

Linking Workplace Ostracism to Job Performance : A Conceptual Framework Considering the ‘New Normal’ Situation

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Abstract

Workplace ostracism is a ubiquitous phenomenon that is present across the majority of organizations. However, it is often ignored, which results in dire consequences for the employees as well as the organizations. Workplace ostracism directly affects the job performance of employees. Also, after the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations are still adjusting to the “new normal.” As this situation has never been foreseen before, at this point in time, workplace ostracism is becoming an emerging issue across organizations today. This short communication aimed to delve deeper into the phenomenon of workplace ostracism, find out the relationship between workplace ostracism and the employees’ job performance, and develop a conceptual model. This conceptual model has been developed with the help of extensive current literature review. The findings revealed that workplace ostracism had an impact on the employees’ personal and professional facets, leading to the variation of employee performance. Also, moderating variables like external support, culture, and religiousness remarkably impacted the relationship between workplace ostracism and different facets. As a result, this study can be used as a reference for HR managers to develop strategies to impede the growth of workplace ostracism in their respective organizations.

Keywords : workplace ostracism, job performance, new normal, COVID-19

JEL Classification Codes : C120, C310, C380, M100, O150

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Today's world is pluralistic, and it is often plagued by cutthroat competition. The situation has been made much worse with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Industrial growth especially has been hindered in this situation, and the world is still reeling from it. In fact, the world is still trying to adjust to the “new normal.” In this context, the performance of the employees is the most important parameter which is responsible for organizational development (Kumar & Valarmathi, 2022). If the employees' job performance becomes efficient, it will positively contribute toward the achievement of the organizational objectives. This, in

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turn, will help the organizations to achieve a competitive advantage (Syed et al., 2022). As per several research studies, many parameters affect employees' job performance. These factors might be abusive supervision, organizational tenure, the psychological capital of the leaders, or the job stress that the employees are experiencing (Chen, 2015). Also, workplace ostracism is another factor that affects the job performance of employees in a very negative manner (Robinson et al., 2013).

Workplace ostracism is referred to as a ubiquitous phenomenon. In fact, the majority of the employees have experienced some form of ostracism. A statistical report that was carried out with over 1,300 participants revealed that 71% of the participants fell victim to workplace ostracism, and 60% of the participants in another study received the silent treatment from their colleagues (O'Reilly et al., 2014). There are severe consequences of workplace ostracism for both the organization as well as the employees (Sharma & Dhar, 2022). From the employees' perspective, workplace ostracism can bring down their self-esteem, negatively affecting their physical and mental health.

Similarly, from the organization's perspective, workplace ostracism instills a higher employee turnover (Renn et al., 2013), creates workplace deviance, and promotes unethical behavior, which directly impacts job performance. A proper understanding of the concept of workplace ostracism could help alleviate its negative consequences on the employees in the long run (Bedi, 2018; Sarwar et al., 2020). Certain research studies showcase that the victims of workplace ostracism basically prefer physical or mental assault over experiencing workplace ostracism. The victims, at least, are acknowledged by the perpetrators who are involved. Thus, workplace ostracism is more harmful as compared to other forms of workplace mistreatment (Giri, Gangopadhyay, Majumder, & Paul, 2019; O'Reilly et al., 2014).

The research questions of this paper are as follows. What are the personal and professional facets influenced by workplace ostracism? Does workplace ostracism affect job performance? Is there any moderator that affects the relationship between workplace ostracism and different facets? The objective of this paper is to build a conceptual framework that would highlight the relationship between workplace ostracism and job performance.

Review of Literature

Workplace ostracism has various adverse personal impacts (Sharma & Dhar, 2022). Amongst the personal facets, there are dire consequences to the physiological as well as the psychological well-being of the employees. Some studies revealed that the physical health of employees was adversely affected if the employees were going through workplace ostracism (Chatterjee & Giri, 2021; O'Reilly et al., 2014). It could also result in sleep fragmentation at night, affecting the sleep quality of the individuals. Also, due to this very reason, the cognitive arousal of the individuals was also adversely impacted (Waldeck et al., 2020). As for the psychological effects of workplace ostracism, several studies have shown that they were numerous. Being ostracised in the workplace could develop negative emotions and anger within the individual, which would furthermore have very serious psychological implications (Bilal et al., 2020). These implications could present themselves in the form of anxiety, poor psychological health and distress, job tension, and stress (Sarfraz et al., 2019), and last but not the least, burnout (Giri et al., 2020; Qian et al., 2019).

There are various professional facets of workplace ostracism as well (Li et al., 2021). There is sufficient literature available that focuses on the impact of workplace ostracism on professional relationships. Relational damages are common in the case of workplace ostracism because of deviant behaviors which result in getting rude to others or making fun of them (Giri et al., 2020; Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018). The victims' satisfaction was also reduced regarding their co-worker's and supervisors' behavior. Workplace ostracism also undermined the perception of the employees of being valued in the organization, which resulted in the depletion of their personal resources (Giri et al., 2018; Wu et al., 2016). This adversely impacted the employees' organizational commitment,

which resulted in the employees leaving the organization (Zheng et al., 2016). Thus, the sense of belongingness of the employees was hindered. Group cohesion was also thwarted, which weakened the employees' resolve to engage in teamwork activities (Wu et al., 2018). Thus, the employees experienced social pain, which resulted in decreased job satisfaction (Giri & Pandey, 2016; Robinson et al., 2013).

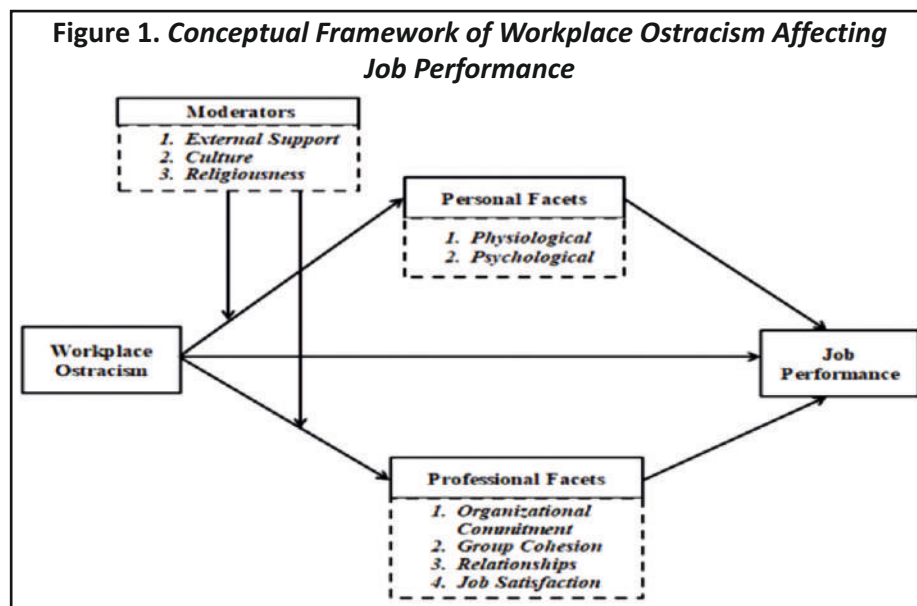
Employees who faced workplace ostracism were found to be socially susceptible (Riva et al., 2014). This results in deviant behavior, which could be witnessed in organizational or interpersonal deviance. Ostracised individuals who engaged in organizational deviance felt that their identity was threatened. Hence, they might sabotage the equipment, litter the workplace, and engage in similar activities (Chatterjee et al., 2019; Sanjeev, 2017). Interpersonal deviance might present itself by being physically violent with the other employees or spreading nasty rumors about them. This behavior of the ostracised employees resulted in a gradual decrease in their job performance (Eatough et al., 2011).

External support, culture, and religiousness are moderating variables, and these factors could neutralize or curb the aversive impacts of workplace ostracism, which might instigate certain positive outcomes. It has been showcased that support from friends and family could work wonders in reversing the deviant behaviors of ostracised employees and in reducing their negative attitudes (Xia et al., 2019). The culture of the ostracised employees, like the employee power distance and also their traditionalism, could lessen the harmful impact of workplace ostracism. Also, the religiousness of the ostracised employees could suppress the aggression of the employees in the workplace (Giri, Chatterjee, Paul, & Chakraborty, 2019; Li & Tian, 2016).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework and different constructs have been derived with the support of an extensive literature review (Figure 1).

According to the extensive review of literature on workplace ostracism, it was determined that workplace ostracism results in disturbing the personal as well as professional facets of the employees. This has a negative effect on their job performance. Negative emotions brew in their minds, which results in certain deviant behavior. The impact of the adversities of ostracism can be somewhat neutralized or lessened with the help of proper



counseling initiated by the organization. However, in most cases, workplace ostracism results in the organization's failure to retain employees.

Conclusion

This study portrays the relationship between workplace ostracism and the employees' job performance. It focuses on the various adverse effects of ostracism on the personal and professional facets of the employees. It is very likely that the victims of workplace ostracism would find it very difficult to meet their job requirements as it directly impacts their job performance. This study also showcases critical insights into the employees' deviant behavior resulting from workplace ostracism. Critical information is withheld from the ostracised employees, which is responsible for undermining their respective performance in the long run. However, it has been witnessed that certain factors like external support, culture, and religiousness can reduce the potency of workplace ostracism. Also, employees will be better equipped to deal with workplace ostracism situations. In fact, the employees' job performance is also not adversely impacted comparatively by the help of those moderating factors. In conclusion, this study can be viewed as a stepping stone for the conduction of further investigations on the workplace ostracism of several organizations. This would help the organizations address this problem at the root level and solve the related issues.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This study has a lot of practical relevance across various organizations, especially during this new normal situation. The social exclusion of ostracised employees can build frustration within them, which the organizations should plan to extinguish. Also, the ostracised employees find it difficult to share their feelings as they do not want to appear weak in front of others. Hence, organizations should pay special attention to individuals so that such problems do not crop up and pollute the organizational environment. With the help of the factors identified in this study, organizations can develop a guideline to help employees avoid this nuisance. Abolition of workplace ostracism can also lead to the development of positive workplace features, motivating the employees to push themselves to perform. Managers can also devise certain programs to train employees to avoid deviant behavior as much as possible and spread awareness about the negative consequences of workplace ostracism. These training programs could be taken from outside the organization, have some on-the-job training efforts that are structured, and contain certain elements of informal learning. All of these will collectively help in the development of the employees. This will result in developing an excellent organizational culture that will promote the prevention of workplace ostracism.

Limitations of the Study and the Way Forward

There are some shortcomings in this research study as well. Firstly, the relationship between the factors drawn out from the literature review was not empirically measured. Secondly, the study was based only on secondary data. However, these shortcomings can be addressed in future works wherein the hypotheses derived could be proved with the help of primary data.

Authors' Contribution

Dr. Arunangshu Giri conceived the idea, developed the conceptual framework, and reviewed and edited the research paper. Satakshi Chatterjee participated in the literature review and wrote the manuscript in consultation

with Dr. Giri and Dr. Salo. Dr. Jari Salo verified the method of the study and identified the implications as well as the future scope of this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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