

The Mediating Effect of Psychological Well-Being on the Relationship Between Ambidextrous Leadership and Workplace Ostracism

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Workplace ostracism (WO) poses a critical challenge for organizations, undermining employee well-being and overall effectiveness. This study examines how ambidextrous leadership (AL), characterized by the balanced use of exploration and exploitation behaviors, reduces WO through the mediating function of psychological well-being (PW). The research is grounded in Leader-Member Exchange theory and Affective Events Theory, which emphasize the relational and emotional dynamics between leaders and employees and provide a foundation for understanding how leadership behaviors influence perceptions of inclusion and well-being. A quantitative research design was employed, drawing on survey data from 325 employees across various industries. Validated scales measuring AL, WO, and PW were administered through an online questionnaire. The results reveal a significant negative association between AL and WO, with PW appearing as a partial mediator. This suggests that AL not only directly reduces feelings of exclusion but also indirectly influences ostracism by fostering employee well-being. Overall, the study underlines the importance of AL in creating psychologically supportive work environments and contributes to organizational behavior literature by clarifying the mechanisms through which leadership can mitigate WO and enhance employee well-being.

Keywords: ambidextrous leadership; psychological well-being; workplace ostracism

(JEL) Codes: L21, M19, M12

Modern organizations operate in quickly changing and unpredictable environments. To survive in highly competitive markets, they rely not only on tangible assets such as buildings, machinery, materials, and investments but also on intangible resources like social capital. Social capital refers to employees who contribute skills and efforts toward organizational goals, making the attraction and retention of valuable individuals essential for success (Chams and García-Blandón, 2019; Crow, 2002). However, the fast-paced business atmosphere can exhaust employees, leading to unintended psychological and behavioral consequences.

Psychologically fatigued employees may exhibit negative outcomes such as turnover intention, workplace cynicism, or other counterproductive behaviors. At the group level, these effects damage relationships among employees, weakening organizational culture, climate, and perceived support. Interactions with colleagues also shape psychological states such as safety, job satisfaction, commitment, and resilience. Among negative workplace experiences, ostracism stands out as a critical issue.

Ostracism, defined as ignoring or excluding individuals from social interactions, is a well-documented social phenomenon (Williams, 2002). In the workplace, it refers to social exclusion and marginalization by peers or supervisors (Ferris, Chen, and Lim, 2017). Research shows its prevalence; for example, Fox and

Stallworth (2005) found that 66% of U.S. employees experienced ostracism during their careers. Antecedents include a lack of inclusion, weakened connections, and misinterpretations of behavior, intentional or not (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2013). The consequences are seriously reduced teamwork, job satisfaction, and PW within organizations.

Understanding ostracism's mechanisms is vital for early intervention. Killworth and Bernard (1976) emphasized that misunderstandings and errors in judgment often trigger exclusion. These perceptions foster neglect and rejection, making ostracism a significant organizational issue. It harms employees' well-being, life satisfaction, work engagement, and performance, while also undermining organizational efficiency and innovation.

Ostracism arises from both individual characteristics, such as personality traits and cognitive dispositions, and organizational factors, including culture, climate, and leadership (Hitlan & Noel, 2009; Zhao, Xia, He, Sheard, & Wan, 2016). Ostracism is not merely an interpersonal issue rather it can be acknowledged as culturally embedded structural term shaped by organizational norms, values and rules of inclusion and exclusion. In this regard, organizational cultures that discourage employee voice and tolerate organizational silence, can implicitly permit ostracism by legitimizing ignoring and social withdrawal. Such cultures strengthen negative daily responses that increase employees' feelings to marginalization and undermine psychological well-being. On the contrary, participative cultures produce positive affective events mitigating ostracism. Addressing it therefore requires interventions on both cultural, organizational and personal levels. Initiatives such as diversity management, mentoring, and conflict resolution training reduce ostracism and strengthen employee identification with corporate values. Furthermore, promoting psychological safety (Edmondson & Lei, 2014), emotional labor strategies (Grandey, Fisk & Steiner, 2005), psychological capital (Luthans, Avolio, & Youssef, 2007), and employee well-being (Danna & Griffin, 1999) help mitigate its effects. Organizational culture (Schein, 2010), trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), and perceived support (Eisenberger et al., 1986) also play central roles in reducing exclusion.

Among organizational variables, leadership styles are especially critical. Leaders guide strategy, allocate resources, and influence decision-making, thereby shaping environments that can prevent ostracism. While styles such as authentic, transformational, transactional, strategic visionary leadership, and exploitative leadership are effective in different ways (Gardner, Coglisier, Davis & Dickens, 2011; Kamran, Malik & Khan, 2025; Memon, Baloch & Iqai, 2024), AL is particularly relevant in today's volatile markets.

AL balances exploration and exploitation behaviors to enhance efficiency and adaptability. Exploration emphasizes innovation, experimentation, and learning, while exploitation concentrates on refining going on processes, ensuring consistency, and improving resource utilization (Birkinshaw & Gupta, 2013; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013). Leaders switch between these behaviors depending on situational demands, making them highly effective in uncertain contexts (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004).

A defining feature of AL is strategic vision, which integrates employees into innovative goals while aligning individual contributions with organizational objectives (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009; O'Reilly and Tushman, 2016). By bridging departmental gaps, promoting knowledge sharing, and encouraging communication, these leaders foster positive culture (Adler, Goldoftas, & Levine, 1999). They empower employees through autonomy, morale building, and recognition, which reduces exclusion. They also manage conflicts effectively exploitation-oriented strategies resolve task conflicts, while exploration-oriented strategies turn relationship conflicts into opportunities for collaboration (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013).

Thus, AL mitigates WO by strengthening communication, teamwork, and inclusivity. Beyond direct effects, mediating variables such as psychological safety, empowerment, and resilience explain how leadership reduces ostracism. Of these, PW is especially critical, encompassing autonomy, personal growth, purpose, positive relationships, and self-acceptance (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

PW is linked to health, job performance, and social relationships. Employees with higher well-being have less tendency to engage in exclusionary behaviors, benefiting from the inclusive culture fostered by ambidextrous leaders. Therefore, PW can serve as a crucial mediating factor in the correlation between AL and WO

Conceptual grounding and development of research hypotheses

The association between ambidextrous leadership (AL) and workplace ostracism (WO)

WO is conceptualized as “the degree to which a person recognizes being ignored or excluded by others at work” (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008). It often manifests as neglect, avoidance, or mistreatment and has detrimental consequences for employees, including reduced effectiveness, increased negative behaviors, diminished PW, and higher stress levels (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002; Hitlan & Noel, 2009). Ostracism may originate from colleagues, supervisors, or subordinates. Unlike overt bullying or harassment, it is marked by passive, covert behaviors, making it difficult to detect and address.

The term “ostracism” stems from the Greek *ostrakon*, referring to pottery shards used in Athens to exile disruptive individuals. This practice served as a democratic mechanism to preserve social and political stability by removing disruptive individuals. In workplaces though, exclusion occurs through informal, unstructured actions. Such behaviors undermine belonging and inclusivity, leading to loneliness, anxiety, reduced self-esteem, or depression. Over time, ostracized employees may display absenteeism, weakened organizational commitment, and higher turnover intentions.

Addressing WO is crucial, as it undermines employee attitudes and performance. Organizational interventions are necessary, and leadership plays a pivotal role. Several leadership types such as authentic leadership, transformational leadership or transactional leadership have been extensively examined in organizational behavior literature. Their effects on workplace ostracism can differ in scope and mechanism. In this regard, authentic leadership focuses on transparency, ethics and self-awareness, which in turn empowers employees’ well-being and resilience in the workplace. Nevertheless, this leadership approach does not clearly address leaders’ abilities to cope with organizational demands and stressors that interpersonal tensions and dynamics bring on. Alternatively, transactional leadership takes control, incentives and compliance as its focal point. It provides strong leadership structure but unfavorably reinforces rigid hierarchies and social distance that triggers perceptions of WO. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, prioritizes inspiration, vision and motivation. These aspects can support engagement and well-being of employees however they may be insufficient to highlight experienced forms of social exclusion resulting in ostracism. In contrast to these leadership styles, AL can offer a more comprehensive framework for understanding WO by simultaneously integrating stability and flexibility. The balance between exploration and exploitation-oriented behaviors can better explain WO which is subtle and context-dependent phenomenon. Rather than dismissing other leadership approaches, it can be argued that AL can offer an explanatory framework for WO with two-dimensional structure as reducing ambiguity and relational uncertainty which are two key antecedents of workplace ostracism. Unlike authentic, transformational or transactional leadership styles that prioritize relational and instrumental mechanisms, AL integrates both dimensions and offers more comprehensive understanding to reduce WO in dynamic organizational contexts.

Additionally, AL with its balance of exploration and exploitation is particularly effective. Exploration emphasizes innovation and adaptability, while exploitation focuses on stability, refinement, and efficiency. This duality enables leaders to create cultures valuing both adaptability and consistency (Birkinshaw & Gupta, 2013). Skilled in shifting between these behaviors, ambidextrous leaders foster inclusivity, open communication, and trust, thereby reducing misunderstandings and feelings of exclusion.

By aligning employee goals with organizational objectives, ambidextrous leaders build supportive atmospheres where employees feel valued and secure. Their exploitation-oriented approach ensures clarity and reliability, while their exploration orientation encourages collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving. This dual capacity helps organizations navigate change, strengthen teamwork, and reduce ostracism.

At this point, it is necessary to discuss the theoretical foundations of this study. Leader-Member Exchange theory (LMX) and Affective Events Theory (AET). LMX theory conceptualizes supervisor-employee relationships as reciprocal exchanges, where relationship quality affects performance, creativity, satisfaction, and commitment (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). High-quality exchanges enhance supervisory support, promote security and job satisfaction.

Affective Events Theory emphasizes the role of emotional and psychological experiences in shaping behaviors. Workplace events trigger emotions that influence both immediate actions and long-term attitudes (Cropanzano, Dasborough, & Weiss, 2017). Positive leader behaviors can reduce alienation and increase satisfaction, while negative events may intensify exclusion. AL, by balancing exploration and exploitation, creates positive affective experiences that mitigate ostracism.

Empirical research also supports these arguments. Alghamdi (2018) demonstrated that AL enhances innovative performance. Wu, Wang, Estay, and Shen (2022) found it reduces role stress and silence. Wu, Wang, He, Estay, and Akram (2020) reported that AL strengthens affective commitment while reducing workplace deviance. In summary, AL plays a vital role in addressing WO. By combining innovation with stability, and fostering communication and support, ambidextrous leaders create inclusive and resilient organizational environments. Based on these discussions and prior research, the initial hypothesis of this research is formulated as below:

H₁: Ambidextrous leadership is inversely related to workplace ostracism.

The role of psychological well-being (PW) as a mediator between ambidextrous leadership (AL) and workplace ostracism (WO)

In organizational behavior science, PW is defined as “the affective and purposive psychological state that people experience while they are at work” (Robertson and Flint-Taylor, 2009, p. 6). It represents a person’s ability to handle daily stress and challenges while working productively and contributing to society. PW is a core element of mental health and resilience, enabling employees to adapt to difficulties and maintain a positive outlook. It influences physical health, workplace performance, and social relationships by enhancing emotional resilience, satisfaction, and self-acceptance. Ryff (1989) conceptualized PW through six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. These factors guide individuals in navigating life, building connections, and developing self-acceptance. Autonomy reflects the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors independently. Environmental mastery involves adapting to and shaping one’s environment to achieve goals. Personal growth refers to continuous psychological development and self-actualization. Positive relationships emphasize creating meaningful social ties, while purpose in life provides direction and meaningful goals. Finally, self-acceptance reflects a positive self-image and emotional resilience, where individuals acknowledge strengths and weaknesses without harsh self-criticism.

PW is also explained through two overarching perspectives: hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Boniwell & Henry, 2007; Fredrickson, 1998). Hedonic well-being concentrates on positive emotions, life satisfaction, and happiness. According to Fredrickson (1998), positive emotions expand attention and thinking, enabling the development of long-term psychological capital. In contrast, eudaimonic well-being emphasizes self-actualization, meaningful goals, and psychological growth. It promotes resilience, fulfillment, and self-realization beyond temporary happiness. Effective PW requires balancing hedonic and eudaimonic aspects combining emotional positivity with long-term purpose and growth.

The benefits of PW include enhanced motivation, job satisfaction, efficiency, and effectiveness. Research highlights the role of leadership in fostering this state. Wang et al., (2022) found that AL strengthens self-efficacy, self-awareness, and psychological empowerment, positively influencing task performance. Lindert et al., (2022) emphasized that transformational leadership enhances PW by fostering motivation and engagement, while Zeike, Bradbury, Lindert, and Pfaff (2019) showed similar effects from digital leadership.

AL is particularly significant in supporting PW. This style balances exploitation focused on clarity, consistency, and efficiency with exploration, which fosters innovation, creativity, and adaptability (Zacher & Rosing, 2015). By providing stability and innovation simultaneously, ambidextrous leaders help employees feel secure while encouraging engagement in dynamic processes (Gong, Liu, Rong & Fu, 2021). The leader-subordinate relationship under AL is underpinned by shared trust, emotional support, and a recognition of belonging (Martínez-Climent, Rodríguez-García, & Zeng, 2019). Leaders who provide guidance while seeking employee contributions foster psychological security and resilience (Yan, Lian, & He, 2024). Furthermore, granting autonomy and decision-making opportunities empowers employees, improving confidence, inclusion, and intrinsic motivation.

Developing PW through leadership is critical for preventing negative organizational outcomes. Factors such as social exclusion, job dissatisfaction, and turnover intention undermine effectiveness, while WO, being excluded or neglected by colleagues or supervisors, is one of the most damaging experiences. In this regard, PW functions as a buffer, mitigating ostracism's emotional and cognitive consequences through both hedonic and eudaimonic dimensions.

Lack of emotional support, inadequate supervision, or limited guidance from leaders can serve as antecedents of ostracism. AL, by balancing exploitative and explorative behaviors, provides employees with both stable structures and innovative opportunities. This duality fosters mutual benefit, reduces alienation, and increases group integration. Employees thus feel valued and motivated, while organizations benefit from a more resilient and committed workforce. Exploitation-oriented practices provide structured guidance, whereas exploration-oriented practices encourage creativity and autonomy, together creating a positive environment that nurtures PW.

Hedonic well-being helps maintain emotional stability and happiness, while eudaimonic well-being strengthens purpose and resilience. Together, they enhance motivation, self-worth, and the capacity to cope with ostracism. Studies also highlight that PW improves self-esteem, resilience, and workplace belonging, which mitigate exclusionary behaviors (Ardianto & Etlidawati, 2022; Li & Hasson, 2020). Employees who experience higher levels of well-being show stronger social involvement, form stronger interpersonal ties, and actively participate in organizational activities, thereby reducing ostracism.

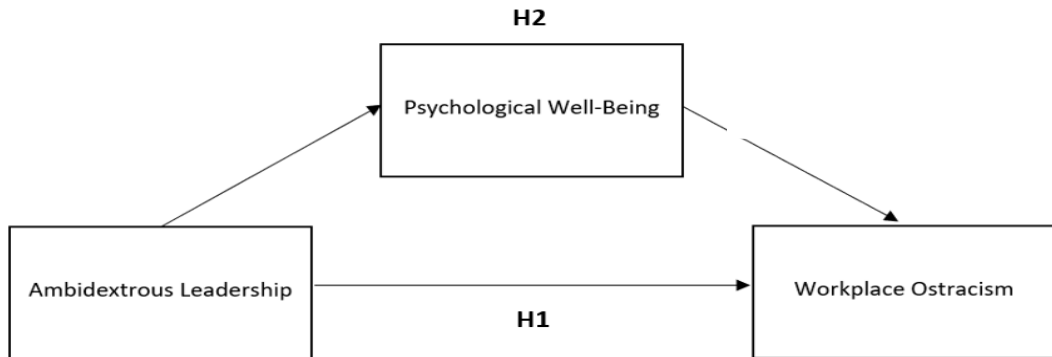
Expanding on the role of PW as mediating variable is crucial to capture underlying mechanism where AL behaviors influence complex workplace outcomes such as WO. Although direct-effect models often fail to fully explain the psychological processes that shape employees' cognitive and emotional responses, mediating variables provide more nuanced explanations by clarifying how and why leadership behaviors translate into employees' social experiences. In this regard, PW has been deliberately chosen as a mediating variable that comprehensively integrates emotional, cognitive and motivational dimensions. PW represents employees' capacity to cope with stress and a condition to maintain positive against failures and mistakes. Though other organizational variables such as trust, engagement or organizational identification focus on relational or attitudinal outcomes, PW captures resilience, emotional stability, and capacity to cope with social stressors. By positioning PW as a mediator, this study moves beyond simplistic leadership-ostracism research and provides mechanism-based explanation grounded in LMX and AET.

In sum, PW can be a critical mediator between leadership and workplace outcomes. Ambidextrous leaders foster well-being through open communication, recognition, and empowerment, creating supportive and dynamic environments. By strengthening employees' hedonic and eudaimonic states, they reduce the risks of ostracism and enhance organizational performance. Drawing on the aforementioned arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₂. Psychological well-being will mediate the association between ambidextrous leadership and workplace ostracism.

Figure-1 displays the research model constructed in accordance with the hypotheses developed from the theoretical rationale discussed above.

Figure 1 Conceptual Model of the Study



Method

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The present study involved actively employed individuals working in white-collar positions. A total of 450 individuals were invited to participate via e-mail, yielding 325 usable responses. Participants in this study were full-time employees working in sectors such as defense and industrial sectors, all positioned within Turkey. The questionnaire was conducted in the Turkish and the data collection period spanned from March 2025 to August 2025. The respondents' demographic summary showed a well-balanced gender ratio, with 50.5% male and 49.5% female participants. Regarding educational background, 64.6% of respondents held an undergraduate degree, while 35.4% possessed a postgraduate qualification. An examination of the respondents' marital status revealed that 55.1% were married and 44.9% were single. The largest proportion of participants was aged between 26 and 40, and most reported having between five and ten years of total work experience.

Research Measures and Scales

In this research, three measurement scales; ambidextrous leadership; psychological well-being; workplace ostracism scales were employed. These methods were revised from their original versions and interpreted into Turkish by academicians in the accessible literature.

The AL Scale was originally developed by Rosing, Frese and Bausch (2011) and later converted into Turkish language by Kılıç (2018). The instrument is made up of 14 questions and measures two dimensions: leader's opening behaviors and leader's closing behaviors. It is administered using a six-point Likert measurement scale. The rating scale extends from 1 (Completely disagree) to 5 (Completely agree)

The PW Scale was initially developed by Diener (1984) to assess individuals' overall well-being and psychological health. In order to make the scale applicable in the Turkish context, it was later converted and adjusted by Telef (2013), who also conducted extensive validity and reliability tests. The instrument is based on a five-point Likert-type response scale, where respondents are requested to express their degree of agreement with each statement. The scale is anchored between 1 (Completely disagree) and 5 (Completely agree).

The WO Scale, originally developed by Ferris, Brown, Berry, and Lian (2008) and subsequently adapted into Turkish by Karakiraz, Uslu, and Özsoy (2023), was employed in this study. The measurement tool comprises 10 indicators and adopts a 7-point Likert-type response scale spanning from 1 (Completely disagree) to 7 (Completely agree)

Results

Psychometric Properties and Model Fit

The findings expose that all three variables as AL, WO and PW exhibit acceptable reliability, as indicated by Cronbach's Alpha values (CA) of .96, .95 and .93, correspondingly. The AL construct demonstrated strong fit across key indices, with GFI=.937, AGFI=.910, CFI=.982, and IFI=.982. The chi-square/df ratio was 1.98, indicating a very good fit, and the RMSEA=.055 (90%CI[.042-.068], PCLOSE=.249) remained within the acceptable limits. The PW model analysis indicated an acceptable-to-good model fit with $\chi^2=22.2$, $p=.220$, $\chi^2/df=1.23$ reflecting an acceptable fit between the data and the proposed structure. Additional indices supported the adequacy of the model: GFI=.905, AGFI=.881, CFI=.945, TLI=.936, and IFI=.946. The RMSEA=.027 (90%CI[.055-.089], PCLOSE=.021) fell within the acceptable range, while the RMR value of .046 also indicated a reasonable fit. The WO model demonstrated a good overall fit, with $\chi^2=56.53$, $p<.01$, $\chi^2/df=2.02$. Fit indices were satisfactory, including GFI=.967, AGFI=.935, CFI=.990, and IFI=.990. The RMSEA=.056 (90%CI[.035-.077], PCLOSE=.295) also indicated an acceptable fit, while the RMR=.036 supported the adequacy of the model. Finally, AL, PW, and WO demonstrated strong reliability, with composite reliability (CR) values of .96, .93, and .95, in that order. In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were 0.67 for AL, 0.62 for PW, and 0.66 for WO. Results indicate that the constructs exhibit robust reliability and satisfactory overall validity.

Table 1 Validity, reliability and model goodness fit values

<i>Variables</i>	<i>CA</i>	<i>CMIN/SD</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>AGFI</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>NNFI</i>	<i>IFI</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>AL</i>	0,96	1,98	0,937	0,910	0,982	0,925	0,982	0,055	144,8	73	0,000
<i>PW</i>	0,95	1,23	0,905	0,881	0,945	0,935	0,946	0,027	22,2	18	0,020
<i>WO</i>	0,93	2,02	0,967	0,935	0,990	0,946	0,990	0,036	56,53	28	0,000

Notes: CMIN/DF (Minimum Discrepancy/Degrees of Freedom): Acceptable if $3 \leq \chi^2/df \leq 5$, good if ≤ 3 , GFI (Goodness of Fit Index): Acceptable if ≥ 0.90 , good if ≥ 0.95 , AGFI (Adjusted GFI): Acceptable if ≥ 0.85 , good if ≥ 0.90 , CFI (Comparative Fit Index): Acceptable if ≥ 0.90 , good if ≥ 0.95 , NNFI (Non-Normed Fit Index): Acceptable if ≥ 0.90 , good if ≥ 0.95 , IFI (Incremental Fit Index): Acceptable if ≥ 0.90 , good if ≥ 0.95 , RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation): Acceptable if ≤ 0.08 , good if ≤ 0.05 , χ^2 = Chi-Square Value, df = Degrees of Freedom, P = Significance level. Variables: AL = Ambidextrous Leadership, PW = Psychological Well-Being, WO = Work Ostracism, *P < 0.05, **P < 0.01

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and intercorrelations among the research variables. This examination was conducted to explore the differential effects of the variables analyzed. The findings indicate that the means and standard deviations are within the acceptable limits for normality. In addition, the bivariate correlations among the core variables of the model demonstrated to be statistically significant.

Table 2 Means, Standard Deviation, Reliability and Correlations

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Mar. St.</i>	<i>Edu.</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>AL</i>	<i>PW</i>	<i>WO</i>
<i>Gender</i>	1,50	,50	1						
<i>Mar.St.</i>	1,45	,49	,132*	1					
<i>Edu.</i>	2,49	,75	,137*	-,073	1				
<i>Age</i>	35,72	7,34	-,164**	-,345**	,002	1			
<i>AL</i>	3,51	1,13	-,015	,005	-,293**	-,049	1		
<i>PW</i>	3,45	,89	-,083	,015	-,300**	-,140*	,785**	1	
<i>WO</i>	2,69	1,17	,021	-,115*	,102	,007	-,566**	-,594**	1

Notes: Gender (1 = male, 2 = female), Marital Status (1=Married, 2=Single), Education (1 = diploma, 2 = bachelor, 3 = master, 4 = PhD), SD = Standard Deviation, AL = Ambidextrous Leadership, PW = Psychological Well-Being, WO = Work Ostracism, *P < 0,05 and **P < 0,01

Regression Analysis

For the mediation analysis, IBM SPSS (version 26) alongside the PROCESS macro (version 3.5.3) developed by Hayes (2017) were employed. The PROCESS macro assists the testing of complicated mediation patterns by estimating both direct and indirect effects, and in this study, 5,000 bootstrap samples were generated for resampling.

It was proposed in Hypothesis 1 that AL would affect WO negatively. The analysis results displayed that AL accounted for 38% of the variance in WO. Both the regression coefficient of AL and the model constant demonstrated statistical significance. Specifically, AL was shown to be negatively linked to WO ($\beta = -0.266$, $p < .001$). Table 3 presents the entire analysis output for Hypothesis 1, confirming support for the hypothesis

Table 3 Direct impact of ambidextrous leadership (AL) and workplace ostracism (WO)

<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
-,266	,073	-3,65	,000	-,410	-,122

Secondly, Hypothesis 2 suggested that PW would mediate the association between AL and WO. The analyses confirmed that the indirect impact of AL on WO through PW was significant ($\beta = -0.316$, $LLCI = -0.452$, $ULCI = -0.162$), as the confidence interval excluded zero. This indicates that PW functions as a significant mediator, given that AL positively influences PW ($\beta = 0.616$, $p < .001$), which therefore is inversely related to WO ($\beta = -0.513$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, the direct influence of AL on WO continued to be statistically significant ($\beta = -0.266$, $p < .001$), providing evidence of a partial mediation effect. See table 4.

Table 4 Indirect impact of ambidextrous leadership (AL) and workplace ostracism (WO)

<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
-,316	,074	-3,65	,000	-,452	-,162

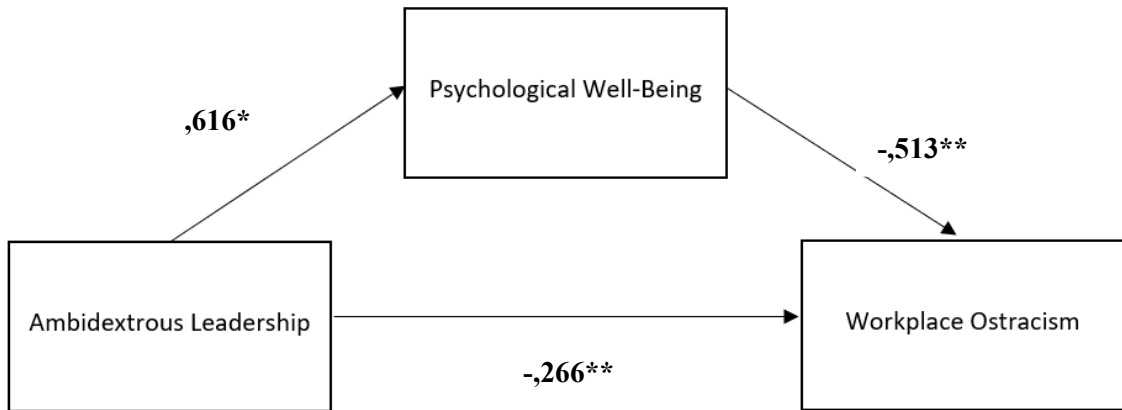
The total effect analysis indicated that AL had a significant adverse impact on WO ($\beta = -0.582$, $SE = 0.047$, $t = -12.33$, $p < .001$). The 95% confidence interval ($LLCI = -0.675$, $ULCI = -0.489$) did not include

zero, further confirming the robustness of this relationship. These results indicate that increased AL is linked to decreased levels of WO, when both direct and indirect effects are considered together. See table 5.

Table 5 Total impact of ambidextrous leadership (AL) and workplace ostracism (WO)

<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
-,582	,047	-12,33	,000	-,675	-,489

Figure 2 Results of the research



Critical Discussion of Findings

The results of this study offer robust evidence that ambidextrous leadership plays a key role in reducing workplace ostracism by shaping both the social and psychological dynamics of the work environment. Leaders who successfully balance exploration and exploitation behaviors appear to create organizational contexts in which employees feel valued, included, and supported. This balance enables leaders to respond flexibly to changing demands while maintaining stability and clarity in roles and expectations, which in turn reduces employees’ perceptions of exclusion.

The adverse association between ambidextrous leadership and workplace ostracism can be elucidated through the leaders’ ability to manage job-related demands. Exploratory behaviors such as openness to new ideas, innovation, and flexibility signal respect for employee input and individuality, whereas exploitative behaviors such as consistency, goal clarity, and performance monitoring provide structure and predictability. Together, these behaviors reduce ambiguity and social uncertainty, which are often associated with feelings of exclusion. Employees working under ambidextrous leaders may therefore perceive their work environment as both psychologically safe and socially inclusive, lowering the likelihood of ostracism.

Moreover, the findings demonstrate that psychological well-being partially mediates the relationship between ambidextrous leadership and workplace ostracism. This result highlights the significance of employees’ internal psychological resources in understanding how leadership behaviors translate into social outcomes. Employees with higher levels of psychological well-being are more resilient, adaptive, and capable of coping with interpersonal stressors, which reduces their sensitivity to exclusionary cues. Psychological well-being thus functions as a protective mechanism that buffers employees against the negative social dynamics that may emerge in organizational settings.

The mediating role of psychological well-being also underscores its multidimensional nature. Components such as autonomy, personal growth, purpose in life, and self-acceptance contribute to employees’ ability to interpret workplace interactions more constructively and maintain a stable sense of self-worth.

Ambidextrous leaders may enhance these dimensions by empowering employees, encouraging learning, and providing both support and accountability. As a result, employees are better equipped to manage workplace challenges and less likely to perceive themselves as marginalized or ignored.

In addition to leadership behaviors, organizational culture can play a crucial role in determining workplace ostracism. In organizational cultures shaped by openness, trust and inclusion, AL can more effectively influence psychological well-being thereby reducing workplace ostracism. In contrast, silence-oriented and rigid hierarchical cultures may normalize exclusionary behaviors, that make WO less visible and more problematic to address. Alternatively, organizations where power distance is comparatively high, AL should actively balance authority and openness to encourage inclusion. In cultures with a strong power distance orientation, employees may be more sensitive to exclusionary behaviors and cannot tend to include in organizational voice. Therefore, organizational culture should be considered as contextual factor that shapes the perception of leadership behaviors (Zainab, Ahmad, Sheeraz, 2022).

Furthermore, this research offers various practical initiatives for organizations to reduce WO. For example, organizations should invest in leadership development programs to constitute AL attitudes. By these programs, leaders can be capable of combining exploration-oriented and exploitation-oriented practices such as encouraging open-dialogue and performance feedback. Learning two-dimensional leadership prioritizes flexibility and stability in the workplace that creates more inclusive environments. Second, corporations should generate mentoring and structured feedback mechanisms that are explicitly aligned with AL practices. To foster learning and autonomy, regular performance reviews with AL and conflict resolution practices supported by AL should be encouraged.

Drawing on existing literature, enhancing psychological safety and resilience among employees can be implemented through set of structured organizational practices. As psychological safety prioritizes leadership behaviors that encourage voice, correction of mistakes and reduce work-related risks, AL can be uniquely positioned to support this safety by combining openness with new ideas and inclusiveness of employees to decision-making processes. These exploration-oriented behaviors can support psychological safety of employees. Moreover, exploitation-oriented behaviors such as consistent feedback, role-clarity or fairness in decision-making can enable employees to express their concerns without fear of social exclusion. Thus, the balance of AL behaviors can trigger simultaneous feeling of stability and predictability that shapes psychological safety. In result, employee inclusivity can be enhanced where workplace ostracism can be diminished.

Nonetheless, resilience develops through experience of manageable challenges reinforced by emotional and cognitive resources (Rasheed, Saleem & Mahmood, 2016). From AL perspective, resilience can be fostered by encouraging flexibility and creativity as exploration behaviors provide. Whereas exploitation behaviors reinforce resilience with supportive feedback, clear work-roles and structural management practices. In other words, the balance of AL attitudes can enhance employees' psychological state, enabling employees to acknowledge workplace challenges more constructively. Consequently, organizations should insert AL practices to organizational processes which strengthen psychological safety and resilience that create inclusive work environments and mitigate ostracism feelings.

These findings extend existing literature by empirically validating the function of psychological well-being as an explanatory pathway in the leadership–ostracism relationship. While prior studies have conceptually suggested that leadership influences employee well-being and social experiences, empirical evidence integrating ambidextrous leadership, psychological well-being, and workplace ostracism has remained limited. By demonstrating this mediating pathway, the present research enhances our nuanced comprehension of the manner in which leadership behaviors affect not only performance-related outcomes but also employees' psychological and social functioning.

Overall, the discussion of findings suggests that reducing workplace ostracism requires more than formal policies or procedural interventions. Leadership behaviors that simultaneously support adaptability and

stability play a central role in shaping employees' psychological states and social perceptions. By enhancing psychological well-being, ambidextrous leaders indirectly mitigate exclusionary experiences and contribute to healthier, more inclusive organizational climates.

Conclusion

This study concludes that ambidextrous leadership is a critical factor in reducing workplace ostracism, both directly and indirectly through psychological well-being. By balancing exploration and exploitation behaviors, ambidextrous leaders foster inclusive and adaptive work environments that support employees' psychological resources. In sum, the findings draw attention to the cruciality of leadership approaches that simultaneously promote flexibility, stability, and employee well-being in contemporary organizations.

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