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Workplace spirituality as panacea for waning well-being during the pandemic crisis: A SDT perspective

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the association between workplace spirituality and well-being of employees working in the hospitality sector during the COVID 19 pandemic crisis. Workforce agility and organisational identification were taken as parallel mediators for the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee well-being. The hypothesized research model was examined in the light of SDT perspective of psychological needs. Data was collected through questionnaire survey using standardized instruments. The study surveyed 322 hotel employees of the northern region of India and utilized Structural Equation Modeling to test the hypothesized relationships. Findings confirmed a positive association between workplace spirituality and well-being, and established the role of workforce agility and organizational identification as parallel mediators in this relationship. COVID 19 significantly affected employees in the hospitality sector due to unprecedented uncertainties and economic hardships, which has taken a toll on mental health and well-being of the employees. Supportive organizational practices and systems are essential to ensure flexibility, adaptability and promptness in reacting to disrupting situations. Hotels should provide mental and emotional support to their staff during the crisis situation. This study is the first of its kind to explore the linkage between workplace spirituality and well-being, and indicates that, apart from ensuring logistical adjustments and business continuity, leaders would be required to find solutions for a sense of belonging, commitment, and engagement within the organization, general wellbeing of individuals as well as teams. When leaders prioritize the concern for wellbeing of employees in such unprecedented times, they would be rewarded with a workforce that is healthy, resilient, better connected, committed, and engaged with their work and co-workers and more likely to deliver on their goals. The current scenario is a critical time for organizations to take a fresh look at the evolving needs of their employees, and evaluate and prioritize their wellbeing programs by optimizing available resources.

The Corona virus pandemic hit organizations, especially in the hotel and hospitality sector, with the intensity of a tsunami and the road to recovery seems long and arduous (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021a, 2021b). Losses have been mounting for the industry which has been operating at a very low scale (Gossling, Scott, & Hall, 2020a, 2020b). This has already led to closure of many setups, job losses, pay cuts, even job

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1. Introduction

The worldwide outbreak of COVID – 19 not only disrupted work environments but also had a severely detrimental effect on the overall health and morale of employees. The pandemic can be classified as a traumatic event that led to rapid changes in working conditions on a large scale, causing severe physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological issues (Horch, 2020). All over the world, business leaders and HR departments are struggling to make quick adjustments to the “new normal” work order, incorporating drastic changes in ways of working such as working from home, diverse timings, shifting to altered work or even no work at all (Helm & van der, 2020, March 25). While some industries adapted seamlessly to digital working platforms (Mehrolia, Algarsamy, & Solaikutty, 2021), a few sectors such as hospitality and tourism, witnessed major setbacks due to mobility restrictions, social distancing etc. (Sharma, Thomas, & Paul, 2021; Gossling et al., 2021). Moreover, the situation is expected to continue for months not weeks, indicating that, apart from ensuring logistical adjustments and business continuity, leaders would be required to find solutions for a sense of belonging, commitment, and engagement within the organization, general wellbeing of individuals as well as teams. When leaders prioritize the concern for wellbeing of employees in such unprecedented times, they would be rewarded with a workforce that is healthy, resilient, better connected, committed, and engaged with their work and co-workers and more likely to deliver on their goals. The current scenario is a critical time for organizations to take a fresh look at the evolving needs of their employees, and evaluate and prioritize their wellbeing programs by optimizing available resources.

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redundancies (Kuicke & Peters, 2021). As per industry estimates, total job losses in the Indian hospitality sector in the first six months of the lockdown have been around $ 5.5 million (Modgil, 2020). People are the biggest assets for hospitality industry. They are responsible for keeping the business viable. Hence, it is imperative to pay attention to the health and happiness of employees, especially post Covid-19.

An important issue in organizational settings is that of growing complexity in personal and professional lives of employees, which further affects their emotional and psychological health (Chen, 2020; Karsavuran, 2021). So the focus of organizations is gradually shifting towards creating a spiritual climate at work that would influence the spiritual domain of an individual and positively impact wellbeing (Pawar, 2016). Against this backdrop, our paper is a significant contribution towards the emerging debate on the crisis within the hospitality sector, by examining the critical factors that influence long-term health and safety of the employees. Although a number of researchers have acknowledged and understood the role of workplace spirituality in enhancing multiple forms of wellbeing (Khatri & Gupta, 2017; Aboobaker, Edward, & K.A. 2019; Mahipalan & S, 2019), a limited number of studies have been found in tourism and hospitality sector (Soliman, Di Virgilio, Figueiredo, & Sousa, 2021). The current research intends to fill this research gap.

Since the COVID scenario has had a major impact on the hospitality sector, the significance of agility has increased manifold. Even though hospitality staff are resilient and proficient inmasking their feelings, uncertainties and fear induced by the pandemic could have chipped their armor (Wragg, 2020). In such circumstances, workforce agility may be looked upon as a critical component of work-related behaviour and may be defined as the ability to respond promptly and flexibly to unexpected changes (Munteanu, Bibu, Nastase, Cristache, & Matis, 2020). An agile workforce is not only able to handle uncertainties and complexities of work-related situations but also can react to uncertain environmental uncertainty adequately and timely (Darvishmotvali, Altinay, & Köseoğlu, 2020). This helps the organizations to respond to uncertain environmental changes effectively without any detrimental effects on their stress levels and wellbeing concerns (Peters & Buhalıs, 2019). The other critical aspect is that when individuals perceive their organizations to be supportive during despairing times, they feel positive about the organization and this promotes a higher level of organizational identification (Lam, Liu, & Loi, 2016; Wu, Weisman, Yoshikawa, & Lee, 2020). More the resources that individuals receive from the organization, the higher will be their levels of motivation, satisfaction and wellbeing (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). Taking into account the importance of agility and organizational identification in the hospitality industry to enhance employee wellbeing and the lack of research in this area; the current study makes a valuable contribution in providing an effective framework for promoting workforce wellbeing.

From a theoretical point of view, the primary goal of this study is to develop and test a novel and unique research model that contributes to a thorough reflection on the impact of the pandemic on employee wellbeing in the hospitality sector. This is in alignment with the findings of bibliometric study by Donthu and Gustafsson (2020) who stated that COVID 19 crisis calls for robust and sustainable business strategies to meet changing market demands to remain agile and competitive. The study helps in identifying ways and means to mitigate this situation. Further, the research proposition may be invaluable for stakeholders to understand and implement sustainable mechanisms to deal or cope with any potential similar events in future. Since the work profile in hospitality industry is dynamic, volatile and labour intensive, it must be more agile as compared to other industries (Stylos, Zwiegelaar, & Buhalıs, 2021), to handle it in a productive and effective manner, without letting it affect the wellbeing of employees. This model may help employers to recognize and allay fears and concerns of the staff by bringing in spirituality-infused work practices (Jnaneswar & Sulphey, 2021; Zou, Houghton, & Li, 2020), and utilizing the role of agility and organizational identity so that they feel safe and supported at work, enhancing general wellbeing (Haldorai, Kim, Chang, & Li, 2020). To the best of our knowledge, there is paucity of research in the Indian hospitality sector on the role of workforce agility and organizational identification as mediators in stimulating the association between workplace spirituality and employee wellbeing.

Taking into consideration the fact that Indian hospitality is recuperating and emerging rapidly post the second wave of pandemic, this study intends to examine the following research objectives: (a) to investigate the role of workplace spirituality in enhancing employee wellbeing; (b) to ascertain whether organizational identification and workforce agility mediate the positive association of workplace spirituality and employee wellbeing. These research objectives are particularly crucial considering the effect of pandemic on hospitality business (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020), as this study highlights the key factors that needs to be considered during for smooth business operations during turbulent times.

The study is structured into six sections. In the initial section, the paper has incorporated SDT theory of motivation as the theoretical base in explaining workplace spirituality. Its role in organizational functioning as well as beneficial outcomes for employees such as wellbeing at work, has also been examined. The section that follows explains hypotheses development on the basis of extensive literature review, followed by research methodology, after which research findings are discussed. The final section of the paper consists of discussions of the result findings and the conclusion and implications.

2. Literature review

2.1. Self-determination theory (SDT)

The current study utilizes Self-determination theory to develop a theoretical basis to understand the role of workplace spirituality in enhancing wellbeing at work. Self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) is a meta-theory of human motivation that addresses the basic issues within a vast range of life domains ranging from relationships, work, personality development, psychological needs, energy and vitality, self-regulation, aspirations, and most importantly, the impact of social environments on human behavior, affect and wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The SDT perspective thrives on the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness, and the influence of social and cultural context in facilitating individual needs, desires, interests, perceived sense of self-direction, growth and wellbeing (Legault, Ray, Hudgins, Pelosi, & Shannon, 2017).

For decades, the concept of psychological needs has been used to explain organizational behaviour by assessing the differences in strength of particular needs as perceived by different individuals (Gagne & Deci, 2005) to predict motivation, satisfaction and work outcomes. SDT defined the need for competence (need to feel effective), autonomy (need to feel self-reliant and free), and relatedness (need to connect with others), as universal prerequisites necessary for optimal human development and growth (Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, & Deci, 1996). Nevertheless, this tendency for human development and growth should not be assumed to happen naturally for everyone; it can be easily thwarted by a deficient social environment because an individual is constantly interacting with the external world, striving for need satisfaction which may or may not be supported always (Legault et al., 2017). So, this idea of a fit between the individual and the extent to which (s)he can satisfy her/his needs in the environment, is inherent in the SDT proposition and is vital for the wellbeing and effectiveness of individuals (Greguras, Die fendorff, Carpenter, & Tröster, 2019). It can therefore be appropriately ascertained that level of satisfaction of needs is the result of a match between an individual’s unique attributes/characteristics and the environmental contextual factors, further predicting wellbeing as an outcome of satisfaction of needs.

When analyzing the SDT perspective, it is important to distinguish
between autonomous motivation, that denotes an individual’s intrinsic motivation to engage in any activity voluntarily, and controlled motivation, that indicates an individual acting with a sense of pressure or force to engage in an activity (Deci & Ryan, 2008). However, both types of motivation are intentional and can energize & induce behavior as well as stand in contrast to the concept of motivation that depicts an individual’s lack of intention and motivation. Another important aspect of SDT is that extrinsic motivation can vary in extent, which can be termed as autonomous versus controlled (Gagné & Deci, 2005). The authors further postulated that when individuals are regulated or energized into action through applying external contingencies, it specifies extrinsic motivation, signifying controlled motivation. However, when such behavioral regulations are internalized to an extent that it no longer needs the presence of an external contingency to induce the motivated behavior, it will move towards being autonomous motivation. It is thus clear, an extrinsically motivating task can be termed as autonomous or controlling depending on the extent to which the tasks have been internalized by the individual. The key contribution of SDT is that tasks can be internalized and integrated within underlying values, thus eliminating the need for external force, helping individuals experience autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Based on an extensive study of laboratory experiments and research in varied domains, Gagné and Deci (2005) argued that satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs helps in enhancing employee’s intrinsic motivation and internalization of extrinsic motivation, yielding positive outcomes such as behavioral changes, effective performance, job satisfaction, positive work attitudes, OCBs and psychological wellbeing.

2.2. Workplace spirituality

Workplace spirituality provides a holistic view of life to individuals in terms of pursuing the meaning and purpose in their work, desire to connect with other people and be a part of the community, and also aligning organizational goals with individual ethics and value proposition (Sehra, 2015). The current research proposes that theoretical tenets of SDT, comprising of three basic psychological needs - that of autonomy, competence and relatedness - be utilized to understand employees’ desire to seek the dimensions of workplace spirituality at play in the organizations they work for. SDT perspective focuses on the role of intrinsic motivation in the fulfillment of psychological needs that invariably leads people to become self-motivated and self-driven to perform at work without any external influence or interference (Deci, Ryan, Michael, & Vansteenkiste, 2008). Similarly, workplace spirituality is also concerned with accomplishment of the highest level of human needs, viewed as spiritual needs that involve searching for deeper meaning, purpose and experience of feeling good at work (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017). Such nurturing of human needs is important for overall psychological growth, integrity and wellbeing of individuals (Deci & Ryan, 2000) as per SDT.

Workplace spirituality refers to employees’ experiences of meaningful work and community feeling at the workplace (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Duchon & Plowman, 2005) as well as individual’s personal and professional alignment with the organizational environment (Garg, 2017). Kinsierski and Skrypnik (2006) believed that workplace spirituality fosters the individual experience of being passionate and energized by the work, finding meaning and purpose in work, which gets enhanced by the feeling that they can express their complete selves at work and feel connected to their co-workers. In this context, SDT proposes that intrinsic motivation urges a natural desire in people for growth and self-development that is very similar to what workplace spirituality propagates. Furthermore, SDT extends the notion that individuals make efforts to internalize and assimilate tasks with their underlying values so that there is no need for any external force; rather, they rely on intrinsic motivation to perform their activities (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The need for autonomy, as proposed by SDT theory, refers to an individual’s self-determination and self-regulation to fulfill work needs. This gets reflected in the spiritual perspective of meaningful work, implying that it must have a purpose that involves a sense of joy by engaging one’s full potential to achieve whatever is considered important in life (Chawla & Guda, 2013; Duchon & Plowman, 2005). The presence of spiritual employees at work with high internal energy and drive is critical for the work environment since such individuals would be highly motivated. This emphasizes autonomy, one of the basic psychological needs, as per SDT.

SDT suggests that the need for competence encourages individuals to embrace challenges and responsibilities that help them in optimizing their capacity to perform and promote enhancement in feelings of meaningfulness i.e., seeking meaning and value in work (Moon, Youn, Hur, & Kim, 2018). This drive to seek fulfillment of competence need is akin to what workplace spirituality induces among employees that is, to seek fulfillment of deeper intrinsic needs, consistent work values, and meaning for common good (Barrett, 2003). Thus, it makes it clear that the natural inclination of human beings towards competence needs, as promulgated by SDT, is an inherent factor in explaining why meaningful work has been incorporated as a significant dimension of WPS.

It is interesting to note that the workplace spirituality dimension of sense of community shares some common grounds with SDT’s relatedness needs. SDT argues that satisfaction of relatedness needs takes place in the social context when employees feel connected with their colleagues and their intrinsic motivation increases since it enhances the sense of belongingness in the organization (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Satisfaction of the need to be connected to others and be effective in a social environment supports people’s tendency to internalize community values and behaviors endorsed by other group members, and enhances their intrinsic motivation to be useful and effective in work.

Autonomy need of the SDT theory concurs well with the WPS dimension of alignment with organizational values. Alignment with organizational values implies that employees feel engaged with the organization’s beliefs and values, not just socially and cognitively, but also spiritually (Gatling, Kim, & Milliman, 2016). The process of values alignment gets facilitated when supportive HR practices promote employee empowerment, making employees feel valued as spiritual human beings who bring their whole selves to work (Milliman, Ferguson, Trickett, & Condeemi, 1999; Rego & Pina e Cunha, 2008). Similarly, it can be inferred that the SDT perspective of internalization of external environmental factors into self-directed behaviours and fulfillment of the need for autonomy (Gagné & Deci, 2005) also act as key drivers for individuals to seek alignment with the values, goals and beliefs of the organization, as proposed by the WPS dimension of alignment with organizational values (Gatling et al., 2016).

It is thus clear that both workplace spirituality and SDT have similar processes of inner consciousness by which an individual can identify and work towards the fulfillment of their inner needs, values and beliefs (Gatling, 2016). In subsequent sections, we will examine whether individual inclination to fulfill SDT’s needs of autonomy, relatedness and competence can be attributed to the reasons why intrinsically motivated employees seek meaningful work, community and alignment of values - significant dimensions of workplace spirituality.

2.3. Employee wellbeing

Currently, when the world is widely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals are experiencing mental issues due to loss of family and friends, loneliness, fear, anxiety, anger, stress, etc. (Peroz et al., 2020). As per a recent survey of about 1500 people across 46 countries (HBR, 2021), majority of employees are stressed out due to the raging pandemic and a general feeling of loss of control over life and work, which is greatly affecting their general and workplace wellbeing. Although organizations established different practices that supported remote working yet high productivity, increased senior leader care and concern, operational agility; the new work order led to a completely
different set of risks to employee wellbeing such as fear of job losses, lack of work-life balance, inadequate technology, isolation, so on and so forth (Oehler, 2020). The conversation in management research on employee wellbeing is not new but its relevance in the current situation is not over-rated.

Employee wellbeing can be identified as the overall positive experience and functioning of an employee in an organization (Grant et al., 2007) and is a multidimensional construct consisting of physical, social, psychological (Grant et al., 2007), mental and spiritual well-being (Pawar, 2016, 2019). While multiple categories of wellbeing can be included to describe employee wellbeing, we have taken the eudaimonic perspective of wellbeing, which focuses on the psychological aspects of wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001), viewed as an expression of one’s true self (Grant et al., 2007). The indicators of psychological wellbeing are closely linked with the aspects of autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, life, purpose and positive relatedness (Pawar, 2019) - very well aligned with the SDT theory of autonomy, relatedness and competence.

3. Conceptual model and hypotheses development

This study aims to investigate whether there is any significant association of workplace spirituality with employee wellbeing, and also study the mediating effects of workforce agility and organizational identification on this relationship. The researchers modelled this study on prior research conducted by Milliman, Czaplewski, and Ferguson (2003), which is one of the earliest empirical evidence of relationships between the three dimensions of workplace spirituality with five employee attitude variables, including organizational commitment, intention to quit, intrinsic work satisfaction, job involvement and organization-based self-esteem (OBSE). Thereafter, a few researchers attempted to examine the relationship of WPS with different attitudinal and behavioral variables such as job satisfaction, turnover, intention to quit, commitment (Crawford, Hubbard, Lonis-Shumate, & O’Neill, 2008; Gatling et al., 2016), employee engagement, intention to stay, service delivery (Milliman, Gatling, & Kim, 2018).

3.1. Workplace spirituality and employee wellbeing

SDT theory proposed the presence of intrinsic motivation in individuals for satisfaction of needs, desires, interests, self-growth and wellbeing. This is very similar to the intrinsic-origin perspective of workplace spirituality proposed by Krishnakumar and Neck (2002), who described it as a phenomenon originating from the inside of an individual, meaning thereby that it is an inner search for meaningful experience at work, sense of community and connectedness with others, and alignment of personal values at work. In other words, the presence of workplace spirituality helps self-management or autonomy at work, makes the employees experience relatedness and competence by facilitating an empowered environment that leads the organizational activities in a meaningful direction (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003). The hospitality industry is service-oriented and geared towards continually providing great experience and satisfaction for customers, which can be tedious and tough. It is therefore important to investigate potential benefits of fostering WPS in the hospitality industry, to mitigate any detrimental effects of negativities on employees’ health. Crawford et al. (2008) examined employees from two hotel management groups, one where WPS was promoted and one that did not. The authors found significant differences between the two organizations regarding employees’ positivity towards the organizational environment. Scholars have identified that when individuals are engaged in meaningful work, they experience significant positive effects including commitment, satisfaction, sense of fulfillment (Whittington & Whittington, 2018), and psychological wellbeing (Cameron, 2012). In a recent study on Indian hospitality employees (Haldorai et al., 2020), it was found that an ethical work environment that embraces spirituality at work is beneficial for the wellbeing of the employees, organization and society at large. Wallace (2019) argued that job characteristics such as self-actualizing work, helping others and a sense of belongingness, contribute towards a sense of meaningful work which eventually leads to eudaimonic wellbeing. Based on review of literature, it can thus be hypothesized that:

H1. There is a positive association between WPS and employee wellbeing.

3.2. Workplace spirituality and workforce agility

In the latest AON survey of HR professionals on “Accelerating Workforce Agility and Resilience” (Aon Pulse survey 5, 2020), around 84% of HR leaders felt that workforce agility is extremely important for the organization yet, only 39% admitted that their current workforce is very agile. Notion of an agile organization is the most widely-held proposition to handle uncertain and unpredictable business environments (Shereriy and Karwowski, 2014) with creativity and innovative work behavior (Afser & Badir, 2017). According to a qualitative study by Darvishmotevalli and Tajeddini (2019), the hotel managers confirmed that organizational agility can help surviving the complex environments of hospitality industry. Gartside, Silverstone, and Cantrell (2014) argued that instead of depending upon a few top executives, agile organizations rely upon employees at all hierarchical levels to be deployed suitably as per demand of the hour. Workforce agility reveals how capable the employees are at adapting to unprecedented changes in the work environment (Paul, Jena, & Sahoo, 2020) to cope with fast-changing work landscapes (Jadoul, Nascimento, Salo, & Willi, 2020). Hospitality industry is dynamic in nature and is focused on providing great experience to demanding customers; so there is a greater need for employees not only to be productive and service oriented but also to be creative, innovative and agile, to address challenging customer demands. In this context, Shereriy and Karwowski (2014) found that employee autonomy is an important determinant of ensuring workforce agility as it enhances an employee’s intrinsic motivation towards work. Interestingly, autonomy is an important dimension of SDT theory as it refers to an individual’s self-determination to fulfill his job responsibilities by choice and not due to external pressure. Whenever employees feel that their contribution in the workplace is creating an impact and is valued within the organization, workforce agility is reinforced (Paul, Jena, & Sahoo, 2020).

Also, if individuals believe that they are performing meaningful work, even if it is unexciting, they try to internalize their tasks in work behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2006). This further leads to greater involvement of the employees at all hierarchical levels, greater speed and flexibility (Olsson & Salay, 1983 as cited in Muduli, 2016) and workforce agility. Another important competence required to create an agile workforce is collaboration which implies that when individuals work in groups, they exhibit better productivity and efficiency, and develop task relationships (Qin, Nembhard, & Barnes, 2015). Several studies have emphasized the significance of a feeling of community and connectedness at the workplace, as an important factor of workplace efficiency and effectiveness (Paul & Saha, 2015). This leads to increase in productivity and average task speed (Onyait, 2019), in other words, agility.

H2. There is a positive association between WPS and workforce agility.

3.3. Workplace spirituality and organizational identification

Researchers have defined organizational identification as the psychological bonding between the employee and the organization as a social entity (Edwards & Peccei, 2007) or the extent to which employees’ attributes align with those of the organization (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Organization identification is an essential element for effective functioning of the organization (Fuller, Marler, Hester, Frey, & Relyea, 2006). Hence, the organization must maintain a
positive and strong employment relationship by creating feeling among employees of a strong identification with the organization (Kar- anika-Murray, Duncan, Pontes, & Griffiths, 2015). Employment in hospitality industry is perceived to be undesirable due to strenuous working conditions, low wages, long working hours, high work pressures, lack of career development opportunities etc. Therefore, it is crucial for organizations to encourage employee identification to prevent high turnover and disengagement (Getz, 1994; Yang, Wan, & Fu, 2012). In a study on Chinese hotel industry, Peng, Lee, and Lu (2020) found that when employees identify themselves with the organization, it enhances the feeling of relatedness, a significant dimension of workplace spirituality. In other words, when an employee is high on OI, he/she feel oneness with the organization. Moreover, Indian hospitality industry is reeling under shortage of skilled manpower and high attrition rate, making it imperative to focus on suitable HR practices and positive work environment to encourage organizational identification and counter negative image (Santhanam, Kamalanabhan, Dyram, & Ziegler, 2015).

Most definitions of spirituality in workplace often incorporate a link between core attributes of the organization and the individual. This has been endorsed by several authors like Mitroff and Denton (1999a), who emphasized alignment of individual and organizational values. Milliman et al. (2003) referred workplace spirituality as being connected to deeper value attributes. Boros (2008) found that the degree to which individuals identify themselves with the values and goals of their organization is valuable for both individuals and the organization. Individuals with high organizational identification perceive their jobs to be meaningful, due to the belief that their contribution is important for achievement of the organization’s objectives and goals (Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015). According to SDT, workplace spirituality helps in creating a conducive work environment by incorporating a spirit of trust, cooperation, mutual caring and understanding (Fry, 2003). This in turn, induces a strong sense of belongingness and social membership among the individuals, which is closely linked to stimulating a sense of organizational identification among employees (Chen, Jiang, Zhang, & Chu, 2019).

H3. There is a positive association between WPS and organisational identification.

3.4. Workforce agility and employee wellbeing

Organizations need to openly embrace and practice agility to get an edge in the fast-changing business environment (Pradhan, 2016). In the current situation, it has become a necessity to survive the turbulence of the pandemic crisis. Munteanu et al. (2020) emphasized that the process of transformation of an organization into an agile and sustainable organization is possible only through its employees. In other words, an agile workforce is the best bet for organizations to handle unexpected and volatile changes in the environment by proactively presenting viable solutions (Muduli, 2016). The Agile Manifesto (2013) presented 12 principles that describe agile ways of working. Out of the 12 principles, most important in the context of employee wellbeing are: facilitating autonomy to motivated people, providing them with adequate organizational support and resources, and promoting self-managed teams to ensure better coordination and collaboration to achieve the desired results (Kansaälä & Tuomivaara, 2013). As proposed by SDT theory, the need for autonomy refers to an individual’s self-determination and self-regulation to fulfil the work needs, out of their own volition and without any external pressure (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Furthermore, high internal energy and desire to perform are critical for any work environment as individuals with such traits will be highly motivated, emphasizing autonomy, a basic psychological need proffed by SDT. Kotera, Adhikary & Gordon (2018) emphasized a significant relationship between intrinsic motivation and mental health of UK hospitality workers. Employee wellbeing is very important for hospitality firms as the success of an organization is dependent on employees’ evaluation of life circumstances and quality of life which enhances their performance (Peters & Buhalís, 2019). Muduli (2016) posited and proved that workforce agility and organizational agility can be achieved through various supportive organizational practices such as learning and training, reward system, employee involvement, teamwork and efficient information system. Such management practices help the employees in performing well at a job adaptively and flexibly (Sherehiy, 2008) and also enhance wellbeing at work (Tuomivaara, Ala-Laurinaho, Ylisassi, & Voltanen, 2016).

H4. There is a positive association between workforce agility and employee well-being.

3.5. Organizational identification and employee wellbeing

Organizational identification refers to the extent to which employees identify themselves with the organization (Dutton et al., 1994), and act in the interest of the organization in such a way that the organization’s successes and failures are perceived as their own (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Taking reference from the insights and findings of social identity theory, Wegge, Van Dick, Fisher, Wecking, and Moltzen (2006) argued that strong psychological attachment of employees to their organization enhances work motivation and wellbeing. They further contended, that high organizational identification leads to high work motivation as depicted by high job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviour, low turnover intention, and better wellbeing as indicated by lower health complaints, lower emotional exhaustion, and lower feeling of depersonalization. Similarly, Kumar Mishra and Bhatnagar (2010) found evidence of a positive relationship between organizational identification and employee wellbeing. They further asserted that conscious facilitation of organizational identification can act as an important process to enhance employee wellbeing and lower emotional exhaustion.

Due to odd-hour shifts, higher people-contact hours, overtime leading to fatigue, burnout, emotional exhaustion and stress etc., wellbeing of employees in the hospitality sector gets compromised and may result in employee absenteeism, higher turnover and disengagement (Shani, Uriely, Reichel, & Ginsburg, 2014). Peng et al. (2020) observed that employees with high OI are intrinsically motivated to perform and contribute to the organizational success which thereby helps in beneficial outcomes. In her qualitative study on the hospitality sector, Ponting (2019) asserted that corporate leader’s efforts to create organizational identification through purpose-orientation and people-centric identity leads to enhancement of employee wellbeing which is essential for organizational success. In a recent study conducted on hotel employees in China, Su and Swanson (2019) observed that higher levels of organizational trust and identification help in boosting employee wellbeing. The SDT concept of relatedness is extremely useful in providing an understanding of how various social forces and interpersonal environmental factors help individuals to identify with others in a social context, and engage in behaviors and values that are exhibited and endorsed by group members (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Satisfaction of the need to be identified as someone contributing effectively at work enhances an individual’s intrinsic motivation and it reflects positively in overall wellbeing.

H5. There is a positive association between organizational identification and employee wellbeing.

3.6. Workforce agility and organizational identification as mediators

Workplace spirituality has always been perceived in organizations as a significant means to enhance employee wellbeing (de Klerk, 2005; Garg, 2017; Pawar, 2016). During the ongoing pandemic crisis, employers are even more concerned about the physical and mental health implications induced due to stress, fear and uncertainty, and are looking for a holistic approach to address psychosocial issues related to this
global challenge (Koss, 2020). The basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness as postulated by SDT theory help in understanding needs, desires, interests, sense of self-direction, self-efficacy, growth and wellbeing (Legault et al., 2017). Coppola, Rania, Parisi, and Lagomarsino (2021) observed that spirituality incorporates the idea of a sense of belonging and existential interconnectedness (relatedness), an important tenet of the SDT perspective that is closely related to perceptions of wellbeing, physical and mental health.

Organizational identification indicates the connection of employees with the organization (Lyu, Yao, Zhang, & Liu, 2020) and is reflected by dedication, sense of belonging and high energy levels (Van Bogaert et al., 2014), that in turn, promotes a work environment with optimism and self-efficacy (García-Sierra, Fernández-Castro, & Martínez-Zaragoza, 2016). This sense of belongingness and feeling of interconnectedness is what is referred to as the SDT need for relatedness. It is a universal prerequisite for human growth and development (Ryan et al., 1996), and vital for wellbeing and effectiveness of individuals (Greguras et al., 2014). Several studies have noted that organizational identification has a significant role in enhancing employees’ health and satisfaction (Steffens et al., 2009), decrease in employee burnout (Haslam & Reicher, 2006) and other sicknesses ranging from minor ailments to depression (Haslam & Reicher, 2006; Wegge et al., 2006). Taking a cue from social identity theory, Knight and Haslam (2010) found that organizational identification partially mediates the role of managerial control and wellbeing. Peng et al. (2020) propositioned role of OI as a mediator in enhancing perceived job performance and pro-environmental behaviours in hotel sector. However, integrated proposition of examining the role of organizational identification in the association of workplace spirituality and employee wellbeing has not been taken up so far; the current study is an attempt to fill this gap.

Rapid changes at workplace demand that employees remain agile, adaptable and flexible (Varshney & Varshney, 2020). Recent research based on responses of 850 C-suite leaders by Randstad Sourceright (2021) reported that the COVID 19 pandemic has accelerated the pace of organizations globally; organizations are taking efforts to strengthen workforce resilience including overall wellbeing of employees. Darvishmotavali et al. (2020) observed the significant role of organizational agility in mitigating the negative impact of uncertainties in the work environment on employees and the organization in general. Similar findings were reported by a recent Malaysian study on hospitality industry by Alsubah, binti Rahman, Mohamad, and Khaleel (2020). Several studies have shown that various organizational practices such as human capital, equitable rewards system, performance management, job enrichment, information systems and competencies etc., significantly promote workforce flexibility and agility (Sherer & Karwowski, 2014; Beltrán-Martín & Roca-Puig, 2013). These practices enhance the ability of employees to perform a flexible range of tasks which strengthens their sense of autonomy and self-determination (Muduli, 2016). Furthermore, Muduli (2016) argued that high level of meaningfulness associated with a task internally motivates employees to exhibit commitment, involvement and agility, which may be further helpful in enhancing wellbeing at work (Tuomivaara et al., 2016). This closely aligns with the focus of SDT theory on the role of intrinsic motivation in the fulfillment of psychological needs, that invariably leads people to become self-motivated and self-driven to perform well at work voluntarily, without any external direction (Deci et al., 2008). This is especially important for the overall growth, development and wellbeing of employees (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This study attempts to examine the mediating role of workforce agility in the link between workplace spirituality and employee wellbeing.

H6. The relationship between WPS and employee wellbeing will be significantly mediated by (a) workforce agility; and, (b) organizational identification.

4. Research methodology

4.1. Sampling method and procedure

Data for the present study were collected from employees working in the hospitality sector in India. In consonance with prior studies in the sector, this study used a convenience sampling method for data collection (Faroq, Zhang, Talwar, & Dhir, 2021). HR managers of 22 hotels located in North India were contacted via mail and telephone and were briefed about purpose of the survey. These hotels were selected based on their ratings (3 or more ratings). Of 34 hotels, only 16 hotels accepted the request for data collection. Reason for the low acceptance for data collection, as shared by a few HR managers, was that the hotels were busy developing strategies to cope with the pandemic situation. Departments that participated in the survey were the food and beverage department, housekeeping department, front office, training, security, finance and HR department. Before starting the process of data collection, we informed the HR managers that the study needs to utilize diverse variation of demographic categories. Hence, it was ensured that the departments which participated in the survey (food and beverage department, housekeeping department, front office, training, security, finance and HR department) comprised of varied demographic categories such as age, gender, marital status, education and experience. Data was collected during October 2020 to December 2020. To curtail issues and problems associated with convenience sampling, the sample was selected based on larger variation. We ensured that the sample included all demographic categories of population (age, experience, gender, marital status and education). With the help of the HR managers, around 620 employees were contacted to be part of the survey, of which 452 gave their consent. A Google link of the survey was shared with all the respondents. It had the statements about demographic variables and all the four study variables. The questions were jumbled to reduce social desirability among the respondents. They were further assured of confidentiality of their responses by allocating a code as an alternative to the hotel’s name in the survey form. Of 452 respondents who showed willingness to be a part of the survey, researchers were able to get 331 filled surveys after six weeks. Nine of the responses were discarded due to incomplete forms, leaving 322 to be used for the study. For ensuring adequacy of sample size for the proposed model, the G-Power was used (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). The power value was computed as 0.92, which was more than the generally accepted minimum level of power i.e., 0.80 (Cohen, 1988).

4.2. Scales

The present study used standardized scales which were measured on a five-point Likert scale with 5 referring to strongly agree and 1 referring to strongly disagree. The scale descriptions are mentioned in Appendix 1 of the paper.

Workforce spirituality was measured on a 9-item scale (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Milliman et al., 2003). “My spirit is energized by work,” is an example of scale item.

Workforce agility was measured through 7 items taken from Breu, Hemingway, Strathern, and Bridger (2002). The items included the dimensions, Adaptive, Flexible, Developmental, Collaborative, Competent, Speed and Informative. An example is, “I am comfortable with change, new ideas and new technologies in my organization”.

Organizational identification was measured through a three-item scale adapted from the MDIS, modified to address organizational foci (Stoner, Perrewé, & Hofacker, 2011). Example of, “If asked if I belong to this organization, I would say ‘Yes’”, reflects the scale items.

Well-being was assessed through the 3-item scale “Warwick-EdinburghWell-being Scale (SWEMWBS), 2008”. Items included,
“I’ve been feeling optimistic about future.”

4.3. Multivariate normality test and common method bias

As the p-value of both skewness and kurtosis was found to be more than .05, results indicated that the data was multivariate normal. As the data was multivariate normal, along with reflective relationship & testing the existing theory, the authors used covariance-based structural equation modeling CB-SEM (Hair, Hult Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017). CB-SEM requires that the sample size be large with no outliers, and the collected data should exhibit linearity, normality, absence of heteroscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity (Talwar et al., 2020, 2021).

Apart from randomly arranging the items to overcome the issue of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) which normally occurs during cross-sectional data collection, the researchers used Harman’s single factor test, in concordance with recent studies (Kaur, Dhir, Talwar, & Ghuman, 2021). The results of factor analysis showed that the first factor accounted for 29% of total variance which was less than the value of 50% stated for CMV to occur (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Hence, the issue of common method bias was not applicable for the present study. The heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was also carried out and it was observed that all the HTMT values were less than the suggested cut-off of 0.85 (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015), thereby eliminating all chances of common method bias.

4.4. Reliability and validity analysis

The study utilized structural equation modeling (SEM) which is a statistical tool for exploring multivariate relationships among all the study variables viz., measurement and latent variables. The measurement model was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) before testing the hypothesized structural model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

The researcher followed Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (2006) observation of overall model fit and contrast validity. While examining factor loading estimates, it was observed that some items had a factor loading of less than 5 which can lead to a problem for convergent validity (Hair et al., 2016). Hence, two items were dropped from the well-being construct. The measurement model thus provided a satisfactory model fit (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach alpha, and construct validity was assessed using convergent and discriminant validity. Reliability of over 0.70 was found for all the items, thus fulfilling the condition recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Accordingly, the recommendation of discriminant validity was established, as the AVE for each construct was more than the correlation value.

The measurement model demonstrated good model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.90$, RMSEA = 0.06, GFI = 0.931, AGFI = 0.922, and CFI = 0.938). Similarly, the structural model also witnessed good model fit, with modification indices of all parameters under the prescribed values ($\chi^2/df = 2.94$, RMSEA = 0.06, GFI = 0.928, AGFI = 0.921, and CFI = 0.936).

Table 1 of the study depicts composite reliability and average variance extracted of the second-order constructs which were found to be under recommendation values. Association between the constructs was also found to be positive and significant.

5. Results

5.1. Demographic details

Demographic details of the respondents are depicted in Table 2. Age, gender, marital status, education and experience were controlled as they could confound the results, in line with prior studies that argued the confounding effect of socio-demographics on individual behavior in varied contexts (Dhir, Talwar, Kaur, Budhiraja, & Islam, 2021; Kumar, Dhir, Talwar, Chakraborty, & Kaur, 2021). Gender, age and marital status, were coded to negate the impact of demographic variables. Male was coded as 1 and Female was coded as 2; married employees were coded as 1, unmarried as 2, and neutral as 3; age and experience were coded in the range of 1–4, with 1 being the lowest and 4 the highest.

5.2. Descriptive statistics

Table 3 depicts the descriptive statistics, and correlation values of the scales. The issue of multi-collinearity was also rooted out as correlation coefficients between the constructs were found to be less than 0.70, thereby strengthening the case in support of discriminant validity.

5.3. Hypotheses testing

AMOS 20 (Arbuckle, 2009) was utilized to test the hypothesized model. As depicted in the results in Table 4, a positive and significant association between WPS and WA supported the first hypothesis of the study ($\beta = 0.17, t = 3.92, p < 0.01$). Hypothesis 2 of the study also was supported with a positive association between WPS and WA ($\beta = 0.18, t = 3.07, p < 0.01$). A positive association between WPS and OI ($\beta = 0.21, t = 4.88, p < 0.01$) supported Hypothesis 3 of the study. The fourth hypothesis of the study was supported when a positive association was Table 1

| Constructs | CR  | AVE  | MSV  | ASV  | WA  | WPS | WB  | OI  |
|------------|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| WA         | 0.921 | 0.626 | 0.408 | 0.155 | 0.791 |
| WPS        | 0.901 | 0.505 | 0.195 | 0.083 | 0.167 | 0.711 |
| WB         | 0.851 | 0.538 | 0.408 | 0.149 | 0.439 | 0.158 | 0.734 |
| OI         | 0.913 | 0.726 | 0.195 | 0.080 | 0.171 | 0.242 | 0.122 | 0.852 |

Abbreviations: WA, workplace agility; WPS, workplace spirituality; OI, organizational identification; WB, well-being.
culture, geopolitical and structural changes, and the subsequent impact on work environments. An unforeseen situation like the COVID-19 pandemic has had a severely adversarial impact on business continuity (KPMG, 2020). Apart from the alarming crisis related to health, many organizations, especially in the hospitality business, are facing unprecedented economic difficulties in sustaining their businesses. Hence, the need of the hour is to build a more resilient and agile workforce, to help cope with such crises, both at personal and organizational levels. The study is particularly significant in the current scenario as the world had never faced an economic crisis as severe as the current one during the COVID 19 pandemic (Ramelli & Wagner, 2020). While it had an impact on almost all sectors, the hospitality sector was amongst the first and worst impacted sectors (Khan, Niazi, Nasir, Hussian, & Khan, 2021), resulting in massive employee layoffs, salary cuts, forced leaves etc. (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021a, 2021b). Such a colossal economic crisis and loss of employment greatly impacted mental health of employees, especially in the hospitality sector in India (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2021a, 2021b). Emphasis on organizational practices that enhance each aspect of WPS – meaningful work, sense of community and alignment of values - can assist hospitality employees embark the path of revival by making them resilient to cope up and win over the crisis.

The present study investigates an important aspect of organizational research i.e., enhancing wellbeing at work, especially significant during the current times when radical transformations on the work front have necessitated a call for higher levels of agility to remain relevant (Anand, 2021). The study focused on examining the relationship of workplace spirituality with wellbeing at work. SDT theory was utilized to develop the theoretical basis for the model. Further investigations revealed that organizational identification and workforce agility successfully mediate the relationship between WPS and employee wellbeing.

As hypothesized, workplace spirituality was found to have a significant relationship with employee wellbeing. Previous researches on workplace spirituality have focussed on the inner spirit of an individual that requires constant nourishment in the form of meaningful work done in the context of community (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006). The need for autonomy posited by SDT theory emphasized that when an individual finds purpose and meaning in work, (s)he performs it out of volition, without any pressure (Ryan & Deci, 2006), which in turn, reduces job stress and enhances wellbeing at work. Furthermore, SDT’s need for competence drives the individual to accept challenges and responsibilities, and perform the tasks to the best of their capabilities, which results in the feeling of meaningfulness at work (Moon et al., 2018). Paul and Saha (2015) posited that survival, success and wellbeing at work get initiated when organizations have collaborative work systems where individuals and teams work together to achieve outstanding performance and organizational success. This sense of community augurs well with SDT’s need for relatedness when employees feel connected with colleagues and organizations. This sense of belongingness enhances intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000), thereby enhancing wellbeing. Pawar (2016) examined the possible role of workplace spirituality in enhancing multiple dimensions of employee wellbeing and indicated that it can be effectively used as an intervention to enhance multiple dimensions of employee wellbeing without impairing any form of it. When individuals internalize external factors of motivation into self-directed behaviours (Gagne & Deci, 2005), it facilitates the process of alignment of values, not just socially and cognitively, but also spiritually (Galting et al., 2016). This helps in reducing the perception of workplace stressors and enhances a sense of wellbeing (Kumar & Kumar, 2014). It is thus clear that wellbeing of employees is important for the hospitality industry specifically because only an engaged and healthy employee will whole-heartedly contribute towards service delivery, thus keeping the customer happy and satisfied. Workplace spirituality helps in fostering a positive environment that encourages people to be mindful, compassionate and sincere, resulting in enhancement of wellbeing which is essential, especially during turbulent times as are being experienced now.

Findings of the study reveal that workplace spirituality is positively related to workforce agility, as proposed in our theoretical model. COVID 19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on global economy, including the hospitality sector which was probably the most impacted due to mobility restrictions, lockdown, social distancing norms etc.,

Table 3
Descriptive statistics (N = 322).

| Variables                      | Mean | SD  | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  |
|--------------------------------|------|-----|----|----|----|----|
| 1. Workforce agility          | 4.60 | 1.12| 0.79|
| 2. Workplace spirituality     | 3.04 | 1.04| 0.17**| 0.71|
| 3. Wellbeing                  | 3.62 | 1.19| 0.60**| 0.16**| 0.73|
| 4. Organisation Identification| 4.12 | 1.13| 0.19**| 0.50**| 0.26**| 0.85|

Note: **correlation significant at 0.01 level; Discriminant validity is represented diagonally and in bold and italics.

Table 4
Direct effects.

| Parameters | Estimate | Lower | Upper | SE  | t    | Outcome |
|------------|----------|-------|-------|-----|------|---------|
| WPS < WAI  | 1739     | 0866  | 2612  | 0444| 3.92 | Supported|
| WPS < WAI  | 1802     | 0650  | 2954  | 0586| 3.07 | Supported|
| WAI < WAI  | 2139     | 1277  | 3001  | 0438| 4.88 | Supported|
| WAI < WAI  | 4209     | 3415  | 5003  | 0404| 10.42| Supported|
| WAI < OI   | 1408     | 0348  | 2469  | 0539| 2.61 | Supported|

Note: *Empirical 95% CI does not overlap with zero. Abbreviations: WA, workplace agility; WPS, workplace spirituality; OI, organizational identification; WB, well-being.

Table 5
Indirect effects and 95% CIs.

| Parameters | Effect | Boot LLCI | Boot ULCI | Boot SE | Boot t | Outcome |
|------------|--------|-----------|-----------|---------|--------|---------|
| WBI < WAI  | 0758   | 0301      | 0193      | 1373    | 4.88   | Supported|
| WBI < WAI  | 0301   | 0141      | 0043      | 0603    | 1.04   | Supported|
| WBI < OI   | 1060   | 0331      | 0440      | 1723    | 3.92   | Supported|

Note: *Empirical 95% CI does not overlap with zero. Abbreviations: WA, workplace agility; WPS, workplace spirituality; OI, organizational identification; WB, well-being.
leading to revenue loss, job loss, decreased market demand and so on (Davahli, Karwowski, Sonmez, & Apostolopoulos, 2020). Such unpredictable changes leave employees feeling worried, disheartened and insecure (Paul et al., 2020). Hence, organizations need to incorporate supportive organizational practices such as training, reward system, involvement, teamwork and effective information system, to promote adaptability, flexibility, and agility of the workforce (Muduli, 2016; Sherehiy & Karwowski, 2014). Organizations being committed to employee training and upskilling, helps in employee empowerment and autonomy, major determinants of workforce agility (Sherehiy & Karwowski, 2014). This aspect of autonomy as per SDT theory relates to self-determination of employees to fulfil job responsibilities which leads to purpose and meaning to the work being performed (Ryan & Deci, 2006). This further culminates into speed, flexibility and workforce agility (Muduli, 2016). Second, teamwork environment facilitates congeniality amongst members and effective collaboration in the completion of projects on time, thereby resulting in agile work behavior (Breu et al., 2002). Organizations must attempt to induce team environment synergistic impact on workforce agility by enabling a sense of community at the workplace, a significant dimension of workplace spirituality. The current study established the role of workplace spirituality and its underlying dimensions in promoting workplace agility, which has especially assumed significance in the current scenario where adaptability and quick response to unpredictable changes is called for.

Results have confirmed the positive association of WPS with organizational identification. The onslaught of COVID 19 has highlighted organization’s responses to react, decide and implement certain actions. These may not be people-friendly such as layoffs, salary cuts etc., and may have great impact on organizational identification (Ashforth, 2020). The study also laments the ongoing erosion of organizational identification even before the pandemic due to popular trends such as the DIY gig economy and rapid virtualization of work. Thus, the need of the hour calls for organizations to proactively look out for not only their employees but other stakeholders such as the surrounding community (Gibson, 2020) to boost organizational identification. Interestingly, when employees witness their organizations being proactive in espousing the core values of following the right path of helping the employees and others during a crisis, they feel aligned with its value system, thus fostering organizational identification (Gouldner, 1960). The findings are consistent with SDT’s need for relatedness wherein group-based relationships not only enhance a sense of community amongst its employees but also enrich workplace experiences and thereby better identification with the organization (Haslam, 2004). Knight and Haslam (2010) found evidence that employees’ perceptions of comfort and autonomy in workplace had a major bearing on their identification with the organization which in turn, leads to job satisfaction and wellbeing. Our findings emphasize that the organization must facilitate meaningful work, sense of community and value alignment for their employees, as it helps them achieve their best and identify with organization goals. SDT suggests that employees feel motivated to fulfill the need for autonomy that lets them perceive the tasks they perform as meaningful and important for achievement of the organization’s goals and objectives. This in turn, enhances a sense of belongingness and helps in the stimulation of organizational identification among employees (Chen et al., 2019).

Results of our study further revealed that workforce agility has a positive association with employee wellbeing. The pandemic has given rise to deep uncertainties among employees (De-la-Calle-Durán & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021) and crisis effects are visible on India’s tourism and hospitality industry that has been most badly affected (Dash, 2020). Unexpected and volatile changes in the environment can be handled only by proactively presenting viable solutions by employees (Muduli, 2016; Munteanu et al., 2020). Out of twelve principles describing agile ways of working proposed by Agile Manifesto (2013),
four principles are most important in the context of enhancing employee wellbeing. These are: facilitating autonomy to motivated people, providing adequate organizational resources to perform well, promoting self-managed teams for better coordination and collaboration to achieve desired outcomes (Kansal & Tuomivaira, 2013). Many organizations start de-prioritizing employees’ psychological needs due to business losses caused by lockdown and other restrictions (Kumar, 2021). This severely affects employee wellbeing and engagement (De-la-Calle-Durán & Rodríguez-Sánchez, 2021). Workforce agility and resilience can help address health and wellbeing of employees in the pandemic environment. Pandemic situation has created a hospitality landscape that had never been experienced before in human history. Hospitality organizations have been forced to adopt new strategies and approaches to handle the disruptive environment. Workforce agility has become one of the most important factors in ensuring safe, healthy and rewarding work environment for employees.

Findings supported the hypothesized model that organizational identification has a positive association with employee wellbeing. Ashforth (2020) argued that individuals need to identify themselves in the organizational (work) context to remain relevant and valued; however, meeting this need is a constant challenge during COVID 19. Employees view uncertain situations and circumstances, such as the one being experienced due to COVID 19, as beyond their purview of control which leads them to negative behavioral responses (Vander Elst, De Cuyper, Baillien, Niesen, & De Witte, 2016). When employees perceive the work environment to be favorable and leading to positive consequences, it decreases job insecurity (Piccoli et al., 2017) and enhances their identification with the organization (van Dick, Grojean, Christ, & Wieseke, 2006). When employees experience strong psychological attachment with the organization, it boosts their motivation levels and wellbeing (Wegge et al., 2006). Our hypothesis gets support from similar studies by Kumar Mishra and Bhatnagar (2010) who contended that the more employees internalize organizational attributes and identify with their organization, the better is their well-being. Su and Swanson (2019) also presented their findings on similar lines that employee wellbeing increases significantly with higher levels of organizational trust and identification. Our results endorse the relationship of organizational identification with wellbeing. Therefore, organizations must work towards providing such environment to employees that would enhance their sense of belongingness and pride. When employees display strong identification with the organization and attach emotional significance to its membership, their beliefs about it become more positive and results in their wellbeing.

Our analysis confirmed that workforce agility and organizational identification significantly mediate the relationship between workplace spirituality and employee wellbeing. Positive associations of workplace spirituality with wellbeing have been extensively researched and proven in earlier studies (Garg, 2017; Janneswar & Sulphey, 2021; Karakas, 2010; McKee, Driscoll, Kelloway, & Kelley, 2011). It is now important to identify means through which these constructs can be utilized in organizational settings to bring about the desired outcomes. Varsnney and Varshney (2020) postulated that agility, adaptability and flexibility of employees are important factors to handle unprecedented and fast-changing environments at the workplace such as the one being faced during COVID 19. AON study (2020) reported that workforce agility and resilience are central factors for future success of organizations globally and for the means to achieve employee wellbeing. Similarly, organizational identification has been emphasized as having a significant role in reducing employee burnout (Haslam & Reicher, 2006), improving employee satisfaction and health (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009), and reducing physical and mental ailments such as stress, depression (Haslam & Reicher, 2006; Wegge et al., 2006).

Knight and Haslam (2010) argued that wherever organizations foster autonomy and decision-making control in the hands of employees, it encourages organizational identification, job satisfaction, and ultimately the wellbeing of employees. Hospitality employees experience stressful conditions that affect their wellbeing. However, it has been proven that spiritual awareness attenuates the overwhelming pressure of stress and enhances employee wellbeing. Organizations must implement spiritual practices at work as this provides valuable resources to employees by bringing in a sense of purpose, feeling of belongingness. This helps them cope with the vagaries of work life. WPS enables individuals to experience awareness of their capabilities, improved relationships, sense of autonomy and a realistic view of the volatile and uncertain environment, to have better control over stressful situations. Furthermore, our findings prove that hospitality organizations must promote workforce agility so as to empower employees to respond quickly and appropriately to customer demands, especially the fast-changing needs in dynamic and unpredictable environments. When employees sense the organization providing an enabling work environment and an alignment of personal values with organizational values, their sense of belongingness gets enhanced and they start aligning with the organizational purpose and goals. Strong organizational identification leads to enhanced wellbeing of employees.

6.1. Theoretical implications

The current study has identified some valuable conceptual and theoretical implications for researchers working in the hospitality sector. A crucial take away from the study is that the core needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, proposed by self-determination theory, may explain the effectiveness of WPS dimensions of meaningful work, sense of community and alignment with organizational values, in achieving workforce wellbeing. COVID 19 has significantly changed the mind-set of people towards travel and tourism, shifting the focus to life and health. This has led to huge losses for the industry and created sustainability concerns. The theoretical framework proposed in the study would help in establishing certain mechanisms through which the hospitality sector may adapt to cope with this unprecedented crisis and achieve a positive trajectory to revival. The framework and emergent changes play a part in revealing a sense of direction and guidance in developing a future course of action in the “new world order”, for e.g., ensuring agile ways of working to enhance wellbeing at work.

6.2. Managerial implications

Results of the study present several useful insights for business managers and HR practitioners. The notion of wellbeing at work can be well stimulated by promoting workforce agility which means that when organizations invest in empowering employees to make autonomous decisions for achievement of organizational goals without any managerial control, it enhances employee wellbeing. Furthermore, when employees get energized by experiencing organizational trust in their capabilities and supportive HR practices to enable them to perform well, their identification with the organization goes up, leading to job satisfaction and wellbeing. The study indicates that supportive organizational practices and systems are particularly relevant for the hospitality sector because of the dynamic nature of the industry where flexibility, adaptability and promptness to react to situations are paramount. Findings also indicate that organizational leaders, rather than getting insecure, must enhance their own capabilities to handle empowered employees at lower hierarchies which is crucial for workforce agility and identification with the organization. This can be possible when they imbibe spiritual values and infuse their subordinates too with such values since it helps everybody to find meaning and purpose in work, realize the importance of working collaboratively in the service of customers. Findings of the current study and a few previous ones have corroborated the need for a spiritual domain in employees as well as a spiritual climate in the organization. For instance, organizations can indulge in ideas such as encouraging yoga, meditation and mindfulness at workplace, to transform itself into a spiritual work domain beaming with positivity, creativity, productivity and wellbeing. Such efforts from
the organization would lead employees to be less self-centred and more connected with the big picture as portrayed by the organization, and help themselves get aligned to the organizational objectives. The more the employees feel connected to the organization, the more positivity and feeling of well-being would be experienced by them. Organizations may also take constructive steps in understanding inner motivational needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) of their supervisors and other employees and try to provide them with the kind of work that is most suited to their abilities and interests. This will keep the employees motivated and also enhance well-being at work.

6.3. Limitations and directions for future research

Although our study presents valuable insights and significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge, the study is not devoid of limitations. The chosen sample for the study includes respondents working in the hospitality sector in the Delhi-NCR region; hence, generalization of the findings will be possible only if the sample is expanded to include hospitality employees from across India. This can be a future area of research. Sample of the present study was selected based on larger variation to curtail the issues and problems associated with convenience sampling, it is recommended for future researchers to collect data from a larger sample from multiple states of India for generalizability of result. As the key variables investigated in our study are positive, it would be worthwhile to examine the influence of variables with negative connotation such as turnover intention, emotional labour, perceptions of organizational politics, workplace incivility etc., on the relationship between workplace spirituality and well-being. Further, the mediating role of personality dimensions such as psychological capital indicators like optimism, self-efficacy, and hope during unprecedented times, can also be taken for future study. A comparative analysis between various industries can give more robustness to the generalizability of result. As the key variables investigated in our study are positive, it would be worthwhile to examine the influence of variables with negative connotation such as turnover intention, emotional labour, perceptions of organizational politics, workplace incivility etc., on the relationship between workplace spirituality and well-being.

Appendix 1: Constructs and Scale items

| Meaningful work (MW) | Source |
|----------------------|--------|
| My spirit is energized by work | Ashmos & Duchon (2000) |
| I see a connection between work and social good | |
| I understand what gives my work personal meaning | |
| Sense of Community (SC) | Milliman et al. (2003) |
| I feel part of a community | |
| I think employees are linked with a common purpose | |
| I believe employees genuinely care about each other | |
| Alignment with Organisational Values (AOV) | Ashmos & Duchon (2000) |
| I feel positive about the values of the organization | |
| My organization cares about all its employee | |
| I feel connected with the organization’s goals | |
| Workplace Agility | Breu et al., (2002) |
| I am comfortable with change, new ideas, and new technologies in my organization | |
| I am flexible to quickly change from task to task, job to job and place to place | |
| I map my skills, benchmark for skill assessment and develop the skill | |
| I am comfortable with cross-functional project team, collaborative ventures with other companies, or a virtual organization | |

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