WORKPLACE OSTRACISM AND HOSPITALITY EMPLOYEES' TASK PERFORMANCE: THE MODERATING EFFECTS OF FEELING TRUSTED[*]

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Abstract

This study investigates the moderating effects of feeling trusted on the relationships between workplace ostracism and task performance. The proposed hypotheses were tested by hierarchical regression analysis by means of data from 107 hospitality employees. The results revealed that workplace ostracism have no significant associations with task performance. On the other hand, the results revealed that feeling trusted is positively correlated with task performance. Because the findings did not indicate a significant relationship between workplace ostracism and task performance, the Sobel test for the moderation model was not applied. The study provides help to understand the impact of the workplace ostracism and feeling trusted on task performance. Very scarce and rare researches are available on ostracized employees and extremely little research is available relating hospitality employees.

Keywords: Workplace Ostracism, Task Performance, Feeling Trusted, Hotel's Staff, Kocaeli

INTRODUCTION

The most commonly quoted definition describes workplace ostracism (WO) as the extent to which a person perceives that he or she is ignored, rejected or excluded by others in the workplace (Ferris et al., 2008; Williams, 2001). According to Sommer et al. (2001, p.229) ostracism is the purposeful ignoring or shunning of an individual by others. Ostracism definitions generally include the terms exclusion, shunning, ignoring, and rejecting. Thus, Robinson et al. (2013, p.206) stated that identifying the core features shared by all of these behaviors will help to understand the logic of agglomerating them under a general construct named "ostracism". They offered an expanded definition as "workplace ostracism is when an individual or group omits to take actions that engage another organizational member when it is socially appropriate to do so that". This definition indicates a distinguishing feature as the experience of ostracism occurs only when another violates norms that suggest one should acknowledge at the workplace.

The exclusionary behavior of co-workers may take many forms such as avoiding eye contact, leaving the room when an individual enters, and failing to respond to coworkers' greetings. Ostracism may create a threat because it is an exclusion mechanism, and thus is linked to social separation anxiety. Ostracised individuals experience pain, feel sadness and anger, threats to belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence. Their resources are depleted, which leads to internalized feelings of alienation, depression, helplessness, and worthlessness. (Yaakobi and Williams, 2016, p.163-164). Hitlan and his collegues indicate workplace ostracism hinders one's ability to establish or maintain positive interpersonal relationships, work-related success, or favorable reputation within one's place of work (2006, p.2017). Being ostracized at work, a place where people seek to form friendships, social connections, and inclusion with others can be extremely hurtful and result in undesirable organizational outcomes.

When individuals perceive that they are excluded from conversations or their ideas and views are ignored, they are likely to reduce their contribution to the organization. It has been argued that workplace ostracism may affect knowledge hiding that can cause serious economic losses to companies (Zhao et al., 2016). In contrast, social inclusion has been shown to increase trust in previous task partners that might signal willingness for cooperation (Hillebrandt, Sebastian and Blakemore, 2011). Ostracism is an unethical and unfair treatment that can possibly results in withdrawal to avoid the pain of rejection (Robinson et al., 2012). To avoid further rejection and increase a sense of control, the employee is engaging in acquiescent silence that is defined as withholding information, views, ideas and opinions about potential organizational problems (Dyne et al., 2003; Morrison and Milliken, 2000).

Consequently, previous research has shown that workplace ostracism has significant impact on the employees' attitudes and behaviors such as increased deviant behaviors, (Zhao et al., 2013, Hitlan and Noel 2009) turnover intention anxiety and emotional exhaustion, (Ferris et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2006) as well as decreased job performance, (Hitlan et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2012), satisfaction, (Ferris et al.,2008; Liu et al., 2013) and organizational citizenship behaviors (Ferris et al., 2008) but fewer empirical investigations have been conducted in the hospitality industry. Recently, Leung et al., (2011) have investigated the impact of workplace ostracism on employee service performance and Zhao et al., (2013) on counterproductive work behaviors. However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, scholars have not yet fully explored its impact on hospitality employee's task performance. Consequently, this study aims to discuss the moderating effects of feeling trusted on the relationships between workplace ostracism and task performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workplace Ostracism and Task Performance

Researchers who support "Resource Based View" agree that much attention should be given to intangible assets and especially human capital because value creation ability has shifted from tangible to intangible assets (Teece, 1998; Hall, 1993; Carmeli and Tishler, 2004). Therefore, academicians and practitioners have been trying to realize the benefits of empowering and supporting work environment for the past two decades. However, the recent research led by O'Reilly (2015) provides consistent empirical evidence of the prevalence of ostracism at work. More than 70% of respondents said they had experienced some form of exclusion in the prior six months. Participants consistently rated actions such as ignoring, excluding, or overlooking a co-worker. Another survey for 262 full-time workers revealed that 66% respondents received the silent treatment and 29% respondents reported that other people intentionally left the area when the respondents entered (Fox and Stallworth, 2005).

Researchers agree that ostracism has such a negative impact on employees' psychological well-being (Ferris et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2006; O'Reilly & Robinson, 2009) which, in turn, can reduce one's ability to effectively contribute to the organization. Craighead et al. (1979) found that individuals who imagined being ignored tended to show passivity and disengagement. Other studies have shown that being the target of ostracism may fuel uncooperative or aggressive responses (Robinson et al., 2013). In addition, Zhao at al., (2013) found that there is positive relationship between workplace ostracism and counterproductive work behaviors. They also stated that counterproductive work behaviors negatively affects organization as a whole because workplace ostracism may lead to an employee's decision to act out against social norms and trigger negative behaviors as a response.

According to Twenge et al., (2001) trust and belongingness may be important feelings that are affected by social exclusion. This result can help to understand why workplace ostracism is positively related to service workers' knowledge hiding (Zhao, Xia, He, Sheard and Wan, 2016). In other words, ostracism may lead people to feel less trust which is very important for knowledge sharing and development. Relatedly, Zand (1972) found that high trust groups were more open, shared more relevant information and identified more creative, higher quality solutions, than low trust groups. Morover, there is a considerable body of research showing that trust predicts risk taking and task performance, and affective commitment (e.g., Colquitt, Scott,& LePine, 2007).

On the other hand, Leung and his collegues (2011) investigation among employees in Chinese

hotels illustrated that employees who are being ostracized with not enough psychological resources will try to conserve psychological resources by demonstrating low performance and work engagement. Ostracism can threaten individual's social resources, and thus can be viewed as a stressor (Williams, 2001) which have been linked to work outcomes such as employee loyalty (Wallace,1995), workplace deviance (Lee and Allen, 2002), intention to leave (Hom and Griffeth, 1995; Harvey et al., 2007), emotional exhaustion (Gaines and Jermier, 1983) job performance (Motowidlo et al.,1986) Workplace ostracism is costly for employees and organizations because employees who encounter high levels of workplace ostracism are likely to have low levels of organizational identification and are less willing to engage in citizenship behavior (Wu et al., 2016).

According to Blumberg and Pringle (1982: p.562) job performance can be related to three constituent including capacity to perform, willingness to perform and the environmental factors. However, willingness to perform is the key determinant of job performance since it impacts the other two constituents. For instance, a person may be very capable but if s/he is not motivated or want to make more effort, s/he cannot perform well. A sense of belonging develop a sense of duty or obligation to the group which can effectively override tendencies toward self-interest (Harkins and Petty, 1982). Today's organizations need engaged employees who are willing to make more effort, enthusiastic regarding their jobs, and often involve themselves deeply in their work (May, Gilson and Harter, 2004). When an individual perceives s/he is ostracized at work, his/her sense of belonging is likely undermined, which in turn, can reduce both their ability and motivation to contribute to the organization (O'Reilly and Robinson, 2009, p.6). Thus, we hypothesize:

H1: Workplace ostracism is negatively correlated with task performance.

Workplace Ostracism, Task Performance And Feeling Trusted

Trust can be defined as "the extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions and decisions, of another" (McAllister, 1995). Mayer et al. (1995) claim that trust is specific to the domain of interpersonal work relationships, particularly the relationship between supervisors and subordinates. They define supervisory trust as the willingness of a subordinate to be vulnerable to the actions of his/her supervisor whose behaviour and actions s/he cannot control. On the other hand, feeling trusted is defined as the perception that another party is willing to accept vulnerability to one's actions. Employees who feel trusted perceive that another party is willing to assume risk with them (Lau and Lam, 2008). If a supervisor empowers his subordinates, treats his subordinates fairly, supports his subordinates, or shares important information with his subordinates, then the subordinates' perception of being trusted is expected (Deng and Wang, 2009, p.18).

According to Lau et al.,(2007) perception of being trusted is expected when a supervisor empowers his subordinates, treats them fairly, supports them, or shares important information with them. Den Hartog et al. (2002) reported that employees' trust in their supervisor was related to their trust in management in general. Supervisors are perceived as the represontor of the organization and thus when employees trust their immediate supervisors, they are more likely to generalize such trust to the whole organization (Tan and Tan, 2000, p.243). Many scholars agreed that employee ratings of supervisor trust are more appropriately termed "feeling trusted" to reflect the perceptual nature of the concept (e.g Lau, Liu and Fu, 2007). Besides, trust affects an employee behavior only when it has been felt by the employee. Therefore, in this study feeling trusted is measured via the subordinate's perception of being trusted by their supervisor.

Researches indicate that employees who trust their supervisors tend to have better job performance (Deutsch Salamon and Robinson, 2008; Lau, Lam and Wen, 2008), more frequent citizenship behavior (Podsakoff, MacKenzie and Bommer, 1996; Nyhan,1999; Perry, 2004), and higher job satisfaction (Colquitt, Scott and LePine, 2007; Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). Anticipating a relationship between ostracism, feeling trusted and task performance may be explained through social exchange theory. According to the theory that builts on the norms of reciprocity, when an individual experiences pleasant or unpleasant feelings from an organization, s/he reciprocate the organization in terms of her/his perception. Since, in general, individuals send back the benefits they receive, they are likely to response helpfulness and kindness with affective reactions, which may in turn lead to desirable work

attitudes and behaviors (Leung, 2008; Shapira-Lishchinsky and Even-Zohar; 2011). On the contrary, by way of replication, subordinates with low level of trust is likely to be less willing to make extra effort and less motivated to perform beyond minimum requirements.

Literature review indicates that trust can be an important determinant of task performance. For example, Colquitt et al. (2007) found that trust in the manager is positively related to job performance and organizational citizenship behavior and negatively related to counterproductive outcomes, such as the intention to quit the organization. Similarly, Dirks (2000) study indicated that trust in the leader is associated with team performance. Mayer and Gavin (2005) also found empirical support for their assertion that trust in management allows employees to focus on the tasks that need to be done to add value to their organization. Consequently, feeling trusted is likely a significant predictor of job performance for employees. However perception of ostracism and feeling trusted in hospitality industry with increased job demands and thus work stress can have more negative effects on service delivery. Thus, we hypothesize:

H2: Feeling trusted is positively correlated with task performance.

H3: Feeling trusted will moderate the negative relationship between ostracism and task performance in such a way that the relationship is weaker for employees with high levels of feeling trusted.

METHODOLOGY

Selection of Sample and Respondents Demographics

The survey was conducted on sample consisting of 107 hotel employees located around Kocaeli province between June 2017 and October 2017.

Measures

All items were measured on a five point Likert-type scale where (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Workplace Ostracism was measured using the ten-item scale developed by Ferris et al. (2008). Sample items included 'Others ignored me at work', 'Others left the area when I entered', and 'My greetings have gone unanswered at work'. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.74.

Feeling trusted was measured using the four-item scale developed by Lau et al (2007). Sample items included "My supervisor delegates important work to me, "My supervisor empowers me with great decision-making power". Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.88. Task performance was measured using the five-item scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). Sample items include 'I can competently complete assigned work', 'I can perform the duties of my job description', and 'I never neglect my job responsibilities'. This job performance scale was based on participants' self-reports. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.98.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics regarding our sample is indicated in Table 1. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by authors, using the "personally administrated questionnaire" method.

When the demographic characteristics of the employees participating in the survey are examined (Table 1) out of the 107 respondents 52.3% are women, 46.7% are men and 61.6% are under 35 years of age. In terms of distribution of respondents by department % 22,4 of the respondents are employed in the front office followed by the food and beverage department 16.8%. In terms of education, % 33,6 have completed high school followed by %29of those having university degree. 24.3% of the respondents are low and middle level managers. When employees are asked about all sectoral seniority, it is seen that the majority of the respondents (%35.5) are under 5 years, while those over 15 years are only 20.1%. Finally, the length of the service in the current hotel shows that the majority of respondents have worked for less than is 2 years. Only % 4,7 of the respondents have worked for a period of 9-15 years.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Gender	F	%	Age	F	%
Male	56	52,3	17-25	30	28
Female	51	46,7	26-34	36	33,6
Missing	1	1,0	35-43	31	29
			44-52	9	8,4
			Missing	1	1,0
Department	**F**	**%**	**Education**	**F**	**%**
Housekeeping	15	14	Primary School	21	19,6
Front Office	24	22,4	High School	36	33,6
Kitchen	14	13,1	Vocational School	15	14
Sales&Marketing	4	3,7	Graduate	31	29
Technical Service	7	6,5	Post Graduate	1	1,0
Accounting	8	7,5	Missing	3	2,8
Human Resources	3	2,8	**Position**	**F**	**%**
Management	2	1,9	Manager	15	14,0
Food&Beverage	18	16,8	Chef	11	10,3
Other	10	9,3	Staff	73	68,2
Missing	2	1,9	Trainer	6	5,6
			Missing	2	1,9
Hotel Seniority	**F**	**%**	**Total Seniority**	**F**	**%**
0-2	42	39,3	0-5	38	35,5
3-5	39	36,4	6-8	19	17,8
6-8	6	5,6	9-15	19	17,8
9-15	5	4,7	16-20	13	12,1
Missing	15	14,0	20 +	4	3,7
			Missing	14	13,1
Total	**107**	**100**	**Total**	**107**	**100**

Data Analysis and Results

In order to identify the underlying structure of various measures exploratory factor analysis using principle components of factor extraction and varimax rotation techniques was performed. As a cut-off loading was used 0.40. Most factor loadings were above 0.50 which can be assumed a high level of significance. The results from our factor analysis of the measurement items for each of the subscales (Table 2) imply that measures used in this study have construct validity (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 2: Factor Loading of Scale Items

Workplace Ostracism	Feeling Trusted	Task Performance
,898	,869	,968
,895	,846	,958
,868	,825	,940
,867	,708	,938
,865		,928
,862		
,795		
,685		
,673		
,556		

Model Testing Results

We conducted hierarchical regression analysis to examine the hypothesized relationships among workplace ostracism, feeling trusted and task performance (Table 3). In the first step, we investigated the impact of workplace ostracism on task performance. The results revealed that workplace ostracism is not significantly correlated with task performance. Accordingly, the first hypothesis of the study is not

supported. On the other hand, the results revealed that feeling trusted is positively correlated with task performance. Accordingly, the second hypothesis of the study is supported). The moderation model tests whether the prediction of a dependent variable, Y, from an independent variable, X, differs across levels of a third variable, Z Since the findings did not indicate a significant relationship between workplace ostracism and task performance, the Sobel test for the moderation model was not applied.

Table 3: Hierarchical Moderated Regression Analyses

	Step 1	Step 2
Step 1: workplace ostracism -task performance	,362	
Step 2: feeling trusted - task performance		,272[**]

Conclusion, Discussions and Suggestions

Past researches on ostracism indicate that it is such a negative phenomenon that impacts employees' psychological well-being (Ferris et al., 2008; Hitlan et al., 2006; O'Reilly & Robinson, 2009) which, in turn, can reduce task performance. However, the results of the current study carried on hospitality employees did not support the expectation that being ostracized from other employees affects performance. This is an interesting result because as Gkorezis and Bellou (2016) mentioned that the effect of workplace ostracism in collectivistic cultures like Turkey is likely to be more vigorous. Many researchers agree that compared to the individualistic cultures that focus less on high quality relationships collectivist ones may be more sensitive to ostracism (e.g. Leung et al., 2011).

On the other hand, Hofstede (1980) mentioned that Turkey is high power distance society. In high power distance society there are barriers or tall hierarchical levels for employees in organizations. Maybe, individuals who are already culturally accustomed to being excluded because of the existence of tall hierarchal levels tolerate workplace ostracism and will not let these behaviors affect their performance. Therefore, researchers should keep in mind this cultural effects when interpreting the findings of the study.

Consistent with the past studies, the findings of this study suggest trust would enhance task performance. Perception of feeling trusted in hospitality industry with increased job demands and thus work stress can have more positive effects on service delivery. Trust in management allows employees to focus on the tasks that need to be done to add value to their organization. For that reason managers should dedicate their time and energy to build trust in their organization.

Despite this study offers a number of contributions to the literature, like all researches it has some limitations. First of all, the participation rate is low and concentrated only in one city of Turkey, Kocaeli. Future studies could replicate the study in the Mediterranean and Aegean regions of Turkey in order to increase the response rate and also the generalizability of study results. Besides, the research is specific to one industry and thus it is debatable whether these results would generalize to other industries. Second, we did not include the role of personality type into our investigation and predicted that all employees are affected in the in the same way and to the same degree. On the other hand, this study has only examined the role of workplace ostracism in decreasing task performance. However, counterproductive work behavior have been theorized as behavior for ostracized employees to restore their sense of control and sense of belongingness (Williams, 2007; Robinson, O'Reilly and Wang, 2013). It can also be suggested to other researchers who wants to study in this subject to investigate the role of culture that would possibly give an in-depth analysis of the issue.

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