

**Customer Mistreatment and Insomnia in Employees – a Study in
Context of COVID-19**

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COVID-19 has changed the way customers and service employees interact, resulting in increased service pressure and mistreatment from customers. It has resulted in increased negative behaviors both at work and beyond, but there is a dearth of literature investing the various issue. Against this backdrop, this study entails investigating the impact of customer mistreatment on employees' insomnia by considering the mediating role of employees' rumination and moderating effects of leadership. This study is based on a lag methodological approach, where two times survey has been carried out to elicit the responses of service employees at restaurants. Questionnaires of the study were distributed to 640 employees of service organizations, but only 281 useful responses were received at the second phase of data collection and ultimately used for analysis. The study's findings reveal that mistreatment from customers increases sleep disorder (insomnia) both directly and indirectly

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through feelings of rumination. On the other hand, leadership is found to dampen the influence of mistreatment on employees' rumination. The study offers a novel explanation of the relationship between customers' mistreatment and employees' insomnia through mediating role of rumination and moderating role of authentic leadership in the nerve-wracking service delivery situations caused due to COVID-19.

Keywords: COVID-19; customer mistreatment; insomnia; restaurants; rumination; authentic leadership.

COVID-19 has influenced the economic activities across the globe, where the food sector is one of the most affected industries, where the structure of “what and where has been eaten” has changed its dynamics (Hubbub, 2020; Wall, 2020). The ‘eating-out’ trend is a decline, but the food and beverage demand has increased by 19% (AHDB, 2020; McKeivitt, 2020). The increased demand and decreased customers' visits have set a ‘new normal’ for the food supply chain, which demands policymakers' considerations to meet the customer demands, preferences, and market dynamics (Armstrong & Reynolds, 2020). One of the recent shifts is an increase in takeaways and food deliveries (Forbes, 2020), as a rise of 11% is observed in takeaways during lockdowns (Bradshaw, 2020). As the food services have observed a shift (Armstrong & Reynolds, 2020; Bradshaw, 2020; Forbes, 2020), there is a need to address the contemporary issue. One of the unaddressed and unattended issues is the change in the ways customers influence service employees (Izquierdo-Yusta, Gómez-Cantó, Martínez-Ruiz, & Pérez-Villarreal, 2020). It is also observed that delivery and takeaways demand devoted and efficient service providers, but due to increased customer interaction the possibility of mistreatment increases because of low-quality interpersonal relationships (Koopmann et al., 2015), which ultimately influences employees negatively (Boukis et al., 2020; Brotheridge and Grandey, 2002; LeBlanc and Kelloway, 2002). The issue of mistreatment is a global phenomenon; for instance, 87% of the Australian frontline employees reported that they are mistreated by the customers (ABC News, 2018). On the other hand, Porath and Pearson (2012) commented that 98% of employees face uncivil behaviors at

work. These mistreatments are attributed to management, employees, and customers (Gallup survey, 2018). The pertinent issue has attracted practitioners and researchers (Boukis et al., 2020), especially to the food industry.

CM is responded by employees in many ways, e.g., through increased absenteeism & turnover (Grandey et al., 2004; Han et al., 2016), reduced performance (Cho et al., 2016), burnout (Dorman and Zapf, 2004), and well-being (Koopmann et al., 2015). Yet another aspect that has not gained due attention is employees' emotional outcomes (Harris and Reynolds, 2003; Hu et al., 2017). The severity of customer misconduct in the hospitality and food industry has attracted researchers who have primarily focused on the antecedents and consequences of customer mistreatment (e.g., Cortina et al., 2017; Gong et al., 2014), while the studies investigating the explanatory mechanism between mistreatment and its outcomes are scarce (Baranik et al., 2017; Boukis et al., 2020). Another aspect that is mostly under investigation is the employees' family-level outcomes (Zhang, Wu, & Ferreira-Meyers, 2019).

Against the mentioned backdrop, this study attempts to offer a novel explanation by considering the link between customer mistreatment and Insomnia (a sleep disorder) of employees by considering the mediating role of employees' rumination. According to Hu, Zhan, Garden, Wang, and Shi (2018), the employees feel emotionally drained due to the customers' mistreatment, but the mechanism between both mistreatment and employees' emotional response needs further attention. Such employee-level outcomes are valued as their behavioral responses, and beyond work, outcomes are dependent upon their emotional states (Lavelle, Rupp, Herda, Pandey, & Lauck, 2019). While the mechanism between customer mistreatment and employees' family-level outcomes is deemed important for investigation (Zhang, Zhou, Zhan, Liu, & Zhang, 2018; Zhang et al., 2019).

Based on the mentioned need for an investigation, this study entails investigating the effects of customers' mistreatment on service employees' insomnia through the mediation of rumination. Rumination is defined as the conscious thoughts that arose due to excessive

environmental demands (Martin & Tesser, 1996). When employees face customer mistreatment, they tend to have negative thoughts and emotions (Sliter, Sliter, and Jex, 2012). But how the feelings are determined and further lead to beyond work outcomes is an area that has not gained due attention in the past (Lavelle et al., 2019), especially the emotional and psychological consequences of workplace mistreatments (Anjum, Liang, Durrani, & Parvez, 2020). Thus we propose that service employees have negative thoughts when the customers mistreat them, and in response, they tend to have psychological issues like insomnia.

Another important consideration for researchers is finding out the factors that may reduce the impact of customer mistreatment on employees' responses, especially the organizational interventions (Lavelle et al., 2019). Recent studies have valued the role of organizational factors; for instance, Zhang et al. (2018) found that leader-member exchange quality reduces the adverse effects of workplace emotional reactions. Similarly, HRM practices reduce the harmful effects of customer mistreatment in the shape of employees' emotional responses (Hu et al., 2018). Yet another consideration is the supervisor's role, as Myrden and Kelloway (2015) commented that supervisors could provide cognitive and emotional responses at the time of adversities. But how various supervisory styles have an influence is an area that has empirically not gained due attention from researchers (Cortina et al., 2017; Zhu et al., 2019), especially the authentic leadership style (Wang & Xie, 2020). Authentic leadership is considered more promising in the hospitality industry (Ling, Liu & Wu, 2017), when compared with other industries as employees of this sector face issues of workload, tedious jobs, and stress (Qiu, Alizadeh, Dooley & Zhang, 2019).

Thus this research endeavor investigates the impact of customer mistreatment on employees' sleep disorders through the mediation of rumination. Moreover, it also examines the moderating role of authentic leadership in the relationship between customer mistreatment and employees' rumination (see figure-1). We assume these relationships based on appraisal theories of emotions (Arnold 1960; Ellsworth 2013; Lazarus 1991; Roseman 2013; Scherer 2009) and conservation of resources theory conservation (COR; Hobfoll, 1989). The following

sections cover the theoretical underpinning and how it helps in generating hypotheses.

Theoretical Premise of the Study

We drew the study model on the Appraisal Theories of Motivation (ATM; Arnold, 1960; Ellsworth, 2013; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2013; Scherer, 2009) and Conservation of Resources Theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989). Appraisal theorists believe that emotions are the outcome of different appraisals of events, situations, or persons (Hu et al., 2018). When individuals feel that something hampers the attainment of their goals, and there is an absence of coping options to manage the demands, a feeling of stress arises. Based on the given theoretical premise, we assume that customers' mistreatment is a negative event that influences employees' emotions negatively. Furthermore, authentic leadership appears to be a coping resource that may reduce the impact of customers' mistreatment, and thus negative emotions may dampen.

Similarly, COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002), assumes that humans tend to protect, preserve, and gain resources which may cover material, social and personal resources. It further suggests that loss of resources creates a situation of stress, and to avoid stressful situations, humans try to safeguard their resources (Byrne et al., 2014; Hobfoll, 1989, 2002). Based on this theoretical premise, we propose that customer mistreatment would be considered a loss of social resources, and employees will feel negative thoughts (rumination) and psychological outcomes (a sleep disorder). The leader is yet another resource that may reduce the influence of loss of social support (i.e., customer mistreatment) and dampen the effects of rumination and emotional exhaustion of employees. Hypotheses for the study are built in the following sections.

Literature Review

Customer mistreatment (afterward, CM) is a poor treatment given by customers to service providers (Dorman & Zapf, 2004), and is identified when customers use supercilious language, yell, and raises voice on employees (Grandey et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2011). The influences of CM are widespread, covering cognitive and emotional (Feinstein et al., 2013; Hu et al., 2018) to attitudinal and behavioral

consequences (Cropley et al., 2012; Storbeck & Robinson, 2004). While linking CM with rumination, it is expected that customers' excessive demands and aggressive behaviors determine perceptions violations of encounter norms (Baranik et al., 2017), while such violations influence employee at emotional levels (Anjum et al., 2020; Lavelle, Rupp, and Borckner, 2007). It further leads to reduced performance (Hu et al., 2018; Lavelle et al., 2019), well-being (Hu et al., 2018), and increase sabotage behavior (Skarlicki et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2018).

The most profound of all is the emotional and psychological outcomes of CM, as such responses pave the way for many other consequences. CM evokes negative emotions like frustration, anxiety, and anger (Zhan et al., 2016) and is, therefore, considered a social hassle (Sliter, Jex, Wolford, and McInnerney, 2010). On the other hand, service employees have to regulate their emotions in the process of social interaction (Grandey et al., 2004). Such workplace demands arise further CM is high, as employees have to modify their feelings more frequently. Furthermore, due to incompatibility in customer demands service employees often feel role conflict (Parkington & Schneider, 1979). The case is particularly present when the employees have to face aggressive behavior from customers. Such acts result in physical and physiological costs to service employees (Hu et al., 2018). It is further to share that CM leads to feelings of resource loss and depletion (Wright and Cropanzano, 1998), and the situation of consumption of resources often leads to emotional and psychological drain (Maslach et al., 2001). COR theory also highlights that the loss of resources leads to the creation of emotional exhaustion (Hobfoll, 1989). Furthermore, ATM helps us propose that CM is an adverse event that negatively influences employees' emotions (e.g., Ellsworth, 2013; Roseman, 2013; and Scherer, 2009), resulting in sleep disorder (a psychological syndrome).

Another outcome of CM is rumination, which is defined as conscious thoughts that arose due to excessive environmental demands (Martin and Tesser, 1996). While looking at the determinants of rumination, it has been observed that negative human interactions influence the level of thoughts (rumination). The verbal aggression and misconduct from the customers create a violation of encounter norms

(Baranik et al., 2017; Zhan et al., 2013) and ultimately generate service pressures. Such aggressive interactions and feelings of further pressure influence the emotional states (e.g., anxiety, anger) (Lavelle et al., 2007). Past studies have found that CM creates strong emotional reactions from employees (Diefendorff & Grosserand, 2003), and they appraise it as an adverse event/interaction (Wang et al., 2013).

Rumination is a multi-facet phenomenon covering negative, positive, neutral, past, or future orientation (Brinker & Dozois, 2009) and offers diverse outcomes, ranging from positive (Ciarocco, 2010) to adverse outcomes (Pravettoni et al., 2007). Segerstrom et al. (2003), on the other hand, refer it to purpose instead of its nature (positive or negative). Cropley and Zijlstra (2011) divided rumination into affective and problem settling ruminations based on the objective. The emotional state is not favorable for the recovery process and deals with the psychophysiological arousal, while the problem-solving rumination may not have such determinants and is thus less damaging. Problem-solving rumination offers positive outcomes like increased self-efficacy, positive affectivity, and well-being, and such rumination is expected to improve workplace outcomes. Considering the nature of predictors, this study focuses on negative rumination, which is regarded as valuable in service delivery literature because it can affect service providers' behavioral responses (Hamesch, Cropley, & Lang, 2014; Querstret & Cropley, 2012). The basic premise of the appraisal theories lies in the fact that emotions are the outcome of different appraisals of events, situations, or persons (Hu et al., 2018). When an individual feels that some hindrances hamper the attainment of some goals, and there is an absence of coping options to manage the demands, thus feel stressed. Based on the theoretical premise, we assumed that customers' mistreatment is an adverse event that negatively influences employees' emotions.

As CM increases rumination (e.g., Baranik et al., 2017; Zhan, et al., 2013), which further leads to psychological outcomes (i.e., insomnia) (Hamesch et al., 2014; Querstret & Cropley, 2012), it is anticipated that CM would have both direct and indirect influence (through the mediation of rumination) on insomnia. Past studies have also observed the antecedents and outcomes of rumination. For example, it has been found

that rumination bridges negative workplace experiences and adverse psychological issues (e.g., depression) (Feinstein et al. 2013). It has also been reported that one's obsession caused by factors like uncivil behaviors makes employees think of such behaviors (rumination), which further influences adverse outcomes (Carpentier et al., 2012). It is therefore assumed that rumination may lead to psychological outcomes that cause sleep disorder (insomnia), thus both direct and indirect relationships are assumed.

According to AMT (Arnold, 1960; Ellsworth, 2013; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2013; Scherer, 2009), the psychological and emotional responses are the outcome of different appraisals of events, situation, or persons (Hu et al., 2018), and presence of negative feelings about those events, conditions or persons create hindrances in the attainment of some goals. In such situations, one looks for coping options to overcome appraisal deficiencies and thus feel stress. Based on the theoretical premise, we assume that customers' mistreatment is an adverse event that negatively influences employees' emotions and psychological outcomes. As the CM is employees' believe that they cannot decipher the personal resources to cope with it, they tend to demand some external resources as coping stress (Boukis et al., 2020). While we propose the role of an authentic leader as a coping force, as such leaders are believed and trusted by the followers (Qiu et al., 2019), and through the service for the followers' such leaders may hinder the effects of adverse workplace events (Sousa and van Dierendonck, 2017). Past studies have also found that authentic leaders positively influence employees' outcomes. For instance, such leaders influence the emotional level outcomes of employees by performing their roles of trust and authenticity (Wang & Xie, 2020), thus could be considered as an external resource and can reduce the emotional consequences of CM. Therefore, it is to expect that leadership would dwindle the harmful effects of CM on rumination, which is hypothesized below:

Hypotheses

H1: CM positively influences employees' sleep disorder (insomnia).

H2: CM positively influences employees' feelings of rumination.

H3: Employees' rumination mediates the relationship between CM and employees' sleep disorders (insomnia).

H4: Authentic leadership weakens the positive relationship between CM and employees' rumination.

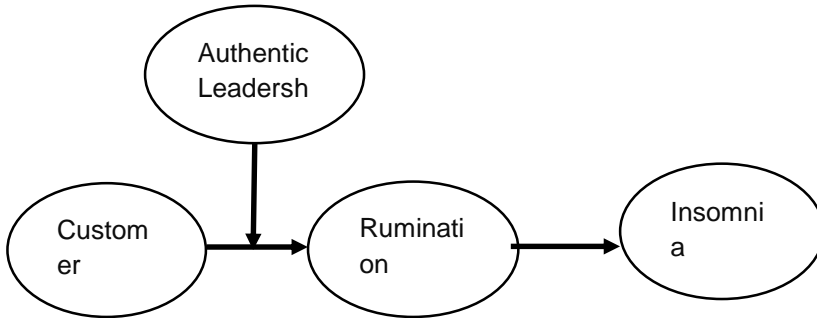


Figure-1: *Conceptual Model*

Research methods

The data for the current study were collected from service industries (restaurants and retailers) between March–June 2020 from major cities of Pakistan. The service providers in large cities have to face more customers' threats, as they have to offer services to huge customers (Ahmed et al., 2020). The study was considered a timely contribution as the government converted strict lockdown into smart lockdown, and thus the services business has regained its position. But due to threats of coronavirus and SOPs, the provision of service was not timely, and therefore customer mistreatment increased. McKinsey and company (2020) also highlighted that customer's adverse treatment was mounted due to COVID-19, affecting the overall service delivery process. Employees were inquired at the end of the day and week to acquire adequate responses. The current study data were collected in two phases, where at stage one, 513 respondents filled the questionnaire. At step two (after one month), only 281 respondents were approachable and filled the questionnaire. Most of the respondents were males (83%), married (53%), had the experience of fewer than two years (63%), and had an average age of 30.75 years.

Table-1

Demographical information

Demographical factor		Frequency
Gender	Male	83%
	Female	17%
Marital status	Married	53%
	Unmarried	47%
Age	<20	89
	21-30	136
	31-40	45
	>40	11
Experience	<1 year	122
	1-3 years	56
	4-5 years	53
	>5 years	50

We utilized well-established and widely used measures to operationalize the variables. Customer mistreatment was measured through the 18 items scale of Wang et al. (2011), which covered exemplary items like, “In last week, customers yelled at me.” Rumination was operationalized using McCullough et al. (2007) eight items scale, which covered items like: “I could not stop thinking about the bad experience with the customers.” Authentic leadership was operationalized using the 16 items scale of Walumbwa et al., (2008), which covered items like: “My immediate supervisor lets others know who he/she truly is as a person”. The scale for measuring sleep disorder (Insomnia) was operationalized using the four items scale of Scott and Judge (2006). It covered items like: “I had trouble falling asleep.” The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression.

Statistical analysis and findings

The statistical analysis was carried out in two stages, where the preliminary analysis was carried out at the first stage, and hypotheses testing was done in the follow-up. The preliminary analysis covered statistical procedures for missing values, outliers, common method biases, normality, reliability, descriptive, and correlation analysis. As only filled questionnaires were used for analysis, there was no missing value. The data were normally distributed, as the values of skewness and kurtosis were in the acceptable range ($<+1$ for skewness and $<+3$ kurtosis). We used Harman’s single factor test to test the presence of

common method variance, where the CMV was not present as the estimated value (41.23%) was below the standard value (<0.50) (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Statistical results for reliability, descriptive, and correlation analysis are presented in table-1, where all the statistical values highlight that all the measures are reliable ($0.791-0.902 > 0.70$). It is also evident that the CM is positively correlated with both rumination ($r = 0.33^*$) and insomnia ($r = 0.28^*$). Similarly, rumination and insomnia are also positively correlated ($r = 0.41^*$), while authentic leadership is negatively correlated with the outcome variables (rumination, $r = -0.25^{**}$; insomnia, $r = -0.09^*$). The preliminary relationship findings help us move further with the analysis.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to test the adequacy of measures, as its widely used and accepted technique (Hair et al., 2010). The measurement model is fit ($\chi^2/df=2.39$, CFI=0.91, SRMR=0.050, RMSEA=0.0274), and all the items loaded acceptably ($0.56-0.94 > 0.50$) (Hair et al., 2010). The value of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) exceeds the threshold of 0.50 (i.e., $0.64-0.82$); thus, the convergent validity is met (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Iglesias et al., 2019).

Table-2: *Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

Variables	Mean (SD)	Loading	CR	AVE	CM	SL	Rum	Insom
Customer	4.23	0.59 –	0.81	0.64	0.902			
Mistreatment (CM)	(0.552)	0.88						
Authentic Leadership (AL)	4.17 (0.631)	0.71 – 0.79	0.89	0.82	-0.08	0.883		
Rumination (R _{um})	3.98 (0.848)	0.56 – 0.94	0.80	0.76	0.33* 0.25**			0.890
Insomnia (Insom)	4.43 (0.501)	0.62 – 0.75	0.88	0.79	0.28* -0.09*		0.41*	0.791

Model Fitness Indices: $\chi^2/df=2.39$, CFI=0.91, SRMR=0.050, RMSEA=0.0274

* $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$; Reliability values in diagonal line

The discriminant validity is assessed through bivariate correlation and square root values of AVE. The values are given in table-2 highlight that AVE's square root exceeds the correlation coefficient; thus, the measures are discriminately (Hair et al. 2010).

Table-3: *Discriminant Validity*

	CSR	SQ	AC	CCB
Customer mistreatment	0.79^a			
Authentic leadership	0.58 ^b	0.88		
Rumination	0.49	0.68	0.89	
Insomnia	0.59	0.71	0.65	0.93

^an AVE square root in diagonal; ^b Bivariate correlation among constructs

Hypotheses Testing

Results of regression analysis are given in table-3. The findings signify that customer mistreatment causes employees' sleep disorder/insomnia ($\beta = .24, p < .001$), and rumination ($\beta = .29, p < .001$). Rumination further leads to insomnia ($\beta = .31, p < .01$). It also highlights that the effects of CM are reduced when the effects of rumination are controlled ($\beta = .18, p < .001$), thus it is evident that the explanatory role of rumination exists. The mediation relation is further proved when tested through Sobel test ($z=3.01, p = .001$) and Bootstrap tests (CI= 0.034 – 0.173, with no zero) for indirect effects, thus direct (H1-H2) and mediation hypotheses (H3) are proved.

Table-4: *Regression Results*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>		
CM – Insom	0.24	0.11	2.20	0.000		
CM – R _{um}	0.29	0.10	2.91	0.000		
R _{um} – Insom (controlling of CM)	0.31	0.14	2.23	0.009		
CM – Insom (controlling R _{um})	0.18	0.08	2.25	0.000		
	M	SE	L95%CI	U95%CI		
Bootstrap results for indirect effects	0.21	0.04	0.034	0.173		
	Value	SE	L95%CI	U95%CI	Z	P
Sobel results for Indirect Effects	0.31	0.06	0.026	0.309	3.01	0.001

U=upper limit, L=lower limit, CI=confidence interval, Bootstrap sample size 5,000

CM= Customers' mistreatment, R_{um}=Rumination, Insom=Insomnia

The results for moderation analysis are reported in table-5 and figure-2. The statistical results highlight that customer mistreatment ($\beta = .29, p < .001$) and authentic leadership ($\beta = -.21, p < .001$) significantly influence rumination. The interaction effects (Customer mistreatment \times

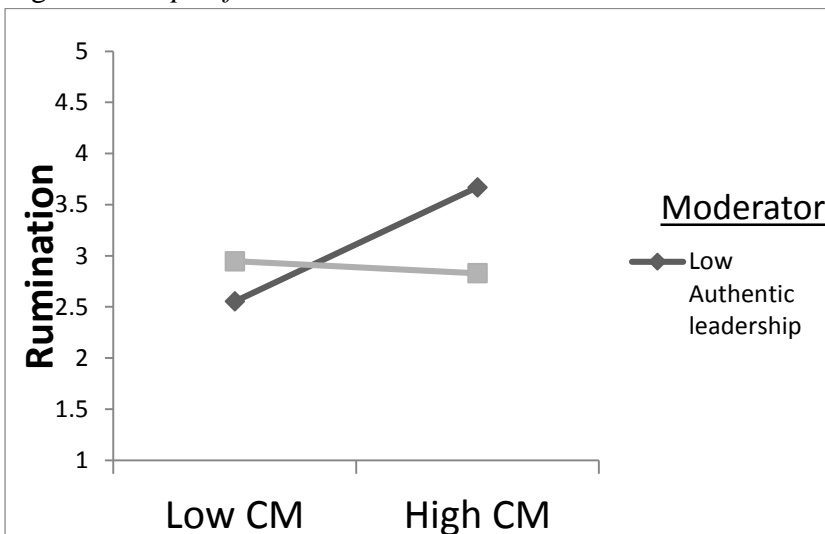
authentic Leadership) are also significant ($\beta = -.41, p < .05$). The moderation slope (figure-2) further highlights that in the presence of higher authentic leadership, the rumination is reduced; thus, the moderation hypothesis is also supported (H4).

Table-5: Results for Moderation

Variables	Rumination
Gender	0.009*
Age	0.086
Profession	0.004**
Customer mistreatment	0.250*
Authentic Leadership	-0.112*
Customer mistreatment \times Authentic Leadership	-0.308**

* $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$

Figure-2: Slope of Moderation



Discussion

This study aims to find the impact of mistreatment from customers on employees' cognitive and psychological outcomes. The outbreak of COVID-19, lockdowns, and increasing taking away and online orders have increased the service pressure. Moreover, due to reduced sales, downsizing has increased the burden on the survivors.

Thus employee to customer ratio has increased, resulting in increased service burden, increased delivery time, and compromised service quality. This has led customers to mistreat the service providers. But how the increased mistreat, which is attributed to COVID-19, impacts employees, is an area that has not been addressed in the literature. Against this backdrop, this study entails investigating employee rumination and insomnia as an outcome of customer mistreatment. It also considers the moderating role of authentic leadership in the mechanism. The results reveal that due to increased customer mistreatment, employees ruminate, which ultimately influences their sleep, while rumination partially mediates the mechanism. The findings highlight a contemporary phenomenon faced by restaurant employees. But this study also provides a solution to the problem by empirically testing and proving the role of leaders in mitigating the effects of customer mistreatment.

Past studies have also investigated the negative impacts of customer mistreatment. They have considered it from multiple perspectives, e.g., as an interactional justice (Rupp et al., 2007), conservation of resource perspective (Boukis et al., 2020), job demand perspective (Boukis et al., 2020; Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Grandey et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2011), and goal-failure perspective (Boukis et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2013). The current study adds value by integrating the Appraisal Theories of Motivation (ATM; Arnold, 1960; Ellsworth, 2013; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2013; Scherer, 2009), which proposes that mistreatment could be considered as a negative appraisal of the event (due to pandemic and service pressure), which influences employee emotions (i.e., rumination and insomnia). The study's findings reveal that when employees feel that the customers mistreat them, they tend to ruminate (at and off job hours – the cognitive outcome), which further influences their psychological state, like sleep quality. This phenomenon is evident in the pandemic (Armstrong & Reynolds, 2020; Bradshaw, 2020; Forbes, 2020), as the customer-employee relationships have been compromised (McKinsey & Company, 2020). The findings are consistent with past studies, which denote the adverse employee outcomes of customer mistreatment. Such mistreatments make sense of adverse incidents and make one think more for that, i.e., ruminate (Mor and

Winguist, 2002). There is extant literature on the behavioral outcomes of such workplace mistreatments (e.g., Baranik et al., 2017; Boukis et al., 2020), but the psychological and emotional outcomes (e.g., sleep disorder) has mostly been ignored, which is the mainstay of the current study and is empirically evident.

Nonetheless, merely discussing the problems is not the contribution, but this study offers a solution to the problem. The study considers the role of authentic leadership in reprimanding the effects of customer mistreatment. Authentic leadership is considered more promising in the hospitality industry (Ling, Liu & Wu, 2017), when compared with other industries as employees of this sector face issues of workload, tedious jobs, and stress (Qiu, Alizadeh, Dooley & Zhang, 2019). The study outcomes divulge that authentic leadership can mitigate the effects of customer mistreatment by reducing employees' rumination and insomnia. The value of a supervisory role has also been valued in the past; for instance, Liaw et al. (2010) highlight that supervisors may buffer or dampen the employee outcomes. Hu and Liden (2011) have highlighted that when a leader intends to serve followers, the outcomes are expected to be positive. Sousa and van Dierendonck (2017) also signifies that authentic leaders bring positive work outcomes.

The findings are also in-line with the theoretical premise of ATM (Arnold, 1960; Ellsworth, 2013; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2013; Scherer, 2009) and COR (Hobfoll, 1989). The basic premise of the appraisal theories lies in the fact that emotions are the outcome of different appraisals of events, situations, or persons (Hu et al., 2018). When an individual feels that some hindrances hamper the attainment of some goals, and there is an absence of coping options to manage the demands, they feel stress. Based on the theoretical premise, we assumed that customers' mistreatment is a negative event that influences employees' emotions negatively. Furthermore, authentic leadership appears to be a coping resource that may reduce the impact of customers' mistreatment, and thus negative emotions may dampen. Similarly, based on COR (Hobfoll, 1989), we propose that customer mistreatment would be considered as a loss of social resources, and employees will feel negative thoughts (rumination) and psychological outcomes (a sleep disorder). The

leader is yet another resource that may reduce the influence of loss of social resources (i.e., customer mistreatment) and dampen the effects of rumination and emotional exhaustion of employees.

Theoretical & Managerial Implications

The pandemic has set a “new normal” for the food supply business (Armstrong and Reynolds, 2020), affecting the “service with a smile” perspective as the takeaways and food delivery services have replaced the conventional restaurant business (Bradshaw, 2020; Forbes, 2020). The new normal has changed the way customers and employees interact and have increased service delivery pressure on employees (Izquierdo-Yusta et al., 2020). The study offers a new perspective by considering customer mistreatment's cognitive and psychological outcomes (i.e., rumination and sleep disorder). The perspective has mostly been ignored in the literature. But merely discussing the problem is not the mainstay of the current study; instead, it offers a remedy, i.e., authentic leadership. The findings highlight that when the leader serves followers, the adverse effects of customer mistreatment are dampened. The role of authentic leadership has also been largely ignored in the past, and empirical evidence is scarce. The study uses Appraisal motivation theory (Arnold, 1960; Ellsworth, 2013; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2013; Scherer, 2009) and conservation of resource perspectives (Hobfoll, 1989) to explain the mechanism between customer mistreatment and insomnia. Past studies have also investigated the negative impacts of customer mistreatment. They have considered it from multiple perspectives, e.g., as an interactional justice (Rupp et al., 2007), conservation of resource perspective (Boukis et al., 2020), job demand perspective (Boukis et al., 2020; Dormann & Zapf, 2004; Grandey et al., 2004; Wang et al., 2011), and goal-failure perspective (Boukis et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2013), but the appraisal motivation theories have not been used to explain the given mechanism. Thus, this study highlights a contemporary issue caused by pandemic (COVID-19) and offers a timely solution.

The results of the study are equally useful for the management of restaurants. For instance, the study highlights that customer mistreatment is an emergent issue faced by the restaurant employees, which needs to be addressed by the management. The study also highlights that it's not

only a workplace issue; instead, it influences employees' personal lives by making them ruminate for long and losing sleep quality. Thus the management of organizations should tackle the issue of customer mistreatment by various managerial level interventions. One of the proposed interventions is to develop a high level of trust with the followers, as when a leader is authentic, the employees do not consider the customer mistreatment a negative factor. Thus managers may adopt the role of an authentic leader to mitigate the adverse customer treatments.

Limitations and future directions

Though this study is a timely contribution by highlighting the problem (i.e., increased customer mistreatment) during COVID-19 and offering a remedy (the authentic leadership), the study is still prone to some limitations. The foremost is the sample taken from the restaurants, while other service firms (e.g., retailers, engineering services) could also be considered for investigation. Though the data collection was challenging in the pandemic, longitudinal studies could be carried out to see the long-term effects of customer mistreatment. Culture could be another consideration for future studies, as culture determines one's response (e.g., complaining behavior) (Shao and Skarlicki, 2014). The response could also be attributed to personality (Chi et al., 2018, 2013), gender (Johnson and Whisman, 2013). This study offers an authentic leader role as a coping mechanism, while other organizational-level interventions (e.g., ethical climate, reward system, organizational support) and group-level factors (e.g., team cohesion, involvement) could also be considered. Organizational, team, and individual level determinants are of high significance, as Barber et al. (2005) highlighted that rumination is an outcome of some event that may be linked with any of such determinants. Social sharing and employees' word of mouth could also be considered the mediation mechanism between customer mistreatment and employees' cognitive and emotional outcomes (Baranik et al., 2017).

Conclusion

This study is a timely contribution to the existing body of knowledge on COVID-19 and its effects on work and family lives. The

study provides evidence from the service industry where customer mistreatment has increased, but how it influences employees' work and family domains have attracted researchers. The findings highlight that the mistreatment does not only influence the work outcomes but also stretches to the personal and family domains (i.e. cause of rumination and insomnia). This study also contributes by providing a workplace mechanism to overcome such issues (i.e. authentic leadership). Thus organizations may intervene by the provision of leadership roles and can mitigate the negative influence of customer mistreatment.

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