



Muted Creativity in the Face of Workplace Ostracism: The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

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Abstract: This study examines the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee creativity. Moreover, we investigated the mediation effect of employee engagement. The current investigation's conceptual framework is supported by self-determination theory. Data was collected from a total of 305 employees from banking sector of Pakistan. The participants granted their consent to fill out the questionnaire measuring workplace ostracism and employee engagement. On the other hand, the supervisors were requested to rate the employee's creativity. The sample was in the form of dyads. On average 1 supervisor rated 5 employees working under them. The hypotheses developed in this study have been validated by the statistical findings. The results confirmed the direct and indirect paths. The research underlines the theoretical and practical implications. Furthermore, the limitations and focus of future investigation are highlighted.

Keywords: Workplace Ostracism, Employee Engagement, and Employee Creativity

1. Introduction

Everyone agrees that creativity from employees is key for businesses to stay ahead these days. That's why everyone in the company needs to come up with new and useful ideas. A lot of experts agree that understanding what helps employees be creative is a big deal. (Ouakouak & Ouedraogo, 2017). Employee creativity is a critical factor for businesses to be successful and so important due to its dynamic environment. Certain factors tend to reduce employee creativity in the organization. The extant literature highlights that workplace ostracism may reduce employee creativity (Zhang et al., 2023). According to Ferris et al. (2008), workplace ostracism refers to the deliberate exclusion or ignoring of an individual by their colleagues within an organization. Research has highlighted that workplace ostracism reduces employee engagement in creative activities, suggesting that when employees feel excluded, they may be less motivated to engage in creative thinking and problem-solving (Choi et al., 2008). However, the underlying mechanisms through which workplace ostracism influences creativity remain largely unexplored.

One of such underlying mechanisms could be employee engagement. This study proposes a lack of employee engagement as a factor caused due to workplace ostracism. Employee engagement is defined as employees feeling good and fulfilled at work. This positive feeling can help protect them from the negative effects of feeling excluded (workplace ostracism) and keep them creative. (Peng et al., 2017). Furthermore, when employees feel ostracized, they may become less engaged in their work, which in turn may limit their ability to generate useful ideas. To uncover the full extent of this relationship, future studies should investigate workplace ostracism, employee engagement, and employee creativity. This research can help organizations understand how to reduce the negative

impact of ostracism on creativity and improve employee performance. By examining these relationships, we seek to uncover the multifaceted interplay of workplace ostracism, employee engagement, and creative output. Through a descriptive, cross-sectional design, we explore these factors and their influence on creativity within the organizational context.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

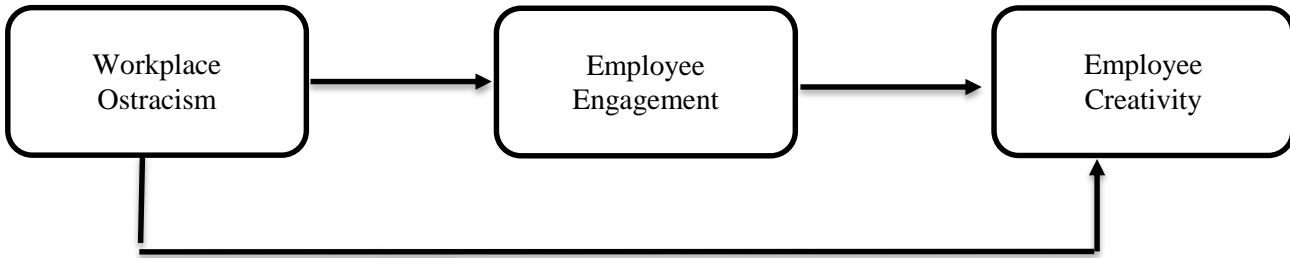


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2. Literature Review

Workplace ostracism is a widespread issue that has been shown to have adverse effects on employee creativity. This literature review aims to utilize existing research findings on the influence of workplace ostracism on employee creativity, with a focus on the mediating role of employee engagement.

2.1 Influence of Workplace Ostracism on Employee Creativity

A study by (Amabile & Pratt, 2016) investigates how feeling ostracized by coworkers affects an individual's creativity. It takes the perspective that the workplace environment can either stifle or support creative thinking. Daily interactions and group dynamics among colleagues can significantly impact a person's ability to think creatively. Creativity is coming up with new and helpful ideas, either on your own or by working with a small team. These ideas can be for new products, services, or ways of doing things for the organization (Amabile, 1988). Studies show that when colleagues shut someone out at work, it can hurt their confidence and creativity (Williams, 2001). Accordingly, being ostracized can hurt a person's interest and involvement in coming up with creative solutions. This can eventually lead to less overall creativity (Suyono et al., 2023).

H₁: Workplace Ostracism has a negative and significant impact on Employee creativity.

2.2 Impact of Workplace Ostracism on Employee Engagement

The extent to which an individual immerses himself/herself in a role is called engagement (Haldorai et al., 2020). The things happening around employees at work have the biggest impact on whether they feel involved and engaged or uninvolved and disengaged in their jobs (Park & Ono, 2017). A previous study found that when employees felt ostracized at work, they became less satisfied with their jobs and contributed less overall. This social exclusion wore them down, making them less engaged with their work. In addition, it harmed their mental and physical health (Park & Ono, 2017).

H₂: Workplace Ostracism has a negative and significant impact on employee engagement.

2.3 Employee Engagement and Employee Creativity

Different perspectives showed a positive impact on employee creativity (Gonlepa et al., 2023). This positive emotional state fosters a sense of well-being and psychological safety, encouraging them to take risks, explore new ideas, and persevere through challenges. Employees who were consistently dedicated to their work were very likely to have shown significant improvement in their creativity in the workplace. (Bakker, 2022).

H₃: Employee engagement has a positive and significant effect on employee creativity.

2.4 Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

When employees experience ostracism (being excluded or ignored), it can lead to negative emotions and decreased motivation. However, if employees have high levels of engagement – meaning they're invested and enthusiastic about their work – they may be better equipped to cope with these negative feelings. Their engagement might provide a sense of purpose and resilience, allowing them to maintain their creative spark despite the ostracism. In this scenario, engagement weakens the effects of ostracism on creativity, hence it plays a mediating role.

H₄: Employee engagement acts as a mediator between workplace ostracism and employee creativity.

In conclusion, this literature review demonstrates the detrimental effects of ostracism on creative behavior, highlighting the moderating role of intrinsic motivation. Moreover, the potential mediating role of employee engagement provides a foundation for exploring the underlying mechanisms involved in the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee creativity. Overall, this literature review provides a comprehensive synthesis of the existing research findings and offers insights into potential future research directions in this domain.

3. Methodology

The data was collected from respondents employed in the banking sector of Pakistan. In the sample, the renowned banks located in major cities of Pakistan were targeted for gathering data. In total 305 employees working in banks filled out the complete questionnaire. Moreover, employees in supervisor positions were requested to rate their subordinate's creativity. On average one supervisor rated five employees forming a ratio of 1:5. The data was in the form of dyads, a key was located to match the responses.

The banking industry in Pakistan is vital for the country's economic progress as it offers crucial financial services such as savings and investment options, loans, and payment systems. It enables the accumulation of capital, assists firms and individuals in obtaining credit, and fosters financial inclusion, which is crucial for reducing poverty and maintaining economic stability. In addition, the sector facilitates the mobilization of both local and foreign investments, promotes economic growth, and ensures monetary stability through the State Bank of Pakistan's competent regulation and supervision. The banking sector in Pakistan plays a crucial role in promoting the country's economic well-being and advancement by providing a reliable and effective financial infrastructure.

The scales on the variable were adopted from previous studies to ensure reliability. Response options for survey questions were rated on a five-point Likert scale.

3.1 Measures

3.1.1 Workplace Ostracism

A ten-item scale developed by Ferris et al. (2008) was employed to evaluate workplace ostracism.

3.1.2 Employee Engagement

The researchers utilized a set of nine measures developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) to assess employee engagement.

3.1.3 Employee Creativity

We employed four items to assess the creativity of employees as perceived by their supervisors from Baer and Oldham (2006).

4. Results

SmartPLS 4.1.0.1 statistical tool was utilized for data analysis. As recommended by scholar's two-step approach was followed for data analysis (Hair et al., 2021). The step approach details are as follows:

- a) Evaluation of Measurement model that includes (a) factor loading > 0.7 (Hair et al., 2021) (b) Composite reliability (CR) > 0.7 (Gefen et al., 2000) (c) Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.5 (Bagozzi et al., 1991), and (d) Discriminant Validity that is through Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) < 0.9 .
- b) Evaluation of Structural model that involves (a) Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) (b) Testing direct and indirect hypotheses (c) Effect Size (f^2), and (d) coefficient of determination (R^2).

4.2 Measurement Model

Figure 2 demonstrates the measurement model highlighting factor loading that is > 0.7

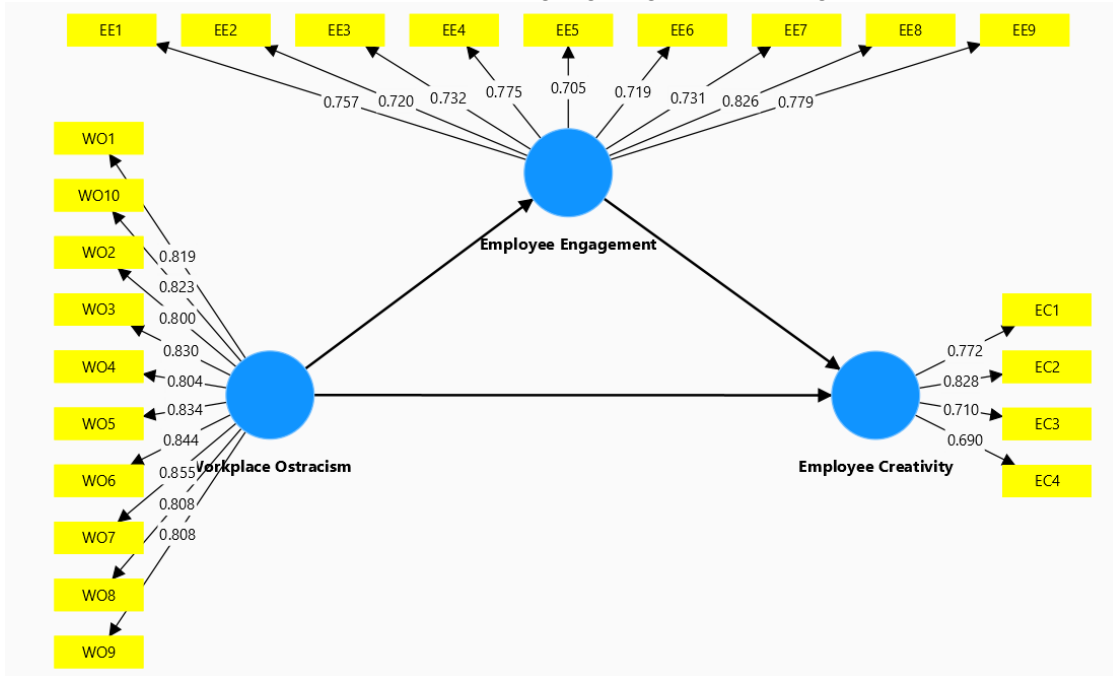


Figure 2: Measurement Model

Table 1 represents AVE > 0.5, and CR > 0.7 meeting all the recommended thresholds by scholars thus ensuring reliability.

Table 1: AVE, and CR

Variables	AVE	CR
Employee Creativity	0.665	0.888
Employee Engagement	0.501	0.9
Workplace Ostracism	0.586	0.934

Table 2 demonstrates Discriminant validity through an HTMT Ratio that is less than 0.9 hence discriminant validity is proved.

Table 2: HTMT

	Employee Creativity	Employee Engagement
Employee Engagement	0.646	
Workplace Ostracism	0.697	0.729

Structural Model

Figure 3 is a structural model highlighting t-statistics, beta and significance and R-Square

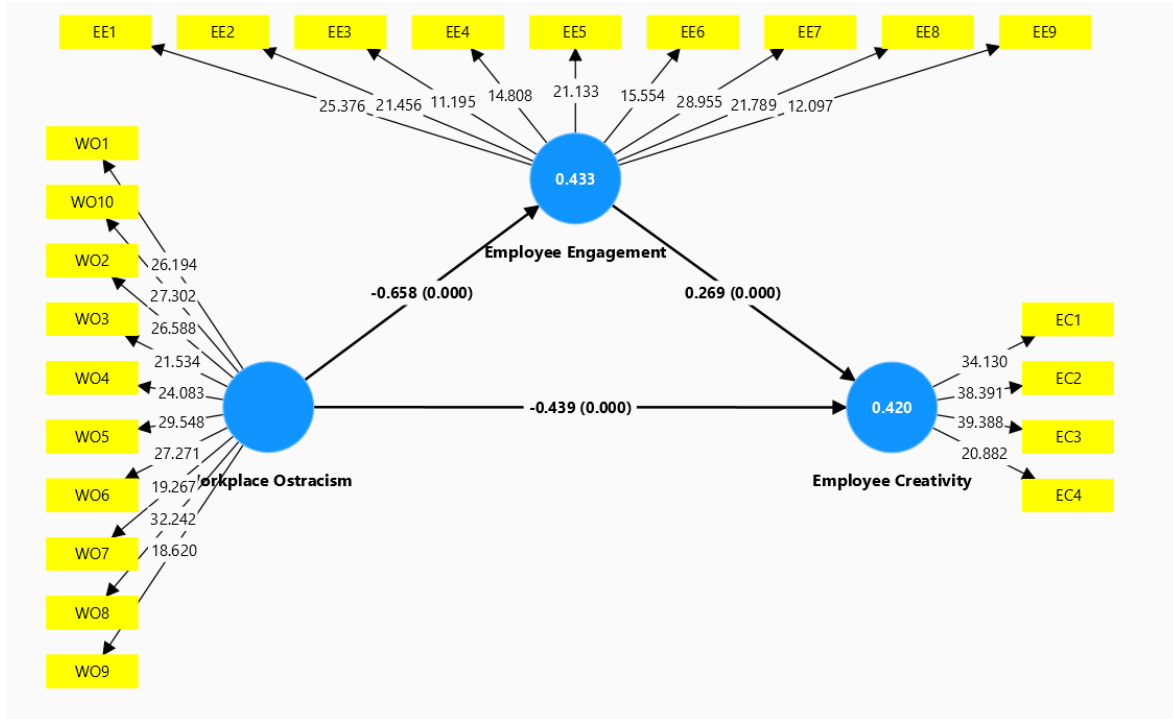


Figure 3: Structural Model

Table 3 indicates VIF values that are less than 5 proving the absence of multicollinearity

Table 3: VIF

	Employee Creativity	Employee Engagement
Employee Engagement	1.763	
Workplace Ostracism	1.763	1

Table 4 shows the direct path. The hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are supported by findings as results are significant and hypothesized directions.

Table 4: Direct Paths

	Hyp	β	SD	T	P
Employee Engagement -> Employee Creativity	H3	0.269	0.062	4.377	0.000
Workplace Ostracism -> Employee Creativity	H1	-0.439	0.057	7.738	0.000
Workplace Ostracism -> Employee Engagement	H2	-0.658	0.054	12.182	0.000

Table 5 confirms H4. There is a partial mediation because direct and indirect both paths are significant.

Table 5: Indirect Path

	β	T	P	Hyp	β	T	P
Workplace Ostracism -> Employee Creativity				Workplace Ostracism -> Employee Creativity	-0.177	3.942	0.000

Ostracism	->			Ostracism	->
Employee Creativity				Employee Engagement	->
		-0.616	12.113	0.000	H4
				Employee Creativity	

Table 6 indicates the effect. The Research Scholar offers criteria for measuring effect size (f²), ranging from 0.02 (representing a minor influence) to 0.15 (representing a moderate effect) to 0.35 (representing a significant impact). Cohen (1988) states that any result below 0.02 signifies the absence of impact. The influence of EE on EC is minimal, but the effect of WO on EC and EE is significant.

Table 6: Effect Size

	Employee Creativity	Employee Engagement
Employee Engagement	0.271	
Workplace Ostracism	0.288	0.763

Table 7 displays the R-square values, which represent the extent to which the model explains the data. Researchers, such as Hair et al. (2021), have determined that the R² value is bounded between 0 and 1. When working with primary data, it is recommended that the R² value be 0.2 or more. Table 7 exhibits values that significantly exceed 0.2.

Table 7: R-Square

	R²
Employee Creativity	0.42
Employee Engagement	0.433

5. Discussion

This study examined the relation between workplace ostracism and reduced creative output and the mediating role of employee engagement. Firstly, the result shows that workplace ostracism reduces creativity. Previous research has uncovered the detrimental impact of workplace ostracism on employees. Ferris et al. (2017) demonstrated how ostracism negatively affects employee well-being and job performance. Furthermore, aligning with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), ostracism can undermine employees' intrinsic motivation and sense of belonging, hindering their creative potential. By undermining basic psychological needs, ostracism weakens intrinsic motivation, which is the desire to do work for the sake of enjoyment, satisfaction, and personal growth. When ostracized, employees may lose the internal drive and enthusiasm for their work, as their efforts seem undervalued and unrecognized. In the context of ostracism, employees who experience exclusion or isolation may perceive a lack of reciprocity and support, leading to decreased engagement and motivation. Based on the results, employees who were more engaged exhibited higher levels of creativity. This result aligns with the notion that engaged employees experience higher levels of positive emotions and extrinsic motivation, which can act as catalysts for creative problem-solving and innovative thinking (Amabile, 1996). Additionally, the results show that employee engagement mediates between workplace ostracism and creativity.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This research article on workplace ostracism provides several theoretical insights. The first implication is employees subjected to ostracism are less likely to generate creative ideas, confirming the negative impact of social exclusion on individual innovative thinking. Secondly, the study highlights the negative influence of workplace ostracism on employee engagement, underscoring the importance of fostering inclusive work environments to enhance employee commitment and involvement. Thirdly, it is found that employee engagement positively contributes to employee creativity, emphasizing the role of psychological and emotional investment in enhancing creative outputs. Moreover, the mediation analysis reveals that employee engagement serves as a mechanism through which ostracism impacts creativity.

5.2 Practical Implications

The practical implications of this research reveal key insights for the banking sector. Firstly, it highlights the negative impact of ostracism on employee creative behavior, emphasizing the importance of fostering inclusive work environments to enhance innovation. Secondly, the negative effect of ostracism on employee engagement underscores the need for organizations to address social dynamics within the workplace to improve overall employee well-being and performance. Moreover, the positive relationship between employee engagement and creativity suggests that investing in strategies to boost engagement levels can lead to enhanced creative outputs. The mediating role of engagement showcases the critical role it plays in translating negative experiences of ostracism into positive outcomes. Recognizing the detrimental effects of ostracism, banks can implement anti-bullying and social inclusion programs to create a culture of respect and belonging. Organizations can leverage these findings to implement targeted interventions that promote a supportive and engaging work environment, ultimately fostering employee creativity and well-being within the banking sector.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

A few limitations were identified in this study. The first limitation has to do with the study's sample. The study relied on self-reported data, which can be susceptible to bias. The present study used Pakistani banking sector employees as research samples. Hence, the findings are restricted to the current study and can't be generalized to other sectors or countries. Future research can be done on other sectors and different countries. The long-term effects of workplace ostracism on employee creativity remain largely unexplored. To fully understand this complex relationship, longitudinal studies are necessary. Moreover, the present research has focused primarily on the direct impact of ostracism, while the influence of underlying mechanisms beyond employee engagement requires further investigation. Lastly, there is no substantial research on the moderating role of various variables thus future research can investigate the moderating role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

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