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Buffering Effects Of Workplace Spirituality On The Relationship Between Abusive Supervision And Work Alienation Among Private Sector Employees

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Abstract

Work becomes foreign when the very leaders meant to guide it are the reason employees disengage. In environments where there are no modalities checkmating abuse of employees, abusive supervision thrives. Work alienation and abusive supervision are two sides of the same toxic coin. Employees in such settings often experience reduced engagement, and a lack of meaning in their work – a precursor for alienation. Against this backdrop, this study examined abusive supervision as predictor of work alienation as well as the buffering effects of workplace spirituality among private sector employees which helps to cushion the effects of abusive supervision. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design using a structured questionnaire. A total of 507 employees (203 males and 304 females) whose ages ranged from 25 to 51 years and mean age of 37.5 years and SD = 2.50 from selected commercial banks participated in the study. The participants were chosen through multi-stage sampling technique (purposive, cluster and simple random) to ensure representation across job levels and branches. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression and moderation analysis to determine the influence of workplace spirituality. The results indicated that abusive supervision ($r = .47, p < .001$) positively related to work alienation, whereas workplace spirituality ($r = -.39, p < .003$) negatively related to it. The moderation analysis revealed that workplace spirituality weakens the negative relationship abusive supervision. These findings highlight the importance of fostering workplace spirituality to mitigate the adverse effects of rigid and toxic leadership. Organizations should integrate spiritual values to promote employee well-being and reduce alienation. Future research should explore longitudinal effects and sector-wide applications to enhance workplace inclusivity and engagement.

Keywords: *abusive supervision, leadership, work alienation, workplace spirituality,*

Introduction

Work alienation is a feeling of disconnection and estrangement from a person's job, coworkers and his or herself. It often results in powerlessness, meaninglessness and emotional exhaustion when workers lack autonomy. Work alienation which detaches workers from purposeful engagement at work seems a growing trend in the workplace. Work alienation in Nigeria's private sector, exacerbated by weak regulatory frameworks and systemic inefficiencies (Amadi & Akujobi, 2024), poses a critical threat to organizational sustainability and employee well-being. Employees grappling with alienation often experience psychological detachment, diminished motivation, and reduced productivity, leading to high turnover and operational inefficiencies.

Recent studies (Richard et al., 2020; Arasli et al. (2021), Sarwar et al., 2022) identified abusive supervision as possible key predictor of alienation. For instance, hierarchical power structures in Nigerian organizations often foster communication barriers, marginalizing lower-tier employees (Etodike et al., 2020), while abusive supervision intensifies feelings of exclusion and distress (Hershcovis et al., 2017).

Work alienation is a dichotomous inter-relational class problem that manifests in the way workers interact and mingle within the workplace such that a feeling of being removed from others or not belonging to different strata of the organizational hierarchy is experienced by the alienated workers (Marx, 2019). This feeling in the views of Cetinkaya and Karayel (2019), further leads to psychological isolation, making employees feel as though they are unconnected to the rest of the organization. This alienation is often compounded by several factors, including abusive supervision which significantly impacts the degree of alienation experienced by workers.

Recent trends in literature (Richard et al. 2020, Arasli et al. (2021), and Sarwar et al. 2022) highlighted the urgency of addressing work alienation by examining its predictors, including abusive supervision. Researchers have increasingly focused on this variable as critical factor influencing the extent of alienation experienced by employees. For instance, their studies (Etodike et al., 2020; Dai et al. 2022) highlighted the prevalence of abusive supervision, where employees perceive their supervisors as hostile and non-supportive, has been linked to increased psychological distress and disengagement at work (Tepper, 2000; Hershcovis, Ogunfowora, Reich, & Christie, 2017). Moreover, the modern workplace's demands often blur the lines between professional and personal life which further exacerbate the feelings of alienation, hence making work-place spirituality a critical factor in maintaining balance at work. Despite these insights, limited research explored how contextual factors might mitigate alienation in Nigeria's unique socio-cultural and regulatory landscape. This gap underscores the urgency of investigating moderating variables, such as workplace spirituality, which may buffer alienation by fostering purpose, community, and resilience amid systemic challenges. Thus, this study examined the buffering effect of workplace spirituality in the relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation among Nigerian private sector employees.

Abusive supervision seems a critical factor contributing to work alienation which takes advantage of power imbalance between superiors and subordinates. Tepper (2000) conceptualized abusive supervision as subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which their supervisors engage in sustained hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact. Research by Hershcovis et al. (2017) highlighted that maltreatment from supervisors who control essential resources and wield significant influence over outcomes, can severely damage the goodwill and morale of employees. This often leads to feelings of helplessness and detachment, further isolating workers and exacerbating alienation.

Onyishi et al (2015) also observed that abusive supervision and overload is among the factors contributing to work alienation in the workplace. He opined that abusive supervision can significantly induce the feelings of alienation at work, as employees may feel undervalued unappreciated or mistreated. Abusive supervision in Nigeria's private sector often manifests through authoritarian leadership styles, where supervisors exploit power imbalances to intimidate or belittle subordinates (Okolie, 2021). For example, in Nigerian telecommunications companies, employees have reported supervisors using derogatory language or arbitrary punishment to assert dominance, leading to psychological distress and disengagement (Arasli et al. (2021),). Such behaviors thrive in environments with weak regulatory oversight, where employees lack formal channels to report misconduct. A case study of a Lagos-based logistics firm highlighted how abusive supervision correlated with increased absenteeism and turnover, as employees felt dehumanized and powerless (Sarwar et al., 2022). These practices

not only damage morale but also reinforce alienation by eroding trust between employees and management and can become worse in the presence of negative work-life balance.

Amidst these challenges, workplace spirituality emerges as a potential mitigating factor. Pourkiani and Sayadi (2019) described workplace spirituality as employees' efforts to develop strong connections with coworkers, seeking meaning and value from their work environment. Vasconcelos (2019) added that workplace spirituality includes the willingness to assist colleagues, offer a listening ear, and show concern for their job and personal problems. By fostering an environment of ethical solidarity and mutual support, workplace spirituality can counteract the negative impacts of abusive supervision, and other negative work variables thereby reducing work alienation. Promoting workplace spirituality can thus serve as a strategic intervention to enhance employee engagement and well-being. By encouraging practices that nurture connections and a sense of purpose, organizations can create a more inclusive and supportive work environment. This approach not only helps in mitigating the adverse effects of supervisory abuse but also strengthens the overall organizational culture.

Workplace spirituality, rooted in shared ethical values and communal solidarity, holds significant potential to counteract alienation in Nigeria's private sector (Sarwar et al., 2022). For instance, Nigerian firms integrating faith-based initiatives, such as prayer sessions or ethical leadership workshops, have reported stronger employee cohesion and resilience (Gupta et al., 2021). In a Lagos-based manufacturing company, mindfulness programs aligned with employees' spiritual beliefs reduced stress and improved interpersonal trust, even in highly hierarchical settings. (Nwagbara, 2020). Similarly, value-driven leadership in Nigerian fintech startups has fostered inclusive cultures where employees feel connected to a shared mission, mitigating the isolating effects of abusive supervision (Arasli et al. (2021),). Again, Onyishi et al (2012) advocated for organizational support in the workplace. He observed that when employees feel that their organization values and supports them, they will be more likely to perform better and engage in extra-role behaviours like taking charge. By leveraging Nigeria's cultural affinity for spirituality, organizations can bridge systemic gaps and cultivate a workplace where employees thrive despite regulatory shortcomings.

Against this backdrop of the private sector's unique organizational climate and culture, this study addressed the need for a more nuanced understanding of the predictors of work alienation in the Nigerian private sector. By examining the buffering effects or roles of workplace spirituality on the relationship between abusive supervision, this holistic approach is essential for developing interventions that support overall employee well-being and reduce the likelihood of alienation in the Nigerian private sector. This is particularly important in the Nigerian private sector, where in the views of Amadi and Akujobi (2024), addressing these issues can lead to improved employee satisfaction, enhanced productivity and reduced turnover rates.

Theoretical Framework

The Social capital theory (Coleman, 1988), which posited that social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness facilitate collective action for mutual benefit, provides a valuable framework for understanding the moderating roles of workplace spirituality in the relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation among private sector employees. This theory underscores the importance of social interactions and the networks within an organization, suggesting that these relationships can significantly influence employee behavior and attitudes. In the context of this study, the theory helped to elucidate how workplace spirituality, as a form of social capital, can buffer the negative impacts of supervisory abuse on employees' sense of alienation.

For instance, Workplace spirituality, which encompasses a sense of meaningful work, connectedness to others, and alignment with organizational values, can act as a form of social capital by fostering a supportive and cohesive work environment. According to the Social Capital theory, such an environment can enhance trust and cooperation among employees, which is crucial in mitigating the effects of abusive supervision. Abusive supervision, characterized by sustained hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors from supervisors, can severely undermine employees' psychological well-being and sense of belonging. Social Capital theory suggested that robust social networks and supportive relationships within the workplace can help mitigate these negative effects. When workplace spirituality is prevalent, employees are likely to experience higher levels of empathy, compassion, and support from their peers and supervisors, which can counteract the feelings of isolation and alienation caused by abusive behaviors. This sense of community and shared purpose can empower employees to cope more effectively with adverse supervisory practices and maintain a positive outlook towards their work and organization.

Thus, The Social Capital theory, which emphasizes the value of social networks, trust, and reciprocity in facilitating collective action, provides a significant lens for understanding the buffering effects of workplace spirituality on the relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation among private sector employees. The theory suggests that workplace spirituality, by fostering a supportive and cohesive work environment, can mitigate the negative impacts of supervisory abuse by promoting trust, empathy, and mutual respect. Additionally, it highlights how a strong sense of community and shared values can help employees manage work-life more effectively, reducing feelings of alienation and enhancing overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Through these mechanisms, workplace spirituality serves as a crucial form of social capital that enhances employee well-being and resilience against adverse workplace dynamics.

Three hypotheses guided the study:

1. Abusive supervision will significantly predict work alienation among private sector employees in Nigeria.
2. Workplace spirituality will significantly predict work alienation among private sector employees in Nigeria.
3. Workplace spirituality will significantly buffer the relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation among private sector employees in Nigeria.

Method

Participants

Blair and Blair's (2015) sample reduction formulae ($N/1+N[\alpha]^2$) was used to determine 507 bank employees as the required minimum sample for the population of the main study. These participants were from the banking sector in South-East Nigerian (Anambra, Imo and Ebonyi State). The participants comprised 203 males and 304 females whose ages ranged from 25 to 51 years and mean age of 37.5 years and standard deviation of 2.50. They were drawn from a cluster of 11 commercial bank branches. The participants were selected through multi-stage sampling technique comprising; purposive sampling, cluster sampling and simple random sampling. Purposive sampling technique involved the judgment of the researcher about the appropriateness of the population sample (bank employees as organized private sector) for the study whereas cluster sampling technique was used to select commercial banks in strategic locations in each state while simple random

sampling was used for selecting each of the participants in the study. Demographic data revealed that in terms of educational qualification, 291 had Bachelor's degrees, 119 had HND, 61 had NCE/ND, 32 had Master's degrees and 4 had Doctoral degrees. In terms of religious affiliation, that 495 were Christians, whereas 9 were Muslims while 3 did not indicate their religious affiliation.

The study made use of three (3) research instruments for data collection. The instruments were: Work alienation scale, Workplace spirituality scale and Abusive supervision scale.

Work Alienation Scale (WAS)

The Work Alienation Scale (WAS) – The WAS was developed by Mottaz (1981) and was used to measure reported social alienation among employees. The SAS is a 21 item questionnaire using 4 points Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree). The WAS has a range of score between 21 and 84. A higher score indicated higher level of reported work alienation. The scale has three dimensions: powerlessness, meaninglessness and self-estrangement. The authors confirmed that the scale is a reliable scale with Cronbach Alpha coefficients of .92, .79 and .88 respectively for the powerlessness, meaninglessness and self-estrangement subscales. Having previously been used with the Nigerian sample, a pilot test was carried out to ascertain the suitability of the scale in the present study and a general reliability coefficient of .78 was obtained.

Workplace Spirituality Scale (WSS)

The Workplace Spirituality Scale (WSS) – The WSS was developed by Petchsawang and Duchon (2009) and was used to measure the reported workplace spirituality. The WSS is a 22 item questionnaire using 5 points Liker Scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree). The WSS has a range of score between 22 and 110. A higher score indicated higher level of reported workplace spirituality. The scale has four dimensions measuring Compassion, Meaningful work, Transcendence and Mindfulness. The authors confirmed the validity of the scale at $\alpha = .85$. Having previously been used with the Nigerian sample, a pilot test was carried out by the present researcher to ascertain the validity of the scale in the present study and reliability coefficient of .81 was obtained confirming that the instrument is reliable for use in the study.

Abusive Supervision Scale (ASS)

Abusive Supervision Scale is a 15-item scale designed by Tepper (2000) to measure perceived abusive supervision as perceived by subordinates. Participants were required to respond to each item on a 5-point Likert scale indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree with each of the statements made in the questionnaire ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. For instance: 1=Strongly Disagree (SD), 2=Disagree (D), 3=Undecided (U), 4=Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA) (Tapper, 2000). Tapper (2000) reported reliability index for the Scale as .95. Sample items include “My supervisor tells me my thoughts or feelings are stupid,” or “My supervisor puts me down in front of others.” The instrument has been validated for Nigerian sample by Onyishi (2012) and a Cronbach's alpha of .89 was established. Having previously been used with the Nigerian sample, a pilot test was carried out to ascertain the suitability of the scale in the present study, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .79 was obtained confirming that the instrument is reliable.

Procedure

The study began with a pilot testing of the instruments of the study to ascertain their suitability and/or to enhance their validity/reliability before they are used in the current study. This was done to ensure that the instruments consistently measure what they ought to measure and are reliable measures of the constructs over

time and across the sample being examined. During the pilot testing of the instruments, the researcher sampled 81 participants in the pilot study which were drawn from bank employees in Enugu State in order to ascertain the validity and reliability of the instruments to be used in the main study. In the main study, the researcher sampled 507 commercial bank employees. The participants were selected from the bank branches from Anambra, Imo and Ebonyi States in South-East using simple random sampling - the ballot technique which have homogeneous characteristics with Enugu State used in the pilot test. The importance of homogeneity of the samples is to eliminate participants' bias and to reduce socially-motivated response. The participants in the main study were sampled using multi-purpose sampling technique just like during the pilot testing. In this technique, purposive sampling was used for selecting the region – South-East and the appropriateness commercial banks as organized private sector for the main study while cluster sampling was used to select bank branches within the chosen cities and simple random sampling was used to select each of the participants. During the survey, participants' permission was sought orally and in addition, participants had written instructions on how to participate in the study. The researcher was assisted by research assistants (2 NYSC members), trained on how to administer test instrument in the area to enable the field work be completed in time. The research assistants helped in the distribution and collation of the survey (questionnaire) after they have been filled by the participants. After collation of the surveys from the participants, only valid ones were extracted for coding and data analysis.

Design and Statistics

The design for the study was correlation design which utilized cross-sectional survey method. This method allowed the researcher to explore predictive relationship of the factors on the dependent variable across a section of the sampled participants as well as the role of workplace spirituality in this relationship. The statistics for the study was the moderated regression statistic which tested the predictive role of the predictor as well as the moderating role of workplace spirituality on the criterion variable. Statistical output was managed in Jamovi 1.6.

Results

The statistical results of the hypotheses are presented with the aid of descriptive tables followed by a brief interpretation.

Table 1: Summary table of descriptive statistics showed the mean and standard deviation for all study variables.

N	Abusive Supervision	Workplace Spirituality	Work Alienation
N	507	507	507
Mean	61.5	69	60.5
Std.Dev	2.34	2.20	1.52

Table 1 showed participants' means score and standard deviations on abusive supervision, workplace spirituality, and work alienation. From the mean scores, it could be observed that work alienation score of the participants was moderately high at $M = 60.5$, $SD = 1.52$ indicating tight spread of scores among commercial bank employees. Other mean scores showed that mean for abusive supervision at 61.5, while workplace spirituality at 69. Further tests were carried out to ascertain the relationships among

the variables.

Table 2: Summary table of Correlation matrix for all variables showing the relationship among the variables of the study.

N		Abusive supervision	Workplace spirituality	Work alienation
Abusive supervision	Pearson r	—		
Workplace spirituality	Pearson r	-0.343*	—	
Work alienation	Pearson r	0.470***	-0.391*	—

Note *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 2 above showed a mixed relationship among variables. Positive and significant correlation was found between work alienation and abusive supervision, at $r = .47$, $p < .001$ ($n=507$). For the relationship of workplace spirituality with work alienation, negative significant correlations were observed at $r = -.39$, $p < .003$ ($n = 507$). The correlation result implies that increase in abusive supervision is proportionate to increase in work alienation among the commercial bank employees in South-East Nigeria. The correlation data were regressed to ascertain whether the observed increase reached significant predictive level.

Table 3: Summary table of Model Fit Measures of R, R-square, adjusted R-square, RMSE, and overall model test for independent contribution of abusive supervision and workplace spirituality

Model Fit Measures

									Model
									Overall Test
Model	R	R ²	AdjustedR ²	RMSE	F	df1	df2	p	
1.	0.542	0.2744	0.2712	1.87	148.8	2	506	<.001	
2.	0.830	0.7326	0.7298	1.28	422.4	4	503	<.001	

1. Abusive supervision vs work alienation
2. Workplace spirituality vs work alienation

Table 3 above showed the model fit measure for the independent contributions of the predictor variables - abusive supervision and workplace spirituality. Model 1 shows that at $R^2 = .271$, abusive supervision contributed 27.1% explanation at $RMSE = 1.87$ in the prediction of work alienation. The moderator variable workplace spirituality boosted the predictive power when added in the model at $R^2 = 0.729$ (72.9%) at $RMSE = 1.28$, with workplace spirituality having an independent contribution of 18.9% (72.9-54). Thus, the model fit measures confirm that the predictors - abusive supervision and workplace spirituality have observable predictive impacts on the criterion variable work alienation among commercial bank employees in South-East, Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary table of Moderation analysis showing buffering role of workplace spirituality on the relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation

Moderation Estimates

	Estimate	SE	T	P
Abusive supervision	0.2105	0.02159	-10.397	<.001
Workplace spirituality	-0.4248	0.02287	-29.065	<.001
Abusive supervision*Workplace spirituality	0.1860	0.00801	2.25	<.002

a. Abusive supervision - work alienation

Table 4 above showed that the moderation estimate is indicative that the predictive relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation was reduced when workplace spirituality was added; the predictive estimate of abusive supervision was reduced from beta weight coefficient of .21 to .18, $p < .002$ as indicated in the moderation coefficient, showing that the workplace spirituality reduced the positive predictive role of abusive supervision on work alienation. Thus, hypothesis 3 which stated that workplace spirituality would significantly buffer the relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation was accepted

Discussion

The study investigated the buffering effects of workplace spirituality in the relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation among private sector employees in South-East, Nigeria. The study tested three hypotheses in pursuit of the objectives of the study.

Regression analyses revealed that abusive supervision significantly heighten work alienation, whereas workplace spirituality reduced it. It showed that toxic leadership practices contribute to alienation, while spiritual values in the workplace create a more inclusive environment. Moderation analysis shows that workplace spirituality weakens the effect of abusive supervision on work alienation. Workplace spirituality drastically reduces the impact of abusive supervision on work alienation. Employees who experience a strong sense of meaning, shared values, and purpose are better able to cope with toxic leadership. This highlights the role of a spiritually enriched work culture in mitigating alienation.

The first Hypothesis which stated that abusive supervision will significantly predict work alienation among private sector employees in Nigeria was accepted. Findings from the data analyzed showed that abusive supervision yielded a strong positive predictor of work alienation. This implied that employees experiencing abusive supervision significantly feel more alienated in the model. The result is in this direction because toxic leadership behaviors erode employees' psychological well-being and workplace engagement. This finding is supported by recent empirical literature, such as the study by El-Gazar et al. (2024), which linked abusive supervision to service sabotage through work alienation in nurses. Their findings indicated that abusive supervision fosters work alienation, which in turn increases the likelihood of counterproductive behaviors. Similarly, the findings of Onyishi et al (2015) further gave credence to the findings of this research. The researchers found that abusive supervision significantly impacted work alienation among nurses. This aligns with the current study's assertion that toxic leadership erodes employee engagement and well-being, ultimately leading to alienation in the workplace.

The social capital theory further explains the impact of abusive supervision on work alienation by emphasizing the role of organizational relationships, trust, and networks in fostering a cohesive work environment. Abusive supervision disrupts these elements by instilling fear and mistrust, thereby reducing employees' sense of belonging. When employees perceive a lack of social support and positive workplace relationships, they become more alienated from their work. Furthermore, the finding of hypothesis two supported Oginni's (2024) findings which examined the influence of abusive supervision on employee morale in Nigerian manufacturing organizations and found that high levels of abusive supervision resulted in lower job satisfaction, reduced commitment, and decreased loyalty, all of which contribute to work alienation. This reinforces the present study's conclusion that abusive supervision weakens employees' psychological resilience, making them feel detached from their work and organization.

Similarly, Sarwar et al. (2022) provided theoretical insights by demonstrating that punitive supervision exacerbates work alienation and negatively impacts employee well-being. Their findings highlight that employees under punitive supervision experience increased psychological distress, leading to disengagement from workplace activities. This study further suggests that coping mechanisms such as willpower and way-power can mitigate the adverse effects of abusive supervision. However, in organizations where such coping mechanisms are absent or ineffective, work alienation becomes more pronounced, as found in the present study.

Additionally, the findings on this research provided more understanding on Ezech, Etodike, and Chukwura's (2018) study which found that abusive supervision significantly predicted cyber-loafing among federal civil servants in Nigeria, attributing this to an unhealthy leader-member exchange. Their results implied that employees who experience abusive supervision are more likely to disengage from productive tasks and develop cynical attitudes toward their work environment. This supports the current study's findings that workplace alienation is a direct consequence of toxic leadership. Thus, the findings of hypothesis one in conjunction with prior empirical literature highlights the urgent need for organizations to implement leadership training programs that emphasize empathy and constructive supervisory practices to mitigate workplace alienation and enhance employee engagement.

Hypothesis two which stated that workplace spirituality will significantly predict work alienation among private sector employees was also accepted. Workplace spirituality yielded the strongest negative predictor amongst the variables explored in this study. This simply implies that a spiritually supportive work environment (sense of purpose community and alignment with values) decreases work alienation. This finding is in line with the study of Wijaya, Sidin, Noor, Pasinringi and Mallongi (2024) which found that workplace spirituality has a significant

influence on work alienation of nurses in China. The researchers found that a spiritually supportive work environment increases organizational commitment of employees and consequently reduces the feelings of isolation or alienation. This finding reinforces the assertion of the present study that a work environment that encourages sense of purpose, community and alignment of values gives employees a sense of belonging and invariably reduces feelings of alienation.

Similarly, the study of Ryu, Seo and Jung (2014) further gives credence to the findings of the present study. The researchers explored the effects of workplace spirituality on organizational citizenship behaviour of employees. The findings revealed that inner life and sense of community which are components of workplace spirituality have significant positive influence on organizational citizenship behaviour of employees. The finding suggests that employees thrive more in an environment where workers cooperate and look out for one another. Hence, workplace spirituality should be encouraged in workplaces to reduce feelings of alienation.

Furthermore, the study of Ezech, Ojobu, and Joe-Akunne (2023) also gave support to the findings of the present study. The researchers investigated the predictive roles of workplace spirituality on employee silence and social alienation among NYSC corps members of Northern Nigeria origin in Delta State, Nigeria. Their finding showed that workplace spirituality negatively and significantly predicted employee silence and social. The significant predictive influence recorded in their study implied that as workplace spirituality increases, employee silence and social alienation reduces. This goes to buttress the findings of the present study which asserted that workplace spirituality helps to reduce the negative impact of work alienation on employees in the workplace. Consequently, organizations are encouraged to promote a spiritual climate to foster and increase goodwill, consideration for others, collaborations and helping behaviour in the organization. These will engender organizational effectiveness and employee satisfaction.

Hypothesis three which stated that workplace spirituality will significantly buffer the predictive relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation was accepted. The moderation estimate is indicative that the predictive relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation was reduced when workplace spirituality was added showing that the workplace spirituality reduced the positive predictive role of abusive supervision on work alienation. The findings of Hypothesis three suggest that workplace spirituality plays a significant buffering role in mitigating the effects of abusive supervision on work alienation. From the lens of social capital theory, workplace spirituality fosters trust, shared values, and a sense of belonging within an organization, which can buffer employees against the detrimental effects of toxic leadership. Social capital, as a resource embedded in relationships, can counterbalance the alienation caused by abusive supervision by strengthening communal ties and fostering mutual support (Ali et al., 2022). This aligns with the argument that when employees perceive their workplace as a spiritual environment characterized by meaningful work, interconnectedness, and transcendence they are less likely to experience the powerlessness and detachment that typically arise from abusive supervision (Ezech, Ojobu, & Joe-Akunne, 2023).

Also, the findings of hypothesis three supports the findings of Ke, Zhang, and Zheng (2022) which provided empirical support for this perspective by demonstrating how workplace spirituality mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership and job performance in the public sector. Their study indicated that spirituality at work enhances leader-member exchange (LMX), fostering stronger interpersonal relationships between employees and their leaders. In cases of abusive supervision, employees with a high sense of workplace spirituality may still find support and meaning through their peer networks, reducing the negative impact of toxic leadership. This supports the argument that organizations should cultivate an inclusive and spiritual climate to mitigate the adverse effects of negative managerial behaviors. Moreover, workplace spirituality has

been linked to reductions in social alienation and employee silence, further substantiating its protective role in workplace dynamics.

Ezeh, Ojobu, and Joe-Akunne (2023) found that workplace spirituality significantly reduces employees' feelings of meaninglessness and social alienation. This finding underscores the importance of a spiritually supportive environment in buffering against work alienation, even under abusive supervision. Employees who experience workplace spirituality may reframe their work experiences, finding solace in shared values and higher purposes, thus decreasing their tendency to feel alienated despite external pressures.

The implications of these findings extend to industry practice, particularly in post-pandemic organizational management. Çetin (2021) highlights how workplace loneliness and alienation have become critical concerns in the wake of COVID-19, necessitating intentional efforts to foster spiritual well-being in organizations. Many organizations have implemented workplace spirituality initiatives, such as mindfulness programs, value-driven leadership, and social responsibility activities, to enhance employees' sense of purpose and belonging. These initiatives not only promote resilience against abusive leadership but also contribute to higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

The findings equally resonate with Ali et al. (2022), who argue that workplace spirituality enhances social capital, which, in turn, reduces work alienation. Their research in the service sector demonstrates that employees with access to spiritual leadership and a strong sense of workplace spirituality are less likely to experience work alienation, as these factors help build interpersonal trust and psychological safety. This suggests that organizations should not only aim to eliminate abusive supervision but also actively promote workplace spirituality as a counter measure. By fostering an environment that values interconnectedness and spiritual well-being, organizations can strengthen their social capital, ultimately reducing work alienation and enhancing overall employee well-being.

In conclusion, this study investigated the buffering effects of workplace spirituality on the relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation among commercial bank employees in South-East Nigeria. The motivation for the study was driven by the growth of adverse working conditions of bankers with its attendant negative consequences. The findings of this study underscore the critical role of workplace spirituality in buffering or moderating the relationship between abusive supervision and work alienation among commercial bank employees in South-East Nigeria. The results revealed that work alienation is moderately high, driven largely by toxic leadership practices. However, a factor such as workplace spirituality significantly reduced alienation, highlighting the importance of organizational policies that foster employee well-being and a sense of purpose. These insights align with existing literature that emphasizes the adverse effects of rigid leadership and abusive supervision on employees' psychological and emotional well-being. Moreover, the study demonstrates that workplace spirituality serves as a crucial buffer against the negative effects of abusive supervision.

Employees in organizations with strong spiritual values experience reduced alienation even when confronted with toxic leadership. This suggests that fostering an environment characterized by meaningful work, ethical leadership, and shared organizational values can help mitigate the detrimental effects of rigid workplace systems. The moderation analysis further reinforces the notion that workplace spirituality can act as a protective factor, weakening the impact of abusive supervision on work alienation. The study provided valuable insights for organizational leaders, policymakers, and human resource professionals in the private sectors especially in banking sector. It emphasized the need for strategic interventions that promote workplace spirituality, reduce organizational rigidity, and encourage work-life balance to address the challenge of work alienation. Future

research should explore longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of these factors and examine how workplace spirituality can be institutionalized as a core aspect of organizational culture. By prioritizing employee well-being and fostering a sense of purpose, commercial banks in South-East Nigeria can enhance productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organizational success.

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