The impact of workplace spirituality on lecturers' attitudes in tourism and hospitality higher education institutions

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A B S T R A C T

Despite the significance of workplace spirituality, a limited number of tourism studies have empirically examined its outcomes within tourism higher education institutions (HEIs). To address this gap, this study investigates the influence of workplace spirituality on lecturers' engagement, commitment, workforce agility, trust, and empowerment. A quantitative approach was adopted by gathering surveys from 218 tourism and hospitality lecturers in HEIs in Italy and Portugal. With the employment of PLS-SEM, the empirical findings reveal that workplace spirituality has a positive and significant impact on lecturers' engagement, commitment, workforce agility, trust, and empowerment. This research contributes to tourism knowledge about workplace spirituality within HEIs. It also provides empirical contributions related to management of lecturers' attitudes and behaviour in tourism HEIs.

1. Introduction

Lecturers are fundamental key workers in higher education institutions (HEIs), they represent their institutions and determine the quality of the education and learning process. They also drive innovation in pedagogical methodologies and encourage students' involvement (Walder, 2014) and they provide serious publications with ethics to be considered by different committees for promotion, scholarship approvals, lectures, doctoral exams and future job applications (Khoo-Lattimore, 2018a, 2018b).

In this regard, workplace spirituality (WPS) plays a pivotal role in the creation of a climate of trust, engagement, commitment, empowerment and workforce agility. Work climate is created by all the actors in the process. In the HEIs case, the educational managers, lecturers, and students are the main players in creating an environment and a climate of strong and positive relationships, to ultimately achieve exceptional learning outcomes (Shephard, 2008).

The concept of WPS is a powerful driver in organisations' climate and has been studied by several researchers, such as Driscoll and Wiebe (2007), who have contributed to the conceptualisation of the construct. Hackman and Oldham (1980) has created a job characteristics model,

making a strong connection with WPS. Moreover, Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs considers WPS fundamental for workers' well-being.

By analysing the state of the art regarding WPS, it is possible to find a proliferation of theoretical and empirical studies on how WPS is an important predictor of employees' well-being (Friedman & Lobel, 2003). Studies also reveal that, when the organisational climate is framed by WPS, workers build meaningful relations and integrated positive connections with their managers, and with their co-workers (Pfeffer, 2010).

More specifically, other studies have addressed WPS in organisations by making correlations with variables such as performance (Ashmos & Duchon, 2005; Jurkiewicz, Robert, & Giacalone, 2004; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012), job satisfaction (Altaf & Awan, 2011; Lee, Lovelace, & Manz, 2013), work attitude (Gatling, Kim, & Milliman, 2016; Milliman, Czaplewski, & Ferguson, 2003), organisational commitment (Kazemipour, Amin, & Pourseidi, 2012; Rego, Pina, & Cunha, 2008), job engagement (Roof, 2015; Saks, 2011), innovative work behaviour (Afsar & Rehman, 2015), work agility (Paul, Jena, & Sahoo, 2019), and knowledge sharing behaviour (Rahman, Osmangani, Daud, Chowdhury, & Hassan, 2015).

Considering the goal of this paper, it is also important to analyse the studies that examined WPS in tourism and hospitality context. There are

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several studies observing a diversity of perspectives such as employee attitudes (Crawford, Hubbard, Lonis-Shumate, & O'Neill, 2009; Gatling et al., 2016), service quality (Lee et al., 2013), customer service experiences (Pandey, Gupta, & Arora, 2009), recompenses systems (Chia, 2012), employee engagement (Milliman, Gatling, & Kim, 2018), employee organisational citizenship behaviour (Rezapouraghdam, Alipour, & Darvishmotevali, 2018), employee sustainable behaviour (Rezapouraghdam, Alipour, & Arasli, 2019), and employee productivity (Biswakarma, 2018).

WPS in HEIs has also attracted a nascent body of valuable literature (Abu Bakar, 2020; Paul et al., 2019). WPS could influence lecturers' work attitudes and improve their performance, sustaining powerful meaningful relationships at the workplace. Lectures play an active role in academic institutions, and their improved spirituality generates a positive connection between lecturers and colleagues. Lecturers/employees' aligned personal values and work behaviours would in turn contribute towards enhancing students' human potential (Barkathunnisha, Lee, Price, & Wilson, 2018).

While there may be relevant literature that has explored the WPS concept from different perspectives and scientific dominions, and correlated it with multiple concepts, it is also evident that both theory and empirical research methods of this field must be significantly extended (Abu Bakar, 2020; Paul et al., 2019). This is even more evident in the realm of tourism and hospitality HEIs.

Tourism and hospitality HEIs are responsible for developing professionals with the adequate competencies and work attitudes to create a more strategic sector. In this context, HEIs need to generate a climate of trust that effectively engages (Hughes & Rog, 2008), increases commitment, empowers, and strengthens the workforce agility of their lecturers, and WPS can be the driver for achieving these goals. As a result, the purpose of this study is to analyse the relationships and correlations between WPS and such variables.

To the best of our knowledge, there is no research that investigates the outcomes of WPS on the work attitudes of tourism and hospitality lecturers in HEIs in Italy and Portugal. More specifically, based on a literature search on databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and others, studies' results that empirically investigate the impact of WPS on lecturers' engagement (ENG), commitment (COM), workforce agility (WAG), trust (TRT) and empowerment (EMP), have not been found.

Understanding and analysing the effects and implications that WPS has on workplaces in different countries will result on relevant information for HEIs, which could be used to create ideal conditions for their lecturers. This will also provide guidance for future research on WPS in tourism and hospitality HEIs.

To do this, the paper is organized as follows: first, the paper presents a literature review about WPS, its definition and its effects on work attitudes, and the hypotheses derived from theory; it then presents the research methodology, and empirical results and main findings. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion, implications for practice and theory, limitations, and future research directions.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Workplace spirituality

In the existing literature, it is possible to find numerous definitions and measurements of the concept of spirituality, which has been studied in different disciplines. However, the limitations and complexities of this concept have not yet been well clarified (Case & Gosling, 2010). Besides its ambiguity, the concept has often been defined indirectly through its similarity with religiousness. In particular, previous research has supported that spirituality is interchangeable with religiousness (Slater, Hall, & Edwards, 2001), and that religiousness is a broader construct compared to spirituality (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Pargament, 1999; Zinnbauer et al., 1997).

In our research, 'spirituality' refers to the tendency to guide thoughts, feelings, and behaviour by the gist or idea of whatever is beyond, and seen as ultimately important, and which can be expressed both religiously and non-religiously (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Pargament, 1999; Zinnbauer et al., 1997).

When applying the concept of spirituality to the organisational context, its definition remains unclear (Biswakarma, 2018; Milliman et al., 2018). The existing literature defines WPS (Beehner & Blackwell, 2016; Petchsawang & McLean, 2017) as the spiritual well-being of workers in relation to their working conditions. WPS has also been defined as a facilitator of workers' relationships with co-workers, which can ultimately contribute to their sense of completeness and joy (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003), to finding meaning and purpose in their job, and strength to strive for those values (Paloutzian, Emmons, & Keortge, 2010).

Spirituality in the workplace is incorporated in organisational values by several researchers (Beehner & Blackwell, 2016; Petchsawang & McLean, 2017). Their research highlights the positive relationship between specific values and cultural traits, in creating "an environment where integration of the personal and professional selves is possible, engaging the whole person in the work process" (Jurkiewicz et al., 2004, p. 134).

WPS is understood as a mix of attributes at an individual level and in the organisational context. Existing literature has highlighted that WPS is positively correlated with important organisational variables, such as performance (Ashmos & Duchon, 2005; Jurkiewicz et al., 2004; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012), work attitude (Gatling et al., 2016; Liu & Robertson, 2011; Milliman et al., 2003), job involvement (Milliman et al., 2003; Pawar, 2009), organisational commitment (Kazemipour et al., 2012; Rego et al., 2008), innovative work behaviour (Afsar & Rehman, 2015), work agility (Paul et al., 2019), and trust and knowledge sharing behaviour (Rahman et al., 2015). Therefore, bringing spirituality into the workplace will lead to a greater sense of humanistic values, and to changing the organisational culture in order to improve organisational performance (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003).

In the educational context, namely in HEIs, existing studies on spirituality yield valuable insight regarding the lecturers' implementation of new practices in the teaching and learning process (Shahjahan, 2010). And, periodically, HEIs revise their strategies to create a spiritual environment to motivate lecturers, and to create a climate of trust (TRT). This is done by encouraging all educational actors to feel engaged in their activities and to "express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). A successful strategy may be providing all actors with autonomy in making decisions, and inspiring a sense of belonging, which would help improve organisational performance (Abu Bakar, 2020; Ashmos & Duchon, 2005; Jena & Pradhan, 2018; Jurkiewicz et al., 2004; Kanter, 1983; Paul et al., 2019; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012).

2.2. Influences of workplace spirituality in tourism and hospitality HEIs lecturers' behaviours

2.2.1. Workplace spirituality and employees' engagement

Engagement (ENG) has been studied by several researchers, but the most common definition is "the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694). It is the "simultaneous employment and expression of a person's preferred self in task behaviours that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performance" (p. 700). ENG in the organisation and in the job position provides the employees with sufficient energy to improve their performance. As such, work engagement inherently represents an intrinsic motivation to perform (Soliman & Wahba, 2019; Zeijen, Peeters, & Hakanen, 2018). HEIs, as a type of organisation, define people management strategies to make their lecturers engaged, which is key to heighten the level of learning outcomes,

and a driver of individual attitudes and behaviour (Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young, 2009; Petchsawang & McLean, 2017; Richman, 2006). Increasing the employees' engagement in the organisation creates conditions for more WPS (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004; Pfeffer, 2010), as it is recognised that spirituality is one of the crucial dimensions of human personality (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002). Therefore, if an organisation encourages spirituality, it encourages its employees to bring their "whole self to work" (Krishnakumar & Neck, 2002; p. 159). In contrast with these research conclusions, some researchers have argued that WPS and employee ENG exist independently (Saks, 2011). Moreover, only a limited number of studies have connected them and suggested how they might be related (Harter et al., 2002; Macey et al., 2009; Saks, 2011).

Together with defining strategies to increase their employees' ENG (Mirvis, 1997), organisations also try to find new ways to increase employees' self-esteem, recognition, and respect (Kruger, 1999; Schwartz, 2000), factors that positively influence WPS. In line with this idea, organisations are implementing health policies, distributive justice practices, integrity principles, cultural diversity, as part of promoting identification with the core values of the organisation. These policies and values, together with employee development programmes (Altaf & Awan, 2011) are promoted in order to heighten WPS, and to ultimately increase employees' ENG. This relationship between WPS and ENG has been studied by several researchers (Milliman et al., 2018; Petchsawang & McLean, 2017), in the educational context of lecturers. Altaf and Awan (2011)'s study specifically highlights the importance of studying the relationship between WPS and lecturers' ENG, supporting the relevance of the first hypothesis that emerges from the literature:

H1. Workplace spirituality has a positive impact on lecturers' engagement.

2.2.2. Workplace spirituality and employees' commitment

Employee commitment (COM) can be defined as a psychological state that characterizes an employee's relationship with the organisation, and that reduces the likelihood of an employee leaving the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 2000).

The relationship between WPS and COM has been investigated by prior research. According to Rego, Pina and Cunha (2008), when employees practice WPS, they feel more affectively attached to their organisations, and they experience a stronger sense of obligation/loyalty. In addition, empirical evidence has been found on the spill over effect from WPS, which may improve employees' organisational COM, and thus contribute to job performance and to overall organisational performance (Beehner & Blackwell, 2016; Kazemipour et al., 2012). Moreover, to increase COM, employees must be aligned with the mission, vision, and values of their organisation (Jena & Pradhan, 2018; Rego et al., 2008). In line with this, existing research has found support for the positive relationship between organisational spiritual values in the workplace and employee COM (Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005; Milliman et al., 2003). In educational settings, the lecturers' effectiveness improves if they display positive organisational behaviour, a sense of belonging, and a deep COM to their institutions' success (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2012; Wang & Bird, 2011). Thus, the next hypothesis is:

H2. Workplace spirituality has a positive impact on lecturers' commitment.

2.2.3. Workplace spirituality and workforce agility

Workforce agility (WAG) refers to how employees of an organisation react to the threats and to the ecological changes in the most suitable manner, and demonstrate their capability of adapting to the changes occurring in the work environment, in the optimum condition at all times (Paul et al., 2019). Technological advancements are one of the ground-breaking phenomena in organisations, and mainly in the higher education sector, where they have been developed during the last years.

Educational technology has become transversal to all activities and an indispensable factor in higher education and to lecturers' daily lives. It includes the use of learning management systems to organise classes, to make learning resources available, and to address the need of constant upgrade of knowledge about the latest statistical software tools (e.g., NVivo for understanding qualitative data analysis), which support lecturers' research work. However, not only technology is changing, but pedagogical methods and educational models are also being revolutionised, and all these changes require agility. In addition, time management skills of academics are being required to manage teaching workload and simultaneously conduct interdisciplinary research, as part of building an agile teaching workforce (Abu Bakar, 2020). This "revolution in the measurement of collective human behaviour" (Kleinberg, 2008, p. 66) influences the mind-set of lecturers, who are increasingly required to become more agile.

The creation of an agile workforce means to have lecturers who have a positive attitude towards changes and new challenges (Paul et al., 2019; Wolf & Durstmuller, 2018). HEIs are employing spirituality promotion to improve agility in the workplace, by allowing teams to work autonomously, by encouraging collaboration between colleagues, and by motivating them to work passionately and without negative feelings (Paul et al., 2019). The presence of spirituality creates a climate of trust, encouraging lecturers and developing WAG (Paul et al., 2019).

However, few studies have conducted and validated research that shows how WPS influences WAG (Muduli & Pandya, 2018; Paul et al., 2019). It is evident that empirical research on the relationship between WPS and WAG must be significantly extended, particularly in tourism and hospitality HEIs. Due to the lack of research on this point of view, we hypothesise:

H3. Workplace spirituality has a positive impact on lecturers' workforce agility.

2.2.4. Workplace spirituality and employees' trust

Trust (TRT) is a multidimensional concept and its definition depends on the theoretical framework under study. In relation to the organisational context, TRT can be defined as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p. 712). TRT is essential for any organisational relationship, as it can drive motivation, unanimity and harmony among employees. Through these, TRT can consequently lead to an excellent organisational culture that encourages cooperation and drives employees to increase their individual performance (Afsar & Rehman, 2015).

To create an environment and culture of TRT among employees, WPS is a fundamental factor (Jurkiewicz et al., 2004). Jurkiewicz et al. (2004) have conducted a review of the concept of spirituality, and created a framework including numerous values such as TRT and its effects in organisations. In this study, TRT is considered as "a state of being able to confidently depend on the character and truth of the organisation and its representatives" (Jurkiewicz et al., 2004, p. 131). Krishnakumar and Neck (2002), with their spiritual freedom model, have included TRT, and examined various viewpoints on spirituality, explaining potential benefits of promoting it in organisations.

Additional studies have concluded that the presence of spirituality in a climate of TRT among lecturers in HEIs can generate several benefits, in terms of pedagogical performance and learning outcomes, better synergies and interactions among lecturers, and a positive environment (Abu Bakar, 2020; Nedkovski, Guerci, De Battisti, & Siletti, 2017; Paul et al., 2019).

The existing literature on TRT in organisational and educational fields gives valuable insight for HEIs' people management (Bird et al., 2012). Previous studies have demonstrated that the increase in TRT

directly or indirectly results in more positive workplace behaviours and attitudes such as employees' ENG (Bird et al., 2012; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Based on these considerations, the following hypothesis has emerged:

H4. : Workplace spirituality has a positive impact on lecturers' trust.

2.2.5. Workplace spirituality and employees' empowerment

There are two major approaches to empowerment (EMP) (Maynard, Gilson, & Mathieu, 2012), respectively related to social structure and to psychological EMP. Social structure EMP focuses on empowering leadership, specifically on the way a leader cultivates employees' latent skills, by providing them with the autonomy to make decisions influencing organisational performance (Kanter, 1983). Psychological EMP is related to different varieties of conduct on the job. Here, spirituality acts as a resource that decreases negative aspects of the job setting, and enhances positivity in employees' mind-set, increasing confidence, autonomy, freedom, and influence on their work (Spreitzer, 1995, 2008). According to Conger and Kanungo (1988), and Spreitzer (1995), EMP is defined as self-determination of an individual's sense of autonomy, better stance of self-esteem, or having a choice to initiate and regulate actions, which is typically associated with visionary and charismatic leaders. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) define competence as a generalised sense of a person's ability to increase job performance. In this study, we argue that when lecturers' spiritual moral values are aligned with the organisation values, employees feel psychologically empowered to work with a positive mind-set. For HEIs lecturers this is even more important, as they are leaders in the classroom, and need to feel empowered to take initiative or drive a positive environment (Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011; Spreitzer, 1995, 2008) in order to improve the learning process and outcomes. In our review of the existing literature, we did not find clearly defined associations between WPS and EMP in tourism and hospitality HEIs. Thus, the fifth hypothesis is developed:

H5. : Workplace spirituality has a positive impact on lecturers' empowerment.

Building on the presented literature review and formulated hypotheses, the proposed research model is illustrated in Fig. 1.

3. Methodology

3.1. Questionnaire and measurements

Based on the illustrated research model, a structured questionnaire was developed to collect data from participants in Italy and Portugal. The final form of the questionnaire involves two main parts. The first part comprises demographic features of respondents including gender, age, name of the university, academic position, job status, major, work experience, institution type and country. The second section includes measures of the six constructs, namely WPS, ENG, COM, WAG, TRT and EMP. The justification of our choice of hospitality and tourism HEIs and items describing reviewed constructs was based on previous studies: WPS (20 items; Beehner & Blackwell, 2016); ENG (15 items; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006; Petchsawang & Mclean, 2017), COM (9 items; Rego et al., 2008; Fryea, Kangb, Huhc, & Leed, 2020), WAG (7 items; Muduli, 2016), TRT (7 items; Ayoko & Pekerti, 2008; Mayer & Davis, 1999), and EMP (9 items; Spreitzer, 1995; Hall, 2008) (see Appendix 1). All items used in this study were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree). The survey form was reviewed by four professors specialising in tourism and management to check content validity before being distributed to participants.

3.2. Sampling and data gathering

Lecturers of tourism and hospitality courses in HEIs in the countries of Italy and Portugal were the target population of this study. According to the population location, the probabilistic sampling techniques could not be conducted in this study, because of the large size of the population and its distributed presence in many geographical regions within the two countries. Consequently, convenience sampling was used in this study, considering that the members of the target population are homogeneous, characterised by being in the tourism and hospitality sector and academic staff specialising in and/or teaching tourism and hospitality courses (namely lecturers) (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This research employed an online survey to collect data from respondents. Invitations to fill the survey were sent through emails and social media to tourism and hospitality lecturers in HEIs in the two selected countries.
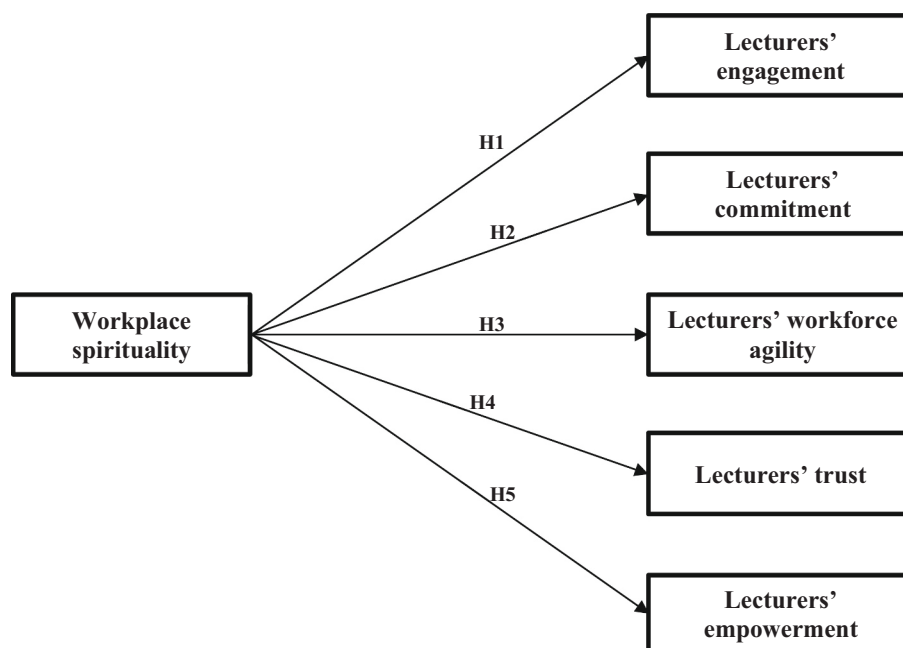

Fig. 1. The conceptual framework.

The online survey was distributed from 3rd February 2020 to 27th February 2020, and 218 valid responses were obtained, with 113 surveys collected from Italy and 105 from Portugal.

Table 1 illustrates the demographic features of respondents. With regards to gender, 54.1% of all respondents were female and 45.9% were male. Italy and Portugal were similarly proportioned, with 46.9% and 44.8% male respondents respectively and 53.1% (Italy) and 55.2% (Portugal) female respondents. 35.3% of the total sample was aged between 30 and 40; the largest age group of respondents in Italy was less than 30 years old (35.4%), while respondents in Portugal were mainly aged between 30 and 40 (52.4%). Of all participants, 33.9% were employed as assistant professors, a position undertaken by 48.6% of respondents in Portugal and 28.3% of respondents in Italy (a position to which these respondents referred as 'assistant lecturer'). Regarding job status, 72% of the overall sample was full time, with 69.9% full-time employed in Italy and 74.3% full-time employed in Portugal. Participants belonged to both tourism (33.5%) and hospitality (27.1%) majors, with respondents in Portugal specialised in hospitality (53.3%) and tourism (38.1%), and respondents in Italy majoring in tourism (29.2%) and other disciplines (68.1%). With regard to their work experience, around 37% of study participants reported less than 5 years' or more than 10 years' experience. In Italy, 47.8% of respondents had less than 5 years' work experience and in Portugal, 37.1% had 5 to 10 years' experience. In addition, 54.6% of all respondents affiliated with governmental institutions, with 75.2% of Italian respondents in government institutions, while in Portugal, 67.6% of respondents belonged to private institutions.

3.3. Data analysis

Considering the sample size and the nature of causal relationships between the latent variables, this study employed the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). Employing WarpPls 7.0 software packages (Kock, 2020), the current paper applied the two-step procedure suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). This allowed to carry on SEM data analysis and to examine the fit of the collected data with the conceptual framework (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In doing

so, the measurement model was first assessed to ensure the reliability and validity of the research variables. Secondly, the structural models were conducted to measure the relationship between the studied constructs and to test the hypotheses. It is evident that PLS-SEM has been substantially conducted in several studies (e.g. Chen & Wu, 2020; Huang, Dai, & Xu, 2020; Soliman, 2019) within tourism and hospitality contexts.

4. Research findings

4.1. Measurement model testing

To test the measurement (outer) model, a number of steps were implemented. First, to establish indicator reliability, the outer loadings for each latent variable should have a cut-off point of at least 0.60 (Amaro & Duarte, 2015; Chin, 1998). Therefore, we excluded all items that had loadings scoring less than 0.60 (Appendix 1). As a result, the analysis was re-performed and all loadings were above the recommended value of 0.60. The next step is assessing the reliability and validity for the reflective constructs included in the research model. The latent variables' reliability was assessed by testing composite reliability (CR). The values of CR (Table 2) exceeded 0.70, proving construct reliability (Manley, Hair, Williams, & McDowell, 2020). Concerning the scale validity, both convergent and discriminant validity were evaluated. Based on the results provided in Table 2, convergent validity was confirmed, since the average variance-extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50 (Hair, Howard, & Nitzl, 2020). Regarding discriminant validity, the approach of heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) was used (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015), as a superior criterion compared to Fornell and Larcker (1981)'s approach. As provided in Table 3, HTMT.$_{90}$ values for all latent variables were below 0.90, except for WPS-ENG with 0.915, but still significantly less than 1.0 (Henseler, 2017). Therefore, discriminant validity was established. With respect to the goodness-of-fit indices, as shown in Table 4, the fit indices values of APC, ARS, AARS, AFVIF, GoF, SPR, RSCR, SSR, and NLBCDR were adequate and acceptable (Kock, 2020).

4.2. Structural model assessing

To examine the causal relations between the investigated latent variables, the structural model was assessed depending on the following measures: path coefficients (β) and their significance (*p*-value), R^2, effect size (f^2), and Q^2 (Hair et al., 2020). Fig. 2 elucidates the results of the structural model. It is revealed that WPS has a significant and positive impact on ENG (β = 0.86, $p < .01$), COM (β = 0.78, p < .01), WAG (β = 0.68, p < .01), TRT (β = 0.60, p < .01), and EMP (β = 0.70, p < .01). As a result, H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 were supported. With regard to R^2 values, the findings produced R^2 values of 0.74 for ENG, 0.61 for COM, 0.46 for WAG, 0.37 for TRT, and 0.49 for EMP. Based on the given R^2 values of the endogenous constructs, the inner model showed a good explanatory power. In the following step, we evaluated the effect size (f^2) of path coefficients. Manley et al. (2020) demonstrated f^2 value as follow: $0.02 < f^2$ value $< 0.15 =$ low effect size; $0.15 < f^2$ value $< 0.35 =$ medium; and f^2 value $> 0.35 =$ large effects. According to the findings presented in Table 5, large effect sizes were found among all links between the investigated latent variables. Subsequently, the Q^2 was assessed. According to Hair et al. (2020), Q^2 values should exceed zero to be meaningful, and be considered medium ≥ 0.25, and large ≥ 0.50. As presented in Table 5, we found Q^2 values of 0.73 for ENG, 0.60 for COM, 0.45 for WAG, 0.36 for TRT, and 0.48 for EMP. These values elucidate substantial predictive relevance of the research model.

Furthermore, we performed multi-group analyses (MGA) to compare the impact of WPS on the five outcomes (i.e., ENG, COM, WAG, TRT, and EMP) of lecturers located in Italy versus those located in Portugal. In this regard, we employed two widely-used approaches, namely Satterthwaite's, and pooled standard error (Kock, 2020). As shown in

Table 1
Respondents' demographic profile.

Characteristic	Classification	Total sample % (n = 218)	Italy % (n = 113)	Portugal % (n = 105)
Gender	Male	45.9	46.9	44.8
	Female	54.1	53.1	55.2
Age	Less than 30	20.2	35.4	3.8
	30–40	35.3	19.5	52.4
	41–50	22.9	21.2	24.8
	51–60	14.7	15.9	13.3
	60 or older	6.9	8.0	5.7
Academic position	Assistant lecturer	18.8	28.3	8.6
	Lecturer	16.5	20.4	12.4
	Assistant professor	33.9	20.4	48.6
	Associate professor	17.4	19.5	15.2
	Professor	13.3	11.5	15.2
Job status	Full-time	72.0	69.9	74.3
	Part-time	28.0	30.1	25.7
Major	Tourism	33.5	29.2	38.1
	Hospitality	27.1	2.7	53.3
	Others	39.4	68.1	8.6
Work experience	Less than 5 Years	37.6	47.8	26.7
	5–10 years	25.2	14.2	37.1
	More than 10 years	37.2	38.1	36.2
Institution type	Governmental	54.6	75.2	32.4
	Private	38.5	11.5	67.6
	Other	6.9	13.3	0.0
Total		100%	100%	100%

Table 2
The measurement model assessment.

Latent variables/items (reflective)	SFL	CR	AVE
Workplace spirituality (WPS)		0.949	0.510
WPS1	(0.699)		
WPS2	(0.671)		
WPS3	(0.684)		
WPS4	(0.746)		
WPS5	(0.737)		
WPS6	(0.603)		
WPS7	(0.750)		
WPS8	(0.764)		
WPS9	(0.798)		
WPS10	(0.759)		
WPS11	(0.661)		
WPS12	(0.774)		
WPS13	(0.712)		
WPS14	(0.686)		
WPS15	(0.745)		
WPS16	(0.658)		
WPS17	(0.693)		
WPS18	(0.689)		
Lecturers' engagement (ENG)		0.946	0.618
ENG1	(0.803)		
ENG2	(0.868)		
ENG3	(0.835)		
ENG4	(0.816)		
ENG5	(0.760)		
ENG6	(0.780)		
ENG7	(0.747)		
ENG8	(0.837)		
ENG9	(0.830)		
ENG10	(0.684)		
ENG11	(0.655)		
Lecturers' commitment (COM)		0.920	0.561
COM1	(0.693)		
COM2	(0.722)		
COM3	(0.733)		
COM4	(0.810)		
COM5	(0.745)		
COM6	(0.792)		
COM7	(0.750)		
COM8	(0.730)		
COM9	(0.759)		
Lecturers' workforce agility (WAG)		0.921	0.625
WAG1	(0.718)		
WAG2	(0.857)		
WAG3	(0.825)		
WAG4	(0.820)		
WAG5	(0.748)		
WAG6	(0.787)		
WAG7	(0.769)		
Lecturers' trust (TRT)		0.813	0.521
TRT1	(0.687)		
TRT2	(0.761)		
TRT3	(0.721)		
TRT4	(0.716)		
Lecturers' empowerment (EMP)		0.904	0.653
EMP1	(0.874)		
EMP2	(0.848)		
EMP3	(0.828)		
EMP4	(0.762)		
EMP5	(0.718)		

Note: SFL = Standardized Factor Loadings; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted.

Table 3
Discriminant validity (HTMT ratio).

Construct	WPS	ENG	COM	WAG	TRT	EMP
WPS						
ENG	0.915					
COM	0.847	0.873				
WAG	0.739	0.706	0.886			
TRT	0.752	0.773	0.789	0.730		
EMP	0.775	0.829	0.668	0.495	0.774	

Table 4
Model fit and quality indices.

Average path coefficient (APC)	0.724	P < .001
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.531	P < .001
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.529	P < .001
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	3.690	< 5.0, acceptable
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.556	> 0.36, large
Sympson's paradox ratio (SPR)	1.000	Ideally
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	1.000	Ideally
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1.000	>0.7, acceptable
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	1.000	>0.7, acceptable

Table 6, the findings of MGA indicated that there are no significant differences regarding the values of path coefficients (β) and *p*-value between the two groups. This means that there are no substantial differences in the influence of WPS on the behaviour of tourism and hospitality lecturers in HEIs, in both Italy and Portugal.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The current study aim was to investigate the influence of workplace spirituality (WPS) on tourism and hospitality lecturers' attitudes in terms of their engagement (ENG), commitment (COM), workforce agility (WAG), trust (TRT), and empowerment (EMP) within HEIs. To address this aim, a quantitative approach was adopted by using a survey to gather data from a sample of tourism and hospitality lecturers working at HEIs in two Western European countries: Italy and Portugal. PLS-SEM was utilized to analyse the collected data and test the research hypotheses. Based on the empirical findings of this paper, all hypotheses proposed in this paper were confirmed, as WPS has positive and significant consequences on work attitude-related variables (i.e., ENG, COM, WAG, TRT and EMP) in relation to tourism and hospitality lecturers in HEIs in the two selected nations.

The empirical results indicated that WPS positively and significantly influenced the engagement of tourism and hospitality lecturers in both countries. This result is in line with the findings of prior studies proposing that ENG is substantially affected by WPS in organisations within different contexts (e.g., May et al., 2004; Pfeffer, 2010). More specifically, by analysing the items of ENG, it is possible to identify the dimensions of engagement illustrated by Kahn (1990, p. 694), namely the cognitive dimension of ENG which is related to the lecturers' beliefs regarding the HEI, the senior management, and work conditions (Beehner & Blackwell, 2016; Petchsawang & McLean, 2017). An emotional dimension of lecturers' engagement was also identified, which is linked to the lecturers' feelings about the institution, the senior managers and working conditions, and to whether they perceived to have positive or negative attitudes towards them. This seemed to be reflected in the opinions of lecturers who had positive perceptions about their work environment and in the way their work represented a valuable purpose in their lives (Paloutzian et al., 2010). The physical dimension that is associated with lecturers' involvement in their educational activities, was expressed by their dedication to work as well as to the institution itself. This dimension was also described by the lecturers' willingness to perform their tasks with pleasure and to provide higher levels of quality work (Lee et al., 2013).

Results showed that WPS has a positive and significant effect on lecturers' commitment towards their HEIs. In this regard, lecturers consider themselves as a part of the institution, and feel that they have to remain in the institution to effectively contribute to its growth as well as to its reputation and prestige (Abu Bakar, 2020; Paul et al., 2019). This finding supports previous studies' results (e.g., Beehner & Blackwell, 2016; Kazemipour et al., 2012; Rego et al., 2008) indicating that there is a positive association between WPS and employees' COM. This can be achieved through a solid relationship between lecturers and their institutions, built on high levels of commitment and trust. This will
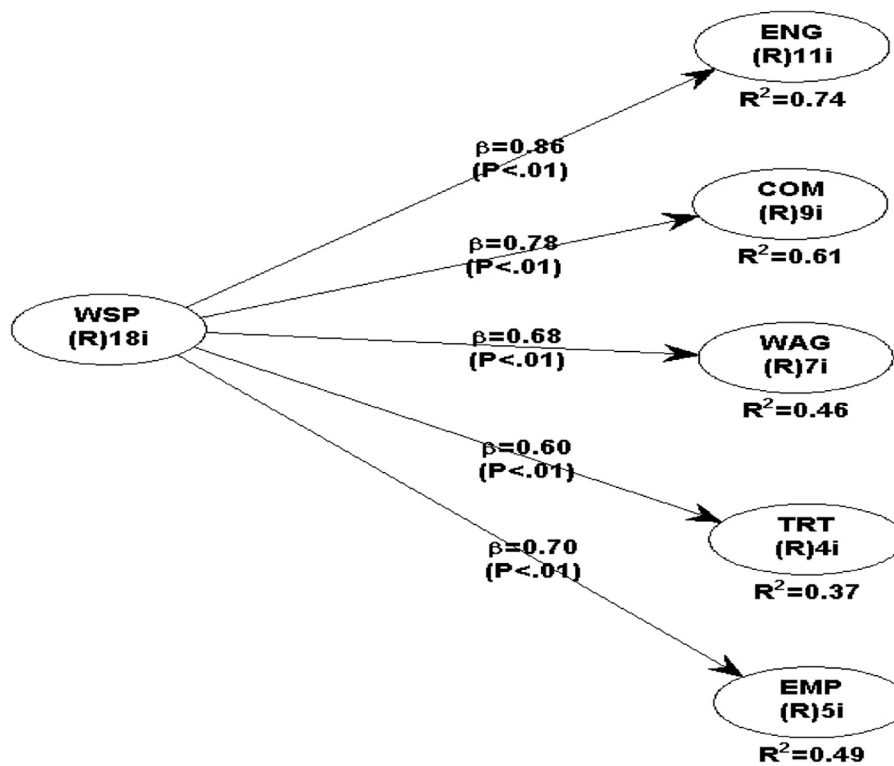
Fig. 2. Results of the inner model.

Table 5
The structural model and hypotheses testing.

Hypotheses	Path coefficient (β)	P value	Effect size (f^2)	Results
H1: WPS → ENG	0.858	<0.001	0.736	Supported
H2: WPS → COM	0.780	<0.001	0.608	Supported
H3: WPS → WAG	0.678	<0.001	0.459	Supported
H4: WPS → TRT	0.605	<0.001	0.366	Supported
H5: WPS → EMP	0.698	<0.001	0.487	Supported

converge into a work culture focused on innovation and change, needing further levels of COM towards activities provided within the HEIs.

Moreover, the empirical results demonstrated that WPS substantially and positively impacts the WAG of tourism and hospitality lecturers in the two countries. WAG here plays a fundamental role, because lecturers need to be prepared to use new educational technologies, new pedagogies, and new methods of teaching and learning (Shahjahan, 2010). Lecturers are also eager to learn new knowledge and develop new skills in their fields. In this vein, their enhanced openness to new experiences and technology will consequently lead to develop their skills, and will be considered as a trigger and force for more innovative processes within HEIs. This finding supports the work of Muduli and Pandya (2018) and Paul et al. (2019), who indicated that WAG has a significant association with WPS.

In addition, the findings indicated that TRT of tourism and hospitality lecturers in both Italy and Portugal is positively affected by WPS. This result concurs with past studies (e.g., Bird et al., 2012; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002) demonstrating that higher levels of individuals' TRT could directly or indirectly lead to workers' more positive attitudes and behaviours towards workplace. The results also showed how a good climate of TRT, along with the presence of spirituality, can generate several benefits in organisation performance (e.g., Jena & Pradhan, 2018; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012), better synergy, confidence, and interaction between lecturers, as well as a positive environment for lecturers in HEIs (Abu Bakar, 2020; Nedkovski et al., 2017; Paul et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the study results revealed that WPS has a positive link with the EMP of tourism and hospitality lecturers in both countries. This result confirms previous research findings (e.g., Jena & Pradhan, 2018; Maynard et al., 2012; Seibert et al., 2011; Spreitzer, 2008) arguing that WPS has a substantial association with employees' EMP. In this vein, it can be concluded that EMP is associated with delegation of authority and delegation of decision-making, which can be conditional upon the leadership style in HEIs. As EMP gives the possibility for lecturers to freely decide, for instance, to make decisions about the use of methodologies, the choice of scientific approach, and educational technologies to be applied in the learning process, it could positively affect lecturers' willingness to be more engaged and committed to their educational

Table 6
Multi-group analyses (MGA).

Hypotheses	Italy		Portugal			p-value difference	
	β	f^2	β	f^2	β difference	Satterthwaite	PSE
H1: WPS → ENG	0.912*	0.831	0.767*	0.588	0.145	0.183	0.181
H2: WPS → COM	0.838*	0.702	0.684*	0.468	0.154	0.167	0.165
H3: WPS → WAG	0.714*	0.509	0.615*	0.378	0.098	0.388	0.386
H4: WPS → TRT	0.651*	0.423	0.561*	0.314	0.090	0.438	0.435
H5: WPS → EMP	0.760*	0.577	0.648*	0.420	0.111	0.324	0.321

Note: * ≤0.001; PSE = pooled standard error.

activities and HEIs. The results of the multi-group analysis indicated that there are no significant differences connected to the opinions of the two groups of lecturers in Italy and Portugal. In other words, the respondents in the two countries responded in a similar way, demonstrating that the consequences of WPS on tourism and hospitality lecturers' attitudes are not different in the two chosen nations. This confirms the argument that the respondents of the two countries display the same culture and religion, which in turn are reflected in similar attitudes.

To conclude, based on this paper's literature review, WPS is the spiritual wellbeing of an individual in work environments: it does not only relate to one's relationships with colleagues and managers, but also to the physical working conditions, namely, the existing technological infrastructures to support lectures, research activities, and students' learning process. Moreover, lecturers are psychologically and physically engaged in their HEIs, which is demonstrated by their COM in showing pride of being a part of their institutions, and by their enhanced openness to new ideas, technologies and development of new skills. TRT in the HEIs leads lecturers to be more autonomous and responsible, and to have a sense of happiness in being part of the educational community. Furthermore, the results of the present study generally follow the conclusions of prior studies analysed in the above literature review, and they can be a major input for management strategies regarding lecturers in HEIs, and for the definition of policies to enhance TRT and EMP among lecturers. These will necessarily contribute to a better organisational climate and to an improvement of the quality of educational outcomes. In addition, it is possible to conclude that WPS is an important new driver or antecedent in the models of lecturers' ENG. Therefore, WPS in HEIs can be described as a crucial tool for creating a proper work environment, where the integration of personal and professional selves is possible. Based on the study results, this can be done by engaging lecturers in the work process (Jurkiewicz et al., 2004), strengthening lecturers' commitment towards their institution (Piryaei & Zare, 2013), and ensuring that they are agile in facing changes occurring in the work environment (Paul et al., 2019).

6. Implications

6.1. Theoretical implications

The current study provides a number of theoretical contributions. This research adds to the body of knowledge in tourism and hospitality by empirically evaluating the influence of WPS on tourism and hospitality lecturers' attitudes in HEIs within two Western Europe nations, namely Italy and Portugal. There have been few attempts and approaches presenting several and valuable insights regarding WPS and associated key issues (predictors and consequences), within different contexts and areas. However, there is still a lack of research providing rigorous empirical evidence and solid analysis on the outcomes of WPS on lecturers' work attitudes in HEIs in general. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this research represents one of the several attempts that empirically examines the consequences of WPS on the attitudes of lecturers who are teaching and/or specialising in tourism and hospitality. More specifically, there is no known published work investigating tourism and hospitality lecturers in Italy and Portugal and the impact of WPS on their attitudes. It is also evident that the majority of prior studies on WPS and on its related variables have concentrated on the perspective of employees working at organisations within other sectors (e.g., service, manufacturing), with a considerable scarcity of research on this subject in the context of HEIs. As a result, the current paper adds to the existing knowledge in tourism and hospitality literature by highlighting the importance of WPS in the HEIs' environment, and by focusing on the outcomes of WPS from the tourism and hospitality lecturers' perspective. Moreover, this paper develops and evaluates an integrated framework including six main latent constructs: WPS (independent construct), and ENG, COM, WAG, TRT, and EMP (dependent constructs). In this vein, the proposed framework of this paper was not previously tested within

the HEIs context, particularly in the two given countries. As such, this paper provides in-depth insights on the link between the aforementioned variables, and on their related scales, to clearly understand how the work attitudes of tourism and hospitality lecturers can be impacted by WPS in their institutions. In other words, the research model identifies the indicators of WPS to understand the most crucial factors that can substantially affect lecturers' attitudes, which in turn will affect their work environment in HEIs. Providing a proper organisational climate framed by WPS will result in building meaningful relations and integrated positive connections in HEIs, among academic staff members and with their senior managers (Pfeffer, 2010). Another theoretical contribution of the present paper is the examination of the association between WPS and workforce agility (WAG) among HEIs in general. In this regard, several studies tested the consequences of WPS on work attitudes and organisational performance within various domains. However, little attention was paid to the effect of WPS on WAG, and to the perspective of tourism and hospitality lecturers. The paper addresses the lack of empirical investigation in the connection between these two constructs within HEIs, especially in the two chosen nations, confirming the valuable contributions of this study to theory, and to tourism and hospitality academic-related aspects in HEIs.

6.2. Practical implications

Besides its theoretical implications, this paper presents several practical contributions to concerned management of HEIs. According to the empirical findings, it is revealed that WPS has positive and substantial effects on the work attitudes of tourism and hospitality lecturers. As such, HEIs are required to provide a suitable educational climate and environment through which to ensure that cultural diversity is supported, the identified core values of the institution are well promoted, and adequate career development programmes for employees are well provided. This could be implemented by understanding the essential factors of WPS affecting the work attitudes of lecturers of tourism and hospitality in Italy and Portugal. In addition, this study provides managers and stakeholders with clear guidelines on the significance of WPS in HEIs. Organisational values demonstrated in the culture promote lecturers' experience of transcendence through the work process, and facilitate their sense of being connected to others, providing feelings of completeness, and satisfaction (e.g., Daniel, 2010; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Jurkiewicz et al., 2004). Moreover, the study findings empirically demonstrate the positive relationships between WPS and work attitudes (i.e. ENG, COM, WAG, TRT and EMP) of tourism and hospitality lecturers in public and private HEIs. Therefore, management of HEIs should pay closer attention to WPS, to effectively increase lecturers' engagement, commitment, trust, agility, and empowerment in their institutions. This could result in enhancing their performance of academic and non-academic activities (e.g., delivering lectures in an effective manner, increasing their productivity in scientific research, participating in community service activities, etc.). Thus, it is crucial for academic institutions to maintain and develop a sense of integration and alignment. Spirituality should be promoted as an appropriate and effective way to achieve the institutions' short-term and long-term goals and strategies.

7. Limitations and future research trends

This research presents some limitations to be considered for future studies directions. The study limitation is related to the methodology. First, the sample of this study includes academic staff specialising in and/or teaching tourism and hospitality courses, in higher education institutions in Italy and Portugal. Future research can focus on a sample of academics in different areas of specialisation. Additionally, further studies could be conducted from the industry perspective (e.g., the service industry including tourism and hospitality organisations). This could lead to identify different and valuable findings concerning the

selected academic area or industry. One more option could be considered "ethical" with a variable in the study, creating a commitment in terms of behaviour. Secondly, the paper employed a quantitative method to examine the outcomes of WPS: future studies in tourism can apply a qualitative approach to further determine how WPS affects the performance and attitudes of lecturers. This could help provide some useful insights and solid views by investigating discourses, dimensions, on-site outcomes and content of WPS in tourism HEIs. Since an online questionnaire was used in this research, future researchers could conduct a self-administrated survey as a data collection tool. Moreover, the current study depended on a multi-country sample from two countries in Western Europe, thus it would be interesting to reproduce the research on a sample from a number of countries with different cultures, to know if the outcomes of WPS are similar among these nations.

Another limitation relates to the conceptual framework of this study. The present study investigated the outcome of WPS on the work attitudes of tourism and hospitality lecturers. Further research is recommended to examine the moderating role of trust and/or empowerment on the correlation between WPS and its outcomes. Moreover, other constructs (i.e. organisational culture, work environment, leadership style, work stress, etc.) could be examined as mediator or moderator variables. These variables could significantly impact the WPS consequences associated with lecturers' workplace attitudes and performance in HEIs. Additionally, the consequences of WPS comprised five latent variables (i.e., ENG, COM, EMP, TRT, and WAG); thus, other outcomes (e.g., lecturers' loyalty, satisfaction, turnover, etc.) can be investigated to broaden the significance of WPS within HEIs. Finally, the antecedents of WPS should be assessed in future research, to provide solid findings on the critical issues and most crucial factors influencing WPS in HEIs, within different contexts including tourism and hospitality.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2021.100826.

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