Understanding the Workplace Osctrasicism on Employee Retention in it Industry - A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract: The study attempts to develop a framework of workplace ostracism on employee retention levels. Ostracism may be defined as a persistent and progressive attempt to undermine an employee's worth and presence in the workplace. This sort of harassment is subtle, persistent, and frequently done with the express aim of either removing or pushing an individual out of their employment. Employee ostracism can be caused by either a lack of political abilities or a high level of sensitivity. Such methods can have a negative psychological impact on employees, reducing their productivity and dedication to a company. As a result, it is possible that employees will leave the company to escape this treatment. In this study, it tries to explore the determinants of workplace ostracism and wanted to understand the impact of workplace ostracism on employee retention. The study has developed a conceptual framework after the extensive literature review and five hypotheses can be proceed further tested by collecting the data from the employees of IT company.

Key words- Leadership, Ostracism, Retention, Workplace, Culture

Introduction

Ostracism concerns aversive experiences and unethical behaviour from colleagues which has a severely detrimental impact on one's psychological well-being. Abubakar et al. (2018) accentuate that such exclusionary behaviour at the workplace can be passive i.e. workplace ostracism, or it can be active i.e. workplace bullying. Here, it is critical to comprehend the idea that humans are social animals and hence, failure to build a social connection makes them dissatisfied as they acquire the feeling of not being accepted by others (Farasat et al., 2021). To date, researchers have made significant contributions to evaluating the negative implications that are produced due to passive social exclusion through workplace ostracism (Peng & amp; Zeng, 2017;

Howard et al., 2020; Bedi, 2021), still there remain many trends and patterns that are not discovered. Constant exposure to such negative experiences may force an employee to quit his job to escape such experiences. In this regard, the current study is particularly concerned with how workplace ostracism may further lead to employee turnover intention, impacting a firm's retention levels negatively.

Additionally, it is critical to understand that one can cope with ostracism so as to mitigate the negative consequences of the same. In this regard, the current study perceives that effective leadership practices can help employees to overcome this situation and avoid the negative emotions that may further hamper their psychological well-being as well as productivity. For instance, Wang et al. (2021) highlight that an effective leader may have distinct traits which may not help in cultivating their own personality but also transform that of others in a viable manner. Leadership is found to play a pivotal role in any firm. It can enhance or deteriorate employees' performance outcomes (Baig et al., 2021), organizational performance (Ibrahim & amp; Daniel, 2019), motivate employees (Astuti et al., 2020), determine job satisfaction and commitment levels of the employees (Eliyana & amp; Ma'arif, 2019) and also predict employees' retention levels (Yamin, 2020; Rao et al., 2018; Ahsan, 2018). In this regard, this study intends to understand the dimensions of workplace osctrasicism on employee retention in IT industry.

Literature Review

Workplace ostracism is defined as "the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others at work" (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008, p. 1348), as well as "when an individual or group omits to take actions that engage another organizational member when it is socially acceptable to do so" (Robinson et al., 2013, p. 206). These two definitions reflect that ostracism could be caused by both action (excluding) as well as inaction (omission of inclusion), but they also reflect that ostracism can be defined by perceptions, in the case of the former, or behaviours, in the case of the latter. Typically, authors who apply perceptual definitions take a victim-focused perspective, whereas those who apply behavioural definitions take an environmental- or perpetrator-focused perspective (Jahanzeb, Fatima, & Malik, 2018; Quade et al., 2018; Yang & Treadway, 2018). While it is recognized that studying ostracism from the perspective of the perpetrator(s) is important, the current meta-analysis instead analyses ostracism from the victim's perspective. Employee retention levels reflect the extent to which employees are willing to continue theirjob or look for growth within the same firm (Lin & amp; Huang, 2020). There are many factors that employees' retention levels ranging from job satisfaction (Irabor & amp; Okolie, 2019), compensation, career advancement, supervisor support (Modau et al., 2018), and so on. Stress and challenges encountered negatively impact one's intention to stay (Choy & Kamoche, 2021) and workplace ostracism precisely fosters stress (Sarfraz et al., 2019). Fiset et al.(2017) highlighted that perceived workplace ostracism negatively impacts the turnover intentions of the employees, especially when they attain lower

organisational support. Asimilar finding was delineated by Chung (2018) wherein he outlined that a lack of positive psychological empowerment enhances the intensity of negative experiences gained by the employees owing to ostracism. This leads them to leave the firm as a response to curb these challenges. Moreover, Mahfooz et al. (2017) asserted that turnover intentions of the employees are directed driven by increased job burnout and stress when encountered workplace incivility and workplace ostracism. Other negative implications of workplace ostracism on employee retention levels were mediated by stress, work rumination, declining psychological well-being and self-efficacy (Singh & Srivastava, 2021; He et al., 2020; Sarwar et al., 2019).

Research Gap

Although previous studies reflect a number of consequences that are associated with workplace ostracism (Yang & Wei, 2018; Chung & Kim, 2017; Chen & Li, 2019; Fatima, 2016; Yang & Treadway, 2018; Hsieh & Karatepe, 2019), one of the most critical impacts that can affect a firm's performance negatively is the lower retention levels of the employees (Fiset et al., 2017; Chung, 2018; Mahfooz et al., 2017). Moreover, it is also found that leadership can positively impact all those factors that further determine higher retention levels of employees (Kalsoom et al., 2018; Asbari et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2019; Sugianingrat et al., 2019; Shaaban, 2018; Dalkrani & amp; Dimitriadis, 2018; Waris et al., 2018). This study is intended to understand the dimensions of workplace ostracism and it impact on employee retention.

Conceptual framework

We adapt Aquino and Lamertz's (2004) victimization framework to identify and explain the antecedents and outcomes of felt ostracism. This framework suggests that victims and perpetrators of mistreatment partake in roles and statuses with associated characteristics and behaviours, which can be used to discern the personal and environmental antecedents of mistreatment.

The work environment dictates the risks and benefits of ostracizing others, and environments can encourage (discourage) ostracism because the associated benefits are high (low) and/or the costs are low (high). For example, employees in competitive work environments have been shown to ostracize others to "get ahead," whereas cooperative work environments have been shown to reduce workplace ostracism (Halevy et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2015). The hypothesis can be developed

H1: Work environment has significant influence of workplace ostracism

Characteristics of the victim and perpetrator are expected to play a key role in explaining the occurrence of felt ostracism, and the victimization framework elicits various factors that lead potential targets of ostracism to either be ostracized or feel as though they have been ostracized. Below, we assess antecedents of ostracism that include personal variables (e.g., personality), social variables (e.g., leadership), and environmental factors (e.g., perceived support). We selected these variables because of

their pervasiveness in the literature and relevance to the victimization framework. The most commonly studied personal predictors of workplace ostracism are the Big Five personality dimensions (Halevy et al., 2014; Leung et al., 2011; Wu, Wei, &Hui, 2011), most of which cause employees to avoid the provocative victim status.

H2: Personal characteristics has significant influence of workplace ostracism

On the other hand, neuroticism is positively related to ostracism, perhaps because it causes employees to adopt the provocative victim status. Neurotic individuals are moody and more often experience socially oriented, negative emotions—including anger, envy, jealousy, and guilt. Neurotic individuals may perform social behaviours to address these negative emotions, which may produce conflict. Also, neurotic individuals tend to be more susceptible to negative aspects of their environment. While neurotic individuals may be more likely to endure ostracism, it is also possible that they are more likely to perceive being ostracized— even in the absence of ostracizing behaviours (Leung et al., 2011; Wu et al., 2011).

H3: Neuroticism has significant influence of workplace ostracism

It is important to understand the demographic characteristics of people who are most likely to endure ostracism, as these people may be systematically vulnerable due to their overt characteristics (i.e., age, gender). If significant relationships are found, it may be necessary to develop interventions that can pre-emptively address ostracism that may occur to these people. Gender is frequently studied alongside workplace ostracism, but few justifications have been provided for this relationship. Ferris et al. (2017) directly note, "the ostracism literature has typically not examined the topic of gender in depth" (p. 326). In empirical studies, gender is often included as a control variable, and any variance that it explains is treated as unimportant (Chen, Takeuchi, & Shum, 2013; Quade et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2015).

H4: Demographic characteristics has significant influence of workplace ostracism

Employee retention levels reflect the extent to which employees are willing to continue their job or look for growth within the same firm (Lin & Huang, 2020). There are many factors that employees' retention levels ranging from job satisfaction (Irabor & amp; Okolie, 2019), compensation, career advancement, supervisor support (Modau et al., 2018), and so on. Stress and challenges encountered negatively impact one's intention to stay (Choy & Kamoche, 2021) and workplace ostracism precisely fosters stress (Sarfraz et al., 2019). Fiset et al. (2017) highlighted that perceived workplace ostracism negatively impacts the turnover intentions of the employees, especially when they attain lower organisational support. A similar finding was delineated by Chung (2018) wherein he outlined that a lack of positive psychological empowerment enhances the intensity of negative experiences gained by the employees owing to ostracism. This leads them to leave the firm as a response to curb these challenges. Moreover, Mahfooz et al. (2017) asserted that turnover intentions of the employees are directed driven by increased job burnout and stress

when encountered workplace incivility and workplace ostracism. Other negative implications of workplace ostracism on employee retention levels were mediated by stress, work rumination, declining psychological well-being and self-efficacy (Singh & amp; Srivastava, 2021; He et al., 2020; Sarwar et al., 2019).

H5: workplace ostracism has significant impact on employee retention
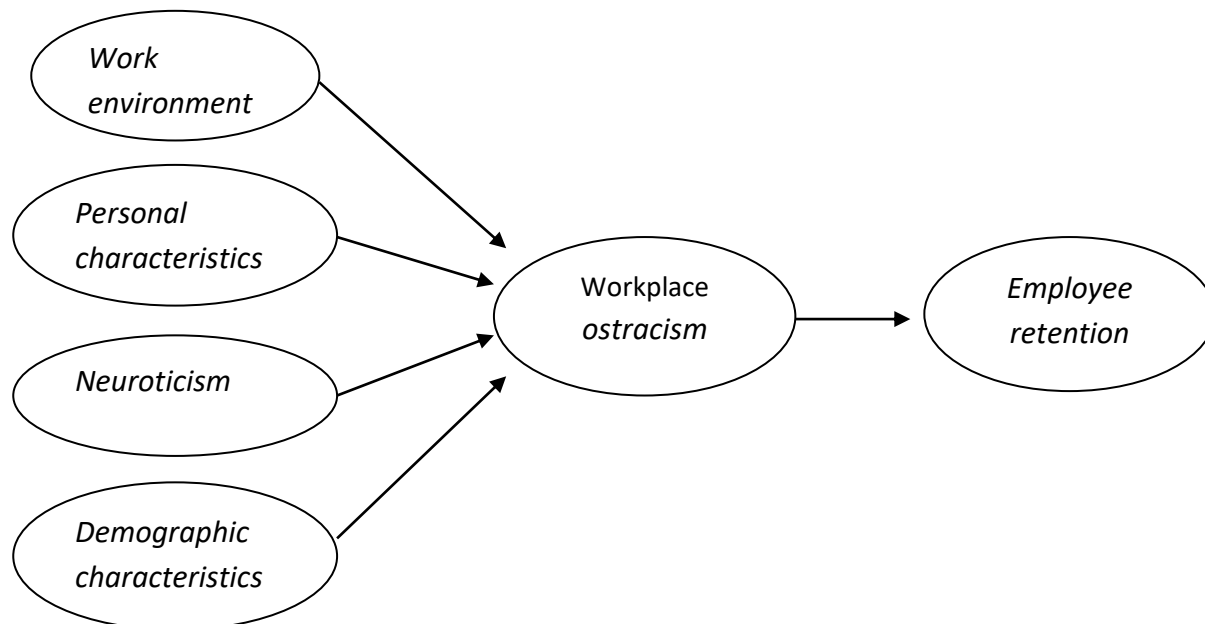

Figure-1: Conceptual framework

Research Methodology:

Research methodology is critical for guiding the way the objectives and questions of research should be addressed. Beginning with philosophy, the current study will be governed by a positivist research philosophy. This philosophy embarks upon the idea that truth, reality or knowledge cannot be subjective in nature and hence, it should be proven using scientific or statistical evidence (Saunders et al., 2019). As a result, the use of positivist research philosophy will be conducive to the current study for reducing any sort of bias that arises due to the acquisition of subjective information. In alignment with philosophy, a quantitative research approach will be adopted. The quantitative research approach will be instrumental in acquiring data in a numeric form that can be statistically analysed from a large sample size, which will increase the reliability of the results gained (Ghauri et al., 2020).Moreover, the study will adopt a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design is concerned with finding trends and patterns. Additionally, it facilitates the verification of the causal relationship between the defined set of variables (Rahi, 2017). Thus, it will be instrumental for the current study to empirically analyse the developed assumptions. Lastly, the study will adopt a deductive reasoning approach. The deductive reasoning approach is concerned with the analysis of hypothetical assumptions for providing precise and factual results (Rahi, 2017).

Data collection and Data Analysis procedure

As the current study is concerned with addressing a gap in the literature, which is not previously addressed, it is critical to acquire primary data. The use of primary data will help the current study in gaining customised, familiar and objectively aligned information (Ghauri et al., 2020). In this regard, a self-developed questionnaire instrument will be used to acquire this information from the mid-level employees of organisations. The questionnaire will be developed by adapting to standard scales and reviewing existing literature. The target population of the current study will be the mid-level employees of the organisations as they are the most vulnerable to ostracism. Further, the study will use a simple random sampling procedure to choose these respondents. The simple random sampling method will allow each and every mid-level employee to be part of the current study which, in turn, will reduce any sort of bias that may arise due to the purposive selection of participants (Taherdoost, 2016).

Moreover, the sample size of the current study will be limited to 400 employees considering the time constraints within which this study should be completed. The mid-level employees will be contacted through e-mails wherein a consent form along with the details pertaining to the purpose of the current study will be outlined. Subsequently, the eminence of their responses will also be explained along with the way this information will beutilised. The interested employees will be asked to send back the signed consent form. Only those respondents that are willing to participate in the study will be sent the developed questionnaire survey which could be filled out through an online portal.

The data collected through this survey will be statistically analysed using SPSS software. The study will employ both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to comprehensively analyse the data acquired. Also, reliability statistics will be used to analyse the reliability of the developed questionnaire after conducting a pilot study.

Significance/Contribution of the study

Satisfied and highly engaged employees are the keys to veil the benefits of higher productivity as well as the performance of the organization. Nonetheless, negative behaviours like workplace ostracism may disrupt the entire outlook of the employees towards the firm. Thus, resulting in higher turnover intentions for escaping such negative emotions. This will further have a negative impact on the organisation's overall productivity and reputation in the long run. As a result, it becomes critical for the firm to take relevant steps to evaluate and eradicate the same before it suffers from its implications. However, the prevailing literature only presents fragmented evidence pertaining to its implications and the manner in which ostracism at the workplace can be curbed. In alignment with this, the current study will contribute theoretically to the existing literature that does not provide sufficient evidence in this context. Moreover, the study will also contribute practically to the organisations that may be unaware of the root cause of higher turnover rates.

Limitations of the study

Limitations unfold the barriers that a researcher encounters while conducting research which may potentially impact on the findings of the study. The current study too may suffer from some limitations. Firstly, the study aims at acquiring primary data through the questionnaire instrument. As a result, it is quite possible that the responses may suffer from bias, past perceptions or even neglect. Moreover, the sample size is restricted to 400 employees and hence, the increase in sample size may reflect different results. Secondly, it can be outlined that the current study is being conducted in India which represents a geographical limitation. Therefore, the findings of the current study may not be applicable elsewhere.

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