

Chapter 22

The Relationship Between Spiritual Well-Being and Life Satisfaction During COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Turkey is among the countries that has been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thousands of people have lost their lives, and the outbreak has caused millions of people to experience both physiological and psychological problems. This study examines the effect of spiritual well-being on the life satisfaction levels of individuals the COVID-19 pandemic. The research was carried out on white-collar employees working in the service sector in Turkey. The data of the field research was collected through online surveys from a sample of 384 employees. The findings show that spiritual well-being has a positive effect on life satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the loss of thousands of lives all over the world, and it still continues to affect many people. The World Health Organization (WHO) officially announced the coronavirus outbreak as a pandemic on the 11th of March, 2020, and recommended measures to prevent its spread (Contreras, Baykal and Abid, 2020:2). The ongoing disease, which is still contagious, causes psychological reactions such as fear, anxiety, and depression, making it difficult the fight against the epidemic. Although healthcare personnel and authorized institutions are doing their best to combat the pandemic, adopting individual preventive measures is also of great importance.

In many countries, curfews and social isolation rules have been introduced to prevent people from coming together and thus, prevent the spread of the disease. Government decisions on curfew and social isolation adopted in connection with the pandemic have increased individuals' feelings of loneliness. The fact that people move away from their familiar social environments, are deprived of social support, and

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have to struggle alone with the problems brought by the disease have resulted in negative psychological consequences and reduced their quality of life. The difficulties caused by the pandemic have undoubtedly negatively affected the life satisfaction of individuals. Many semi-closures and total closures in Turkey, remote working practices adopted in many sectors, and policies supporting social isolation have deeply affected social life and reduced individuals' quality of life. International Labour Organization (ILO) announced that between 5.3 million and 24.7 million jobs will be lost because of the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19, and this deterioration in employment also means a large loss of income between \$860 billion to \$3.4 trillion by the end of 2020 (Açıkgöz and Günay, 2020). While people have become more concerned about health at the same time they have started to fear unemployment, debts, career breakdown, and broader economic crisis which decreased their life satisfaction even more. In that point, Silahtaroglu, Baykal and Canbolat's (2020) research conducted in Turkey during the Covid-19 period shows that as weeks passed and the disease became more widespread, it led to lower levels of life satisfaction and created anxiety and despair. Undoubtedly, spirituality, which is a common heritage of this culture, has an important contribution to the high spiritual power of individuals, and when individuals are supported by this spiritual faith, they can increase their ability to fight against all the difficulties brought by the disease. Indeed, spirituality has also a special place in Turkish culture (Baykal, 2019a). When faced with traumatic processes, Turkish people tend to hold on to each other as well as to their beliefs more tightly. In fact, as people try to tolerate adversity, difficulties, and misfortunes, they tend to draw strength from their spirituality, which is a factor that increases their inner motivation. In a way, this is an intrinsic motivator that exists in the codes of societies. Turkey has a collectivist culture. In other words, group belonging, social relations, and community involvement are important in this culture. People are generally emotional and sensitive in their daily lives (Baykal, 2019b). Social ties, solidarity, and spirituality have a significant role in individuals' lives, which can also facilitate the struggle against difficulties. In fact, spirituality appears as a concept that is often confused with religion in the historical process (Narcıkara, 2017: 44). However, Fry (2003), with a secular definition, associated spirituality with feelings of love, respect, conscience, patience, tolerance, gratitude and responsibility that provide peace and happiness to the person. This concept is actually necessary for religion but arguably one can also contend that religion is not necessary for spirituality (Boztilki and Ardiç, 2017). Both religion and spirituality increase the psychological resilience of individuals in crisis (Krysinska, Andriessen, and Corveleyn, 2014; Zehir and Narcıkara, 2016). Many previous scientific studies have shown the positive effect of spirituality on psychological health (Koenig, 2010; Milner et al., 2020) and its positive relationship with life satisfaction (Mefford, Phillips and Chung, 2020; Maier & Surzykiewicz, 2020).

The pandemic is a chain of dangerous, mostly uncontrolled, and dynamic events. Owing to the fact that possible consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are rather unpredictable in a short and longer perspective, individuals need psychological and spiritual support in order to struggle with the negative effects of this unpredictable and burdensome period. For many people, spiritual and religious practices give meaning, purpose and constitute a supportive community. In general terms, spiritual well-being creates the necessary means to cope with stressful life events and traumas. Activities, particularly of a religious nature, make it possible to reduce the stress of the pandemic (Coppola, et al. 2021). Hence, this study investigates the effect of spirituality on life satisfaction by focusing on white collar employees during the first months of the pandemic.

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