

# Factors Affecting Workplace Ostracism among Government and Private Firms' Employees

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**Keywords:** Workplace Ostracism, Abusive Supervision, Workplace Bullying, Workplace Incivility, Interpersonal Deviance, Interpersonal Distrust, Negative Workplace Gossip, Organizational Politics, Social Undermining, Supervisor Support, Voice Behavior.

**Abstract:** I don't want to overlook workplace ostracism the experience of being ignored/ excluded from workplace communication for life which has devastating consequences on both, the employee and the organization. This research explores the drivers of workplace ostracism (WO) of frontline employees working in government and private organizations within Chhattisgarh, India, which include abusive supervision (AS), workplace bullying (WB), workplace incivility (WI), interpersonal deviance (IDS), interpersonal distrust (ID), negative workplace gossip (NWS), organizational politics (OP), and social undermining (SU), supervisor support (SS) and voice behavior (VB) as the antecedents of WO. Data from 629 employees from government and private sector firms was collected through a structured questionnaire, and the relationship between workplace ostracism and its antecedents was analyzed using the PLS-SEM method. Results show that WI and WB are the leading predictors of WO, thus implying exacerbation of social exclusion. AS, IDS, ID, NWG, OP, SU, SS, and VB were not found to have a direct effect from other variables. These findings underscore the importance of inclusive workplace policies, effective leadership training, conflict resolution and emotional intelligence programs to mitigate workplace ostracism and foster a more positive work environment.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Workplace ostracism, or the perception of being ignored, excluded, or isolated in professional settings, is a severe problem that harms both employees and organizations (Wang et al., 2023; Das & Ekka, 2024). When employees find themselves sidelined, they tend to face emotional turmoil, decreased motivation, and lower satisfaction at work. Such an approach only fuels poor relationships within the workplace, unhealthy relationships with co-workers and the misery experienced by colleagues as they are forced to work around such toxicity, thereby hindering work performance and productivity. Studies (Zhong, 2025; Chaudhary et al., 2024) have shown that workplace ostracism can fuel knowledge hoarding, when employees withhold valuable knowledge intentionally from others, which hampers collaboration and innovation. But one of the most disturbing outcomes of ostracism is its association with increased turnover. Das and Ekka (2024)

highlight that exclusion can make employees think about leaving their jobs, resulting in higher turnover intentions and more recruitment cost for organization. In some cases, workplace ostracism also promotes counterproductive work behaviors, such as retaliatory revenge, defensive silence, and pure work disengagement, which also seriously damages workplace harmony (Izhan et al., 2024).

Ostracism has a particularly debilitating impact in service and healthcare sectors. Sharma et al. (2024) indicated that workplace ostracism in service industries correlates with ill psychological well-being, increased absenteeism, and decreased work performance. In healthcare sector, Ramadan et al. (2023) shows that these mechanisms are similar to those identified for how ostracism adversely impacts organizational commitment potentially also degrading patient care and treatment outcomes. As a result, in the face of their supervisors' ostracism, employees may doubt themselves and become less confident and even procrastinate, which negatively

impact work efficiency (Sarwar et al., 2024). Workplace ostracism can also be very damaging, yet it is often overlooked because it is less overt than bullying or harassment (Gamian-Wilk & Madeja-Bien, 2021). While normal entering workplace strategies, strong leadership, or a positive work culture may help and be beneficial in some cases, they are not enough to eradicate the issue (Lestari et al., 2024). Thus, organizations need to proactively need to come up with inclusive policies, emotional intelligence training, and a supportive work environment to eliminate ostracism and enhance employee engagement (Das & Ekka, 2024; Izhan et al., 2024; Sharma et al., 2024; Ramadan et al., 2023). The current study aims to see the relationship of various elements to workplace ostracism to derive the impact of workplace ostracism and also its relevance in the present modern settings.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies have established that abusive supervision increases workplace ostracism. And it makes employees silent, ineffective, and frustrated, particularly in power-dominating authorities (Khalid et al., 2023; Anjum et al., 2023). According to Wang and Xu (2022), when workers are unable to stand up to tyrannical superiors, they might instead ignore peers, thus exacerbating ostracism. Bai et al. (2021) observed that others might emulate the leader's bad behavior, leading to greater exclusion. Supervisors ignoring employees can make them feel unvalued and disconnected, and damage their well-being and engagement (Brison et al., 2024). So, the study proposes that,

H<sub>1</sub>: Abusive supervision would have a significant effect on workplace ostracism.

Workplace ostracism negatively affects voice behavior, meaning employees who feel excluded are less likely to speak up or share concerns, which lowers their performance and engagement. Imran et al. (2021) showed that ostracized employees may suppress their emotions instead of improving performance. Wu et al. (2019) further stated that new employees also struggle to express ideas when their psychological needs are unmet. Both supervisor and coworker ostracism reduce voice behavior, though in different ways (Li & Tian, 2016). Wu et al. (2018) added that group ostracism weakens team cohesion, making employees less likely to speak up. Moreover, workers are less willing to voice concerns when they see colleagues being excluded, unless they have

strong political skills (Wang & Liao, 2022). Hence, the study hypothesizes that,

H<sub>2</sub>: Voice behaviour would have a significant effect on workplace ostracism.

Previous studies suggest that supervisor support can reduce workplace ostracism. The lower levels of engagement when not supported can lead to turnover and even spill over to personal life stress (Zeng et al., 2024; Brison et al., 2024). However, as per Ahmed et al. Mitchell et al. (2013), supportive supervisors can reduce these biases and create a more inclusive workplace. This boosts employee sense of value and belonging, thus mitigating the negative effects of ostracism on job satisfaction and turnover (Singh et al., 2024). Additionally, Brison et al. (2021) that supportive leadership can stop employees from experiencing dehumanization in the workplace. Thus, the study's hypothesis is that,

H<sub>3</sub>: Supervisor support would have a significant effect on workplace ostracism.

This indicates that workplace bullying is a significant driver of workplace ostracism, which has negative consequences for employees and organizations alike. According to Li et al. (2021), ostracism, or social death, has a negative impact on job satisfaction, commitment and well-being. That is, those who experience exclusion are more likely to quit their jobs, particularly in high turnover sectors such as information technology (Das & Ekka, 2024; Singh et al., 2024). It leads to stress, burnout, and envy, which ultimately impacts employees (Kim & Jang, 2023). According to Sharma et al. (2024), this ostracism results in low productivity and absenteeism, although decreased impact is possible through organizational support. Therefore, the study postulates that,

H<sub>4</sub>: Workplace bullying would have a significant effect on workplace ostracism.

Social undermining and workplace ostracism are closely linked, with research showing that envy and self-threat can lead to exclusion at work. According to Yarivand (2024), envy-driven undermining damages workplace relationships and organizational health. Employees who feel threatened by ethical comparisons may respond by undermining and excluding others (Quade, 2013). This makes social undermining a possible cause of workplace ostracism. Studies (Li et al., 2021; Das & Ekka, 2024) also showed that ostracism leads to lower job satisfaction, higher turnover, and negative workplace behaviors. Yang and Treadway (2018) added that employees

who feel ostracized may engage in counterproductive behaviors, especially those with a strong need for social acceptance. Hence, the study hypothesizes that,

H<sub>5</sub>: Social undermining would have a significant effect on workplace ostracism.

Workplace ostracism and workplace incivility both negatively impact employees and organizations. Studies (Lestari et al., 2024; Das & Ekka, 2024; Singh et al., 2024) suggested that ostracism, or social exclusion, leads to increased turnover intentions and decreased job performance, and that neither leadership nor workplace culture can do much to deter people from leaving jobs in such contexts. Likewise, rudeness or disrespect or incivility results in stress and low-satisfaction and poor relationship at a workplace (Jackson et al. 2024; Chakraborty et al., 2024). According to Jackson et al. (Nelson et al., 2024, p. poor leadership, heavy workloads and ineffective communication exacerbate incivility. Chakraborty et al. (2023) recommended developing emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and inclusive practices would reduce these effects and ultimately improve staff morale and retention.

H<sub>6</sub>: Workplace incivility would have a significant effect on workplace ostracism.

According to Hameed et al. (2025), negative workplace gossip contributes to workplace ostracism, making employees feel excluded and isolated. It also reduces psychological safety, increasing the likelihood of ostracism among those who hear the gossip (Guo et al., 2021). Kim and Jang (2023) revealed that ostracism worsens job stress and burnout, especially when fueled by envy. Das and Ekka (2024) added that workplace ostracism increases turnover intentions, highlighting the need to address exclusion to improve employee retention. Hence, the study hypothesizes that,

H<sub>7</sub>: Negative workplace gossip would have a significant effect on workplace ostracism.

Hua et al. (2023) revealed that interpersonal deviance is significantly correlated with workplace ostracism, where ostracized employees are more likely to deploy negativity to peers, with those with low self-control and high negative emotion being more prone to such negative behaviors. Similarly, ostracism is an inescapable stressor, which causes defensive silence and emotional burnout, thus, provoking deviant behaviors (Jahanzeb, 2022; Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018). Luo et al. (2022) wrote that attending to psychological needs and creating an inclusive workplace can mitigate these effects.

Moreover, Liu et al. (2024) explained that team dynamics, like envy, amplify this relationship, and consequently proactive employees are more likely to engage in deviant behavior. Thus, the study postulates that,

H<sub>8</sub>: Interpersonal deviance would have a significant effect on workplace ostracism.

Studies (Al-Dhuhouri & Shamsudin, 2023; Al-Dhuhouri et al., 2024) found that interpersonal distrust increases workplace ostracism, leading to negative behaviors like knowledge hiding and employee silence. Al-Dhuhouri et al. (2024) stated that ostracism acts as a bridge between distrust and harmful outcomes, worsening workplace relationships. It also leads to interpersonal deviance, defensive silence, and emotional exhaustion, as employees struggle to cope (Jahanzeb, 2022). As per Chaman et al. (2022), since trust reduces ostracism, higher distrust makes exclusion more likely. Building trust can help minimize workplace ostracism and its negative effects. Hence, the study hypothesizes that,

H<sub>9</sub>: Interpersonal distrust would have a significant effect on workplace ostracism.

Matsson (2023) highlighted that organizational politics can lead to workplace ostracism, as seen in a Swedish hospital where exclusion was used to enforce silence and control. According to Das and Ekka (2024), ostracism increases employee turnover, with studies showing a strong link between exclusion and the desire to leave. It also lowers job performance and engagement, especially in manufacturing and IT sectors (Lestari et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2024). Brison et al. (2024) stated that supervisor and coworker ostracism further worsen work conditions, causing stress and reduced motivation. While good leadership can help, addressing organizational politics is key to creating a supportive work environment (Lestari et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2024). Hence, the study hypothesizes that,

H<sub>10</sub>: Organisational politics would have a significant effect on workplace ostracism.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Sampling and Data Collection

The study focused on middle and top-level employees from government and private organizations in Chhattisgarh, India. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring only willing managers

took part. Out of 800 distributed questionnaires, 629 were valid (see Table 1). Data was collected over six months (January–June 2024) to capture diverse views and reduce timing-related biases.

Table 1: Demographic description.

Gender		Job Type		Total
Male	Female	Govt.	Private	629
373	256	329	300	

### 3.2 Research Instrument

To develop strong measurement scales, the researchers modified 10 existing scales and created one new scale to fit the study's needs. To accommodate participants' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the questionnaire was translated into Hindi for better understanding. A multi-step validation process ensured accuracy and reliability. Four experts reviewed the scales, suggesting fewer items for clarity and efficiency while refining wording and format. A pilot study with 50 participants tested these changes, leading to further refinements. The final questionnaire comprised 56 items ensuring clear, reliable, and culturally appropriate data collection.

The study used different rating scales to measure workplace behaviors and perceptions. Most constructs were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Abusive supervision (4 items) was adapted from Ghayas and Jabeen (2020), workplace ostracism (3 items) from Dalain (2021), and workplace incivility (6 items) from Cortina et al. (2001). A self-structured scale measured interpersonal deviance (5

items). Supervisor support (5 items) from Kazmi and Javaid (2022) and workplace bullying (7 items) from Einarsen et al. (2009) were also included. Voice behavior (5 items) from Rubbab (2021) used a 5-point scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Constantly), while interpersonal conflict (5 items) from Wright et al. (2017) ranged from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very Often). Organizational politics (4 items) from Kacmar & Carlson (1997) used a scale from 1 (Definitely Not) to 5 (Definitely). Interpersonal distrust (6 items) and negative workplace gossip (5 items) from Brady (2018) were rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (Never) to 7 (Daily). Social undermining (6 items) from Duffy et al. (2002) used a 6-point scale from 1 (Never) to 6 (Everyday). These scales ensured accurate and diverse measurement of workplace experiences.

### 3.3 Statistical Tools Used in the Study

The study used Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess the reliability and validity of the collected data and to test the proposed hypotheses. These analyses were conducted using Smart PLS 3 (trial version).

### 3.4 Scale Validation

The study assessed the reliability and validity of its measurement scales using Cronbach's alpha, Rho A, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) (see Table 2). The Cronbach's alpha values for all variables were above 0.7, indicating good internal consistency. Rho A values, which provide an alternative reliability measure, were also

Table 2: Measurement Results.

Variables	Cronbach alpha	Rho A	CR	AVE
Abusive Supervision	0.771	0.74	0.816	0.600
Interpersonal Deviance	0.892	0.926	0.920	0.697
Interpersonal Distrust	0.746	0.701	0.762	0.521
Negative Workplace Gossip	0.873	0.884	0.913	0.724
Organisational Politics	0.773	0.72	0.764	0.629
Supervisor Support	0.865	0.882	0.902	0.647
Social Undermining	0.920	0.920	0.938	0.715
Voice Behaviour	0.884	0.940	0.919	0.739
Workplace Bullying	0.852	0.860	0.890	0.575
Workplace Incivility	0.911	0.911	0.931	0.695
Workplace Loneliness	0.891	0.892	0.92	0.698
Workplace Ostracism	0.839	0.844	0.903	0.757



found above 0.7 for all the variables. The Composite Reliability (CR) values confirmed the overall reliability of the scales explaining its values above 0.7 for all the variables. The AVE scores, which measure how much variance in a construct is explained by its indicators, were all above 0.50, ensuring adequate convergent validity. These results indicate that the measurement tools used in the study were both reliable and valid for data analysis.

4 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The results of the PLS-SEM analysis reveal several insights into the relationships influencing workplace ostracism (see Table 3 and Figure 1). Among the predictors, workplace bullying exhibits a significant positive relationship with workplace ostracism ( $\beta =$

0.115,  $t = 2.973$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), indicating that experiences of bullying substantially contribute to ostracism. Furthermore, workplace incivility emerges as the strongest predictor, showing a highly significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.707$ ,  $t = 17.788$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), underscoring its critical role in fostering ostracism in organizational settings. Other predictors such as abusive supervision ( $\beta = 0.012$ ,  $t = 0.320$ ,  $p = 0.749$ ), interpersonal deviance ( $\beta = 0.005$ ,  $t = 0.114$ ,  $p = 0.909$ ), interpersonal distrust ( $\beta = 0.025$ ,  $t = 0.968$ ,  $p = 0.333$ ), negative workplace gossip ( $\beta = 0.037$ ,  $t = 0.651$ ,  $p = 0.515$ ), organizational politics ( $\beta = -0.015$ ,  $t = 0.412$ ,  $p = 0.681$ ), social undermining ( $\beta = -0.074$ ,  $t = 1.088$ ,  $p = 0.277$ ), supervisor support ( $\beta = 0.009$ ,  $t = 0.273$ ,  $p = 0.785$ ), and voice behavior ( $\beta = 0.034$ ,  $t = 1.248$ ,  $p = 0.212$ ) do not show significant effects. These findings highlight the critical influence of workplace incivility and bullying on ostracism while suggesting that other variables may have limited or no direct impact.

Table 3: Sem Results of Objective 1 (Effect on Workplace Ostracism).

Predicted Relationships	$\beta$ value	STDEV	t statistics	p values
Abusive Supervision -> Workplace Ostracism	0.012	0.038	0.320	0.749
Interpersonal Deviance -> Workplace Ostracism	0.005	0.041	0.114	0.909
Interpersonal Distrust -> Workplace Ostracism	0.025	0.026	0.968	0.333
Negative Workplace Gossip -> Workplace Ostracism	0.037	0.057	0.651	0.515
Organisational Politics -> Workplace Ostracism	-0.015	0.036	0.412	0.681
Social Undermining -> Workplace Ostracism	-0.074	0.068	1.088	0.277
Supervisor Support -> Workplace Ostracism	0.009	0.034	0.273	0.785
Voice Behaviour -> Workplace Ostracism	0.034	0.027	1.248	0.212
Workplace Bullying -> Workplace Ostracism	0.115	0.039	2.973	0.003
Workplace Incivility -> Workplace Ostracism	0.707	0.040	17.788	0.000

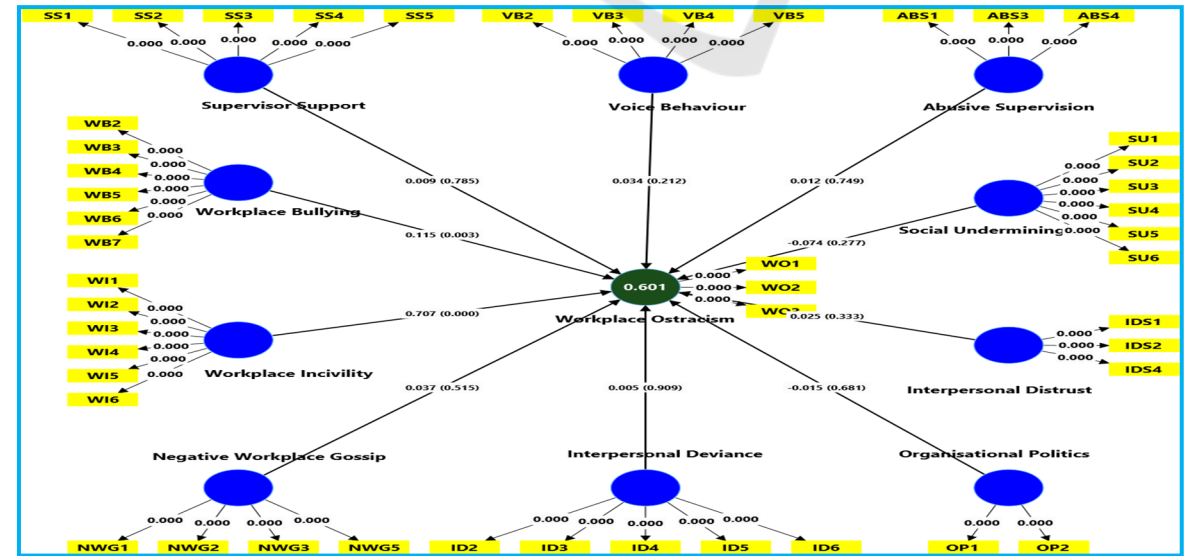


Figure 1: Effect of Antecedent Variables on Workplace Ostracism.

## 5 DISCUSSIONS

This preliminary PLS-SEM analysis is a helpful way of quantifying and understanding the drivers of workplace ostracism, and distinguishes important predictors from less significant ones. Bullying is one of the major drivers of workplace exclusion (Einarsen & Ågotnes, 2023). This indicates that employees subjected to bullying are more prone to feel excluded or neglected in both social and formal settings (Verma et al., 2023; Glambek et al., 2018). Workplace exclusion can be toxic with serious ramifications, including stress, diminished job satisfaction, decreased organizational commitment and even considering leaving the organization. Previous research backs this up too, finding that bullying often alienates the victims, leaving them feeling weak and disconnected from their coworkers. This strengthens the belief that a toxic work environment can lead employees to withdraw socially, further compromising their mental health and career development. When it comes to social exclusion among employees, workplace incivility ranks the highest (Holm, 2021; Zhou, 2024). It suggests that even small but repeated rude behaviors failing to acknowledge colleagues, making impolite comments, forgetting to credit contributions are capable of producing ostracism. Unethical and uncivil behaviors are tolerated, and seem more acceptable than overt bullying, making incivility both more common and less visible to those affected (Jackson et al., 2024). Such behaviours leave the employees impersonal than before, it reduces the feeling of belongingness, they do not want to socialize (Zhou, 2024). Why this discovery matters: It's made clear that organizations need to act against rude behavior, and can't only look for more egregious mistreatment, like bullying or harassment. By addressing these subtle forms of disrespect, we can build a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

Workplace ostracism does not link significantly with other factors like abusive supervision, interpersonal deviance, interpersonal distrust, negative workplace gossip, organizational politics, social undermining, supervisor support, and voice behavior. If these results may appear insipid, they actually contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the intricacy of workplace exclusion. For example, abusive supervision is an overall negative in the workplace, but this study found that it does not directly contribute to the occurrence of ostracism. That might mean that although abusive supervisors' resort to intimidation and hostility, they still talk to employees, and don't totally disregard them. Thus,

while their actions are harmful, it does not in itself drive employees into absolute social emarginality.

Similarly, interpersonal deviance and distrust among colleague's weakly influence workplace ostracism. This might also help explain why dividing behaviours into good and bad categories does not always bring about social exclusion but a way for disciplinary action or corrective action. Similarly, although distrust can damage workplace relationships, it does not directly contribute to ostracism. Employees continue collaboration even when distrust is evident, albeit with guardedness or defensiveness. This suggests that desiring some mistrust and rule-breaking is not a fast track to unheededness or exclusion at work.

Ironically, negative workplace gossip is not associated with ostracism. While gossip is typically associated with hostility and exclusion in the workplace, it doesn't always result in total social ostracism. Sometimes gossip can even unite certain employees although it could hurt others. Like organizational politics, it is not a strong predictor of ostracism. Office politics can contribute to rifts and divisions within the workplace, but it does not inherently mean that individuals will be ostracized. This might be because workplace political workers who use workplace politics maintain networks and alliances, rather than completely ostracizing other workers. However, social undermining (the actions that undermine someone's career advancement.) is very irrelevant in the factors causing ostracism at work. This means we address a co-worker in a way that doesn't ruin his or her reputation, protecting him or her from being excluded from workplace interactions, turning topic over to damage one's visibility or opportunity. For supervisor's support does not have a meaningful impact on ostracism. It has been shown that even if supervisors are encouraging their subordinates (Holzman 2005), they will not necessarily prevent social exclusion (Vasilenko et al. 2018). Finally, voice behavior (i.e., speaking up to others about thoughts and concerns) has little correlation with ostracism. This implies that speaking up at work isn't inherently exclusionary based. Indeed, many organizations may value proactive employees rather than separate them for expressing their opinions.

## 6 FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES

Filling this research gap, future studies may also examine how workplace ostracism affects employees over time, such as its effects on their well-being and job performance. Whether exclusion at the workplace vary across organizations is questionable and may require looking at cross cultural studies. Another avenue for researchers is examining the impact of online communication on workplace ostracism. Moreover, more studies should direct towards preventing ostracism, for example, imposing better leadership training or workplace policy strategies that can promote a supportive and inclusive workplace.

## 7 LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations. It focuses only on employees in Chhattisgarh, India, limiting its generalizability. The data is self-reported, which may introduce bias. Also, the study uses a cross-sectional design, preventing conclusions about cause and effect.

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the key factors influencing workplace ostracism, with workplace incivility and bullying emerging as the strongest predictors. Subtle disrespectful behaviors and repeated mistreatment significantly contribute to employees feeling excluded. However, other factors like abusive supervision, interpersonal deviance, distrust, gossip, organizational politics, social undermining, supervisor support, and voice behavior do not show a direct impact on ostracism. These findings suggest that while certain negative behaviors harm workplace relationships, they do not always lead to complete social exclusion. Organizations should focus on reducing workplace incivility and bullying through strong policies, training programs, and supportive leadership. Encouraging respectful communication and inclusive practices can help prevent workplace exclusion. Future research should explore long-term effects, cultural differences, and digital workplace interactions to gain deeper insights. Addressing ostracism effectively can create a healthier and more productive work environment, ensuring employees feel valued and engaged in their organizations.

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