The Hidden Crisis at Work: Motivation and Performance in the Shadow of Ostracism and Knowledge Hiding

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Abstract: This conceptual article explores the intertwined effects of workplace ostracism (WO) and knowledge hiding (KH) on employee motivation (EM) and performance (EP). Drawing on the Conservation of Resources (COR), Social Exchange (SET), and self-determination theories (SDT), this framework proposes a novel illustration of how WO and KH erode psychological safety and trust, ultimately diminishing EM and subsequently EP. The aims of this study are as follows: (1) to examine the direct impact of workplace ostracism on employee performance, with an emphasis on how exclusionary social behaviors affect individual productivity and contribution within the organization; (2) to investigate the moderating role of knowledge hiding in the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee motivation, exploring how being ostracized influences employees' willingness to share knowledge and how this, in turn, affects their intrinsic drive; and (3) to analyze the combined effect of workplace ostracism, knowledge hiding, and employee motivation on employee performance to understand the indirect pathways through which negative social dynamics influence overall job effectiveness. This study designates EM as a key mediator and KH as a moderator of these relationships. This study suggests the necessity of addressing fundamental workplace behaviors to sustain motivation, foster inclusivity, and improve performance, supported by practical HR strategies and future empirical research.

Keywords: Workplace Ostracism, Knowledge Hiding, Employee Motivation, Employee Performance

Introduction

Workplace ostracism (WO) refers to the degree to which a person feels neglected or left out by coworkers. It has become a major issue in organizational behavior because it can damage employees motivation and performance (Steinbauer et al., 2018). WO reduces psychological safety and fosters withdrawal, undermining performance, effort, and creativity through social exclusion and emotional strain (Glazer et al. 2021). According to the desperation principle in the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, when individuals face resource loss, such as exclusion, they enter a defensive mode characterized by protective, often irrational behavior (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This triggers a cycle of resource depletion, as threats to valued resources, such as social inclusion, induce stress and reduce motivation (Wang et al., 2023). WO also disrupts interpersonal trust and the reciprocal expectations foundational to Social Exchange Theory (SET), where positive workplace behaviors are built upon mutual reinforcement and respect (Paşamehmetoğlu et al., 2022). Consequently, ostracized individuals are more likely to disengage, detach from organizational goals, and show reduced commitment, compounding their motivational loss (Xu et al., 2020). A previous study supports this, indicating that WO significantly lowers work engagement, with indirect effects on performance through emotional strain (Shaikh et al., 2022). Furthermore, exclusion signals a lack of recognition, weakening employees' sense of competence and relatedness—two core psychological needs identified in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Sedlářík et al., 2023). In response to ostracism, employees may engage in defensive behaviors, among which knowledge hiding (KH) is particularly prevalent (Bhatti et al., 2022). KH refers to the intentional withholding of information when requested, often as a self-protective or retaliatory strategy against perceived mistreatment or exclusion (Rezwan & Takahashi, 2021). Ostracized individuals, fearing further social penalties or

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manipulation, are less likely to share knowledge, making WO a key antecedent of KH (Bhatti et al., 2022). Although both the WO and KH have individually been shown to hinder trust and collaboration, their combined impact on employee motivation and performance remains unexplored. Drawing on COR theory, this study investigates how these behaviors interact to produce motivational decline and performance deficits. By closing this significant gap, this study presents an original framework that addresses the psychological processes of foundational engagement and practical methods for enhancing worker performance in inclusive workplaces. Organizations strive to optimize employee performance in a constantly shifting corporate environment by creating positive cognitive and social environments and improving their technical skills. However, two negative workplace behaviors, Knowledge Hiding (KH) and Workplace Ostracism (WO), have emerged as silent disruptors of employee engagement and productivity. Despite significant advancements in organizational behavior research, the synergistic impact of KH and WO on motivation and performance remains largely unexplored. It becomes harmful when employees purposely hide or withhold knowledge, which is frequently seen as a vital resource in knowledge-intensive industries. All forms of ostracism, the act of eliminating or shunning someone at work, promote alienation and separation. These behaviors undermine psychological safety, thereby reducing motivation and productivity

The conceptual structure presented in this study describes how KH and WO adversely affect Employee Motivation (EM), which, in turn, affects Employee Performance (EP). The model also emphasizes the mediating role of EM in this complex dynamic, offering a fresh perspective on the behavioral antecedents of such performance degradation.

Research Objectives

1. This study examines the direct impact of workplace ostracism on employee performance, emphasizing how exclusionary social behaviors affect individual productivity and contribution within the organization.

2. This study investigates the moderating role of knowledge hiding in the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee motivation, exploring how being ostracized influences employees' willingness to share knowledge and how this, in turn, affects their intrinsic drives.

3. This study analyzes the combined effect of workplace ostracism, knowledge hiding, and employee motivation on employee performance to understand the indirect pathways through which negative social dynamics influence overall job effectiveness.

Theoretical Foundation

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

SET asserts that social behavior is the effect of an exchange process in which individuals evaluate relationships based on perceived benefits and costs. Knowledge hiding and ostracism disrupt the norm of reciprocity in professional settings, thereby diminishing trust and mutual respect, which are key elements in sustaining employee motivation.

Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

COR theory explains that individuals strive to obtain, retain, and protect valuable resources. When employees face ostracism or knowledge withholding, they perceive a threat to their psychological and informational resources. This perception leads to demotivation and eventually reduces work performance.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

According to SDT, the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness–is the source of motivation. Ostracism and knowledge concealment directly undermine these relationships. For example, denying knowledge lowers perceived competence, whereas exclusion affects the sense of belonging.

Literature Review:

Workplace Ostracism

Workplace ostracism, defined as the sense of being ignored or ostracized by coworkers, has received significant scientific attention because of its dramatic impact on employee well-being and organizational outcomes (Li et al., 2021). Howard et al. (2020) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis revealing that leadership characteristics, particularly abusive supervision and poor leader-member exchange, are strong predictors of workplace ostracism. Personality characteristics such as low agreeableness and high neuroticism, along with contextual factors such as inadequate social support, contribute to the likelihood of experiencing ostracism (Kaya et al., 2017). Additionally, Dash et al. (2024) identified factors such as perceived misalignment with organizational norms and unconscious social processes as significant antecedents in the Indian context (Dash et al., 2023). The detrimental effects of workplace ostracism are often mediated by psychological constructs (Al-Atwi et al., 2017). Li et al. (2021) find that organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) modulates the relationship between ostracism and results like job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2023) found that emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between ostracism and negative employee well-being. The implications of occupational ostracism are extensive and far-reaching. Howard et al. (2020) observed strong associations between ostracism and adverse effects such as deviant behavior, weak basic effectiveness, and low psychological well-being. Li et al. (2021) stated that the impact of ostracism varies across cultures, with individualistic societies experiencing more negative consequences for belonging and job satisfaction. Workplace ostracism is associated with higher turnover attempts in the Indian IT sector; however, perceptions of organizational ethics and genuine leadership can lessen its impact (. Singh et al., 2024). The literature indicates that organizational culture, individual personality traits, and leadership styles play a role in the complex nature of workplace exclusion. Its adverse effects on employee attitudes, behaviors, and well-being necessitate the implementation of proactive organizational strategies.

Knowledge Hiding

Knowledge hiding (KH) has garnered significant scholarly attention over the past two decades, particularly following Connelly et al. 's (2012) seminal work, which conceptualized KH as the intentional concealment of knowledge requested by others. According to Connelly et al. (2012, p. 65), KH is "an attempt to withhold or conceal knowledge that has been requested by another member of the organization" and identified three primary dimensions of KH: evasive hiding, playing dumb, and rationalized hiding. A recent study developed this framework by including additional parts, such as bullying concealment and counter-questioning, to improve the conceptual understanding of KH behaviors (Rezwan & Takahashi, 2021). The antecedents of KH are multifaceted and encompass both individual and organizational factors. Personal traits such as competitiveness and fear of losing one's unique value contribute to KH, while organizational elements such as exploitative leadership and workplace incivility exacerbate this behavior. Psychological distress has been identified as a mediating factor linking negative workplace environments to increased KH (Jin et al., 2023). The consequences of KH are detrimental to organizational effectiveness(Xiao & Cooke, 2018). It impairs decision-making quality, hampers innovation, and diminishes the performance of teams. Moreover, KH negatively affects employee well-being, leading to increased turnover intention and reduced organizational citizenship behavior (Rezwan and Takahashi, 2021). Organizations are encouraged to create an environment of trust and openness to reduce or lessen KH (Rezwan & Takahashi, 2021). As leaders who set the standard for fair communication and knowledge sharing set the tone for organizational norms, management support is essential (Jasimuddin & Saci, 2022). The possibility of KH can also be minimized by adopting human resource strategies such as regular training, knowledge-sharing platforms, and team-based incentives (Oliveira et al., 2023). KH is a complex habit influenced by several organizational and individual factors. Its detrimental effects on organizational performance highlight the necessity of proactive measures to encourage the sharing of information.

Employee motivation

According to Babatunde (2015), employee motivation is a critical factor in determining the success and effectiveness of any organization. He contended that an organization's performance can be directly impacted by the level of motivation among its employees. Employee motivation is a critical factor in today's fast-paced, uncertain global marketplace, where success is largely determined by how well workers utilize their abilities. If staff members are not motivated or engaged to implement the best strategies, they may not succeed in drawing in, nurturing, and retaining outstanding people, which is one of the pillars of long-term organizational success. Because there is little automation or technical innovation in industries such as construction, where manual labor and human input are essential, human capital is frequently viewed as a company's most valuable asset. In this competitive setting, motivation is essential for encouraging good performance and employee dedication, not just a nice-to-have. According to Tupti (2020), companies are looking for people who are truly motivated to achieve and give their best work, in addition to being highly qualified specialists. Employees who are intrinsically driven are more likely to strive for greatness, be productive, and remain with their companies. Motivation is essential for fostering collaboration and team work. It fosters a work environment in which individuals are more willing to work and support one another. Additionally, engaged workers make more constructive contributions to team projects, enabling businesses to utilize their labor more effectively (Siddiqui and Rida 2019). However, human resource management remains challenging. Humans are complicated beings with a wide range of personalities, wants, and behaviors, unlike robots or other materials. According to Babatunde (2015), for workers to genuinely contribute to the long-term development of the company, management must recognize and meet their unique objectives and requirements in a considerate and responsive manner.

Employee Performance

Kloutsiniotis and Mihail (2020) state that an employee's performance is usually assessed based on how effectively they follow expectations for workplace behavior during a predetermined time period, as well as the amount and quality of work they accomplish. It displays how well a person performs their duties and uses commitment and professionalism to help the organization succeed. A firm's total success can be greatly impacted by employees who continuously exhibit excellent work discipline, such as being punctual, adhering to company standards, and remaining dedicated to their tasks (Fahmi et al., 2022). Workplace discipline is a cornerstone of long-term productivity in organizations. Employee focus and output naturally increase when they comprehend how their responsibilities fit into the organization's larger objectives, such as raising customer pleasure or boosting financial success (Peng, Lee, & Lu, 2020). Many businesses utilize formal performance review processes to ensure that their staff meets their expectations. These systems assist in growth and development decisions, measure progress, suggest areas for improvement, and highlight employees' strengths (Wang et al., 2022). According to Maden-Eyiusta and Alten (2021), high-performing workers are those whose efforts satisfy the objectives of the company and themselves. In other words, genuine success occurs when there is a balance—where workers are happy and see their careers advance while also advancing the company's interests.

However, finding this balance is not always straightforward. Performance may be hampered by several internal and external factors. Hostile workplace culture, poor leadership, low motivation, and lack of resources are some of the factors that can prevent workers from giving their best efforts. These obstacles affect the organization's general well-being and productivity, in addition to individual achievement.

Workplace Ostracism and Employee Motivation

Ostracism at work is closely related to detrimental effects, including emotional exhaustion, decreased job satisfaction, and an increase in unethical behavior (Li et al., 2021). Workplace exclusion adversely affects employees motivation. Ostracism causes emotional exhaustion, which, in turn, lowers employee motivation and productivity (Ibrahim & Olaleye, 2025). Similarly, ostracism reduces organization-based self-esteem, which lowers job satisfaction and performance (Li & Liu, 2021). However, intrinsically motivated employees may accept workplace exclusion by focusing more on their work and using it as a means of feeling accomplished (Steinbauer et al., 2018). Intrinsic

motivation reduces the positive impact of exclusion on job insecurity and employee sabotage (Singh, 2023). Because it diminishes feelings of identity and belonging in the workplace, workplace racism can detrimentally affect employees motivation and involvement (Khan et al., 2024).

Workplace Ostracism and Knowledge Hiding

Workplace ostracism (WO), defined as the experience of being ignored or excluded by colleagues, has increasingly been recognized as a critical antecedent of knowledge-hiding (KH) behavior in organizational settings (Dutta et al., 2024). A growing body of literature has sought to unpack the psychological and contextual mechanisms through which the WO influences employee behavior, particularly in knowledge management (Bhatti et al., 2022). Bhatti et al. (2023) demonstrated that WO leads to KH through the sequential mediation of reduced efficacy needs and increased psychological distress. This suggests that ostracized employees may resort to concealing their knowledge as a strategy to regain control and preserve their self-worth. In a similar vein, Fatima et al. (2022) found that coworker ostracism diminishes relational identification, which triggers knowledge hiding, especially when ostracized individuals perceive intentional harm in exclusion. In the context of the BPO sector, Laeeque et al. (2024) identified that WO indirectly promotes KH by reducing psychological safety and enhancing employee silence. This indicates that ostracism erodes the interpersonal trust necessary to openly share knowledge. Chaudhary et al. (2024) further extended this understanding by highlighting that workplace withdrawal mediates the WO–KH relationship, with authentic leadership mitigating the negative effects of ostracism. A recent study that examined cognitive frameworks and was published in Frontiers in Psychology (2024) revealed that the relationship between WO and KH is mediated by negative reciprocity beliefs, implying that employees may intentionally withhold information as a form of retaliation. Supporting this view, Al-Dhuhouri and Shamsudin (2023) found that a misfit between personal and organizational values intensifies the WO–KH link, particularly in environments characterized by interpersonal distrust. Dutta et al. (2024) also associated WO with KH and subsequent behaviors such as quiet quitting, emphasizing the cascading effects of ostracism on employee disengagement. Khalid et al. (2019) reported that work-related stress (WRS) can significantly encourage knowledge concealment and uncover job strain, serving as a crucial mediator. In the final category, Hameed et al. (2025) noted unfavorable workplace rumors as a cause of WO, which ultimately results in KH. They pointed out that this association can be exacerbated by personality factors, such as neuroticism. Investigations consistently establish that WO plays a crucial role in KH for various organizational, interpersonal, and psychological reasons. To foster a culture of knowledge sharing and maintain organizational performance, workplace ostracism must be addressed (Dutta et al. 2024).

Knowledge hiding and Employee motivation

Knowledge is one of the most important resources for businesses. However, a developing problem called "knowledge hiding," in which workers purposefully withhold information that others have asked for, can seriously impair collaboration and output (Connelly et al., 2012). In addition to undermining creativity and learning within the company, this type of behavior damages trust and interferes with teamwork. This practice undermines interpersonal trust and adversely affects team dynamics, innovation, and organizational learning. Motivation is one of the main determinants of whether workers decide to divulge or keep information; people are far more likely to contribute to group initiatives and voice their opinions when they feel appreciated, encouraged, and psychologically at ease in their workplaces. Feeling valued encourages employees to work together and communicate openly without fear of retaliation or competition. Transparency is encouraged, and harmful habits such as knowledge withholding are reduced by this sense of safety and gratitude. Additionally, fostering such an environment depends heavily on the leadership approach. Leadership plays a significant role in fostering this culture. Highly moral leaders, such as those who use transformational or ethical leadership, can make a significant difference in this regard. By prioritizing justice, personal growth, and team unity, these leaders establish high standards for honesty and trust. By motivating their teams and establishing a shared objective, they reduce the likelihood of knowledge being kept secret and create an atmosphere in which workers feel free to contribute and share ideas (Xiao and Cooke, 2019). There is a bidirectional correlation between motivation and knowledge concealment. People who are genuinely motivated are less likely to conceal their knowledge from others. However, if the organization's culture encourages hiding information, even the most driven employees may back off.

Employee motivation and Employee performance

Employees play a crucial role in determining customer experience because they are frequently the initial point of contact. Therefore, it is critical for businesses to provide their employees with regular assistance and motivation. When workers feel appreciated and motivated, they are more inclined to give their all, which improves performance and benefits the company. Attipoe, Wright Evans et al. (2021) stated that performance reviews are crucial for driving employee growth and aligning with organizational objectives. Such reviews not only assist individuals in being aware of their areas of strength and development but also enable managers to be armed with facts to make more strategic decisions. They also provide opportunities to receive constructive criticism, which facilitates personal and professional development. However, the performance evaluation process can be difficult, mainly because of its complex and multifaceted characteristics (Boafoa Okine et al. 2021). Employee motivation significantly influences workplace behavior and performance, and its effects can be either beneficial or detrimental, depending on how well it aligns with the expectations of the organization (Boafoa Okine et al. Employee behavior and performance are greatly influenced by their motivation. Positive results may arise when motivation meets the expectations of the organization. However, it may have a reverse effect in the case of mismatches. Financial incentives, such as bonuses and salaries, are undoubtedly important; however, research indicates that true motivation is more complex. To maintain employee engagement, recognition, opportunities for personal development, and a strong sense of purpose are crucial.

2021). It is also critical to remember that there is no single way to motivate others. As each person has unique demands and motivations, it may be much more beneficial to customize motivational techniques for each employee rather than using a single technique across the board. Mohamed et al. (2025) provide additional support for a more considered and balanced approach to organizational motivation by highlighting the considerable contributions that both monetary and non-monetary rewards make to employee performance and retention.

The Moderating Role of Knowledge Hiding Between Workplace Ostracism and Employee Motivation

Workplace ostracism (WO), defined as the extent to which individuals feel ignored or excluded by others in the workplace (Ferris et al., 2008), has been widely recognized as a harmful organizational phenomenon that negatively affects employees' psychological well-being, job performance, and motivation. Employee motivation is particularly vulnerable to the effects of ostracism because exclusion disrupts core psychological needs related to belongingness, self-worth, and emotional security (Banerjee & Shinde, 2025). In recent years, researchers have begun to investigate knowledge hiding (KH), the intentional concealment of information requested by others, as a potential mechanism through which WO affects employee outcomes, including motivation and performance. KH has typically been viewed as an outcome of negative interpersonal experiences; however, emerging literature suggests that it can also function as a moderating variable, shaping how workplace dynamics, such as ostracism, influence employee behavior and attitudes (Nauman et al., 2024). KH, when driven by psychological distress or self-protection motives, may reduce employees' engagement and motivation to contribute to collective goal achievements. For example, Bhatti et al. (2023) demonstrated that WO elevates psychological distress and reduces efficacy, ultimately fostering workaholism. This withdrawal behaviour may serve as a self-preservation strategy, but one that also undermines motivational engagement at work. Fatima et al. (2022) further revealed that coworker ostracism diminishes relational identification, which can increase KH, especially when ostracism is perceived as intentional or harmful. This suggests that KH may compound the demotivating effects of ostracism by disrupting social bonds and feelings of unsafe psychological safety. Similarly, Hameed et al. (2025) identified that negative workplace gossip amplifies WO and KH, particularly among neurotic individuals, highlighting a toxic cycle in which KH deepens disengagement and reduces intrinsic motivation to work. Dutta et al. (2024) linked WO with both KH and quiet quitting behaviors, suggesting that KH may act as a behavioral bridge between social exclusion and reduced motivation or organizational withdrawal behavior. Although KH was not examining KH as a direct moderator, Khan et al. (2024) noted that intrinsic motivation could buffer the negative effects of WO. This points towards a dynamic interplay where KH—if activated as a

coping response—may neutralize or intensify motivational consequences depending on individual and contextual factors.

In addition, Al-Dhuhouri and Shamsudin (2023) demonstrated that person-organization unfit intensifies the WO–KH relationship. Employee motivation is compounded by inconsistency, suggesting that KH may alter its overall influence on emotions connected to work and be a reaction to exclusion. Furthermore, Babič et al. (2019) indicated that team-based positive leadership deters KH and maintains motivation even under challenging circumstances. Hilliard et al. (2022) noted that some forms of KH—especially those motivated by constructive aims—might not always reduce motivation but rather reflect strategic behaviour aligned with organisational goals.

In summary, while direct empirical investigations of KH as a moderator between WO and motivation remain limited, converging evidence indicates that KH significantly shapes the emotional and cognitive outcomes of ostracized employees. As such, KH can either buffer or exacerbate the motivational consequences of WO, depending on individual traits, organizational culture, and leadership style. Recognizing and managing this moderating role is crucial for organizations striving to foster psychologically safe knowledge-sharing environments that protect and enhance employee motivation.

Mediating role of employee motivation between workplace ostracism and employee performance

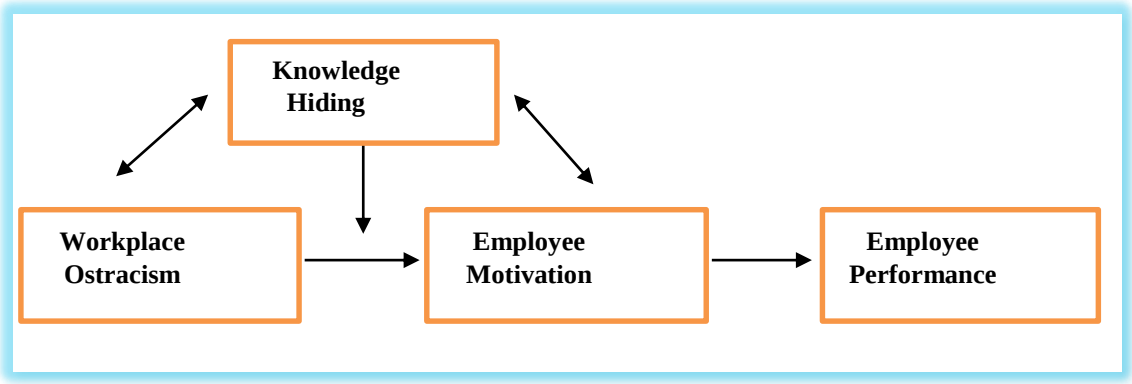
Workplace ostracism refers to the practice of being purposefully disregarded, shut out, or socially alienated by supervisors or co-workers within a company. This issue has become more widely acknowledged as a common problem in modern workplaces, presenting serious risks to the general well-being of the company as well as the well-being of individual employees. Such social exclusion can have detrimental psychological repercussions, decrease job satisfaction, lower employee engagement, and eventually impair organizational performance by eroding morale and teamwork, as Waldeck et al. (2020) have shown. According to numerous studies, workplace exclusion has a detrimental impact on several important factors, including employee motivation and psychological needs such as self-esteem, belonging, sense of purpose, and personal agency (Aliza et al., 2022; Hitlan et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2017). People's emotions are not the only things impacted when they feel excluded at work. Being excluded might cause them to lose their sense of purpose and belonging, which can lower their motivation, cause them to become dissatisfied with their work, and worsen their mental health. Their general happiness and professional development may suffer over time because of this disconnection. Feeling alone at work can subtly impair performance and restrict contributions to the team, in addition to making the day more difficult for the employee. Social exclusion can be detrimental to both individuals and organizations, as evidenced by research that clearly links workplace ostracism to a decline in critical performance. According to Sun et al. (2021), workers' feelings about their occupations can suffer significantly when they feel excluded or alone at work. They frequently lose the drive that typically keeps them involved and motivated, feel less connected to the organization, and experience less satisfaction than younger employees do. Their performance is not the only thing impacted by this decline in morale; it also raises the possibility that they may begin to consider quitting the firm. Furthermore, feeling left out may cause people to behave in subtle negative ways. They may begin to distance themselves from their duties, stop participating in team activities, or even act in ways that are inappropriate in the workplace.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

The conceptual model (as depicted in the Figure) comprises four core constructs:

- **KH: Knowledge Hiding**
- **WO: Workplace Ostracism**
- **EM: Employee Motivation**
- **EP: Employee Performance**

Conceptual Model:



Source authors' work

The relation between Workplace Ostracism and Employee Motivation: (WO → EM)

Workplace ostracism diminishes employee morale, creates social isolation, and leads to psychological withdrawal from work. Employees who feel excluded are less likely to exhibit proactive or engaged behavior, leading to lower motivation levels.

Proposed Hypothesis (H1): Workplace Ostracism negatively influences Employee Motivation.

The relation between Knowledge Hiding and Workplace Ostracism: KH → WO

When employees hide knowledge, it fosters distrust and contributes to interpersonal tensions. Individuals or groups may be excluded by these behaviors, which can exacerbate feelings of exclusion.

Proposed Hypothesis (H2): Knowledge Hiding positively influences Workplace Ostracism.

The relation between Knowledge Hiding and Employee Motivation: KH → EM

Knowledge hiding directly undermines motivation by obstructing learning, growth, and collaboration. Because it limits access to essential information, workers feel under-appreciated and incompetent.

Proposed Hypothesis (H3): Knowledge Hiding negatively influences Employee Motivation.

The relation between Employee Motivation and Employee Performance: EM → EP

Motivated employees demonstrate greater enthusiasm, creativity and commitment. They are more likely to diligently pursue organizational goals and exceed their performance expectations.

Proposed Hypothesis (H4): Employee Motivation positively influences Employee Performance

Discussion and Implications

The Dual Role of KH

Knowledge Hiding emerges as a root contributor to both workplace ostracism and demotivation. It is not only a standalone destructive behavior but also an enabler of social exclusion. Consequently, organizations must recognize KH as an integrated issue that affects the organization as a whole and extends beyond interpersonal relationships.

Workplace Ostracism as a Social Toxin

The model demonstrates that ostracism is not just an emotional issue but one with far-reaching motivational and performance-related consequences for the organization. Good communication, training on how to understand other cultures, and other factors can help change this way of thinking and make workers happier.

Motivation as a Mediating Variable

By positioning motivation as a mediating variable, the model provides a nuanced understanding of how KH and WO translate into a performance deficit. This information is essential for developing

interventions that prioritize motivational elements such as opportunities for growth, autonomy, and recognition.

Performance Implications

Although the relationship between motivation and performance is widely acknowledged, this model places it within a larger social-psychological context. The well-being and efficiency of organizations are at stake due to the inefficiency resulting from KH and WO's disruption of motivation.

Managerial Implications

This conceptual framework has practical utility in designing human resource strategies aimed at improving team cohesion, knowledge sharing and inclusivity. The suggested managerial actions are as follows:

1. **Anti-Knowledge Hiding Policies**: Create an environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing what they know and ensure that we show our appreciation when they do.

2. **Initiatives for Inclusion and Belonging**: Create structures such as social integration programs and anonymous feedback platforms to monitor and decrease ostracism.

3. **Systems for Performance Support**: Ensure that everyone has what they need – the right gadgets, clear instructions, and a good understanding of what is expected.

4. **Ways to Enhance Motivation**: Funding the education sector, career growth, and knowledge tools that promote both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Future Directions

Because this approach is conceptual, empirical validation is necessary. Future research should use cross-sectional or longitudinal data from various industries to evaluate the model. The comprehension of these dynamics may be further enhanced by moderating factors, including employee resiliency, leadership style, and organizational culture.

Moreover, by listening to the stories of workers who feel left out or kept in the dark, we can truly understand what they are experiencing. If we examine how these issues manifest in different parts of the world, our ideas will be much more useful.

Conclusion

This study provides an in-depth examination of the complex and often neglected facets of workplace ostracism and its far-reaching effects on both organizational and individual performance. This research identifies how exclusion or neglect in the workplace instigates a detrimental cycle, with psychological distress at its genesis and behaviorally based outcomes, such as knowledge withholding and decreased intrinsic motivation, at the end. These intermediate variables serve as vital channels through which the negative effects of ostracism penetrate work environments, eventually undermining organizational effectiveness and employee productivity. The proposed conceptual model provides in-depth insight into these relationships by empirically connecting social exclusion with performance through dual moderators and mediators of employee motivation and knowledge withholding. This suggests that ostracized workers are more likely to lose the internal motivation necessary for consistent effort and engagement and engage in knowledge-sharing activities less frequently because they feel alienated and separated. Such behaviors are especially detrimental in settings that primarily depend on teamwork and expertise, where open communication, group learning, and engaged employees are critical to an organization's success. This study highlights the urgency with which firms must identify, prevent, and deal with workplace ostracism. Because it is subtle, this kind of social abuse frequently goes unreported; however, it has serious repercussions for the health of an organization. Managers and human resource leaders must recognize that fostering an inclusive and psychologically secure environment is not only morally required, but also strategically necessary. Preventive measures against these silent but harmful barriers include funding programs to build an inclusive culture, emotional intelligence learning, and anticipatory conflict resolution. In an era where human capital is one of the most valuable assets, there is a need to recognize and address the psychological dynamics of the workplace. Companies that do not deal with these social dynamics risk decreased performance, knowledge silos, and disengagement. Those who value social

cohesiveness and psychological health, however, will be better able to enhance employee motivation, maximize production, and have a strong, cohesive workforce. As such, one of the most essential components of contemporary HRM practice must be the mitigation of workplace ostracism and its effects.

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