

# The Influence of Observed Workplace Ostracism on Psychological Distress and Job Performance: The Moderating Effects of Perpetrator's Injustice Attribution and Emotional Intelligence

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[https://doi.org/10.35609/gcbssproceeding.2022.1\(62\)](https://doi.org/10.35609/gcbssproceeding.2022.1(62))

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## ABSTRACT

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Forming and sustaining meaningful social relationships is a fundamental need for individuals (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). If they feel rejected, their social interaction need will be unfulfilled (Dewall & Bushman, 2011), leading to impaired belonging needs, control, self-esteem and meaningful existence, which eventually impact their behaviour, mental health and emotions (Williams, 2007). Ostracism is a form of social exclusion/rejection, expressed in various actions, such as ignoring the target and shutting him/her out of the conversations and other actions (Ferris et al., 2008), leading to various detrimental consequences (Li et al., 2021). It is a pervasive phenomenon in different social contexts (Kimel et al., 2017). Workplace Ostracism is defined as “the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others in the workplace” (Ferris et al., 2008). Research in workplace ostracism has prospered in recent years (Howard et al., 2019). Various theoretical perspectives have been brought forward to explain workplace ostracism, one of which is the workplace victimisation relational model by Aquino and Lamertz (2004) that consolidates two perspectives—the victim and the perpetrator—in the context of role relationships and organisational structure. This model proposes that workplace ostracism should be understood within a social, dyadic relationship between the victim and the perpetrator and the organisational context in which such relationships occur.

**Keywords:** Observed workplace ostracism, psychological distress, perpetrator's injustice, emotional intelligence, job performance.