



# “What is my organization doing for me?” Organizational supportive measures in gearing job performance: thriving at work amid COVID-19

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## Abstract

The present study explores the link between organizational supportive measures i.e., perceived organizational support during COVID (POS-COV) and employees' satisfaction with the organization's COVID-19 responses (SOCV19R) in boosting employees' thriving at work leading to their job performance grounding on the conservation of resources (COR) theory. The study further delves deeper into how servant leadership moderates the rapport between (POS-COV, SOCV19R) and thriving at work. Two wave dyadic data from 265 full-time frontline hotel workers in China, through a simple random sampling technique and adapted questionnaire design based on 5-point Likert scale. The study performed analysis including descriptive statistics, correlation, multicollinearity diagnosis, reliability, validity, and model fitness indexes. It further examined the direct, indirect and moderation analysis based on 5000 bootstrapped samples with 95% confidence interval through the Structural equation model (SEM) technique using AMOS and PROCESS macro comprising five hypotheses. The results illustrate that POS-COV and employees' SOCV19R tend to influence employees' thriving positively and thriving affects job performance positively. Thriving mediates (POS-COV, SOCV19R) and job performance. Servant leadership moderated the positive link between (POS-COV, SOCV19R) and thriving. This study brings inferences for the hospitality industry by highlighting the importance of organizational supportive measures to promote their thriving and job performance amid COVID-19.

**Keywords** Perceived organizational support during COVID · Satisfaction with organization's COVID-19 responses · Thriving at work · Job performance · Servant leadership · COVID-19

## Introduction

What makes employees thrive and perform their jobs effectively amid COVID-19? To answer this question, we look into the organizational behavior literature in the COVID context. COVID-19 has been a critical factor in recent times and has been declared as an established ongoing health issue (<https://www.who.int/news/item/>). Up till the first half of 2023, WHO reported 6.9 million casualties (<https://covid19.who.int/>). Since COVID-19's deleterious consequences affected everyone differently, the hospitality industry has faced a hard hit from COVID-19 as it heavily relies on human interaction and was exposed to COVID-19's spread because of its infectious nature (Duarte Alonso et al., 2020). The previous literature stated that COVID-19 brought psychological and work-related stress for employees which caused a decline in their tendency to thrive at work (Chew et al., 2020; Li et al., 2022), and COVID-19's stress and risk perception enhanced depression and lowered their job performance (Sarfranz et al., 2022; Yan et al., 2021). To mitigate

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the depression, fear, anxiety and stress due to COVID-19 and nourish the employees' thriving at work and their job performance, limited literature is available on organizations' responses to how they have supported their employees during COVID-19 to retain effective employee performance.

The current research addresses the disparity by investigating the connection between the contextual supportive measures implemented by organizations in response to COVID-19, aimed at fostering employee well-being and productivity, and their impact on job performance amidst the pandemic. In this vein, the study at hand investigates two less explored COVID contextual supportive measures. First, perceived organizational support during COVID (POS-COV) which is explained as recognizing employees' efforts and providing them support for their physical and mental health in the face of COVID (Vo-Thanh et al., 2020). Secondly, the preventive measures implemented by the organization for employees' safety and to mitigate the risks posed by COVID-19 (SOCV19R).

We aim to investigate the direct effects of POS-COV and employees' SOCV19R on employees' thriving and their effects on job performance indirectly via the mediation of employees' thriving amidst the health emergency caused by COVID-19. The study at hand also undertakes to examine the thriving and employees' job performance link.

The frontline hotel workers have been exposed to the risk of COVID spread due to which, fear and anxiety caused a decline in their psychological resources. The risk of being exposed to COVID-19 builds a stress base, which causes the depletion of resources (Tu et al., 2021). From a resource perspective, conservation of resources theory (COR) provides grounds for this notion that individuals experience stress when their resource pool experiences a loss cycle, on the other hand, the acquisition and retention of resources make them relaxed and satisfied (Hobfoll et al., 2018). The current study underscores that POS-COV and SOCV19R as organizational contextual supportive measures during COVID-19, provide psychological resources to employees grounding on COR (Chang & Busser, 2020; Vo-Thanh et al., 2020), by which they feel thrived at work and consequently can perform their job effectively.

Organizational support literature further entails the policies and procedures to promote individuals' well-being, coaching, supportive communication and leadership, etc. (Wu et al., 2020). Among these factors, servant leadership is characterized to serve its followers by putting their interests first (Brownell, 2010). Servant leadership is explained as the leader's follower-oriented approach, prioritizing followers' needs, and putting others' concerns before his own (Eva et al., 2019).

While the organizations' supportive measures provide psychological resources to employees to make them thrive, leadership support can motivate them and contribute to thriving at work by interacting with organizational supportive measures

for COVID-19. We proposed servant leadership as a moderating factor between {POS-COV and SOCV19R} with employees' thriving. The previous research has discussed the adversity of pandemic on individuals' behavior and this study is important in highlighting the organizational stance in dealing with COVID-19 and taking into account the prioritization of employees' thriving and job performance.

Taken together, this study undertakes five hypotheses consisting of POS-COV, employees' SOCV19R, thriving, job performance and servant leadership. The study at hand adopted the survey method to acquire the two-wave dyadic data through Likert scale from 265 frontline hotel workers in China. The analysis consisted of reliability, validity, model fitness index, direct, indirect and interaction paths through AMOS and PROCESS macro were performed through SPSS, AMOS.

The multifold contributions to existing research can be seen in the study at hand. Firstly, it investigates the impact of POS-COV and employees' SOCV19R on their thriving at work. Secondly, unveiling the thriving-job performance rapport. Third, exploring thriving as a mediator between POS-COV, employees' SOCV19R and job performance. Fourth, exploring the crucial boundary condition of servant leadership between the {POS-COV and employees' SOCV19R} and thriving work. Fifth, grounding on the Conservation of resources, it provides insights into hospitality literature during the Pandemic and brings managerial implications regarding individuals' conservation and retention of resources.

## Hypotheses

### POS-COV and thriving

Based on the definition of POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), POS-COV means that employees are being valued, their contributions are recognized during COVID, and the organization is concerned about their well-being. For example, the organization shows its concern for employees' well-being and mental health while they are performing their jobs in the face of COVID and also equip them with personal resources which boost their motivation (Tu et al., 2021). During COVID-19, organizations provided support by taking care of members' mental and physical health, in turn, the employees' perception of organizational support is strengthened (Vo-Thanh et al., 2020).

We propose that POS-COV is conducive to employees' psychological state by providing resources to make employees thrive. Thriving at work is described as the concurrent experience of vitality and learning (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Existing literature postulates that organizational support strengthens learning with vitality in the workplace (Abid et al., 2016). POS-COV provides emotional resources to employees to boost their motivation (Tu et al., 2021). For

example, it helps in countering employees' anxiety and fear of COVID and boosts their confidence by treating them well, recognizing their efforts and motivating them (Tu et al., 2021). The thriving model also supports the notion that positive affective resources enable thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Perceived organizational support builds employees' trust in their organization that it cares about their needs. The thriving model underscores that a climate of trust promotes thriving in individuals (Spreitzer et al., 2005).

In the face of COVID-19, gaining resources through organizational support has been an important aspect for employees to retain their well-being. COR explains the mechanism of acquisition and retention of existing resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Amid COVID-19, the workers expect supportive resources from the organization, therefore Perceived organizational support during COVID as a contextual variable, provides resources to boost their motivation and well-being (Tu et al., 2021).

Supporting employees during COVID-19 (e.g., providing them resources such as physical space, job time flexibility, monetary reliefs, entertainment opportunities at work, free medical supplies, psychological counseling sessions, bonuses to front-liners, free and discounted meals, etc.) means that the organization extends its support for learning and feeling vital at workplace (Zhai et al., 2020). Organizational support during COVID-19 can provide a pool of resources to make employees energetic and maintain learning mechanisms that can act as a shield against the loss of resources (Zhai et al., 2020).

H1: POS-COV positively affects thriving at work.

### Employees' SOCV19R and thriving

The study at hand contends that employees' SOCV19R bears a positive influence on thriving. COR has been a core theory in explaining organization-employees' bond in terms of the provision of resources and utilization of those resources. It suggests that human beings not only strive to gain but also retain the resources to perform well (Hobfoll, 1989). Job resources do not only prepare the individual to meet the job demands but also promote their psychological state.

In recent times amid COVID-19, the discussion about how organizational supportive measures promote workers' well-being and job performance, has been of great interest (Lee, Choi, & Kang, 2021). Vo-Thanh et al. (2020) stated that individuals' SOCV19R develops a resource pool that boosts motivation and trust. Mao et al. (2021) suggested that employees' SOCV19R is a source of motivation and strengthens individuals' psychological capital.

Satisfaction with Covid responses makes individuals more resourceful and can formulate high-quality relationships and strengthen learning behavior (Zhai et al., 2020). During

COVID-19, individuals can interact with their colleagues to promote their learning at work when they are satisfied with the responses of their organization towards COVID-19 (Niessen, Sonnentag, & Sach, 2012). A dynamic work approach contains much of the work to be performed in groups and teams which makes employees feel vital (Paterson et al., 2014).

Vo-Thanh et al. (2020) stated that individuals' SOCV19R develops trust in their organization and they feel safe, secure and motivated to perform their job activities. A higher level of resource provision to employees develops trust, strengthens their support perception and enables their thriving at work (Abid et al., 2015; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Moreover, employees' SOCV19R boosts employees' confidence and motivates them to work amid COVID challenges (Mao et al., 2021), which provides the opportunity to learn and experience vitality.

H2: Employees' SOCV19R positively affects thriving.

### Thriving and job performance

As an in-role behavior, job performance is an involuntary behavior that has to be accomplished appropriately as a part of job duties (Yu & Frenkel, 2013). Porath et al. (2012) stated that effective job performance is a way to meet the organization's expectations from its members through performance efficiency phenomena. Learning as an intellectual competency enhances the effectiveness to perform well at work (Rose et al., 2009). Vitality is prone to expand cognitive processes, it elicits the necessary behavioral inclinations and empowers employees to generate novel ideas and thoughts (Shahid et al., 2020).

Since individuals need resources to perform well (Hobfoll et al., 2018), Thriving individuals are resourceful and are more attached to the organization and they tend to exhibit an enhanced level of performance (Walumbwa et al., 2018). A stage where these learning resources are combined with vitality becomes a more suitable way of acquiring and retaining the pool of resources (Bruch & Ghoshal, 2003). Thriving has been used as a mechanism for individuals' self-regulation, which brings control over their work and eventually, they exhibit an enhanced level of performance (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Frazier and Tupper (2018) suggested that thriving employees gain motivation and tend to perform their jobs effectively.

H3: Thriving positively affects job performance.

### Thriving as mediator

We propose that POS-COV and employees' SOCV19R enhance employees' thriving and consequently will enhance

their job performance. We consider POS-COV and employees' SOCV19R as organizational supportive factors which will affect employees' job performance through thriving. Previous literature showcased thriving as a mediating factor between supportive factors, for example, supportive leadership (Paterson et al., 2014; Taneva & Arnold, 2018) Empowering leadership (Ali et al., 2018) Leader-member exchange (Li, 2015) Organizational justice (Farid et al., 2021) and can result in in-role, extra-role and creative job performance (Kleine et al., 2019). Conservation of resources suggests that resources travel in the package which means that resources emerge through supportive work organizations (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

POS-COV produces supportive resources to help employees in nurturing their psychological conditions (Tu et al., 2021) and can be a motivator for their experience of thriving. Based on organizational support phenomena, POS-COV signals that individuals' well-being matters the most to the organization (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), which strengthens their trust in the organization and they feel more vital and keep on learning at work during COVID times. Employees' SOCV19R posits that when employees are satisfied with the measures taken by the organization at the workplace to protect them against COVID, they feel motivated (Vo-Thanh et al., 2020). COR explicates that resource provision boosts individuals' motivation psychologically (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Frazier and Tupper (2018) stated that thriving injects cognitive resources which yields an accomplishment of job duties in a refined way. Combined with vitality, acquiring and retaining physical and psychological resources results in effective job performance (Fredrickson, 2001). The socially-embedded model posits that motivated individuals tend to experience thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Organizational supportive measures produce the resources and can enhance individuals' learning and vitality (Abid et al., 2015; Ortiz-Bonnin et al., 2022) and resultantly, thriving individuals exhibit better in-role performance. Moreover, thriving's mediation has been evidenced between contextual factors and job outcomes (Kleine et al., 2019; Shahid et al., 2020).

H4: Thriving mediates {(a) POS-COV (b) Employees' SOCV19R} and job performance.

### Servant leadership as a moderator

It is explained as serving others and focusing on subordinates' needs which are considered crucial in shaping an effective organization (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leadership is rooted in the idea that leaders should nurture their followers to shape their behavior to exhibit servant leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Servant leaders place a high priority on their followers and recognize their

responsibilities toward society (Pressentin, 2020). For servant leaders, protecting the well-being of all stakeholders - whether they are employees, customers, or members of the community - is the top priority (Ehrhart, 2004). Servant leadership encompasses different traits such as listening, empathy, stewardship, foresightedness, conceptualization, and healing (Spears, 2004). Servant leadership has been a critical factor in the organizational context (Chen & Kanfer, 2006).

Existing literature evidenced that servant leadership brings positive behavioral and attitudinal outcomes in individuals i.e. LMX and Trust (Lee et al., 2020); task focus, heedful relating (Usman et al., 2020); extra-role behaviors (Elche et al., 2020). The present study proposes servant leadership as a moderator between organizational supportive measures and thriving. Previous studies postulate that servant leadership acts as a boundary condition between organizational supportive measures and thriving (Farid et al., 2021).

In the face of COVID-19, employees experienced anxiety, depression and fear which resulted in depletion of the resources (Tu et al., 2021). In this scenario, individuals require more resources for their well-being and psychological health. The resources' generation through POS-COV and employees' SOCV19R might not be sufficient for individuals. In this vein, servant leaders can provide additional resources to their followers through their support and serving them. Hospitality workers were exposed to depression which played an adverse effect on their mental health (Yan et al., 2021). COR theory elucidates the individuals' need for resources that are crucial to their psychological health (Hobfoll, 1989). In this scenario, servant leadership can moderate as it can reduce not only the effects of negative factors but can also contribute to resource provision to make them motivated (Tu et al., 2021). Servant leaders shape such a work context where employees feel motivated and confident (Babakus et al., 2011).

Servant leadership provides resources that are needed to feel more energetic and motivated (Gerbasi et al., 2015), which strengthens the relationship between organizations and their members and enhances their thriving level. During COVID-19 times, employees need a greater level of leader's support. Farid et al. (2021) stated that servant leadership can moderate the relationships between organizational supportive factors and thriving. Servant leaders have a unique way to help their followers to nourish and feel thriving (Usman et al., 2020). Therefore, servant leadership as a boundary condition is argued to moderate the effects of POS-COV and SOCV19R on employees' thriving.

H5: Servant leadership moderates the link between {(a) POS-COV and (b) employees' SOCV19R} and employees' thriving.

## Methods

### Sample and procedures

The participants belonged to the Chinese hospitality industry. Since the pandemic health emergency, a lot of changes have taken place in China, including testing at the mass level, monitoring health codes in every city and especially during inter-city traveling. The front-line hotel workers had to be more vigilant because they always have to interact with inbound domestic and international travelers with different itineraries.

Two-wave data were collected during October and November 2022 from frontline hotel employee-supervisor dyads. Frontline hotel employees are in an advantageous position because of proximity to customers, in-depth understanding of operations, rapport with customers and real-time feedback collection. After contacting the Human resources department of the hotels, we gave a brief to employees and supervisors and collected data from agreed participants of employee-supervisor dyads with the help of human resource representatives in each hotel. The duties of these frontline hotel employees consisted of dealing with guest inquiries, complaints, managing tours to local attractions, maintaining accurate guest records, coordinating with other hotel departments to fulfill guest needs, assisting guests with travel arrangements such as booking transportation, making restaurant reservations, and arranging sightseeing tours, dining options, handling guest requests for special services or amenities, assisting with luggage handling and storage, and providing general assistance and information to enhance guests' overall experience.

Through a simple random sampling technique, at time 1, we distributed 310 questionnaires to frontline hotel workers to get their responses about POS-COV, employees' SOCV19R, thriving at work and servant leadership. The anonymity was assured to the participants and also that the study results will purely be used for academic purposes. We received 284 useful questionnaires from the first wave of the data collection process. After one month, at time 2, the questionnaires were distributed to supervisors of respective workers to record their responses about employees' job performance. The total number of useful questionnaires we received was 265 after the second wave of data collection. We assigned them researcher-generated unique codes and after getting questionnaires from both employees and supervisors, we matched them through the same researcher-generated unique codes. Finally, with 265 useful questionnaires from employee-supervisor dyads summed up to an 85.48% response rate.

The present study controlled the demographics' effects for their potential impact on variables of interest (Ng & Feldman, 2012). For example, existing studies stated that

**Table 1** Demographic details

	Frequencies	%age
Gender		
Male	114	43
Female	151	57
Total	265	100
Age (years)		
20 to 25	70	26.4
26 to 30	76	28.7
31 to 35	60	22.6
36 to 40	29	10.9
Above 40	30	11.3
Total	265	100
Education		
Secondary school	99	37.3
Inter or Bachelor	144	54.3
Masters or higher	22	8.4
Total	265	100
Period of employment in years		
1 to 5	190	71.7
6 to 10	45	17.0
11 to 15	17	6.4
16 to 20	13	4.9
Total	265	100

older workers may feel exhausted in terms of job performance (Uchino et al., 2006). The educational level and employment tenure may vary in exhibiting job performance (Denton & Kleiman, 2001; Elahi et al., 2020; Yu & Frenkel, 2013). Moreover, previous literature suggested controlling for the effects of demographics for their potential effect on an individual's thriving (Abid et al., 2015). The majority of the respondents were women 151 (57%). Most workers had the age of 20–30 years 146 (55%). 144 (54.3%) respondents had inter or bachelor. 190 (71.7%) employees were having 1 to 5 years of experience in their job (Table 1).

### Measures

We used Likert scale for data acquisition (“1” strongly disagree to “5” strongly agree).

**POS-COV.** To gauge this concept, a six-items scale was followed by Tu et al. (2021). The scale consists of “During COVID-19, my organization is willing to help me when I need a special favor.” with ( $\alpha$ ) value 0.851.

**SOCV19R.** Three items were borrowed from Ortiz-Bonin et al. (2022). The sample items include “In general, I am satisfied with my organization's reaction to COVID-19” with ( $\alpha$ ) value 0.843.

**Thriving at work.** Ten items were borrowed from Porath et al. (2012) including “I feel alive and vital” with ( $\alpha$ ) value 0.927.

**Servant leadership.** It was analyzed through seven items from Liden et al. (2015) which encompasses “My leader puts my best interests ahead of his/her own.” with ( $\alpha$ ) value 0.905.

**Job performance.** Four-item were borrowed from Rhoades et al. (2001). The scale consisted of “This employee Performs tasks that are expected of him or her” with ( $\alpha$ ) value 0.794.

## Data analysis

We performed different tests to analyze the data before further analysis. First, we checked the reliability at the construct level consisting of ( $\alpha$ ) and (composite reliability) values. Hair et al. (2019) suggested that the criterion should be ranged between 0.70–0.95. The “ $\alpha$ ” values ranged 0.843–0.927 which surpassed the threshold of 0.70 and the composite reliability ranged from 0.846 to 0.929 which is greater than 0.70 and suggests that the present study meets the criterion range of being between 0.70 and 0.95 (Hair et al., 2019).

As a next step, we analyzed the convergent validity through Average variance extraction (AVE), which is a widely used measure to ensure the criterion requirement of convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). The AVE was found to be 0.542–0.650, surpassing the cut-off value of 0.50 which indicates a greater amount of the variance in the constructs, suggesting better convergent validity.

To examine whether the indicators or items of one construct correlate more strongly with their construct than with other constructs, we checked the discriminant validity for which the correlations among the constructs are  $< 0.85$  and the  $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$  is higher than the correlation among variables (Table 2). We analyzed model fitness indicators through AMOS and the five-factor model  $\chi^2 = 410.884$ ,  $df = 395$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.040$ , SRMR = 0.048, CFI = 0.996, GFI = 0.910 RMSEA = 0.012 exhibits a good fit. Moreover, to know about the magnitude of multicollinearity, the present study analyzed the variance inflation factor (VIF) whose threshold

should be  $< 3.0$  (Hair et al., 2019), and it ranged from 1.04 to 1.32, which shows no adversity of collinearity (Table 2).

Data analytics was performed through SPSS, and direct and indirect hypotheses were tested through Structural equation model (SEM) AMOS because it can examine the relationships among variables and test complex theoretical models. Moderating effects were checked through PROCESS macro by using model 1 (Hayes, 2013). Descriptive statistics showed a correlation between POS-COV, employees’ SOCV19R, thriving at work, servant leadership and job performance. Next, the direct paths of organizational supportive measures and thriving and their indirect paths with job performance through thriving were analyzed using SEM AMOS. We analyzed the servant leadership’s interaction with POS-COV and employees’ SOCV19R on thriving, using model 1 of PROCESS macro with a 95% confidence interval and 5000 bootstrap samples.

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

The mean values of constructs ranged from 3.07 to 3.78, whereas the SD ranged from 0.85 to 0.92. The correlation analysis shows satisfactory outcomes such as POS-COV and thriving ( $r = 0.326$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), SOCV19R and thriving ( $r = 0.399$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), thriving and job performance ( $r = 0.329$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and servant leadership and thriving ( $r = 0.208$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) (Table 2).

### Hypothesis testing

Table 3 consists of Path analysis where Hypothesis 1 and 2 proposed that POS-COV and employees’ SOCV19R have a positive influence on thriving. Based on results ( $\beta = 0.193$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), ( $\beta = 0.366$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) the said paths are supported. H3 proposed that thriving influences job performance positively which is supported based on the results ( $\beta = 0.388$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) (Fig. 1). Thriving was posed as mediator between POS-COV (H4a), employees’ SOCV19R (H4b) and job performance. According to the results, the said paths are supported ( $\beta = 0.075$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), and ( $\beta = 0.142$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) respectively (Table 3). Servant

**Table 2** Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients

Variables	Mean	SD	VIF	POS	SOCV19R	TAW	SL	JP
POS-COV	3.07	0.85	1.24	<b>0.736</b>				
SOCV19R	3.18	0.92	1.32	0.408**	<b>0.806</b>			
TAW	3.23	0.88	1.29	0.326**	0.399**	<b>0.753</b>		
SL	3.78	0.88	1.04	0.025	0.053	0.208**	<b>0.793</b>	
JP	3.24	0.88	1.13	0.244**	0.301**	0.329**	0.118	<b>0.760</b>

\*\* $p < 0.01$

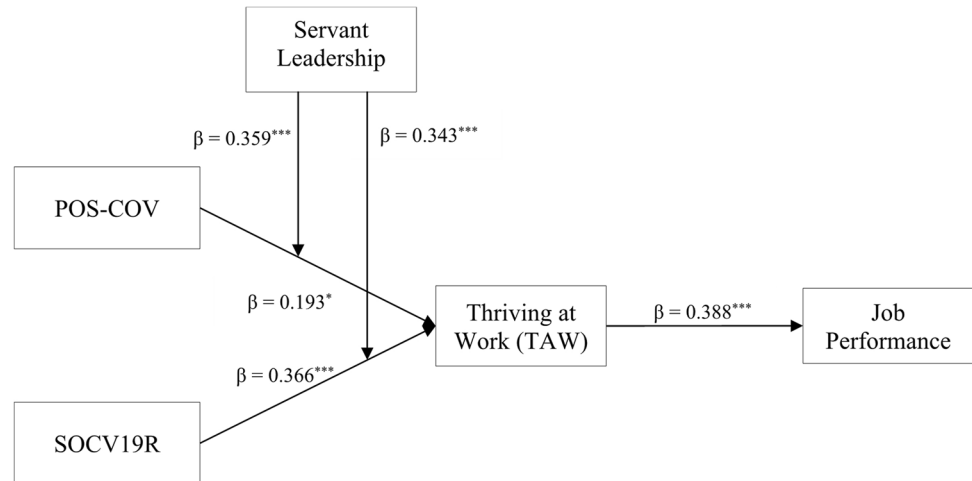
Note:  $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$  is depicted in bold

**Table 3** Direct, indirect and interactional paths

Hypothesis	Paths	Effect size	S.E	LLCI-ULCI	Relationship
H1	POS-COV-->TAW	0.193*	0.071	0.042–0.322	Supported
H2	SOCV19R-->TAW	0.366***	0.084	0.201–0.531	Supported
H3	TAW--->JP	0.388***	0.080	0.224–0.537	Supported
H4a	POS-COV-->TAW-->JP	0.075**	0.033	0.019–0.151	Supported
H4b	SOCV19R-->TAW-->JP	0.142***	0.047	0.064–0.247	Supported
H5a	SL* POS-COV ----->TAW	0.359***	0.068	0.224–0.493	Supported
H5b	SL* SOCV19R ----->TAW	0.343***	0.049	0.246–0.439	Supported

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

**Fig. 1** Theoretical framework



leadership was supposed to moderate the rapport between POS-COV (H5a), SOCV19R (H5b) and individuals’ thriving. The proposed paths gained affirmation through results ( $\beta = 0.359$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), and ( $\beta = 0.343$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 3, Fig. 1). Moreover, Figs. 2 and 3 show the graph of interaction.

**Discussion**

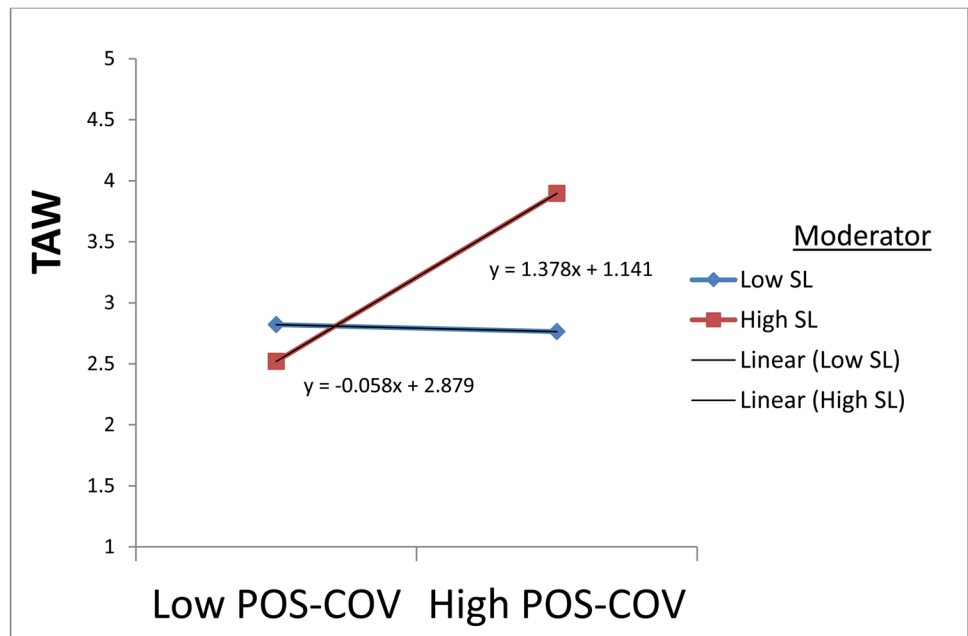
The study reveals how organizations support their employees to make them thrive and enhance job performance amid COVID. The study undertakes five hypotheses to support and explain the current framework in the hospitality industry of China. We hypothesized that organizational supportive measures during COVID such as POS-COV tend to influence employees’ thriving positively. The regression analysis showed support for the aforesaid relationship (H1 supported) which shows that when organizations extend their support to their members during COVID and employees are being valued, recognized, and cared about, then they tend to feel thrived. This outcome conforms to the existing literature which portrays that when an organization shows support to the employees, they resultantly experience thriving (Chang & Busser, 2020). Watkins et al. (2015) stated that national support during the crisis may not be availed due to

emergencies, yet organizational support provides help and care during COVID-19 (Ortiz-Bonnin et al., 2022), which provides resources to boost learning and vitality.

Second, as per the results, employees’ SOCV19R influences thriving at work (H2 supported) which suggests that individuals feel supported, protected and keep on learning and feeling vital. The consistency with existing research findings can be observed where the employees’ SOCV19R as organizational support helps to reduce negative elements and promote positivity (Fan, Potočnik, & Chaudhry, 2021). Furthermore, during challenging events such as COVID-19, it boosts the individuals’ psychological capital and helps to overcome health and work-related threats (Mao et al., 2021) and as a contextual factor it helps employees to retain their thriving level.

Third, the study explicates through the results that thriving gleans an effective job performance amid COVID-19 (H3 supported). Consistent with previous research, individuals’ experience of thriving is positively associated with their job performance (Taneva & Arnold, 2018) but this study adds from the COVID contextual aspect where the importance of thriving individuals and its effects on their job performance has been exhibited. Tu et al. (2021) suggested that stress causes the loss of resources which can bear detrimental effects on employees’ job performance, which means that to yield an

**Fig. 2** Servant leader as moderator POS-COV and thriving



effective job performance, great attention should be given to protecting employees from stress and other detrimental factors in COVID and promoting their thriving at work.

Fourth, we proposed thriving as a mediator among employees' SOCV19R, POS-COV and job performance. The results showed support for the said mediating paths (H4a, H4b supported). This implies that organizational COVID contextual supportive measures enhance individuals' experience of thriving and the resultant performance of job tasks. These findings are evidenced to have support from existing literature. Abid et al. (2015) posed thriving as a mediator between organizational support and innovative behavior. Ortiz-Bonnin et al. (2022) examined that employees' SOCV19R promoted the work-life balance and resultantly affected employees' job performance effectively. Finally, this result endorses the mediating mechanism of thriving that has positive contextual antecedents and brings positive behavioral and attitudinal consequences (Kleine et al., 2019).

Fifth, we put forward the notion that servant leadership acts as a boundary condition for the rapport between POS-COV, employees' SOCV19R and thriving at work, which gained support through results (H5a, H5b supported). The previous findings stated that servant leadership significantly moderates organizational supportive measures and thriving's links (Farid et al., 2021). Moreover, servant leadership boosts the individuals' thriving through resources provision and enhancing individuals' thriving by interacting with organizational supportive measures related to COVID (POS-COV and SOCV19R).

Lastly, Since the Pandemic has adversely affected the hotel industry, COR theory urges the need for resources through supportive measures (Hobfoll, 1989), through which they

can continue their learning process and feel vital. POS-COV and employees' SOCV19R as supportive measures provide employees support and resources through which they can be able to gain more resources to experience thriving and exhibit effective job performance.

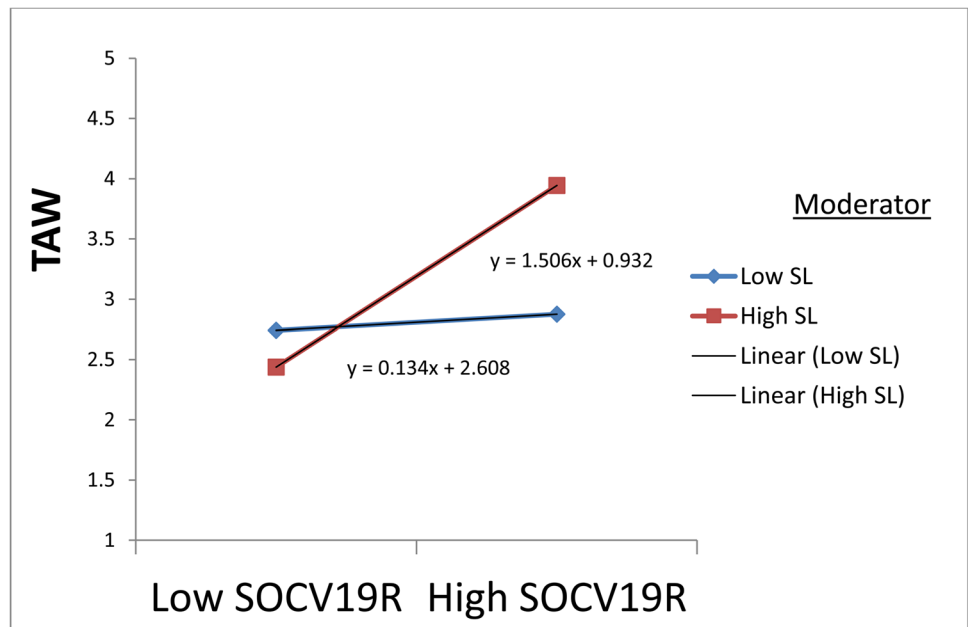
### Theoretical implications

The current research brings several additions to the prior knowledge by bridging the discrepancies in the literature. First, it explores the direct effects of perceived organizational support during COVID on thriving. Frontline hotel workers faced hardships during COVID-19 and they expect targeted support from organizations amid COVID (Tu et al., 2021). Based on the fundamentals of POS (Eisenberger et al., 1986), this study has discussed its relation with thriving at work as a COVID contextual variable which explains that organization recognizes and cares about individuals' well-being in confronting COVID-19.

Second, a relatively new concept i.e. satisfaction with organization's COVID-19 responses that explains that individuals are satisfied with organizations' steps to protect employees against COVID-19 (Ortiz-Bonnin et al., 2022), was examined as an antecedent to thriving at work. Previous studies discussed the adversity of COVID-19 on employees, entailing anxiety and depression which causes resource depletion (Tu et al., 2021). This study shows that SOCV19R provides resources and enables employees to thrive. Third, thriving was examined as a mediating mechanism among POS-COV, employees' SOCV19R and job performance. Previously, meta-analysis has discussed the



**Fig. 3** Servant leader as moderator between SOCV19R and thriving



mediated mechanism of thriving between contextual factors and employees' job performance (Kleine et al., 2019).

This study extends the knowledge pool by investigating the thriving as a mediator between COVID contextual supportive aspects and employees' job performance. Fourth, servant leadership moderates the relationship between POS-COV, employees' SOCV19R and employees' thriving. Servant leadership highlights its significance by putting followers first and interacting with organizational supportive measures for COVID to promote individuals thriving at work. Finally, it adds to the conservation of resources theory that how resource pool can be accumulated through Organizational supportive measures during COVID-19 which can promote employees' thriving at work and eventually their job performance. Moreover, servant leadership enhances the pool of resources to help individuals to thrive by interacting with organizational supportive measures during COVID-19.

### Practical implications

Besides theoretical contributions, the preset study discusses the practical implications and policy recommendations for hospitality managers. First, the results suggest that POS-COV enhances thriving at work, which shows organizations' extensive support and care of their employees' well-being to make them thrive amid COVID-19. This can be done by initiating health and well-being programs, mental health support, remote work infrastructure, demonstrating a genuine commitment to employees' health, safety, and overall well-being. Existing research portrays a prolific role of perceived organizational support in promoting a healthy bond between an organization and its

members (Li et al., 2019). Second, Employees' SOCV19R and their ability to thrive at work during the pandemic has significant practical implications for organizations, which suggests that to make employees thrive at work, organizations need to provide free medical supplies, flexible work arrangements, Implement comprehensive health and safety protocols aligned with recommended guidelines from health authorities, health monitoring and ensuring their protection in their work environment, both physically and psychologically.

Third, the significant mediating mechanism of thriving between organizational supportive measures and job performance suggests hotel managers provide more resources to employees through COVID-related supportive measures through which employees can learn and feel vital and ultimately exhibit effective job performance. Fourth, from the perspective of servant leadership as a moderator, it can amplify the impact of organizational supportive measures by embodying the principles of servant leadership. Their empathetic and supportive approach can reinforce the effectiveness of these measures, making employees feel more cared for and valued and enhancing their thriving at work.

### Limitation and future direction

Along with the different theoretical and policy recommendations, this study bears limitations and hereafter provides future directions also. The implications may be limited in generalizability because of the Chinese hospitality workers' sample. Different industries, organizational sizes, and cultural contexts could influence the relationships between

POS-COV, employees' SOCV19R, servant leadership, employees' thriving, and job performance. Future studies can reproduce the results in diverse settings. Second, while this study explores thriving as a mediator, there may be other psychological and behavioral mechanisms through which organizational supportive measures for COVID-19 influence job performance. Future research could explore additional mediating constructs such as organizational commitment, psychological well-being, or work motivation to broaden the horizon of underlying processes.

Third, investigating boundary conditions other than servant leadership would be valuable. For example, exploring how individual differences (e.g., age, gender, tenure) or other leadership styles can moderate the relationships between organizational supportive measures for COVID-19 and thriving at work could enhance our understanding and provide practical implications tailored to specific conditions.

Fourth, considering the limitation of conducting this study at the individual level, we suggest that examining this framework at different levels of analysis could provide insights into how these factors interact and influence each other. Future research can employ multi-level modeling techniques to disentangle the effects at various levels and examine potential cross-level interactions.

Fifth, we gathered two-wave data from supervisor-employee dyads to avoid CMB (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The memory bias and drop rate were lowered by the two-wave data collection approach (Einarsen et al., 2009). The previous literature stated that both shorter and longer intervals can cause varied central tendencies of the respondents due to temporal-contextual effects (Maaß et al., 2022). Future studies can also adopt other strategies i.e., interviews with managers and also collecting longitudinal data to have an extensive understanding of results. Lastly, the present study expounded servant leadership as a boundary condition on POS-COV, employees' SOCV19R and thriving, forthcoming research can employ other theoretical lens and examining other boundary conditions.

## Conclusion

The hospitality industry has been a core part of the economy of every country. The Chinese hospitality sector has been vigilant in this regard. However, frontline hotel workers remained in a critical position due to the interaction of the public at large, during the COVID health emergency. The results underscore that POS-COV and employees' SOCV19R influence employees' thriving positively and resultantly promote their job performance. Moreover, servant leadership moderates the relationship of POS-COV, employees' SOCV19R and thriving. Overall, this study brings some useful insights into hotel organizations and can promote their frontline personnel's thriving at work and

job performance by recognizing employees' efforts during COVID (POS-COV) and adopting measures to protect them from being exposed to COVID-19 (employees' SOCV19R). Moreover, servant leaders can provide resources and nourish their followers' thriving at work.

**Data availability** The data that support the findings of this study are available from Hohai university but restrictions apply to the availability of these data, which were used under license for the current study, and so are not publicly available. Data are however available from the authors upon reasonable request and with permission of Hohai university.

## Declarations

**Ethical approval** Ethical approval was granted by the Business School Ethics Committee at Hohai University, China. All procedures were conducted following the relevant guidelines and regulations.

**Informed consent** Informed consent was obtained from the respondent's organizations before they participated in the study.

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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