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Workplace Spirituality and Work Engagement of Street-Level Bureaucrats: Chain Mediation Role Between Public Service Motivation and Organizational Identification

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Abstract: - Purpose – This study draw on the social exchange theory to explore the mediating role of public service motivation (PSM) and organizational identification between workplace spirituality and work engagement of street-level bureaucrats. Design/methodology/approach – This study takes 1150 street-level bureaucrats in China as the research object, aims to explore the influence mechanism and internal path of workplace spirituality on the work engagement by constructing a chain mediation model. Findings – The workplace spirituality of street-level bureaucrats has a significant positive impact on work engagement. PSM plays an independent mediating role between workplace spirituality and work engagement. Organizational identification plays an independent mediating role between workplace spirituality and work engagement. Public service motivation and organizational identification play a chain mediation role between workplace spirituality and work engagement. Originality/value – In addition to revealing the relationship between workplace spirituality and work engagement in street-level bureaucrats, these results connect the internal mechanism of the chain mediation model in series from the perspective of reciprocity and obtain a strategy about the psychological path to manage street-level bureaucrats, which enlightens public sector managers to motivate their bureaucrats spiritually.

Keywords: Workplace Spirituality, Work Engagement, Public Service Motivation, Organizational Identification, Street-Level Bureaucrats, Social Exchange Theory

1   Introduction

The way to effectively improve the organization performance is the focus of managers' exploration. Thus, researchers start from the psychological aspect of employees and describe their self-evaluation and self-recognition of their work with the concept of work engagement. Work engagement refers to the internal concentration of individual job performance and psychological job recognition. In other words, organizational members combine themselves with job responsibilities through control measures to express themselves by physically completing tasks (Kahn, 1990). Abundant related studies have paid attention to employees' work attitudes and specific behaviors, such as job performance improvement, intensification of organizational citizenship behavior, reduction of counter-productive work behavior, and mitigation of job burnout (Demerouti et al., 2001; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Chen et al., 2020). It is found that strong work engagement can bring many positive results to enterprises, so researchers focus on the work engagement of employees in the private sector.

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However, as for the public sector, especially the street-level bureaucrats, the targeted research on work engagement is still insufficient.

Street-level bureaucrats are front-line public servants who implement policies and directly provide public services or goods to citizens. As primary workers, they hold discretion and respond to the real demands of the broad masses of people at terminal procedures of policies (Lipsky, 1980). Thus, their job is mainly to serve the public, so their work engagement will also have a significant impact on public service performance. Primary bureaucrats with higher work engagement are more likely to devote themselves to fulfilling the mission of the organization and maintain a high work motivation while actively providing public services (Shim et al., 2020). However, street-level bureaucrats with low work engagement have more tendencies to procrastinate, which eventually restricts the efficiency of public services. At present, the overall level of work engagement for street-level bureaucrats is low, for which their governance abilities should be optimized and their power-responsibility imbalance tends to be caused due to the excessive implementation of discretion (Yuan et al., 2022). In addition, the responsibility control mechanism of street-level bureaucrats is dominated by internal control and external supervision, which generally follows the dual logic of "being responsible to the higher agencies" and "serving people", with behavioral standards, institutional constraints, performance appraisal, and other measures within the organization adopted (Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1979; Linder and Peters, 1987). Besides, mass supervision, legislative supervision, judicial supervision, etc. are implemented outside the organization to ensure that street-level bureaucrats fulfill their duties fairly (Gan, 2019). Nevertheless, rigid rules and regulations, softened supervision mechanisms, and high-pressure performance appraisal often trigger their increasing negative emotions and behaviors, which not only weaken their independence and capabilities in the work, but also restrict their work enthusiasm and behavior initiative (Han, 2008; Breit et al., 2016). Therefore, the control logic of "motivation-guidance" not only can activate their organizational autonomy (Keulemans and Groeneeveld, 2020; Li and Han, 2022) and enhance their work engagement, but also promote their subjective initiative and self-restraint, so as to modify the overall work style of street-level bureaucrats and even the public sector, correct the unhealthy atmosphere including the discretion abuse, public responsibility evasion, and sheer pursuit of performance (Hassan et al., 2021). Some researchers have proved that heavy procedures of bureaucracy often excessively restrict the interest of public service personnel, which leads street-level bureaucrats to experience more negative emotions with lower work engagement up against the serious loss of psychological resources (Buchanan, 1975). If managers blindly use superficial external motivations such as salary incentives, welfare rewards, superior supervision, and system norms to spur and restrain them, employees may find it difficult to form an active work attitude. In particular, the overloaded work pressure and exhausted work resources have the potential to evoke their resistance psychology against orders from leaders. In contrast, the internal needs of spirituality such as value pursuit, achievement motivation, team belonging, social support, and self-realization are easier to enhance employees' internal work resources, activate their active behaviors, and make them voluntarily devote their efforts and enthusiasm to the work (Bakker et al., 2014; Maslach and Leiter, 2016; Gabriel and Aguinis, 2021). Therefore, as perceptions of work meaning, group interconnection, and high-level needs, workplace spirituality can break through the limitation of material drive and promote the work initiative of street-level bureaucrats by activating their pursuit of individual self-transcendence (Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Ke et al., 2015).

As an individual need, workplace spirituality needs one or more motives as mediation roles to realize its transformation into positive behavior or attitude. From a personal perspective, public service motivation (PSM), as a personal motivation to serve the collective interests, comes from internal needs. Namely, the stimulation of workplace spirituality (Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999) can make street-level bureaucrats consciously devote themselves to jobs because of the fit values, thus improving their work engagement (Boyd et al., 2017). From the organizational perspective, workplace spirituality meets the needs of individuals belonging to internal groups and promotes the organizational identification of department members, so as to make street-level bureaucrats cognitively prefer organizations and better recognize their jobs, promoting work engagement (Steffens et al., 2014; Huang and Chen, 2020). Besides, there is a progressive relationship between PSM and organizational identification. Street-level bureaucrats with higher PSM will love and recognize organizations for their fit values, and gain organizational identification under a strong sense of group belonging (Kim, 2012). To sum up, this study first explores whether the workplace spirituality of street-level bureaucrats can promote work engagement, and then builds a chain mediation model based on the synergy between PSM and organizational identification from the aspects of personal motivation and primary bureaucrats' organizational emotion, so as to explore the deep influence mechanism of workplace spirituality on the work engagement of primary bureaucrats.

This study has the following contributions. First of all, based on the people-oriented value, this study investigates whether and how the workplace spirituality of street-level bureaucrats positively affects their work engagement. Meanwhile, a strategy for managing street-level bureaucrats is put forward through the psychological path, which easily hit the pain point of their insufficient driving force at present. Secondly, this study constructs the whole research framework according to the social exchange theory, exploring the internal relationship between workplace spirituality and work engagement from the perspective of reciprocity, which connects the logic of the chain mediation model. Thirdly, an empirical study on the working status of street-level bureaucrats is carried out in this study, which enriches the existing research and expands the occupational categories of street-level bureaucrats' work engagement and workplace spirituality. Finally, this study analyzes the chain mediation between PSM and organizational identification, further revealing how workplace spirituality improves street-level bureaucrats' work engagement. It is helpful to clarify the process of why workplace spirituality affects PSM.

2   Literature review and hypotheses

2.1   Social Exchange Theory

In related research, social exchange theory has been widely included in the discussion framework of employee motivation. Following the principle of reciprocity, this theory holds that there is a clear exchange relationship between individuals and organizations (March and Simon, 1958). Thus, when employees get the expected economic or non-economic rewards from the organization, they will have a sense of obligation to repay the organization by actively participating in work, completing tasks, maintaining good interpersonal relationships, and fulfilling the expectation of organizational role (Blau, 1986; Chernyak-Hai and Rabenu, 2018). At present, scholars have defined three social exchange situations, including leaders, employees, and organizations, which correspond to three social exchange states such as leadership identification, personal value, and organizational support. First, when leaders and their subordinates establish a high-quality exchange relationship, employees will

obtain material (such as salary rewards, task allocation, training opportunities, work information, etc.) and non-material resources (such as social support, ability recognition, psychological safety, resource guarantee, etc.) from leaders. As a result, they're willing to repay with a positive work attitude and behavior feedback (Breukelen et al., 2006; Walumbwa et al., 2011). Secondly, when the matching degree between employees' personal and organizational values is high, employees will gain a strong sense of work meaning and self-worth from their jobs, and then produce more positive work motivation with a better attitude (Liu et al., 2020). Thirdly, when employees perceive the positive evaluation of their contributions and sincere concern for their happiness from the organization, they will further strengthen their sense of organizational support and team belonging, thus generating a sense of obligation and rewarding the organization with positive work attitude and behavior feedback (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Simbula et al., 2023). To sum up, this principle of reciprocity enables employees to establish an exchange relationship among superiors, employees, and organizations, which not only urges individuals to assume the obligation to repay after their internal needs are met, but also motivates them to voluntarily behave positively with attitudes beneficial to their work, organizations, and even members.

2.2 Workplace Spirituality and Work Engagement of Street-Level Bureaucrats

Work engagement is a positive psychological state that helps to improve the performance of employees, which reflects the degree to which organizational members combine their self-roles with their roles in jobs so as to integrate themselves into the work psychologically and fully find self-expressions (Lawler and Hall, 1970; Kahn, 1990). Kahn (1990) divides work engagement into three dimensions, including physiological engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement, which respectively represent the level of physical engagement, the state of consciousness awakening, and the ability of emotional perception in the work. Maslach and Leiter (1997) believe that the matching degree between individual and job leads to work engagement and job burnout. The former is characterized by Energy, Involvement, and Efficacy, while the latter corresponds to Exhaustion, Cynicism, and Lack of Professional Efficacy. It can be seen that work engagement focuses on the individual self-expression in the work and psychological experience of his job, which not only reflects the individual physical behavior such as strictly abiding by regulations and working diligently, but also emphasizes their psychological identification of current work and the individual belief in the importance of work (Guo and Hou, 2022). In addition, the work engagement of street-level bureaucrats is related to their governance ability. If their work engagement is poor, it will easily lead to corruption such as the excessive implementation of discretion, anomie of administrative behavior, unreasonable moral decision-making, and an imbalance of powers and responsibilities, and they fail to perform their due responsibilities as public servants (Gofen et al., 2022). On the contrary, street-level bureaucrats with high work engagement are often committed to fulfilling the mission of the organization, care for public interests subconsciously, and give full play to their subjective initiative in public affairs, including safeguarding public interests, creating the public wealth, and responding to public demands (Shim et al., 2020). In a word, work engagement is a kind of psychological capital to effectively alleviate negative emotions such as job burnout, which can make street-level bureaucrats devote themselves to public service, thus reducing the internal resource loss caused by heavy procedures, and helping them maintain strong enthusiasm, abundant energy, and rich work motivation (Dudau et al., 2020).

Workplace spirituality integrates positive feelings such as work achievement, work interest, and work meaning

experienced by individuals in the workplace, which reflects employees' sense of belonging to the organization, sense of meaning derived from work, and sense of connection with colleagues (Duchon and Plowman, 2005). Ashmos and Duchon (2000) first defined workplace spirituality as an inner self-awareness, that is, the inner experience cultivated by individuals through completing meaningful work in organizations and participating in group interaction. Krahnke et al. (2003) further proposed that workplace spirituality is a unique organizational culture and value system, which endows employees with self-transcendence in the work, thus bringing them a sense of integration, identification, and belonging. Besides, according to Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003), workplace spirituality is a framework of organizational values, which are embodied in culture. Through the work, employees' transcendental experience is promoted so that they connect with others in a way that provides a sense of integrity and pleasure. Thus, workplace spirituality is a transcendental experience in the work, mainly composed of three dimensions as follows, that is, Meaningful Work, Community, and Alignment with Organizational Values. They correspond to individuals, teams, and organizations respectively (Milliman et al., 2003). In addition to creating the meaning and purpose of work, it cultivates the close connection between employees and organization members, which finally enriches the inner experience of employees under the interaction and combination of internal needs and work meaning (Maeques, 2006; Petchsawanga and Duchon, 2012).

Strong workplace spirituality provides street-level bureaucrats with a positive atmosphere of self-development and spiritual freedom, which makes them realize their intrinsic potential and self-worth at work, and then a strong spiritual motivation is generated at work (Karakas, 2010). From the individual aspect, workplace spirituality stimulates spiritual resources such as personal value, self-realization, and work meaning in public service. According to social exchange theory, street-level bureaucrats guided by the principle of reciprocity are more likely to repay organizations by immersing themselves in work and producing high innovation performance (Walumbwa et al., 2011; Sharma and Kumra, 2020). From the team aspect, workplace spirituality brings a strong sense of member connection and group belonging to street-level bureaucrats. In order to repay their material rewards, social support, freedom of speech, and interpersonal care, they are willing to integrate team goals into their personal ones and immerse themselves in work to achieve this goal (Krahnke et al., 2003; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003). From the organizational aspect, workplace spirituality makes street-level bureaucrats experience a high consistency between personal values and organizational values. At this moment, organizational mission once again strengthens their personal beliefs, gives them a strong sense of recognition and accomplishment, and further improves work engagement based on the principle of reciprocity (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2003; Palframan and Lancaster, 2019). It can be seen that workplace spirituality can stimulate the growth motivation of street-level bureaucrats while satisfying the insufficient motivation, which is a good rule of thumb to improve their working behavior, stimulate their work vitality, and then increase their work engagement. Some studies have found that workplace spirituality is associated with positive work outcomes. For example, higher job satisfaction, less workplace deviation, lower rate of employee turnover, and stronger professional identification(Breytenbach, 2016; Singh and Chopra, 2018; Astuti, 2020). To sum up, this study puts forward the following hypothesis:

H1: Workplace spirituality has a positive predictive effect on the work engagement of street-level bureaucrats.

2.3 Mediating effect of PSM

PSM is a behavioral reason and psychological need to serve the public interest, which is mainly driven by the inner desire to help others or improve their lives (Das, 2022). Originating from the thinking of alternatives to incentive salary, it emphasizes the need to concern with the inner spiritual needs of public sector employees and studies the practical measures and institutional arrangements to improve the performance of public officials from the perspective of public value. Therefore, PSM can be a spiritual incentive for public service providers such as street-level bureaucrats apart from material rewards (Perry et al., 2010). Perry and Wise (1990) first defined PSM as the individual tendency to act mainly or completely based on the motivation of public organizations, which includes rational motivation, normative motivation, and perceptual motivation. On this basis, many scholars have further improved its theoretical framework and put forward that PSM is an altruistic motivation guiding individuals to provide public services to the interests of organizations, the public, society, and even all mankind (Brewer and Selden, 1998; Rainey and Steinbauer, 1999). To sum up, as a belief and value that transcends personal and organizational interests, PSM can drive individuals to specifically behave to benefit society in appropriate situations, while the spiritual culture provided by organizations for their employees will further enhance their intrinsic motivation, so that individuals can meet their spiritual needs in public service behaviors and voluntarily carry out public services or other positive behaviors beneficial to the public (Vandenabeele, 2007; Hassan et al., 2021).

In the domain of public service, collective interest is the highest spiritual guidance and value pursuit of organization members. Therefore, when the workplace spirituality is strong, street-level bureaucrats, civil servants, and other public service personnel tend to agree with the ideals and beliefs of the public sector, for which they can meet their altruistic needs and realize their self-worth through the abundant sense of work meaning and personal accomplishment (Farmer et al., 2019). In order to maintain the happiness and satisfaction brought by this mutually beneficial relationship, street-level bureaucrats will gradually give back to the organization in a way close to such ideals and beliefs, establish a long-term social exchange relationship with the organization by enhancing their PSM (Ritz et al., 2014; Hassan et al., 2021). It can be seen that satisfying their spiritual needs can get the return of their high organizational service motivation. In other words, workplace spirituality can promote the PSM of street-level bureaucrats.

Street-level bureaucrats with a strong motivation for public service have the same values as their posts. On the one hand, this subjective experience, which is in line with organizational ideals, can bring them a strong sense of connection, identification, and belonging, so that they gain organizational identification, thus actively combining self-role with the role in work to return for superiors, organizations, and members. At the same time, the positive state of "vitality, dedication, and concentration" can be stimulated (Choi et al., 2015; Simbula et al., 2023). On the other hand, this strong spirituality of public service can increase their internal incentive resources, strengthen their good self-image, and meet their internal needs of self-realization. Based on the norm of reciprocity, street-level bureaucrats will present a proactive working attitude. They will ensure the stability and durability of exchange relations by constantly enhancing emotional engagement to work (Cooke et al., 2018; Peretz, 2020). Many scholars have also proved that a positive predictive effect exists between PSM and work engagement(Bakker, 2015; Rajagukguk and Desiana, 2021). In summary, this study proposes the hypothesis as

follows:

H2: PSM plays a mediation role between workplace spirituality and street-level bureaucrats' work engagement.

2.4 Mediating effect of Organizational Identification

Organizational identification is a special form of social identification, which is regarded as a psychological connection and emotional bond between individuals and organizations, and a process in which individuals define themselves and belong to organizations (Freud, 1922; Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Riketta (2005) summed up the viewpoints of different scholars into three types, that is, an emotional perspective that emphasizes the individual recognition of organizational values and inner belonging (O 'Reilly and Chatman, 1986); a cognitive perspective that emphasizes whether an individual defines himself as an organizational member (O' Reilly and Chatman, 1986); a cognitive emotional perspective that emphasizes whether an individual has a sense of unity with the organization, a supportive attitude towards the organization, and a perception of sharing characteristics with organizational members (Patchen, 1970). Thus, organizational identification is a self-concept acquired by individuals in interpersonal and group relationships, which originates from individual cognition and internalization of organizational values, often reflecting employees' self through the visualization of emotional states such as organizational belonging, organizational pride, and organizational loyalty (Weisman et al., 2022).

Workplace spirituality stimulates street-level bureaucrats' strong sense of work meaning so that they can meet the needs for self-realization in providing public services, thus obtaining a positive self-concept (Duchon and Plowman, 2005; Petchsawanga and Duchon, 2012). At this time, based on the norm of reciprocity, street-level bureaucrats will take the initiative to adjust their self-goals according to organizational goals and promote organizational identification by integrating self-concept and organizational concept, so as to enhance organizational identification (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Brewer and Gardner, 1996). The sense of community and value unity brought by workplace spirituality to street-level bureaucrats provides them with emotional support, which can meet their social-emotional needs including safety, self-esteem, belonging, and love (Armeli, 1998; Milliman et al., 2003). At this time, street-level bureaucrats will have a sense of obligation and responsibility to repay organizations out of reciprocity norms, thus strengthening the close combination of their self-concept and organizational concept. In addition, organizational identification can be promoted (Amiot et al., 2007; Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016). It can be seen that workplace spirituality, as an immaterial resource obtained by street-level bureaucrats in organizations, posts, and workplaces, improves their organizational identification by constructing the social exchange relationship between employees and organizations.

Regarded as individual self-concept reflected by the organization, organizational identification is actively divided into internal and external groups labeled with group members, which will inevitably bring strong work engagement to employees. From the organizational aspect, when the organizational identification is high, street-level bureaucrats will incorporate professional achievements into the overall self-achievement, which strengthens the inner sense of the same ideals and good self-concept (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016). As a result, reciprocal motivation can be generated to promote organizational development. Street-level bureaucrats will voluntarily behave in line with their roles and organizational citizenship, which is beneficial to the organization (Zhong et al., 2015). From the emotional aspect, when the organizational identification is high, employees will get strong

happiness and satisfaction at work because of interpersonal interaction and emotional connection. At this time, street-level bureaucrats are less prone to negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and slackness, but properly cope with work pressure with the support of a positive environment. Meanwhile, they are more willing to better engage in the organization to maintain the mutually beneficial relationship between individuals and organizations (Simbula et al., 2023). Many scholars have believed that organizational identification can promote work engagement (Kashyap and Chaudhary, 2019; Simbula et al., 2023). To sum up, this study puts forward this hypothesis:

H3: Organizational identification plays a mediation role between workplace spirituality and work engagement.

2.5 Chain Mediating effect of PSM and Organizational Identification

PSM is an altruistic value that transcends self-interest and focuses on collective interests, which can drive public service providers to serve the public more actively and even be willing to contribute to collective well-being (Vandenabeele, 2007; Paarlberg and Lavigna, 2010). Specifically, street-level bureaucrats with strong PSM have intense altruism and lofty pursuit of serving the public and contributing to society. This value is consistent with the core goal of the public sector, which also gives them a sense of internal maintenance, interpersonal connection, and team belonging consistent with organizational ideals (Vandenabeele, 2007; Miao et al, 2018). At this time, in order to repay the self-worth and social identification provided by the organization, street-level bureaucrats will build a social exchange relationship based on the principle of reciprocity, which not only further seeks the consistency between personal values and organizational values, but also increases loyalty and emotional identification to the organization, striving to maintain the identification of organization members and labeling themselves as internal groups in their work (Avanzi et al., 2014; Ciobanu et al, 2019). Therefore, street-level bureaucrats with strong PSM have gained strong organizational recognition under the reciprocal relationship. Previous research conclusions partially confirm the rationality of the above theoretical assumptions. Liu and Perry (2014) found that PSM can promote the organizational identification of civil servants through cross-lag design. Qiu (2017) concluded through empirical research that the high PSM of civil servants will lead to high organizational identification and make them participate in more organizational citizenship behaviors. Studying helping behavior in the public sector, Karolidis and Vouzas (2019) found that the relationship between PSM and helping behavior was mediated by organizational identification.

Street-level bureaucrats with high vocational spiritual power not only get rich inner experiences such as a sense of value, meaning, and accomplishment from their work, but also feel social support and interpersonal care from leaders, teams, and members (Duchon and Plowman, 2005; Petchsawanga and Duchon, 2012). From the perspective of reciprocity, street-level bureaucrats will enhance their PSM to give back the spiritual resources provided by organizations, so as to match their own goals with the values of the public sector, thus satisfying internal needs by establishing long-term social exchange relations (Farmer et al., 2019; Hassan et al., 2021). Similarly, high PSM will further strengthen their humanistic consciousness and altruistic tendency (Das, 2022). At this time, the high fit between individuals and organizations brings them a sense of connection, identification, and belonging, which increases their sense of identification with organizations to follow the norms of reciprocity (Avanzi et al., 2014; Ciobanu et al, 2019). When organizational identification is high, street-level bureaucrats can

beautify their self-image, strengthen their self-concept, and get emotional support at work (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016), which finally enhances their recognition and love for their jobs based on social exchange relations, correspondingly promoting their work engagement (Simbula et al., 2023). To sum up, this study puts forward this hypothesis:

H4: PSM and organizational identification play a chain mediation role between workplace spirituality and work engagement of street-level bureaucrats.

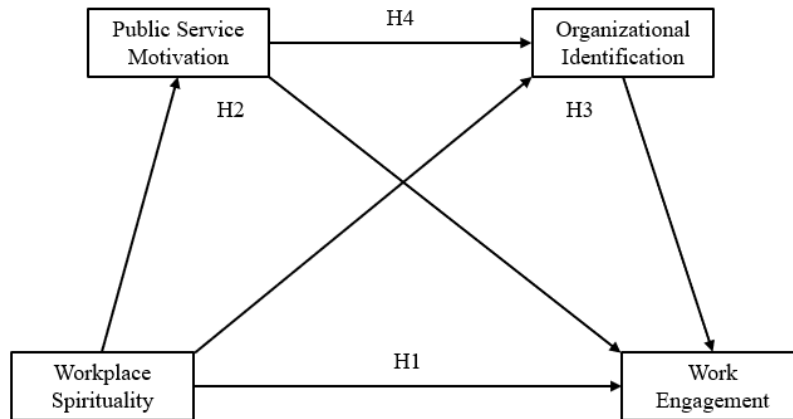The theoretical model of this study is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Research Model

3   Methods

3.1 Participants and sample

The sample of this study comes from a main urban area in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China. The reasons for this choice are as follows. The urban area implements the management co-construction system of provinces and cities with a focus on cities. Its communities and streets cover a wide range and accommodate a large population. Compared with other urban areas, it is more representative of samples. At the same time, our team has a cooperative relationship with it, which makes it easier to contact the subjects to fill out and collect the questionnaire. In the specific investigation, the author first contacted the street leaders by telephone in advance, then went to the community service center with them to ensure the authority of the questionnaire, and emphasized confidentiality before distributing the questionnaire. In addition, the author and researcher supervise the questionnaire filling of street-level bureaucrats in the workplace all the way. On the one hand, they interpret the items beyond their understanding in detail. On the other hand, they set upper and lower limits for the time to ensure the quality of the questionnaire. Finally, we collected the questionnaires immediately after the interviewees completed it.

In this study, 1150 questionnaires were distributed by convenient sampling. After eliminating blank, missing, and invalid questionnaires with many repeated answers, 1003 valid samples remained at an effective rate of 87.22%. In this sample, there are 298 males (29.70%) and 705 females (70.30%), with the overall age range as 18-62 years old (M=35.03 years old, SD=8.006). Besides, subjects at 30-39 years old are the majority, accounting for 49.15%

of the total sample. Subjects at 29 years old and below, 40-49 years old, and 50 years old account for 25.42%, 20.14%, and 5.28% respectively. The details are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Distribution of Demographic Characteristics of Street-Level Bureaucrats

Category		Number of People	Proportion
Gender	Male	298	29.70%
	Female	705	70.30%
Age	29 years old and below	255	25.42%
	30-39 years old	493	49.15%
	40-49 years old	202	20.14%
	Over 50 years old	53	5.28%
Education	Junior college or below	482	48.10%
	Undergraduate	505	50.30%
	Master degree or above	16	1.60%
Political Outlook	Party member	506	50.40%
	Democratic parties	3	0.30%
	Member of Communist Youth League	119	11.90%
	Independents	3	0.30%
	Masses	372	37.10%
Years of service	5 years and below	265	26.43%
	6-10 years	255	25.42%
	11-15 years	255	25.42%
	16-20 years	124	12.36%
	21-25 years	54	5.39%
	26-30 years	27	2.69%
	Over 30 years	23	2.29%

3.2 Measurements

3.2.1 Workplace Spirituality

The Chinese version of the *Workplace Spiritual Scale* (Ke et al., 2014) based on the classic three-dimensional structure put forth by Milliman et al. (2003) includes 27 topics, which are divided into three dimensions as follows, including work significance (such as "the work I am engaged in now conforms to my life ideal"), sense of group (such as "If I have difficulties, I believe my colleagues will help me"), and the consistency with organizational

values (such as "I work for a moral organization"). The scale adopts Likert's standards to evaluate by 1-5 scores, with 1 representing "completely inconsistent" and 5 "completely consistent". The higher the total score is, the stronger the individual workplace spirituality is. The Cronbach's α of the scale was 0.96.

3.2.2 Work Engagement

The short version of the *Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9)* compiled by Schaufeli et al. (2002) includes 9 items, which are divided into three dimensions, including vitality (such as "I feel energetic at work"), dedication (such as "I am proud of my work"), and concentration (such as "I am immersed in my work"). The scale adopts Rickett's standards to assess by 0-6 scores, with 0 representing "completely inconsistent" and 6 representing "completely consistent". The higher the total score is, the higher the individual work engagement is. In order to make the expression of each item conform to the characteristics of the Chinese context, this study revised the existing Chinese version of the scale a through back translation program. In this study, Cronbach's α of the scale was 0.96.

3.2.3 Public Service Motivation

The Public Service Motivation Scale developed by Yang (2021) in the Chinese context is adopted. Based on Perry's scale (1996), the scale adds two new dimensions related to the Chinese situation, including 18 items divided into six dimensions, such as the attraction of making policies (such as "I am willing to share my views on public policies with others"), commitment to public interests (such as "public services beneficial to the public and the people are very meaningful to me"), compassion (such as "I am very concerned about the interests of vulnerable groups"), self-sacrifice (such as "I am willing to sacrifice personal interests for public ones"), social recognition and reputation (such as "I especially care about whether my behavior conforms to the general norms of society"), and moral persistence (such as "I think morality is very important to ensure group and social order"). Rickett's standards of 5-score assessment are adopted. 1 stands for "completely inconsistent" and 5 for "completely consistent". The higher the total score is, the higher the individual PSM is. In this study, the Cronbach's α of the scale was 0.90.

3.2.4 Organizational Identification

The Organizational Identification Scale developed by Ashforth and Mael (1992) consists of six items, such as "When I hear others praise my career, I feel like I am also being complimented". In order to make the expression of each item conform to the characteristics of the Chinese context, this study revised the existing Chinese version of the scale through a back translation program. The scale uses the 5-point standards put forward by Rickett, with 1 representing "completely inconsistent" and 5 "completely consistent". The higher the total score is, the higher the organizational identification of individuals is. In this study, Cronbach's α of this scale was 0.90.

4 Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Deviation Test of Common Method and Multicollinearity Test

In this study, the self-report method was used to collect data with the large sample size and many questionnaire items, so there might be homologous method bias. First of all, during the questionnaire design, the author randomly sorts the questions of each subscale and scores them in reverse, aiming at reducing their predictability and increasing their separability. Secondly, the researcher emphasized the anonymity of the answers in the specific

testing stage, which reduced the social approval tendency of the raters and further ensured their authenticity and validity. In this study, the Harman single-factor test was used to test the data. The results are as follows. (1)There were 9 factors whose characteristic root was greater than 1 without rotation, which explained 65.34% of the variation. (2)The variance explanation degree of the maximum factor is 35.37%, which is less than the evaluation standard of 40%. Therefore, there is no serious common method bias in this study. In addition, this study measures the multicollinearity problem by a variance inflation factor (VIF). As a result, the VIF of workplace spirituality is 1.730, that of PSM is 1.836, and that of organizational identification is 1.433. All are in the range of $0 < VIF < 10$, which indicates that there is no serious multicollinearity problem in the model as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Regression Coefficient and Collinearity Diagnosis Among Variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Normalization Coefficient	t	Significance	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Standard Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	. 002	. 239		. 010	. 992		
Workplace Spirituality	. 088	. 020	. 143	4.292	. 000	. 578	1.730
Public Service Motivation	. 277	. 041	. 231	6.713	. 000	. 545	1.836
Organizational Identification	. 765	. 068	. 340	11.185	. 000	. 698	1.433

Dependent variable: work engagement

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis is carried out on each variable in the study, with the results shown in Table 3. There is a significant positive correlation among workplace spirituality, PSM, organizational identification, and work engagement ($p < 0.001$), which can be used for the next hypothesis verification. In addition, correlation analysis showed that there was a significant positive correlation between the age of the sample and each variable (r=0. 178, 0.140, 0.123, 0.160; $P < 0.01$). Besides, a significant negative correlation exists between gender, workplace spirituality, organizational identification, and work engagement (r=-0.090, -0.186, -0.357; $P < 0.01$). Thus, in the follow-up regression analysis and hypothesis verification stage, it is necessary to take age and gender into the control variables for testing.

Table 3 Average Number, Standard Deviation, and Correlation Coefficient of Each Variable

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Workplace Spirituality	112.50	15.37	1					
2 Public Service Motivation	79.22	7.860	. 626***	1				

3 Organizational Identification	25.07	4.190	.470***	.516***	1			
4 Work Engagement	34.01	9.441	.448***	.496***	.526***	1		
5 Age	35.03	8.006	.178***	.140***	.123***	.160***	1	
6 Gender			-.090***	-. 051	-.186***	-.357***	-.230***	1

Note: * p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

In this study, the PROCESS macro of SPSS is used to analyze the main data. Under the control of gender and age, a chain mediation model is established with workplace spirituality as an independent variable, work engagement as a dependent variable, and PSM and organizational identification as intermediary variables. Meanwhile, the model is tested by the Bootstrap method featuring the offset correction percentile (repeated sampling 5000 times). The results show that workplace psychiatry significantly positively affects PSM (β = 0.622, p < 0.001), organizational identification (β = 0.228, p < 0.001), and work engagement (β = 0.130, p < 0.001). PSM significantly positively affects organizational identification (β = 0.366, p < 0.001) and work engagement (β = 0.255, p < 0.001). The specific results of regression analysis and standardization path coefficients of each model are shown in Table 4 and Figure 2.

Table 4 Regression Analysis of Each Variable

Result Variable	Predictive Variable	R	R^2	F	Beta	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	T
Public Service Motivation	Workplace Spirituality	0.637	0.393	215.882***	0.622	0.293	0.343	24.800***
	Age				0.032	-0.018	0.081	1.257
	Gender				0.013	-0.637	1.074	0.501
Organizational Identification	Workplace Spirituality	0.569	0.324	119.384***	0.228	0.044	0.080	6.778***
	Public service Motivation				0.366	0.160	0.230	10.962***
	Age				-0.003	-0.030	0.026	-0.113
	Gender				-0.148	-1.833	-0.869	-5.505***

	Workplace Spirituality				0.130	0.042	0.118	4.122***
	Public service Motivation				0.255	0.229	0.382	7.855***
Work Engagement	Organizational Identification	0.658	0.433	152.116***	0.281	0.505	0.762	9.694***
	Age				0.020	-0.055	0.060	0.078
	Gender				-0.280	-6.789	-4.769	-11.233***

Note: * p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
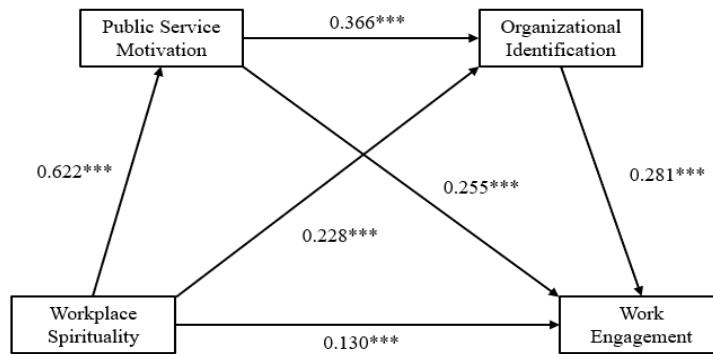
Figure 2 Path Coefficient Diagram of Chain Mediation Model

The analysis results of the chain mediation effect are shown in Table 5. The total indirect effect, that is, the mediating effect value is 0.176, accounting for 68.78% of the total effect of workplace spirituality on work engagement. Besides, this effect is composed of indirect effects produced by three paths. Path 1 is workplace spirituality → PSM → work engagement, with 0.097 as the effect value, accounting for 38.02% of the total effect. Path 2 is workplace spirituality → organizational identification → work engagement, with an effect value of 0.039, accounting for 15.40% of the total effect. Path 3 is workplace spirituality → PSM → organizational identification → work engagement, with an effect value of 0.039, accounting for 15.36% of the total effect. The above indirect effects, total indirect effects, direct effects, and 95% confidence intervals of total effects do not contain 0, which indicates that all pathways have reached significant levels. Therefore, the hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4 in this study hold water.

Table 5 Bootstrap Test of Mediating Effect

Path	Effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	Relative Mediating Effect
Direct Effect	0.0799	0.0194	0.0419	0.1179	31.22%

Total Indirect Effect	0.1760	0.0152	0.1472	0.2073	68.78%
Workplace Spirituality → Public Service Motivation → Work engagement	0.0973	0.0131	0.0726	0.1239	38.02%
Workplace Spirituality → Organizational Identification → Work Engagement	0.0394	0.0082	0.0247	0.0566	15.40%
Workplace Spirituality → Public Service Motivation → Organizational Identification → Work Engagement	0.0393	0.0065	0.0276	0.0528	15.36%

5   Discussions

Based on the social exchange theory, this study explores the relationship between workplace spirituality and work engagement of street-level bureaucrats, and excavates two paths of PSM and organizational identification, revealing how workplace spirituality can promote their work engagement. The results show that the workplace spirituality of street-level bureaucrats has a significant positive predictive effect on work engagement, while their PSM and organizational identification play an independent and joint mediation role between workplace spirituality and work engagement. In other words, workplace spirituality can positively influence PSM, further promote organizational identification, and finally improve work engagement. In addition, the amount of total mediation effect is 0.176, while that of path 1 is as high as 0.0973, which indicates that more than half of the total mediation effect is achieved through the path of workplace spirituality → PSM → work engagement. It can be seen that higher workplace spirituality may stimulate street-level bureaucrats' sense of reciprocal obligation by meeting their internal needs (Karakas, 2010), which not only enhances their PSM, but also further promotes organizational identification if their values are consistent with organization, thus achieving the ultimate goal of strengthening work engagement based on social exchange relations.

5.1 Theoretical Significance

First, this study draws a psychological strategy to manage street-level bureaucrats by constructing a chain mediation model of workplace spirituality and promoting work engagement, which responds to the conclusion that unnecessary and overelaborate formalities have a negative impact on public sector employees (Buchanan, 1975). On the one hand, the current research on street-level bureaucrats' management mainly focuses on external behaviors such as discretion, job performance, service effect, and organizational citizenship behavior (Yee et al., 2015; Van Berkel et al., 2022). Thus, few scholars focus on their psychological engagement in their jobs (Shim et al., 2021). On the other hand, the researchers' incentive strategies for street-level bureaucrats focus on external control measures such as institutional innovation, working environment, performance reward, and accountability mechanisms (Weatherley and Lipsky, 1977; Hupe and Hill, 2007; Lavee, 2020), while the internal driving forces such as work motivation and their psychological capital have received less attention (Homberg et al., 2017; Dudau et al., 2020). Therefore, breaking through the restriction that street-level bureaucrats often use external incentive strategies, this study introduces the significant influence of spiritual motivation on initiative behavior by constructing the psychological and predictive work engagement by workplace spirituality, thus reversing the

external constraints such as rules and regulations to the internal incentives to stimulate their positive psychological experience, and enriching the incentive system of public departments.

Secondly, this study uses social exchange theory in an innovative manner to explain the relationship between workplace spirituality and work engagement of street-level bureaucrats, connecting the internal path of the chain mediation model in series from the perspective of reciprocity. On the one hand, social exchange theory is the golden standard for understanding workplace behavior, which is mainly used to explain positive behaviors or states in workplace relations and social relations (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). This theory focuses on instrumental behavior under the orientation of rational choice and defines social exchange as an action based on the return of others (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964). Therefore, positive work outcomes from the perspective of social exchange theory are often associated with beneficial resources offered by others, such as organizational support (Ladd and Henry, 2000; Riggle et al., 2009; Nunkoo, 2012), leadership style (Twigg, 2007; Kacmar, 2011; Schopman, 2015), and organizational atmosphere (Hofmann et al., 2003; Gould-Williams, 2007). Few studies have used this theory to explain the relationship between employees' self-endowed internal resources and reward behavior, such as workplace spirituality, PSM, and organizational identification (Mostafa et al., 2015; Zhang, 2020). On the other hand, previous studies on the endogenous motivation of work engagement are mostly based on the model of job requirements-resource, self-determination theory, etc., emphasizing the promotion of key psychological or personal work resources to work engagement (Kinnunen et al., 2011; Mussaguulova, 2020;). However, few researchers combine social exchange theory to explain why individuals are willing to actively participate in work to create value-driven by internal resources (Aryee et al., 2012; Rayton and Yalabik, 2014). Therefore, this study explains the relationship between workplace spirituality, PSM, organizational identification, and work engagement with the social exchange theory. Based on the reciprocal mechanism, it connects the bridge between inner spiritual resources and work engagement, which promotes the understanding of street-level bureaucrats' work engagement from the perspective of social exchange relationships.

Thirdly, this study combines the two variables of workplace spirituality and work engagement with street-level bureaucrats, which enriches the related research and broadens their applicable boundaries. So far, work engagement in the private sector has yielded considerable results (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Crawford et al., 2010), but the exploration of the public sector, especially street-level bureaucrats, needs further development (Shim et al., 2021). Similarly, originating from the internal experience of employees (Duchon and Plowman, 2005), workplace spirituality has its research results concentrated on enlightening enterprise managers and leaders to effectively manage subordinates through spiritual motivation, so as to improve job performance and maximize efficiency (Fry, 2003; Karakas, 2009). However, from the aspects of street-level bureaucrats and even the whole public sector, research on workplace spirituality is still relatively scarce (Garcia-Zamor, 2003; Hassan et al., 2020). Thus, this study not only extends the research on work engagement and workplace spirituality to street-level bureaucrats, but also expands their occupational categories. Besides, it connects management and psychology, which contributes to the theoretical model that tends to be saturated in the field of organization and management.

5.2 Practical Implications

First, this study finds that spiritual motivation promotes work engagement. Therefore, public sector managers

should carefully and timely evaluate and abolish heavy procedures in regulations, set up a supervision mechanism that combines rigidity with softness for appropriate controls, and strengthen the self-discipline behavior of street-level bureaucrats under moderate external management. By giving their certain discretion to exert their subjective initiative (Lipsky, 2010), they can voluntarily follow the norms and actively behave with the responsibility of public servants in any situation.

Secondly, this study concludes that PSM plays a mediation role between workplace spirituality and work engagement. Therefore, public sector managers can incorporate PSM into the training of street-level bureaucrats, correct their value orientation by strengthening the cultivation and evaluation of public service awareness, and improve employees' moral integrity and professional capability on the job, so as to make them gentle and active for primary work in the community (Ward, 2013). In addition, public sector managers can also regard PSM as a major criterion for recruitment assessment, give priority to street-level bureaucrats with higher PSM in the entry screening.

Thirdly, this study clarifies the mediation role of organizational identification between PSM and work engagement. Thus, the model of public sector management needs to be relationship-oriented, supplemented by task-oriented, and creates a humane working environment for street-level bureaucrats with care, respect, and sincerity (Ke et al., 2015). In this circumstance, they can gain a strong sense of organizational belonging and group connection, thus enhancing their organizational identification and stimulating their work engagement or other positive behaviors (Schwarz et al., 2016; Hansen and Pihl-Thingvad, 2018). Besides, leaders need to make good use of the incentive mode that combines rewards and punishments. They can immerse organizational goals to all street-level bureaucrats through authoritative management, supplemented by flexible strengthening means such as encouragement and recognition, so as to guide them to use their discretion reasonably.

6   Limitations and Prospects

There are three potential limitations in this study. First, the research method is relatively simple. The self-rating scale is selected for data collection because of the large sample size, which makes it difficult to clarify the causal relationship between variables and explore the deeper psychological mechanism. Moreover, the subjects may have some practice effects and social approval tendencies when filling out the questionnaire. Given these limitations, future research can consider interviews and experiments to further verify the relationship between workplace spirituality and work engagement, so as to explore how workplace spirituality promotes the acquisition, preservation, and accumulation of internal resources of primary bureaucrats before improving work engagement.

Secondly, the research sample is based on Chinese background. This study collected data from a certain province in China, with the results featuring a particular cultural and social background, but whether they can be popularized and applied in other countries needs further consideration. Future research can make a cross-cultural comparison of street-level bureaucrats' workplace spirituality and work engagement according to the national conditions and governance of different countries, so as to clarify the variations of this chain mediation path in diverse cultural backgrounds.

Thirdly, the research conclusion can be further promoted. This study draws the conclusion that workplace spirituality can promote street-level bureaucrats' work engagement, which has made certain contributions to their management, work engagement, workplace spirituality, etc. However, most current scholars mainly take workplace spirituality as an independent variable, aiming to explore its positive work results (Rego and Pina e Cunha, 2008; Garg, 2018), while the research on its cultivation measures remains limited (Kumar and Kumar, 2014). With the antecedents of workplace spirituality as a start, future research can explore the internal and external mechanisms shaping employees' workplace spirituality, so as to build a complete path of antecedents and aftereffects.

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