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THE SILENT TREATMENT: WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT OSTRACISM

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Abstract

Humans complete their days with many social interactions that fill themselves. They spend their time with their family, friends and colleagues. Hence it will be hurtful for people being alone or forgotten in all context. This study reviews recent writings about exclusion in psychology and management to see whether and how they affect business life. Ostracism attracts especially psychologist for many years, however in today's business life feeling of excluded is a common problem both employer and employee in organizations. But the studies are nascent specifically in management field. Accordingly, our aim is to review related literature and encourage scholars to focus ostracism and foster to investigate antecedents and outcome, as well moderating effects. In this study, the authors make several contributions, first contribution is theoretical, second is that examining ostracism in aspect of organizational behaviour and finally providing a novel framework for future researches. The authors also have suggestions for practical implications.

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1. Introduction

Undeniably, belonging and feeling of connection with others is crucial for individuals in all social context due to nature of fundamental human needs. As belongingness is a desirable and positive, the opposite of belongingness is negative and individuals tend to avoid exclusion. More surprisingly, exclusion is widespread in society. In their major study Faulkner et al. (1997) showed that 75% of individuals feel excluded from their social environment. Exclusion has been called through different terms, social exclusion, rejection, abandonment, being out of the loop and ostracism (Robinson, et al, 2013). However, all the terms refer to rejection we use ostracism in the study.

As an increasingly hot topic among practitioners and scholars ostracism refers to being excluded and ignored by another individual or groups (Williams & Sommer, 1997). Ostracism can be defined as refuse from the desired social group deliberately (Peng & Zeng, 2017). Being ostracized, in other words excluded and ignored, has painful and distressing effects on individuals and society. Moreover, social exclusion has extraordinary unexpected results of such as school shooting in society. For example, Leary et al. (2003) investigated the relationship among school shooting and social exclusion via case studies in United States about 15 school and has demonstrated that social rejection was present in 13 incidents. Beside, Baumestier, Twenge and Nuss (2002) showed the negative effects of social exclusion on cognitive performance and they empirically demonstrated reduction of social exclusion in intelligent thought and the relationship between emotions and social exclusion has been investigated. Social excluded individuals have emotional distress and have negative moods like hostility and anxiety (Baumestier, Brewer, Tice, & Twenge, 2007). Social exclusion also appears to affect prosocial behaviours such as volunteering or donating money to a charity (Twenge et al., 2007). And experimental studies also found a link between meaningless of life and social exclusion which can foster suicide in society (Twenge et al., 2003).

Although social exclusion has been investigated in social psychology for a long time, managers and scholars in management have been interested the effects on social exclusion recently. Additionally, studies about workplace ostracism is not adequately incorporated organizational behaviour research.

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to emphasize the importance of ostracism both workplace and social lives. As shown in Figure 1, we propose a conceptual model for understanding the role of social excluded individuals both social and work life. The study investigated individual related and organizational related ostracism and its possible effects on workplace outcomes. We emphasize both work attitudes (engagement and job satisfaction) and behaviours (turnover intention and performance).

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Individual Related Ostracism

Through a series of studies designed to shed light on ostracism, Williams and Sommer (1997) argued need-threat model explain the threatening role of ostracism in individual's needs. Williams and Sommer (1997) proposed that ostracism threaten the need for belongingness to others, self-esteem, control over and meaningfulness. Belongingness is a primary human need (Baumeister & Leray, 1995) and ostracism damages the ties between individual and group. Secondly, it threatens self-esteem and there is negative relationship among ostracism and self-esteem. One's person self-esteem depends on success and

failure and being excluded cause to feel exceptionally bad about one self and individuals interpret exclusion as a result of failure. Thirdly, ostracism also threatens the need for control. Specifically, long term ostracism cause to feel helpless and despair. Finally, it fosters meaningfulness. Alike belongingness, self-perception is crucial for individuals. Others view shaped self-perception and influence meaningfulness. Meaningfulness is an important psychological state and refers to value of a life and it is a primary motive for individuals all their aspects of life (May et al., 2004).

Although the consequences of ostracism have been handled in the social psychology and psychology the antecedents of ostracism have not been studied commonly. Baumestier and Learay (1995) suggested that cognitive process is important in the basement of social exclusion. For example, people categorize each other and social links among each other spontaneously cause to exclude other. One of the social exclusions can be based on individual personal life. For instance, death of loved one, separated by reluctance can induce ostracism. Individuals may choose to be excluded other persons willingly. Moreover, it is important to note that, inarguably, ostracism have negative consequences on every individual, however research indicates that some people are affected much more than others social exclusion (Canyas & Downey, 2002).

2.2. Organizational Related Ostracism

In today's business environment, tasks have been accomplished collaboratively and tasks require to work together. The positive effect of social interaction in workplace have been investigated in organizational behaviour field (Heaphy & Dutton, 2008). In their major study, they revealed that positive social interactions have positive consequences on human health and physiological resourcefulness. Additionally, Carmeli and Gittell (2009) developed the most popular model to predict positive relationship among co-workers. This model is based on mutual respect, shared goals and shared knowledge and called high quality connections at work. However, studies showed that 66% employee felt "silent treatment" in their work environment (Ferris et al., 2008) and they do not feel mutuality on the contrary they feel isolated and excluded. As a consequence, organizational scholars should rethink the theories and practices in ways that more fully understand ostracism as essential in organizational life. Ostracism is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of unpleasant subjective experiences including physical and emotional pain and psychological distress (Eisenberger, 2012). In organizational context, ostracism can be defined as "the exclusion, rejection, or ignoring of an individual (or group) by another individual (or group) that, hinders one's ability to establish or maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work related success or favourable reputation within one's place of work" (Hitlan et al., 2006, p. 218). Zhao et al. (2016) conceptualized workplace ostracism as an emotional abuse and emphasized three characteristics; in organizations individuals may be ostracized by supervisor, customer or co-worker, being ostracized is not subjective and ostracized individual feel painful and hurtful in their relationships.

In this study, we suggest that several contextual and individual resources that promote ostracism at work. Organizational and individual. Organizational factors are namely, organizational climate, leadership and organizational practices and individual factors are, individual characteristics and relationship with others.

Organizational climate has been conceptualized in various ways and there are inconsistencies among dimensions of organizational climate (Landells & Albrecht, 2013). The direct effects of organizational

climate on employee behaviours have been revealed in organizational behaviour literature. For example, while supportive organizational climate is positively related to employee satisfaction and commitment (Luthans et al., 2008), competitive work climate foster feeling ostracism (Ng, 2017). In competitive climate employees tend to exclude their co-workers for handling competitive environment. Therefore, we propose that:

P1: There is a relationship among organisational climate and workplace ostracism.

It is important to note that there is a dark side of leadership and leaders can behave destructive way (Schyns & Schilling, 2013) to their followers. Ostracism can be actualized purposeful or non-purposeful by leader (Robinson et al., 2013). In purposeful ostracism, leader is aware of his/her action and want to hurt follower. On the contrary, in non-purposeful ostracism, leader is unaware of his/her action to follower, like forget or lost in thought. Some leadership style may also evoke concern about others' feeling of exclusion. It is important to understand in work context that why managers choose to behave some employee excluded or why some employee choose to ignore and exclude co-worker. For example, the leader may be interested with their personal outcomes rather than benefit organizational or members at a whole (O'Conner et al., 1995). Further, the characteristics of leader may influence ostracism like narcissism. Leaders who shows grandiose narcissism tend to be center of attention and behave arrogance and self-absorption (Reina et al., 2014) and manipulate situation to highlight their self-image (Van Dijk & De Cremer, 2006) and inattentive to the followers. Hence;

P2: There is a relationship among leadership behaviours and workplace ostracism.

Defensive behaviour represents reactive and protective actions to reduce threat or avid unwanted demand. Employees can avoid action, blame or change (Ashforth & Lee, 1990). In work environment employees tend to behave defensive way sometimes. For example, they want to avoid feeling bad or they don't want to see looking like the bad guy (Sommer et al., 2001). Therefore, we propose that:

P3: There is a relationship among workplace defensive behaviour and workplace ostracism.

Ostracism can lead to undesirable work-related behaviour and attitudes. Being ostracized by co-workers or leaders has a stronger negative influence on individuals. Specifically, silent treatment causes painful and hurtful feelings. For example, Wu et al. (2012) suggested that workplace ostracism is positively associated with job tension, emotional exhaustion and depressed mood at work. Research has shown that job tension intention (Zivnuska et al., 2002), emotional exhaustion (Mulki et al., 2006) has negative effects on both job satisfaction and turnover. Additionally, the relationship between ostracism and negative emotions has been tackled. Sommer et al. (2001) indicated the effects of negative emotions namely are, angry, hurt, guilty, lonely and worried on ostracism. These negative emotions may influence job engagement and job satisfaction among co-workers. Further, there are evidences that silent treatment effect job performance and turnover intention in the literature (Robinson et al., 2013). Hence:

P4a: There is a relationship among workplace ostracism and job engagement.
P4b: There is a relationship among workplace ostracism and job satisfaction.
P5a: There is a relationship among workplace ostracism and job performance.
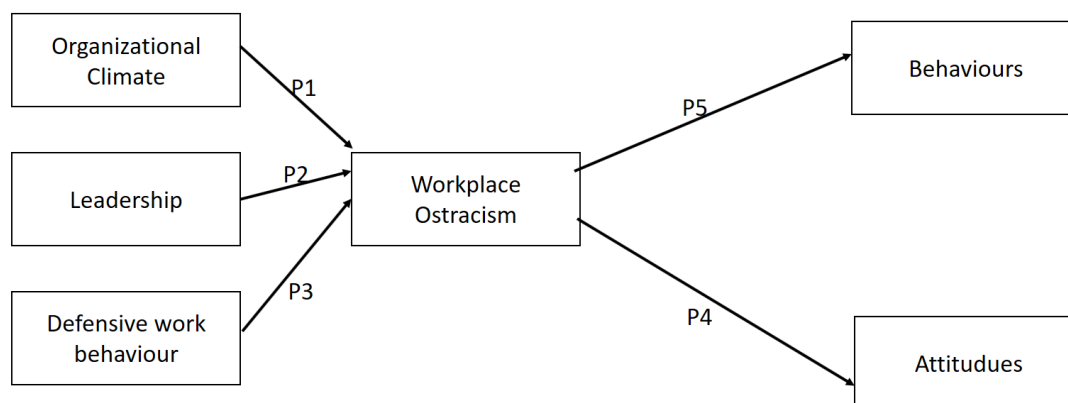P5b: There is a relationship among workplace ostracism and turnover rate.

Figure 01. Proposed model

3. Discussion and Implications

In this study we contribute the clarification of ostracism in work place settings. Our conceptual model of workplace ostracism provides new perspectives for social exclusion topic. We propose that ostracism can be originated from both individual and organizational related and both of them lead to negative consequences.

3.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

It is important to note that countries culture play important role the feeling of being excluded or ignored. For example, in collectivist culture like Turkey being excluded may be more painful and causes negative consequences. Wu et al. (2012) examined the effects of workplace ostracism in China and demonstrated the positive relationship among workplace ostracism and job tension, emotional exhaustion and depressed mood at work.

Beside the negative effects ostracism can cause positive consequences in work settings. However' studies focus on the dark side of social exclusion, the light of social exclusion should be investigated. As Williams and Sommer (1997) indicated employees work harder for regaining the sense of belongingness in collective. Employees tend to show high performance for gaining acceptance from their leaders.

Besides, implications for theory exclusion should be handled by practitioners. Organizations need to learn how to cope with ostracism in work settings. For example, human resource departments or organizational psychologist could take precautionary steps. Organizations provide to feeling belongingness to employee during the project and connect with one or more co-worker and feeling as one with the player of the project. It is important to note that feeling of influencing organizational decisions or control over the decision process prevent the ostracism in workplace.

3.2. Limitations and Future Research

Future research can be investigated the effects of individualistic ostracism on organizational related ostracism. For example, if one feeling devalued in the relationship between friend, romantic partner or social group member in social life, in work context is it important?

We believe that gender is an important issue in social exclusion in organizations. There is little known about the impact of gender on ostracism in collective masculine societies for example in Turkey. Future studies can be investigated the differences between male and female ostracism in workplace empirically.

Future research should also focus on antecedents of social exclusion both work and social environment. In the literature, most of the studies conducted through experimental studies. We suggest that the antecedents and consequences of social exclusion, ostracism, can be investigated through field studies for example using survey methods.

3.3. Conclusion

Ostracism is a situation that takes place in the dark side of organizational behaviour. Ostracism impacts employee psychology and damages both workplace and daily life. However, how ostracism affect employee behaviour is nascent in the literature. In this study, we propose a research model for investigating positive negative attitudes and behaviours in workplace context. This research just emphasizes the importance of understudied concept both organizational behaviour and human resource management fields. Through future empirical and experimental research workplace ostracism will be expanded and be more fruitful and rich.

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