

IF I DON'T EXIST: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF WORKPLACE OSTRACISM AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESSSurryia Hayat Mengal¹, Dr. Beenish Malik², Dr. Jamil Ahmad³, Dr. Muhammad Mudassar Anwar⁴

Original Article

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Abstract

In this study we examined the mediating role of interpersonal deviance and moderating effects of ingratiation between workplace ostracism and psychological distress, based on transactional theory of stress and coping. Cross sectional survey design was used and data was collected from 202 academicians from all universities of Quetta. Workplace ostracism threatens employee's interpersonal needs and self-efficacy. Employees try to cope with this approach and avoid indulging in psychological distress, through influence behavior ingratiation. This relationship was investigated by applying Hays PROCESS and used SPSS to analyze direct and indirect effects of moderated mediation model. Our results shows that workplace ostracism interpersonal deviance and ingratiation contributes to the prevalence of psychological distress and offer direct and collateral appliance. One path involves actions that dispirit ostracism by influential behavior, another step measures related to interpersonal deviance anticipated by mentoring and employee's support plans. The current research clarifies the underlying influential, intellectual and emotive mechanism between workplace ostracism and psychological distress. It extends research on interpersonal deviance and ingratiation to explain its theoretic as well as experiential effects on psychological distress. It additionally demonstrates how employees adopt ingratiation to turn down negative outcomes of workplace ostracism. Lastly, it explains the whole mechanism in context of collectivistic philosophy of Pakistan.

Keywords: Ostracism, Interpersonal Deviance, Ingratiation, Psychological Distress

1. Introduction

Being omitted and ignored by others at workplace is referred as workplace ostracism (Wesselmann, Wirth, Pryor, Reeder, & Williams, 2013). Workplace ostracism is explained as “the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others” (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008, p. 1348). Ostracism is a psychological experience which threatens basic human needs being ignored and excluded from the group (Al-Atwi, 2017). Robinson and William have found workplace ostracism is clearly related to undesirable work consequences as job withdrawal, aggression and interpersonal deviance (Chung, 2014). Negative emotions along with frustration, sadness, loneliness are key elements to engage in psychological distress (Tyndall, Waldeck, Riva, Wesselmann, & Pancani, 2018). Negative behaviors and workplace deviance at work that violates the organizational norms enormously costs organizational growth and wellbeing (Ferris, Spence, Brown, & Heller, 2012). Workplace ostracism reduces employee’s engagement at work (Leung, Wu, Chen, & Young, 2011).

However, we highlight workplace ostracism as uncontrollable phenomena that threatens the fundamental needs of employees and specifically concerned with the productivity of satisfied employees (Markova, 2018). Therefore we attribute that workplace ostracism in academia having collectivistic background have different emotional and cognitive understanding is more threatening than in a less collectivistic culture (Jahanzeb, 2017).

“Collectivism refers to a set of feelings, beliefs, behavioral intentions, and behaviors related to solidarity and concern for others, and collectivistic cultures emphasize the establishment of close and harmonious interpersonal relationships” (Hui, 1988, p. 17).

Likewise, Researchers have confirmed the destructive state of workplace ostracism and its negative effects such as sadness, loneliness, depression, jealousy, guilt, shame, embarrassment and social anxiety and an interpersonal stressor that may result employees to be in stress at work (Y. W. Chung, 2018). Academicians being ignored by other coworkers and colleagues may make them feel not to be beneficial for workplace who ask for recognition which hits self-esteem and inner peace of employees and ultimately results in deviant behaviors at work (Peng & Zeng, 2017). Workplace ostracism is traumatic stressor that can engage employees in psychological distress (Wu, Yim, Kwan, & Zhang, 2012).

Moreover, considerate how to deal with ostracism is perilous phenomena as a social influence behavior ingratiation is a common strategy to cope with ostracism (Wu et al., 2012). Ingratiation is “an attempt by individuals to increase their attractiveness in the eyes of others” (Liden & Mitchell, 1988, p. 572).

Therefore, built on the contemporary literature we proposed that interpersonal deviance mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and psychological distress and ingratiation moderates the relationship between interpersonal deviance and psychological distress. We put forward a theoretical model that represents and shows the association among workplace ostracism and interpersonal deviance and ultimately engaging in psychological distress and the moderating role of ingratiation (Fig 1).

This study marks numerous noteworthy influences first, this study examines the affiliation of workplace ostracism and psychological distress and empirically suggest the mediating role of interpersonal deviance with moderating effects of ingratiation.

1.2 Theoretical Background and hypothesis development

This study submits that Workplace ostracism leads academicians to psychological distress with meditating effects of interpersonal deviance and this relationship is moderated by ingratiation. The propositions in this research are based on the transactional theory of stress and coping. This theory states that stress consequences are depending upon individual and environment factors (Dillard & Dillard, 2019). Primary appraisal focuses on the stress outcomes that how an individual perceive it and secondary appraisal emphasis that how much an individual is capable of coping with the stress (Dillard & Dillard, 2019). Individual and environmental process generates emotions and stimuli are appraised as threatening challenging or damaging the subsequent distress pledges coping strategies to manage emotions (Drummond, 2017).

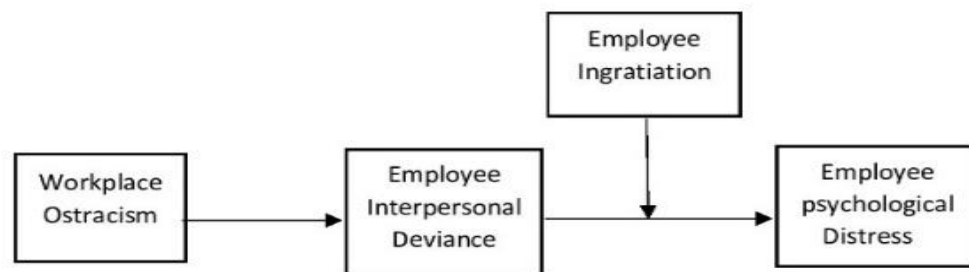
1.3 Workplace Ostracism and Psychological Distress:

Ostracism appears to occur among all social animals and across history in humans either

ancient tribal groups or modern erudite societies (Williams, 2009). Negative emotions along with depression, frustration, isolation, violence at an amplified level can indulge employee in psychological distress (Tyndall et al., 2018). Ostracized employee may perceive ostracism on daily basis this perception might let them higher levels of psychological distress overtime (Waldeck, Tyndall, Riva, & Chmiel, 2017). Ostracism is strain full stressor that can engage employee's to psychological distress, ostracism threatens employees basic psychological need of belonging, self-esteem, control and their meaning full existence (Williams & Nida, 2011). Psychological distress experience in workplace is highly interrelated with uninvited consequences of life suffering, turnover intentions and deprived physical wellbeing (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999).

Hypothesis 1: Workplace ostracism has positive association with employee psychological distress.

Figure 1 workplace Ostracism & Psychological distress model mediating effects of interpersonal deviance and ingratiation as moderator.



1.4 Interpersonal deviances as mediator

Workplace ostracism is found as an interpersonally painful and stressful. Stress process can be psychological, physical, or behavioral (Chung, 2018). Interpersonal deviance is described as “behavior of colleagues and organizational members which may violate the norms and threaten the interpersonal needs of employees” (Robinson & Bennett 1995, p. 556). Interpersonal deviance could have serious consequences and complex psychological distress, reduced psychosomatic welfare and work gratification (Ferguson & Barry, 2011).

Hypothesis 2: *Interpersonal deviance mediates the association between workplace ostracism and psychological distress.*

1.5 Ingratiation as moderator

According to the motive and efficiency of ingratiation “is a function of employee’s political skill, which facilitates the delivery and execution of the influence behavior” (Ferris et al., 2007, p. 309). To retain decent social relation this social influence behavior is striking to assume (Asadullah & Musaddiq, 2016). If employees has fail to achieve desired behaviors or receive negative outcomes form colleagues ingratiation can discourage these responses (Asadullah & Musaddiq, 2016).

Hypothesis 3: *Ingratiation moderates the relationship between interpersonal deviance and psychological distress.*

1.6 Methodology

1.6.1 Participants and procedures

Data was collected from academic staff of universities of Quetta by using quota sampling. Survey-based questionnaire was distributed among the employees of all public sector universities located in Quetta city. Numerous sound quoted studies have employed alike samples and urges the need of research more in context of academies (Erkutlu, 2016; Kashif Imran, 2017; Maranto & Griffin, 2011; Zimmerman, Carter-Sowell, & Xu, 2016). The researchers distributed 250 questionnaires to the academic staff of all

public sector universities of Quetta city and received back only 202 questionnaires. 48 of which were inadequate and waste. We collected the replies by face to face and through Google doc’s forms and sending emails to respondents. Participants were asked to deliver their personal profile gender, age education level, work experience, and organization. Altogether, 202 useable questionnaires were composed with a response rate of 56%.

We used modified scales to collect data regarding the variables under study. Regarding sampling, we carefully chosen academic staff as per quota sampling percentage allocated to each university. We assured our participants that the collected data would be kept confidential.

1.6.2 Measures

English language was used for correspondence with participants and all adopted measurement scales were in English because English is the formal language and widely understandable among academicians of Quetta city. Furthermore, all of the participants were teachers and highly educated staff. Measurement scales were measured on a 5-point scale of strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5.

Workplace Ostracism: Workplace ostracism was evaluated on a ten-item scale (Ferris et al., 2008). Certain sample items are as follows: “Others ignore you at work” “Others leave the area when you arrive” “Your greetings have gone unanswered at work”. Participants responded to the items using 5-point likert scale strongly disagree= 1 to strongly agree=5

Employee Interpersonal Deviance: Employee’s interpersonal deviance was measured. On a 4-item scale (Spector et al., 2006). Certain sample items were as follows: “I have been nasty or rude to a client, customer, or citizen” “I have insulted or made fun of someone at work” “I have ignored someone at work”. Participants responded to the items using 5-point likert scale strongly disagree= 1 to strongly agree=5.

Employee Psychological distress: Employee’s psychological distress was

measured on a 21- item scale (Dianne, Green , Anthony, Taylor, n.d.1988). A four-point likert scale from one indicating “not at all” to four indicating “extremely”. Some sample items were as follows: “Difficulty in speaking when you are excited” “Trouble remembering things” “Worried about sloppiness or carelessness”.

Employee Ingratiation; Employee’s ingratiation was measured on a 7-item scale(Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991). Some sample item were used as follows: “Impress upon your supervisor that only he/she can help you in a given situation mainly to make him/her feel good about himself/herself” “Highlights the achievements made under his/her leadership in a meeting not being attended by him/her” “Tell him/her that you can learn a lot from his/her experience” participants responded to the items using a 5-point response scale (1 = Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Often, 5 = Almost Always).

1.7 Results

We adopted Macro Hays PROCESS Model 14 for moderated mediation model (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).(Table 2)

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics, and bivalence correlation reliability estimations for all

the measures. In close proximity inspected correlations between main variables in this research displays that workplace ostracism has strong & positive correlation with mediator interpersonal deviance ($r = .773$ $p < 0.01$) and with the moderator ingratiation($r = .620$ $p < 0.01$) and workplace ostracism is strongly positively correlated with the outcome variable psychological distress ($r = .484$ $p < 0.01$) finally, the relationship of ingratiation and interpersonal is correlated ($r = .739$ $p < 0.01$) and correlation between interpersonal deviance and psychological distress ($r = .567$ $p < 0.01$) ingratiation and psychological distress is strongly correlated ($r = .617$ $p < 0.01$)

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Mean, standard deviation and correlation:

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Workplace ostracism	Interpersonal deviance	Ingratiation
Workplace Ostracism	27.8416	14.03211			
Interpersonal Deviance	12.1782	5.19164	.773**		
Ingratiation	41.6436	16.31261	.620**	.739**	
Psychological Distress	56.5743	22.08547	.484**	.567**	.617**

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

We also performed test for moderation and mediation (Model 14 PROCESS) developed by (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to evaluate the hypothesis using IBM SPSS statistics and to analyze the direct and indirect effects of variables whether interpersonal deviance mediated the association between workplace ostracism and psychological distress and moderating role of ingratiation between interpersonal deviance and psychological distress. Interconnected coefficients are presented in Table 2. According to hypothesis

1 the total effect (CI) of workplace ostracism on psychological distress was significant ($b = .1785$, $t = 4.346$, $p < 0.001$). And in line with hypothesis 1 workplace ostracism has positive significant relationship with psychological distress. Likewise, in line with the hypothesis two and three workplace ostracism had positive and significant effect on psychological distress with mediation and moderation ($b = .081$; 95% CI = (-.1683, .5263) and ($b = .0900$; 95% CI = (-.0382, .5193)

Table 2: Direct and indirect effects

Effects	Coefficients	95%Confidance interval(CI)
Direct effects		
WO → ID	.2859	(.2526 , .3192)
ID → PD	.3944	(.1847 , .3667)
WOPD →	.4760	(.1906 , .4172)
Indirect effects		
WO → PD Via ID	.1858	(-.1683 , .5263)
ID → PD Via IN	.2328	(-.0382 , .5193)

N=202

1.8 Discussion

This study intended to investigate workplace ostracism, a social phenomenon that has newly discovered considerable charm and attention by scholars, and at what level it effects organizational outcomes and behavioral aspects of employees, i.e., psychological distress. The whole mechanism is demonstrated by transactional theory of stress and coping and discovered interpersonal deviance as a mediator between workplace ostracism and psychological distress,

Furthermore, as an influential tactic ingratiation is a moderator between interpersonal deviance and psychological distress. Workplace ostracism in collectivistic culture is more dominant feature as compare to individualistic cultures. Collectivistic cultural identities of individuals are strongly associated with their cultures. Consequently, when individuals ostracize in collectivistic culture, they try to avoid any form of personal conflict as an alternative, they choose to involve in unintended and secret interpersonal maltreatment to sustain a sense of interpersonal consistency. Conversely, individualistic may react to ostracism and engage in retaliatory ostracism because of preferring self-centeredness over interpersonal harmony (Zhao, Qingxia, He, Sheard, & Wan, 2016).

The findings of this research shows that employees apprise workplace ostracism as an unavoidable painful stressor that pressurize the basic needs (Oaten, Williams, Jones, & Zadro, 2008). As transactional model of stress employee recognize stress as an unavoidable stressor (Yang & Treadway, 2018).

Second, employees practice avoidance coping strategies to overcome stress at very initial stage. Our findings show that employees engage in these behaviors by two ways, through emotive and intellectual path. The results of this study shows that ostracism is a form of a social exclusion and can lower cognitive performance and leads individuals to different form of self-defeating behaviors (M. Harvey, Moeller, Kiessling, & Dabic, 2018). We also find that emotionally exhausted and depressed employees at work may lose cognitive resources which may cause them to interpersonal deviance. This study findings are backed by various research outcomes that determine that workplace ostracism is optimistically correlated with psychological distress (Chung, 2018). Therefore, this study reveals the connection of interpersonal deviance as mediator among workplace ostracism and psychological distress.

Additionally, by assuming this emotional strategy employees also try to adopt influence behavior through an influential tactic ingratiation. According to our third hypothesis employees try

to cope with ostracism by engaging in influence behavior ingratiation (Chung, 2018).

The significant connection found between workplace ostracism and psychological distress can be explained by transactional model of stress, which offers that ostracized academicians lack access to emotional and cognitive resources and may engage in distress (Abu-Bakr, 2017). Furthermore, our results specify that ostracism is positively related with interpersonal deviance which then leads to strain full strains psychological distress, and as per transaction theory of stress and coping ingratiation plays a vital role between interpersonal deviance and psychological distress and suggests positive relationship between these indirect relationships.

1.9 Theoretical contribution

This study marks several noteworthy contributions. First it explains the fundamental intellectual and negative outcomes of workplace ostracism and psychological distress (Wu et al., 2012). Scholars argued that injustice behaviors and low self-esteem are consequences to interpersonal deviance (Ferris et al., 2012). Ingratiation as influence behavior tactic may be used to cope not only with workplace ostracism but also with other destructive behaviors such as

psychological distress (Wu et al., 2012). Second, it extends the research on interpersonal deviance and its effect on psychological distress. This would be a thought-provoking involvement as most studies focused on its effects, outcomes (Ferguson & Barry, 2011). Third, it incorporates research on coping mechanism of ingratiation between interpersonal deviance and psychological distress of employees and utilizes Lazarus and Folkman (1984) transactional theory of stress and coping to clarify how employees recognize the strain full event and use coping approach and act ingratiation influence behavior to reduce negative effect of workplace ostracism and interpersonal deviance (P. Harvey, Stoner, Hochwarter, & Kacmar, 2007).

Finally, and predominantly, this study helps to explain workplace ostracism and psychological distress in the perspective of collectivistic beliefs of Pakistan (Islam, 2004).

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