

EFFECTS OF WORKPLACE OSTRACISM ON STRESS AND WORK ENGAGEMENT OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS

¹DR BUSHRA NAOREEN, ²FARHAN AJMAD*, ³DR SHUMAILA SHAHZAD, ⁴NIDA KHALID, ⁵MEHWISH JABEEN

¹Associate Professor, Department of Education, GC University Faisalabad.

²MPhil Scholar, Department of Education, GC University Faisalabad. (farhanamjad537@gmail.com)

³Associate Professor, Department of Education, GC University Faisalabad.

⁴MPhil Scholar, Department of Education, GC University Faisalabad.

⁵Assistant Professor, Department of Education, GC University Faisalabad

Abstract

The present study aimed to examine the impact of workplace ostracism on stress and work engagement among university teachers. A descriptive survey research methodology was employed, utilizing questionnaires to gather data from the participants. The target population consisted of teachers from three universities in the Faisalabad district, and a sample size of 155 teachers was selected. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were employed to analyze the data. The findings revealed a positive correlation between workplace ostracism and stress. Specifically, a one-unit increase in workplace ostracism was associated with a corresponding 0.283 unit increase in stress levels. Conversely, a negative correlation was observed between workplace ostracism and work engagement. Alternatively stated, a one-unit increase in workplace ostracism resulted in a 0.015 unit decrease in work engagement. In conclusion, workplace ostracism was found to have a detrimental effect on stress levels and work engagement. Based on these findings, the study suggests that universities should implement and enforce policies aimed at mitigating teacher ostracism and fostering a supportive work environment. This approach is likely to enhance teachers' work engagement and overall well-being. It is important for universities to prioritize the implementation of such measures to ensure a positive and conducive workplace atmosphere for their teachers.

Keywords: workplace ostracism, work engagement, stress, environment

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ostracism is a prevalent phenomenon that occurs across various demographic groups, including age and gender. It can be observed in various contexts, such as children excluding certain individuals from their play groups or even among animals like lions and chimpanzees. Workplace ostracism, a subtle yet common form of mistreatment, refers to the intentional exclusion or disregard of individuals by their colleagues in situations where inclusion is socially expected. This behavior can be seen as a form of "cold violence" within the workplace, attracting significant attention from researchers (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2013).

Workplace ostracism impact on worker's pressure, representative commitment, and responsibility, since workers will think different workers overlook them so how might they get by in this climate where different representatives are not giving them esteem, it will influence association's results also. If working environment exclusion is occurring with representatives, it will be the justification behind low cooperation between the workers. In addition, it will adversely influence



representative's commitment since when workers have agreeable connection then they can share their workplace issues and data. Additionally, workplace ostracism can have a detrimental impact on work productivity, particularly when employees lack the necessary skills to complete certain tasks. In such instances, employees may need to seek guidance from their seniors. However, if seniors ignore or exclude them within the workplace, it can hinder their ability to perform optimally. This can ultimately result in reduced work effectiveness and efficiency. Therefore, fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment is crucial to ensuring that employees have the necessary resources and support to overcome challenges and maximize their productivity. (Chung, 2018, Hitlan, & Noel, 2009).

Stress refers to a state in which an individual experiences mental disturbances that hinder their ability to be productive and elicit negative emotions (Mullan, 2014). It is responsible for detrimental effects on an individual's health and can contribute to job dissatisfaction. Additionally, stress can result in aggressive and negative behavior, both in personal and professional contexts (Attell, Kummerow Brown, & Treiber, 2017; Turner & Turner, 2013). Individuals experiencing stress often seek attention from others as they feel emotionally low and require support from their peers. Stress prevents individuals from forming positive relationships in the workplace and impedes the development of a friendly environment (Attell et al., 2017). Furthermore, stress has adverse effects on mental health, prompting individuals to seek social support from others for emotional and physical assistance during stressful situations. This need for attention arises from a sense of inadequacy and a desire for support from colleagues (Attell et al., 2017; Turner & Turner, 2013). Social support, whether from friends or family, plays a crucial role in alleviating stress-related problems.

In the workplace, stress can lead to improper conduct towards coworkers. Hence, employees seek social support from their colleagues to reduce stress levels (Attell et al., 2017). Stress also has a detrimental impact on an employee's productivity, effectiveness, and the quality of their work (Halkos & Bousinakis, 2010).

Stress has the ability to disrupt an individual's behavioral patterns, including their vocal behavior. When under stress, individuals tend to allocate their physical and emotional energy towards managing the stress, which can negatively impact their overall behavior. In normal circumstances, individuals tend to avoid situations that may result in potential losses. However, when experiencing stress, individuals may struggle to discern between what is beneficial or detrimental to them, leading to a higher probability of making unfavorable choices.

In an organizational setting, stress significantly reduces employee productivity. Extensive research has indicated a direct relationship between stress and employee performance. Nonetheless, it is possible to effectively manage stress in the workplace (Hogh, Hansen, Mikkelsen, & Persson, 2012). The nature of a coworker's mental and emotional attachment to their workplace is known as employee engagement. Work engagement is a term used in human resources to describe how enthusiastic and committed an employee is to their work. Colleagues that are actively involved care about their work and the organization's mission and believe that their contributions matter. The kind of connection employees have with the company and the work they conduct is known as



employee engagement. It evaluates the organization's adherence to fundamental corporate ideals and objectives. Additionally, when employees are motivated, the business benefits from increased effectiveness, production, and profitability. Employee engagement may also be used to describe a passionate relationship that employee has with a company. Work engagement is defined as the level of attachment a someone has to their work. (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008).

Employee engagement has been the subject of much research, and it has been shown to be related to a number of workplace outcomes. Employee engagement has been found to have a negative correlation with employee turnover intentions. It can be understood as a positive mindset that individuals bring to their work environment, characterized by a sense of meaningfulness, security, and availability. This has been identified as a key determinant of employee engagement (Gupta & Sharma, 2016).

Employee engagement differs significantly from work engagement. While employee engagement encompasses behavioral aspects, such as employees passionately investing their physical capabilities to excel in their job (referred to as physical engagement), cognitive engagement involves comprehending the organizational strategy and enhancing skills to make optimal contributions at work (Bakker et al., 2008)

This study looked at the connections between workplace exclusion and job performance, stress, and intention to leave the service industry in Pakistan. It also looked at how psychological capital affected this link in a moderating way. The study discovered a link between interpersonal deviance and workplace rejection, counterproductive behavior, emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, fear of negative evaluation, silence, and proactive customer service. Two studies specifically focused on workplace ostracism and discovered its connection to counterproductive behaviors and silence. However, it is crucial to remember that a significant portion of current research on workplace ostracism is based solely on empirical studies. By exploring the effects of workplace rejection on two factors, stress and job engagement, which have not received much attention in the local context, the current study aims to fill this gap.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate and evaluate the levels of stress, job engagement, and ostracism at work.
2. To investigate the relationship between stress levels and workplace ostracism.
3. To look into how work engagement is impacted by workplace ostracism.
4. To examine the impact of various demographic factors on ostracism and involvement at work.

Research Questions

1. What is the current workplace stress, ostracism, and engagement levels?
 2. How does workplace ostracism affect stress levels?
 3. How does workplace ostracism affect employee engagement?
- How do various demographic factors affect work engagement and ostracism at work?

METHODOLOGY

The research was descriptive. The survey approach was considered appropriate and adopted to complete the research; the questionnaires were used to collect the required information. Conclusion and recommendations were made based on findings.

A population deals with the set of people to whom the result of the research applies. The population of the study comprised of all the teachers of the three universities of district Faisalabad.

Three universities of Faisalabad were selected that is Government College University Faisalabad, University of Education Faisalabad, and University of Agricultural Faisalabad. Two faculties were selected as sample from each university. 50 teachers were selected as sample from each university. Finally, the sample was 155 faculty members of three universities. Sample was selected through simple random sampling.

Demographic variable

<i>Background Variable/ Characteristic</i>		<i>N=155</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	Female	78	46.4%
	Male	77	47.0%
	Total	155	
Qualification	M.Phil	76	49.0%
	PhD	79	51.0%
	Total	155	
Job	Regular	40	24.1%
	Contract	65	39.2%
	Visiting	50	30.1%
	Total	155	
Locality	Urban	81	48.8%
	Rural	74	41.2%
	Total	155	
Faculty	Physical Science	62	37.3%
	Social Science	93	56.0%
	Total	155	
University	GCUF	55	35.48%
	UAF	50	32.25%
	UOE	50	32.25%
	Total	155	

The researcher developed three questionnaires based on the existing literature, focusing on workplace ostracism, stress, and work engagement. Ensuring the reliability of the tool was crucial in minimizing errors. To enhance reliability, pilot testing was conducted. The pilot testing involved collecting data from a sample of 155 students. Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the tool's reliability and it generated a result with a value of .841.

<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>N of Items</i>
0.841	53

Findings

Table 1. *Descriptive Analysis of the Factors of Workplace Ostracism*

	N	Min	Max	M	S.D
Ignore	155	1.00	3.90	1.8658	.75605
Disappointment	155	1.00	4.50	1.9734	.98105
Workplace Ostracism	155	1.17	3.78	1.9136	.74501

Table 1 displays the participants' overall mean scores for their perceptions of workplace ostracism and its components. Disappointment had higher mean score ($M = 1.9734$, $SD = .98105$) whereas Ignore had lowest ($M = 1.8658$, $SD = .75605$).

Table 2 *Descriptive Analysis of the Factors of Stress*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Frustration	155	1.00	3.88	2.3258	1.00914
Pressure	155	1.00	4.56	2.6953	1.18903
STRESS	155	1.12	3.94	2.5214	1.06014

Table 2 displays the participants' overall mean scores for their perceptions of stress and its components. Pressure had higher mean score ($M = 2.6953$, $SD = 1.18903$) whereas Frustration had lowest ($M = 2.3258$, $SD = 1.00914$).

Table 3 *Descriptive Analysis of the Factors of Work Engagement*

	N	Min	Max	M	S.D
Effort	155	1.56	4.44	3.4667	1.02505
Enthusiastic	155	2.00	4.56	3.6444	.88449
Work Engagement	155	1.78	4.28	3.5556	.93993

Table 3 displays the participants' overall mean scores for their perceptions of work engagement and its components. Enthusiastic had higher mean score ($M = 3.6444$, $SD = .88449$) whereas Effort had lowest ($M = 3.4667$, $SD = 1.02505$).

Table 4 *Effect of Workplace Ostracism on Stress*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	
	.283 ^a	.080	.074		
Coefficient	Unstandardized	Standardized	t	p	
	B	SE	B		
(Constant)	1.751	.226		7.729	.00
Workplace Ostracism	.403	.110	.283	3.651	.00
ANOVA	SS	MS	Df		
Regression	13.871	13.871	1		



Residual	159.210	1.041	153	.00 ^b
Total	173.080		154	

Dependent Variable: Stress

As indicated in Table 4, the r-square value is 0.08, which means workplace ostracism, causes 8.0% change in stress. ANOVA results show that the ($p=0.00<0.05$) determined a substantial connection between Workplace Ostracism and stress. Coefficient results indicated that the ($\beta= 0.283$); suggests that a change of one unit in workplace ostracism causes a 0.283 unit change in stress. Furthermore, the beta value is positive, indicating a direct relationship between workplace ostracism and stress. Alternatively, we may say that when workplace ostracism increases by one unit, the stress also increases by 0.283 units.

Table 5 *Effect of Workplace Ostracism on Work Engagement*

Table 3.2 (continued): Workplace Ostracism on Work Engagement						
Model		R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	
		.015 ^a	.000	-.006		
Coefficient		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	p
		B	SE	B		
	(Constant)	3.593	.209		17.162	.00
	Workplace Ostracism	-.019	.102	-.015	-.190	.00
ANOVA		SS	MS	Df		
	Regression	.032	.032	1		
	Residual	136.023	.889	153		.00 ^b
	Total	136.056		154		

Dependent Variable: Work Engagement

The analysis results presented in Table 5 indicate an r-square value of 0.000, indicating that workplace ostracism accounts for 0.0% of the variance in work engagement. However, the ANOVA results revealed a significant relationship between workplace ostracism and work engagement ($p=0.00<0.05$). The coefficient results showed a negative beta value ($\beta= -0.015$), suggesting that a one-unit increase in workplace ostracism corresponds to a 0.015 unit decrease in work engagement. This negative beta value indicates an inverse relationship between workplace ostracism and work engagement. In other words, when workplace ostracism increases by one unit, work engagement decreases by 0.015 units.



CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of workplace ostracism on employee stress and work engagement. The results indicated that employees reported higher levels of disappointment compared to feeling ignored, suggesting that they were more affected by feelings of disappointment. Additionally, employees experienced higher levels of pressure in their workplace environments.

Regarding work engagement factors, employees demonstrated higher levels of enthusiasm compared to other factors. The study revealed a direct relationship between workplace ostracism and stress, indicating that an increase of one unit in workplace ostracism led to a 0.283 unit increase in stress levels. Conversely, an inverse relationship was observed between workplace ostracism and work engagement, indicating that a one-unit increase in workplace ostracism resulted in a decrease of 0.015 units in work engagement.

In conclusion, the study findings suggest that workplace ostracism positively affects stress levels while negatively impacting work engagement. This implies that as workplace ostracism increases, employee stress levels also increase, while work engagement decreases.

Findings of the current study are also aligned with the findings of many other studies. As one of the studies shows Workplace ostracism has a significant effect on employee stress, employee engagement, and commitment. When employees perceive that they are being ignored by their colleagues, it creates a hostile environment where they struggle to find value and belonging. This not only impacts the well-being of employees but also affects organizational outcomes (Chung, 2017).

Stress poses a major threat to employee productivity. When employees experience mental disturbances, their ability to perform tasks with full effort is compromised. Task performance requires specific energy and mental relaxation, which are fundamental requirements for effective work (Detert & Burris, 2007).

Research has demonstrated that workplace ostracism has a negative impact on employees' emotions, including stress, depression, unhappiness, and loneliness. These emotional states resulting from workplace ostracism directly influence employees' performance, as emotionally wounded individuals struggle to perform tasks with creativity and innovative ideas (Chung, 2018).

Previous research has consistently shown a positive association between workplace ostracism and various forms of conflict, such as task conflict, colleague conflict, management conflict, and supervisor conflict. These results are in line with those of our study, which showed that workplace exclusion had a negative impact on employee engagement and had a beneficial effect on employee stress. This is consistent with Chung's (2018) findings, which indicated a comparable effect of workplace exclusion on stress and engagement.

Additionally, a different study highlighted the negative consequences of workplace exclusion on employee engagement. When employees experience ostracism in the workplace, their level of engagement with the organization declines, as they perceive a lack of value from the organization. These findings suggest that workplace ostracism not only affects individual well-being but also has implications for the overall organizational climate and employee engagement (Park, 2016).



Recommendations

It is suggested that

Administration at workplaces should avoid using negative words for its staff members. They must not be ignored and disappointed. They should be assigned tasks to value them to get better productivity.

Motivation is a great factor affecting employees' performance. It may be used to enhance performance and keep them away from stress. Employees should be engaged properly to avoid frustration and disappointments.

Institutions can develop policy guidelines for administration to avoid workplace ostracism.

Conducive environment at the institutions can eliminate stress and disappointments at workplaces and can increase work engagement of employees.