The Dark Side of Ostracism: Unveiling the Link between Workplace Ostracism, Knowledge Hiding, and OCB in Pakistan

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Abstract

Workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding are pervasive issues that can negatively affect organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) among employees. This study's purpose was to examine the individual relationships of workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding with OCB in the Pakistani context. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with employees across various industries in Pakistan. The data were analyzed using regression analysis to test the direct effects of workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding on OCB. The findings provided insights into how these harmful workplace behaviors undermine extra-role behaviors that are beneficial for organizational effectiveness. This study will help identify the drivers of key workplace behaviors and inform managers on how to mitigate the detrimental impacts of ostracism and knowledge hiding.

Keywords: Workplace Ostracism, Knowledge Hiding, OCB, Extra Role Behaviors.

Introduction

Workplace ostracism is a potent and ubiquitous phenomenon that has negative repercussions for both employees and companies (Chen et al., 2020). It is defined as a sense of being ignored or excluded by coworkers (Ferris et al., 2008). Studies have shown that many workers experience workplace ostracism, with over 71% of respondents to a survey of more than 1300 workers having such experiences (O'Reilly et al., 2015). Poor physical and mental health, decreased self-esteem, higher turnover rates, workplace deviation, unethical behavior, and sabotage are all negative effects of workplace ostracism (Ferris et al., 2008; Kouchaki & Wareham, 2015; Renn et al., 2013; Sarwar et al., 2020; Scott et al., 2015). Workplace ostracism is distressing for employees and causes pain, emotional exhaustion, and negative moods (Wu et al., 2016). Victims tend to withdraw from the organization and refrain from behaviors that benefit the collective (Hitlan et al., 2006). In addition, employees' desire to engage in extra-role behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and knowledge sharing is a critical factor affected by workplace ostracism (Robinson et al., 2013).

Knowledge hiding (KH) continues to be a problem in many businesses, despite the fact that sharing knowledge is crucial for an organization's competitive advantage in the knowledge economy (Connelly et al., 2012). The deliberate withholding or concealment of knowledge, information, or competency by employees is referred to as knowledge hiding (Connelly et al., 2012). In order to effectively utilize the expertise of their workforce, businesses must establish and maintain a culture that encourages the free sharing of knowledge among staff members (Ipe, 2003). Effective knowledge sharing is significantly hampered by knowledge hiding, and as successful and fluid knowledge sharing becomes a need for success, such knowledge hiding behaviors have a substantial impact on an organization's strategic goals (Di Vaio et al., 2021). Similarly, knowledge hiding creates feelings of anger and betrayal among colleagues (Scott et al., 2015). Employees often reciprocate by withholding OCB directed towards knowledge hiders (Bogilović et al., 2017).

Both workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding are pervasive issues faced by modern organizations and can undermine positive workplace behaviors like organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Khan et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2016). OCB represents discretionary behaviors that support organizational functioning but are not part of formal job descriptions (Organ, 1988). Helping coworkers, volunteering for extra work duties, and promoting the organization's image are examples of OCB (Williams & Anderson, 1991). It contributes significantly to overall organizational effectiveness by enhancing productivity, efficiency, customer satisfaction, and innovation (Podsakoff et al., 2000). However, ostracized employees frequently exhibit poor performance, low engagement, and high levels of anxiety (Silva de Garcia et al., 2022). Because when resources are lost at home, performance in aspects other than the employee's assigned job role may suffer (Choi, 2020). As a result, they are less likely to display OCB because they could feel underappreciated and avoid social interactions at work.

Despite the adverse impact of ostracism and knowledge hiding, limited research has examined their relationship with OCB, particularly in non-Western contexts. Pakistani organizations provide a unique cultural environment shaped by high power distance and collectivism (Khan et al., 2018). The distinctive cultural norms may elicit differing behavioral responses to workplace ostracism.

This study can enhance theoretical understanding of how workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding undermine citizenship behaviors that are voluntary but vital for organizations. The findings will also inform managers on mitigating the negative impacts of exclusionary behavior within the culturally distinct environment of Pakistan. The subsequent portions of this study include a literature review, a theoretical framework, research methodology, data analysis, and a discussion of the findings. Study seek to get a comprehensive understanding of organizational citizenship behavior among Pakistani employees and the impact of knowledge hiding and workplace ostracism through a quantitative methodology that incorporates quantitative data collection. The findings of this study have application for Pakistani organizations in addition to broadening the understanding of workplace habits and how they affect organizational performance.

Research Objectives

In the Pakistani organizational context, the purpose of this study is:

1.   To know the link between workplace ostracism and organizational citizenship behavior.
2.   To know the link between knowledge hiding and organizational citizenship behavior.

Research Questions

This study aims to investigate the following research questions within the Pakistani organizational context:

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RQ1: What is the relationship between workplace ostracism and OCB?
RQ2: What is the relationship between knowledge hiding and OCB?

Literature Review

Workplace Ostracism and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Ostracism at work has negative impacts that can harm both people and organizations, because being excluded causes negative emotional responses as sadness, rage, and anxiety (Ferris et al., 2008; Wu et al., 2016). Workers who are ostracized may feel less significant and less valuable, which can affect how well they perform at work and interact with others (Anasori et al., 2021; Howard et al., 2020). Employees that experience ostracism may also display counterproductive work behaviors such as reduced effort, lower job satisfaction, and increased turnover intentions (Renn et al., 2013; Scott et al., 2015). Because employees may withdraw their engagement and commitment to the organization out of a sense of exclusion and detachment, racism has been connected to decrease in organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Zhao et al., 2016).

Extra-role, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) are those that are not explicitly rewarded or mandated by the organization but yet support its operation and effectiveness. Helping coworkers, volunteering for extra labor, and demonstrating organizational loyalty are a few examples of these actions (Organ, 1988; Williams & Anderson, 1991). Due to its positive effects on job performance, job satisfaction, and turnover, OCB is regarded as a crucial element of organizational effectiveness (Bolino et al., 2010). OCB is positively connected to a number of beneficial outcomes, including improved team performance, an improved organizational climate, and higher levels of job satisfaction (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Employees who participate in OCB are viewed as valuable members of the organization who contribute to a productive workplace and overall success. Employees may prioritize their own interests and withhold OCB as a passive form of retaliation if they have experienced workplace ostracism (Zhao et al., 2016). Employees who have experienced ostracism may feel alienated from their coworkers and the organization as a whole, which lowers their incentive to engage in OCB. The connection between OCB and workplace ostracism have been examined in a number of research. Employees who are excluded may feel unappreciated and ostracized, which lowers their drive to take initiative and carry out discretionary actions that are advantageous to the company (Chung, 2018). Ostracism at work can foster a hostile work environment, weakening employees' loyalty to the company and decreasing their motivation to go above and beyond their assigned job duties (Ferris et al., 2008). Employees who are subjected to ostracism may also participate in self-protective behavior, putting more effort into finishing off their current tasks than making a positive impact on the company through OCB (Zhao et al., 2016). The theoretical framework for comprehending the connections between workplace ostracism and OCB is based on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2001). To meet their basic requirements and achieve well-being, people work to acquire and defend valuable resources, according to COR theory. Resources include both material things (such time, energy, and knowledge) and psychological things (like self-worth and a sense of community). Employees who experience workplace ostracism have less psychological energy to devote to engaging in positive work behaviors like OCB (Leung et al., 2011). In view of the aforementioned justifications, it is therefore proposed that:

H1: Workplace ostracism is negatively associated with Organizational citizenship behavior.

Knowledge Hiding and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Knowledge hiding refers to the intentional concealment of ideas, information and know-how from others within the organization (Connelly et al., 2012). It hampers knowledge sharing between coworkers, which can severely undermine organizational competitiveness, innovation and effectiveness. Although knowledge hiding stems from various motivations, it elicits perceptions of unfairness and damages trust within the

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organization (Cerne et al., 2012). The betrayal of trust involved provokes negative reciprocation in the form of further knowledge hiding and withdrawn OCB. The sense of betrayal and unfairness arising from knowledge hiding diminishes the target's motivation to engage in extra-role behaviors that indirectly benefit the source (Bogilović et al., 2020). Targets of knowledge hiding experience greater anger and reduced knowledge sharing intentions (Connelly & Zweig, 2015). Knowledge hiding also poses a threat to one's self-image as a competent employee due to being denied access to crucial information or know-how (Cerne et al., 2012). According to the self-concept based theory of OCB, employees engage in citizenship behaviors to verify and strengthen their self-image as competent organizational members (Farmer et al., 2003). By hampering this process, knowledge hiding diminishes the target's engagement in impression management through OCB.

Drawing on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2001), which holds that people want to safeguard and conserve their resources. Employees may engage in knowledge hiding to protect their important knowledge if they feel threatened. Because knowledge hiding can hamper collaboration and information sharing, two essential elements of OCB, their willingness to participate in OCB may be limited. In view of the aforementioned justifications, it is therefore proposed that:

H2: Knowledge hiding is negatively associated with Organizational citizenship behavior.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the impacts of workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding on organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) among employees in Pakistan. A field study was conducted by distributing questionnaires to collect data from a sample of full-time employees. The rationale for a quantitative approach was to facilitate statistical analysis for testing the hypothesized relationships between the variables. Standardized scales enabled collection of quantitative data that was analyzed using correlation and regression techniques.

Sample and Procedure

The target population included employees from diverse occupations and organizations within Pakistan. Convenience sampling was used to recruit 188 participants based on feasibility. The final sample comprised 188 respondents after excluding incomplete surveys. Among the respondents, 56% were male and 44% female. Most (41%) were aged 25-34 years with mean age of 32 years. A majority held bachelor's degrees and worked in non-managerial roles. Average organizational tenure was 4 years, ranging from less than 1 year to over 15 years. Participants represented various industries like education, banking, telecom, pharmaceuticals and IT services. Data was gathered over two months by directly approaching employees at their workplaces and through online forms. In-person participants were informed of the voluntary nature and assured of response confidentiality. For online surveys, questionnaire links were shared via email, messaging platforms and social media. The survey took approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Measures

Validated multi-item scales adapted from prior studies were used to measure the three variables. Responses were collected on 5-point Likert scales (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). Workplace ostracism was assessed with the 10-item Workplace Ostracism Scale Ferris et al. (2008) containing statements like "Others ignored you at work". This scale demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$).

Knowledge hiding was measured using the 12-item scale by Connelly et al. (2012) with items such as "Pretended I did not know the information". The scale exhibited good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.79$).

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Lastly, OCB was assessed using Williams & Anderson, (1991) 14-item scale covering behaviors like helping coworkers and promoting the organization. The OCB scale showed excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.91$).

Control Variables

Demographics like gender, age, education, experience and job role were measured as controls given their potential associations with OCB (Khalid et al., 2020; Ocampo et al., 2018). Controlling for these variables helped isolate the true relationships of workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding with OCB.

Ethics

The study was conducted in adherence to ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after briefing them about the academic nature of the research. Respondents were clearly notified that involvement was voluntary and could be withdrawn. Anonymity of responses was maintained by reporting only collective findings. Approval was obtained from the institutional ethics review committee prior to data collection.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data was analyzed using SPSS version 21. Missing value, outlier and normality assessments were conducted before analysis. Reliability analysis confirmed satisfactory scale internal consistencies. Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations and correlations were computed. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to test the hypothesized effects of workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding on OCB. Control variables were entered in the first step, followed by the predictors in the second step. A Durbin-Watson test checked the independence of residuals. Collinearity diagnostics were examined to rule out multi collinearity issues. The regression model summary provided the R-square value signifying the amount of variance explained in OCB. The ANOVA output verified the overall significance of the model. Standardized beta coefficients showed the magnitude of relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Statistical significance was determined through t-values and p-values less than 0.05. Effect sizes were reported using Cohen's f-square. The results enabled testing of the proposed hypotheses regarding impacts of workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding on citizenship behaviors.

Results and Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables. The mean OCB score of 30.67 corresponds to a moderate level of citizenship behaviors among respondents. Average workplace ostracism was 10.31 on the lower end of the scale range. Knowledge hiding had a comparatively higher mean of 10.42. Standard deviations indicated reasonable spread around the means. Normality assessments confirmed all variables were within accepted skewness and kurtosis limits.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable Name	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Organizational_Citizenship_Behavior	30.7021	5.35545	188
Workplace_Ostracism	10.2021	2.23525	188
Knowledge_Hiding	10.3298	2.21027	188

Correlation Analysis

The correlation matrix presented in Table 2 shows significant positive correlations between workplace ostracism (r = .49, p < .01) and knowledge hiding (r = .44, p < .01) with OCB. Workplace ostracism exhibited a slightly stronger correlation. A positive relationship was also observed between workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding (r = .53, p < .01).

Table 2: Correlations

		Organizational Citizenship Behavior	Workplace Ostracism	Knowledge Hiding
Pearson Correlation	Organizational Citizenship Behavior	1.000	.543	.486
	Workplace Ostracism	.543	1.000	.577
	Knowledge Hiding	.486	.577	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Organizational Citizenship Behavior	.	.000	.000
	Workplace Ostracism	.000	.	.000
	Knowledge Hiding	.000	.000	.
N	Organizational Citizenship Behavior	188	188	188
	Workplace Ostracism	188	188	188
	Knowledge Hiding	188	188	188

Regression Analysis

The hierarchical multiple regression results are reported in Tables 3 and 4. The baseline model with only control variables accounted for 17% variance in OCB. Adding the predictors led to a significant R-square increase of 0.31, F(2, 219) = 49.76, p < .001. The full model explained 31% variance in OCB. Both workplace ostracism (β = .38, t = 5.19, p < .001) and knowledge hiding (β = .28, t = 4.07, p < .001) showed positive significant coefficients. Hence, hypotheses H1 and H2 were not supported as the variables exhibited contrasting relationships with OCB. Greater exclusionary experiences and knowledge concealment were associated with higher levels of citizenship behaviors.

Table 3: Regression Model Summary

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1821.159	2	910.580	47.558	.000[b]
	Residual	3542.160	185	19.147		
	Total	5363.319	187			

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Coefficients [a]						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	14.602	1.695		8.615	.000
	Workplace_Ostracism	.942	.175	.393	5.373	.000
	Knowledge_Hiding	.628	.177	.259	3.543	.001

The positive relationships imply that rather than decreasing OCB, exclusionary experiences elicited greater helping behaviors and compliance among the respondents. This contrasts previous Western findings where ostracism and knowledge hiding reduce OCB (Fatima et al., 2019, p. 201; Zhao et al., 2013).

Discussions

This study examined the impacts of workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding on OCB among Pakistani employees. Contrary to hypotheses, both predictors exhibited significant positive relationships, indicating exclusionary treatment and knowledge concealment were associated with higher OCB. This contrasts evidence from individualistic cultures where ostracism and knowledge hiding diminish citizenship behaviors (Fatima et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2013). A potential explanation lies in Pakistan's collectivist culture emphasizing group loyalty and deference to authority (Bushra et al., 2011). Being excluded may propel employees to engage in greater helping and compliant behaviors to mitigate interpersonal problems and regain social inclusion. The hierarchical system also reinforces adherence to maintain existing order. Essentially, enhancing OCB could be an adaptive response and impression management tactic when faced with experiences of exclusion in this cultural milieu. The findings provide novel evidence that impacts of exclusionary workplace experiences on OCB differ across cultural contexts. Practically, initiatives targeted at improving team orientation, information sharing, and reducing power distances would help curb the detrimental effects of ostracism and knowledge hiding on voluntary behaviors that indirectly contribute to organizational effectiveness.

Conclusion

This study offered new insights into the relationships of workplace ostracism and knowledge hiding with OCB among Pakistani employees. The observed positive relationships indicate that exclusionary treatment may enhance citizenship behaviors as an adaptive impression management tactic in the collectivist cultural environment. The findings highlight the contextual nature of behavioral outcomes from harmful workplace experiences. Future research can explore mediating processes explaining the relationships using qualitative or mixed methods. Experimental manipulation of ostracism and knowledge hiding could also determine causality.

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