PREDICTORS OF WORK ENGAGEMENT: THE CENTRALITY OF WORKPLACE OSTRACISM

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ABSTRACT

The study endeavors to uncover the role of workplace ostracism in predicting work engagement. Workplace ostracism is a phenomenon which can be encountered in every workplace (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008). The study examines the effect of workplace ostracism on work engagement. More specifically, the study examines the interactive effects of role ambiguity and workplace ostracism, and the interactive effects of the work experience at the current workplace and workplace ostracism, on work engagement. The study also looks into the individual-level variable of psychological meaningfulness and the organizational-level variable of perceived organizational support as potential antecedents of workplace ostracism.

The data for the study is collected from 326 teachers (university and college) in two phases. In the first phase the data pertaining to the independent variable of workplace ostracism and the variables of role ambiguity, work experience at the current workplace, psychological meaningfulness and perceived organizational support is collected. After a gap of 35 days, data pertaining to the dependent variable of work engagement is collected.

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Smartpls3 software is used for the purpose. The results are largely consistent with the proposed relations except that the perceived organizational support is not significantly related to workplace ostracism. Workplace ostracism is found to partially mediate the relation between psychological meaningfulness and work engagement. Thus, we find that psychological meaningfulness leads to an increase in work engagement indirectly through reduced perceptions of ostracism.

Partial Least Squares Multigroup Analysis (PLS-MGA) is conducted to compare the path coefficients of the relations across the two gender groups. The relation between perceived organizational support and workplace ostracism is found to be significant only in

case of females. This result suggests that the perception of a support from the organization is important to reduce the perception of ostracism in case of females. Workplace ostracism is found to partially mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and work engagement only for females. Similarly, role ambiguity moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and work engagement only for females. The ambiguity inherent in the job interacts with the ambiguity inherent in the phenomenon of workplace ostracism to negatively affect the work engagement. In the end, the study brings out its limitations and suggests some directions for future research.

Keywords: Workplace ostracism, work engagement, role ambiguity, psychological meaningfulness, perceived organizational support.

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Einstein once remarked—"*There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle; the other is as though everything is a miracle."* I have always held everything in life to be a miracle. The fact that I was born into a particular family and the fact that I have been blessed with an able body and an able mind (although I'm not very sure about the able mind stuff), is and will always remain a miracle to me. (I mean, just look at the odds against this happening). I am forever indebted to Existence for these blessings.

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