

# How Does Cynicism Mediate Spiritual Leadership and Organizational Commitment? The Case of Turkish and Indonesian Universities

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## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to determine the role of cynicism in the relationship between the perceived spiritual leadership of university employees and their organizational commitment. Because of the international nature of the problem at hand—university staff in Turkey and Indonesia who are engaged in ongoing educational activities—a comparison strategy predicated on cultural differences was favored. The study utilized correlation analysis and normal distribution determination in SPSS, and structural equation modeling in AMOS to reveal regression relations. Findings suggest that academics in Turkey and Indonesia are more committed to their institutions when they have a positive perception of the organization's spiritual leadership. Likewise, when university employees perceive cynicism in the organization, their commitment to spiritual leadership and the organization reduces. In other words, cynicism appears to partially mediate the relationship between spiritual leadership perception and organizational commitment in both countries.

**Keywords:** Spiritual Leadership, Cynicism Behavior, Organizational Commitment, AMOS, SPSS

**JEL Classification Codes:** M12,M10,J81

**Referencing Style:** APA 7

## INTRODUCTION

The term leadership, which is used frequently in everyday language, is familiar to everyone. However, a public-accepted definition has yet to be developed. From this perspective, it is possible to assert that the literature contains a variety of leadership definitions. Bennis (1989), for instance, compares leadership to a beautiful woman and asserts that we can only comprehend her once we see her. Additionally, Yukl (2002) prefers to define leadership as a unique management state. Meanwhile, Chemers (1997) defines leadership as the ability to mobilize one's followers to achieve one's goals. Studies of leadership have been very important at every point in history. According to the theory of personal characteristics—also known as the traditional approach in leadership research—leaders are preconditioned to certain personality characteristics from birth (Çelik, 1999). However, studies involving the integration of research results on leadership by Myers (1964) and Stogdill (1981) have played a significant role in changing the current thinking about leadership. The most important finding of these studies is that there is

no significant correlation between physical traits or high intelligence and leadership. This implies that leadership is not an innate trait, but rather a learned quality (Aydn, 1991; Kaya, 1993).

Various theories of leadership have developed on the basis of the recognition that many discussions of leadership focus on the leader's personal qualities. Transformational leadership, toxic leadership, visionary leadership, digital leadership, ethical leadership, and spiritual leadership are the leadership concepts that have received the most attention over the past few years. To illustrate one of these theories, sharing leadership entails delegating organizational management to members and providing opportunities (Gronn, 2006). Visionary leadership entails developing future strategies and putting them into action when the time comes (Marx, 2006). Ethical leadership focuses on situations in which individuals in the organization should and should not act (Rubenstein, 2003). Cultural leaders are those who create a culture within an organization, feed off of it, and guide the followers at this point (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988).

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Service leadership sees willingness to help as a natural part of the personality and reveals a leadership understanding that aims to serve the members as a means of influencing them in the process of achieving their goals (Ferch, 2005). Therefore, this study will refer to related studies in order to explain the concept of spiritual leadership while simultaneously identifying similarities and differences between countries (Turkey and Indonesia) in regard to the spiritual leadership theory developed by Fry. It intends to shed light on the role of cynicism in the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Although the concept of spiritual leadership has been briefly discussed, the concept of the soul and the religious and philosophical aspects of spirituality can provide a more comprehensive introduction to the topic. In both theological and philosophical writings, the soul is described as the invisible aspect of the human being. The soul is a concept that concerns the spiritual aspect of the individual, both theologically and ontologically. Furthermore, while classical physics acknowledges that the soul is an energy form and an invisible being that will never vanish, it is still argued that the brain is the source of this energy. When the subject is considered philosophically, the soul is the substance formed by all of the emotions, thoughts, and moral aspects of the person; or it is a non-living object that gives the body the ability to move (Cevizci, 2017).

The concept of a soul has no scientific precedent in the twenty-first century. This is due to the fact that the concept of the soul in modern science is invisible and difficult to test. However, the modern study of psychology and the causes of human behavior did not commence until the first quarter of the 19th century. This study will attempt to answer questions about the soul by referring to the approaches of thinkers from the early Islamic and Hellenistic periods. In Islamic philosophy, the concept of nafs is favored over the concept of soul. Additionally, the word nafs appears 295 times in the Quran, the Islamic scripture (Varlı, 2019). Another important point to consider is that the concept of soul or spirit is extremely complex and profound. In fact, even philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle disagreed on this matter. Furthermore, it is believed that the nafs (soul), as it is used in Islam, is a whole with the material and spiritual aspects of human beings, and the soul is a subtle body that holds this whole together and is alive from infinity to eternity (Hökelekli, 2006).

Al-Kindi (796-866), the first Islamic philosopher, described the nafs as a “very precious divine treasure” and compared it to the sun in that it transfers the energy received from the creator to people (Uysal, 2004). In this regard, according to Al-Kindi, Greek philosophy and Islamic philosophy are viewed as equivalent. Furthermore, he divides the nafs (soul) into three stages: the stage with the ability to live, the stage of thought, and the stage with many powers and will (Kindî, 2014). Although the concept of spiritual leadership has been briefly mentioned, the concept of the soul, as well as the religious and philosophical aspects of spirituality, can provide a better presentation of the subject. The soul, according to theology and philosophy, is the invisible aspect of the human being. The soul is a theological and ontological concept that pertains to the spiritual aspect of the individual. Furthermore, while classical physics acknowledges that the soul is an energy form and an invisible being that will never vanish, it is still argued that the source of this energy is the brain. In terms of philosophy, the soul is the substance formed by all of the emotions, thoughts, and moral aspects of a person; or it is a non-living object that gives the body the ability to move (Cevizci, 2017).

Ibn Sina (980–1037), one of the Islamic philosophers, produced very significant works in the fields of philosophy and medicine, and conducted extensive research on the subject of the soul. In the tractate of *Kitâbu’ş-Şifâ/Nefs* (980/1037), “*We see certain things in our outer world thanks to our will and perceptions. These things we see are not in this forum by their own will or due to our observations. Therefore, everything that creates the nature of these things and enables us to perceive them as they are is called nafs (soul)*” (Ibn Sina, 2013).

He claims that the nafs (soul) is revealed along with the assertion that it is distinct from the material world. In other words, it has been emphasized that it has characteristics such as being personal and not reliant on anyone. In summary, organs are parts of the human body; however, the absence of some of these does not imply the absence of humans. However, these organs alone do not express the human being. Even if everything is destroyed, an individual can still be accepted ontologically; this is known as the ‘self’ or soul (Atay, 1998). In fact, Ibn Sina, like Aristotle, divides the soul into three parts: the human soul, the vegetable soul, and the animal soul (Ibn Sînâ, 2013). According to Farabi (870-950), the soul is a more pleasant being that is unrelated to the nafs. According to him, the soul is an object that has no form and has nothing to do with the mind, and it can be released in

dreams (Farabi, 2009). Ghazali (1058-1111), like other philosophers, weighed the concept of soul against the triad of heart, soul, and mind (Akçay, 2005). Ghazali dealt with the spirit on two levels. While expressing that the source of the first is in the heart, the second is a subtle body that allows human comprehension. Ghazali (1975) classifies the soul into three types: vegetable soul, animal soul, and human soul. While stating that the soul is a creation in his work, he also stated that it is immortal (Ghazali, 1975).

Following the discussion of Islamic philosophers' ideas on the subject, the soul, according to Kutsa b. Luke (820-913), who lived during the early Islamic period and had a significant influence on the transition of Hellenistic philosophy to the Islamic world of thought, is a subtle body that begins with the heart and serves to ensure the flow of blood. According to him, the soul activates the senses and perceptions (feeling) through the brain nerves, and the movements that result from this provide the emergence of the concept (Aydin, 1999). He differs from the Islamic philosophers whose ideas are presented above in this regard because the soul dies with the body. According to the relevant literature, the concepts of spiritual leadership, organizational commitment, and cynicism are discussed below based on these definitions.

### **Spiritual Leadership**

There have been debates about the concept of leadership throughout history, and it has progressed through various stages. Initially, it was assumed that leaders possessed these innate characteristics, and this aspect was discussed. Accordingly, the characteristics of the leaders were identified, and it was believed that individuals who possessed these traits could be leaders. This view is based on the belief that leadership is innate. However, subsequent leadership discussions have argued that leadership is a situation that develops and realizes through learning. What behaviors should leaders exhibit, particularly in light of behavioral theory? Although an answer to the question has been sought, it has been criticized for failing to take into account environmental conditions. Both the traits approach and the behavioral approach contribute to contemporary leadership theories. Paternal leadership, transformational leadership, spiritual leadership, authentic leadership, toxic leadership, and digital leadership are examples of emerging concepts.

As the topic of spiritual leadership has not been extensively researched, this study hopes to fill a conceptual and methodological gap. Spiritual leaders are those who

activate the necessary attitudes and behaviors to provide material and spiritual motivation in the inner worlds of their followers and themselves (Fry, 2003). While spiritual leaders reveal these behaviors and values, they also create vision and values that are compatible with their followers. Furthermore, they force organizations to know, understand, and constantly learn (Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005). Because the loyalty and longevity of employees depend on their satisfaction of their spiritual and psychological needs, spiritual leadership seeks to meet those needs as well (Fry, 2003). From this perspective, it is known that there is a connection between their work life and their spiritual life when their time at work is considered. It is well understood that these situations are inextricably linked (Crossman, 2011).

Another characteristic of spiritual leaders is that they adhere to ethical values and have principles (Northouse, 1997), they trust their followers, and they take care to maintain a sense of empathy among them (Sanders, Hopkins, and Geroy, 2003), thereby fostering the development of common values (Fairholm, 1996). Spiritual leaders have a high level of trust in their followers and encourage them to trust one another (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Spiritual leaders inspire their followers by giving their lives deeper meaning (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Thus, by eliminating organizational alienation and resistance to change, they can boost productivity (DePree, 1992). Spiritual leaders initially change their environment by empowering others to change (Covey, 2004), and they also create values that connect the logic and emotions of their followers. Thus, they ensure that employees' commitment to themselves and the organization reaches marginal levels in every respect (Pfeffer, 2003).

In recent years, numerous studies on spiritual leadership and organizational commitment have been conducted, as evidenced by the literature. In the study conducted by Bozkuş and Gündüz (2016), for instance, it was determined that there is a significant relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment, and that this relationship is strongest when normative and emotional commitments are present. In addition, Tanrkulu (2020) discussed in her graduate thesis the impact of physical education teachers' spiritual leadership behaviors on their organizational commitment. These studies reveal substantial differences between the demographic characteristics of teachers and their spiritual leadership and organizational commitment. In addition, it is stated that there is a significant and robust correlation between teachers' perceptions of spiritual leadership

and organizational commitment. In a broader context, numerous researchers have examined the relationship between spiritual leadership and employee commitment to the organization over the past decade (Fry, 2003; Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005; Fry & Slocum, 2008; Polat, 2011; Chen & Yang, 2012). These data led to the formulation of the following hypothesis:

**H1:** *There is a significant relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment.*

### **Organizational commitment**

There are currently numerous definitions of organizations. To begin, there are a few key terms that serve as excellent high-level descriptions of the organization that must be mentioned. The term "organization" is used to describe a group of people working together toward a common goal (Etzioni, 1964). In this context, it is possible to assert that organizations have an instrumental dimension and are based on the principle of unity of purpose (Scott, 1961). Organizations face opportunities and threats as a result of external and internal environmental conditions. For this reason, it wants to create resistance against the uncertainty in these organizational structures. Therefore, it is desirable for the organization's employees to be devoted to their jobs. However, it is not expected that organizations will form commitments solely due to uncertainty; the state of commitment can become quite complex (Iles et al., 1990). The expected formation of commitment in organizations occurs over a period of time with the formation of values and levels of belonging (Miroshnik, 2013). While organizational commitment ensures that employees remain with the organization, it also reduces employee turnover (Colquitt et al., 2013).

In the field of organizational behavior, the model which was developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) is the widely accepted method for measuring organizational commitment. Furthermore, empirical support has been provided by studies conducted in many countries on the subject (see Battal, 2020; Allen and Meyer, 1996; Cheng and Stockdale, 2003; Lee et al., 2001; Meyer et al., 2002). Affective, continuance, and normative commitment dimensions comprise the three-dimensional model of organizational commitment. In a nutshell, affective commitment refers to the interest that employees have in their commitment to the organization as well as the employee's sense of belonging within the organization. The continuation commitment, on the other hand, illustrates the costs (retirement, bonuses, awards, career steps, compensations, etc.) that employees may incur when they

leave the organization. Normative commitment is the attitude employees should have toward their coworkers and managers in accordance with the organization's moral and ethical rules. Employees only demonstrate this level of commitment when they feel compelled to remain with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Numerous studies have been conducted on leadership styles, as evidenced by the literature. The relationship between organizational commitment and leadership types has also been investigated (Batmunkh, 2011; Ergreen and Iraz, 2017; Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016; Ramayah and Min, 2009). Several studies have examined the connection between cynicism and organizational commitment. For example: Türköz et al. (2013); Yorulmaz and Çelik, (2016); Yıldız (2013); Yavuz and Beduk (2016); Nafei and Kaifi (2013); Yasin and Khalid (2015). (2015). Henceforth, the second hypothesis of the study is as follows:

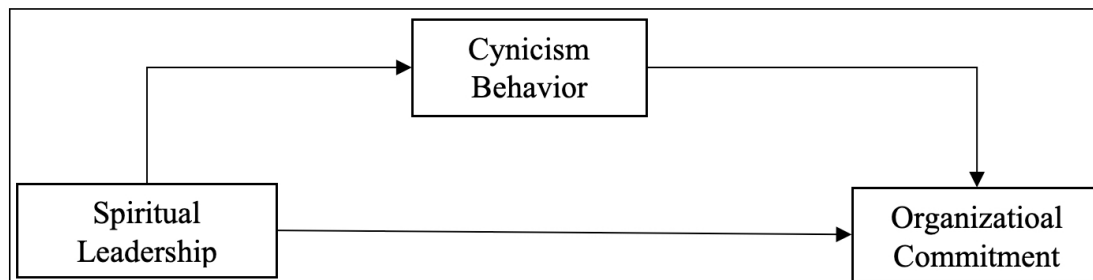
**H2:** *There is a significant relationship between cynicism behavior and organizational commitment.*

### **Cynicism Behavior**

Previous studies on the concept cynicism over the past decade has shown that it is, in fact, a relatively new concept. Furthermore, studies in domestic literature cover recent dates. Despite this, more theoretical and empirical research on the concept of cynicism is expected to be conducted in our countries in the coming years.

Cynicism is a term used to describe the negative emotions that employees may feel towards their organization, such as hatred, greed, anger, psychological burnout, and disappointment. For this reason, cynicism is an undesirable situation for both employees and managers in organizations. Individuals who believe that people only care about their own benefits and that society is largely self-interested, unjust, and Machiavellian are called "cynical." The system of thought that explains this idea is also called cynicism. Cynicism occurs when individuals lose their belief, trust, and sense of justice towards their organizational structures over time. In other words, cynical people are highly critical, focus on mistakes, and have a tendency to be negative (Erdost et al., 2007). Cynicism refers to behavior where people only consider their own interests when explaining their goals and expect others to do the same (Tokgöz and Yılmaz, 2008). These behaviors lead to feelings such as arrogance, lack of empathy, and ruthlessness (Abraham, 2000).

The number of studies conducted on the relationship between spiritual leadership and cynicism is relatively low in our countries. However, when domestic and foreign



**Figure 1.** Research Model

literature is examined, some studies demonstrate that spiritual leadership has a significant impact on cynical behaviors (James et al., 2011; Bilgiç, 2017; Ünal, 2020). These studies show a negative relationship between spiritual leadership and cynicism. The third hypothesis of the study was developed based on this information:

**H3:** *There is a significant relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational cynicism.*

### The Mediating Role of Organizational Cynicism Behavior

Numerous studies on the concept of cynicism can be found in the literature, which examine it as a conceptual, dependent, or independent variable. For example, Durmuş (2022), Kaya et al. (2022), Mills and Keil (2005), Andersson and Bateman (1997), and Tran et al. (2022) have conducted research on cynicism. Some studies also explore the mediating role of cynicism in the relationship between different concepts, such as Fayganoğlu (2021), Yıldırım and Ceyhan (2020), Genç (2018), Çoban and Deniz (2021), Ajawarneh and Atan (2018), and Ogunfowora et al. (2018).

Previous studies on this subject have focused on the dependent, independent, and mediator effects of organizational cynicism behavior. This study aims to reveal the mediating effect of cynicism behaviors on the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment. This model is based on the equity theory, which is one of the motivation theories. Tang and Baldwin (1996) state that employees' commitment to the organization, their sense of organizational justice, and their level of belonging increase when they feel satisfied and treated equally in the workplace. However, their informal or deviant behavior weakens the cynic (Swiercz & Smith, 1991). Therefore, in this study, while examining the commitment of employees to the organization within the context of spiritual leadership, cynicism behavior was included in the model as a mediator that weakens this relationship due to the equity theory. The theoretical infrastructure of this model was developed based on the equation theory and the path model (Baron and Kenny,

1986). Based on this information, the final hypothesis of the theoretical model is presented below:

**H4:** *Organizational cynicism has a mediating effect on the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment.*

## RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted by asking academic and administrative staff from two universities in Turkey and Indonesia to fill out questionnaires. This section will also include the model, scales, and analyses used in the study, as well as the results.

### Research Model

The basic model of the research is presented as follows, based on the above-mentioned literature and Baron and Kenny's (1986) path model.

### Research Sampling

The population of this research comprises university employees who actively provide academic and administrative services in Turkey and Indonesia. The sample was selected using a random sampling technique. Additionally, the surveys were conducted on Google Forms with necessary warnings to prevent data loss between countries, and due to the surveys coinciding with the Covid-19 pandemic period.

A total of 424 questionnaires were collected for the research, with 218 from Turkey and 206 from Indonesia. The average number of academic and administrative staff in both universities is 500. Therefore, it can be said that a sufficient sample representing the population has been obtained with a 4% margin of error and a 95% confidence level at a 5% significance level. The respondents' demographic characteristics are as follows:

There are 101 female and 117 male employees within the sample from Turkey. As for age distribution, 97 of them fall into the 30-39 age category, and 105 belong to the 40-49 age group. Regarding seniority, 45 employees

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients (Turkey)

	Tot ScoreAvr	Ss.	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
<b>1. Spiritual Leadership</b>	24.85	8.33	.74	-.57	(.81)		
<b>2. Organizational Commitment</b>	20.65	7.19	.36	-.65	<b>.782**</b>	(.87)	
<b>3. Cynicism Behavior</b>	19.03	5.87	-.69	-.32	-.314**	-.297**	(.74)

have worked for 5 years or less, 122 have worked for 6-10 years, 34 have worked for 11-15 years, 14 have worked for 16-20 years, and 3 have worked for 21 years or more. Meanwhile, there are 94 female and 112 male employees who filled out the questionnaires from Indonesia. Off this number, 104 of the employees are aged between 30-39, and 102 are aged between 40-49. In terms of seniority, 24 of the employees have worked for 5 years or less, 108 have worked for 6-10 years, 48 have worked for 11-15 years, 19 have worked for 16-20 years, and 7 have worked for 21 years or more.

### Research Scales

The research employed the survey technique, which is a commonly used method for measurement and evaluation. To gauge the participants' level of instant perception, the study utilized 5-point Likert-style scales. The questionnaire included three scales: the spiritual leadership scale, organizational commitment scale, and cynicism behavior scale. Moreover, the study discussed several statistical measures such as Cronbach Alpha value, AVE values, and CR values. The Alpha values of the scales were expected to be 0.70 or above, while the KMO value should be at least 0.60. Additionally, the AVE value was expected to be 0.50 or more, and the CR value was expected to be greater than the AVE value. It can be inferred that the factors explain the structure at a level of at least 0.50 based on the study by Hair et al. (2019: 9). Furthermore, the study noted that an AVE value lower than 0.50 is acceptable if the composite reliability (CR) is higher than 0.60, as cited in Yılmaz and Kınaş (2020).

### Ethical Consent

Ethics Committee Approval was obtained from Bayburt University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the letter numbered E-36671036-050.99-62689/ and the decision numbered 2022/04/14 on 21.03.2022.

### Spiritual Leadership Scale

To measure the level of spiritual leadership perceived by participants in the study, the researchers used a scale developed by Fry (2007), which consists of dimensions such as hope, visionary, and deep commitment. The Turkish equivalent of the scale was revealed by Kurtar (2009). One of the preferred expressions in the scale is "I understand my university's vision and am committed to it."

### Organizational Commitment Scale

The original scale, developed by Penley and Gould (1988), was collected under three dimensions (self-seeking, compulsory, and moral commitment) and the equivalence of the study in Turkey was made by Ergün and Çelik (2019). For our study, we focused on the level of moral commitment, and one of the expressions from the preferred scale was "I really feel like the problems of this university are my problems."

### Cynicism Behavior Scale

The Organizational Cynicism scale, developed by Brandes et al. (1999), was adapted for use in Turkey by Karacaoğlu and İnce (2012), and is expressed under three dimensions (emotional, cognitive, and behavioral cynicism) in both its original and Turkish versions. For our study, we focused on the level of emotional cynicism, and one of the questions from the scale used was "I get nervous when I think of my university."

## FINDINGS AND RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

This study utilized SPSS and AMOS programs to analyze the data. The first step involved examining the reliability of the questionnaires, followed by a discussion of the structural validity of the measurement model. To test the structural validity, confirmatory factor analysis was performed using the Turkish versions. Multicollinearity between the scales was checked, and a correlation

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients (Indonesia)

	Tot ScoreAvr	Ss.	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
<b>1. Spiritual Leadership</b>	21.36	9.18	<b>.69</b>	-.54	(.77)		
<b>2. Organizational Commitment</b>	18.34	5.27	<b>.45</b>	-.75	<b>.546**</b>	(.79)	
<b>3. Cynicism Behavior</b>	12.61	4.36	<b>-.77</b>	-.41	<b>-.447**</b>	<b>-.266**</b>	(.88)

**Table 3.** Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted Values for the Scales

Kavram	CR(Turkey)	AVE(Turkey)	CR(Indonesia)	AVE(Indonesia)
1.Spiritual Leadership	0,741	0,667	0,885	0,599
2.Org Commitment	0,816	0,793	0,836	0,695
3. Cynicism Behavior	0,722	0,615	0,794	0,627

**Table 4.** Goodness of Fit Values of Scales and Research Model (Turkey)

Goodness of Fit Values	$\chi^2$	df	CMIN/DF	SRMR	NFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Spiritual Leadership	159.230	73	2.181	.062	.920	.955	.954	.074
Org Commitment	7.186	7	1.027	.039	.995	.996	.995	.042
Cynicism Behavior	3.280	2	1,640	.045	.997	.984	.996	.054
Measurement Model	541.045	243	2.227	.063	.944	.962	.922	.075

analysis was conducted to reveal the direction of the relationship between the scales. In the last step, SEM was used to test the validity of the hypotheses. The Bootstrap method in SEM analysis was employed to increase the amount of data and evaluate both direct and indirect effects.

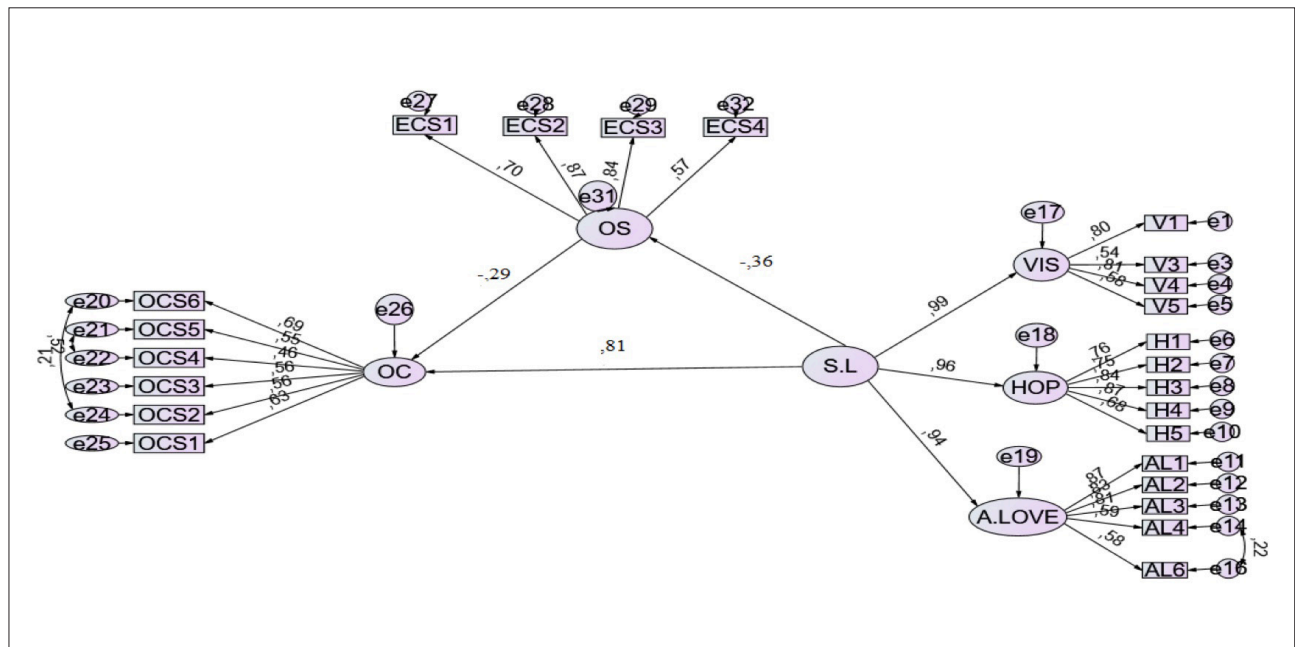
The research findings presented in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that there are significant direct and indirect effects between spiritual leadership, organizational commitment, and cynicism behavior, with a confidence level of 99%. Moreover, the data shows a normal distribution as evidenced by the skewness and kurtosis levels. Furthermore, the reliability of the scales used in the study was deemed acceptable with a reliability level

above 0.70, and participants from both countries were found to have understood the scales well according to Kartal and Dirlik's (2016) study.

The study included confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) for both Turkey and Indonesia using the AMOS package program. The CFA results led to necessary modifications and question elimination based on the program suggestions. The researchers utilized the most widely accepted high-level estimation method available in the literature, as per Gürbüz and Şahin (2016). The CFA analyses showed that the model scales were within acceptable ranges, and Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were examined to reveal any possible reliability issues between the two

**Table 5.** Goodness of Fit Values of the Scales and the Research Model (Indonesia)

Goodness of Fit Values	$\chi^2$	df	CMIN/DF	SRMR	NFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Spiritual Leadership	205.970	98	2.102	.066	.954	965	.956	.073
Org Commitment	10.219	8	1.277	.029	.996	994	.995	.037
Cynicism Behavior	5.671	4	1,418	.032	.956	988	.984	.045
Measurement Model	567.287	241	2.354	.069	.912	934	.912	.078



**Figure 2.** Structural Equation Model (SEM) and Standardized Path Coefficients (Turkey)

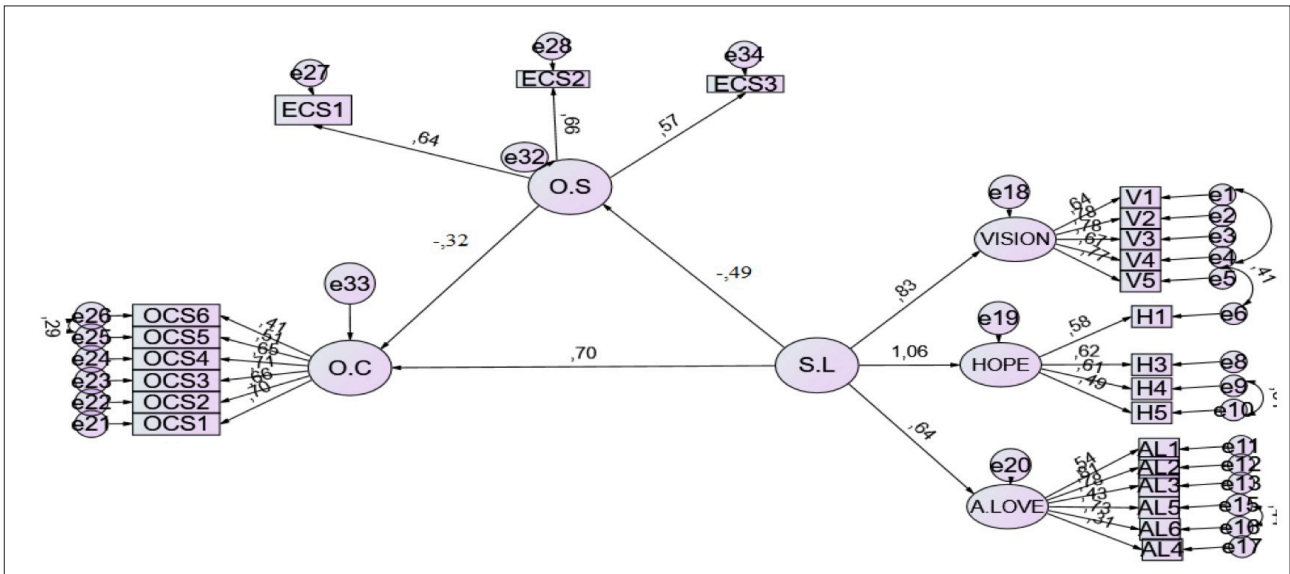
countries. AVE values of 0.50 or higher and CR values greater than the AVE value were considered acceptable. The findings showed that the factors explained the structure at a level of at least 0.50, and both countries had acceptable CR and AVE values as per Hair et al.'s (1998) cited in Yılmaz and Kinaş (2020). In Table 3, the CR and AVE values for both countries were reported, indicating that the scales used in the study were reliable in both Turkey and Indonesia.

The CFA's conducted in Turkey and Indonesia have provided interesting insights into the factor loadings present in these countries. The lowest factor loadings in Turkey ranged between 0.54 and 0.87 in their unmodified state, while in Indonesia, the lowest factor load was found to be 0.51 with the highest factor load of 0.78. All of these factor loads were deemed statistically significant, and they were identified separately for both countries within the basic model.

The goodness-of-fit values obtained through CFA for Turkey indicated a  $\chi^2/df=2.22$ , SRMR= 0.63, NFI=0.94, TLI =0.92, CFI =0.96, and RMSEA=0.75, while the overall model goodness of fit values for Indonesia were a  $\chi^2/df=2.35$ , SRMR= 0.69, NFI=0.91, TLI =0.93, CFI =0.91, and RMSEA=0.78. These values suggest that both countries have acceptable levels of goodness of fit. A summary of these values is provided in Table.4 and Table.5.

The study then proceeded with a path model analysis to examine the mediating role of cynicism behavior in the relationship between perceived spiritual leadership and organizational commitment. This analysis aimed to test the hypotheses formulated and explore the mediation effect. The results of the analysis were presented through the structural models, which formed the basis of the study, and were depicted in Figure 2 and Figure 3.





**Figure 3.** Structural Equation Model (SEM) and Standardized Path Coefficients (Indonesia)

These models provided a graphical representation of the relationship between perceived spiritual leadership, cynicism behavior, and organizational commitment. The values obtained from these models were critical in evaluating the mediating effect of cynicism behavior in the relationship between perceived spiritual leadership and organizational commitment. The findings from this analysis provided a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that exist between these variables and offered valuable insights into the mechanisms that underlie the relationship between them.

The coefficients displayed in Figure 2 and Figure 3 represent the standardized regression coefficients, which are critical in evaluating the strength and significance of the relationships between the variables. As a general rule, if the standardized regression coefficient values are greater than or equal to 0.50, it is considered a strong effect, between 0.30 and 0.50 a medium effect, between 0.10 and 0.30 a low effect, and if the coefficient is below 0.10, the effect is not statistically significant (Kara and Ellialti, 2021). Using the models presented in Figure 2 and Figure 3, the H1, H2, H3, and H4 hypotheses were tested, and the results were summarized in Table 6 and Table 7. Additionally, the indirect effects and the significance of the mediating role were evaluated using the bootstrap method in the AMOS program along with the SOBEL test. These analyses provided a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the variables and the mediating effect of cynicism behavior on the relationship between perceived spiritual leadership and organizational commitment.

Upon analyzing the data obtained from Turkey, the results presented in Table 6 indicated a positive and

significant direct effect of spiritual leadership on the dependent variable ( $\beta = .812, p < .005$ ), thereby accepting the H1 hypothesis. This finding suggests that managers who exhibit strong spiritual leadership skills in Turkey are likely to increase employee commitment to the organization. The indirect effect models were then explored, revealing that spiritual leadership had a negative impact on organizational cynicism, which acted as a mediating variable ( $\beta = -0.364, p < 0.05$ ), thereby meeting the conditions for H2 hypothesis. It was also observed that organizational cynicism had a negative and significant effect on organizational commitment ( $\beta = -0.292, p < 0.05$ ), providing further evidence of the importance of spiritual leadership in reducing organizational cynicism and enhancing employee commitment to the organization. These findings highlight the critical role of spiritual leadership in fostering a positive organizational climate and improving employee engagement and commitment.

Based on the findings of the study, the H3 hypothesis was accepted, indicating that cynical behaviors decrease in organizations with spiritual leaders, and an increase in cynical behaviors can weaken commitment to the organization. Additionally, the mediating effect was analyzed to understand the impact of cynicism behavior on the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment. The results revealed that the effect of spiritual leadership on organizational commitment through cynicism behavior was significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.627, p < 0.05$ ), and the effect size decreased. The SOBEL test also confirmed the partial mediating role of cynicism behavior (SOBEL = 6.745;  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, the H4 hypothesis was

**Table 6.** Mediation Analysis Results (Turkey)

Dependant	Independent	$\beta$	Std. Dev.	t	p
<b>Direct effect</b>					
Organizational Commitment	→Spiritual Leadership	0,812	0,049	24,542	<b>0,000*</b>
<b>Indirect effect</b>					
Organizational Cynicism	→Spiritual Leadership	-0,364	0,054	21,065	<b>0,000*</b>
Organizational Commitment	→Organizational Cynicism	-0,292	0,069	18,471	<b>0,000*</b>
Organizational Commitment	→Spiritual Leadership	0,627	0,066	13,195	<b>0,000*</b>

\*p<0.05 significant effect, p>0.05 no significant effect; SEM

**Table 7.** Mediation Analysis Results (Indonesia)

Dependant	Independent	$\beta$	Std. Dev.	t	p
<b>Direct effect</b>					
Organizational Commitment	→Spiritual Leadership	0,703	0,037	21,145	<b>0,000*</b>
<b>indirect effect</b>					
Organizational Cynicism →	Spiritual Leadership	-0,491	0,044	29,047	<b>0,000*</b>
Organizational Commitment	→Organizational Cynicism	-0,322	0,081	13,475	<b>0,000*</b>
Organizational Commitment	→ Spiritual Leadership	0,541	0,067	15,199	<b>0,000*</b>

\*p<0.05 significant effect, p>0.05 no significant effect; SEM

accepted, emphasizing the critical role of spiritual leadership in reducing cynical behaviors and improving employee commitment to the organization. These findings have important implications for organizations that seek to promote a positive workplace culture and enhance employee engagement and commitment.

The analysis of the Indonesian data is presented in Table 7, where the focus was on examining the direct effect of spiritual leadership on organizational commitment. The results showed a positive and significant effect ( $\beta = .703$ ,  $p < .005$ ), indicating that strong spiritual leadership has a beneficial impact on the commitment of academic and administrative staff working in Indonesia. Therefore, the H1 hypothesis was accepted, and it was concluded that spiritual leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing organizational commitment. Additionally, the indirect effect of spiritual leadership on organizational cynicism

was investigated. The analysis revealed a negative and significant effect ( $\beta = -0.491$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), implying that spiritual leadership can mitigate cynicism within the organization. Overall, these findings suggest that strong spiritual leadership is essential for fostering commitment and reducing cynicism among employees in Indonesia.

The study examined the relationship between organizational cynicism and organizational commitment, as well as the effectiveness of spiritual leadership in strengthening commitment and reducing cynicism behaviors in two countries. The H2 hypothesis was accepted, indicating that the mediation condition was met. The findings showed a negative and significant effect of organizational cynicism on organizational commitment ( $\beta = -0.322$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), leading to the acceptance of the H3 hypothesis. The effectiveness of spiritual leadership was found to have a significant and

positive effect on organizational commitment, while also weakening cynicism behaviors. The mediation effect was also significant, indicating that the role of spiritual leadership in organizational commitment decreased with the effect of cynicism, but remained positive ( $\beta=0.627$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The Sobel test confirmed the significance of these results (SOBEL= 6.745;  $p=0.000<0.05$ ). Overall, the study suggests that spiritual leadership can be an effective strategy for improving organizational commitment and reducing cynicism in different cultural contexts.

In the final stage of the study, the researchers examined the mediation effect of cynicism behavior on the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment. The findings revealed that the effect of spiritual leadership on organizational commitment decreased through cynicism. Despite this, the effect remained significant and positive, with a beta coefficient of 0.541 and a p-value of less than 0.05 ( $\beta=0.541$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The Sobel test confirmed the significance of the mediation effect, indicating that the last hypothesis of the research, H4, was accepted due to the partial mediation role of cynicism behavior (SOBEL= 5.442;  $p=0.000<0.05$ ). These results suggest that even in the presence of cynicism, spiritual leadership can still have a positive impact on organizational commitment.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The theoretical section of the study introduces the concept of spiritual leadership, which serves as the focus of the research and represents the independent variable in the basic model. The etymology of the term "soul" is briefly discussed, along with its philosophical, scientific, and mystical aspects. The concept of "nafs" is also mentioned in relation to the soul, and their similarities and differences are explored. The literature on spiritual leadership, organizational commitment, and cynicism behavior is reviewed, along with relevant studies on the mediation effects of cynicism behavior. In the analysis and findings section of the study, data were collected from 206 university employees in Indonesia and 218 university employees in Turkey using an online survey method. These employees included both academic and administrative staff working in state universities. The study focuses on identifying the relationships between the aforementioned concepts and testing the research hypotheses.

The first step of the study involved assessing the reliability of the measurement scales used to evaluate spiritual leadership, organizational commitment, and cynicism. The scales were found to be reliable. Descriptive

statistics, correlations, skewness, and kurtosis were calculated for each scale in both countries to determine whether the data followed a normal distribution. The results showed that the distribution was normal in both countries, although there were positive and negative correlations between the scales. In the second stage, the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated based on the standardized regression coefficients obtained from confirmatory factor analyses conducted separately for Turkey and Indonesia. The aim was to determine the reliability of the scales as dependent and independent variables. The data met the basic conditions required for the study, with an AVE value of 0.50 or higher, a CR value greater than the AVE value, and a Cronbach's alpha value above 0.70 in both countries. The discriminant validity test was not conducted because the correlation between the scales was not very close to 1. This suggests that the scales were not perceived as being very closely related in the two countries.

The second section of the study focuses primarily on DFA analyses conducted with the AMOS software. To organize and clarify the presentation of data from both countries, the overall goodness-of-fit levels of Turkey and Indonesia have been determined. From Tables 4 and 5, it can be determined that both countries' goodness-of-fit levels are acceptable. Based on the structural equation and path models shown in Figures 2 and 3, it can be inferred that there is a strong connection between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment in both countries. This indicates that the employees' perception of spiritual leadership behavior has a significant impact on strengthening their commitment to the organization, according to the employees in Indonesia and Turkey. However, when considering the presence of cynicism behavior, it is evident that even if employees perceive spiritual leadership in the organization, there is still a significant decrease in their commitment to the organization, according to the perception of employees in both countries.

The research findings from Figure 2 and Figure 3 reveal a significant negative impact of cynicism behavior on both spiritual leadership and organizational commitment in both Turkey and Indonesia. This suggests that when employees perceive cynicism behavior in their organization, it decreases their perception of spiritual leadership and their level of commitment to the organization. The study also includes a mediation analysis for Turkey and Indonesia, which is presented in Table 6 and Table 7. The SOBEL test results were examined using the

theoretical mediation model proposed at the beginning of the study by two methods (Baron and Kenny, 1986). The findings show that cynicism behavior has a partial mediating effect on the relationship between perceived spiritual leadership and organizational commitment in both Turkey and Indonesia. This confirms the basic hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, and H4) created for both countries.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the perception of spiritual leadership behavior has a positive impact on organizational commitment, but this effect is weakened by the presence of cynicism behavior. Furthermore, cynicism behavior mediates the relationship between spiritual leadership and organizational commitment in both Turkey and Indonesia. The Torah, Psalms, Bible, and Qur'an are considered the major books of monotheistic religions, all of which mention the prophet Adam as the ancestor of humanity. The Torah and Psalms were revealed to Jews, the Bible to Christians, and the Qur'an to Muslims. The Psalms contain praises and supplications to Allah but no religious provisions. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zen Buddhism are common in India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, but these religions differ from monotheistic ones in their views on creation.

The story of Abel and Cain, the children of Adam, who represent good and evil, is mentioned in the three holy books. Adam is considered a spiritual leader who showed compassion and love towards all his descendants. The fight between good and evil continues today, and examples of this struggle can be seen in literature and real life. Steinbeck's novel "East of Eden" provides an excellent example of this fight between pure good and pure evil and how individuals at the head of families can be spiritual leaders who direct the development of their families. The concept of spiritual leadership has existed since the first people, and these leaders have influenced the behaviors of their followers with their love, optimism, and spirituality. They have guided both sides in the fight between good and evil. Future studies could explore management philosophies of spiritual leaders from national and international cultures.

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