

Reducing Workplace Ostracism Through Value-Based Leadership: A CIMO-Guided Bibliometric Synthesis

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Abstract: Workplace ostracism is a significant psychosocial risk that adversely affects employee well-being, engagement, and organizational effectiveness. This study examines how value-based leadership approaches ethical, authentic, spiritual, transformational, and empathic leadership mitigate workplace ostracism and influence employee outcomes across diverse organizational contexts. A bibliometric analysis using R-Studio and a systematic literature review were conducted, with findings synthesized through the Context–Intervention–Mechanism–Outcome (CIMO) framework. The results show that value-based leadership reduces workplace ostracism by fostering psychological safety, trust, inclusion, resilience, and meaningful work through mechanisms such as social exchange, social identity, self-determination, and relational trust. Conversely, destructive leadership intensifies ostracism, stress, employee silence, turnover intentions, and reduced well-being. This study provides the first integrated CIMO-based synthesis of value-based leadership and workplace ostracism from an occupational health and safety (OHS) perspective, offering theoretical insights and practical guidance for developing inclusive, psychologically safe, and resilient workplaces.

Keywords: Workplace Ostracism, Leadership, Bibliometric Analysis, Co-occurrence, Well-Being.

1.Introduction:

In today's rapidly evolving organizational environment, technological disruption, hybrid work arrangements, and increasing employee expectations have intensified relational challenges, making employees more vulnerable to workplace ostracism and social exclusion. Leadership plays a critical role in shaping trust, inclusion, and employee well-being, as workplace ostracism, defined as being ignored or excluded by colleagues or leaders [1], undermines belongingness, increases emotional exhaustion, and encourages counterproductive work behaviours. Consequently, value-based leadership approaches, particularly spiritual and ethical leadership, have gained prominence for fostering trust, fairness, compassion, meaningful work, and prosocial behaviour [2,3]. Global evidence further highlights the importance of effective leadership, with Gallup (2023) reporting that 82% of employees identify their leaders as a major source of workplace stress, while the World Health Organization (2022) estimates that poor leadership and unhealthy work environments result in approximately US\$1 trillion in annual productivity losses. Against this backdrop, this study examines how spiritual and ethical leadership influence workplace ostracism, employee well-being, and behavioural outcomes across organizational settings. The novelty of this review lies in integrating these leadership approaches within the Context–Intervention–Mechanism–Outcome (CIMO) framework to explain workplace ostracism as an emerging occupational health and safety (OHS) concern. The study contributes theoretically by integrating Spiritual Leadership Theory [2], Social Learning Theory [4], and Social Exchange Theory to explain how value-based leadership creates psychological resources that reduce relational harm. Practically, it offers evidence-based guidance for developing ethical, compassionate, and inclusive leadership practices that reduce



workplace ostracism and enhance employee well-being and organizational performance. The Research Questions are given below:

RQ 1: How do leadership styles mitigate workplace ostracism and reduce its negative outcomes such as turnover intention?

RQ 2: How does spiritual leadership improve employee well-being and work engagement in organizations?

RQ 3: How do value-based leadership styles influence employee well-being, commitment, and engagement across different organizational settings?

2. Research Methodology:

2.1. Overview:

In order to answer our research questions, we utilize the systematic literature review as a method. While there are many different approaches to systematic reviews, we have used an approach for our study. Firstly, we conducted a bibliometric analysis, network analysis (co-occurrence of keywords). From this we have selected articles based on co-occurrence of keywords. This allowed us to obtain a one-stop overview of the literature around the process as guided by recent literature review works [5,6]. Secondly, we conducted a systematic literature review using the CIMO methodology as guided by [7].

2.2. Data Analysis:

This study adopts a combined bibliometric analysis and systematic literature review (SLR) to synthesize evidence from qualitative, exploratory, experimental, and quasi-experimental studies on workplace ostracism and leadership. Descriptive analysis was conducted using MS Excel 16.52, while R-Studio was used for bibliometric analysis and keyword co-occurrence mapping based on data extracted from Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). The review followed the PRISMA guidelines to ensure a transparent and replicable study selection process [8–10]. To organize the evidence, the Context–Intervention–Mechanism–Outcome (CIMO) framework was adopted to examine how leadership interventions operate across different organizational contexts [11].

A systematic search of Scopus and WoS was conducted for the period 2015–2025 using the keywords “*Workplace Ostracism*” AND “*Leadership*”. After applying language, document type, journal, and subject area filters, 29 records were identified from Scopus and 97 from WoS. Following duplicate removal, 109 unique records remained for bibliometric analysis, from which keyword co-occurrence mapping identified three thematic clusters. After title, abstract, and full-text screening, 33 articles from Q1 and Q2 journal articles met the inclusion criteria for the final systematic review. The complete study selection process is presented in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1).

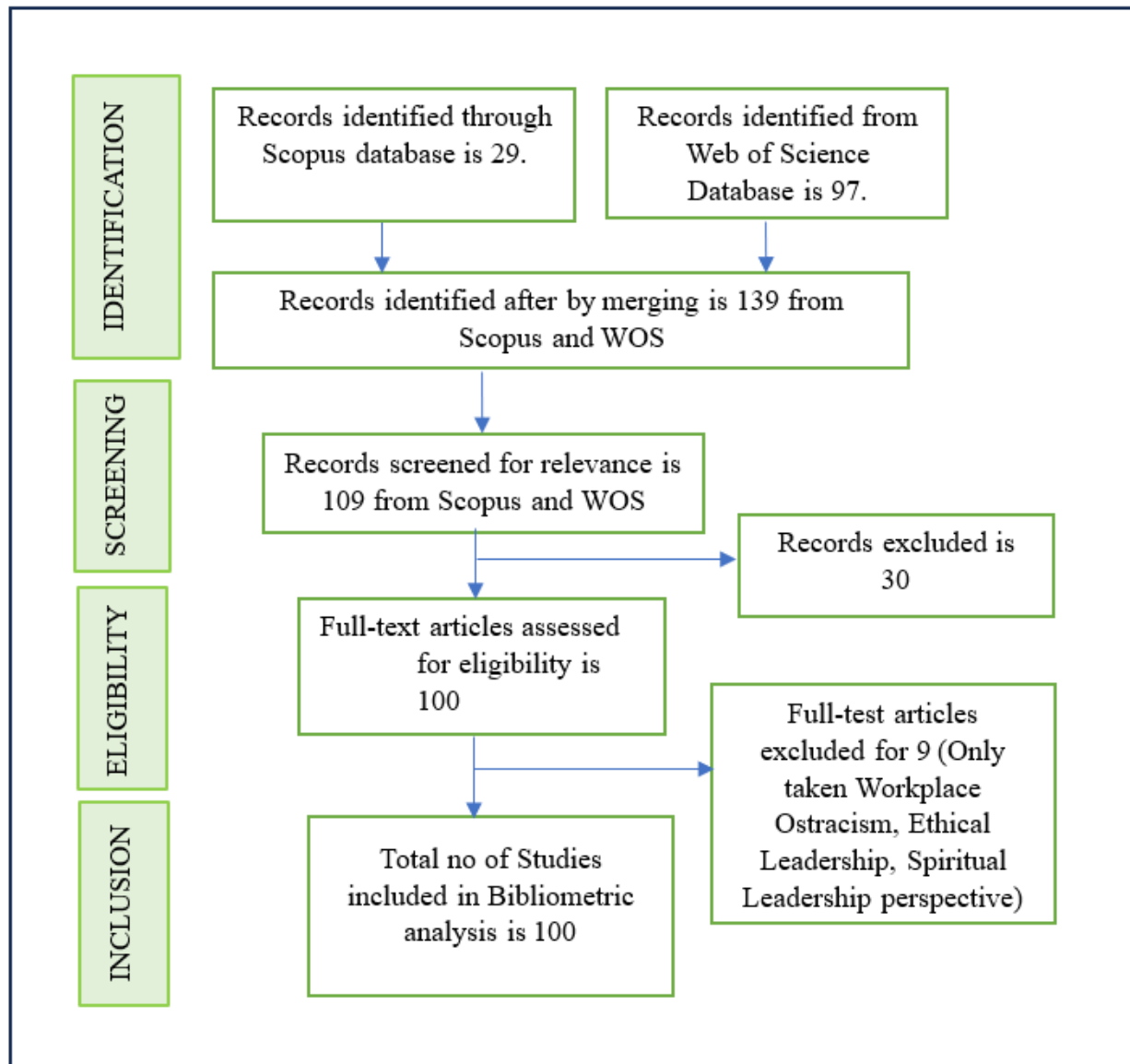


Figure 1 PRISMA Flowchart

Source [11]

2.3. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Co- Occurrence of Keyword Analysis:

This bibliometric network visualization shows “workplace ostracism” as the main research

node, the largest red node. All other connected nodes represent related ideas that often occur with workplace ostracism in published research. The red cluster nodes represent emerging themes and newer concepts, such as ethical leadership, spiritual leadership, knowledge hiding, stress, turnover intention, customer service sabotage, and COVID-19 impacts. The blue cluster nodes represent established research areas connected to workplace ostracism, including surveys, human behaviour, workplace dynamics, job performance, gender context, and organizational psychology.



Figure 2 Co- Occurrence of Keyword Analysis.

Based on this above Figure 2, themes were segregated into three, which has explained in CIMO Framework as below.

3. CIMO Analysis of Each Theme:

3.1. Theme 1: Ethical and Authentic Leadership Reducing Workplace Ostracism.

3.1.1. Context:

Workplace ostracism is a common problem in diverse organizational and cultural settings affecting employees well-being, behaviour and performance. Research across industries like services, IT, healthcare, higher education, telecommunications, finance, manufacturing and aviation in the UAE, India, Jordan, Thailand, South Korea, Spain, US and Pakistan shows that ostracism is influenced by factors like hierarchical organizational structures, collectivist cultural norms, leadership practice, interpersonal distrust and high job demands[12–17]. Collectively, these findings emphasize that workplace ostracism is a global organizational issue that diminishes psychological well-being, communication, inclusion, turnover intentions, and organizational effectiveness across different sectors and cultures.

3.1.2. Intervention:

The studies reviewed showed that leadership and organizational interventions are important mechanism for decreasing workplace ostracism and enhancing employee outcomes. Ethical leadership fosters fairness, integrity and moral behaviour which in turn decreases workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behaviours[12]. Authentic leadership fosters self-awareness, transparency, trust, and psychological safety, thereby mitigating ostracism and enhancing well-being and social exchange relationships [13,18,19]. Trust, compassion, integrity and forgiveness as elements of organizational virtuousness enrich inclusive workplace cultures. Active empathic listening by supervisors reduces stress and feelings of exclusion. Transformational leadership and leader humility further enhance engagement, collaboration and positive interpersonal relations. On the other hand, destructive, directive, laissez-faire, transactional and ineffective leadership styles were found to be the significant antecedents leading to workplace ostracism [13,18,20–22]. Overall, value-based leadership and supportive organizational climates operate as effective interventions to reduce ostracism, foster inclusion, and improve employee well-being and organizational outcomes.

3.1.3. Mechanism:

The reviewed studies explain the relationship between leadership, workplace ostracism and employee outcomes through different psychological mechanisms. According to Social Identity Theory, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory and Social Exchange Theory, ethical and authentic leadership reduces perceived ostracism by promoting fairness, trust, reciprocity and positive relationships [13,15,20,29]. Self-Determination Theory highlights that authentic leadership enhances well-being by fulfilling employees' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness [15]. The Stressor Emotion Model and COR Theory indicate that empathic leadership replenishes emotional resources and reduces conflict-driven deviance [23]. Transformational leadership enhances vigor and engagement, while leader

humility promotes trust and informal learning [24–26]. Sociometer Theory further explains that supportive leadership, organizational identification, and perceived organizational support buffer the negative effects of ostracism by strengthening inclusion, self-esteem, and organizational citizenship behavior [15,27–29].

3.1.4. Outcome:

The reviewed studies consistently suggest the negative effects of workplace ostracism (WO) on employee and organizational outcomes in terms of increasing silence, turnover intentions, counterproductive work behaviours, knowledge hiding and procrastination and decreasing well-being and engagement. Ethical leadership, authentic leadership and organizational virtuousness mitigate these effects by fostering fairness, trust, inclusion, communication and commitment, resulting in improved retention, job satisfaction, creativity, quality of patient care and organizational citizenship behaviour [15,17,24,30,31,31–35]. Conversely, authoritarian, laissez-faire, and transactional leadership styles intensify workplace ostracism and undermine cooperative behaviours [35] as mentioned in table 1.

3.2. Theme 2: Spiritual Leadership Enhancing Employee Well-being & Resilience.

3.2.1. Context:

The reviewed studies examine the influence of spiritual leadership, employee well-being, and workplace relationships on organizational performance and sustainability across diverse cultural and industrial contexts [36]. Evidence from South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, South Africa, Poland, and India demonstrates that spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality positively influence employee well-being, engagement, and organizational effectiveness across manufacturing, services, healthcare, telecommunications, public institutions, and higher education sectors [37–41]. Collectively, these findings indicate that value-based leadership approaches are effective in enhancing employee and organizational outcomes across Asian, American, and European contexts.

3.2.2. Intervention:

The reviewed studies highlight value-based leadership as a key intervention to enhance employee well-being and organizational performance. Spiritual leadership fosters meaningful work, shared values, hope, faith, altruistic love and organizational commitment. Public Service Motivation theory, Self Determination Theory and person-Organization Fit theory predict that congruence between employees spiritual values and the organizational climate leads to higher level of intrinsic motivation, a feeling of belonging and flourishing [42,43]. Workplace spirituality practices, including shared purpose, compassion, mindfulness, and mutual support, strengthen psychological safety, well-being, and positive workplace relationships [44–46]. Authentic leadership further promotes trust, ethical behavior, engagement, and positive emotions while reducing unethical conduct [41]. Overall, spiritually and ethically grounded leadership models serve as effective interventions for fostering well-being, meaningful work, moral integrity, and constructive employee behavior.

3.2.3. Mechanism:

The reviewed studies reveal that psychosocial resources are key mechanisms through which leadership influences employee outcomes. Leader and coworker support, autonomy, and positive emotions enhance well-being and help employees manage work-family demands [47–52]. Spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality foster trust, compassion, engagement, intrinsic motivation, and a sense of meaning by aligning personal and organizational values [53–58]. Emotional well-being further strengthens these effects through greater job satisfaction and positive emotions [59–63]. Overall, these mechanisms promote psychological well-being, organizational commitment, meaningful work, and reduced burnout [47–57,59–64].

3.2.4. Outcome:

The reviewed studies indicate that spiritual leadership enhances employees' sense of meaning, purpose, belonging, and psychological well-being, fostering learning, empowerment, and positive workplace relationships [48,53,65–68]. These benefits translate into higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, productivity, work-life balance, service quality, and reduced stress and burnout [65,69–71]. Authentic leadership further improves engagement, conflict management, supervisor satisfaction, and reduces burnout, bullying, and turnover intentions [72–75]. Overall, spiritual leadership and workplace spirituality promote sustainable employee well-being, organizational performance, and occupational health as mentioned in table 1.

3.3. Theme 3: Influence of Leadership on knowledge behaviour and organizational virtuousness.

3.3.1. Context:

The reviewed studies span diverse organizational and cultural contexts, including manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, education, and service sectors among China, South Korea, Pakistan, Türkiye, Indonesia, Poland, the UK, and the USA [76–81]. Collectively, they demonstrate that leadership behaviors and organizational climate significantly shape employees' psychological experiences, workplace relationships, and overall organizational functioning across different socio-cultural settings.

3.3.2. Intervention:

The reviewed studies demonstrate value-based and relational leadership interventions, including transformational, ethical, authentic, moral, benevolent, and supportive leadership. These approaches promote trust, fairness, empowerment, compassion, and ethical behavior, enhancing employee motivation, creativity, resilience, psychological safety, and collaboration [76,82,83]. In contrast, dysfunctional, authoritarian, and fear-based leadership undermine communication, increase anxiety, and impair employee well-being and performance [84]. Overall, value-based leadership and virtuous organizational climates are essential for fostering positive employee behavior and sustainable organizational outcomes.

3.3.3. Mechanism:

The reviewed studies highlight value-based and relational leadership interventions, including transformational, ethical, authentic, moral, benevolent, and supportive leadership. These approaches promote trust, fairness, compassion, empowerment, and ethical behavior, enhancing employee motivation, creativity, resilience, psychological safety, and positive social exchange [82,83,85]. In contrast, dysfunctional, authoritarian, and fear-based leadership increase anxiety, weaken communication, and adversely affect employee well-being and performance [84]. Overall, value-based leadership and virtuous organizational climates are essential for fostering positive employee behavior and sustainable organizational outcomes.

3.3.4. Outcome:

The reviewed studies show that positive leadership styles, including transformational, ethical, benevolent, moral, and virtuous leadership, enhance employee innovation, creativity, engagement, and performance by fostering thriving, psychological safety, trust, and knowledge sharing [86–95]. Ethical leadership further reduces deviant behavior, anxiety, workplace ostracism, and absenteeism while improving knowledge creation, organizational commitment, and performance [87–92]. Benevolent and virtuous leadership strengthen organizational identification, psychological well-being, and relational climates, whereas value-based leadership enhances person-organization fit, organizational learning, flexibility, and sustained competitive advantage [83,93–95]. Overall, positive leadership environments promote innovation, well-being, and long-term organizational effectiveness as in table 1.

3.3.5. Overall CIMO Process:

Table 1: (CIMO-Based Thematic Synthesis of Leadership and Workplace Outcomes)

Theme	Context (C)	Intervention (I)	Mechanism (M)	Outcome (O)
1. Leadership & Workplace Ostracism	Ostracism arises in high-pressure, collectivist, hierarchical workplaces across global sectors.	Ethical, authentic, transformational, humble leadership; destructive leadership styles increase exclusion.	• Social Identity Theory • Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory • Self-Determination Theory (SDT) • Social Learning Theory • Sociometer Theory	Reduced well-being, increased silence, burnout, deviance; positive leadership enhances inclusion, Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and engagement.
2. Spiritual Leadership & Well-being	Spiritual leadership is relevant across global sectors where meaning and	Spiritual leadership, authentic leadership, and workplace	• Spiritual Leadership Theory • Self-Determination Theory (SDT) • Public Service	Job satisfaction, commitment, engagement, reduced stress and burnout.

	well-being are essential.	spirituality practices.	Motivation (PSM)	
3.Value- Based Leadership & Positive Outcomes	Trust depends on leadership within corporate, industrial and educational contexts.	Moral, benevolent, virtuous, ethical, authentic, transformational leadership.	• Leader– Member Exchange (LMX) Theory • Moral Elevation • Value Congruence • Social Exchange Theory	Higher commitment, well-being, engagement, innovation, and reduced negative emotional outcomes.

4. Discussion:

The findings indicate that value-based leadership plays a crucial role in reducing workplace ostracism and improving employee well-being, engagement, commitment, and performance. Ethical, authentic, spiritual, and transformational leadership foster trust, fairness, psychological safety, and inclusion, whereas authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership increase exclusion and its negative outcomes. The review also shows that leadership influences employee outcomes through psychological mechanisms such as trust, organizational identification, and perceived organizational support. Practically, organizations should strengthen value-based leadership and inclusive HR practices to reduce workplace ostracism and promote sustainable employee and organizational performance.

5. Conclusion:

This study indicate that leadership is a decisive factor shaping the workplace experience-both as a risk factor that triggers ostracism and as a protective resource that counters exclusion and fosters well-being. Evidence from various world contexts shows that authentic, ethical, spiritual, transformational, humble and empathic leadership styles significantly decrease the effects of workplace ostracism while boosting psychological resources, engagement, meaning and resilience among employees. value-based leadership models influence employees through core psychological mechanisms, which includes social exchange, self-determination and organizational identification, which ultimately boosting more inclusive, healthy and sustainable workplaces.

6. Limitations and Future Research:

This study has several limitations. Most included studies relied on self-report, cross-sectional designs, limiting causal inference. The evidence was concentrated in corporate, education, and public-sector settings, with limited research in high-risk industries and insufficient attention to cultural differences. Future research should employ longitudinal and multi-level designs, examine diverse sectors such as healthcare, construction, and manufacturing, and investigate the influence of cultural values and digital workplace ostracism. Further studies should also explore how ethical and spiritual leadership, supported by emerging AI technologies, can help identify and prevent workplace exclusion.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that there is **no conflict of interest**.

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