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Revisiting the Akhi Order: Research on Akhi Values and the Perception of Anatolian People

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Abstract

Akhi is an important system that guided social and commercial life in Anatolia from the 13th century to the beginning of the 20th century. The Akhi Organisations, shaped by the Akhi system of thought, became important social aid and non-governmental organisations of their time. Even though the Akhi organisations legally disappeared at the beginning of the 20th century and were replaced by other organisations, the Akhi thought system continues to be in effect in Anatolia as a cultural heritage. Today, it is quite important for Anatolian people that tradesmen embrace Akhi values closely. This study investigates Anatolian people's perception of tradesmen's Akhi values. Customers' perception of values of the Akhi community is measured via general and sub-dimensions, and its relationship with demographic characteristics is examined through a survey method. The survey data, evaluated by the SPSS 25.0 program, is subjected to Cronbach Alpha, factor, frequency, t-test and a one-way ANOVA test. As a result of the study, it is determined that the participants have a moderate level of perception of the Akhi community and the demographic characteristics of the participants have a significant effect on the perception of values of the Akhi community.

Keywords

Anatolia, Akhi, Akhi Organisations, Perception of Akhi, Akhi Rules

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Introduction

Akhi culture, whose basic philosophy is based on benevolence, hospitality, generosity and brotherhood, started to spread rapidly in Anatolia after the Turks accepted Islam. With the acceptance of Akhi culture in society, Akhi organisations were established, and these organisations started to direct economic life through trade. Akhi culture, which shaped the principles of trade within the framework of Islamic principles, constituted the basis of the Akhi community, which was the most important civil society organisation of its time. Akhi culture, which was based on Islamic principles, had an effect in Anatolia from the 13th century to the 19th century. Akhi organisations based on Akhi culture began to lose power in the following periods, with the economic policies of the Ottoman State and the increasing involvement of non-Muslims in trade; they turned into, first, *gedik*[1] and later, *guild organisations*. The effects of Akhi culture, which guided commercial life in Anatolia for a long time, continue as a cultural heritage today. Therefore, although not legally binding, Akhi principles are still in effect informally for the development and conduct of trade in many parts of Anatolia.

The approach to customer relationship management in today's competitive trade has continued in conformity with the legacy of Akhi culture among Anatolian tradesmen. Similarly, Anatolian people pay respect to Akhi principles, which is a cultural reflection, in their daily consumption routines. This study is an attempt to investigate the importance placed on Akhi culture by tradesmen with whom Anatolian people do their daily shopping. To this end, the study first explains Akhi culture, Akhi organisations and their historical development by evaluating the related literature, and then presents the findings of the empirical research that was conducted in the last section.

Theoretical Framework

The *"Akhi person"* lies at the heart of Akhi culture, which spread rapidly in Anatolia with the conversion of Turks to Islam. The value that that defines the Akhi person is the "Akhi" lifestyle. According to one approach, the word "*Akhi*" has an Arabic origin and is derived from the word "*ah*" which means brother and is expressed as "*my brother*". According to another approach, the expression "*Akhi*" is derived from the word "*akı*", which means "*generous, open-handed*"

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1   Monopoly over trade rights in the Ottoman Empire.

in old Turkish inscriptions such as "*Kutadgu Bilig*", "*Divan-ı Lugati't Türk*" (Özerkmen, 2004:59). In the dictionary of the Turkish Language Society, the word "*Akhi*" is defined as "*generous, brother*", while "*Akhi order*" is defined as "*the guild, which has its roots in ancient Turkish customs and includes all branches of work such as tradesmen, craftsmen, farmers, etc., which show a high level of development in Anatolia*" (TDK Sözlük).

In the understanding of the "*Akhi person*", there is a system of thinking that celebrates living under morality and discipline, reflecting this discipline and morality in one's work, and contributing to society by working. Akhi people have highly valued helpfulness, honesty and integrity. These values caused a change in economic, social and cultural issues by spreading to the entire society over time (Bayram, 1994:30-32). We can easily observe this change in the Anatolian region, where Akhi culture has an effect. Hence, Akhi organisations, which emerged under the influence of Akhi culture, are institutions that have commercial, social and cultural activities that aim to serve society and to act in conformity with work ethics, which is explained with special rules (fütüvvetname) belonging to the organisation, in a systemic hierarchy (such as sheikh-master-apprentice-journeyman) (Aslan, 2013:35; Bayram, 1991:7).

When evaluated in the historical process, Akhi organisations are an institutional system that started to be seen in Anatolia from the 13th century as a result of the union of Turkish customs and traditions with Islamic principles. Akhi organisations coming from the tradition of futuwwa formed the basis of Akhi culture with a Turkish-Islamic synthesis (Şimşek, 2002:18). The understanding of futuwwa is the basis of Akhi organisations. In creating the rules of Akhi organisations, "*futuwwa-nama*[2]", which was shaped as a result of the understanding of futuwwa, have had a great impact on the development of tradesmanship and trade in Anatolia (Bayram, 1994:28; Çağatay 1997:43).

Akhi Evran Sheikh Nasiruddin Ebu'l Hakayık Mahmud Bin Ahmed al-Hoyi, who is regarded as the founder of the Akhi system in Anatolia, came from the Turkmen tribes living in Iran in the 12th century. Akhi Evran left the city of Hoy, Iran in the first half of the 13th century and first went to Damascus, then to Baghdad and Mecca, and then came to Anatolia. After coming to Anatolia,

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2   The works that contain the written principles of the understanding of futuwwa that started to emerge in the regions of Iraq and Iran in the eighth century are called futuwwa-nama (www.islamansiklopedisi.org.tr). Modesty, openness, generosity, fraternity and rejection of worldly life are the basic principles that affect the writing of Futuwwa-namas. (Erken, 1998:11; Anadol, 1991:74).

he organized the tradesmen and artisans within the framework of the futuwwa-nama rules, together with his father-in-law Evhauddin Kırmani in the Kayseri region in 1206, and ensured the establishment of the Akhi organisation in Anatolia. Akhi Evran guided tradesmen from 32 different branches and spread the Akhi understanding to every corner of Anatolia from city centres to villages (Temel, 2007:17; Arslan 2015:26).

Akhi organisations continued to have influence in Anatolia from the 13th century until the beginning of the 20th century (Şimşek, 2002: 18). These organisations affected the social and economic life in many regions, cities, towns, and villages even outside Anatolia, where the Ottoman Empire dominated for a long time (Çeker, 2017:23; Eryiğit, 1989:22). Moreover, the Akhi understanding and Akhi organisations organised social life, too. Therefore, the Akhi understanding has been a complementary order for political, social, military, economic and religious relationships in society (Çeker, 2017:23). The aim of Akhi organisations is to reflect the philosophy and approach toward trade and arts of the Muslims who were in Anatolia or came to Anatolia afterwards. Uniting all tradesmen under one order of rules, Akhi organisations carried out activities contributing to their moral, professional and military development. The fact that the Akhi organisations were not only commercially-founded communities, but also respected science and included the rulers of those times, also provided for the social welfare and peace of societies (Arslan, 2015:253-254).

After the Akhi organisation was present in Anatolia for a long time, it started to weaken as a result of the increasing presence of non-Muslims in the population due to the expansion of the lands of the Ottoman Empire and non-Muslims' engagement in trade. This influence of members of different religions who do not adopt the principles of Islamic belief along with the Ottoman Empire's unique economic understanding, which allowed private investors, caused the structure of the Akhi organisations to turn first into *gedik organisations* and then into *guild organisations* (Bosnalı, 2004:39). Although this structural transformation of the Akhi organisation caused the emergence of different institutions in business life, as a result of the philosophy of Anatolian people shaped by the principles of Islam, it did not disappear completely in social life, and, as a customary legacy, it has lasted until today within the framework of unwritten ethics.

The basic principles of the Akhi thought system are as follows (Bayram,1994:40):

- Loving, respecting and valuing people

- Helping young people

- To place importance on education

- To fulfil the principles of social services

- To place importance on the military profession

- To provide for the opening of businesses

- To engage in economic activities

- To ensure that capital creates employment.

Bonded by these basic principles of the Akhi thought system, Akhi people formed the structure of the Akhi organisation with their generosity, hospitality, moral personality, hard work and justice (Köprülü, 1972:153). Today, the Akhi understanding is still a customary and traditional thought among Anatolian people.

Literature Review

While research on Akhi thought generally deals with the importance and effects of Akhi organisations from a historical point of view, today there is quite a limited amount of research on consumers' view of Akhi values. Studies on the Ahi order in the literature focus on different features of it.

Akman (2006), for instance, examined current daily practices in line with the principles of the Akhi thought system and culture in the Balıkesir region. In the study, *village rooms* and *village houses* in the region were investigated and the relationship between conversations and ceremonies held there and Akhi culture was questioned. The study reached the conclusion that there was a relationship between Akhi culture and the ceremonies and practices held in villages, and these ceremonies and practices increased the feelings of unity and solidarity among people.

Aslanderen (2016) investigated the commitment of tradesmen and artisans to Akhi values in the Kırşehir region. The study applied the "Akhi Values Scale"

to 807 participants and the findings were evaluated through various statistical methods. The study found that tradesmen and artisans are moderately committed to the Akhi values of professional standards, human relations, professional development and professional vulnerability.

Bağdaş (2018) examined the impact of Akhi principles and practices on today's SMEs in Elazığ in terms of entrepreneurship. A questionnaire, which was designed by the researcher himself, was applied to 122 SME managers. The research reached the conclusion that implementation of Akhi principles is crucially important for the development of SMEs.

Manav (2019) investigated the ties of today's tradesmen and artisans with the Akhi philosophy. Within the scope of the research, several interviews were conducted with pharmacists in Konya. As a result of the research conducted on 15 pharmacists registered in the pharmacists' chamber, it was determined that today's professional associations make great contributions in solving their members' problems and helping with professional development by acting like Akhi organisations.

Karagül (2019) investigated the effect of using Akhi principles in new economic policies applied to reduce the negative effects of globalization on income distribution, poverty and the environment. The research defined the concept of globalization and related problems as well as discussing the applicable aspects of Akhi principles towards the problems of globalization. As a result of the research, it was concluded that the attitudes and behaviours arising from the principles and practices of the Akhi can be used effectively in reducing global problems.

Gelici (2007), by comparing the Protestant work ethic with Akhi ethics, discussed the Akhi practices that are not capitalist but constitute the economic and cultural side of Islam. In the study, the differences between the Protestant work ethic and Akhi ethics were explained.

Aladağ (2016) examined the business practices of the jewellery industry within the framework of Akhi criteria. As a result of in-depth interviews with 11 jewellers in Istanbul and Ankara, it was concluded that although some of the Akhi values have been lost, most of them are still active in the jewellery sector today.

In a study conducted by Akça (2013) to examine the relationship between Fethiye region artisans and Akhi traditions, it was concluded that although the Akhi organisation has disappeared formally, they are still values that are widely considered and applied among tradesmen.

Doğan (2011) examined the development and sharing of Akhi principles among tradesmen within the framework of implicit knowledge. In this study, similarities between Akhi principles in the development of implicit knowledge with modern methods are discussed.

Karaman (2007) discussed the Akhi organisation in Çorum in the context of the development of the Turkish Akhi Organisation through historical documents. As a result of the research, it was concluded that the Akhi organisation had an important effect on the development of tradesmen in Çorum.

Bayram (2012) examined the impact of the Akhi order and tradesmen organisations on economic life in the Ottoman Empire. This study discusses the main methods of Akhi organisation while determining the basic practices and principles of tradesmen and the effects of these methods on overall economic developments.

As a result of the literature review, it is understood that there are very few studies where today's customers, whom we define as Anatolian people, evaluate the tradesmen and artisans in terms of Akhi principles. This study is especially important in terms of addressing Akhi thought, which continues to have cultural effects in Anatolia, from the perspective of consumers and therefore will fill the gap in the literature.

Methodology and Findings of the Research

Purpose and Importance of the Research

Even though Akhi organisations lost their institutional existence at the beginning of the 20th century, Akhi culture continues its influence in Anatolia today as a legacy. Today, Akhi culture and practices continue to regulate business life, shape the relationships of tradesmen and artisans with customers, and shape the traditional principles of modern customer relationship management as unwritten customary rules. In this context, Anatolian people attach importance to the characteristics of Akhi culture while shopping and expect local tradesmen to act in accordance with Akhi values.

The purpose of this study is to measure to what degree customers perceive Akhi values to be present in the tradesmen with whom they do business. The study is important in terms of being an important reference in determining the deficiencies and expectations in the regulations to be made by tradesmen organisations. In this way, tradesmen organisations can develop more effective relationships with their members by using the data that will emerge from this study. In this context, the questions of the study are:

- To what degree are Akhi values held by tradesmen, according to customers?

- According to the customers, to what degree do tradesmen hold Akhi values according to the following sub dimensions: Professional standards, Relationship with people, Professional Development, Vulnerability?

- According to the demographic characteristics of the customers, to what degree are Akhi values held by tradesmen?

Method of the Research

This study, which aims to determine the perceptions of customers about the level of Akhi values of tradesmen, is conducted using the "survey" method, which is a quantitative research method. The survey is composed of two sections. In the first part, there are six questions to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants. In the second part of the study, the "Akhi Values Scale", which was developed by Yeşil and Aslanderen (2017) and used in various studies and whose validity and reliability has been proven, is used. The scale, which consists of 32 questions in total, evaluates the Akhi values of the tradesmen in four sub-dimensions (Occupational Standard Factor, Human Relations Factor, Professional Development and Education Factor, Vulnerability Factor). The scale questions consist of a 5-point Likert scale: "Totally Disagree, Disagree, Partially Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree". Answers are evaluated between 1 and 5 points respectively, and in the analysis of the data, the average value of the answers is examined. The average scores obtained as a result of the research are evaluated as follows:

- Between 0.01-0.99 means *very bad* Akhi values perception.

- Between 1-1.99 points means *bad* Akhi values perception.

- Between 2-2.99 points means *medium* Akhi values perception.

- Between 3-3.99 points means *good* Akhi values perception.

- Between 4-5 points means *very good* Akhi values perception.

The fieldwork of the research was carried out in October 2019. Ethics Committee Permission was not obligatory for research conducted before 2020. For this reason, ethical committee approval for the study was not implemented. However, informed consent was obtained from the research participants.

The Population and Sample of the Research

Considering limitations such as high costs, Covid-19 bans, and legal and time constraints, it was not possible to reach customers in all of Anatolia, so the population of the research consists of people over the age of eighteen living in Elazığ[3]. The sample of the study was chosen from the population by the random sampling method. While the population of the study consists of 411,981[4] people over the age of 18 living in Elazığ province according to the population data, the sample of the research consists of 826 people. The sample size of the study is adequate at the population level, and the data are at an acceptable level with a 95% confidence level, and +/- 3.41 margin of error.

Reliability, Validity and Restrictions of the Study

The Cronbach Alpha test was applied to the data to determine the reliability level of the study. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the "Akhi Values Scale" used in the study was found to be "highly reliable[5]" at the 0.853 level. Considering the sub-dimensions of the Akhi Values Scale, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.897 in the professional standard dimension, 0.864 in the relationship with people dimension, 0.802 in the professional development and education dimension, and 0.868 in the vulnerability dimension.

The Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test are applied to the data to determine their suitability for factor analysis. If the KMO value is 0.50

3   If the size of the universe is known already, n=N t2 p q/d2 (N-1) +t2 p q formula is applied in calculation of sample size (Baş, 2008:87)

4   Results of distribution of address-based population data by age groups (https://www.nufusu.com/il/elazig-nufusu)

5   Cronbach Alpha is achieved with high reliability at 0,80<R<1,00 level (Yıldız ve Uzunsakal, 2017:13)

and above and the Bartlett's Test is at p <0.001, factor analysis is accepted as suitable for the data (Field, 2000:28). The KMO value of the scale was obtained at 0.82 and the Bartlett test data were calculated at the level of (p <0.01). Therefore, the results obtained show that the data are suitable for factor analysis. As a result of the factor analysis, it was determined that the total variance of the distribution was 0.88. If the total variance of the study is 0.50 and above, it reveals validity and the scale becomes meaningful (Büyüköztürk, 2002: 472-473). The limitations of the study, whose reliability and validity were obtained, are as follows:

- Research data is limited to ''Ahi Values Scale''

- In the study, it was accepted that the participants gave objective answers.

- The research was limited to Elazığ province due to geographic, time, economic and Covid-19 constraints.

Findings

As a result of the preliminary examination of the research findings, it was decided that 826 out of the 975 questionnaires would be evaluated and the data were converted into numerical codes and processed and interpreted in the SPSS 25.0 program. Demographic findings of the research and the perception of Akhi values were evaluated respectively.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants in detail. According to Table 1 data, 53.0% of the participants are female (445 people) and 46.1% are male (381 people). The balanced distribution of women and men in the general population of Elazığ is reflected in the gender distribution of the study. 45.9% of the participants are married (379 people), 51.1% are single (422 people), and 3% have an "other" marital status (25 people). The age distribution of the participants is as follows: 18-25 age range is 23.4% (193 people), 26-32 age range is 21.2% (175 people), 33-39 age range is 22.2% (184 people), 40-46 age range is 21.7% (179 people), 47 and above is 11.5% (95 people). The age distribution of the participants reflects the general age distribution of Elazığ.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable		f	%
Gender	Female	445	53.9
	Male	381	46.1
Marital Status	Married	379	45.9
	Single	422	51.1
	Other	25	3.0
Age	18-25	193	23.4
	26-32	175	21.2
	33-39	184	22.3
	40-46	179	21.7
	47+	95	11.5
Education Level	Illiterate	20	2.4
	Primary School	117	14.2
	High School	255	30.9
	Associate Degree	242	29.3
	Undergraduate and above	192	23.2
Occupation	Non-working	88	10.7
	Unpaid Family Worker	99	12
	Student	188	22.8
	Private Sector	283	34.3
	Public Sector	168	20.3
Monthly Income (TL)	2000 and below	292	35.4
	2001-3000	111	13.4
	3001-4000	170	20.6
	4001-5000	187	22.6
	5000 and above	66	8.0

Moreover, as seen clearly from the table, most of the participants have an education level of high school and above with an income of 3000 TL and above. The employment status of the participants also shows large variation, ranging from being unemployed to unpaid family worker and public/private sector. In this way, the general demographic characteristics of the participants reflect the average data of the region.

General Akhi Order Values and Sub-Dimensions of Participants

In Table 2, the Akhi values perceptions of the participants are given together with their general and sub-dimensions. According to the data in Table 2, the overall Akhi value perception dimension of the participants was determined to be 2.89. This result shows that the participants have a medium level of Akhi values perception. This situation shows that consumption patterns and traditions are changing with advancing technology. The Akhi understanding, which has

been losing influence in Anatolia since the 20th century, continues to exist after a century, albeit at a moderate level. The Akhi principles, which reveal the traditional side of the principles of modern customer relationship management, seem to continue to be effective.

Table 2
Overall Akhi and Sub-Dimension Perception Levels of Participants

Akhi Values Dimensions	N	$\bar{X}$	σ
Professional Standard Dimension	826	3.04	0.82
Human Relations Dimension	826	2.83	0.84
Occupational Development/Education Dimension	826	2.84	0.76
Vulnerability Dimension	826	2.80	0.78
Overall Akhi Values	826	2.89	0.72

Akhi sub-dimension values of the participants were examined according to the data in Table 2. Among the sub-dimensions, the occupational standard has been determined at a good level with 3.04. The existence of national and international standards in today's trade conditions and the fact that these standards are an important value for the customer in shopping transactions have revealed the need for tradesmen to comply with the standards. Human relations, as another sub-dimension, was found to be at a medium level with 2.83. Relations with the customer are particularly important for the sustainability of local artisans. The occupational development and education sub-dimension was obtained at medium level with 2.84. Today, tradesmen should attach importance to education and keep themselves up-to-date in order to improve. The lowest data among all sub-dimensions were obtained in the vulnerability dimension, with 2.80 at a medium level.

When the 32 propositions directed to the participants are evaluated in general, the perceptions that emerged at the best level were that the tradesmen "respect and place importance on the profession in which they earn their sustenance" and "They are content with less earnings, they are grateful for a lot". The lowest level of perception in the participants was detected in the propositions "They try to deceive the customer by praising their goods" and "They are greedy about gaining goods and making money".

Impacts of Participants' Demographic Characteristics on Perception of Akhi Values

This part of the study examines the relationship between the demographic characteristics of the participants and the overall Akhi values and sub-

dimensions. Our research evaluates the data by using the t-test and one-way Anova analysis. Before the evaluation process of the data, we checked the normality and homogeneity values for the suitability of the data for evaluation. The *akewness* and *kurtosis* values of the data occur at an acceptable level, and the homogeneity appears to be greater than p> 0.005. The data are suitable for evaluation in terms of homogeneity.

Table 3 displays the perceptions of Akhi level and sub-dimensions of the participants according to their gender. Considering the result of the t-test applied to the data, a statistically significant difference occurs at p <0.05 in the dimensions of general mentality and occupational standard, human relations and vulnerability. There is no statistically significant difference at the p <0.05 level in the professional development and education sub-dimensions.

Table 3
Akhi Order Values Levels of the Participants by Gender Variable

Sub-dimension	Female			Male		
	N	$\overline{X}$	σ	N	$\overline{X}$	σ
Occupational Standard Dimension	445	2.92	0.78	381	3.18	0.88
Human Relations Dimension	445	2.66	0.73	381	3.03	0.85
Occupational Development/ Education Dimension	445	2.85	0.74	381	2.82	0.79
Vulnerability Dimension	445	2.91	0.92	381	2.68	0.94
Overall Akhi Value	445	2.84	0.44	381	2.96	0.52

The gender factor of the participants stands out as a factor affecting the Akhi values. While the Akhi values for male participants is 2.96, the same value is 2.84 for female participants. The overall Akhi order perception of men seems higher than women. A variety in results are obtained as regards sub-dimensions. To this end, the occupational standard dimension is 3.18 for males and 2.92 for females; human relations dimension is 3.03 for males and 2.66 for females. Male participants have a higher level perception in regards to professional standards and human relations sub-dimensions. Finally, in the vulnerability dimension, it was 2.91 for females and 2.68 for males. This shows us that the vulnerability perception of females is higher than males.

Table 4 displays the perceptions of Akhi level and sub-dimensions of the participants in detail in terms of their marital status. We applied a One Way Anova test in order to see the impact of marital status of participants on their Akhi values perceptions and reached the value of 0,02 Sig. at p<0,05 level. In

addition, there is a significant statistical variety among variables. We employed the Bonferroni test to determine among which groups there is a difference between variables and found significant groups at p<0,05 level.

Table 4
Akhi Values Levels According to the Marital Status Variable of the Participants

Sub-dimension	Married			Single			Other		
	N	$\overline{X}$	σ	N	$\overline{X}$	σ	N	$\overline{X}$	σ
Occupational Standard Dimension	379	3.20	0.89	422	2.89	0,86	25	3.24	0.74
Human Relations Dimension	379	2.91	0.83	422	2.74	0,75	25	3.10	0.92
Occupational Development/ Education Dimension	379	2.92	0.76	422	2.79	0,77	25	2.41	0.43
Vulnerability Dimension	379	2.74	0.94	422	2.88	0,74	25	2.54	0.83
Overall Akhi Value	379	2.97	0.45	422	2.88	0,48	25	2.83	0.52

According to the data in Table 4, overall Akhi values perception of married participants is higher than that of single participants. As regards sub-dimensions, a variety in findings stand out clearly. The occupational standard sub-dimension is 3.20 for married participants and 2.89 for single ones; the human relations sub-dimension is 2.91 for married participants and 2.74 for single participants; occupational development/education sub-dimension results in 2.92 for married participants and 2.79 for single participants. Married participants have a higher perception of occupational standard, education and human relations than singles. As regards the single participants, vulnerability perception sub-dimension results in higher levels. We disregarded the "other" category since the number of participants in this category represents a very small part (3%) of the percentile.

Table 5 shows us in detail the perceptions of Akhi level and sub-dimensions of the participants according to their age status. We applied a One Way Anova test in order to see the impact of age status of participants on their Akhi values perceptions and reached the value of 0.03 Sig. at p<0.05 level. Besides, there is a significant statistical variety among variables. We employed the Bonferroni test to determine among which groups there is a difference between variables and found significant groups at p<0.05 level.

Table 5
Akhi Values Levels According to the Age Variable of the Participants

Age/Di-men-sion	General			Occupational Standard			Human Rela-tions			Occupational Development/ Education			Vulnerability		
	N	$\overline{X}$	σ	N	$\overline{X}$	σ	N	$\overline{X}$	σ	N	$\overline{X}$	σ	N	$\overline{X}$	σ
18-25	193	2.84	0.55	193	2.79	0.86	193	2.81	0.77	193	2.79	0.85	193	3.01	0.90
26-32	175	2.92	0.38	175	3.11	0.75	175	2.87	0.68	175	2.96	0.71	175	2.63	0.92
33-39	184	2.92	0.47	184	3.19	0.79	184	2.82	0.81	184	2.84	0.74	184	2.67	0.79
40-46	179	2.91	0.41	179	3.08	0.74	179	2.82	0.77	179	2.80	0.70	179	2.88	0.93
47 and above	95	2.89	0.61	95	3.05	0.98	95	2.85	0.91	95	2.76	0.82	95	2.84	0.88

Considering the data in Table 5, the sub-dimensions of occupational standard, human relations and occupational development/education occur in lower levels for the 18-25 age group than other groups, whereas the vulnerability sub-dimension is measured higher for the same age group than the other groups. In general, young participants' perception of Akhi values culture is generally lower than other age groups. This situation shows that Akhi culture weakens due to different factors as time passes. This indicates that Akhi culture gets weaker as the age increases, due to various factors.

Table 6 shows us the perceptions of Akhi level and sub-dimensions of the participants according to their education levels. Using a One Way Anova test, we determine the impacts of education level on the perception of Akhi values of participants and as a result, we obtained 0.01 Sig. value at p<0.05 level. Based on our findings, it is also possible to assert that there is a clear variety in variables. To determine among which groups there is a difference between variables we employed the Bonferroni test and found significant groups at p<0.05 level.

Table 6
Akhi Values Levels of Participants According to Their Educational Levels

Sub-Dimensions	Illiterate (n=20)		Primary School (n=117)		High School (n=255)		Associate Degree (n=247)		Undergradu-ate/Graduate (n=192)	
	$\overline{X}$	σ	$\overline{X}$	σ	$\overline{X}$	σ	$\overline{X}$	σ	$\overline{X}$	σ
Occupational Standard Dimension	2.92	0.65	2.71	0.83	3.10	0.74	3.16	0.48	3.02	0.55
Human Relations Dimension	2.82	0.74	2.49	0.42	2.90	0.54	2.91	0.54	2.87	0.47
Occupational Development Dimension	2.65	0.72	2.66	0.74	2.82	0.69	3.01	0.62	2.77	0.41

Vulnerability Dimension	2.56	0.61	3.20	0.77	2.73	0.42	2.66	0.51	2.84	0.81
Overall Akhi Value	2.76	0.59	2.74	0.48	2.91	0.44	2.96	0.49	2.89	0.62

According to the data in Table 6, the higher the education level, the higher the overall Akhi values. While the overall Akhi values is 2.89 for undergraduate and graduate groups, it is 2.96 for associate degree graduates, 2.91 for high school graduates, 2.76 for illiterate participants, and 2.74 for primary school graduates. While associate degree graduates have the lowest degree in sub-dimensions of occupational standard, human relations and occupational development, primary school graduates have the highest degree of vulnerability sub-dimension. Hence, as the education level increases, the overall Akhi values level for the tradesmen with whom customers do their shopping increases as well.

Table 7 presents in detail the perceptions of Akhi level and sub-dimensions of the participants according to their employment status. Conducting One Way Anova test, we measured the impacts of employment status on the perception of Akhi values and as a result, we obtained 0.02 Sig. value at $p < 0.05$ level. Moreover, a statistically significant variety is witnessed among variables. To see among which groups there is a difference between variables, we employed the Bonferroni test and found significant groups at $p < 0.05$ level.

Table 7
Akhi Values Levels of Participants According to Their Employment Status

Sub-Dimensions	Non-working (n=88)		Domestic Roles/ Family Business (n=99)		Student (n=188)		Private Sector (n=283)		Public Sector (n=168)	
	$\overline{X}$	σ	$\overline{X}$	σ	$\overline{X}$	σ	$\overline{X}$	σ	$\overline{X}$	σ
Occupational Standard Dimension	2.70	0.77	3.11	0.84	2.90	0.82	3.15	0.85	3.14	0.82
Human Relations	2.62	0.88	2.98	0.77	2.79	0.66	2.95	0.92	2.72	0.67
Occupational Development Dimension	2.66	0.61	2.62	0.93	2.79	0.74	2.85	0.85	3.02	0.77
Vulnerability	3.02	0.92	2.70	0.88	2.86	0.76	2.75	0.74	2.77	0.82
Overall Akhi Value	2.73	0.47	2.89	0.48	2.84	0.50	2.96	0.53	2.93	0.32

Table 7 shows us that participants working at private or public sector have a higher degree of overall Akhi values perception than the ones who do not work, do housework and are students. As regards the sub-dimensions, a similar comparison can be made between different employment statuses. As such, private sector workers have the highest degree of the occupational standard

sub-dimension; domestic workers/family business workers present the highest degree of the human relations sub-dimension; public sector workers have the highest degree of occupational development, and finally, non-working participants show the highest level of the vulnerability sub-dimension. Therefore, it is obvious that there is a direct relationship between the employment type and the overall Akhi values.

Table 8 shows in detail the perceptions of Akhi level and sub-dimensions of the participants according to their income levels. A One Way Anova test was applied to the data to determine the effect of the income levels of the participants on the perception of Akhi values and 0.03 Sig value was reached at $p<0.05$ level. A statistically significant difference was found between the variables. The Bonferroni test was applied to the data in order to determine among which groups there is a difference between variables and, significant groups were found at the $p <0.05$ level.

Table 8
Akhi Values Levels of Participants According to Their Income Levels

Sub-Dimensions	2000 TL and less (n=292)		2001-3000 TL (n=111)		3001-4000 TL (n=170)		4001-5000 TL (n=187)		5000 TL and above (n=66)	
	$\bar{X}$	σ	$\bar{X}$	σ	$\bar{X}$	σ	$\bar{X}$	σ	$\bar{X}$	σ
Occupational Standard Dimension	2.79	0.86	3.17	0.85	3.35	0.74	3.05	0.78	3.11	0.73
Human Relations	2.81	0.85	2.93	0.85	2.95	0.65	2.66	0.80	2.94	0.76
Occupational Development Dimension	2.75	0.81	2.60	0.64	2.98	0.77	2.91	0.87	3.16	0.55
Vulnerability	3.01	0.87	2.44	0.82	2.55	0.81	2.99	0.75	2.64	0.69
Overall Akhi Value	2.82	0.53	2.84	0.53	3.00	0.43	2.91	0.43	2.99	0.44

According to the Table 8, participants with a monthly income between 3001-4000 TL present the highest degree of overall Akhi value. Similarly, the same group also presents the highest value of occupational standard and human relations sub-dimensions. Occupational development, as another sub-dimension, gains the highest value in the group, with monthly income between 4001-5000 TL. Because of all these findings, it can be assumed that there is the same level of relationship between monthly income and education status. Since a rise in income levels would occur as the education level increases, it seems plausible and meaningful that we would get similar results in both demographic features.

Discussion and Conclusion

The Akhi order is an important system of thought relying on social values, putting forward a philosophy of life and including a number of different training processes. Akhi organisations shaped around Akhi philosophy stood out as the significant institutions of their time to determine the way that social life and trade relationships took place. Akhi thought dominated the social life in all of Anatolia from the 13th century to the beginning of 20th century. This dominance started to weaken with the change in the structure of society and the transition of trade to the international dimension. Today, even though Akhi values or Akhi organisations do not have a legal basis, it continues as a dominant understanding in Anatolian trade relationships as a customary heritage. Akhi culture has inspired many of today's institutions (Chamber of Tradesmen, Association of Tradesmen, etc.) and today's modern understanding of customer relations management.

Broadly speaking, the vast majority of Akhi literature mainly focus on two research areas. Firstly, a group of the studies discuss the social functions and core values of Akhi culture from a historical perspective. The second group of studies, on the other hand, investigate whether the Ahi values are still valid today. All of these studies have been applied on different business sectors in different cities of Anatolia.

However, almost all of the Akhi studies have carried out their research on tradesmen and artisans. Hence, there is almost no study focusing on customers. Therefore, this study brings a difference and innovation to the relevant literature as it takes customers as the focal point and accordingly, makes a significant contribution to the Akhi culture literature.

This study investigates how customers today evaluate tradesmen and artisans in terms of sustaining Akhi values even though it does not have legal basis anymore. In short, the basic question of this study is to what extent Akhi philosophy is implemented and followed by today's tradesmen. As a result of the study, the answer we can give to this question is that Akhi values are still maintained at a medium level. The low Akhi values perceptions of especially young age groups and changing consumption and shopping patterns in general weaken overall Akhi values, and this reveals the fact that today's tradesmen have to keep these values alive in order to compete better, at least in their local

market. The relationship between demographic characteristics of Anatolian people and Akhi values varies according to the variables of marital status, educational status, monthly income and employment status, and these features affect the level of overall Akhi perception.

Today's tradesmen organisations should carry out studies that will keep the modern approaches of Akhi values alive in their regions. It is important for local economies and markets to revive the Akhi philosophy, which is getting weaker day by day. Therefore, the following issues should be focused on:

- Priority should be given to studies on Akhi culture,

- Awareness should be raised among tradesmen and customers in order to keep the Akhi culture alive,

- It should be kept in mind that Akhi culture is a great legacy of Anatolia,

- The structure of today's organisations, which have similar characteristics to Akhi organisations, should be strengthened.

As a result, keeping in mind that Akhi culture is a great legacy of Anatolia, it should be ensured that the Akhi thought system is integrated with today's social values. The Akhi order, a great cultural heritage, must be reactivated in a way that also benefits national development.

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