

WORKPLACE OSTRACISM AND COUNTERPRODUCTIVE WORK BEHAVIOURS: A MODERATED MEDIATION ANALYSIS OF ORGANISATIONAL CYNICISM AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

This article aimed to examine the effect of workplace ostracism on employees' propensity to participate in counterproductive work behaviours, considering the mediating role of organisational cynicism and the moderating impact of emotional intelligence. Education sector, the most significant sector of any economy, is expanding rapidly in Pakistan. The main actors in this sector are teaching professionals. The level and quality of education is directly related to the expertise, competencies, and knowledge of teaching professionals. Positive intent, in addition to information, skills, and abilities, is crucial for transmitting knowledge to students. However, this objective may not be realized if teachers tend to demonstrate negative workplace behaviours. In this regard, three contextual variables i.e., organisational cynicism, workplace ostracism, and emotional intelligence, were used to help explain why and how a relationship exists between workplace ostracism and employee' engagement in counterproductive work behaviours. This was a quantitative study, based on survey approach. The study found that workplace ostracism not only enhances teachers' perceptions of organisational cynicism but also intensifies their inclination to engage in counterproductive work behaviours. Similarly, organisational cynicism accelerates teachers' tendency to participate in counterproductive work behaviours, while emotional intelligence dampens it. Lastly, emotional intelligence has been found to moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behaviours, whereas organisational cynicism mediates the said relationship. Thus, this study carries significant contribution by explaining why teachers sometimes engage in counterproductive work behaviour and helps devising ways to combat it.

Keywords: Workplace Ostracism, organisational cynicism, Emotional Intelligence, Counterproductive work behaviours (CWB), Teachers, Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa (KPK)

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan, the seventh on the list of countries by population, faces various challenges. One such challenging sector is education. In Pakistan, both the literacy rate and the level of education are quite low when compared to other nations. The competence of the teaching staff has a direct and significant impact on the quality of education. There is no denial to the fact that the nation has highly talented professors and researchers. However, they sometimes tend to participate in unprofessional workplace behaviours. Any intentional behaviour on the part of an organisational member that is contrary to the legitimate interests of the organisation or its members may be referred to as one of these counterproductive workplace behaviours, or CWB (Sackett, 2002). Some of the negative workplace behaviours teachers may tend to engage in include, being absent from duty, arriving late to class and leaving early, acting too casually while teaching, putting in little effort to prepare and deliver lectures, etc. These unfavourable behavioural trends run the risk of further degrading the nation's educational system.

One of the most important factors in this regard is the quality of interpersonal relationship at the workplace. Good interpersonal relationships among co-workers lead to beneficial outcomes. However, the luxury of having good interpersonal relationship is not always the case, as negative workplace events often take place in organisations. One of such negative workplace events is workplace ostracism, which occurs very frequently across times and organisations (Fox & Stallworth, 2005). In this context, employees sometimes recall instances in which they were shunned or ostracised by others in their social interactions. In literature, this phenomenon is referred to as ostracism. Hence, workplace ostracism represents the failure on the part of an individual or group to engage another organisational member in social interaction (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2013, p. 207). Putting it differently, "workplace ostracism" occurs when an individual perceives himself as being ignored or marginalised by co-workers (Williams, 1997), and represents a negative interpersonal relation.

A substitutional amount of research indicate that workplace ostracism is accompanied by a variety of negative outcomes, such as rising

emotional fatigue that turns into negative workplace attitudes, enhanced turnover intentions, and a high rate to switch to another job. According to Gkorezis, Panagiotou, and Theodorou (2016), workplace ostracism has a negative effect on attitudes and behavioural responses at work and encourages its victims to act aggressively and antisocially (Rajchert & Winiewski, 2016). Similarly, workplace ostracism can result in increased levels of hostility, CWB, harassment, and workplace problems, to name a few (Chung, 2015; Zhao, Peng, & Sheard, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, workplace is associated with a variety of negative outcomes. One such significant outcomes is organizational cynicism. This is because researcher have discovered several antecedents of organisational cynicism, including the perception of procedural and relational injustice (Bernerth, Armenakis, Field, & Walker, 2007). Based on this logic, we suggest that organizational cynicism arises as a result of workplace ostracism, because this social exclusion is a form of relational injustice. The link between WPO and organisational cynicism can also be explained by the lack of social support, which demotivates employees from fulfilling their obligations to their organisations and leads them to adopt pessimistic viewpoints. It is important to note that ostracism at work denotes a lack of social support for its sufferers. Henkens and Leenders (2010) backed up this theory and claimed that a lack of social support causes feelings of job fatigue, which in turn leads to organisational cynicism.

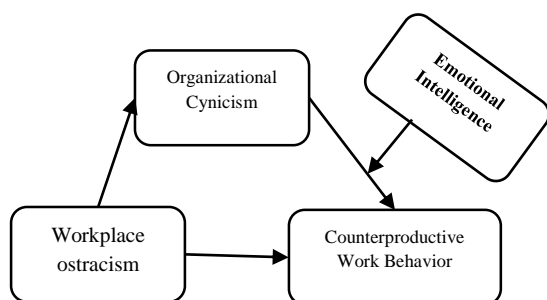
As for the nature of organizational cynicism, it signifies a negative attitude of an employee towards his organisation (Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998). In general, it is described as a mindset that is negative against a person, group, idea, social custom, or organisation and is characterised by irritation, discouragement, distrust, and a negative state of mind (Andersson & Bateman, 1997). The same goes for organisational cynicism, which, according to Dean et al. (1998), has three components: (i) a belief that the organisation lacks integrity and should not be trusted on; (ii) the development of negative emotions towards the organisation; and (iii) the engagement in censorious and harmful behaviours directed at the organisation

(or its members) as a result of these negative beliefs and emotions.

In addition to organisational cynicism, emotional intelligence is another a significant factor that could influence how workplace ostracism impacts CWB. The term "emotional intelligence" denotes to a range of skills and capabilities, comprising the capacity to recognise and control one's own together with other people's emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). It illustrates how well people can recognise, analyse, and successfully control their emotions in order to achieve goals, become more adaptable, and deal with difficulties. As a result, emotional intelligence may have significant individual and the organisational levels effects. For example, emotional intelligence serves for the development and well-being of the organisation by reducing the negative effects of job stress and job burnout (Schneider, Lyons, & Khazon, 2013). It also influences how people behave at work, enhancing altruistic behaviour, promoting job outcomes, and reducing interpersonal conflicts and the stress they cause (Carmeli, 2003).

In light of this background, it is crucial to have a scholarly look into the problem of how employee behaviours get affected from workplace ostracism. In this context, is also extremally pertinent to examine the underlying mechanism of the said relationship. Hence, for this purpose, a moderated mediation model is used. Therefore, the study aims to investigate how workplace ostracism affects employees' inclination to involve in CWB through the moderating and mediating effects of emotional intelligence and organisational cynicism, respectively.

Figure 1
Theoretical model of the study



THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Workplace ostracism and employee behaviours (CWB)

At the workplace, employees interact socially as they have to collaborate as teams, group members, superiors, supervisors, peers, or subordinates, etc. The quality of their social interactions has a significant impact on how they behave. A good social interaction has a favourable impact on their behavioural inclinations, whilst negative social interaction has the opposite effect. Hence, the quality of mutual contact (social interactions) is crucial while considering employees' attitudes and behavioural responses.

In the view of this argument, workplace ostracism can be regarded as an extremely irritating issue such that those who are ostracised are socially died (Einarsen, Skogstad, & Glaso, 2013). This is because ostracism threatens the ability of its victims to live meaningful lives and makes them feel unworthy (Huang, Sun, Hsiao, & Wang, 2017). Hence, workplace ostracism leads to significant negative consequences. Literature shows that reduced involvement in organisational citizenship behaviour, workplace deviance (Lee & Allen, 2002; Hitlan & Noel, 2009); intention to leave (Harvey, Stoner, Hochwarter, & Kacmar, 2007); and lower job performance are some of the negative outcomes of associated with workplace exclusion. Likewise, ostracised individuals are more likely to exhibit antisocial and aggressive behaviours (Rajchert & Winiewski, 2016; Yan, Zhou, Long, & Ji, 2014).

Moreover, ostracism in the workplace has a negative effect on not only on its victims but also on the entire organisation. There are numerous ways that it might hurt a company. For example, O'Reilly and Robinson (2009) claim that workplace exclusion undermines workplace contribution. Similarly, workplace ostracism shows a positive correlation with emotional exhaustion and employees' involvement in hazardous behaviours. According to Chen and Li, (2020), ostracism at work influences emotional fatigue, which encourages employees' engagement in risky and undesirable workplace behaviours.

Some of the other negative effects of workplace ostracism include; a rise in intention to leave

(Harvey et al., 2007), rise in job withdrawals (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008), and a decrease in job performance (Hitlan, Clifton, & DeSoto, 2006). It is crucial to note that these outcomes are the dimensions of CWB. Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested.

H1: Employees' tendency to participate in CWB is positively impacted by workplace ostracism.

Workplace ostracism and organizational cynicism

The other stream of the study is to establish and explain the relationship between workplace exclusion and employees' development of cynical thoughts. The question is why employee develop cynical thought? There may be different explanations to answer this question. However, from an organisational perspective, Davis and Gardner (2004) are of the view that when employees feel that their organisation lacks integrity, honesty, and equality, they acquire a negative mind set towards their organisation known as organisational cynicism. Likewise, when a worker believes that his organisation is unreliable or unworthy of trust, it results in organisational cynicism (Abraham, 2000). As mentioned earlier, workplace ostracism is regarded as a sign of relationship injustice. On the same line, organisational cynicism is also primarily brought on by perceptions of unfairness. The notion that procedural and relational injustices are closely related to organisational cynicism has been substantiated by Bernerth et al. (2007). So, it may be concluded that workplace exclusion, a form of relational injustice, may lead to the development of pessimistic ideas and may have a boosting effect on organisational cynicism.

In addition to the above argumentation, the social support mechanism is yet another explanation for the existence of link between workplace ostracism and organisational cynicism. Social support is an essential work resource whose absence might result in the creation of cynical thoughts. Many issues could result from a lack of social support, for instance, it may discourage workers and demotivate them workers to fulfil their organisational responsibilities. This view has been confirmed by Henkens and Leenders (2010) that the

absence/lack of social support lead to job burnout, that ultimately results in mental checking out from one's job – a component of cynicism.

In a nutshell, a stronger social support mechanism may protect employees to develop cyclical thoughts towards their organisation. Workplace ostracism — signifying a lack of social support — however, have a boosting effect on employees' propensity to think cynically. This is because workplace ostracism fosters a feeling of interpersonal injustice that makes employees skeptical about their organisation. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis.

H2: Workplace ostracism has a boosting effect on organisational cynicism.

Organizational cynicism (OC) and employee behaviours

One of the main issues of the studies on human behaviour is figuring out what motivates workers to engage in CWB. One of these motivating factors is organisational cynicism. Literature suggest that organisational cynicism carries several negative consequences. For example, a decrease in motivation (Wanous, Reichers, & Austin, 1994), and a rise in emotional exhaustion (Maslach, 2001), as well as a decline in the propensity to engage in prosocial workplace behaviours (Van Dyne, Graham, & Dienesch, 1994) are some of the negative consequence caused by organisational cynicism.

In addition to these, other consequences of organisational cynicism include; passing serious negative statements about the sincerity and honesty of the organisation, projecting negatively its future policies, using disparaging language about the organisation, and questioning the morality of the organisation (Dean et al., 1998; Bakker, 2007). These actions are counterproductive in nature as they have a detrimental impact on the organization's wellbeing. Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) declared that as organisational cynicism is a phenomenon made up of negative thoughts about one's job, management, and/or institution, therefore, a cynic person is more likely to exhibit bad workplace behaviours (CWB). Andersson and Bateman (1997) backed up the same claim that organisational cynicism causes CWB.

In addition to the behavioural impact, organisational cynicism also has negative organizational level consequences, e.g., job burnout, emotional exhaustion (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003), declined organizational loyalty, job dissatisfaction, decreased enthusiasm, lack of trust on the integrity of the leaders (Reichers, Wanous, & Austin, 1997), decreased performance (Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008), and a rising tendency to engage in unethical and disloyal behaviours (Andersson & Bateman, 1997).

Furthermore, it is a fact that organisational cynicism is a negative attitude (Dean et al., 1998) and CWB is a negative behaviour (Spector & Fox, 2002). In accordance with the attitude behaviour relationship, a negative attitude is typically followed by a negative behaviour. Hence, it stands to reason that a negative attitude will be followed by a negative behaviour. Studies have also backed up this claim. For instance, Judge, Scott, and Ilies (2006) found that organisational cynicism had a positive association with a tendency for employees to engage in unproductive behaviours at work. Cynical personnel tend to more frequently participate in actions that could hurt co-workers as well as organisation.

In short, research points to three main causes of CWB among employees: a lack of organisational justice, a breakdown of the psychological contract, and a lack of confidence in the management of the company. In fact, the core theme of organisational cynicism is related to both the sense of a lack of organisational fairness and the low degree of trust in the organisation or its management. Hence, it is logical to conclude that organisational cynicism intensifies employees' propensity to engage in CWB. Consequently, we propose the following hypothesis.

H3: Organisational cynicism causes an increase in employees' propensity to involve in CWB.

The mediating function of organisational cynicism among workplace ostracism and employee behaviours

Organizational cynicism and workplace ostracism are closely related, as was stated in the literature review and hypothesis development sections. While developing the third hypothesis (H3), we saw that organisational cynicism accelerates employees'

inclination to partake in CWB. Likewise, we also saw that organisational cynicism is positively affected by the incidence of workplace ostracism, as discussed while developing hypothesis second (H2). Hence, it stands to reason that WPO influences organisational cynicism, which in turn affects employees' propensity to engage in CWB. Therefore, we suggest that organisational cynicism transmits the impact of workplace ostracism to employee behavioural tendency — involvement in CWB, as expressed in the following hypothesis.

H4: The interaction between workplace ostracism and CWB is mediated by organisational cynicism.

The moderating role of emotional intelligence

An important factor that significantly affects an employee's behavioural patterns is emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence has a significant effect on individual behaviours and organisational performance (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). Several researches have looked at how emotional intelligence affects employees' management of their workplace stress and the resultant behavioural reactions. It has been found that emotional intelligence increases altruistic workplace behaviour, promotes work outcomes, reduces interpersonal disputes and the stress they cause (Carmeli, 2003), and promotes overall wellbeing (Austin, Saklofske, & Egan, 2005).

In the context of our study, as previously mentioned that workplace ostracism makes employees cynical about their organisation or its members, which has a negative impact on their behavioural tendencies. They may incline to involve in counterproductive work behaviours as a reaction to their feelings of being ignored. However, some of them may be able to control their undesirable behavioural inclinations due to their emotional intelligence ability. This is because emotional intelligence may protect them from responding negatively to their pessimistic beliefs and thus favourably influencing their behaviours.

Emotional intelligence can be viewed as a critical control variable, as it can lessen the negative repercussions associated with many undesirable workplace situations. It is positively correlated with employees' work

engagement (George, Okon, & Akaighe, 2021). Moreover, with its impact on perceived organisational support, it also has a beneficial influence on employees' psychological capital. Emotional intelligence can be viewed as a key policy tool because these factors — improved work engagement, psychological capital, and perception of organisational support, have a significant positive impact on organisations and their members.

Moreover, the role of emotional intelligence to buffer the positive connection between interpersonal conflicts and CWB provides another argument in favour of using it as a moderating variable. Interpersonal conflicts cause increased involvement in CWB. Yet, employees' propensity to engage in CWB declines if they possess emotional intelligence skills (Kundi & Badar, 2021). According to Preena (2021), although ostracism at work leads to increased employees' participation in workplace deviant behaviours (CWB), this link may be weakened by their improved psychological capital — emotional intelligence. In short, emotional intelligence is the capacity to observe one's own and others' emotions, and eventually to use this information to guide one's ideas and actions (Kun & Demetrovics, 2010). We also know that workplace ostracism is a bad workplace environment practice that causes its victims to feel organisational cynicism, which makes them react badly. In other words, workplace exclusion causes organisational cynicism, which causes employees to react negatively by becoming more involved in CWB. Yet, employees' level of emotional intelligence may determine how badly they react to organisational cynicism brought on by ostracism at work. Hence, their emotional intelligence ability will make them less likely to be tempted to act out negatively. Based on these argumentations, we suggest our final hypothesis as under.

H5: Emotional intelligence moderates the proposed positive relation between workplace ostracism and CWB as suggested to be mediated by organisational cynicism.

METHODOLOGY AND MEASURES

The goal of this study was to better understand the association between workplace ostracism, organisational cynicism, emotional intelligence, and counterproductive work

behaviours (CWB) among Pakistani teaching professionals. Participants in the study were the academic staff members of three public institutions in KPK, Pakistan (University of Haripur, University of Science and Technology Abbottabad, and Hazara University Mansehra). This was a survey-based study wherein data were gathered through a questionnaire. The questionnaire contained standardised scales to measure each dimension; including workplace ostracism, organisational cynicism, emotional intelligence, and counterproductive work behaviours. The researcher personally conducted the survey to acquire the data. He visited each campus and gave out roughly 200 questionnaires to respondents, from which 152 were returned fully completed. Hence, the final analysis was conducted using these 152 responses.

A 10-items scale created by Ferris et al. (2008) was used to measure workplace ostracism. An example item on the scale was "others ignored me at work". The Brandes, Dharwadkar, and Dean (1998) 12-items scale was used to assess organisational cynicism. An example item on the scale was "I believe that my organisation says one thing and does another". The 16-items Wong and Law (2002) scale was used to assess emotional intelligence. An example item on the scale was "I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time". Likewise, the Sjoberg (2007) 10-item scale based on Bennett and Robinson's (2000) theory of deviant behaviour, was used to assess CWB. A sample item of the scale was "I have seen to private affairs during work hours".

Likert scales were used to measure every construct. In this regard, 5-points Likert scales, with 1 denoting "never" and 5 denoting "always", were used to measure CWB and workplace ostracism, each. Similarly, organisational cynicism, and emotional intelligence were measured, each, with a 5-points scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree".

Ethical considerations and Data analysis technique

The study was allowed by the administration of each university, as well as the head of each teaching department. We also obtained each participant's consent in advance and made sure that their identify would not be revealed and

that the data would only be utilized for study. Data was analysed using statistical methods including frequency tables, correlation, and regression. The mediation and moderation analyses were carried out using Process Macro by Hayes (2013) with the aid of SPSS version 21.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The fitness of the model was assessed with the help of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), wherein several fit indicators were used, such as, chi-square, GFI, CFI, SRMR, and RMSEA. The model overall fitness was evaluated using the chi-square test with a benchmark value of 0.05 (Barrett, 2007). Additionally, any value bellow 3 when the chi-square value is divided

Chi Square = χ^2 , Degree of Freedom = Df, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation = RMSEA; Comparative Fit Index = CFI; Goodness-of-fit Index = GFI; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual = SRMR; $p < .01$

by the degree of freedom (χ^2/df), with a significant value of the level of significance, showed a better fit of the model. Similarly, the value for SRMSR below .08, RMSEA having a value from .06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) to .07 (Steiger, 2007), CFI exceeding .92, and GFI to be at least .90 were thought to be reasonable values representing a satisfactory fit of the model. We tried three different models i.e. single factor model, two factors model, three factors model, and lastly, four factors model, and compared their results for the fit indices. Our analysis indicated that the 4-factors model had the greatest fit indicators in comparison to the substitute models. Therefore, it was the most suited model to our data, as shown in the following table 1.

Table 1
Confirmatory factor analysis

Model	χ^2	d.f.	RMSEA	CFI	GFI	SRMR
Four factors model	142.54	148	.064	.94	.96	.060
Three factors model	138.32	149	.056	.87	.93	.084
Two factors model	130.23	150	.041	.85	.88	.102
Single factor model	128.61	151	.032	.83	.86	.123

Table 2
Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's Alpha, and Correlations

Variables	Mean (SD)	Cronbach's Alpha	1	2	3	4
1.CWB	2.60 (.58)	0.83	1			
2.Organisitional cynicism	3.24 (.73)	0.85	.163*	1		
3. Emotional intelligence	3.86 (.52)	0.81	-.230**	-.144**	1	
4.Workplace ostracism	3.07 (.71)	0.84	.474**	.164*	-.342*	1

** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

Table 3:
Path coefficient (the Direct, and moderated effects)

Regression path	Coefficient (Beta)	R ²	P
CWB<--- WPO	.586	.343	*
Organisational cynicism <--- WPO	.424	.180	*
CWB <--- Organisational cynicism	.543	.295	*
CWB <--- Emotional intelligence*organisational cynicism	-.138	.120	*

The analysis of correlation is reported in Table 2. The table shows that there are significant positive correlations among organisational cynicism and CWB ($r = .163, P = 0.05$), workplace ostracism and CWB ($r = .474, P = 0.01$), workplace ostracism and organisational cynicism ($r = 0.164, sig = 0.05$). Likewise, there are significant negative relationships among organisational cynicism and emotional intelligence ($r = -.230, P = 0.01$), CWB and emotional intelligence ($r = -.144, P = 0.01$), and emotional intelligence and ostracism ($r = -.342, P = 0.05$). Moreover, every construct of the scale was found to have a Cronbach's Alpha exceeding the benchmark value (0.70), signifying the scale to be reliable.

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

These results indicate that workplace ostracism has a significant positive effect both on CWB ($\beta = .586, p = .01$, variance explained 34.3%) and organisational cynicism ($\beta = 0.424, p = .05$, variance explained 18%), therefore, H1 "Employees' tendency to participate in CWB is positively impacted by workplace ostracism" and H2 "Workplace ostracism has a boosting effect on organisational cynicism" are supported.

Likewise, organisational cynicism significantly influences instructors' propensity to engage in CWB ($\beta = 0.543, p = .05$, variance explained 29.5%). This result is line with hypothesis H3. Therefore H3 "Organisational cynicism causes an increase in employees' propensity to involve in CWB" is also

supported. Finally, our results also indicated the interaction effect of organisational cynicism and emotional intelligence between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behaviours is significant ($\beta = -0.138, p = .05$, variance explained 12.0%). This result favours our fourth hypothesis. therefore, H4 "The interaction between workplace ostracism and CWB is mediated by organisational cynicism" is also accepted.

Table 4:
The indirect, and moderated mediation effects
 INDIRECT EFFECT

	Effect size	LLCI	ULCI
Organisational cynicism	.0485	.0058	.1479

MODERATED MEDIATION EFFECT

	Index size	LLCI	ULCI
Organisational cynicism*emotional intelligence	-.0223	-.0930	-.010

Note: Counterproductive work behaviour = Dependent variable; Workplace ostracism = Independent variable; organisational cynicism = Mediating variable; and Emotional intelligence = Moderating variable.

The above table (table 5) demonstrates the mediation effect of organisational cynicism, and moderated mediation effect of emotional intelligence and organisational cynicism between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behaviours. The indirect effect of workplace exclusion on CWB via organisational cynicism is significant (indirect effect size = .0485, LLCI = .0058, and ULCI = .1479). This result favours our fourth hypothesis. Hence, our the H4 " The interaction between

workplace ostracism and CWB is mediated by organisational cynicism” is accepted.

Finally, the table shows that the moderated mediation index is statistically significant (index = -.0223, LLCI = -.0930, and ULCI = -.010). This result is in line with our fifth hypothesis. Therefore, H5 “Emotional intelligence moderates the proposed positive relation between workplace ostracism and CWB as suggested to be mediated by organisational cynicism” is also accepted.

DISCUSSION

This study was initiated to investigate how does workplace ostracism influence employees' propensity to involve in CWB. Additionally, to inspect their direct relationship, we were also curious to investigate whether workplace ostracism might affect CWB indirectly. In this context, organisational cynicism was tested as a potential mediating variable. Moreover, used tried emotional intelligence as a potential moderating variable that might modify the expected relationship between workplace ostracism and CWB. The reason for using these mediating and moderating variables was to get a deeper understanding of underlying process through which workplace exclusion might have an influence on employees' propensity to engage in CWB.

Our findings showed that workplace ostracism carries a boosting influence on the propensity of employees to participate in CWB. This result is consistent with earlier studies, wherein it is concluded that the target's propensity to participate in disruptive and violent behaviour is increased by their sense of exclusion (Rajchert & Winiewski, 2016; Yan et al., 2014). One logical explanation of why there exists a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and CWB is that ostracised individuals may experience either disliked or disrespected. Although, experiencing being disliked or disrespected both hearts, however, feeling disrespected might be more painful. Therefore, the victim of ostracism may have a greater inclination to respond negatively i.e., by engaging in negative workplace behaviours (DeBono & Muraven, 2014). Our results also revealed that there exists a link between workplace ostracism and organisational cynicism. In this regard, we found that workplace ostracism promotions the intensity of organisational cynicism. This is a very crucial link because those

who think cynically toward their organisation lose confidence on their employers and their staff. They might, therefore, be more inclined to exhibit unfavourable work behaviours. This may happen because they believe that their organisations are unjust to them and ignore them in social interactions. As a result, they may have a propensity to act negatively as an effort to harm the organisation or its members to make the score even.

Furthermore, we discovered that organisational cynicism does act as a moderator between CWB and workplace ostracism. This is because ostracised personnel often attribute their neglected experience (social exclusion) to their entire organisation and react poorly as a result. The logic behind this relationship is that the victims of ostracism tend to generate unpleasant sentiments directed not only at the ostracizer but also at the entire organisation as they associate the perpetrator with their wider group, i.e., organisation. In this way, they become cynical to their organisation, which encourages them to participate in CWB. In short, we found that workplace ostracism and employee participation in CWB are linked to each other through organisational cynicism.

In addition to the above findings, we also discovered that emotional intelligence works as a moderating mechanism between CWB and workplace ostracism. As our results show that the unpleasant feelings and the resulting cynical attitudes triggered by workplace ostracism are followed by employees' engagement in CWB. However, we also found that the emotional intelligence ability of the employees determines the extent of their likeliness to engage in CWB as a reaction to workplace ostracism and organisational cynicism. In this regard, we found that employees' emotional intelligence level has a dampening impact on their likeliness to engage in CWB in reaction to workplace ostracism and organisational cynicism.

To sum up, our research led us to draw the conclusion that workplace ostracism and organisational cynicism both have a boosting impact on individuals' propensity to engage in counterproductive work behaviours. Similarly, workplace ostracism has an accelerating impact on organisational cynicism and a discouraging effect on employees' propensity to participate in CWB. Moreover, workplace exclusion and employees' propensity to participate in counterproductive work behaviours are related to

each other through the mediation impact of organisational cynicism. Finally, emotional intelligence weakens the positive association among workplace ostracism and workers' propensity to involve in counterproductive work behaviours.

Implications for practice

This study has important ramifications for how the education industry manages teaching personnel. The study confirms that workplace exclusion has a negative effect on teachers' behavioural tendencies and increases their propensity to engage in CWB. To prevent the negative effects of workplace ostracism, management should implement the necessary measures.

Similarly, by fostering an environment free from ostracism at work, the issues of organisational cynicism and CWB can be managed. In order to do this, open lines of communication should be made available to employees so that they may express their complaints about instances of ostracism and receive helpful advice on how to resolve the issue. Also, by providing a work atmosphere free of ostracism, employers can help employees develop the qualities of organisational dedication and loyalty.

In addition, training programmes targeted to enhance emotional intelligence must be arranged to reduce workers' involvement in CWB. This is because emotional intelligence may work a crucial factor to restrain employees' engagement in CWB in the face of unfavourable workplace events, such as ostracism.

Limitations and future research directions

In order to clarify the study's true context and to provide guidance for future research, the study's shortcomings must be emphasised. The current study do contains some limitations, such as, the use of a cross sectional approach for data collection, the gathering of data from only one sector — the teaching faculty in public sector universities exclusively, and the use of a very small sample size. In the light of these limitations, future research on the topic might make use of a time series design for data collecting, a larger sample size, and a more varied target population to get around these constraints. In addition, several mediators and moderators may also be examined to understand the underlying process by which workplace ostracism may affect the behavioural tendencies of employees.

CONCLUSION

This study sheds new light on the association between employee behavioural tendencies and workplace ostracism in the education sector. Based on social support theory, and attitude behaviours mechanisms, this study employed a survey methodology using a sample of 152 faculty members from public sector universities in KPK, Pakistan. Outcomes of the study lead us to the conclusion that workplace ostracism carries a considerable boosting effect on both employees' propensity to participate in CWB and organisational cynicism. In the same way, employees' propensity to participate in CWB is positively impacted by organisational cynicism but negatively impacted by emotional intelligence. Moreover, the link among workplace ostracism and workers' propensity to partake in CWB is mediated by organisational cynicism. Finally, emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and employees' propensity to involve in CWB.

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