The impact of workplace ostracism on employee silence in the education sector, with workplace spirituality as a mediator: An empirical study focused on NGOs in Northern Syria Prepared By

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الملخص:

الهدف: يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة ظاهرة الصمت بين موظفي المنظمات غير الحكومية التعليمية العاملة في شمال سوريا، وذلك من خلال فحص تأثير النبذ في مكان العمل واستكشاف الدور الوسيط للروحانية في مكان العمل.

المنهجية: استندت الدراسة إلى مقاييس متوفرة في الأدبيات المتخصصة، وتم توزيع الاستبيان باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية على الموظفين العاملين حاليًا في المنظمات غير الحكومية التعليمية في شمال سوريا. تم استلام ٣٦٥ استجابة صالحة نشطة واستخدامها لإجراء تحليل عاملي تأكيدي باستخدام برنامج AMOS ، والذي شكل الأساس لتقييم نموذج المسار ودراسة العلاقات بين المتغيرات.

النتائج: كشفت النتائج أن النبذ في مكان العمل مرتبط ارتباطًا إيجابيًا بصمت الموظفين، وأن الروحانية في مكان العمل تلعب دورًا جزئيًا في التوسط في العلاقة بين النبذ في مكان العمل وصمت الموظفين.

الآثار المترتبة: قدم البحث عدة توصيات لصانعي القرار يمكن أن تساعد في تعزيز السلوك التنظيمي داخل المنظمات غير الحكومية التعليمية.

أعمال مستقبلية: وضع البحث أجندة للأعمال المستقبلية، تتمثل أساسًا في دراسة الروحانية في مكان العمل في سياقات مختلفة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المنظمات غير الحكومية، صمت الموظفين، النبذ في مكان العمل، الروحانية في مكان العمل، شمال سوريا

ABSTRACT:

Purpose: This research aims to study Silence among employees of Education NGOs operating in Northern Syria by examining the effect of Workplace Ostracism and exploring the mediating effect of Workplace Spirituality.

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Method: *the survey was based on scales available in literature, and it was distributed in both Arabic and English to employees currently working in educational NGOs in Northern Syria. 365 active valid responses have been received and used to conduct a Confirmatory Factor Analysis using AMOS, which created a base to assess the path model and study relationships among variables.*

Findings*: The results revealed that Workplace Ostracism is positively related to employee silence, and Workplace Spirituality partially mediates the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and employee silence.*

Implications: *The research provided several recommendations to decision-makers that could help in enhancing organizational behavior within Education NGOs*

Future work: *The research provided an agenda for future work, mainly studying workplace spirituality in different contexts.*

Keywords: Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Employee Silence, Workplace Ostracism, Workplace Spirituality, Northern Syria.

1. INTRODUCTION

NGOs' operations could include accomplishing different tasks related to humanitarian function, environment, and sustainability (Singh, 2014). When looking at the education status in Northern Syria, especially for refugees who flee from other parts of Syria we can notice how complicated the situation is. With the absence of formal education, the biggest burden of providing education in these areas lies on NGOs. Highlighting the importance of understanding several challenges that NGOs face while operating and providing education.

One of the main challenges is that the main education they are providing is the non-formal education developed by NGOs and Syrian refugee teachers with lack of guiding framework or policies. Instead, the main reliance is on the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies to make essential decisions about language of instruction and curriculum (Karam, Monaghan, & Yoder, 2017). Other challenges faced by NGOs are the destruction of educational infrastructure, lack of accreditation, and validation of qualifications. These challenges lead to long-term harmful effects on social and economic prospects caused by the possibility for youth to be attracted by radicalized groups, early marriage and increased child labor (Lăzăroiu, 2015).

Luckily there is a significant increase in NGO numbers in the last decades (Weiss & Gordenker, 1996). Therefore, even governments increased their dependence on NGOs to function in humanitarian situations (Damon, 2020). This urges the need to study important organizational behavior aspects related to their unique form of organizations. Accordingly, when it comes to improving educational results and resolving educational inequities, the development of education NGOs is essential. The way these NGOs' employees and leaders behave internally has a big impact on the organization's overall efficacy. These NGOs can more successfully accomplish their objectives if they are aware of the influence of organizational behavior and the significance of organizational learning (Hafiz, 2019). This highlights the importance of conducting studies that could participate in the improvement of NGOs' organizational behavior and performance.

One of the main topics studied recently and found significantly affecting organizations is employee silence. Literature revealed that Employee Silence has several adverse effects on organizations (Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003; Sahabuddin, Qingmei, Ayub, & Fatima, 2021; Imran, Fatima, Sarwar, & Iqbal, 2021). Therefore, it's essential to study factors that could lead to employee silence to mitigate its impact on organizations, especially on non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Upon reviewing the literature on employee

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silence, it was discovered that despite the significance of workplace Ostracism and its established detrimental impact on organizations (Ferris et al., 2008; Cho et al. 2016; Gkorezis & Bellou, 2016; Zhao, Peng, & Sheard, 2013; Zhao et al. 2016), with prior research indicating that ostracism influences employee silence (Jahanzeb et al., 2021; Sahabuddin et al., 2021) and despite the distinctive characteristics of NGOs, a limited number of studies had examined the relationship between ostracism and employee silence within NGOs. Workplace spirituality is another critical issue that affects organizational behavior within NGOs (Baskar & Indradevi, 2020; Schneider, DeSouza, & Durst, 2015). However, despite Workplace spirituality's role in enhancing positive organizational behavior and mediating the relationships of several organizational behavior variables (Aftab, Sarwar, Kiran, & Qureshi, 2022; Kökalan, 2019; Haldorai, Kim, Chang, & Li, 2020) there are no available studies that examine spirituality's as a mediator of the relationship between ostracism and Employees' Silence.

Therefore, this research will study the relationship between ostracism and Employees' Silence in education NGOs operating in Northern Syria and examine the mediating role of workplace spirituality. Accordingly, this research has two main objectives: the first is to explore the effect of workplace ostracism on Employee Silence. The second objective is to investigate whether Workplace Spirituality mediates the relationship between ostracism and Employee Silence. The research aims to answer the following questions: Does workplace ostracism lead to Employee Silence? And does Workplace spirituality explain the relationship between ostracism and Employee Silence?

By achieving the research objectives and answering the research questions, this paper aims to add to the literature and deepen the understanding of ostracism as a cause of employee silence within NGOs. Since NGOs are different than regular organizations (Singh, 2014) and workplace spirituality is considered essential for their operations (Baskar & Indradevi, 2020; Schneider, DeSouza, & Durst,

2015) and since workplace spirituality mediates the relationships between several organizational behavior variables; and based on available theory in literature, it's necessary to examine whether it has the same effect in mediating the relationship between ostracism and Employee Silence for NGOs. Moreover, the research results aim to introduce empirical recommendations that could help educational NGO's decision-makers to make decisions that enhance their employees' participation within the organization through a deeper understanding of two of the Employee Silence antecedents, workplace ostracism, and spirituality.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Non-profit Organization's nature differs from other for-profit and governmental organizations, which urges the need to conduct specified studies to deepen the understanding of organizational behavior within NGOs (Dandridge, 1979; Westhead, & Cowling, 1998). Damon (2020) presented a recent definition of an NGO as an organization that is not dependent on the government and dedicated to addressing various social, environmental, cultural, and educational issues. Similarly, educational NGOs support education in certain fields or for children with limitations (Brophy, 2020). NGOs differ from other types of regular organizations in their independence and neutrality (Damon, 2020), having differentiated vision and mission (Quarter & Richmond, 2001), adopting unique performance evaluation and accountability (Edwards & Hulme, 2014) and their employees' commitment (Damon, 2020). In addition, NGOs face different types of challenges embodied in maintaining the spiritualization of their employees as a monitor for their behavior and performance (McMurray, 2009). NGOs face different challenges trying to balance mission, passion, efficiency, and effectiveness (Bear & Fitzgibbon, 2005).

This research adopts Lazarus & Folkman, (1984) transactional model of coping as a theoretical background. This model addresses the transaction and interplay between a person - here an employee- and his environment. When a person faces a certain act from the

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surrounding environment he needs to act accordingly as a transactional natural reaction to cope. To do so according to Lazarus & Folkman, (1984) two cognitive appraisals exist, the primary and the secondary appraisal. In the primary appraisal, a person starts evaluating the stress source to consider whether it is harmful and that it may form a threat or challenge. Then the secondary appraisal comes where the person starts assessing and thinking about different options available to cope with the stressor. This theory could be extended to the field of organizational behavior and especially to understand the possible effect of ostracism as a stressor (Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018). After evaluating a stressor, an employee may use silence as one of the possible options in the secondary appraisal of transactional coping to save them any possible losses (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Relatedly, spirituality has been found able to influence coping behaviors providing a starting point to study it in the context of a person's behavior (Gall, et al., 2005). Looking at the transactional model of coping and considering the proven effect of workplace spirituality in mitigating the harmful effect of negative workplace attitudes and behaviors, lead to the possibility of integrating spirituality into this model to provide a deeper insight and understanding.

Accordingly, and in order to form hypotheses regarding Employees' Silence, workplace Ostracism, and spirituality within NGOs, the related literature has been scanned, presenting the next section.

2.1 Employees' Silence

According to Morrison and Milliken (2000) Employee Silence means that employees do not share views and concerns about organizational problems. They added that if an employee feels a dangerous situation when he speaks within the organization, it's possible to choose to remain silent deliberately. Dyne, Ang, & Botero (2003) Studied voice and silence behavior; they said that in addition to being the lack of voice, silence is also harder to comprehend than voice and has more unanticipated consequences. Moreover, Dyne, Ang, & Botero (2003)

differentiated three types of silence: Acquiescent Silence (when employees don't express their opinions due to their belief that it will not make a difference), Defensive Silence (when employees remain silent because of fear), and Pro-Social Silence (is experienced by employees for the sake of their group or to protect their superiors).

There are many consequences of Employee Silence. Employees Silence has been found to correlate negatively with job performance (Sahabuddin, Qingmei, Ayub, & Fatima, 2021) and it also explains workplace ostracism's effect on employee performance (Imran, Fatima, Sarwar, & Iqbal, 2021). Also, organizational silence and commitment are negatively related (Akar, 2018). In addition, employee's silence has been found significantly related to employee's job satisfaction and work engagement (Wang, Hsieh, & Wang, 2020).

The antecedents of Employees' Silence have recently formed an interesting field for several researchers. The study revealed that there is a negative correlation between managerial trust, organizational justice and transformational leadership with organizational silence (Akar, 2018). Relatedly, organizational silence has resulted from burnout and mobbing (Erdirençelebi & Şendoğdu, 2016). In addition, Ostracism has been found to be one of the significant drivers of Employees' Silence (Gkorezis et al., 2016; Jahanzeb et al., 2021; Imran et al., 2021; Sahabuddin et al., 2021). Also, it has been found that an abusive leader, workplace ostracism, and power distance together lead to employee silence among school teachers in Sargodha, Pakistan, with power distance playing a moderating role (Malik et. al., 2023). In addition, workplace ostracism can affect the performance of employees through their silence and voice behavior (Imran, Fatima, Sarwar, & Iqbal, 2021).

In this context an intresting study by Al-Dhuhouri et. Al (2024) found that Employee Silence is increased by perceived workplace Ostracism, which is caused by interpersonal mistrust as well as person-organization fit. Also they stated that Employee Silence is linked to interpersonal mistrust and person-organization unfitness through the mediatory effect of feeling ostracized. This is moderated by ethical leadership, which lessens the effect of ostracism on silence and demonstrates its usefulness in lowering negative workplace

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dynamics. Because it demonstrates the origins and effects of perceived workplace ostrracism and offers workable remedies, the study is beneficial to managers and organizations.

2.2 Workplace ostracism

Several researchers have defined ostracism. Gruter & Masters, (1986) defined Ostracism as social exclusion or rejection. Williams & Zadro (2001) stated that the act of excluding or ignoring a group or individual is referred to as o]Ostracism. Hitlan, Cliffton, & DeSoto (2006) presented the first definition of Ostracism which mentions workplace as the act or omission of a group or individual from a social or professional context that negatively affects one's ability to maintain or develop positive relationships with others. Finally, workplace ostracism was defined according to Ferris et al., (2008) as "the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded at work".

Ostracism leads to enhance several aspects of negative organizational behavior that could harm the organization, like aggression, incivility (Cho, Bonn, Han, & Lee, 2016) unfavorable job attitudes, counterproductive work behaviors, job withdrawals (Zhao, Peng, & Sheard, 2013), knowledge hiding (Zhao, Xia, He, Sheard, & Wan, 2016) and organizational silence behavior (Gkorezis & Bellou, 2016). Moreover, ostracism is negatively related to information exchange behavior (Gkorezis & Bellou, 2016) and organizational voice behavior (Li & Tian, 2016). Accordingly, a direct negative relationship between ostracism and job performance has been proven, along with the finding that Employee Silence mediates the negative relationship between workplace Ostracism and job performance (Sahabuddin, Qingmei, Ayub, & Fatima, 2021; Imran, Fatima, Sarwar, & Iqbal, 2021).

Several research studied the relationship between ostracism and Employee Silence. Employees who face supervisor ostracism tend to adopt defensive silence (Jahanzeb, Bouckenooghe, & Mushtaq, 2021). Furthermore, within public sector universities, a study proved the positive relationship between workplace ostracism and employee silence (Fatima, Ilyas, Rehman, & Imran, 2017). Also, Liu et. al.

(2023) found that workplace Ostracism significantly increases employee counterproductive behavior, mediated by psychological contract violation. Even for patients' safety, a study found that workplace ostracism affects nurses' silence, while organizational identification partially mediates their relationship (Gkorezis, Panagiotou, & Theodorou, 2016). Moreover, Ostracism has been found harming employees' performance through their silence (Sahabuddin, Qingmei, Ayub, & Fatima, 2021; Imran, Fatima, Sarwar, & Iqbal, 2021). Therefore, Aligning these prior research findings with the theoretical background of Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) transactional model of coping, Ostracism as a stressor (Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018) and Silence as one of the possible options in the secondary appraisal of transactional coping to save employees any possible losses (Morrison & Milliken, 2000) the research's first hypothesis will be:

H1: Workplace ostracism is positively related to Employees silence.

2.3 Workplace Spirituality

The concept of Spirituality has recently been evolved and studied by different researchers, which formed a critical trend (Shellenbarger, 2000). The common historical perception of Spirituality involves religious belief (Neck & Milliman, 1994). However, nowadays, spirituality at work is not related to a specific religious tradition, but the concept is based on people's philosophy and personal values (Cavanagh, 1999). Still, there is no one well-known agreed definition for Workplace Spirituality available in literature (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010). However, Ashmos & Duchon (2000) defined Spirituality on the job as "recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of a community".

According to Ashmos & Duchon (2000) workplace spirituality incorporates three dimensions: inner life, meaningful work, and a sense of community. These three dimensions are studied at the individual, departmental, and organizational levels. However, most research papers about workplace spirituality are concerned with the

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organizational level (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004). Ashmos & Duchon (2000) stated that an individual's inner life encompasses a spiritual dimension to their self-concept, as well as a social characteristic that is associated with their work division or organization. They then explained that the concept of meaningful work refers to an individual's level of awareness of the work's purpose. They also stated that a sense of community is a person's ability to connect with others. This includes their autonomy of speech, as well as their ability to handle realistic concerns.

There are several antecedents of Workplace spirituality that are related either positively or negatively. One of these antecedents is ethical leadership which has been found positively associated with Workplace Spirituality (Aftab, Sarwar, Kiran, & Qureshi, 2022). Also, organizational justice and ethical climate were found to be related positively to Workplace Spirituality (Haldorai, Kim, Chang, & Li, 2020). Ostracism has been found associated negatively with the second dimension of Workplace Spirituality, meaningful work (Zhang , Bolino, & Yin, 2022) and also another study proved that the third dimension, a sense of community, has been found negatively related to ostracism (Paşamehmetoğlu, Guzzo, & Guchait, 2022)

Workplace Spirituality has several outcomes that affect personal, organizational, and interactive aspects (Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2008; Karakas & Sarigollu, 2019). Accordingly, Spirituality may impact important personal and organizational outcomes related to interactions of employees (Tombaugh, Mayfield, & Durand, 2011). Through a qualitative study, Karakas & Sarigoll (2019) were able to gain a deeper understanding of the various aspects of Workplace Spirituality. They identified three main themes that are related to this concept: responsibility, reflexivity, and connectivity. Each of these themes is associated with upward spirals of inspiration, engagement, and calling. On the other hand, downward spirals are linked to silence, fatigue, and incivility. (Karakas & Sarigollu, 2019). Moreover, a study proved that workplace spirituality is negatively related to organizational frustration and positively related to job involvement, organizational identification, and reward satisfaction (Kolodinsky, Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2008). Also, Workplace

Spirituality positively affects organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior (Haldorai, Kim, Chang, & Li, 2020).

Despite the importance of Workplace Spirituality, just a few studies studied spirituality within NGOs (Baskar & Indradevi, 2020). However, a study on nonprofit organizations found that workplace spirituality contributes to job satisfaction and meaningful of life (Schneider, DeSouza, & Durst, 2015). In addition, For NGOs, it has been found that spirituality in the workplace has a significant impact on employee engagement in the workplace (Baskar & Indradevi, 2020). Relatedly, voice/silence decisions form an outcome of the employee engagement state (Robinson & Shuck, 2019) Which triggers a question about the effect of workplace spirituality on Employee Silence.

Within literature, workplace spirituality has been introduced as the partial reason for the association between different organizational behavior aspects by mediating the relationship between several organizational variables (Kökalan, 2019; Haldorai, Kim, Chang, & Li, 2020; Kökalan, 2019). Haldorai et al. (2020) studied workplace spirituality mediating effect within the hospitality industry and concluded that Workplace spirituality mediated the effect of organizational justice and organizational citizenship behavior with both workplace deviant behavior and ethical climate. Moreover, Aftab (2022) found that Workplace Spirituality partially mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and job satisfaction. Furthermore, organizational spiritual values partially mediate the relationship between organizational cynicism and job satisfaction (Kökalan, 2019). Also, Kökalan (2018) found that the relationship between organizational justice and organizational silence in both traditional public banks and private participation (Islamic) banks is mediated by workplace spirituality.

Workplace spirituality affects employee engagement in the workplace (Baskar & Indradevi, 2020) and employee engagement has been proven to affect voice/silence decisions (Robinson & Shuck, 2019). In addition, Ostracism has a significant negative relationship with bonding social capital with co-workers

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(Paşamehmetoğlu, Guzzo, & Guchait, 2022) which shares the same definition as a sense of community, a dimension of workplace spirituality. Another dimension of organizational spirituality, meaningful work, has also been found less among employees who experienced ostracism (Zhang , Bolino, & Yin, 2022). Another study on public university teachers found that the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee silence is partially mediated by meaningful existence. (Fatima, Ilyas, Rehman, & Imran, 2017).

Relating the above discussion with the theoretical background of Lazarus & Folkman's (1984) transactional model of coping, Ostracism as a stressor (Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018), and Silence as a coping strategy (Morrison & Milliken, 2000); also based on that, spirituality has been found to influence coping behaviors (Gall et al., 2005); this leads to the assumption of integrating spirituality into this model to provide a deeper insight and understanding. Accordingly, and based on the above discussion and the connection between the findings of several previous studies, the conducted research will examine whether workplace spirituality mediates the effect of ostracism on Employee Silence. As a logical conclusion, the following research hypothesis is deemed necessary and forms the second research hypothesis:

H2: Workplace spirituality mediates the relationship between Ostracism and Employee silence.

3. METHODOLOGY

Based on the above discussion and the two-research hypothesis, the following research model emerged:
H1: Workplace Ostracism is positively related to Employee Silence.
H2: Workplace Spirituality mediates the relationship between Ostracism and Employee silence.

The research is quantitative research conducted by a questionnaire developed by existing literature measurements that contain several instruments to measure each variable. The survey is measured by a Likert seven-point scale. As stated in the research model, this research will study three variables using the following measurement scales: Employees' silence which has been measured by Dyne, Ang, & Botero's (2003) scale and has three dimensions (Acquiescent Silence, Defensive Silence, and ProSocial Silence) with five questions to measure each dimension. The second variable, Workplace Ostracism has been measured by Ferries' (2008) ten-item scale. Finally, the mediating variable, Workplace Spirituality has been measured by the Ashmos & Duchon (2000) scale, which has been confirmed by Milliman et al. (2003) and contains three dimensions (inner life 7 items, meaningful work 6 items, and a sense of community 7 items).

The research population is the number of employees working in educational NGOs in Northern Syria. The Snowball sampling method was adopted with assistance from the top management of several NGOs and schools. The valid received responses are 365. The survey started with a question to confirm that the participant was an employee of an NGO. The survey was issued in both Arabic and English because the majority of those working with the Syrian refugees who recently fled to Northern Syria speak Arabic, especially those working near the borders, in addition to some Turkish staff who understand English. The survey was translated to Arabic using the backward translation method to ensure the validity of the translation.

The data was analyzed using SPSS and AMOS. First, data was screened, and demographics were presented. Then, the proposed measurement model for each variable was assessed by conducting a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS. Then the structural model was assessed by calculating the model fit. Finally, the path model was evaluated by structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and the P-value for each path has been evaluated. Finally, several tests for mediation were conducted.

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4. RESULTS

4.1 Demographics

Table 1 presents the demographics of the collected responses. Most of the sample were males, with 291 responses that form 79.7% of the sample. Accordingly, females were presented with only 74 responses which is 20.3% of the sample.

For age, the majority of the respondents are between 30-39 years old with 207 respondents which form 56.7% of the sample. The second most prominent age group is 20-29 with 72 responses which form 19.7% of the sample. Then comes the 40-49 age group with 65 responses and a percentage of 17.8% of the sample. Finally, the last age group is more than 50 with 20 responses that form 5.5% of the sample.

Respondents' educational levels were classified as High school or less (70 responses, 19.2% of the sample, Diploma (59 respondents, 16.2% of the sample), Bachelor (181 respondents, 49.6% of the sample), and finally, postgraduates (55 respondent, 15.1% of the sample).

Table 1 Respondents' demographics

Gender		
	Frequency	Percent %
Female	74	20.3
Male	291	79.7
Total	365	100
Education		
	Frequency	Percent %
High school or less	70	19.2
Diploma	59	16.2
Bachelors	181	49.6
Postgraduate	55	15.1
Total	365	100
Age		
	Frequency	Percent %
Less than 20	1	0.2
20-29	72	19.7
30-39	207	56.7
40-49	65	17.8

| More than 50 | 20 | 5.5 |
| Total | 365 | 100 |

4.2 Items' factor loading

All the values of factor loadings for each factor exceed 0.5 (appendix 1) which indicates that each item presents and measures the intended factor, and the factor is presented by its items (Hair, Hult, & Sarstedt, 2017).

4.3 Reliability and Validity Assessment

To evaluate the reliability of the research model, the Composite Reliability of each of the variables was assessed. Composite Reliability forms an indicator to measure the model's internal consistency. The accepted value of composite reliability is above 0.7, and any value below 0.6 indicates a lack of reliability (Hair, Hult, & Sarstedt, 2017). As shown in Table 2, the composite reliability values of spirituality, silence and ostracism exceed 0.7 which is considered acceptable to indicate the model's internal consistency level.

Then to assess the convergent validity of the model AVE values were calculated. To assist the discriminant validity of the model MSV values have been calculated and compared to variables' AVEs. As shown in Table 2, all AVE values exceeded 0.5, which indicates an accepted level of convergent validity. For each of the model variables, AVE's value is bigger than the MSV value which indicates an accepted level of discriminant validity of the model (Moore, Mccabe, & Bruce, 2013).

Table 2 Reliability and Validity Assessment

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Spirituality	Ostracism	Silence
Silence	0.771	0.555	0.392	0.872	**0.745**		
Ostracism	0.915	0.523	0.317	0.930	0.563	**0.723**	
Spirituality	0.978	0.936	0.392	0.979	-0.626	-0.389	**0.967**

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5.4 Model fit

The number of observations is bigger than 250 and the number of Questions (items) is bigger than 30 (N=365>250, m= 46 >30) so the below table presents the values of the presented model fit along with the accepted values (Byrne, 2010).

Table 3 Model Fit

	Fit indices	Accepted Value N=365 <250 m= 46 <30	Result
NPAR	121		
CMIN	1894.207		
DF	960		
CMIN/DF	1.973	<5	Accepted
GFI	0.763	>0.90	
NFI	0.832	>0.80	Accepted
IFI	0.909	>0.90	Accepted
TLI	0.901	>0.80	Accepted
CFI	0.909	>0.90	Accepted
RMSEA	0.061	<0.07	Accepted

According to the results shown in the table, the presented measurement model showed an accepted fit result of CMIN/DF, NFI, IFI, TLI, CFI, and RMSEA, which led to an accepted model fit. Also, for the path structural model, the results were the same, so the present measurement and structural model present an accepted level of fit which makes the model qualified to test the research hypothesis

5.5 Testing the research hypotheses

To test the research hypothesis the path model has been evaluated, and values of the path between variables have been calculated using AMOS. The results showed that the direct effect of Ostracism on Workplace Spirituality had the values of (β=-0639, P<0.001 two-tailed) which indicated a significant relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Workplace Spirituality. Also, the path analysis between Workplace Ostracism and Employees' Silence (β=0.476,

P<0.001 two-tailed) showed a significant direct relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Employees' Silence. Finally, when evaluating the relationship between Workplace Spirituality and Employees' Silence, it has been found that the direct effect is also significant (β=-0.347, P<0.001 two-tailed).

Table 4 Path Standardized Regression Weights

			Beta	S.E.	C.R.	P
Spirituality	<---	Ostracism	-0.639	0.093	-6.899	***
Silence	<---	Ostracism	0.476	0.074	6.455	***
Silence	<---	Spirituality	-0.374	0.045	-8.306	***

Accordingly, the results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Employees' Silence which leads to accepting the first research hypothesis, *H1: Workplace ostracism is positively related to Employees' Silence.*

In addition, the results proved a significant positive relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Workplace Spirituality and finally a negative relationship between Workplace Spirituality and Employees' Silence. These findings trigger the evaluation of mediation which had a standardized indirect effect of 0.199.

Table 5 Standardized Indirect Effects

	Standardized Indirect Effects
Silence <--- Spirituality <--- Ostracism	0.239

Also, this finding urges the need to test the significance of the mediation by using the Sobel Test, Aroian Test, and Goodman Test and all the results showed a significant level (p<0.001).

Table 6 Mediation Tests

	Test statistics	Std. Error	P-value
Sobel Test	5.29	0.045	0.00000012

| Aroian Test | 5.73 | 0.045 | 0.00000013 |
| Goodman Test | 5.32 | 0.044 | 0.0000001 |

Mediation tests' results indicate that Workplace Spirituality does significantly partially mediate the relationship between Ostracism and Employees' Silence.

5. DISCUSSION

As discussed in the introduction this research aims to deepen the understanding of Employees' Silence by achieving two objectives: examining the effect of Ostracism and exploring the mediating effect of Workplace Spirituality. The research has been conducted in Northern Syria and the research population is employees working in educational NGOs operating in Northern Syria. The research results have been proven to be qualified to answer the two research questions by proving that workplace ostracism leads to Employees' Silence and Workplace spirituality partially explains the relationship between ostracism and Employees' Silence.

The first research hypothesis proved the positive effect of Workplace Ostracism on Employees' Silence. This finding aligns with several previous research findings in different sectors and countries. In North American organizations, employees who face supervisor ostracism tend to adopt defensive silence (Jahanzeb, Bouckenooghe, & Mushtaq, 2021). As well, within public sector universities, the positive relationship between workplace ostracism and employee silence has been proven (Fatima, Ilyas, Rehman, & Imran, 2017). In the health sector and among nurses, the same result has been found even if it's related to patients' safety (Gkorezis, Panagiotou, & Theodorou, 2016). Moreover, Workplace Ostracism has been found harming employees' performance through employees silence In service sector organizations in Pakistan (Sahabuddin, Qingmei, Ayub, & Fatima, 2021) and the financial sector as well (Imran, Fatima, Sarwar, & Iqbal, 2021). Accordingly, the research results indicate that also in education NGOs that are operating in

Northern Syria, workplace ostracism enhances the act of silence among employees.

Because of the lack of available studies about workplace spirituality within NGOs, despite its importance (Baskar & Indradevi, 2020), The second research hypothesis has been built based on the logical result of connecting several studies' conclusions. However, the research was able to prove that Workplace Spirituality partially mediates the relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Employees' Silence despite that there is no previous study that tackled this relationship. The study will add to the literature the proven significant negative relationship between ostracism and workplace spirituality and the approved relationship between Workplace Spirituality and Employees' Silence which led to the proven partial mediation effect of workplace spirituality. Even though this relationship has not been studied within literature before, some of its related aspects have been studied; like the proven partial mediation of a study within public university teachers which found that the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee silence is partially mediated by meaningful existence (Fatima, Ilyas, Rehman, & Imran, 2017).

Relating the research result with its adopted theoretical background of Lazarus & Folkman, (1984) transactional model of coping, the research findings support that when an employee as a person faces a certain act from the surrounding environment he tends to act accordingly as a transactional natural reaction to cope. The research results proved that employees tend to adopt silent behavior as a natural reaction to facing ostracism within a workplace. This happens as a result of the two cognitive appraisals the primary and the secondary appraisal. In the primary appraisal, an employee starts evaluating ostracism as a stress source to consider whether it is harmful. Then the secondary appraisal comes where the employee starts assessing and thinking about different options available to cope with the ostracism and then decides to adopt silence as a response to ostracism. Relatedly, the research results revealed that the existence of workplace spirituality explains the effect of ostracism on employee's silence. As proven by the research results, ostracism of

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employees within organizations leads to a lower workplace spirituality, so the employee starts to evaluate his possible options to react to this low level of spirituality which eventually leads him to adopt silence as a coping behavior.

7. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to explore the interactions between Workplace Ostracism, Workplace Spirituality, and employee silence within Educational NGOs operating in northern Syria. The collected sample and the analysis of the data led to achieving the research objectives. By achieving the research objectives and answering the research questions, this paper added to the literature and deepened the understanding of Workplace ostracism and spirituality's relationship with Employees' Silence within NGOs.

The research results lead to empirical recommendations that could help NGO's decision makers to make decisions that enhance their employees' participation within the organization. Our findings have several practical implications. First, because Ostracism can have a significant impact on employees' silence, organizations should manage it by implementing human resource practices that minimize employee exclusion. For instance, a 360-degree performance appraisal approach that emphasizes the importance of strong coworker connections can highlight instances of employee exclusion, which can help employees feel less alone and foster strong coworker connections. Secondly, leaders with clear norms and expectations can combat employee silence by establishing a supportive environment where ostracized employees can freely discuss their issues (Christensen-Salem et al., 2021). Thirdly, based on the research results, workplace spirituality partially explains the relationship between ostracism and Employees' Silence and urges NGOs' need to work on building a spiritual workplace which could be achieved by ensuring that employees do not feel ostracized within the workplace. Accordingly, the research findings are deemed to be helpful for NGOs and might enhance their organizational behavior and development by reducing the level of Employees' silence which eventually participate in enhancing employees' job performance (Sahabuddin, Qingmei,

Ayub, & Fatima, 2021), organizational commitment (Akar, 2018), job satisfaction and work engagement (Wang, Hsieh, & Wang, 2020).

This research, as any research, has its limitations. The research is limited to the time and location where it was conducted. Based on the lack of specialized studies that consider NGOs' unique features, the research adopted scales were prepared for regular organizations ignoring the unique features of NGOs. Furthermore, the research is limited to its studied variables ignoring the effect of other potential workplace behavioral variables.

The research results lead to suggest several topics for future research. The research results urge the need to conduct several studies about workplace spirituality and its relationships, antecedents, and outcomes to give a deeper understanding of the topic. Also, based on the mediating effect of Workplace spirituality, which explains the relationship between ostracism and Employees' Silence, future researchers are encouraged to study Workplace Spirituality as a mediator, which may lead to explaining other relationships within organizational behavior. Finally, based on NGOs' unique features, future researchers are encouraged to study Employees' Silence and other antecedents rather than Workplace Ostracism within NGOs in education sector.

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APPENDIX (1): Items' Factor Loadings

		Silence			Spirituality		
	Ostracism	PS	DS	AS	SC	AV	MW
O1	0.689						
O2	0.509						
O3	0.756						
O4	0.603						
O5	0.801						
O6	0.885						
O7	0.749						
O8	0.769						
O9	0.751						
O10	0.649						
PS1		0.45					
PS2		0.782					

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PS3		0.923				
PS4		0.91				
PS5		0.763				
DS1			0.848			
DS2			0.827			
DS3			0.871			
DS4			0.909			
DS5			0.842			
AS1				0.559		
AS2				0.81		
AS3				0.786		
AS4				0.646		
AS5				0.684		
SC1					0.648	
SC2					0.796	
SC3					0.64	
SC4					0.82	
SC5					0.759	
SC6					0.827	
SC7					0.845	
AV1						0.917
AV2						0.735
AV3						0.912
AV4						0.938
AV5						0.868
AV6						0.751
AV7						0.82
MW1							0.874
MW2							0.872
MW3							0.631
MW4							0.863
MW5							0.67
MW6							0.641