# HOW DOES SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP DRIVE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR? UNRAVELING THE ROLE OF AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

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**Abstract:** This research endevors to investigate the interrelationships among spiritual leadership (SL), affective commitment (AC) and employee performance (EP) in the Egyptian hotel industry. Employing a quantitative research approach, the study distributed self-administered surveys to a randomly chosen group of employees. Analyzing 623 valid survey responses using structural equation modelling (SEM), the research revealed significant positive correlations between SL and both EP and AC, with AC also showing a noteworthy positive effect on EP. Moreover, the study found that AC acts as a mediator in the relationship between SL and EP.

**Keywords:** Spiritual Leadership, Employee Performance, Affective Commitment, Hospitality Industry

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## INTRODUCTION

In the fast-paced environment of the hotel industry, the influence of spiritual leadership on employee performance cannot be overstated (Wang et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2022; Qohin and Wihuda, 2023). Spiritual leaders, with their emphasis on values, ethics, and a higher purpose, have the power to inspire and motivate employees to excel in their roles (Ali et al., 2022). This sense of belonging fosters dedication, motivation, and discretionary effort among employees, leading to enhanced organizational outcomes such as productivity, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and positive team dynamics as well as enhanced performance (Qohin and Wihuda, 2023). Furthermore, the study of Bayighomog and Arasli (2022) was conducted in the Cameroonian hotel industry disclosed that the synergy between spiritual leadership and organizational outcome (i.e., affective commitment and employee performance) creates a harmonious work environment conducive to success and excellence. Spiritual leadership (SL)involves a value-driven approach to guiding and inspiring individuals towards a higher purpose within an organizational context (Hunsaker, 2022; Karim et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023). Is rooted in principles of integrity, empathy, and transcendental vision, spiritual leaders highlight the comfort of their employees, encouraging a significance of value, belonging, and interconnectedness (Abbas et al., 2023). In accordance with the study of Karim et al. (2022), spiritual leaders seek to cultivate a culture of trust, empowerment, and personal growth, ultimately driving organizational success through the alignment of individual values with collective goals through emphasizing the importance of ethical decision-making, empathy, and authenticity.

Affective commitment (AC) represents an emotional bond and sense of belonging that individuals develop towards their organization (Budur, 2022). AC involves a deep-seated attachment characterized by feelings of loyalty, identification, and enthusiasm towards organizational goals and values (Harrison et al., 2022). Employees with high levels of affective commitment are driven by a genuine passion for their work and a strong desire to contribute to the success of the organization (Meredith et al., 2023). According to Lahmar et al. (2023) AC fosters a sense of mutual care and reciprocity between employees and their organization, leading to greater job satisfaction, motivation, and ultimately, enhanced organizational performance. Employee performance (EP) implies to the effectiveness and productivity of individuals in fulfilling their job responsibilities and achieving organizational objectives (Vuong and Nguyen, 2022). It encompasses several dimensions for instance, task proficiency, quality of work, creativity, adaptability, and interpersonal skills (Tingo and Mseti, 2022). Effective employee performance is essential for organizational success, as it directly influences productivity, customer satisfaction, and overall competitiveness (Karyatun et al., 2023). Depending on continuous feedback, training, and development initiatives, organizations strive to enhance EP, thereby maximizing individual and collective contributions towards organizational goals and outcomes (Salim et al., 2023).

The hospitality industry in the Egyptian context is widely recognized as labour-intensive, requiring significant human input to deliver exceptional guest experiences (Sobaih, 2015). In this context, the relationship between spiritual leadership

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and employee performance becomes particularly pertinent. Spiritual leadership, with its focus on aligning work with broader values and fostering a sense of purpose and connection, can play a crucial role in motivating and empowering employees within this labor-intensive environment (Fry, 2003). By nurturing a culture of care, empathy, and authenticity, spiritual leadership can enhance employee engagement, satisfaction, and ultimately contribute to the delivery of superior hospitality services. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of spiritual leadership in organizational settings worldwide, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding its specific impact on employee performance within the Egyptian hospitality industry. Additionally, while affective commitment has been extensively studied in various organizational contexts, its role as a mediator in the relationship between spiritual leadership and employee performance remains largely unexplored within the Egyptian hospitality sector. Therefore, investigating these interconnections in the Egyptian context can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of spiritual leadership practices and their implications for enhancing employee performance and organizational outcomes in this specific cultural and business environment.

Drawing upon Spiritual leadership theory (SLT), The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of SL on EP within the Egyptian hotel industry, with a particular focus on understanding the mediating role of AC. By exploring these dynamics, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how leadership styles rooted in values and transcendental purpose influence employee attitudes and behaviors, ultimately shaping organizational effectiveness and success within the unique context of the hotel sector in Egypt.

## LITERATURE REVIEW
### 1. Spiritual leadership and Employee Performance
Several studies (e.g., Anggara and Aulia, 2021; Pio, 2022; Rahmatika et al., 2022; Manel et al., 2023; Khaddam et al., 2023; Subhaktiyasa et al., 2023) highlighted the purported significance of SL in influencing EP is increasingly acknowledged as a pivotal determinant of organizational success. SL indicated by its prominence on values and ethics, has been shown to positively influence various dimensions of EP (Rahmatika et al., 2022). According to the study of Jiang et al. (2023), spiritual leaders inspire and motivate employees by fostering a sense of meaning, purpose, and interconnectedness within the organization. Moreover, SL leads to greater engagement, commitment, and discretionary effort among employees, ultimately resulting in enhanced performance outcomes such as task proficiency, creativity, adaptability, and job satisfaction (Manel et al., 2023). The study of Wu et al. (2020) investigated the impact of spiritual leadership on employee engagement and found a significant positive association between the two constructs in a Taiwanese context. Furthermore, SL cultivates a supportive organizational culture characterized by trust, empathy, and authenticity, which further contributes to employee well-being as well as EP (Syukur et al., 2023). Therefore, we posit that:

**H1:** SL has a positive and direct effect on EP

### 2. Spiritual leadership and Affective Commitment
There is great attention on how SL influences AC within organizations because it is believed to have the capacity to nurture a feeling of purpose and belonging among employees (Battal and Ibrahim, 2023). Several research (e.g., Rumangkit, 2020; Jeon and Choi, 2020; Djaelani et al., 2021; Grego-Planer, 2022; Lahmar et al., 2023; Ullah et al., 2023) suggested that spiritual leaders through their emphasis on values and transcendental purpose, cultivate a work environment where employees feel emotionally connected to the organization's mission and vision. Consequently, employees may develop a strong sense of AC characterized by loyalty, enthusiasm, and identification with the organization (Jeon and Choi, 2020). However, the direct deterministic correlation between SL and AC points to the complexity of organizational dynamics and the many factors that influence employee attitudes (Ullah et al., 2023). Moreover, the subjective nature of spirituality and varying interpretations of its role in leadership further complicate the assessment of its impact on AC (Rumangkit, 2020). Hence, considering these discussions, we could postulate that:

**H2:** SL has a positive and direct effect on AC

### 3. Affective Commitment and Employee Performance
Numerous research (e.g., Aflah et al., 2021; Nauman et al., 2021; Alqudah et al., 2022; Udin et al., 2022; Rifa'I, 2023; Nizam and Hameed, 2023) strengthened that AC emerges as a cornerstone in shaping EP within organizational contexts. AC as an emotional connection and sense of belonging to the organization play a crucial role in influencing employees' dedication, motivation, and discretionary efforts in their roles (Park et al., 2023). The study of Manel et al. (2023) argued that strong AC are inclined to exceed their job expectations, demonstrating genuine loyalty and passion for the organization. This emotional investment of AC fosters a positive work atmosphere, promoting collaboration, resilience, and a shared sense of purpose (Nauman et al., 2021). Consequently, the study of Nizam and Hameed (2023) heightened that AC leads to enhanced EP, characterized by increased productivity, job satisfaction, and positive team dynamics. Organizations that prioritize and foster AC among their workforce stand to benefit from a more engaged and high-performing team, enhancing the organization's overall prosperity and longevity within the contemporary, ever-changing workplace landscape (Alqudah et al., 2022; Udin et al., 2022; Rifa'I, 2023).Therefore, while some studies suggest a positive association between SL, AC and EP, further research (i.e., Rumangkit, 2020; Aflah et al., 2021; Grego-Planer, 2022) argued that there is a need to elucidate the mechanisms underlying this relationship between SL and EP and explore potential mediators and contextual factors. According to Maryati and Astuti (2022) AC fosters a strong emotional connection between employees and their organization generally and their spiritual leaders specifically by cultivating dedication, motivation, and discretionary effort among employees. Consequently, our hypotheses are formulated as follow:

**H3:** AC has a positive and direct effect on EP

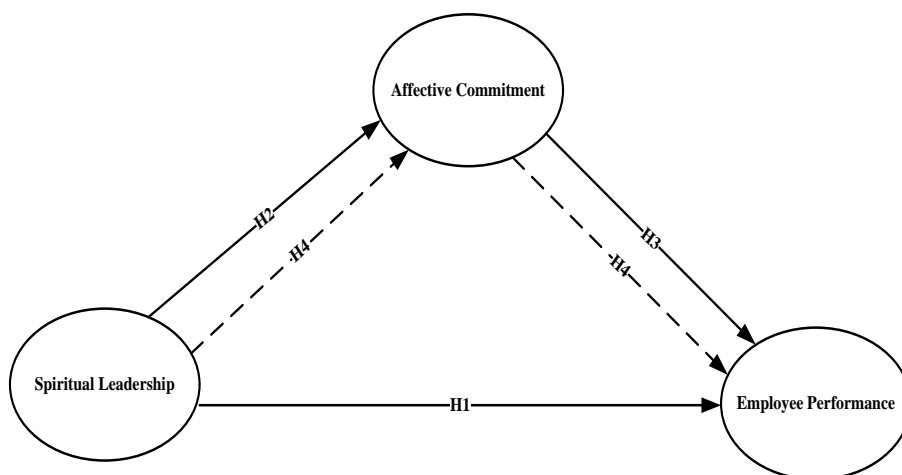**H4:** AC mediates the relationship between SL and EP



Figure 1. Research Conceptual Model

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

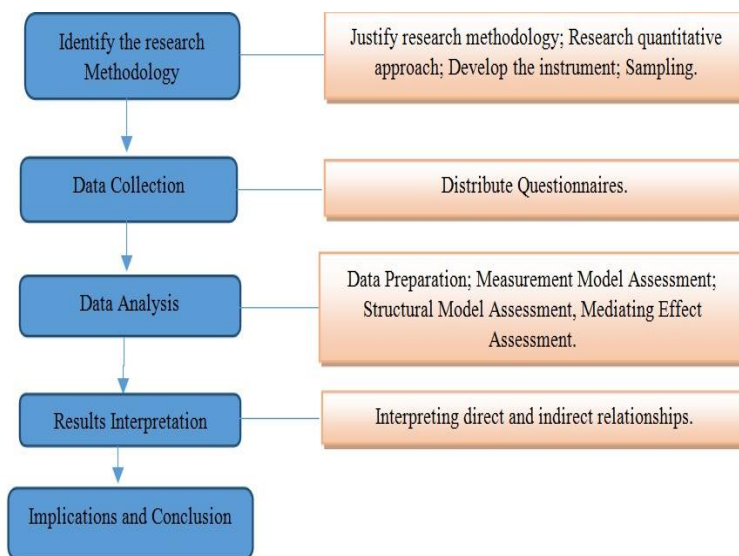The methodology of the study was conducted according to the following Figure 2.



Figure 2. Research Methodology Flow-chart

### The scale and the study constructs

The variables of this study are spiritual leadership, employee performance and affective commitment, which are adopted from the literature. A scale derived from Fry et al. (2005) study was used to measure and evaluate spiritual leadership from the perspective of three dimensions: vision, hope/faith, and altruism, with a total of 9 sentences included in the questionnaire to measure "SL" such as: My organization's vision inspires me to perform better; I show my faith in my organization and its mission by doing everything I can to help it succeed; and leaders in my current organization have the enough courage to stand up for their employees. Employee performance was measured by 5 items, derived from Jansson and Yperen (2004), which are the employee's completion of the duties specified in the job description.

The employee's fulfillment of all formal performance requirements of the job. The employee's performance "EP" of all responsibilities required by the job. The employee's failure to neglect aspects of the work to be performed. The employee's success in performing his or her essential duties. As for the affective commitment "AC", it was measured by six items scale derived from Meyer and Allen (1991), which cited at Nguyen et al. (2020), which are: I am happy to choose the current organization to work for. I always feel that the problems and difficulties that the organization faces are also my problems. I have the feeling that the current organization is my second home. I feel that I belong completely to the current organization. I have the feeling that the organization is like a family and I am a member of it. Certainly, the current organization, it has special importance to me. All variables' scale showed a high reliability value above 0.90.

### Population and Sample Size

In alignment with the study's objective, the target research population is hotel employees. Due to challenges in precisely gauging the workforce's size at hotels, Veal's (2006) findings were consulted, estimating the research

population at approximately 20,000 individuals. Employing the Herbert Larkin equation, a sample size of 377 individuals was determined for this study (Ayad, 2017).

**Data collection**

This study adopted a quantitative approach, utilizing a self-administered questionnaire to gather primary data from the sampled individuals. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire underwent testing, review, and adjustment based on feedback from a panel of tourism industry experts and university professors. The questionnaire was disseminated to 634 employees between December 2023 and January 2024. Of these, 623 questionnaires were completed, yielding a response rate of 98%, which were subsequently subjected to statistical analysis. Divided into four sections, the questionnaire addressed demographic information in the first part, while the remaining sections focused on the three study variables: spiritual leadership, employee performance, and affective commitment. Respondents were instructed to rate each element of these variables using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), based on their perspectives.

**Analysis Techniques**

To examine the descriptive data of the study's sample, the statistical software SPSS version 29 along with Excel sheet 2021 was employed. Furthermore, to assess both direct and indirect relationships among variables and to investigate the research hypotheses, PLS-SEM version 4.0.9.9 was utilized.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Measurement Model (Outer Model) Convergent Validity**

To ascertain the reliability and validity of the variables and elements in this study for model construction, a convergent validity test was conducted. The results indicated a high level of reliability across all elements, surpassing the threshold set by Hair et al. (2017) at 0.7. Additionally, the composite reliability (CR) of all study variables was examined, with all scores exceeding the recommended cut-off point by Bryman and Cramer (2011) and Hair et al. (2017), also set at 0.7. Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all variables surpassed the threshold advised by Fornell and Larcker (1981) at 0.5. These findings collectively support and affirm the reliability and validity of the model. See table 1for detailed results.

Table 1. Results of Convergent Validity

| Construct | Item | Loading | AVE | CR |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SpiritualLeadership (Fry et al., 2005) | SL-1 | 0.817 | 0.686 | 0.881 |
| | SL-2 | 0.706 | | |
| | SL-3 | 0.824 | | |
| | SL-4 | 0.739 | | |
| | SL-5 | 0.706 | | |
| | SL-6 | 0.706 | | |
| | SL-7 | 0.716 | | |
| | SL-8 | 0.702 | | |
| | SL-9 | 0.705 | | |
| Affective Commitment Meyer and Allen (1991), as cited at Nguyen et al (2020). | AC-1 | 0.834 | 0.624 | 0.806 |
| | AC-2 | 0.706 | | |
| | AC-3 | 0.811 | | |
| | AC-4 | 0.842 | | |
| | AC-5 | 0.706 | | |
| | AC-6 | 0.811 | | |
| Employee Performance (Jansson and Yperen, 2004) | EP-1 | 0.903 | 0.628 | 0.734 |
| | EP-2 | 0.811 | | |
| | EP-3 | 0.811 | | |
| | EP-4 | 0.841 | | |
| | EP-5 | 0.901 | | |

**Discriminant Validity**

To enhance trust in the model's outcomes and interpretations, tests including the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading methods were employed. Their purpose was to confirm the discriminant validity of the model and ascertain that all constituent variables are distinct from one another (Kock, 2020) (Tables 2, 3, and Figure 3).

Table 2. Results of Fornell-Larcker criterion (* The values in bold are the square root of AVE)

| Construct | SL | AC | EP |
|---|---|---|---|
| SL | **0.828** | | |
| AC | 0.671 | **0.790** | |
| EP | 0.684 | 0.491 | **0.792** |

The results presented in the previous table indicate that each of the research variables elucidates variance in its components more effectively compared to the collective explanatory power of the other variables within the model. This serves to substantiate the discriminant validity of the model, aligning with the criteria outlined by Fornell and Larcker

(1981) as well as Hair et al. (2017). The results outlined in the previous table affirm the discriminant validity of the model, as endorsed by Chin (1998). This is because all elements of the variables exhibit stronger loading on their respective constructs, surpassing their loading on any other variables within the model's constructs.

Table 3. Discriminant validity - Cross Loading

|  | Spiritual Leadership | Affective Commitment | Employee Performance |
|---|---|---|---|
| SL-1 | **0.817** | 0.656 | 0.639 |
| SL-2 | **0.706** | 0.485 | 0.374 |
| SL-3 | **0.824** | 0.711 | 0.638 |
| SL-4 | **0.739** | 0.305 | 0.572 |
| SL-5 | **0.706** | 0.434 | 0.409 |
| SL-6 | **0.706** | 0.127 | 0.049 |
| SL-7 | **0.716** | 0.403 | 0.443 |
| SL-8 | **0.702** | 0.414 | 0.542 |
| SL-9 | **0.705** | 0.281 | 0.431 |
| AC-1 | 0.706 | **0.834** | 0.409 |
| AC-2 | 0.100 | **0.706** | 0.071 |
| AC-3 | 0.452 | **0.811** | 0.201 |
| AC-4 | 0.631 | **0.842** | 0.415 |
| AC-5 | 0.301 | **0.706** | 0.303 |
| AC-6 | 0.586 | **0.811** | 0.401 |
| EP-1 | 0.730 | 0.420 | **0.903** |
| EP-2 | 0.074 | 0.218 | **0.811** |
| EP-3 | 0.013 | 0.155 | **0.811** |
| EP-4 | 0.609 | 0.381 | **0.841** |
| EP-5 | 0.751 | 0.498 | **0.901** |
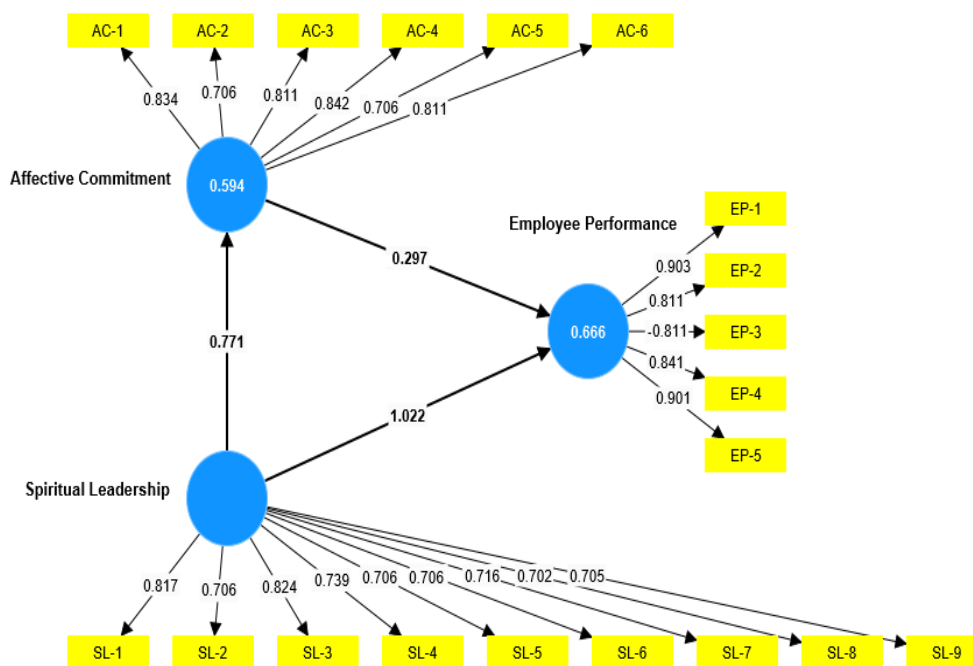


Figure 3. Measurement Model

**Structural Model (Inner Model); Coefficient of determination (R²)**

The coefficient of determination test (R²) was employed to estimate the model's predictive capacity in explaining the percentage of variance observed in the dependent variable using the independent variable. Results indicated that the variance attributed to the independent variable "SL" on the dependent variable "EP" was high, while on the dependent variable "AC" it was moderate, based on the threshold established by Chin (1998) (Table 4).

Table 4. R² of the Endogenous Latent Variables

| Constructs | R-square | Results |
|---|---|---|
| EP | 0.670 | High |
| AC | 0.594 | Moderate |

**Effect size (f²)**

The effect size "f²" test was employed to assess the individual impact of each external latent variable on the internal latent variable. The results revealed that the effect size of the variable "SL" as an external latent variable on both "EP" and "AC" as

internal latent variables was significant, indicating a large effect. Furthermore, the effect size of "AC" as an external latent variable on "EP" as an internal latent variable was moderate, based on the criterion proposed by Cohen (1988) (Table 5).

Table 5. Assessment of Effect Size (f²)

| Constructs | Employee Performance | Affective Commitment |
|---|---|---|
| Spiritual Leadership | 0.923 (Large) | 0.832 (Large) |
| Affective Commitment | 0.522 (Medium) | |

### Goodness of Fit of the Model (GoF)

The Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) test was utilized to verify the reliability of the proposed model for this study as a comprehensive fit measurement model. This evaluation considered factors such as the level of measurement, structure, and overall performance of the model, following the guidelines outlined by Chen (2010):

$$\text{GoF} = \sqrt{R^2 \times \text{AVE}} \qquad \text{GoF} = 0.638$$

Based on the results of the GoF test and with reference to the standard outlined by Wetzels et al. (2009), the adequacy of fit for the model proposed in this study can be affirmed, indicating it is valid enough to be considered a global comprehensive PLS model.
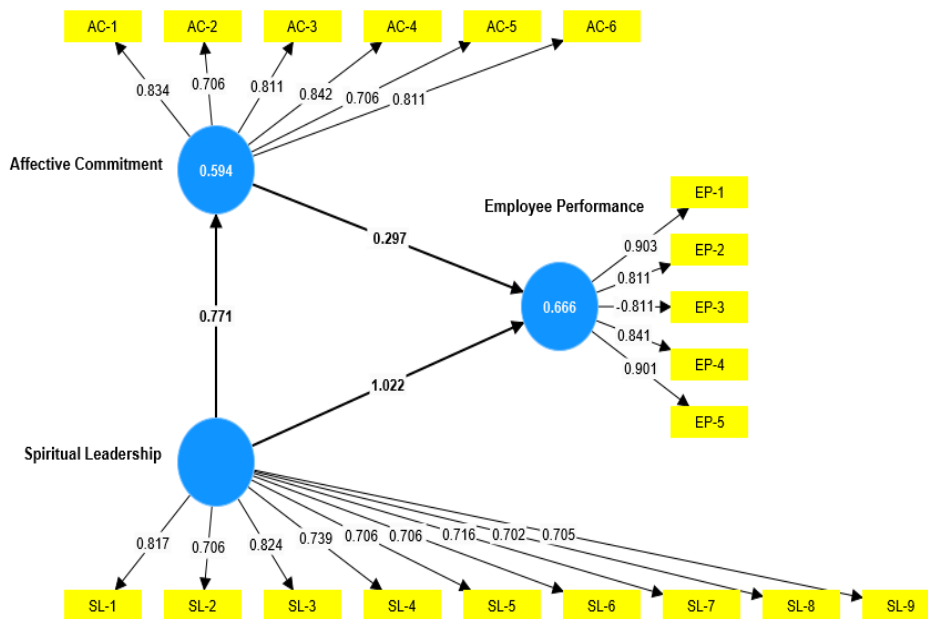


Figure 4. The Final Proposed Structural Equation Model

### Hypotheses assessment (Significance of path coefficients)

To ascertain the validity of the study hypotheses, a significance test on path coefficients was performed, with the goal of evaluating the degree of alignment between the proposed theoretical model and the primary study data. The summary of all hypothesis testing results can be found in Table 6. This research introduced three direct hypotheses and one indirect hypothesis (Figure 1). The results of the structural equation model (Tables 5 & 6, Figure 4) indicated that "SL" has a significant positive effect on both "EP" (Effect size= 0.346, Std. Beta = 1.022, P = 0.000) and "AC" (Effect size= 0.832, Std. Beta = 0.771, P = 0.000), thereby supporting hypotheses H1 and H2. Similarly, "AC" was found to have a significant positive impact on "EP" (Effect size= 0.522, Std. Beta = 0.297, P = 0.000), confirming hypothesis H3. Furthermore, the SEM outcomes demonstrated the mediating effect of "AC" in the relationships between "SL" and "EP" (Std. Beta = 0.228, P = 0.000), with both the lower and upper bounds of the bootstrapped confidence interval surpassing zero. This indicates that zero did not fall within the interval, and the P value was 0.000, in line with the recommendations of Preacher and Hayes (2008). These results support the mediating influence of affective commitment, thus validating hypothesis H4.

Table 6. Path Coefficient of the study Hypotheses (Significant at P** = < 0.01)

| Hypothesis (Paths) | Effect | Std. Beta | Std. Error | T Value | P values | Results |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1: SL -> EP | Direct | 1.022 | 0.036 | 28.388 | 0.000 | Supported** |
| H2: SL ->AC | Direct | 0.771 | 0.023 | 33.521 | 0.000 | Supported** |
| H3: AC ->EP | Direct | 0.297 | 0.048 | 6.188 | 0.000 | Supported** |
| H4: SL ->AC -> EP | Indirect | 0.228 | 0.038 | 6 | 0.000 | Supported** |

### DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTION

Based on Spiritual Leadership theory, this study delves into examining how "SL" impacts "AC" and "EP" among hotel employees in Egypt. Furthermore, it explores how "AC" mediates the relationship between "SL" and "EP". This investigation

aims to offer a more profound insight into how leadership styles grounded in values and transcendent purpose affect employee attitudes and behaviors, consequently molding organizational effectiveness and success within the distinctive environment of the hotel industry in Egypt. The findings revealed that "SL" significantly and positively influences "EP" among employees in the hotel industry in Egypt, aligning closely with prior research by Wu et al. (2020) who examined the impact of spiritual leadership on employee engagement and found a significant positive association between the two constructs in a Taiwanese context. Similarly, the results indicated a significant positive relationship between "SL" and "AC" among hotel industry employees in Egypt, consistent with the findings of Ullah et al. (2023) who explored the influence of SL on knowledge-hiding behavior through commitment in Pakistani agriculture research institutes who found that SL through their emphasis on values and transcendental purpose, cultivate a work environment where feel emotionally committed their organizations.

Additionally, it was found that "AC" significantly and positively impacts "EP" among hotel industry employees in Egypt, echoing the conclusions drawn by Nizam and Hameed (2023) who explored the influence of Knowledge Sharing on EP and the role of AC in Pakistani banking sector who showed that AC leads to enhanced EP, characterized by increased productivity, job satisfaction, and positive team dynamics. Moreover, the results underscore the indirect effect of "SL" on "EP" among hotel industry employees in Egypt through the intermediary role of "AC", confirming the mediating function of "AC" between these variables. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Maryati and Astuti (2022) explored the role of AC in the relationship between of SL and EP of lecturers in Indonesian private universities who affirmed that AC fosters a strong emotional connection between lecturers and their universities generally and their SL and their performance.

The study has yielded several outcomes that carry significance for both theoretical understanding and practical application within the hotel industry. It addressed gaps in existing literature concerning the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between spiritual leadership and employee performance in the hotel sector. This implies that "AC" holds the potential to modify the impact of "SL" on "EP". Furthermore, these results hold managerial implications for the hotel industry, highlighting the necessity for leaders within these establishments to foster positive spiritual and social interactions and prioritize employees' affective commitment, thereby influencing their performance positively. By recognizing and leveraging these reciprocal dynamics, the findings from this research can inform leadership strategies aimed at nurturing thriving and high-performance work environments within the Egyptian hotel industry.

The research findings contribute to enrich the existing theoretical framework by integrating the concepts of spiritual leadership and affective commitment within the context of the Egyptian hospitality sector. By synthesizing these concepts, we provide a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms that drive employee performance in this unique cultural setting. The research also highlights the significance of aligning leadership practices with the cultural values and norms prevalent in Egyptian society. Our research offers practical implications for decision makers within the Egyptian hospitality sector. By identifying the key spiritual leadership practices that foster affective commitment among employees, we provide guidance for leaders to cultivate a work environment conducive to employee engagement, satisfaction, and ultimately, enhanced performance.

**CONCLUSION**

This study aims to explore the direct influence of spiritual leadership on affective commitment and employee performance among individuals working in the hotel industry in Egypt, as well as the indirect influence of "SL" on "EP" through "AC". Data were gathered from 623 employees in Egyptian hotels. Descriptive data were analyzed using SPSS version 29 and Excel Sheet 2021 to examine demographic characteristics of the participants. Furthermore, PLS-SEM version 4.0.9.9 was employed to investigate the direct and indirect relationships between variables and to assess the research hypotheses. The SEM findings revealed that spiritual leadership positively and significantly affects affective commitment and employee performance among hotel industry employees in Egypt. Additionally, the results demonstrated a mediating role of affective commitment in the association between spiritual leadership and employee performance in the Egyptian hotel industry. Recognizing and leveraging these reciprocal dynamics may assist decision-makers in formulating leadership strategies aimed at fostering thriving and high-performance work environments in Egyptian hotels.

Like preceding research endeavors, this study has inherent limitations and constraints that indicate avenues for future investigation. Subsequent inquiries could delve into demographic variables like gender and age, either as moderators or by conducting analyses across diverse groups to discern variations in the examined relationships. Furthermore, further exploration could probe alternative mediators, contrasting their impacts with those observed in our study. It's imperative to be cautious when generalizing the findings of this study, considering its exclusive focus on employees in the Egyptian hospitality sector. Hence, future research endeavors could reevaluate the current model across a range of cultural contexts.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

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