

## Chapter 3

# Spiritual Leadership in Collectivist Cultures: Turkey Example

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Besides financial freedom, the need for finding meaning and inner satisfaction at work has made people search for more spiritual organizations and leaders. A spiritual leadership style is a holistic leadership approach wherein the leader strives to encourage a sense of significance and interconnectedness among employees. In this sense, spiritual leadership can be considered as a meaningful management approach that can answer the search for meaning for employees. This particular form of leadership, which incorporates group focus, vision, and hope, can be regarded as a form of leadership that fits the nature of collectivist cultures. Giving importance to spirituality, brotherhood, altruism, hope, and hardwork, the Turkish interpretation of Islamic Sufi tradition also composes a proper ground for cultivating spiritual leadership in collectivist and conservative Turkish organizations.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Work ethics and academic studies related to this area became more important in recent years owing to the failures and ethic problems of major corporations like Enron and WorldCom (Rokhman, 2010). And this gave way to an increase

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in a parallel area, namely ethical leadership styles. But, most studies in the related realm are based on American and European experiences, thus relies on the Protestant Work Ethic and have a Western perspective. In Islamic societies, a different perspective is required in understanding morality, work ethics and ethical leadership due to Islam's unique ethical perspective stemming from the Qur'an and sunnah (Rokhman, 2010). Like Weberian Protestantism, Islamic tradition also creates the baseline for the ideological foundation for various social and personal attributes that results in economic development (Rokhman, 2010). That is the reason why Islamic ethics promoted for the Muslim world the golden ages between the eighth and the fourteenth centuries (Ali, 2005).

When contemporary markets are considered, it is easy to notice that the philosophy of capitalist production and consumption has created its own sense of consumption in most cultures. And it becomes more and more materialistic as values of capitalism spreads all over the world. Nowadays, it is very difficult for most individuals to distinguish work from the rest of their daily lives. Modern individual's time is spent mostly on their work and social activities related to their work, that is why they usually do not have enough time for their private life and spiritual needs. In this point, Bauman (2001) claims that the ever-increasing bureaucratization process in contemporary organizations are harmful for human nature and existential realities. It creates an exaggerated monotony, underestimates individuals' internal worlds, and ignores their emotions. That is why, for years, managerial studies were mainly production oriented rather than human. In classical, bureaucratic central organizations, the leader is someone who is not enough to meet the diverse demands of the employees especially in spiritual sense. In this sense, spiritual leadership theory can be considered as a significant help in solving problems of contemporary business life and attracts attention (Fairholm, 1998; Fry, 2003; Chen and Yang, 2012).

In understanding spiritual leadership, the term spirituality is quite important. Spirituality defines the essence of one's existence, inner reality and describes universal values which are independent of time and space and contributes to a more harmonious private and work life. Spirituality can also be considered as a process wherein individuals understand the significance of orienting their lives to something nonmaterial and beyond and larger than themselves. And it is a meaningful tool in meeting requirements of employees who have intrinsically need to find meaning in their work, and to have a membership in a meaningful group in which they feel appreciated and valued (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003).

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