Kegan (1982).

The following discussion presents a detailed description of each of three emergent themes of organizational spirituality: reflexivity, connectivity, and responsibility. Both positive/upward and negative/downward dynamics are discussed for each theme. Detailed evidence for these dynamics is presented in Table 1.

Organizational Spiritual Reflexivity (Spirals of Inspiration)

The first overarching theme is *organizational spiritual reflexivity*, described as a shared and dynamic practice of reflection across organizational members to find deeper meaning and inspiration. It also refers to the shared esprit that inspires people to become more balanced in their perspectives about work, life, and organization. Although 'still' metaphors were used to describe this face of organizational spirituality, such as 'a silent cottage for retreat', participants simultaneously stressed the importance of constant efforts and ongoing iterations to achieve such stillness and balance in everyday life. This dynamic aspect was articulated by a manager as follows:

This company is like a refuge in the woods or a cottage for retreat. Silent and respectful, yet filled with joy and meaning. People are not self-absorbed. Constant self-questioning and reflexivity are valued and appreciated; as well as humility. Everyone has to strive continuously to reach inner spiritual balance. If you stop the effort, or discontinue the process of striving, then you cannot stay where you are. You are bound to fall behind where you started.

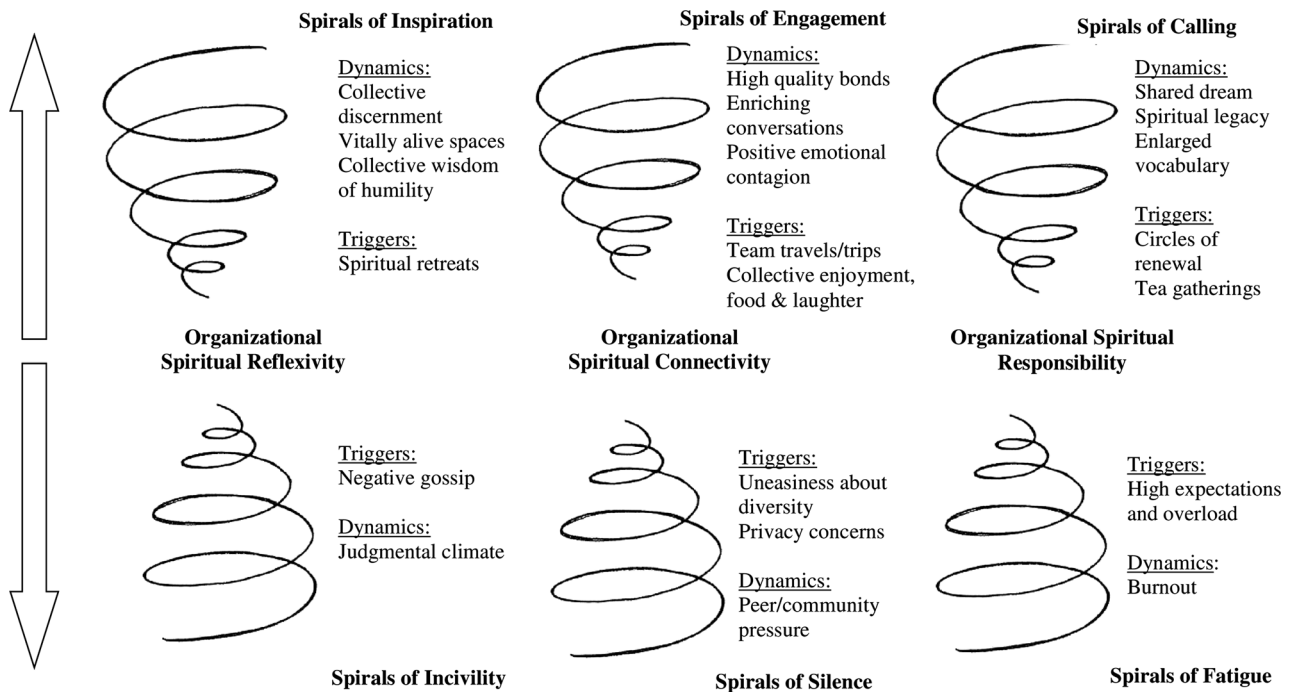


Fig. 1 Spirals of spirituality

We have found upward spirals of inspiration in all organizations emerge through the interplay of a set of positive dynamics: reaching collective discernment, designing spiritually abundant spaces, and developing a collective wisdom of humility to avoid ego traps (see Table 1 for details). These findings emerged after rounds of qualitative data analysis (building on insights from participant observation, organizational data, and semi-structured interviews). The emergence of spirals of inspiration seems to be associated with the concepts of vitality (Feldman and Khademian 2003), transcendence (Bateman and Porath 2003), and flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990).

Collective discernment refers to a higher level of spiritual insight as participants articulated about how they shared a boundary-transcending feeling of inspiration as they strive to overcome their egos and increase their consciousness. In the words of a founder:

We are a group of passionate people here who want to nourish our hearts and grow our souls. In harmony with the whole cosmos, we want to join the rhythms of the universe through ‘sema’ like the whirling dervishes. Sema is our mystical journey of spiritual ascent towards perfection. As we try to let go of our egos and become more liberated in our quest for spiritual growth, we return to this organization with a new layer of wisdom and learning every day. We want to get inspired and inspire others around us.

The second positive dynamic that accelerated upward movement was a conscious and a continuous effort to design workplaces as *spiritually abundant spaces*. Twenty-three (23) leaders mentioned the significance of organizational spaces such as multi-faith prayer rooms, recreation centres, volunteer kitchens, wellness clubs, book clubs, or holistic leadership development workshops. These spaces provide a sense of liminality and elusiveness for organizational members reducing their stress. As members open themselves to new possibilities beyond mundane work, they feel liberated and energized. In three organizations, there was a shared discourse of ‘*flying with both wings*’ which denoted balancing the heart and the mind. Some interlocutors mentioned how they have been feeling in-between this life and the hereafter, while others stressed how important it is for them to reach a delicate balance between material and spiritual goals. In any case, organizations provided members breathing spaces that are permeable, individualized, and abundant:

...I think this is about creating alive spaces that breathe with passion and reflection. There has to be room for a lot of diversity. Everyone’s spirituality is different and this is perfectly acceptable. People here feel secure in sharing their inner lives with one another, because they know that there is a shared ground based on respect. We have a responsibility to create such abundant spaces where people feel

Table 1 Evidence for Processes and Spirals

Second order concepts	First-order categories	Representative data: evidence of dynamic processes quotes illustrating dynamics of positive (upward) and negative (downward) changes
Organizational spiritual reflexivity	<i>Reaching collective discernment:</i> The incremental process of achieving a higher level of spiritual insight and sharing a boundary-transcending feeling of higher consciousness	<i>An incremental process of reaching collective discernment</i> Shared goal of finding deeper meaning and inspiration → Continuous efforts and ongoing iterations to achieve inner peace → Getting inspired and sharing inspiration with one another → Achieving wisdom and spiritual growth → Acting as a role model for one another → Reaching collective discernment <i>Climbing to the top. I am reminded of my own goals and dreams. Each of us has their own Alp or Everest... Every day, we climb new heights and seek new targets. A journey to the top signifies a journey to the deeper self. Mountain climbing requires a great deal of courage, strain, perseverance, and determination. So does soul searching...</i> <i>We are a group of passionate people here who want to nourish our hearts and grow our souls. In harmony with the whole cosmos, we want to join the rhythms of the universe through 'sema' like the whirling dervishes. Sema is our mystical journey of spiritual ascent towards perfection. As we try to let go of our egos and become more liberated in our quest for spiritual growth, we attain a new layer of wisdom every day. We want to get inspired and inspire others around us</i>
<i>Spirals of inspiration</i>	<i>Enabling spiritual wellness and abundance at work</i> The process of achieving a climate of spiritual wellness and abundance through opening up flexible and generous spaces at work	<i>An accumulative process of enabling spiritual wellness and abundance at work</i> Reserving open spaces for reflection, prayer and recreation → Encouraging flexible and energizing wellness practices and hobbies at work → A conscious and continuous effort to design workplaces as spiritually abundant spaces → Constant practice of seeking abundance (<i>bereket</i>) through generosity and sharing among organizational members → Achieving a climate of spiritual wellness and abundance <i>After we opened our common room, it became a space for sharing food, coffee, laughter, fun, and genuine conversations. In particular, sunflower kernels and tea. They are the best for opening up. Everyone started to bring borek, simit, and sweets for sharing. Sometimes we watch Turkish dramas and talk. Sometimes, our conversations become surprisingly deep. The more we shared and talked, the more we have started feeling better about each other and this workplace</i> <i>If you show gratitude (şükür) for the things you have got, God will give you more blessings and this is bereket. Bereket is about turning one to thousands through being generous. You never know where bereket is. It might be in any of the grains of your rice on your plate. Therefore you do not waste any one of them. It is all small things that matter and lead to God's blessings and abundance. As you do not know where it is hidden, you have to keep searching and trying until your last breath</i>

Table 1 continued

Second order concepts	First-order categories	Representative data: evidence of dynamic processes quotes illustrating dynamics of positive (upward) and negative (downward) changes
	<i>Developing collective wisdom of humility to avoid ego traps</i>	<p>An <i>incremental process of developing collective wisdom of humility</i></p> <p>Instilling a collective ethic of self-governance and self-discipline → Constant practice of reflection and self-questioning among organizational members → Striving to overcome egos → Avoiding materialist desires, self-indulgence, and selfishness → Developing collective wisdom of humility</p> <p><i>The kind of self-discipline that is common here motivates you to be like your colleagues. As everyone prioritises sacrifice and serving others, you also learn to serve without expecting any returns. Thus, we have this strong culture of selfless devotion; which I find rather precious and rare in this industry. Our clients realise this and they choose us over others. However, it is very difficult to sustain this dynamic because it requires constant struggle and self-control</i></p> <p><i>It takes enormous discipline and courage to resist your ego traps... It is a painful individual process, but this works well for our company. If there is a problem, you feel responsible to solve it because of self-questioning... Our customers are impressed with our capacity for problem solving... we avoid a self-absorbed marketing discourse like 'We are the best, forget the rest.' There is always room for better and we are always on the learning curve here</i></p>
Organizational spiritual reflexivity	<i>Experiencing spiritual entropy and decline</i>	<i>The inescapable process of experiencing spiritual entropy and decline</i>
Downward movements:	The inevitable process of drifting from the spiritual ideal and descending into obliviousness and self-righteousness	Dealing with the chaos, messiness and material pressures of everyday life → Falling into heedlessness or obliviousness ('gaffet') → Developing blindness to one's own gaps or mistakes → Falling into the trap of self-righteous piety (displaying "holier-than-thou" attitudes) → Judging, criticising and exaggerating the mistakes of others → The emergence of counterproductive and negative behaviours including negative talks and gossip → A judgemental climate leading to further straining of relationships among people of diverse backgrounds
<i>Spirals of incivility</i>		<p><i>I think we are prone to descent as humans—it is our natural tendency to deceive ourselves. We deceive ourselves into believing that we are good and other people are bad. We are self-centred creatures who carry seeds of evil all the time... It does not take much to divide people up. Last week, I made the mistake of listening to negative comments of a (fellow) manager. He was gossiping about another manager under the guise of ensuring quality control. This is a small thing, but it is still destructive because it has the potential of disrupting the positive climate around here. When you go down that route, it is extremely difficult to revert back</i></p> <p><i>We have to be vigilant at all times, otherwise, we automatically fall our spiritual test ('imithan'). If we do not, we automatically fall into the vicious cycle of 'gaffet'; where we stop recognizing and fixing our own negligence. We stop questioning and we are then free falling off the cliff. I experienced such a period of gaffet myself and it lasted months. It was the low of my spiritual life. I then broke hearts and hurt people around me</i></p> <p><i>When we forget God, we forget ourselves and get deceived by our ego (nefs). We neglect to judge ourselves and start judging others. We make others the subject of malicious gossip under the disguise of consultation (istişare). A self-defeating, corrosive cycle begins</i></p>

Table 1 continued

Second order concepts	First-order categories	Representative data: evidence of dynamic processes quotes illustrating dynamics of positive (upward) and negative (downward) changes
Organizational spiritual connectivity	<i>Developing high-quality connections and camaraderie</i>	<i>The process of developing high-quality connections and camaraderie</i>
Upward movements: <i>Spirals of engagement</i>	The process of building genuine relationships and interpersonal sensitivity in the organization	Developing positive perceptions and attitudes about colleagues → Investing time and efforts in building high-quality connections with colleagues → Providing support and help for one another in challenging circumstances → Developing a climate of interpersonal sensitivity <i>I decided to make free choices and not be bound by rage or hatred. I decided to be extra kind and helpful to people who have sabotaged my work in the company. And it worked well. The dynamics of the relationship changed. They apologized from me and they are now my close allies. The lesson from this case ('kassadan hisse') is clear: Affection ('muhabbet') and 'fraternity' ('uluwvet') are powerful and contagious. As mentioned in Risale-i Nur, you do love a lot of eyes because of one pair of eye ('Bir göz hatiri için çok gözler sevilir')</i> <i>I love this organization because there are deep personal and spiritual connections among people. We visit when a fellow's parents are ill. We are there to share each other's happiest events. My workplace friends were with me at my wedding and the birth of my daughter. We have fond memories together</i>
	<i>Enjoying enriching and meaningful conversations at work</i>	<i>The process of having good conversations with colleagues at work</i>
	The process of initiating and sustaining enriching conversations at work	Starting conversations with diverse colleagues at work → Sharing own interests and passions with colleagues → Sharing moments of enriching and delightful conversations often accompanied by tea and coffee → Decreased tension and increased engagement at work <i>I love working here because of my colleagues who are also my best friends. We have built bridges of understanding and trust among ourselves—I do not want to give up on this. You can easily lose your friends due to a silly misunderstanding—you must be open about everything</i> <i>...The spirit of this organization is reflected in everyday conversations here. They strengthen bonds among people...they reflect the gifts and the dreams of people... They reach hearts... Conversations here make you feel openhearted and generous with yourself</i> <i>If you talk positively and passionately, you are also encouraging your workplace friends to speak positively. It is a virtuous cycle...</i>
	<i>Experiencing positive emotional contagion</i>	<i>The process of experiencing positive emotional contagion</i>
	The process of spreading of positive emotions across the organization through sharing	Sharing positive emotions with colleagues at work → Positive emotions trigger further positive emotions → Stronger feelings of mutuality, community and engagement among organizational members and across teams → The spreading of positive emotions across teams and departments → A climate of positive engagement at work <i>They often organize trips to different cities and even abroad... not only to develop business but also for the purposes of increasing team spirit. There is often good food, laughter, fun, and everyone feels so positive... These carry forward to the workplace of course—everyone feels happier and more productive</i> <i>When I first joined this company, I was intrigued by sincere greetings and smiles which are the norm here. When you feel good, it becomes contagious. That is why we celebrate birthdays, teams, successes, milestones—everything. When you are surrounded by positive people, you naturally open up and tighten up. This is a powerful positive dynamic</i>

Table 1 continued

Second order concepts	First-order categories	Representative data: evidence of dynamic processes quotes illustrating dynamics of positive (upward) and negative (downward) changes
Organizational spiritual connectivity	<i>Experiencing isolation and alienation</i>	<i>The process of experiencing isolation and alienation</i>
Downward movements: <i>Spirals of silence</i>	The process of encountering prejudice, divisive comments and alienation at work	Unintended consequences of too much homogeneity and cohesion → Peer pressure over organizational members who are different → Negative effects of rumours, divisive comments and gossip → Repression or underestimation of diverse/odd views → Feelings of being alienated and isolated (being an outsider and feeling as 'the other') → Silencing differences and different views <i>When I realised I was the subject of gossip in one of the meetings, it ruined everything for me. I lost my faith in people around here; which resulted in loss of trust and friendships for me. I am not a social butterfly and I would like to preserve my privacy and personal space. Sometimes I find it difficult to say no to people here; because I am always invited to some sort of event. My colleagues are too sweet to turn down, so I end up attending too many gatherings, birthday parties, or tea meetings. I just want to separate my work and my private life. It is just difficult to keep that boundary intact and clear in this sort of environment</i>
Organizational spiritual responsibility	<i>Being part of magic and sharing a dream</i>	<i>The process of being part of magic and sharing a dream</i>
Upward movements: <i>Spirals of calling</i>	The process of feeling a shared sense of responsibility and service	Sharing aspirational values and ideals of the organization → Feeling a sense of shared responsibility towards common good → Being involved in actions to improve the spiritual well-being of employees, customers and other stakeholders → Being part of a culture of devotion and service → Feeling as part of magic and sharing a dream <i>We are continuously trying to make this organization a better place that is known for its contribution and service to society. This is simply called 'competing in the path of service' ('hayirda yarismak')</i> <i>What makes this (place) spiritual is that we feel part of a collective magic. This place makes us better persons. Working here, you eventually become more sensitive and caring. In a sense, we receive more through giving</i> <i>... we strive to transcend the mundane here... to reach grace and magic...this feels mystic even if you are doing a seemingly mundane task... You know everything you do matters. I look at Ahmet, who works as a custodian here and does his job of cleaning passionately, and I admire him because he inspires me to be a better trainer</i>
	<i>Acting in line with the spiritual legacy and intention of the organization</i>	<i>The process of acting in line with the spiritual legacy and intention of the organization</i>
	The process of contributing to the needs of stakeholders touching the organization	Treating employees, partners and clients as whole persons (with hearts, minds and souls) → Considering and serving not only social/economic interests of their employees, but also their spiritual needs → Touching the lives of others in a positive way → Acting in line with the spiritual legacy and intention of the organization <i>Our first job is reaching hearts of people. If we take care of people, profits will follow. Tens of families earn bread here. That is enough return for me as the founder. I will not carry this wealth to the grave, will I? When I look back, I do not look at profits or loss. I look at people and love. If people are satisfied, this company deserves to exist. If we cause misery, better shut it down</i> <i>I think of companies as human beings. If a company is a person, how would he or she like? A good citizen of the world and the universe or a greedy person engaged in potentially destructive actions? This projected image will reflect the spirit of that company</i>

Table 1 continued

Second order concepts	First-order categories	Representative data: evidence of dynamic processes quotes illustrating dynamics of positive (upward) and negative (downward) changes
<p data-bbox="256 1224 279 1654"><i>Utilizing a larger vocabulary for performance</i></p> <p data-bbox="292 1073 341 1654">The process of designing holistic outcomes to improve human condition at work</p>		<p data-bbox="256 191 306 999"><i>The process of utilizing a larger vocabulary for organizational performance to improve human condition and well-being at work</i></p> <p data-bbox="319 159 448 999">Focusing on more holistic and longer term outcomes (beyond the bottom line) → Designing holistic performance measures that are inclusive of social, environmental and spiritual indicators → using a larger vocabulary for organizational performance → clear conscience and contentment (feeling at peace with oneself, colleagues, the environment and the universe)</p>
<p data-bbox="603 1686 652 1896">Organizational spiritual responsibility</p> <p data-bbox="652 1686 719 1896">Downward movements: Spirals of fatigue</p>	<p data-bbox="603 1224 625 1654"><i>Experiencing heavy expectations and fatigue</i></p> <p data-bbox="638 1041 687 1654">The process of losing enthusiasm, energy and commitment due to overload at work</p>	<p data-bbox="461 174 590 999"><i>We have taken the model and the philosophy of Bhutan in our company. Gross Spiritual Happiness is what matters. There is spiritual abundance in our workplaces. We have a multi-faith prayer room and flexible refreshment spaces. We have a slow eating club, a yoga group, a spiritual conversation group ('sohbet grubu') and even a team of go-cart fanatics</i></p> <p data-bbox="603 159 711 999"><i>The process of experiencing role overload, heavy expectations, fatigue and burnout at work</i></p> <p data-bbox="638 159 711 999">Bearing excessive responsibilities and facing continuous demands at work → Getting tired of the heavy duties and demands constantly expected from them → Experiencing role overload, fatigue and burnout at work</p> <p data-bbox="724 159 829 999"><i>I have forgotten to spend time with my family—there is always something more expected from you in this organization. There are meetings and gatherings in the evenings and even during the weekends. You have to constantly devote your time, money, and efforts—this is not everyone's cup of tea. Many people are crushed under the burden of duty</i></p>

confident to open up. As a top manager, I have to be a role model and show that it is okay to share what is deep inside me although it feels scary. It is okay to be passionate about something and share your passions here because our climate offers a buffer of shared trust and a genuine space for heart-warming conversations.

Another interlocutor commented on the Sufi concept of ‘*bereket*’ (abundance) and its dynamic nature as follows:

If you show gratitude (*şükür*) for the things you have got, God will give you more blessings and this is *bereket*. *Bereket* is about turning one to thousands through being generous. You never know where *bereket* is. It might be in any of the grains of your rice on your plate. Therefore you do not waste any one of them. It is all small things that matter and lead to God’s blessings and abundance. As you do not know where it is hidden, you have to keep searching and trying until your last breath.

The third positive dynamic is developing a collective wisdom of humility to avoid ego traps. This dynamic is embodied in actions that support developing shared humility and built-in control that restrain organizational members from materialistic desires, self-indulgence, and selfishness. Twenty-one (21) participants talked about a collective ethic of self-governance and self-discipline which enabled members to pursue their dreams of service without expecting any short-term returns for themselves. Everyone in the organization is supposed to place the needs of others before their own—be it money, time, reward, or prestige. The shared wisdom of humility is reflected in acts of volunteerism. Participants mentioned that they knew they were touching the lives of others, reaching out to people, and contributing to something of greater importance through their work. The humility discourse also provided a high degree of problem-solving capability and resilience at the organizational level, which was seen as a strategic advantage for the organization:

One of the illusions that has come with the modern life and stuck with us is our preoccupation with ourselves. Love yourself! We have lost ourselves in the middle of our capitalist luxuries that we have forgotten about our less fortunate neighbors. We have become immune to hunger, suffering, terror, and violence as long as they do not affect us...Character and values are indispensable—skills are not. We can teach, learn, and improve skills more easily. So when we hire, we search for compassion and humility in the candidates—not exaggerated self-confidence or self-promotion.

Our golden principle: Be a judge to yourself and be an advocate for people around you. This may sound like a simple principle; but it is hard to implement it in the hot pace of business. It takes enormous discipline and courage to resist your ego traps... It is a painful individual process, but this works well for our company. If there is a problem, you feel responsible to solve it because of self-questioning. If an issue comes up, you do not need to defend yourself, because your colleagues will defend you. Our customers are impressed with our capacity for empathy and problem solving. ...But we avoid a self-absorbed marketing discourse like ‘We are the best, forget the rest.’ There is always room for better and we are always on the learning curve here.

At the individual level, participants talked of strict self-questioning to sustain spiritual balance. They also stressed the significance of forgiveness for the other, which seemed to help maintain a harmonious and nurturing culture. During ethnographic visits, we have observed that spiritual retreats outside work helped to sustain such supportive climate. The first author attended 3 weekend retreats organized by three organizations and kept detailed reflective accounts in his diary of his experiences and observations. These retreats were organized to provide ‘breathing spaces’ for employees and took place in a nearby cottage in the woods, by a river, or at the mountains. All employees were invited to these retreats, but participation was voluntary. The retreats involved circles of reading, reflection, prayer, discussion, jogging, tea drinking, and dining intended to open the hearts and minds of members. These circles embodied the ritual forms through which affect was mobilized to activate collective discernment, spiritually abundant spaces, and collective wisdom of humility, thereby triggering positive spirals of inspiration. These spirals reinforce each other, acting as iterative and deviation-amplifying loops (Lindsley et al. 1995). It seemed as if participants in these retreats were inspired both by each other and the mountain peaks to achieve self-actualization; in the words of an interlocutor:

Climbing to the top, I am reminded of my own goals and dreams. Each of us has their own Alp or Everest. We desire to reach for the stars, yet we have difficulty changing our most basic habits... Every day, we should climb new heights and seek new targets. A journey to the top actually signifies a journey to the deeper self. Mountain climbing requires a great deal of courage, strain, perseverance, and determination. So does soul searching... I need to destroy the Lego of my ego—not to be drunk by the joys of victory.

Despite the prevalence of these idealist discourses, we have observed that the dynamics were not always positive in these organizations. Our ethnographic fieldwork revealed an inherent tension between the spiritual idealism inherent in the organizational discourses and the messy pragmatic realities of everyday life. As managers tried to navigate through these tensions on a daily basis, they seemed to enact spirituality in both positively and negative ways, which illustrates the dynamic and dualistic nature of spirals embodied in the fabric of everyday life and culture. For example, managers feeling discomfort with the dualism between the sacred and the profane tended to split their time, change places, or compartmentalize their life domains from one another. Such actions or movements often created cognitive dissonance. One manager commented on how she identified herself with the spiritual and idealist side of the organization while projecting the materialistic aspects on others. The sacred-profane dualism was a recurrent theme and led to organizational members continually oscillate between spiritual ideals and material goals in their everyday decisions and actions. This splitting often led to in-groups and out-groups, along with fierce debates or intergroup conflicts among the perceived sub-cultures. During a meeting, we have witnessed how an older manager complained about the attitudes of younger professionals whom he found *'too secular, irresponsible, and careerist'*. In another setting, a female manager faced an awkward silence when she talked about how professional women faced glass ceilings and judgemental attitudes in a patriarchal environment:

You do not give opportunities for women's advancement because of your assumptions about their 'more significant' duties at home. You never invite veiled women to high-level corporate events because you do not see them as legitimate representatives of this company. We do not want to be your sisters; we want to be recognized as professionals or colleagues with equal rights.

At times these tensions developed into a *'judgemental climate'* leading to further straining of relationships among people of diverse backgrounds, resulting in a *'spiral of incivility'*. When a negative action of one member led to the negative action of another, these counterproductive behaviours escalated into a spiral of incivility (Andersson and Pearson 1999; Meier and Gross 2015). These cases of incivility were often manifested in the 'negative talks' or gossip of the third parties during consultation meetings (*istişare*). The emergence and prevalence of these negative dynamics in these organizations was unexpected since organizational leaders seemed to have solid principles to prevent such conflict. A leader described these downward spirals as follows:

When we forget God, we forget ourselves and get deceived by our ego (nefs). We neglect to judge ourselves and start judging others. We make others the subject of malicious gossip under the disguise of consultation (*istişare*). A self-defeating, corrosive cycle begins.

The spirals of incivility caused some organizational members to feel alienated and sceptical about the concept of organization's spiritual responsibility. They had multiple concerns, e.g. avoiding being manipulated or being vulnerable, protecting their privacies, as consistent with the critical perspectives on workplace spirituality (Bell 2008; Lips-Wiersma et al. 2009). They displayed strong will to remain independent and to resist any form of influence over their non-work lives. Organizational spirituality came with significant costs and burdens for members who had reservations against spirituality in the workplace, as well as for leaders who were sensitive about their personal values and private lives:

Let me say that I am totally against spirituality at the workplace. I have always felt that it is a bit creepy to be surrounded by people expressing their faith at work. I do not want to exchange conversations about God, spirits, higher beings or whatsoever. I prefer a secular environment, thank you. I once had a philosophical argument with some colleagues here and they have now stopped talking to me about this nonsense; which is great. They have now accepted me as I am and they do not mention spiritual crap when I am around.

Although some leaders whom we interviewed were aware of both positive and negative dynamics of organizational spirituality, most of them did not quite know how to interpret and shape these dynamics. Findings indicated that strict and ruthless interrogation of the self in line with the Sufi principle of self-accounting (*'nefis muhasebesi'*) along with flexible and compassionate attitudes towards other people produced the best results. However, we observed that it was almost impossible to sustain this 'idealist' Sufi principle (which can be symbolized as the 'spiritual peak') in the messiness of everyday life. Most of our respondents described how people preached these principles; but acted in contrary to these principles (i.e. through loving oneself and developing blindness to one's own gaps or mistakes while at the same time judging, criticising, and exaggerating the mistakes of others). Therefore, the natural tendency was to descent from the Sufi ideals amidst the chaos and material pressures of everyday life. One respondent said this was *'inevitable, since it is only human to forget and make mistakes'*.

Another used the term ‘*gaflet*’ which refers to the spiritual trap of heedlessness or obliviousness in Sufi philosophy:

Our constant persistence, our strong willpower, and our yearnings or dreams make us a better human being. We have to be vigilant at all times, otherwise, we automatically fail our spiritual test (‘*imtihan*’). If we do not, we automatically fall into the vicious cycle of ‘*gaflet*’; where we stop recognizing and fixing our own negligence. We stop questioning and we are then free falling off the cliff. I experienced such a period of *gaflet* myself and it lasted months. It was the low of my spiritual life. I then broke hearts and harmed people around me. God saved me from that black hole through a spiritual guide (“*hayırhah*”).

Organizational Spiritual Connectivity (Spirals of Engagement)

The second recurrent theme is *organizational spiritual connectivity*, described as an organizational climate characterized by high-quality connections, genuine relationships, and interpersonal sensitivity. This theme surfaced in all organizations and was mentioned in thirty-four (34) interviews. It was described by terms such as a climate of openheartedness, close friendship, a collective sense of belonging, and a shared feeling of being brothers and sisters:

What characterizes organizational culture here is that employees have a special bonding with one another. They feel responsibility and show genuine concern for customers. This sense of dedication sets us apart from the competition.

The metaphor that best describes this aspect of organizational spirituality is the organization as a family cocoon. Specifically, this theme reflects the view that spirituality exists in the fabric of interpersonal relationships at work. Participants described themselves as embedded in social networks that are always changing in form and structure due to the dynamic nature of interpersonal relationships. In the words of a manager:

We always need to change because we are living in systems which are in flux. It is like having to swim along a wild stream. If you do not move, you will become mossy. But if you move along God’s will, you will then be able to lead and help people around you.

Maintaining relationships required continuous investment in the quality of the relationships, which could improve or deteriorate depending upon the interpersonal dynamics:

I decided to make free choices and not be bound by rage or hatred. I decided to be extra kind and helpful to people who have sabotaged my work in the company. And it worked well. The dynamics of the relationship changed. They apologized from me and they are now my close allies. The lesson from this case (‘*kissadan hisse*’) is clear: Affection (‘*muhabet*’) and ‘*fraternity* (‘*uhuvvet*’) are powerful and contagious. As mentioned in *Risale-i Nur*, you do love a lot of eyes because of one pair of eye (‘*Bir göz hatırı için çok gözler sevilir*’).

High-quality connections and camaraderie were manifested in behaviours like remembering birthdays of colleagues, providing support for one another in challenging circumstances, sharing the work load in busy times, praying for each other, or accepting opposing views with empathy and respect:

I love this organization because there are deep personal and spiritual connections among people. We visit when a fellow’s parents are ill. We are there to share each other’s happiest events. My workplace friends were with me at my wedding and the birth of my daughter. We have fond memories together.

Despite these good practices, our data indicated how high-quality connections among people could easily be harmed and go wrong if one of the parties violated the principles of trust and camaraderie through hurtful gossip. Therefore, a constant effort to invest in the relationship coupled with ongoing rituals to talk and repair harm was needed to maintain the sustainability of high-quality connections.

The second dynamic that accelerated upward spirals of engagement was the prevalence of enriching and delightful conversations with colleagues at work. Nineteen (19) participants mentioned how spiritual conversations warmed up their hearts or how heated intellectual debates lightened up their minds. These talks could be characterized as water-cooler conversations that eased people’s tensions and increased their engagement in the workplace:

...The spirit of this organization is reflected in everyday conversations here. They strengthen bonds among people...they reflect the gifts and the dreams of people... They reach hearts... Conversations here make you feel openhearted and generous with yourself.

Workplace conversations were not always enriching and delightful however. The most destructive dynamics occurred as a result of aggressive rumours, divisive language, or sneaky comments aimed at harming the reputation of the other. The double-edged nature of workplace

conversations illustrated not only the dynamic power of speech, but also the fragility of human egos and relationships.

The third positive ingredient fuelling spirals of engagement was the relational dynamics of positive emotional contagion across teams in the organization. Among the interviewees, 15 participants mentioned how positive emotions reinforced and triggered further positive emotions, leading to an upward spiral of thriving and engagement in the workplace:

When I first joined this company, I was intrigued by sincere greetings and smiles which are the norm here. When you feel good, it becomes contagious. That is why we celebrate birthdays, teams, successes, milestones—everything. When you are surrounded by positive people, you naturally open up and lighten up. This is a powerful positive dynamic.

We have observed that these dynamics triggered upward spirals of engagement since organizational members felt more engaged as they build high-quality relationships with each other. As they developed a close community with harmony and empathy, they deepened their connections with others. As a result, an organizational climate of dedication, belonging, and enthusiasm emerged. The stronger the feelings of community and mutuality shared across members, the stronger the engagement of members. These results are supported by research on positive group affect spiral (Walter and Bruch 2008), high-quality connections (Dutton and Heaphy 2003), compassion (Dutton et al. 2006), sense of community (Hughey et al. 1999), and organizational empowerment (Peterson and Zimmerman 2004).

During organizational visits, we have observed that these positive interpersonal dynamics were particularly triggered by team-level activities, such as business or leisure trips. On the other hand, too much homogeneity and cohesion seem to prompt problems such as peer pressure and spirals of silence. Members who felt different remained silent due to the threat of isolation and alienation, which prevented open and honest discussion during meetings. Silencing differences led to defensive routines as alienated people refrained from undiscussable issues, which resulted in a self-reinforcing cycle of deeper silence. Our data suggested that issues that were silenced did not simply disappear, but instead produced anxiety and resentment over time. These negative dynamics are in line with empirical findings of the literature on ‘spirals of silence’ in organizations (Bowen and Blackmon 2003; Brinsfield 2013).

In the organizations studied, significant outcomes of the downward spirals included wrong decisions and actions caused by groupthink, awkward silences over issues of

diversity, and significant peer pressure. A few respondents suggested that spirals of engagement sometimes functioned like double-edged swords leading to intense pressure on them. While these employees mentioned the benefits of experiencing rapport and support from colleagues, they also felt overwhelmed by the intensity of repeated invitations to social gatherings:

People are amazing here and I truly feel their warmth and sincerity. However, I am not a social butterfly and I would like to preserve my privacy and personal space. Sometimes I find it difficult to say no to people here; because I am always invited to some sort of event. My colleagues are too sweet to turn down, so I end up attending too many gatherings, birthday parties, or tea meetings. I just want to separate my work and my private life. It is just difficult to keep that boundary intact and clear in this sort of environment.

What emerged from the visual data of some respondents is also a clear portrayal of dynamics of silence and alienation. For example, a leader illustrated herself as a tree standing apart from the forest, representing her independent but lonely stance in her organization. Staying independent in such a strong and homogeneous organizational culture is indeed described as a major challenge in the accounts of leaders or stakeholders. These findings have implications for leaders who want to design organizational policies and programmes to prevent alienation of employees who might feel as ‘minorities’. A related problem is the prevalence of peer pressure in homogeneous organizations, which may be a source of stress in one’s private life:

I sometimes feel that I arouse uncanny feelings around me, especially in a close-knit community like this. I am certainly an outlier and an outsider to this whole ‘let us do good, feel good’ mindset. I think spiritual nonsense creates an illusion that we are a family, we love each other, and we are brothers and sisters blah blah... However, when it comes to thorny issues such as respecting the identity of a gay person, I feel uneasiness in the air. When meeting a new person here, they first ask if you are married, then if you have kids. It is as if you have to follow this track. This is an utter form of community pressure (‘mahalle baskisi’).

Organizational leaders need to take actions to prevent employees who might feel such community pressure. These actions might include bringing in organizational measures to ensure respect for privacy, supporting diversity in all employment practices and procedures, protecting the rights of the vulnerable, and cultivating a culture of openness and supportiveness.

Organizational Spiritual Responsibility (Spirals of Calling)

The third theme is *organizational spiritual responsibility*, described as assumed collective responsibility for the impact of the organization's actions on the spiritual well-being of employees, customers, and other stakeholders. This theme recurred in four of the organizations and mentioned by 28 respondents. It was described by terms such as making the world a better place, contribution, legacy, and service. The dominant metaphor that describes this aspect of organizational spirituality is a collective journey of service. The theme of responsibility highlights the institutional perspective, as it describes shared perceptions on how spirituality impacts multiple stakeholders.

We have decided to term the dynamic movements of responsibility as 'spirals of calling' because we wanted to capture the self-reinforcing organizational cycles aimed at developing a culture of devotion and service. We have observed upward spirals of calling in all organizations as emergent through the interplay of a set of positive dynamics: being part of magic and sharing a dream, acting in line with the spiritual legacy and intention of the organization, and utilizing a larger vocabulary for organizational performance that improves human condition at work.

'Being part of magic and sharing a dream', mentioned by 28 participants, refers to being drawn to an ideal larger than the self and bearing greater responsibilities. These participants, irrespective of their position in the organization, mentioned that organizational spirituality was connected to shared values and ideals which were larger than themselves:

What makes this solidarity association spiritual is that we feel part of a collective magic. This place makes us better persons. Working here, you eventually become more sensitive and caring. In a sense, we receive more through giving.

We celebrate the extraordinary quality of life here ... we strive to transcend the mundane... to reach grace and magic...this feels mystic and majestic even if you are doing a seemingly mundane task... You know you are part of the circle and flow. You know everything you do matters. I look at Ahmet, who works as a custodian here and does his job of cleaning passionately, and I admire him because he inspires me to be a better trainer.

Some participants mentioned how fortunate they felt because they work in their organization and how they were 'pulled towards' this place to use their unique gifts and talents. This sense of magical calling seems to be very much in line with the callings of zookeepers by Bunderson

and Thompson (2009), and dynamic in nature as per Dobrow (2013).

The second dynamic that fuelled upward spirals of calling was acting responsibly in line with the spiritual legacy and intention of the organization. Fifteen (15) participants argued that the spirit of organizations is important, because it is the reason for their existence. They cared about whether their organization touched the lives of others in a positive way and emphasized the spiritual role of organizations as an important instrument for improving human condition at work. Seventeen (17) participants articulated that organizations needed to consider and serve not only social and economic interests of their employees, but also their spiritual needs. It can be inferred from this discourse that participants advocated for '*corporate spiritual responsibility*', emphasizing an integrative assessment of quality of life includes the spiritual dimension as well:

Our first job is reaching hearts of people. If we take care of people, profits will follow. Tens of families earn bread here. That is enough return for me as the founder. I will not carry this wealth to the grave, will I? When I look back, I do not look at profits or loss. I look at people and love. If people are satisfied, this company deserves to exist. If we cause misery, better shut it down.

A core value in this organization is treating employees, partners, and clients as whole persons—with hearts, minds, and souls. We hate the term human resources and never use it here. Humans are not fungible resources. They cannot be owned or manipulated; nor are they replaceable cogs in the corporate machine. They are creative, enthusiastic and talented individuals who have emotions, regrets, ups and downs.

This conceptualization that emerged from the interview data questioned the very basis of organizations by bringing the spirit of organizations into light very much like Mitroff and Denton (1999)'s categorization which places workplace spirituality at the organizational or strategic level, as a descriptor of the organization as an entity:

I think of companies as human beings. If a company is a person, how would he or she be like? A good citizen of the world and the universe or a greedy person engaged in potentially destructive actions? This projected image will reflect the spirit of that company.

The third positive ingredient fuelling spirals of calling was utilizing a larger vocabulary for organizational performance. By designing systems that focused on longer term outcomes, leaders in these organizations envisioned

making impact beyond the bottom line. Twelve (12) leaders mentioned that their organizations were not evaluated just in terms of short-term profit, but with more holistic performance measures and inclusive of social, environmental, and spiritual indicators. Two leaders mentioned *'positive impact for communities'*, while one emphasized *'leaving a legacy for future generations'* as a sample organizational performance measure. One manager talked about the viability of the Golden Rule as a performance measure. Some leaders talked about the ultimate test of *'clear conscience and contentment'* which included feeling at peace with oneself, with friends and colleagues at work, with the environment and the universe. Although this was mentioned as an individual-level indicator, it can be conceptualized also at the organizational level as enrichment, contentment, or legacy. One organization adapted the Bhutanese index of 'Gross National Happiness' and devised organizational measurements to capture time usage and balance; cultural vitality; physical, mental, and spiritual health; social and community vitality; good governance; a sense of belonging; and ecological vitality. The CEO of this company believed that these measures would prevent atomization, greed, and unethical behaviour in the organization and ultimately lead to a sense of shared responsibility, as well as organizational vitality and longevity:

We have taken the model and the philosophy of Bhutan in our company. Gross Spiritual Happiness is what matters. There is spiritual abundance in our workplaces. We have a multi-faith prayer room and flexible refreshment spaces. We have a slow eating club, a yoga group, a spiritual conversation group (*'sohbet grubu'*) and even a team of go-cart fanatics. We also have atheist employees who do not mind these. Of course people sometimes tease each other, but we have a shared ground of respect.

These sub-themes together can trigger upward spirals of calling as they embody the ideals of positive impact and service shared among organizational members. These spirals are connected to broader humanitarian goals encompassing social, moral, and spiritual responsibility. These dynamics are supported by organizational research on virtuousness (Cameron 2003), meaningfulness (Pratt and Ashforth 2003), and courageous principled action (Worline and Quinn 2003).

During organizational visits, we have observed that spirals of calling were particularly triggered by organizational practices aimed at evoking and revitalizing a collective sense of responsibility. We have participated in tea gatherings (called *'sohbet'*) that functioned as 'circles of renewal'. In these tea gatherings, while drinking strong Turkish tea, participants talked about their commitment to

their organizational roles and contribution. Success stories were told, along with collective decision making on ambitious projects focused on service for the good of others.

Although these discourses advocated constant renewal, revitalization, and continuous responsibility, we have observed that some employees and leaders got tired of the heavy duties and demands constantly expected from them:

I have forgotten to spend time with my family—there is always something more expected from you in this organization. There are meetings and gatherings in the evenings and even during the weekends. You have to constantly devote your time, money, and efforts—this is not everyone's cup of tea. Many people are crushed under the burden of duty.

The negative symptoms we have observed in these organizations in relation to bearing excessive responsibilities are in line with the empirical findings on compassion fatigue (Figley 2002; Slatten et al. 2011), role overload (Bolino and Turnley 2005), and burnout (Cordes and Dougherty 1993). The more managers and employees worked in burdensome situations or environments, the more they experienced stress and exhaustion, which led to a downward spiral of weariness and lethargy. We have termed these dynamics *'spirals of fatigue'*. Some employees told how high expectations sometimes formed up an iron cage, causing tremendous stress. One manager complained about how he felt used, manipulated, and vulnerable when he was let go to another position, which he perceived as 'lower' despite his hard work and service over the years. Becoming aware of spirals of fatigue and handling the emotions associated with them is important for leaders, since they can prevent or circumvent these spirals through pampering themselves and their teams. An obvious method to achieve this might be through organizing team bonding activities, away days, and family picnics. These activities can help towards improving human condition at work.

Discussion

The study aimed to expand and refresh the organizational spirituality literature through new constructs and a dynamic perspective based on spiral movements. We contribute to the theoretical and empirical development of organizational spirituality by inquiring into its nonlinear and collective nature. Based on case studies and qualitative interviews with 40 stakeholders in five organizations in Turkey, this study has explored what organizational spirituality entails and how spiritual dynamics occur in organizations. Using spirals of spirituality, organizational

leaders can detect and shape collective spiritual dynamics and improve human condition at work.

Three key themes of organizational spirituality emerged from analysis of the data: (1) organizational spiritual reflexivity, which captures a shared sense of reflection across organizational members to find deeper meaning and interconnectedness (represented by the metaphor of organization as a silent cottage for retreat); (2) organizational spiritual connectivity, which denotes an abundant organizational climate characterized by high-quality connections, genuine relationships, and interpersonal sensitivity (represented by the metaphor of organization as a family cocoon); (3) organizational spiritual responsibility, which represents assumed collective responsibility for the impact of the organization's actions on the spiritual well-being of employees, customers, and other stakeholders (represented by the metaphor of organization as a collective journey of wisdom and service). None of these themes is static. Field data indicated that they are inherently dynamic and double edged. Each of these themes is connected to the spirals which can be used as lenses through which to examine spiritual dynamics at multiple levels. We argue that the spiritual dimension is inherent in and indispensable to both positive and negative organizational dynamics, and managers are responsible for correctly shaping the dynamics of spirituality in and across the organization.

When taken together, these themes make up upward spirals of spiritual organizing and signify a fractal of the organization's value system. Building on Frederickson's concept of upward spirals (Frederickson 2003), this paper introduced spirals of inspiration, engagement, and calling as emergent patterns of spiritual organizing. These upward spirals operate as self-reinforcing dynamics that trigger and support each other. From a reflexive standpoint, we were intrigued to discover the dynamic and delicate nature of organizational spirituality, having observed the seemingly simple triggers that cause 'U' turns and change of the direction of movements. An upward movement in either of the spirals will trigger a dynamic pattern of consecutive increases, mutually strengthening each other. However, study findings also demonstrated potential triggers and dynamics of downward spirals of incivility, silence, and fatigue. These downward spirals also operate as self-reinforcing dynamics or vicious circles. Benefits of organizational spirituality are countered by its costs: It can complicate the relationship among 'diverse' employees and their preference for free spaces, forming up 'an iron cage' of high expectations, surveillance, and an overload of intimacy. Interviews with respondents have suggested that spirals of inspiration, engagement, and calling can sometimes be double-edged swords leading to intense scrutiny

and pressure on them. While these employees mentioned the benefits of experiencing rapport and support from colleagues, they also felt overwhelmed by the intensity of repeated invitations to social gatherings.

Can organizations or leaders predict when spirals of spirituality move upwards versus downwards in their social system? Although our findings do not enable us to provide a definite answer to this question, there might still be some signals to be observed in the organizational climate to help predictions to implement to influence the direction of the movements. In particular, the discipline of positive organizational behaviour might offer rich psychological insights that could be helpful in triggering positive or upward movements in organizations (Bakker and Schaufeli 2008; Luthans 2002). Managers should keep in mind that employees are not passive recipients of spiritual values provided to them by the organization. Rather, our findings demonstrated that employees are capable of recognizing the spiritual implications and demands of organizations. Regardless of their position, employees can respond to group pressures as well as proactively initiate or shape spiritual dynamics. This acknowledgement of individual agency provides an important departure from much of the existing research on workplace spirituality, which tends to focus on only one level of analysis at a time. The examination of the interplay between and within levels in this study affords a richer understanding of spiritual dilemmas, conflicts, and processes. Hence, the spirals provide a framework for simultaneously studying individual and organizational spirituality—a framework clearly identified in spirituality research (Houghton et al. 2016; Milliman et al. 2003).

Adopting a qualitative approach, this work has contributed to the theoretical conversations on workplace spirituality, organizational dynamics, and leadership, bridging across the disciplines of business ethics, management, and organizational theory. The concept of spirals of spirituality can be positioned and further developed in relation to a wide variety of literature on organizational development and transformation (Cacioppe and Edwards 2005), community betterment (Maton 2008), spiral dynamics model (Beck and Cowan 2014), and complexity theory, nonlinear dynamics, and adaptive systems (Guastello 2013; Morel and Ramanujam 1999). We have illustrated that spirals can be used as lenses through which to examine spiritual dynamics at multiple levels. We have presented a perspective where spiritual dynamics are co-constructed at the interface of teams or through the interaction of organizational members. By focusing on the within-individual spiritual dynamics and interpersonal and organizational spiritual dynamics as perceived by individuals, we can understand complex spiritual dynamics and movements in organizations more completely. Spirals

provide a holistic and versatile way to describe spiritual changes across levels of analysis, giving researchers a sharp and useful language and discourse upon which to draw their research.

Nevertheless, our study has several limitations. By focusing on positive cases and forms of spiritual organizing, this research has not fully addressed the challenges of incorporating spirituality in organizations. The organizational sample, although diverse, may not be representative of all organizations in Turkey which implement spirituality at work. The sample specifically included ‘positive outliers’ that are known for improving the quality of life for their stakeholders with a focus on their spiritual well-being. Given the unique nature of our sample, one is left to wonder whether spirals of spirituality are limited to spiritually oriented Turkish organizations or whether we might find them in other cultural contexts and multinational organizational settings. For some corporate cultures (especially those characterized by a positivist mindset), it may be a challenge to incorporate spirituality issues into the workplace (Mirvis 1997). The tendency of separating ‘faith and reason’ can make perspectives about spirituality ‘undiscussable’ in many organizations (p. 202, Mirvis 1997). We expect that similar themes and processes could be relevant for organizations with humanitarian, compassionate, and spiritual work cultures. These could be small and medium enterprises, humanitarian organizations, social purpose organizations, hospitals, or schools. What matters is a context ripe for spiritual experimentation, compassionate relationships, and positive engagement. This study invites an exploration of the scope and relevance of spiritual organizing to other organizations and introduces spirals of spirituality as a nonlinear framework to pursue this investigation.

The second limitation is that more than half of our respondents have been drawn from higher-level positions such as managers, founders, and HR directors which might have caused a pro-management bias in our findings. Nevertheless, we have tried to prioritize these dissident or marginalized voices during the data analysis process to reduce this bias.

The third limitation is about our data collection methods. Although we tried our best to keep the questions more open-ended, our interview protocol might have led our respondents to draw on more positive experiences. We have drawn our findings from just five organizations operating in the Turkish context. We expect that we would get a more comprehensive picture of dynamic spirituality in organizations through a larger sample of organizations. Without collection of further empirical data and replication of the study in other cultural contexts, it is not clear to what

extent the results may be generalizable to different cultural contexts and different samples.

Conclusion

Our study of organizational spirituality paints a fascinating picture of how upward spirals of inspiration, engagement, and calling be used to advance positive expressions of spirituality at work. The paper also underlines that organizational spirituality may be a potential double-edged sword as negative dynamics are possible through the emergence of spirals of incivility, silence, and fatigue. The paper has implications for organizational leaders. First, leaders can interrupt the downward movements through effective interventions, such as developing a recovery plan to regain trust, eliminating factors that lead to a threatening environment, defending freedom of speech, celebrating diversity and originality, and ensuring psychological safety for all. It is important that leaders open up themselves fully to increase empathic contact and discover unexpected connections among employees. Second, leaders can redirect downward spirals to upwards through instilling pockets of reflection, respect, and renewal into the fabric of the organization. An effective way to do this would be through leisure activities and away days that unleash positive energy of employees in a relaxed and creative atmosphere. The paper underlines the significance of such informal practices and a dynamic approach in managing organizational spirituality. Third, leaders can maintain upward spirals through a series of actions aimed at sustaining positivity, including developing capacity for sustained innovative practices, never taking positivity for granted, actively cherishing positive aspects of culture, designing welcoming human spaces, organizing idea contests, maintaining resource flows for communal events, inspiring spiritual growth, appreciating authentic expression of the self, evoking collective re-imagining of dreams, disrupting social boundaries and status quo, and enhancing the quality of relationships that infuse everyday interactions.

Understanding the implications of spirals of spirituality for the relationship between employees and their organizations promises important insights into the dualistic nature of spiritual organizing, namely its potential for liberation and thriving on the one hand, and for alienation and subjugation on the other. The most significant overall lesson for leaders is that they can trigger upward spirals and shortcut downward spirals in their organizations through fostering a positive and supportive climate that welcomes and celebrates spiritual diversity. In order to foster such a climate, leaders need to build in flexible organizational

structures to support holistic self-fulfilment and spiritual expression, while challenging all forms of oppression and peer pressure. It is also advisable to break barriers of silence through invigorating conversations about faith, religion, or spirituality.

Spirals of spirituality may be envisioned as streams of collective spiritual consciousness. Upward spirals (inspiration, engagement, and calling) may be considered as the upper current flowing above: they embody the collective spiritual will, resolution, aspiration, and unity to make positive change in the quality of life in the organization. They gain their power from managerial principles of compassion, caring, embracing the other, respect for privacy, and openness to diversity. Results have shown how these upward spirals function as a collective source of spiritual motivation, values, and energy without which positive change would not be achieved. Downward spirals (incivility, silence, and fatigue), on the other hand, can be thought as the undercurrent flowing in parallel: they embody the shared community dynamics that are judgemental, alienating, blaming, and incriminating. They gain their power from proselytizing, paranoia, gossip, repression, and excluding the other. Results have shown how these downward spirals suck the spiritual energy, joy, and abundance inherent in individuals and human systems and ultimately create a toxic environment of fear and prejudice. These two streams, representative of higher and lower aspects of human nature, seem to be flowing concurrently and fluidly in the veins of human systems interfering and clashing with each other. Therefore, due to the dynamics of the dual flow described above, spirals of spirituality are always shifting, blurred, and dynamic in their movements—susceptible to being triggered by seemingly small positive or negative action points.

Meaningful social transformation does not come from political prescriptions or technical recipes alone. A holistic approach to improving human condition at work incorporates the spiritual dimension. Becoming aware of and managing spirals of spirituality will enable organizational leaders to accomplish enduring changes in both individual and collective behaviour. There is, therefore, much to be gained by systematically examining the role of spirals of spirituality in building positive human capacity. Through understanding and managing these spirals, leaders can advance positive results in their organizations. In addition to individual-level employee satisfaction and well-being, effective management of spiritual dynamics can also contribute towards the aggregate goals of dispersal of employment, prosperity, inclusive growth, and local democracy—as demonstrated by Anatolian tigers in various Turkish cities.

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Appendix 1

Issues Probed: Themes of Organizational Spirituality

- (1) Analytical Memo on Organizational Context:
 - Basics about the organization: size, employees, sector, mission, vision, objectives, strategic directions, measures of organizational effectiveness, and performance
 - Organizational culture, values, and how they are related to spirituality; organizational spiritual climate for employees; top management attitudes towards spirituality
- (2) Analytical Memo on Collective Spirituality
 - Meanings attached to organizational spirituality and humane values at work
 - Salience/legitimacy of spiritual issues in the organization
 - New ways of incorporating spirituality: innovation and best practices
 - Organizational guidelines and leader attitudes related to employees' spiritual needs
- (3) Narratives Section: Narratives of organizational spirituality
 - Experiences/stories/perceptions of organizational spirituality
 - Emotions, symbols, metaphors, and language used to describe organizational spirituality and related changes
 - *Reflective Memo A* A focus on interpersonal aspects of narratives
 - Characteristics of interpersonal relationships
 - Sense of belonging/community? Interconnectedness? Acts of caring?
 - Metaphors and language used; subtexts, emotional tone

- *Reflective Memo B* A focus on the organizational level: Descriptions of contexts
 - Processes that underlie acts or moments of organizational spirituality
 - What are characteristics of organizations and work contexts where positive relationships, caring and spirituality are nurtured and flourished?
 - What is it that they do? How do they do it? Why do they do it?

Interview Protocol

Interviewee general information Age, sex, demographics; job and position, years and experiences in the organization, career trajectory

Individual perceptions of spirituality Probe into personal meanings of spirituality, attitudes towards spirituality

Spirituality discourses and narratives Participants were asked to provide stories/narratives of a time when they experienced/witnessed spirituality at work. Collective aspects of narratives probed.

Perceptions of Organizational Spirituality

- What are the shared values that characterize the spirit of this organization?
- What gives life to this organization? What gives meaning to work in this organization?
- Fit between individual and organizational spiritual values:
 - Do you feel at ease expressing your spirituality in this organization? Is organizational culture conducive to spirituality? Your evaluation of values, policies, or programmes regarding spirituality in this organization
- Diary method and visual exercise: draw the picture of your workplace. Try to capture the spirit of this organization (you can think about whatever is relevant: people, relationships, emotional climate, context, values, principles—no format restrictions, total flexibility)
 - You can draw pictures or use metaphors/visuals/concept maps
 - You can create a collage of cuttings and images from old magazines or newspapers that symbolize the spirit of your organization.

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