

# Being ignored at work: Understanding how and when spiritual leadership curbs workplace ostracism in the hospitality industry

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## Citation

ALI, Moazzam, Muhammad USMAN, Tan Nhat PHAM, Peter AGYEMANG-MINTAH, and Naeem AKHTAR. Being ignored at work: Understanding how and when spiritual leadership curbs workplace ostracism in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management* [online]. vol. 91, Elsevier, 2020, [cit. 2023-02-24]. ISSN 0278-4319. Available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0278431920302486>

## DOI

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102696>

## Permanent link

<https://publikace.k.utb.cz/handle/10563/1009954>

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# Being ignored at work: Understanding how and when spiritual leadership curbs workplace ostracism in the hospitality industry

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## ABSTRACT

Drawing on the conservation of resources theory, the present study theorizes that spiritual leadership is negatively related to workplace ostracism, both directly and indirectly via job social support and that employees' justice orientation moderates the negative relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism. Based on time-lagged (three waves, two months apart) survey data collected from 252 hospitality employees, our findings reveal that spiritual leadership is negatively associated with workplace ostracism, both directly and indirectly via job social support. We also find that justice orientation strengthens the negative relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism. These findings not only highlight core theoretical contributions towards the existing literature on spiritual leadership, job social support, justice orientation, and workplace ostracism but also offer useful practical implications for hotel managers concerned about the repercussions of workplace ostracism for employees' and organizations' outcomes.

**Keywords:** Spiritual leadership, workplace ostracism, job social support, justice orientation, hospitality management

## 1. Introduction

Workplace ostracism - “the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded at work” (Ferris et al., 2008, p. 1348) - deteriorates employees’ psychological wellbeing, job performance (Lustenberger and Jagacinski, 2010; O’Reilly et al., 2015), and harms their interpersonal relationship dynamics (Zhu et al., 2017). Ostracized employees display unfavorable job attitudes, counterproductive work behaviors, and job withdrawals (Zhao et al., 2013). Previous hospitality research (e.g., Cho et al., 2016; Jung and Yoon, 2018) has also made valuable contributions by exploring the antecedents and outcomes of different interpersonal mistreatments, such as aggression and incivility. However, hospitality research on workplace ostracism is limited to a few studies (e.g., Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2017). Additionally, prior studies have shown that cognitive-based interventions aimed at the victims of ostracism (e.g., encouraging ostracized individuals to reflect and reframe their interpersonal experiences) (Molet et al., 2013; Poon and Chen, 2016) and organization-based interventions targeted at the perpetrators (Day, 2011) play an important role in deterring workplace ostracism. The general literature, albeit limited to a few studies, has revealed that leader-membership exchange (Fiset and Boies, 2018), ethical leadership (Babalola et al., 2017; Christensen-Salem et al., 2020), and transformational leadership (Kanwal et al., 2019) negatively influence employees’ feelings of ostracism.

Although the general management literature suggests some useful insights, the literature on the link between leadership and workplace ostracism in the hospitality context is scarce at best. This constitutes a serious omission for several reasons and, therefore, needs to be addressed to advance this line of research theoretically and empirically. First, workplace ostracism is one of the most common phenomena that exist across organizations and societies (Yang and Treadway, 2018; Zhao et al., 2016). For instance, 71% of 1300 US employees reported that they had faced some form of workplace ostracism (O’Reilly et al., 2015). Zhaopin.com reported that 70% of 10,000 employees working in China had experienced workplace ostracism (Yan et al., 2014). Previous hospitality literature suggests that workplace ostracism is also pervasive in the hospitality industry and represents a serious threat that undermines hospitality employees’ interpersonal relationships and the quality of social interactions (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2017). The impairment of interpersonal relationships can inflict more damage to service organizations such as hotels; because there are often unexpected contingencies during service delivery as a result of hotel guests’ diverse demands; and addressing such contingencies requires high-quality social interactions among hotel employees (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019). These high-quality social interactions help hospitality employees effectively serve their guests and better cope with stressful situations that may stem from emotional labor or unique contingencies during service delivery (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019; Kirillova et al., 2020).

Second, workplace ostracism is a complex phenomenon, as it involves an individual’s counter-normative actions with ambiguous intent and low intensity that are difficult to identify as compared to other interpersonal mistreatments, such as bullying and aggression (Ferris et al., 2017; Naseer et al., 2018). Although ostracism shares some similarity with incivility, as both of these behaviors involve the perpetrator’s ambiguous intent and counter-normative actions, its non-interactive nature (the perpetrator and the target of ostracism do not interact, for instance, excluding the target from conversations, a social event, or not even deigning to argue with the target) differentiates it from incivility (Liu et al., 2019). Robinson et al. (2013) suggest that other forms of interpersonal mistreatment, such as aggression and incivility involve social contact, whereas ostracism is about omitting social contact. A recent meta-analysis also shows that workplace ostracism is different from other forms of mistreatment including incivility and can have different antecedents and consequences

(Howard et al., 2020). Importantly, the exclusionary nature of ostracism makes it more harmful than the other forms of mistreatment and uniquely aversive, as it threatens an individual's survival by jeopardizing his/her basic needs for a meaningful existence, self-esteem, and control (Williams, 2007). Consequently, workplace ostracism not only negatively influences hospitality employees' work engagement, extra-role customer service, self-esteem, and service performance (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019; Leung et al., 2011) but also can result in negative behaviors, such as counterproductive work behaviors and knowledge hiding (Zhao et al., 2016). Finally, Usman et al. (2021, p. 3) suggests that "customers perceive hospitality more than mere eating and sleeping, and their service expectations are often tacit", which are difficult to be identified (Matthing et al., 2004; Karlsson, 2018). Ostracism deteriorates employees' physical and mental health (Heaphy and Dutton, 2008) and thus can hamper employees' ability to understand customers' tacit demands (Usman et al., 2021).

To address these critical gaps, the present study builds off the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018) to test a model that explicates why and when spiritual leadership deters employees' feelings of ostracism. Fry (2003, p. 711) defines spiritual leadership as "comprising the values, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership". We consider spiritual leadership, as some of the important attributes that differentiate it from other related leadership styles (e.g., transformational leadership) can have imperative implications for the hospitality firms, their employees, and customers. For example, transformational leadership style inspires followers' optimism by shaping a vision but ignores the spiritual values and needs of their followers (Boorum, 2009; Nicolae et al., 2013). "The satisfaction of employees' spiritual needs shapes the essence of hospitality - i.e., employees' hospitable behavior, which refers to their altruistic behaviors and genuine care and concerns for the customers" (Usman et al., 2021, p. 2) and peers (Golubovskaya et al., 2017). Moreover, "to ignore employees' spiritual needs in the hospitality context can therefore lead to a decline in the essence of hospitality" (Usman et al., 2021, p. 2) that can negatively influence employees' positive emotions (Killinger, 2006). Spiritual leadership' simultaneous application of social/spiritual values and rational determinants in decision making through its transcendent vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love makes it a unique leadership style (Ali et al., 2020; Fry, 2003; Yang et al., 2019). Altruistic love, hope/faith, and a transcendent vision are the essential components of spiritual leadership through which spiritual leaders accomplish both business and social/spiritual ends. Hope/faith and vision play an important role in achieving business-related objectives; while through altruistic love, spiritual leadership develops employees' sense of membership and calling and thus focuses on both the leader's and his/her followers' spiritual survival (Fry et al., 2005). Satisfying employees' spiritual needs help them make better moral choices when dealing with co-workers and enhance their sense of relatedness and relational wellbeing (Meng, 2016; Reave, 2005). Moreover, spiritual leadership focuses on developing employee's self-leadership skills (Fry et al., 2017) that can play an imperative role in identifying customers' needs and lead to better service performance (Bayighomog and Arasli, 2019). Thus, spiritual leadership has significant relevance for eliminating hospitality employees' sense of being excluded and ignored at work.

Additionally, the present study proposes job social support as a mechanism through which spiritual leadership negatively reduces workplace ostracism. Job social support is considered in this study, as it provides employees with informational, emotional, social, and instrumental resources that help them connect with others, deal with work-related social stressors, and better perform their jobs (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Chen et al., 2019; Karasek and Theorell, 1990; Schreurs et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2018). As we will explain later, job social support is different from perceived organizational support (POS). Although Sarfraz et al. (2019) have examined the links between POS and workplace ostracism, focusing on POS particularly risks glossing over the critical exchange relationships of employees with peers and

supervisors. Here, we suggest that spiritual leadership provides employees with needed job support that, in turn, reduces hospitality employees' feelings of workplace ostracism.

Finally, we argue that the spiritual leadership-workplace ostracism link may not be homogenous across individuals. Rather, as individuals bring heterogeneity to the workplace through a range of different work motives, attitudes, resources, and experiences, they may be differentially influenced by spiritual leadership (Yang et al., 2019). Drawing on COR theory, we propose justice orientation - "the extent to which individuals internalize justice as a moral virtue and are attentive to fairness issues around them" (Sasaki and Hayashi, 2014, p. 252) - as an individual factor that moderates the spiritual leadership-workplace ostracism link. The proposed model is presented in Fig. 1. We focus on justice orientation because individuals' internalization of justice as a moral virtue helps them regulate their interpersonal behaviors based on fair and just treatment (Rupp et al., 2003). More importantly, compared to employees with low justice orientation, employees high on justice orientation are more likely to internalize justice as a moral virtue (Rupp et al., 2003). Consequently, they demonstrate higher levels of fairness and justice while interacting with the co-workers, better regulate their moral conduct, and pay more attention to workplace injustice issues (Sasaki and Hayashi, 2014; Rupp et al., 2003). Justice orientation can thus have important implications for curbing hospitality employees' feelings of ostracism and explain when spiritual leadership is more effective in restraining workplace ostracism (Holtz and Harold, 2013). Accordingly, we suggest that employees' justice orientation will strengthen spiritual leadership's influence on workplace ostracism.

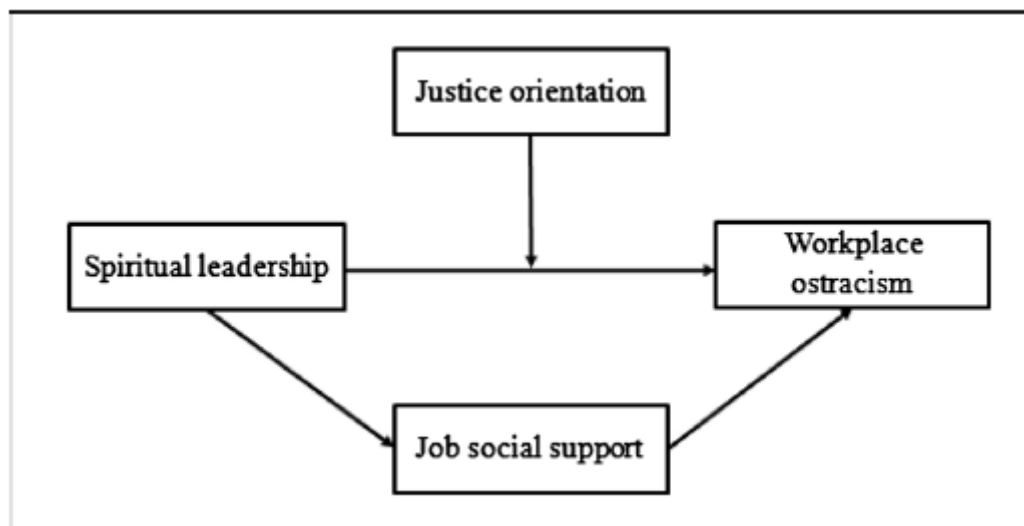


Fig. 1. The conceptual framework.

In sum, the originality of this research is its novel theoretical contributions to the existing literature on spiritual leadership, workplace ostracism, job social support, and justice orientation by filling the aforementioned research gaps. First, by theorizing and testing a model that shows that spiritual leadership is negatively related to hospitality employees' workplace ostracism, the present study signifies the consequential value of spiritual leadership for reducing hospitality employees' feelings of ostracism, and in so doing, suggests managers develop appropriate interventions to avoid the negative repercussions of ostracism for employees and hotels. These are important contributions, given the serious negative repercussions of workplace ostracism for employees' work-related outcomes, the value of spiritual leadership for deterring workplace ostracism, and the lack of studies on spiritual leadership in the hospitality context. Indeed, there are only two studies (Salehzadeh et al., 2015; Bayighomog and Arasli, 2019) on spiritual leadership's outcomes in the hospitality industry. Thus, we

extend the nomological networks of the antecedents and consequences workplace ostracism and spiritual leadership, respectively.

Second, by establishing job social support as a mechanism through which spiritual leadership curbs workplace ostracism, we extend spiritual leadership' consequential potential for enhancing job social support and foregrounds the value of job social support as a mechanism explaining why spiritual leadership negatively affects workplace ostracism. Finally, by showing that justice orientation acts as a boundary condition of the spiritual leadership-workplace ostracism link, the present work extends past research on spiritual leadership (**Bayighomog and Arasli, 2019; Salehzadeh et al., 2015**) and workplace ostracism (**Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019; Christensen-Salem et al., 2020**) and also extends the scope of justice orientation concept by contextualizing it in the hospitality context and highlighting its role in curbing ostracism at work. In sum, our research responds to recent calls in the general management literature for researchers to explore the leadership-ostracism relationship (**Babalola et al., 2017; Fiset and Boies, 2018**), as well as the calls for further research on how to prevent or eliminate ostracism in the hospitality sector (**Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019**)

## **2. Theory and hypotheses**

### *2.1. COR theory*

COR theory suggests that individuals seek to acquire, protect, invest, and accumulate resources, as these resources help them to effectively navigate the work environment. Resources are conditions, objects, social relationships, physical and psychological energies, time, attention, and personal characteristics that help individuals cope with stressful demands and events (**Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018**). Moreover, COR theory proposes that certain resources (e.g., leadership) foster additional resource gain (e.g., job or personal resources), which then drives individuals' attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. Moreover, resource investment takes place when individuals expect future resource gains and do not expect net resources loss.

COR theory further posits that individuals' behaviors and emotions, both positive and negative tend to cross over and transmit from one individual to the other (e.g., from leader to followers) (**Hobfoll et al., 2018**). Such transmission can take place directly, through empathy (direct interaction among people) or different mediating mechanisms, for example, interaction style (e.g., social support or a lack of it). The cross-over of positive and negative behaviors (or emotional states) results in recipients' resources' gain or resources' depletion, respectively.

### *2.2. Spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism*

Spiritual leaders define followers' journey and destination, mobilize them through a broad social and spiritual appeal, instill in them high ideals, and develop faith and hope (**Fry et al., 2005; Guillen et al., 2015**). Through its three fundamental characteristics - altruistic love, faith/-hope, and vision - spiritual leadership spiritually drives and intrinsically motivates followers to seek meaningfulness at work (**Bayighomog and Arasli, 2019; Salehzadeh et al., 2015**). These employees then engage in pro-social behaviors and demonstrate genuine care and concern for their co-workers that positively shape coworkers' relational well-being (**Chang and Teng, 2017**). According to **Ryan and Deci (2000)**, intrinsic motivation-related behaviors are the functions of psychological needs, for instance, relatedness, competence, and autonomy. The accomplishment of these basic psychological needs enhances

individuals' sense of belongingness and relational wellbeing that can reduce their feelings of social exclusion and sense of being ignored at work (**Williams, 2001; Baumeister and Leary, 1995**).

Furthermore, altruistic love, an imperative aspect of spiritual leadership, refers to “a sense of wholeness, harmony, and wellbeing produced through care, concern, and appreciation for both self and others” (**Fry, 2003, p. 712**). Spiritual leaders demonstrate altruistic love in the form of concern for others, gratitude, forgiveness, kindness, and compassion through their actions and behaviors (**Fry, 2003**). Spiritual leaders also exhibit social/spiritual values, for instance, ethical conduct, honesty, and fairness while interacting with others and making decisions (**Bayighomog and Arasli, 2019; Meng, 2016; Reave, 2005; Salehzadeh et al., 2015**). Spiritual leaders also acknowledge and appreciate others' contributions and listen to others responsively (**Fry et al., 2005**). COR theory posits, these positive behaviors can transmit from one individual to the other (**Hobfoll et al., 2018**). Based on COR theory, **Anser et al. (2020)** found that leaders' positive behaviors transmit to followers and discourage followers' engagement in behaviors that harm followers' interpersonal relationships. As such, building off COR theory, we suggest that spiritual leaderships' altruistic behaviors, the sense of self-transcendence, and spiritual values can transmit to employees, and as a result, these employees are likely to show forgiveness, kindness, compassion, and concern for others through their behaviors and take care of others' spiritual needs. Accordingly, employees working under spiritual leaders' supervision are less likely to demonstrate behaviors that comprise interpersonal mistreatment, such as ostracism. Instead, by demonstrating altruistic love and spiritual values through their behaviors and actions, they positively shape coworkers' relational well-being (**Chang and Teng, 2017**) and reduce their feelings of exclusion. These arguments concur with the contemporary hospitality literature that suggests that spiritual leaders inspire their followers to exhibit compassion and genuine care towards others (**Salehzadeh et al., 2015; Usman et al., 2021**). Consequently, spiritual leadership can nurture hospitality employees' feelings of social inclusion and psychological wellbeing (**Bayighomog and Arasli, 2019**) and thus can reduce their sense of social exclusion at work.

Finally, by demonstrating altruistic love through their behaviors and actions, spiritual leaders create a culture of altruistic love characterized by positive social emotions, for example, gratitude, compassion, and concern for others that are at the core of high-quality relationships (**Fry et al., 2017**). Thus, we infer that spiritual leadership reduces employees' sense of exclusion at work. Moreover, prior studies have shown that altruistic love shapes trust-based relationships among co-workers (**Bayighomog and Arasli, 2019**) that we argue can reduce workers' sense of ostracism. Drawing on these theoretical arguments, the present study postulates the following hypothesis.

**H1.** Spiritual leadership is negatively related to hospitality employees' workplace ostracism

### *2.3. Job social support*

Job social support refers to an employee's “overall level of helpful interaction available on the job from coworkers and supervisors” (**Karasek and Theorell, 1990, p. 69**). Prior studies (e.g., **Eisenberger et al., 2002; Hutchison, 1997**) suggest that perceived organizational support (POS) differs from perceived coworkers' support (PCS) and supervisor support (PSS), both theoretically and empirically. POS refers to employees' “global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (**Eisenberger et al., 1986, p. 501**). It constitutes employees' global perceptions of care and wellbeing, where supervisors are considered as the organization's representatives (Hutchison, 1997). Just as employees form global perceptions of care and wellbeing, they also develop general beliefs about the extent to which their supervisors and

coworkers are concerned about their wellbeing, provide them work-related assistance, and value their contributions that are termed as PSS and PCS, respectively (**Thoits, 1985; Ng and Sorensen, 2008**).

The psychometric properties of POS and PSS scales also captured non-redundant constructs (**Hutchison, 1997; Kottke and Sharafinski, 1988**). More generally, previous studies show that employees engage in enduring exchanges with their supervisors and the organization (e.g., **Settoon et al., 1996; Wayne et al., 1997**), suggesting that even if employees perceive their supervisors as their organizations' representatives, they form distinct exchange relationships with them (**Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe, 2003**). Furthermore, due to critical structural changes in contemporary organizations and resulting decentralization, organizations' visibility to employees has become more limited. Consequently, supervisors have gained immense importance in terms of their exchange relationship with employees (**Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe, 2003**). Supervisors not only act as the organization's representatives but also partly replace the organization (**Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe, 2003**). Indeed, our focus on supervisors' spiritual leadership is also inspired by the unique relationship between a supervisor and his/her employees in terms of usually physical proximity and frequent interactions (**Khan et al., 2019**). Moreover, supervisors enact organizational policy, help the "tone at the top" penetrate different organization's levels, and often directly reward their subordinates' contributions (**Johnson and Kennedy, 2010**). Thus, supervisors as spiritual leaders can make a difference in the level of social support to employees and their feelings of exclusion.

Finally, several scholars have suggested that PCS and PSS are equally important in shaping employees' work outcomes and have combined these two constructs as general job social support (**Karasek and Theorell, 1990; Terry et al., 1993**). Thus, following prior research (e.g., **Karasek and Theorell, 1990**), we have combined PSS and PCS as job social support to examine its interrelationships with spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism. Additionally, although **Sarfraz et al. (2019)** have shown that POS is negatively associated with workplace ostracism, there is no study on the link between job social support and workplace ostracism. By studying the link between job social support and workplace ostracism, we foreground the value of employees' social relationships with peers and supervisors that have gained immense importance due to the structural changes in modern organizations.

#### *2.4. Job social support as a mediator*

As leaders and coworkers are considered as important sources of social support at work (**Wiesenfeld et al., 2001; Hobfoll et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2018**), the present study contends that through altruistic love, hope/faith, and transcendent vision, spiritual leadership provides employees with social support in the form various resources, such as information and instrumental resources that help prevent or reduce workplace ostracism. This contention is based on the following theoretical arguments. First, spiritual leaders nurture a positive work environment based on hope/faith and altruistic love that helps them build trust-based relationships with followers, as well as creates a strong social bond among the followers (**Bayighomog and Arasli, 2019**). Indeed, through altruistic love, spiritual leadership incites positive social emotions, for instance, compassion, concern for others, and gratitude that encourage employees to support and take care of the wellbeing of their coworkers (**Fry et al., 2017**). Spiritual leaders also offer employees feedback and emotional support and take care of their professional and personal needs that can enable employees to perform their work and family roles more effectively (**Fry et al., 2017**).

Second, spiritual leaders communicate compelling transcendent vision through an interactional approach (a bottom-up approach that encourages two-way communication, **Ali et al., 2020**) that enhances employees' participation in important decisions and clarifies ambiguities associated with



their work roles (Fry, 2003). Put it differently, spiritual leaders' social support at work provides employees with different resources, such as role clarity (Hobfoll et al., 2018) and a self-transcendent foresight that not only inspire them to accomplish their work roles but also encourage them to be mindful of others' welfare (Fry et al., 2005). Likewise, through their transcendent vision, spiritual leadership develops a sense of meaning and purpose among employees that empower and intrinsically motivate them to assist their co-workers, build responsible social relationships, and take initiatives that positively influence coworkers' relational wellbeing (Bayighomog and Arasli, 2019; Hunsaker, 2016). As such, spiritual leadership can help employees develop strong interpersonal relationships at work that can lead to mutual support and a positive spiral of exchanges among them. COR theory proposes that job resources (e.g., spiritual leadership) prompt resources' positive spiral and boost employees' resources. Thus, seen through the lens of COR theory, spiritual leadership provides employees with social support, which may manifest in the form of different emotional, informational, spiritual, and instrumental resources, both from the leaders and peers.

Additionally, COR theory posits that employees invest resources when they do not fear resources' net loss and expect future resource gains. In this regard, employees working under the supervision of spiritual leaders may not spend resources (e.g., emotions and energy) on ostracizing others that may harm employees' relationships with their peers and can result in the loss of job social support (e.g., access to coworkers' support) and other valued resources. Instead, they are likely to exhibit positive behaviors, such as altruistic and pro-social behaviors that can enhance future resource gains (e.g., trust-based relationships and a spiral of positive exchanges). Importantly, leaders' spiritual behaviors offer them with a safety net to fall back in situations that threaten the net loss of resources. Thus, we suggest that spiritual leadership provides employees job social support, which, in turn, can negatively influence workplace ostracism. These different social and psychological resources provided by spiritual leadership can enable employees to cope with different stressful events and challenges in the workplace that can deter their feelings of exclusion.

Finally, several studies suggest that job social support enables employees to cope with different stressful and unpleasant events at work (Schreurs et al., 2012; Tian et al., 2019). Those employees with high perceptions of job social support are more likely to feel "central, included, valued, and respected" (Wiesenfeld et al., 2001, p: 218). Moreover, instrumental job social support not only enhances employees' level of confidence in their abilities but also flourishes their sense of relatedness (Tian et al., 2019), which diminishes their feelings of being excluded or ignored (Williams, 2001). Drawing on these arguments, we expect that spiritual leadership facilitates job social support, which, in turn, reduces workplace ostracism. Thus, we propose:

**H2.** Job social support mediates the negative relationship between spiritual leadership and hospitality employees' workplace ostracism.

### *2.5. Justice orientation as a moderator*

Workplace ostracism is a form of interpersonal mistreatment, which is not only counter-normative but also ambiguous in its intent (Ferris et al., 2008, 2017). Because of their enhanced self-awareness and self-regulation ability, individuals high on justice orientation are highly motivated to demonstrate fairness and justice in their interpersonal relationships (Sasaki and Hayashi, 2014). In addition to this, as individuals high on justice orientation internalize justice as a moral virtue, they are more attentive to injustice and unfair treatment within the workplace, and as such, tend to discourage issues that stem from the interpersonal mistreatment around them (Rupp et al., 2003; Folger and Cropanzano, 2001; Sasaki and Hayashi, 2014). Thus, we argue that individuals with high justice orientation are less

likely to be the perpetrators of workplace ostracism; instead, they can play an important role in discouraging workplace ostracism when led by a supervisor who demonstrates spiritual leadership.

Spiritual leadership, through altruistic love and transcendent vision, inspire employees to learn and demonstrate spiritual behaviors that enhance their sense of membership and calling (**Ali et al., 2020; Fry, 2003**). Spiritual behaviors include expressing genuine care and concern for others, acknowledging and appreciating others' contributions, listening to others responsively, and demonstrating spiritual values, such as ethical conduct, fairness, and honesty while interacting with others (**Reave, 2005; Meng, 2016**). Moreover, through social influence and intellectual discourse, spiritual leaders create conditions whereby employees demonstrate enhanced moral awareness and self-regulation that help these employees make better moral choices when confronted with an ethical dilemma (**Fry et al., 2005**). Individuals' moral awareness and ability to self-regulate their behaviors enhance their ethical cognition, which enables them to treat their co-workers and others around them fairly (**Reave, 2005; Meng, 2016**). COR theory suggests that employees with more resources are likely to invest more to acquire future resource gains, and resources' investment may rise in the presence of the possibility of accumulating future resource gains. Building on this premise of COR theory, we suggest that individuals who possess more resources (e.g., enhanced attention to the injustice issues at work, motivation to overcome such issues, enhanced self-awareness, and self-regulation ability; i.e., those with high justice orientation) would be more willing to invest their resources. As such, as compared with others, employees high on justice orientation are expected to demonstrate pro-social behaviors and concern for others to generate future resource gains rather than investing their resources on behaviors (e.g., ostracism) that can constitute resources loss, such as losing social support from peers and other valued resources.

Additionally, past research suggests that individuals high on justice orientation tend to be more motivated for regulating their interpersonal behaviors based on fairness and justice, as they hold fairness and justice as their prime moral obligation (**Rupp et al., 2003; Folger and Cropanzano, 2001; Sasaki and Hayashi, 2014**). Moreover, such individuals are more attentive to and sensitive about the justice issues within the workplace and have a strong inclination to sacrifice their self-interest to ensure justice in the organization (**Cropanzano et al., 2003**). These characteristics of individuals with high justice orientation are in congruence with spiritual leaders' transcendent vision, spiritual values, and altruistic love. **Markus (1977)** argues that individuals demonstrate more receptiveness and responsiveness to actions and behaviors that are in congruence with their personality orientations. Drawing on COR theory, we have alluded before that spiritual leaders' values and behaviors transmit to followers, and followers who express genuine care and concern for others and demonstrate spiritual values, such as ethical conduct, fairness, and honesty while interacting with others may not engage in workplace ostracism. Thus, by virtue of being more attentive and responsive to spiritual leaders' behaviors, individuals with high justice orientation are likely to be more attentive and responsive to their leaders' spiritual and altruistic values and transcendent vision. Thus, the interaction of spiritual leadership with individuals with high justice orientation should be more effective in curbing workplace ostracism.

**H3.** Justice orientation moderates the negative relationship between spiritual leadership and hospitality employees' workplace ostracism, such that the relationship is strong when justice orientation is high.

### 3. Research methods

#### 3.1. Data collection and analysis

To test our hypotheses, we collected time-lagged survey data (separated by two-months) from 252 employees in 43 hotels (11 5-star, 18 4-star, and 14 3-star) operating in Pakistan. Initially, 50 hotels were randomly selected, while access for data collection was guaranteed in 43 hotels using personal and professional references. Ten employees were randomly chosen from each of the 43 hotels as the potential participants. Therefore, a total of 430 hotel employees were invited to participate in the study. We delivered questionnaires that were translated from English to Urdu (the National language of Pakistan) using a back-translation technique to these 430 participants. We pre-tested the translated questionnaire with 15 respondents and five management scholars.

In the first round of data collection, questionnaires along with the information sheet that guaranteed confidentiality and explained the purpose of our research was delivered to the potential participants. They were provided pre-paid postage envelopes to facilitate them to return their responses. To minimize administrative costs, we provided participants with a weblink containing the surveys in the second and third rounds. At Time 1, employees completed measures of spiritual leadership, justice orientation, and demographic variables. At Time 2, they provided information about job social support, and at Time 3, they completed the workplace ostracism survey. After repeated reminders, 265,260, and 258 completed responses were received in three waves, respectively. Six of them were found to have missing data, thus leading to a final sample of 252 (54.78% overall response rate) for hypotheses testing. Responses were matched using unique codes. The average age of respondents was 37.7 years, while the average work experience of the respondents was 2.09 years. Moreover, 47.6% were females and 52.4% of them were males. In terms of education, 54.8% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree, while 45.2% of them had a master's degree.

As mentioned above, this study used a time-lagged strategy to collect data that addresses the common method bias (**Podsakoff et al., 2003**). Indeed, several studies have used a two-month lag between data collection waves (e.g., **Khan et al., 2019; Usman et al., 2019**). Moreover, based on **Kock's (2015)** suggestion, we tested data bias by using a full collinearity approach. Recently, a full collinearity approach has been applied in several published works (e.g., **Moqbel and Kock, 2018**). All VIF values were less than 3.33, the threshold value. Common method bias was also examined using Herman's single factor. The results demonstrated that 31.39% variance was explained by the single factor, and it was below 50%, the threshold (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Thus, common method bias was not a problem. Structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 24.0 and multiple regressions using SPSS 24.0 were used to analyze the data.

#### 3.2. Measurement

All the constructs were assessed using a five-point scale, anchored on 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

##### 3.2.1. Spiritual leadership

We adapted a 17-item scale from **Fry et al. (2005)** to assess spiritual leadership. The sample items include "I have faith in my supervisor's vision for its employees" and "My supervisor is honest and without false pride" (altruistic love). As we did not expect each of the dimensions of spiritual leadership

to have different effects on workplace ostracism, and all the three dimensions were highly correlated, an overall measure of spiritual leadership was used (see **Fig. 2**). We used a second-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to determine if the three dimensions load on to a single latent factor. The fit indices for one second-order factor and three first-order factors (vision, hope/faith, and altruistic love) of spiritual leadership were in an acceptable range [ $\chi^2$  (116) = 216.56,  $\chi^2/df$  = 1.86, IFI = .96, TLI = .96, CFI = .96, and RMSEA = .06]. Moreover, the second-order model for spiritual leadership showed a better fit than that first-order model, with all 17 items loaded on spiritual leadership [ $\chi^2$  (119) = 1015.45,  $\chi^2/df$  = 8.53, IFI = .73, TLI = .70, CFI = .73, and RMSEA = .17]. Thus, as both theory and the CFA results supported the use of spiritual leadership as a second-order factor, following the recommendation of **Koufteros et al. (2009)** and **Nunkoo et al. (2017)**, we used spiritual leadership as a second-order factor, following previous research.

Furthermore, to use spiritual leadership as an overall measure in the moderation analysis, data imputation function (AMOS 24.0) was used to estimate the first-order scores, which were then used as the indicators of the second-order construct.

### *3.2.2. Workplace ostracism*

A ten-item scale by **Ferris et al. (2008)** was used to assess workplace ostracism. The sample item includes “Your greetings have gone unanswered at work.”

### *3.2.3. Justice orientation*

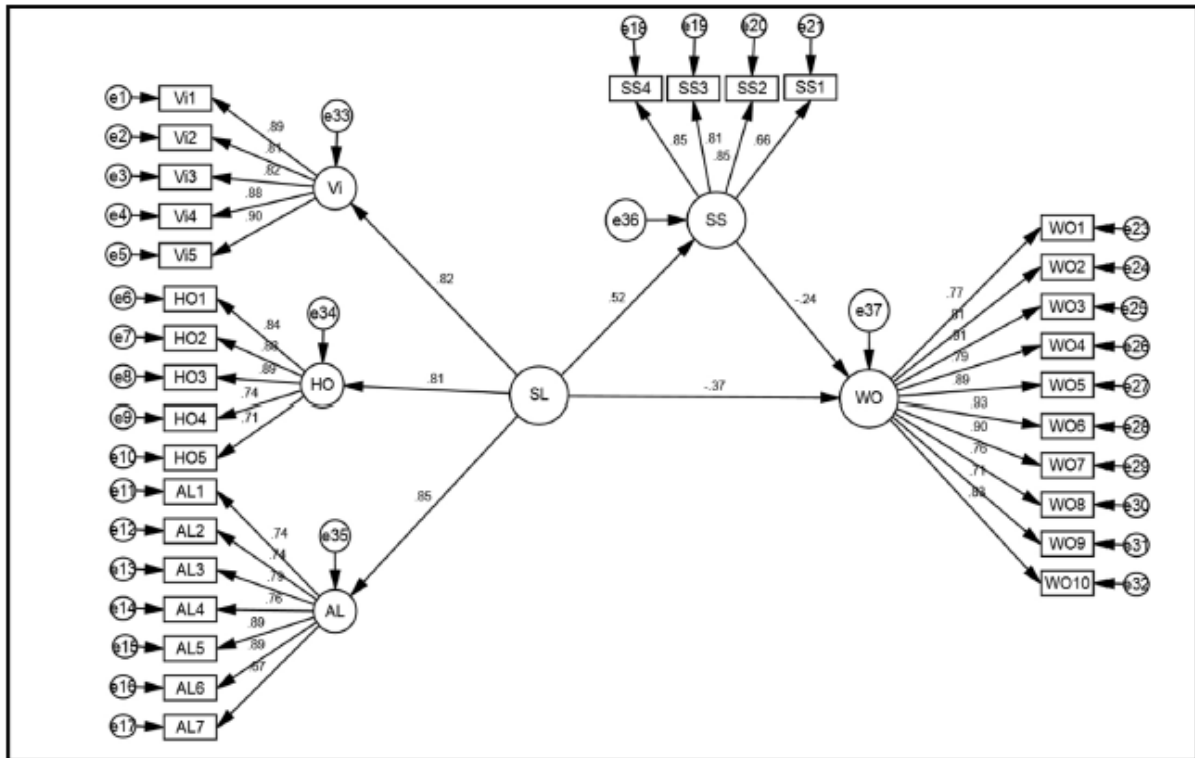
A 16-item scale from **Rupp et al. (2003)** was used to assess justice orientation. A sample item includes, “I am prone to notice people being treated unfairly in public.”

### *3.2.4. Job social support*

A four-item scale from **Van Yperen and Hagedoorn (2003)** was used to assess job social support. A sample item includes “If necessary, I can ask my immediate supervisor for help.”

## *3.3. Control variables*

Research suggests employees’ feelings of ostracism can vary across age, gender, and organization type, suggesting that age, gender, and hotel type (e.g., 5-star, 4-star, and 3-star) may confound with our results (**Ferris et al., 2017; Jahanzeb and Fatima, 2018**). These variables can also affect the level of job social support (**Schreurs et al., 2012; Tian et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2018**). As such, we controlled for gender, age, and hotel type in our analyses.



**Fig. 2.** Mediation model: Job social support as a mediator of the relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism. Notes. SL = spiritual leadership. HO = hope/faith. AL = altruistic love. VI = vision. SS = job social support. WO = workplace ostracism.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Non-independence test and descriptives

We examined our data for non-independence, as the respondents belonged to 46 hotels. Following **Bliese (2000)**, ICC (1) values for the mediator (job social support) and the outcome variable (workplace ostracism) were calculated. The ICC (1) values for both job social support and workplace ostracism were .01 (ns), indicating that non-independence was not a concern. Correlations, means, and standard deviations are presented in **Table 1**.

### 4.2. Measurement model

We assessed the measurement model consisting of spiritual leadership (SL), workplace ostracism (WO), job social support (SS), and justice orientation (JO) using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The fit indices (**Table 2**) showed that the measurement model had a satisfactory fit with the data. Our measurement scales demonstrated satisfactory levels of internal consistency and convergent and discriminant validities (see **Table 3**).

### 4.3. Hypothesis testing

#### 4.3.1. Structural model

We tested our first two hypotheses using SEM. The structural model was assessed by, first, examining the association of spiritual leadership with workplace ostracism. The results showed that spiritual leadership was negatively associated with workplace ostracism ( $\beta = - .49, p < .001$ ). This structural model (1) demonstrated a good fit (see **Table 2** for fit indices). Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported.

Then in structural model (2), job social support was included as a mediator of the relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism (see **Fig. 2** for structural model 2). The structural model (2) also demonstrated a good fit with the data (see **Table 2** for fit indices). The bootstrapping results using 2000 resampling (Table 4) further showed a significant negative indirect effect ( $\beta = - .13, 95\%$  confidence interval did not overlap with zero). As such, we concluded that job social support significantly mediated the spiritual leadership-workplace ostracism relationship. Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported.

#### 4.3.2. Moderation results

Finally, the hypothesized moderating effect of employees' justice orientation on the negative relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism was examined using stepwise regression. In the first step, we entered control variables. We mean-centered spiritual leadership and employees' justice orientation and entered in the second step. In the third step, we entered the interaction term of spiritual leadership and justice orientation. The results (**Table 5**) reveal a significant negative effect of the interaction term ( $B = - .24, p < .01$ ) on workplace ostracism, suggesting that justice orientation moderated the negative association of spiritual leadership with workplace ostracism (see **Fig. 3** for the interaction plotted at  $-1/+1SD$ ). Furthermore, simple slope test revealed that the negative association of spiritual leadership with workplace ostracism was significant when justice orientation was high ( $B = - .51, p < .001$ ); while the association was insignificant when justice orientation was low ( $B = - .07, ns$ ) (see **Table 5**). Thus, hypothesis 3 was supported.

**Table 1** Means and correlations.

Constructs	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Spiritual leadership	2.54	1.10						
2. Job social support	2.79	1.10	.47**					
3. Workplace ostracism	3.11	1.19	-.44**	-.38**				
4. Justice orientation	3.60	.93	.11	.08	-.17**			
5. Age	37.73	8.43	.02	-.04	-.06	-.05		
6. Gender	1.48	.50	-.12	-.04	.05	-.01	.03	
7. Hotel type	6.56	3.65	-.07	-.02	.07	-.01	-.01	-.05

Note.  $n = 252$ . \*  $P < .05$ . \*\*  $P < .01$  level (2-tailed). SD = standard deviation. Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female.

**Table 2** Fit indices of measurement and structural models.

Model	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	IFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Measurement model	2096.03	1025	2.04	.90	.90	.90	.06
Structural model 1	629.30	320	1.96	.95	.95	.94	.06
Structural model 2	842.38	428	1.96	.94	.94	.93	.06

**Table 3** Reliability and convergent validity and discriminant validities.

Construct	1	2	3	4	$\alpha$	AVE	MSV	ASV
1. Spiritual leadership	<b>.82</b>				.95	.68	.27	.17
2. Job social support	.52	<b>.80</b>			.87	.64	.27	.16
3. Workplace ostracism	-.47	-.43	<b>.83</b>		.94	.69	.22	.15
4. Justice orientation	.13	.10	-.18	<b>.71</b>	.94	.51	.03	.02

Notes. n = 252. MSV = maximum variance shared. ASV = average variance shared. AVE = average variance extracted. Bolded values on the diagonals of columns 2-5 are the square root values of AVE.  $\alpha$  = Cronbach alpha.

**Table 4** Direct and indirect effects and 95% confidence intervals (structural model 2).

Parameter	Estimate	LL	UL
<b>Standardized direct effects</b>			
Spiritual leadership → Job social support	.52*	.38	.65
Spiritual leadership → Workplace ostracism	-.37*	-.52	-.20
Job social support → Workplace ostracism	-.24*	-.40	-.08
<b>Standardized indirect effects</b>			
Spiritual leadership → Job social support → Workplace ostracism	-.13*	-.24	-.04

Notes: Empirical 95% confidence interval does not overlap with zero. n = 252 (bootstrapping by specifying a sample of size 2000). LL = lower limit. UL = upper limit.

**Table 5** Moderation results.

Predictors	Workplace ostracism			
	B	t-value	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
<b>Step 1</b>				
Age	-.01	-.99	.011	.011
Gender	.12	.83		
Hotel type	.02	1.09		
<b>Step 2</b>				
Spiritual leadership	-.46**	-7.35	.214	.203**
Justice orientation	-.16*	-2.21		
<b>Step 3</b>				
Spiritual leadership × justice orientation	-.24**	-3.48	.251	.037**

Notes: \*p = <.05. \*\*p = <.01. n = 252.

## 5. Discussion

Workplace ostracism is a serious threat to the workplace (Ferris et al., 2008), and more so, to the hospitality industry, as it significantly impairs effective service delivery (Zhao et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to better understand how to prevent or reduce ostracism in hospitality organizations. Our research findings address this important issue. Specifically, our findings reveal that spiritual leadership's altruistic values and behaviors, such as compassion, kindness, honesty, and fairness reduces workplace ostracism, in part, by providing employees with social support in the form of various interactional, emotional, informational, spiritual, and instrumental resources. The findings indicate that job resources, such as spiritual leadership prompt resources' positive spiral and boost

employees' social support in the form of different emotional, informational, spiritual, and instrumental resources that, in turn, attenuate employees' feelings of ostracism at work.

Our findings also suggest that the negative association between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism is strengthened by employees' justice orientation. In line with previous findings of the general literature (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Sekiguchi and Hayashi, 2014), our results suggest that, as compared with others, employees with high justice orientation possess more resources, such as attention to the injustice issues and self-regulation and can invest more resources to enhance their future resource gains rather than engaging in behaviors that result in loss of resources. The findings point out that, as compared with others, employees with high justice orientation have a stronger inclination to curtail workplace ostracism in two ways; by treating others with fairness and justice and discouraging others from perpetrating ostracism. These findings highlight the critical role that an individual factor, justice orientation, can play in strengthening the negative influence of spiritual leadership on workplace ostracism in the hospitality industry. Together, our findings not only highlight the value of spiritual leadership for helping employees mitigate the feelings of being ostracized at work, but also the importance of employees' justice orientation. We discuss the implications below.

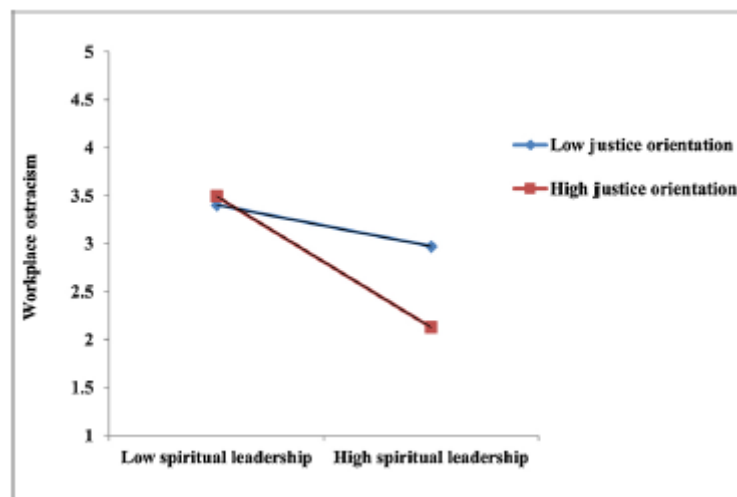


Fig. 3. Justice orientation as a moderator of the relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism.

### 5.1. Theoretical contributions

Despite the serious negative repercussions of workplace ostracism for hotels' wellbeing, performance, and productivity and the theoretical relevance of spiritual leadership for undermining workplace ostracism, hospitality literature has largely ignored the relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism. Moreover, previous general literature has revealed that LMX (Fiset and Boies, 2018), ethical leadership (Babalola et al., 2017), and transformational leadership (Kanwal et al., 2019) are negatively related to workplace ostracism and has called for further research on its links with other value-based leadership styles (Fiset and Boies, 2018; Kanwal et al., 2019). However, the general literature has also glossed over the examination of the relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism. By theorizing and revealing a negative relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism, the present study plugged in this research gap regarding the relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism in the hospitality as well as the general literature. In so doing, the study extended the nomological networks of the outcomes and antecedent of spiritual leadership (Fry et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2019) and workplace ostracism (Ferris et al., 2017; Fiset and Boies, 2018; Yang et al., 2018), respectively. Given the destructive



influences that workplace ostracism can have on hotels' employees' wellbeing and performance and the lack of evidence on the influence of leadership on ostracism in the hospitality context, our work is relevant.

The findings concur with past general literature that concluded that employees' sense of relatedness attenuates their feelings of being ignored and excluded (**Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Williams, 2001; Yang et al., 2018**). The finding also lends support to the scarce prior work that showed that leaders' positive behaviors negatively influence workplace ostracism (**Fiset and Boies, 2018; Kanwal et al., 2019**). However, as previous literature (**Babalola et al., 2017; Kanwal et al., 2019**) is mainly based on social learning and social exchange theories, our study departs markedly from the existing literature (**Fiset and Boies, 2018; Babalola et al., 2017**) by portraying the COR theory as an alternative lens to look at the leadership-ostracism connection in the work context. Thus, our study offered a nuanced theorization of the negative association between leadership and workplace ostracism. By doing so, this study enhanced the scope of COR theory as an important means of explaining the leadership-ostracism relationship.

Moreover, by establishing job social support as a mediator between the negative relationship of spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism, the present study extended the scope of spiritual leadership for enhancing employees' job social support, which, in turn, undermines employee's feelings of workplace ostracism. Although **Sarfraz et al. (2019)** has shown that POS is negatively related to workplace ostracism, the role of an employee's relationships with peers and supervisor for deterring workplace ostracism has been ignored. By filling this gap, our study contributed to the general literature on job social support (**Karasek and Theorell, 1990; Schreurs et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2018**), the hospitality literature on spiritual leadership (**Bayighomog and Arasli, 2019; Salehzadeh et al., 2015**) and workplace ostracism (**Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019; Leung et al., 2011; Christensen-Salem et al., 2020**), and the general literature on the links between leadership and workplace ostracism (**Babalola et al., 2017; Fiset and Boies, 2018**).

Finally, by revealing that employees' justice orientation moderates the negative association of spiritual leadership with workplace ostracism, the present work contributed to the scarce hospitality literature on spiritual leadership (**Bayighomog and Arasli, 2019; Salehzadeh et al., 2015**) and workplace ostracism (**Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2017**), as well as the scant general literature on the links between leadership and workplace ostracism (**Babalola et al., 2017; Kanwal et al., 2019**). Given the untapped nature of this line of research, this contribution that brought to the fore the complex nature of the relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism is imperative. Additionally, despite the recognition that justice orientation can positively shape employees' positive outcomes and discourage employees' negative work-related attitudes and behaviors, the literature on justice orientation is limited to a few studies (**Sasaki and Hayashi, 2014; Sekiguchi and Hayashi, 2014**). By foregrounding justice orientation as a boundary condition of the negative relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism, the present study also contributed to the literature on justice orientation (**Rupp et al., 2003; Sasaki and Hayashi, 2014**).

## *5.2. Practical implications*

The work at hand offers imperative practical insights that can guide hospitality managers to curb workplace ostracism. First, we suggest that organizations should inspire supervisors/managers to develop the spiritual leadership style to motivate followers to build strong interpersonal relationships and provide them with social support at work that can enhance their sense of relatedness and relational wellbeing and mitigate their feelings of workplace ostracism. To achieve this end,

organizations can arrange seminars and training sessions on the importance of simultaneous application of social and spiritual determinants for discouraging ostracism at work that can improve employees' service performance. Indeed, organizations can promote spiritual and altruistic values through both informal and formal meetings that would deter their sense of social exclusion.

Moreover, managers in the hospitality organizations should act as spiritual leaders and use the transcendent vision to cultivate a culture of altruistic love that instigates employees to help coworkers by paying attention to their day to day problems that, in turn, can enhance their sense of membership and curb their feelings of ostracism. Managers as spiritual leaders should emphasize and communicate the value of transcendental behavior and cooperation at work that would help employees to take care of their relational wellbeing. To accomplish this end, managers should create a social environment where employees perceive work as a great good, which safeguards the social, economic, and emotional needs of others, including co-workers.

Second, managers should provide social support to their followers in the form of guidance, relevant information, and other resources required for performing their work roles that, in turn, can curb their feelings of ostracism. Moreover, through transcendent vision and altruistic love, managers/supervisors can create a work environment characterized by altruistic love that encourages employees to take care of their peers' personal and professional needs and provide them social, informational, and psychological support that can enhance their sense of interconnectedness and mitigate their feelings of ostracism. Likewise, managers/ supervisors as spiritual leaders should understand employees' concerns to strengthen their emotional resources, share his/her experience and skills with employees, and encourage and appreciate them to share their knowledge and experience with peers that would create a strong social bond among them.

Finally, our finding suggests that hospitality employees' justice orientation can help mitigate workplace ostracism. This finding has important implications for recruitment and selection practices in hospitality organizations. We suggest that managers in the hospitality industry should emphasize individuals' justice orientation as a moral value when hiring employees. For this purpose, managers should use the justice orientation scale (**Rupp et al., 2003**) as a part of recruitment tests. As employees with high justice orientation can be more influential in countering the ostracism issue, managers should identify and differentiate between employees with high justice orientation and employees with low justice orientation. Managers can do so by conducting psychometric tests based on the justice orientation scale. Managers can also use their social influence to encourage employees to make better moral choices when interacting with others. Furthermore, managers should embed spiritual values in work practice to enhance employees' spiritual experience and build a work environment characterized by moral values and altruistic love that can positively shape employees' justice orientation and enhance the effectiveness of managers' endeavors for curbing the workplace ostracism.

### *5.3. Limitation and future research directions*

The present study is not without limitations. First, although time-lagged data can reduce the possibility of common method variance, drawing causal inferences using time-lagged design about the interrelationships between spiritual leadership, job social support, justice orientation, and workplace ostracism is unlikely. Longitudinal designs should be used to facilitate causal inferences about the relationships that we studied. Second, although the present research uncovered job social support as a mechanism underlying the spiritual leadership-workplace ostracism link, other important constructs can also mediate this link between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism. For instance, prior work on meaningful work indicates that meaningful work positively shapes employees' perceptions

that their work serves a greater good that may encourage employees to treat coworkers fairly and thus, can undermine their peers' feeling of being excluded. Therefore, future research should investigate meaningful work as a potential mechanism underlying the spiritual leadership-workplace ostracism link.

Finally, the present study revealed that the spiritual leadership-workplace ostracism link is contingent on justice orientation, an individual factor. Future research should extend this line of inquiry by considering other individual factors as moderators of this relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace ostracism. The literature on harmonious work passion (**Ho et al., 2018**) indicates that harmoniously passionate individuals not only build high-quality relationships with peers but also engage in helping behaviors. Therefore, it is likely that, as compared to their counterparts, individuals high on harmonious work passion benefit more from spiritual leadership's features of altruistic love and transcendent vision and actively demonstrate behaviors that deter workplace ostracism. We suggest that the role of harmonious work passion as a contingent factor of the spiritual leadership-workplace ostracism link should be examined.

#### *5.4. Conclusions*

Although there is substantial evidence about the detrimental effects of workplace ostracism for employees and organizations (see **Ferris et al., 2017**), limited attention has been paid to understand how and under which conditions ostracism can be prevented, reduced, or mitigated. Based on COR theory, the present study attempted to address this important lacuna in the literature by explicating the role of spiritual leadership in deterring workplace ostracism. Using time-lagged survey data collected from employees in different hotels, we found that spiritual leadership provides resources that enhance employees' social support at work and in doing so, reduces workplace ostracism. Furthermore, we found that employees' justice orientation moderated the effect of spiritual leadership on workplace ostracism such that the effect was stronger when justice orientation was high. Through these findings, we inform managers in the hospitality industry about different leadership-related interventions that can help them address workplace ostracism and its negative repercussions for employees and hospitality firms.

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