

DOES PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING MEDIATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOLERANCE TENDENCY AND INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY?

O bem-estar psicológico media a relação entre a tendência à tolerância e a sensibilidade intercultural?

Özcan Zorlu¹, Engin Aytekin², Bircan Ergün³ & Sibel Çamdibi⁴

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the relationships between tolerance tendency (TT) and intercultural sensitivity (IS), as well as the mediation effect of psychological well-being (PWB) for this relationship within the context of hotel employees. This study explores proposed relationships and tests research hypotheses with a quantitative approach. The data was gathered from 204 employees working in 5-star hotels in Alanya and analyzed using AMOS. SEM results showed that hotel employees' TT significantly and positively affects their IS and PWB. TT enhances the PWB of hotel employees, whereas the PWB of hotel employees also contributes to IS. Additionally, the results of SEM point out that PWB partially mediates the relationship between TT and IS. The study reveals that the human resource management of the hotels needs to apply a comprehensive selection and employment process that evaluates the psychological state and openness to different cultures to enhance the service quality and decrease service failures, misunderstandings, and conflicts. This research ranks among the initial studies to draw attention to how crucial IS and TT are to service encounters. The mediation function of PWB in this relationship has also been revealed. Consequently, by providing thorough explanations, it adds to the currently existing understanding and expands the hospitality and tourism literature with its findings.

KEYWORDS

Tolerance Tendency; Intercultural Sensitivity; Psychological Well-Being; Hotel; Service Encounter.

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RESUMO

Este estudo tem como objetivo examinar as relações entre a tendência à tolerância (TT) e a sensibilidade intercultural (SI), bem como o efeito mediador do bem-estar psicológico (BEP) nessa relação, no contexto dos funcionários do setor hoteleiro. A presente pesquisa explora as relações propostas e testa as hipóteses de investigação por meio de uma abordagem quantitativa. Os dados foram coletados junto a 204 funcionários que atuam em hotéis de 5 estrelas em Alanya e analisados utilizando o software AMOS. Os resultados da Modelagem de Equações Estruturais (SEM) demonstraram que a TT dos funcionários hoteleiros afeta de forma significativa e positiva a sua SI e o seu BEP. A TT potencializa o BEP dos funcionários, ao passo que o BEP desses mesmos colaboradores também contribui para a SI. Adicionalmente, os resultados da SEM indicam que o BEP atua como mediador parcial na relação entre a TT e a SI. O estudo revela que a gestão de recursos humanos dos hotéis necessita aplicar um processo de seleção e contratação abrangente, que avalie o estado psicológico e a abertura a diferentes culturas, visando aprimorar a qualidade do serviço e mitigar falhas no atendimento, mal-entendidos e conflitos. Esta pesquisa figura entre os primeiros estudos a chamar a atenção para a crucialidade da SI e da TT nos encontros de serviço. A função mediadora do BEP nesta relação também foi evidenciada. Consequentemente, ao fornecer explicações aprofundadas, o estudo agrega ao conhecimento existente e expande a literatura de hospitalidade e turismo com seus achados.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Tendência à Tolerância; Sensibilidade Intercultural; Bem-Estar Psicológico; Hotel; Encontro de Serviço.

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry faces multicultural encounters, namely international visitors, who have different backgrounds and interact daily in dynamic environments. Türkiye, as an important international tourism destination, exemplifies this phenomenon with its unique regions, such as Antalya, which has accounted for 32.2% of total arrivals in Türkiye by welcoming over 15 million tourists from January to October 2024. In this sense, Antalya embodies a high-contact tourism setting where service quality becomes critical for customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and destination image. Consequently, front-line tourism employees in Antalya need a high-degree of technical skills and intercultural sensitivity, as well as a tolerance tendency to serve effectively in a complex socio-cultural setting.

Although the tourism businesses always target high service quality and customer satisfaction, unpredictable and uncontrolled service atmosphere often causes misunderstandings, conflicts, service failures, and even more customer complaints. Possible reasons and sources for those undesirable situations have been discussed in the extended hospitality literature, with less

attention paid to the psychological resources of hotel employees. At this point, this research focuses on the psychological attributes of hotel employees within the context of multicultural interactions to reduce or prevent misunderstandings, conflicts, or failures, which is scarcely discussed in hospitality literature. Additionally, by considering psychological resources and placing emphasis on employing sensitive and tolerant employees, hotel managements could develop more effective recruitment, in-service training, and empowerment strategies to improve service quality in multicultural settings. To explore these dynamics, this study is grounded in several key social theories.

As it is well known, communication and interactions in social atmospheres are frequently clarified with social exchange theory (SET), cultural exchange theory (CET), and social acceptance theory (SAT). While SAT emphasizes the inclusion process in a social group, ranging from just presence to being a partner (DeWall and Bushman, 2011), SET consists of a two-sided, mutually contingent, and mutually rewarding process (Emerson, 1976), and CET refers to transmitting cultural elements and materials among differentiated socio-cultural groups (O'Regan, 1999).

In the tourism industry and particularly for hotel businesses, international visitors fulfill their socialization through tailored interactions with hotel employees and locals (Prayag and Ryan, 2012). Within this framework, this study examines TT, PWB, and IS variables that are closely related to intercultural phenomena and the theories mentioned before. In this study, TT implies tolerance to others, which can be seen as a critical application of SAT due to shaping positive interaction. This interaction is also conceived with SET since it consists of a process of exchange as a result of behaviors. Within this perspective, the IS of hotel employees, which facilitates rewarding exchanges and leads to customer satisfaction by minimizing misunderstandings or conflicts, becomes prominent. Furthermore, PWB, which also serves to improve customer satisfaction, is derived from well-being that unfolds constructive and positive feelings of an individual while being closely related to a person's physical, psychological, and social functioning (García et al., 2014).

Despite the importance and theoretical background of the possible relation among TT, IS, and PWB, the quantity of empirical studies examining how the TT of hotel employees affects their IS levels in terms of hotel operations is still insufficient. Moreover, the role of PWB as a mediator, which indicates how a tolerant mindset transforms into a desirable intercultural behaviour, has not been comprehensively discussed in relevant literature. Therefore, this study aims to address

these critical gaps by examining the mediating role of PWB in the relationship between TT and IS among hotel employees. We propose contributing to the literature by providing a valuable understanding of psychological resources that lead to intercultural competence in the hospitality sector. The findings of this study will also expand the existing literature and provide new insights for hotel managements seeking to enhance service quality and workforce efficiency.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

TOLERANCE TENDENCY

Tolerance can be defined as a moral value that consists of the acceptance of others different from us (Witenberg, 2019) and a kind of self-mastery (Chong, 1994). If a tolerant outlook brings benefits to an individual, families of that community will enhance and teach tolerance to their children (Berggren and Nilsson, 2015). Conversely, the complexity of social identity unavoidably affects individuals' tolerance. People connect with various social groups at different levels, and the complexity of those group interactions will heighten the tolerance of individuals (Brewer and Pierce, 2005). As a result, the community members will comprehend and honor the uniqueness and identity of differences (Persell et al., 2001). Tolerance varies from passive to appreciation based on motivations. In passive tolerance, people avoid violence and merely tolerate others' behaviors, attitudes, and opinions, whereas appreciation embodies the rewarding of different opinions as an expression of a pluralistic society (Vogt and Husmann, 2021). Tolerance generally emerges when an individual faces an unpleasant situation (Çalışkan and Sağlam, 2012). Thus, it intends to avoid violence or unsolicited status and is willing to confront mutual understanding and peace by self-mastery. Moreover, tolerance is a learned phenomenon that is first learned by the family and then by the individual's environment (Kalın and Nalçacı, 2017), and it is essential for tourism since intolerance toward other cultures could reduce investment rates based on negative attitudes (Berggren and Nilsson, 2015).

The notion of tolerance tendency have been discussed in various studies in terms of creative tourism (Bastenegar and Hassani, 2018), creative workers in tourism destinations (Beier et al., 2021), the importance of tolerance for tourism development (Qi et al., 2023), the effect of tourism on the improvement of tolerance (Josefová and Štýrský, 2016). The term has also been discussed within the context of communal awareness of diversity in tolerance tourism (Setyowati et al., 2020), tolerance tourism of multicultural society (Astuti et al., 2019), balance

between trade, tolerance, and tourism (Gerritsma, 2019), religious tolerance (Azamovich, 2022; Gaitanos, 2023). This limited number of related studies clearly shows that the tolerance tendency of tourism workers, particularly hotel employees, has not been adequately highlighted. For instance, in the relevant studies, tolerance or tolerance tendency was considered a sociological attribute (mainly at the destination level) rather than a psychological trait of tourism employees. Consequently, how tolerance tendencies impact tourism employees' behaviours and the effectiveness of tolerance tendencies in multicultural service atmospheres are still remain under-discussed in the literature. Therefore, this study contributes to address this gap by focusing primarily on the tolerance tendency of hotel employees in the individual context.

INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY

The concept of culture is defined by UNESCO (2001) as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group that surrounds not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs". The notion turns up in a wide range, starting from family culture to national culture. Today, it is a reality that different cultures worldwide, in any way, interact with others, except only a few primitive clan cultures. As a result, acculturation and enculturation notions have become essential for communities to survive globally. At this point, sensitivity to other cultures, namely IS, determines the success of the interaction process among different cultures. Alternately, people of a particular culture primordially should develop IS. Bennett (2017) claims that IS starts with positive perception and constructivist communication competence across cultures, although the existence of cultural differences in terms of world views created and maintained by a particular culture. In his prior study (1986), Bennett suggests a developmental model for IS containing two main stages and six successive steps. The first stage of IS includes the ethnocentric dimension and it incorporates denial, defense, and minimization steps. The second phase of IS (ethnorelative) consists of acceptance, adaptation, and integration steps.

In the ethnocentric stage of IS development, an individual experiences his/her culture as the center of reality. In the ethnorelative stage, s/he is aware that his/her culture represents one of many equally valid worldviews (Greenholtz, 2005). The denial step of the ethnocentric stage is generally characterized by ignorance of cultural differences and unawareness of cultural identity's effects on the lifestyle. In the defense step, individuals accept their culture as superior

to others and perceive other cultures as threats. The minimization step involves accepting the existence of similarities between people, and individuals often hold the idea that “everyone really wants to be like us” (Hernandez and Kose, 2012). When individuals move up to the ethnorelative stage, they initially perceive others’ cultures as unique and respect them; thus, they experience the acceptance step. The adaptation step begins with empathy, as they are willing to adapt their behaviors to communicate more effectively with members of other cultures. Finally, in integration, individuals integrate aspects of other cultures into their own identity and may begin to feel culturally marginal to their native culture (Varela, 2019). This developmental perspective, which transforms an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative worldview, provides a theoretical framework for how hotel employees assess or interpret their intercultural competence to the customers in their interactions, which is essential for this study.

As a result of IS development, individuals begin to enjoy attending and experiencing different cultures since their worldview has become more complex (Greenholtz, 2005). In the literature, there are various scales to measure IS. However, Chen and Starosta’s (2000) Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) is one of the most preferred in the literature, which is used in this study. ISS includes five sub-dimensions as follows: interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. The ISS mainly assesses multiple facets of an individual’s ability to engage in intercultural communication successfully by encompassing these sub-dimensions.

The IS phenomenon is generally a subject of educational research (Bloom and Miranda, 2015; Coffey et al., 2013; Lambert Snodgrass et al., 2018; Su, 2018) that emphasize the role and importance of IS in terms of studying abroad (Awang-Rozaimie et al., 2013; Bae and Song, 2017). The IS is also a research area for the tourism industry due to international and intercultural social interactions during service delivery where service personnel and customers (tourists) are from different cultures (Yürür et al., 2021). The interaction also takes place between the host community and the tourist. Thus, service personnel, host community, and tourists are the main aspects of IS, and the quality of these interactions materially affects the changes in IS (Kirillova et al., 2015). Hence, service encounters involving different cultural values and norms can sometimes cause conflicts or misunderstandings. In this sense, interculturally sensitive employees could deliver better services, could be more attentive to customer needs, and could use their interpersonal skills to enhance customer satisfaction (Sizoo et al., 2005).

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

The concept of well-being, involving hedonic and eudaimonic approaches, provides a comprehensive understanding of human growth. While the hedonic approach is often associated with Subjective Well-Being (SWB), the eudaimonic approach focuses on Psychological Well-Being (PWB). SWB provides a broad framework that includes how well people feel throughout their lives, the meaning of their lives, and comprehensive satisfaction (Çiki, et al., 2025). PWB, the process of fulfilling one's true potential and functioning optimally, has been comprehensively conceptualized by Ryff and Singer (1996, 2008), Ryff and Keyes (1995). While well-being arises from a combination of orientations, behaviors, experiences, and functioning (Huta, 2016), PWB encompasses six factors: self-acceptance, positive relations, environmental mastery, personal growth, autonomy, and purpose in life. These are grounded in prior theories about life course development, positive functioning, and mental health conceptions (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). Therefore, this study adopts PWB as a psychological resource and capacity, due to its high relevance to the service environment of hotel employees and its pivotal role in navigating individuals' challenges.

Self-acceptance, the first factor of PWB, constitutes a critical feature of mental health, self-actualization, optimal functioning, and maturity characteristics. Positive relations refer to the ability to love, warm and trusting connections, strong empathy, more profound friendship, and high identification with the social environment. Environmental mastery refers to the ability to change one's environment creatively through mental and physical activities, proper choice of the environment, and lifespan development. Continually developing and expanding as a person, self-realization, and facing new challenges through openness to experience constitute the content of personal growth. Autonomy underpins the entire functioning of a person through the internal locus of evaluation, self-actualization, and enculturation. Purpose in life involves having a sense of directedness and intentionality, which fosters productivity and creativity (Ryff and Singer, 1996). People with high PWB also feel in control of their environment (Lee et al., 2009) and experience less suicidal ideation than those who are depressed or stressed (Jin and Zhang, 1998). Hereby, PWB, as an essential psychological resource, may affect an individual's willingness to be tolerant (TT) and also his/her effective engagement in intercultural situations (IS).

In literature, various tourism studies have subjected the PWB notion to different aspects: PWB of tourists (Houge Mackenzie et al., 2023; Vada et al., 2020; Yi et al., 2022), PWB of host

communities and tourists (Li and Chan, 2017; Uysal et al., 2016), PWB of tourist guides (Alrawadieh et al., 2023), social tourism and PWB (Pyke et al., 2019), PWB of destination residents (Sato et al., 2022; Zucco et al., 2020). The PWB of hotel employees has also been examined in various studies. The PWB of hotel employees has been discussed in terms of turnover intentions (Amin and Akbar, 2013), managerial support (Baker and Kim, 2020), work experiences and satisfaction (Burke et al., 2008; Burke et al., 2012), work hours, work intensity, and satisfaction (Fiksenbaum et al., 2010), perfectionism on work engagement and emotional exhaustion (Kanten and Yeşiltaş, 2015), job performance (Kundi et al., 2020), perceived organizational support and organization-based self-esteem (Wang et al., 2020), work antecedents, work-life interference (Wong and Chan, 2020). Although various studies address the importance of PWB and its relations with organizational variables, the notion of PWB still needs to be searched much more to extend the current body of literature. Thus, this study concerns PWB as a variable affecting hotel employees' IS.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

UNESCO (1995) emphasizes the importance of tolerance within the context of cultural diversity. At this point, service encounters in tourism are the means of experiencing cultural diversity through social exchanges (Yürür et al., 2021). Further, tourism experiences have a significant capacity to promote mutual tolerance due to their contribution to the basic principle of multiculturalism, which addresses intercultural exchange with mutual respect and willingness to understand any differences and values (Josefová and Štýrský, 2016). Furthermore, as it is well-known, tolerance tendency embodies the acceptance and appreciation of different cultures and their values, which aligns with the core principles of multiculturalism (Setiawan, 2024). Chen and Starosta (2000) state that tolerance is an inseparable part of IS in terms of respect for cultural differences. Moreover, IS development starts with superficial tolerance of cultural differences and transforms into empathy and pluralism at the end of the process (Paige et al., 2003). In addition to this, as a result of globalization, the importance of cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural competence among hotel staff has become essential for ensuring guest satisfaction (Gumaste et al., 2024). A hotel employee with a high tolerance tendency is more open to and accepting of different worldviews. This psychological predisposition provides the necessary groundwork for developing the skills and attitudes associated with high intercultural sensitivity. Therefore, we propose that the tolerance tendency of hotel employees meaningfully affects their intercultural sensitivity level and articulate the study's first hypothesis as follows:

H₁: The tolerance tendency of hotel employees significantly affects their intercultural sensitivity.

TT, the willingness to display tolerance behaviors in daily life, results from shared activities, failures, and successes (Cookson Jr, 2001). From this perspective, the notion involves various life experiences fostering a sense of togetherness. TT is also an internal disposition that navigates our experiences and relations with others. Thus, psychologically, TT could reduce the cognitive dissonance arising from conflict with others (Ding et al., 2024) and contribute to the internal harmony. This also aligns with Ryff and Singer's (2008) PWB model in terms of positive relations with others and self-acceptance. Hence, PWB encompasses life-span development perspectives through several challenges encountered during different phases of the life cycle and comprises specific factors predicting interactions such as positive relations with others and environmental mastery (Ryff and Singer, 2008). Abdulrahman Almotrefi (2022) affirmed that tolerance repair relationships and contributes to building mutual trust for greater harmony by assuming that tolerance is associated with many positive variables pronouncing PWB. Additionally, Inglehart et al. (2008) found that people from more tolerant societies tend to be happier, which shapes subjective well-being as complementary to PWB. Thus, it is logical to posit that an employee's personal tendency toward tolerance contributes positively to their own psychological health. Therefore, the study's second hypothesis is as follows:

H₂: The tolerance tendency of hotel employees significantly affects their psychological well-being.

PWB is intensely based on moral visions and is probably affected by an individual's culture (Christopher, 1999). The actions of individuals may be considered natural in their culture, yet they may be considered abnormal in others (Jin and Zhang, 1998). Engaging in intercultural interactions cognitively and emotionally requires individuals to manage ambiguities and adapt to unfamiliar social cues (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2015). At this point, more intercultural interactions consisting of experience sharing with people from different cultures provide more personal development chances, where this personal development enhances well-being and personal satisfaction (Micó-Cebrián and Cava, 2014). Furthermore, an individual with high PWB can navigate ambiguities and unfamiliar social situations due to his/her psychological resources (emotional regulation, self-confidence, and environmental mastery) emphasized in PWB. Traditionally, different cultures define the self in various ways, experience emotions differently,

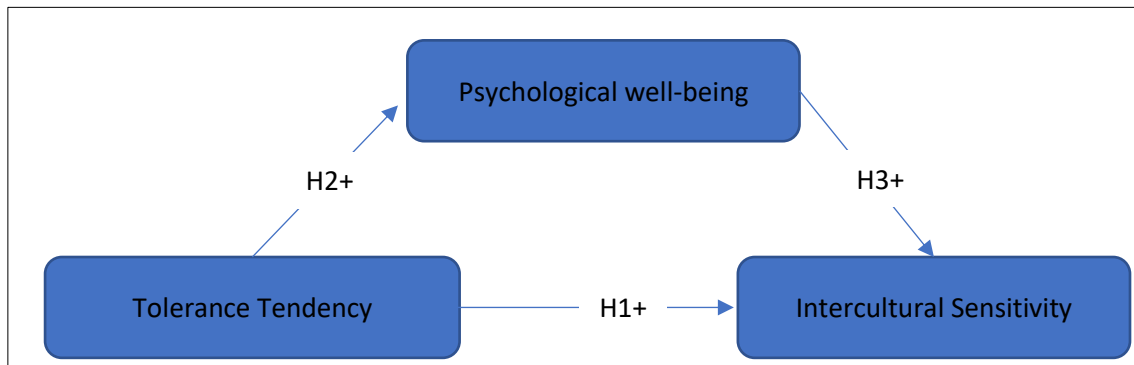
and contain an array of diverse values (Kubokawa and Ottoway, 2009). If a person accepts, adopts, and then integrates into other cultures, s/he will derive satisfaction from these experiences and enhance his/her well-being. Hence, intercultural sensitivity means sustainable and meaningful practices and cooperation for preserving well-being within the context of lifelong learning (Korhonen, 2010). When an individual has low PWB, they may lack the resilience to engage openly and effectively with different cultures. Thus, PWB can be seen as a crucial psychological resource that enables and enhances intercultural sensitivity. From this point of view, we propose the third hypothesis of the study as follows:

H₃: The psychological well-being of hotel employees significantly affects their intercultural sensitivity.

Although we theoretically propose a direct relationship between TT and IS, in practice, it is unlikely to be solely direct. This study proposes that PWB acts as a mediator, explaining how an employee's tolerance translates into effective intercultural sensitivity. The argument is twofold: First, as argued for H2, a higher tolerance tendency fosters key components of PWB. Second, as argued for H3, high PWB provides the necessary psychological resource (resilience, confidence, openness, etc) for hotel employees to engage more effectively and sensitively in intercultural interactions. In this model, tolerance helps build the psychological foundation (PWB), and this foundation, in turn, supports the development and expression of critical social skills (IS). Therefore, PWB is not merely a separate outcome but a critical bridge that links TT to IS, which is an interculturally competent behavior. However, this proposition still needs to be investigated with empirical studies, due to the lack of previous ones. Hereby, we assume that PWB could mediate the relationship between TT and IS, and articulate the fourth hypothesis as

"H₄: The psychological well-being of hotel employees mediates the correlation between TT and IS."

Figure 1. Research Hypothesis



Source: prepared by the author.

METHODOLOGY

Study site: The data of this study was gathered from employees of 5-star hotels operating in the Alanya district of Antalya. According to Türkiye tourism statistics, Alanya hosted over 8 million foreign visitors from March to September. Additionally, Alanya is home to 94 of 306 five-star hotels in Antalya, the most visited destination in Türkiye. Thus, approximately 30% of Antalya's total five-star and corporate hotels are located in Alanya, and host visitors from Germany, Russia, the UK, Poland, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belgium, France, Switzerland, and other countries. In conjunction with this, those hotels generally employ more qualified staff speaking at least two foreign languages, including foreigners. Thus, Alanya presents a suitable atmosphere for multicultural studies with its visitor and employee profile. A secondary, practical reason for selecting this destination was the accessibility of the hotels and the willingness of their management to participate in the survey.

Research instrument: The questionnaire form used in the study consists of four main parts, starting with some demographics (gender, age, abroad experience, position, and experience in the company). The second part included the 24-item Intercultural Sensitivity (IS) scale from Chen and Starosta (2000). The third part contained 10 Psychological Well-Being (PWB) items adapted from Pradhan and Hati (2022). The fourth part consisted of the 18-item Tolerance Tendency (TT) scale, adapted from Çalışkan and Sağlam (2012). All items for the IS, PWB, and TT scales were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). To ensure language validity, the questionnaire form was translated into Turkish by two linguists working at the tourism faculty of Afyon Kocatepe University. Then two HR professionals checked the form before being distributed to participants.

Sampling and Data Collection: The survey was conducted through a convenience sampling technique from 15.03.2024 to 30.07.2024. According to the Culture and Tourism Ministry, 94 of 483 hotels in Alanya are five-star businesses, and they account for approximately 50 percent of the total bed capacity of Alanya, which have 26914 rooms and 82340 bed capacity. Given that these hotels constitute a significant portion of the total accommodation capacity, they host a substantial number of Alanya's international visitors. Based on the size of these establishments, it was estimated that each hotel employs at least 150 workers and the sampling size was determined as 193 with G*POWER software (power = 0.80, $f^2 = 0.15$, $\alpha = 0.05$), which indicates a 95% confidence interval for a medium effect size. After verbal permission was obtained from hotel management, data were gathered from 204 hotel employees using self-administered questionnaires.

Data analysis: The data was firstly coded in SPSS to analyze demographics and to create source data for the AMOS program in which the structural equation model was performed. To test the validity and reliability of the data, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated, and CFA (in AMOS) analyses were performed. Also, the AVE and HTMT coefficients of the variables of the scales were calculated to check the discriminant validity of the model. Then, a SEM model consisting of the mediation effect testing was performed in the AMOS program. Hence, four hypotheses of the study were tested with the SEM model, and some explanations and recommendations were made regarding the findings.

FINDINGS

The demographics of 204 employees proclaimed that the majority of the participants are male (n: 116, 56.9%), while approximately half of the respondents are in the 18-24 group of ages. Participants between 25 and 34 form the second major group. 60 of 204 participants have been abroad at least once, while the rest have not been abroad, so they are with no experience. Seventy-nine participants (30 senior, 49 mid-level) are managers, and 125 (61.3%) are workers of the hotels. Seventy-three participants possess less than three years' experience, while 56 own ten or more years of work experience in their current hotel.

MEASUREMENT MODEL RESULTS

The validity and reliability of the study data were measured using CFA and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients (see Table 1). As stated before, the IS and TT scales were adapted from other studies

conducted in different countries. At this point, the difference in cultural characteristics and value judgments could cause various perceptions that could change the structure of the scales. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients in Table 1 were calculated as 0.955 for TT, 0.963 for IS, and 0.914 for PWB scales. Sub-dimensions (factors) of the TT and IS scales also infer significant coefficients ranging from 0.884 to 0.936. Hence, the study's data set is accepted as valid and reliable based on Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients.

Table 1. Validity and CFA results

Factors	Items	SFLλ	AVE	CR	Factors	Items	SFLλ	AVE	CR			
Acceptation (α: 0.901)	TTac1	0.793	0.523	0.897	Interaction Attentiveness (α: 0.913)	ISia1	0.867	0,775	0,912			
	TTac2	0.747				ISia2	0.902					
	TTac3	0.721				ISia3	0.873					
	Empathy (α: 0.884)	TTac4			0.669	0.637	0.875	Interaction Confidence (α: 0.928)	ISic1	0.724	0,680	0,927
		TTac5			0.739				ISic2	0.878		
		TTac6			0.710				ISic3	0.866		
		TTac7			0.628				ISic4	0.837		
		TTac8			0.763				ISic5	0.891		
Value (α: 0.936)	TTem1	0.811	0.698	0.933	ISic6	0.735	0,662		0,887			
	TTem2	0.835			Interaction Engagement (α: 0.886)	ISie1		0.783				
	TTem3	0.776				ISie3		0.814				
	TTem4	0.768				ISie5		0.833				
Indices	TTva1	0.850	0.698	0.933	Respect for Cultural Differences (α: 0.894)	ISie7	0.824	0,685	0,896			
	TTva2	0.818				ISrcd1	0.883					
	TTva3	0.854				ISrcd2	0.842					
	TTva4	0.799				ISrcd3	0.808					
	TTva5	0.798				ISrcd5	0.772					
	TTva6	0.889										
Indices	O.V	C.V			Indices	O.V	C.V					
χ²/df	2.281	≤ 5	χ²	287.3 60	χ²/df	2.110	≤ 5	χ²	230,006			
RMSEA	0.079	≤ 0.08	df	126	RMSEA	0.074	≤ 0.08	df	109			
TLI	0.932	≥ 0.90	p	0.000	TLI	0.951	≥ 0.90	p	0.000			
CFI	0.944	≥ 0.90	α	0.955	CFI	0.960	≥ 0.90	α	0,963			
SRMR	0.049	≤ 0.08			SRMR	0.038	≤ 0.08					
Factors	Items	SFLλ	AVE	Indices	O.V	C.V						
PWB1	0.664	0.583	0.918	χ ² /df	1.806	≤ 5	χ ²	27,086				
PWB3	0.827			RMSEA	0.063	≤ 0.08	df	15				
PWB4	0.822			TLI	0.977	≥ 0.90	p	0.028				
PWB5	0.734			CFI	0.988	≥ 0.90	α	0,914				
PWB6	0.788			SRMR	0.027	≤ 0.08						
PWB8	0.781			α: Cronbach's Alpha, SFLλ: Standardized factor loadings								
PWB9	0.734			AVE: Average Variance Extracted, CR: composite reliability								
PWB10	0.746			O.V: Observed Values, C.V: Critical Values								

Source: prepared by the author.

As well-known that CFA calculation enables the assessment of the contribution of each scale item and the better measurement of the scale reliability (Hair et al., 2022). Table 1 has CFA results performed in the AMOS program with some measurement values. Fornell and Larcker (1981) propose using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to assess convergent validity by stating that construct validity is questionable if AVE is less than 0.50. Hair et al. (2022) further propose using composite reliability (CR) to measure internal consistency reliability, which should be above 0.70. Hu and Bentler (1999) also emphasize the evaluation of model fit with various fit indexes. Researchers submit that Tucker and Lewis' (TLI) and comparative fit index (CFI) values must be at least 0.90 to accept the model. RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) and SRMR (root mean square discrepancy between the observed and model-implied correlations) values are other criteria in CFA (Hair et al., 2022). A 0.08 value of RMSEA marks a reasonable error of approximation (Browne and Cudeck, 1992), while an SRMR cutoff value that is close to .08 is acceptable (Hu and Bentler, 1999) for SEM modelling.

CFA results in Table 1 propose a reasonable model fit for all scales. RMSEA value was calculated as 0.079 for TT, 0.074 for IS, and 0.063 for PWB scale, while TLI values followed as TT: 0.932, IS: 0.951, and PWB: 0.977 respectively. Meanwhile, CFI scores range from 0.944 to 0.988, where the SRMR cutoff indices point out the goodness of model fit ($SRMR \leq 0.08$). TT, IS, and PWB scales also register convergent validity and composite reliability requirements. AVE values of the TT factors are above 0,50 (TTac: 0.523, TTem: 0.637, TTva: 0.698). Similarly, AVE values of IS factors range as ISie: 0.662, ISic: 0.680, ISrcd: 0,685 and ISia: 0.775. By the way, the AVE value of PWB was calculated as 0,583. Moreover, it is clear from the table that CR indexes of all factors confirm the reliability ($CR > 0.70$). Thus, the data set of this study is valid and reliable regarding the CFA analysis results.

Following the verification of the measurement model's validity and reliability with both EFA and CFA, the discriminant validity was assessed with AVE value and HTMT was checked, and mean and standard deviations were given (see Table 2). As seen in Table 2, independent (TT), dependent (IS), and mediator (PWB) variables possess relatively high mean scores indicating generally positive responses from the participants regarding these constructs. Hence, mean scores range from 3.854 to 4.246.

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

	Mean	SD	TT	TTva	TTac	TTem	IS	ISie	ISrcd	ISic	ISia	PWB
TT	4.092	0.903	0.881									

TTva	4.246	1.025	.915**	0.698	0.805	0.877		0.718	0.705	0.667	0.763	0.741
TTac	3.854	0.983	.932**	.735**	0.523	0.844		0.708	0.738	0.721	0.638	0.705
TEem	4.338	0.925	.893**	.798**	.752**	0.637		0.856	0.806	0.738	0.813	0.786
IS	4.157	0.906	.789**	.717**	.702**	.784**	0.694					
ISie	4.185	0.970	.724**	.656**	.629**	.757**	.913**	0.662	0.900	0.841	0.846	0.815
ISrcd	4.195	0.967	.724**	.644**	.660**	.712**	.886**	.807**	0.685	0.786	0.798	0.751
ISic	4.081	1.013	.704**	.621**	.656**	.669**	.926**	.762**	.716**	0.680	0.842	0.847
ISia	4.224	1.060	.711**	.705**	.575**	.729**	.885**	.762**	.721**	.774**	0.775	0.833
PWB	4.184	0.910	.729**	.685**	.640**	.705**	.820**	.734**	.679**	.779**	.761**	0.583

Notes: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

*: The square root of the AVE values was shown in the dark grey shaded cells.

a: HTMT correlations were shown in the light blue shaded cells.

Source: prepared by the author.

In Table 2, spearman correlation coefficients were given as a matrix without shading. The correlation analysis results imparted high correlations ($r > 0.60$) ranging from 0.621 to 0.932 among all variables and sub-factors. Furthermore, AVE values in Table 2 affirm convergent validity ($AVE > 0.50$) again, as mentioned in Table 1. In addition to Spearman correlations and AVE, HTMT thresholds were calculated to assess discriminant validity. Henseler et al. (2015) state that the HTMT threshold is the average of the heterotrait-heteromethod correlations (i.e., the correlations of indicators across constructs measuring different phenomena), and they offer HTMT thresholds should be equal to or lower than 0.90 to assess sensitivity levels of 95% in terms of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). The test results for HMMT given in Table 2 verify the discriminant validity ranging from 0.786 to 0.900.

STRUCTURAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES TESTING

The results in Table 3 confirm that the structural model fits the data reasonably (χ^2 : 186.808, df: 82, p :0.000, RMSEA: 0.079, TLI: 0.948, CFI: 0.959, SRMR: 0.353). The variance inflation factor (VIF) values were also calculated to diagnose multicollinearity. When the VIF, a tool to measure and quantify how much the variance is inflated, equals "1", there is no correlation. However, variances are highly correlated when the VIF is higher than 5. Thus, it should be less than "5" or between "1 and 5," indicating a moderate correlation (Daoud, 2017). The VIF values of our structural model are all lower than point 5. In other words, the model does not involve multicollinearity.

Results given in Table 3 settled that the tolerance tendency of participants has a significant and direct effect on their intercultural sensitivity (β : 0.883, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, the tolerance

tendency of participants significantly contributes to their psychological well-being (β : 0.816, $p < 0.001$). Plus, the PWB of participants significantly contributes to the IS (β : 0.888, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3. Structural Model Results and Results of Hypothesis

Structural Model Results	Variables				
	VIF	PWB		IS	
		β	S.E	β	S.E
TT	1.000			0.883*	0.580
R ²				0.779	
TT	1.000	0.816*	0.081		
R ²		0.666			
PWB	1.000			0.888*	0.700
R ²				0.788	
TT				0.453*	0.078
PWB	2.133			0.541*	0.075
R ²				0.898	
Indirect effect				0.441 (0.241-0.637)	
*: $p < 0.001$					
χ^2 : 186.808.	df: 82.	χ^2/df : 2.278	RMSEA: 0.079	TLI: 0.948	CFI: 0.959
					SRMR: 0.353
Results of Hypothesis					
	β	S.E	p	Supported / Rejected	
H ₁ : IS <----- TT	0.883	0.580	<.001	Supported	
H ₂ : PWB <----- TT	0.816	0.081	<.001	Supported	
H ₃ : IS <----- PWB	0.487	0.075	<.001	Supported	
H ₄ : Mediation of PWB	0.441	--	0.241-0.637	Supported	
VIF: variance inflation factor. β : Standardized Regression Weight. S.E: Standard Error. p : Significance level (* < 0.001)					

Source: prepared by the author.

When the effects of TT and PWB on IS are taken into account, it is clear from Table 3 that both TT (β : 0.453, $p < 0.001$) and PWB (β : 0.541, $p < 0.001$) significantly affect IS, while PWB makes slightly more contributions. Furthermore, the indirect effect between TT and IS was found to be 0,441 whereas the bootstrap's lower and upper bound are prescribed as 0.241-0.637 in 95% confidence level. Since the relevant bounds do not involve a 0 value, the indirect effect in the

model is considered significant. Thereby, it is surmised that the psychological well-being of participants of the study mediates the effect of tolerance tendency on intercultural sensitivity.

DISCUSSION

In the hospitality and tourism sector, achieving high-quality service standards is very challenging due to the variability of service delivery (Reid and Bojanic, 2009). Indeed, service is an act or performance offered by the hotel employee to the guests that provides some benefits to them, and performance is intensively based on intangible assets (Lovelock and Wright, 1999). Hereby, the psychological and social wellness of hotel employees who contact directly with the customer in service encounters becomes an essential factor for service performance and quality. This study focuses on the effect of TT on IS of hotel employees and the potential mediation effect of PWB using a sample of 204 employees of hotels operating in Alanya. It is also one of the first few studies exploring the relationship among relevant variables regarding hotel management.

According to the study's first finding, hotel employees exhibit high levels of psychological well-being, intercultural sensitivity, and tolerance. Hence, it seems that employees do not suffer from adverse outcomes from busy schedules, which are characterized by intense contact with the customer in a service encounter affected by many uncontrolled factors. Another study finding is that the TT of hotel employees essentially affects the IS level. Hotel employees with adequate levels of maturity and self-esteem also need to display a high tolerance level for the success of contact with the guests (Bardi, 2003). Additionally, hotel services are delivered in an atmosphere where people from different cultures get in touch and interact. Altan (2018) affirms that the employees who work in intercultural workplaces need to be interculturally sensitive. As a consequence, employees with high tolerance tendencies can also be accepted as interculturally sensitive workers, and the findings of this study confirm this postulation. However, to the authors' knowledge, there is no study addressing the relationships between TT and IS. Thus, it was not possible for the authors to compare this finding with previous studies. On the other hand, few IS studies (Awang-Rozaimie, 2013; Bennett, 2017; Coffey et al., 2013) conducted in different fields with various variables generally attributed to the importance of tolerance for the development of IS. Furthermore, Awang-Rozaimie (2013) emphasizes that cultural integration requires high tolerance, while Sizoo et al. (2005) stated that tolerance tendency is an inseparable part of intercultural sensitivity and has an impact on hotel employee performance. Therefore, we propose that these indirect findings support our results, which signal the effect of TT on IS.

Another notable finding is the positive effect of TT on the participants' PWB. Xu et al. (2014, 3) state that a person who is tolerant of others also gets on well with others and fosters positive emotions, which can enhance subjective well-being. Moreover, Corneo and Jeanne (2009) assert that tolerance significantly affects one's self-esteem. Jin and Zhang (1998) used self-esteem as the synonym for PWB, and Warr and Jackson (1983) measured PWB with an 8-item self-esteem scale. Thus, they imply there is a relation between TT and PWB. Similarly, this study confirms the positive contribution of TT of hotel employees on their PWB. However, there is still a considerable gap in the current literature since no studies have pointed out the effect of TT on PWB within the context of hospitality and tourism studies. At this point, this study presents a new insight to researchers regarding the importance of tolerance tendency to well-being.

The third finding of this study is that the PWB of hotel employees contributes to their IS. The literature includes very few studies addressing the relationship between these two constructs. Santosh (2022) reported a minor effect of PWB on IS, and Korhonen (2010) stated that people who preserve and enhance their well-being also tend to experience sustainable and meaningful practices that concern IS. Accordingly, this study confirms that employees in intercultural workplaces like hotels maintain high PWB and IS, and PWB considerably affects IS. So, these findings are consistent with the literature. Most prominently, apart from previous studies, this study reveals the mediation effect of PWB on the relationship between TT and IS. SEM results affirm that the TT of hotel employees contributes positively to IS, and PWB of these employees mediates the relationship between TT and IS. Although many studies discussed the TT and the IS separately, very few addressed their relationship. Furthermore, previous studies did not investigate TT, PWB, and IS in the same study. The potential relationships and effects of these variables on one another have not been examined to date. Consequently, it is asserted that this study makes an essential contribution to filling in the gap in the literature by inferring significant correlations among the variables.

CONCLUSION

This research sought to investigate the relationships between hotel employees' tolerance tendency and intercultural sensitivity, and the mediating role of psychological well-being, in the multicultural and dynamic setting of the tourism industry. The findings confirm that an employee's tolerance tendency significantly influences both their psychological well-being and their intercultural sensitivity. Furthermore, this study shows that psychological well-being acts

as a partial mediator, serving as the crucial psychological mechanism through which a tolerant disposition is translated into effective intercultural behaviour.

The contribution of this study is its shift in focus from observable skills to the foundational psychological attributes that enable service excellence. It demonstrates that building a truly effective service team is not just about training employees, but about cultivating their capacity for tolerance and supporting their psychological well-being. For hotel management, this implies that investing in employee well-being is not simply an ethical responsibility but a strategic imperative for enhancing service quality, reducing multicultural conflicts, and improving the guest experience/satisfaction. By integrating assessments for tolerance into recruitment and making psychological well-being a cornerstone of employee development, hospitality organizations can build a more resilient, empathetic, and interculturally competent workforce.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study offers several significant contributions to the existing literature by building a conceptual bridge between a personal value (Tolerance Tendency), a psychological resource (Psychological Well-Being), and a workplace competence (Intercultural Sensitivity). While social exchange theory is often used to explain the interactions between employees and guests, this study enriches the theory by adding psychological well-being as a psychological resource that facilitates positive social exchanges. The findings suggest that intercultural service quality is influenced by employees' internal state. An employee with high psychological well-being has the emotional resilience to demonstrate interculturally sensitive behaviours, thereby enhancing their interaction with the guest. This adds a psychological dimension to the traditional application of social exchange theory. The finding that psychological well-being partially mediates the relationship between tolerance tendency and intercultural sensitivity is a key theoretical insight. It posits that tolerance alone is insufficient; it is the employee's sense of self-actualization and optimal functioning (psychological well-being) that acts as the transformative mechanism, converting a passive value into sensitive and effective intercultural engagement. This provides an explanation for how prosocial values are translated into desirable workplace behaviours. Consequently, this study provides new insights for future studies in this area.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The quality of services provided in an uncontrollable service environment is often determined by customers' evaluation of tangible and, more importantly, intangible factors. Attitudes and behaviours of hotel employees bear a non-negligible place in these evaluations. Consequently, hotel management continuously tries to enhance the employee profile and applies an effective human resources management (HRM) strategy. At this point, this study offers critical insights as a starting point. For instance, in most cases, a candidate's tolerance tendency and intercultural sensitivity are not evaluated. Indeed, although the candidates' past experiences are evaluated before employment, their opinions about foreign cultures or their approach to differences are generally overlooked. Nevertheless, employee attitudes are decisive in service-oriented evaluations of a customer. In other words, an intolerant employee could sabotage the service delivery, or an unreceptive and non-sensitive employee to different cultures could cause a lot of misunderstandings and cultural conflicts. The findings imply that the human resource management practitioners in hotels should implement a thorough hiring and selection procedure that appraises psychological well-being and cultural receptivity in order to boost service quality and reduce service failures, misunderstandings, and disputes. Moreover, they need to develop more comprehensive strategies based on intercultural contexts. In addition to that, the study puts forward that the human resource management practitioners in hotels apply some carefully determined techniques that is able to assess a candidate's tolerance tendency and intercultural sensitivity.

In tourism, the nature of service delivery requires, on the one hand, psychologically resilient and open-minded employees. It is evident that even the most talented employee will perform below the standards if s/he does not construct positive relations with colleagues or does not feel autonomy and environmental mastery in service encounters. In this case, service failures, misunderstandings, and conflicts will occur with increasing frequency. Even worse, this process will somehow tarnish the hotel's image. Thus, training programs must evolve beyond standard procedures to foster PWB and IS. For this, well-being workshops can be offered on mindfulness, stress management, and emotional regulation. Moreover, role-playing exercises that require employees to step into the shoes of guests from diverse cultures can help them to genuinely understand and adapt to different cultures. Managers should always consider employee motivation and well-being. They must keep in mind that an employee with low morale will not present any contribution to the intangible side of the service encounter. Leadership training can be made to equip them to recognize signs of burnout and low PWB in their teams and provide

support. Lastly, recognition programs that celebrate employees with outstanding intercultural sensitivity can be organized. Success stories about resolving complex cross-cultural misunderstandings can be shared to reinforce these behaviours as a core organizational value.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study brings out some consequential findings that imply originality, it still accepts some limitations in terms of sampling, data collection, analysis, and findings. First, all participants in this study are working in the five-star hotels of the Alanya district, which makes it difficult to generalize the findings of the study. Second, the data were collected only via questionnaire. Because of that, it was unable to evaluate the results of the compared groups, and the findings are based on only qualitative research techniques. Yet, the findings are acceptable with this sampling and cannot be broadened to other samples or cultures. Thus, future studies should put into practice both qualitative and quantitative research techniques and gather data from multiple groups. In this sense, researchers can also choose different types of hotels to get better and more comprehensive results.

This study is simply grounded on social acceptance and social exchange theories with TT, PWB, and IS variables. At this point, similar studies could be conducted on various variables, such as intercultural competence, enculturation, or subjective well-being, and eudemonic well-being, or self-acceptance, self-esteem, and job embeddedness. Those types of studies will extend our knowledge and will make precious contributions to the literature.

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