

## Are They Isolating Me? The Influence of Workplace Ostracism on Employees' Turnover Tendency

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**Abstract.** Using questionnaire survey method, taking 319 employees of a company as a sample, deeply explore the influence of workplace ostracism on turnover tendency, the mediating effect of organizational self-esteem between these two variables, and the moderating effect of mental toughness in workplace ostracism and organizational self-esteem. The empirical analysis shows that there is a positive correlation between workplace ostracism and turnover tendency; the negative correlation between workplace ostracism and organizational self-esteem; organizational self-esteem was negatively correlated with turnover tendency; organizational self-esteem fully mediated the relationship between workplace ostracism and turnover tendency; mental toughness plays a negative moderating role in workplace ostracism and organizational self-esteem. Implications of these findings are discussed.

### Introduction

Ostracism exists in various groups and is a very common social phenomenon. It is no exception in the organizational context. Most employees have had the experience of “sitting a cold bench” or “wearing small shoes” in their work. Workplace ostracism as a “cold” violence in the workplace, especially refers to the self-perception of employees being ignored or rejected by others in the workplace. Staff perceived snub in the course of their work and neglect from leaders and colleagues in the workplace that is ostracism. Once employees are exposed to these neglects, they will greatly affect their enthusiasm for work. It is a kind of hidden pain in the organization, which seriously affects the psychology and attitude of employees. In addition, in the context of Chinese organizations, traditional influence of the “circle” culture and the concepts of “collectivism” and “advocating authority”, so the Chinese have a higher demand and deeper experience of “harmony”, “belonging” and “relationship”. The Chinese “tolerance” and “introverted” personality traits in the workplace so that it uses tissue ostracism of this “invisible killer” means may be more frequent ostracism of workplace hazards caused by Chinese organizations and employees may be more serious.

Organizational self-esteem is the belief of an organization member about how much he or she needs to meet his or her needs by participating in a role activity in the organization. The more specific meaning of the description is that employees with strong self-esteem feel that they are extremely important, meaningful, efficient and valuable in the organization. Such employees have strong self-confidence and high quality. Mental toughness is unique to staff mental traits. High mental toughness staff, even if it is encountered great obstacles in the course of their work, their adaptability is more powerful lower than the mental toughness of employees. Employee suffered intense crowding and neglect, for the beginning of psychology staff is low, prone to self-denial, its organizational self-esteem is bound to be one kind of negative impact reduced. Group organizational self-esteem weaker employees, their engagement is declining and enthusiasm will reduce. In the work of the company's prospects are not bright, employee turnover tendency then risen. Therefore, it is of

great theoretical and practical value to deeply explore the mechanism of workplace ostracism perceived by employees in the workplace.

## Theory and Hypotheses

### Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory is an explanation of the international organization interactive social mental theory of the process of cognition and behavior. According to the theory of social identity, the behavior of individuals within an organization is based on its classification of itself, that is, the individual tries to keep his behavior consistent with the group according to his own classification of the group, while rejecting other groups. The social identity in the organization determines the classification of employees to their own groups, while the maintenance of the group and the ostracism of other groups further strengthen this identity. At the same time, strong social identity will make employees behavior consistent with your group, to improve the performance of community cohesion and consolidation groups. Conversely, if an individual population groups continue to feel this is not accepted or ostracism, but also cannot become a member of other groups, the lower their social identity, behavior and social identity are bound high group members different. As a result, these lower social identity of employees one by one become marginalized workers, they may be due to a similar experience and compassion for each other and form a certain cohesion of marginalized groups. ostracism will give a negative impact on their mental, while the ultimate solution to avoid ostracism might be leaving.

The ostracism of employees in the organization is a kind of damage to their social identity. The direct impact of workplace ostracism perceived by employees in the workplace is that employees take the initiative to stay away from those who he thinks are bringing him unhappy, and show short-term behavior at work to make an adventurous behavior that undermines the long-term development of the organization. What is more serious is that the employee's workplace ostracism pressure is too large and even affects the employee's self-control ability and mental cognitive function, which is then rejected by the surrounding people, thus forming a vicious circle of workplace ostracism, negative psychology and behavior-labor ostracism. The opposite of ostracism is attribution and identity, which is the process by which employees are accepted and recognized by others in the workplace. Therefore, social identity theory can be used to explain the impact of workplace ostracism.

### Research Hypotheses

#### *Workplace Ostracism and Turnover Tendency.*

Research has found that the higher the employee's perceived ostracism in the workplace, the stronger the tendency to leave; the higher the employee's perception in the workplace is from the ostracism of colleagues, the more his turnover tendency strong<sup>[1]</sup>. However, relative leadership ostracism, colleague ostracism has a greater positive impact on employee turnover. The impact of employee ostracism in the workplace on the positive behavior of employees in the enterprise is negative, which will reduce the positive behavior of employees in the enterprise. In the workplace, employee social identity and workplace relationships have an important impact on the employee's mental state and may even affect employee turnover. The social identity of employees and the workplace relationship strengthen each other and affect the work psychology and behavior of employees. Conversely, when employees' social identity is not high and workplace relations are not good, they must feel the ostracism from colleagues and supervisors. The way to deal with such ostracism can be negative work behavior (such as anti-productive work behavior) is resignation to circumvent. The following assumptions are made:

H1: There is a positive correlation between workplace ostracism and turnover tendency.

***The Mediating Role of Organizational Self-Esteem.***

Research shows that the workplace ostracism perceived by employees in the workplace significantly affects the employee’s organizational anti-production behavior and interpersonal anti-production behavior. The employee’s perceived workplace ostracism in the workplace through the mediation effect of state self-control. It affects the organization’s anti-production behavior and interpersonal anti-production behavior. The mental capital status has a positive adjustment effect on the relationship between workplace ostracism and state self-control. The higher the employee’s mental capital status, the more negative the negative impact of workplace ostracism on state self-control. Thus, it has a greater negative impact on employees’ anti-production behavior. The results also show that organizational self-esteem can mediate the impact of workplace ostracism and job performance perceived by employees in the workplace<sup>[2]</sup>. Workplace ostracism is a subjective feeling of employees neglecting others’ neglect behavior. Employees feel the coldness of leaders or colleagues. The employee’s self-esteem based on the organization will be reduced, which will affect the employee’s own work performance, and the work performance will greatly affect the employee’s turnover tendency. The following assumptions are made:

H2a: There is a negative correlation between workplace ostracism and organizational self-esteem.

Research pointed out that organizational self-esteem has a significant negative impact on employees’ negative attitudes. Employees with low organizational self-esteem are prone to negative emotions during their work. Once such negative emotions are generated, employees with many negative emotions will inevitably have a negative impact on the concentration of employees’ work, and it will also easily disrupt the work rhythm of employees. Over time, the enthusiasm of employees will be swayed by this negative emotion. In the long run, employees will not be able to complete the tasks arranged by the leaders of the company. The trust and goodwill of the leaders and colleagues will gradually decrease, and even neglect them. The phenomenon of ostracism, and then the turnover tendency of employees will also rise.

H2b: Organizational self-esteem has a mediating role in workplace ostracism and turnover tendency.

***The Moderating Role of Mental Toughness.***

Research pointed out that active personality can regulate the relationship between workplace ostracism and organizational citizenship behavior perceived by employees in the workplace<sup>[3]</sup>. Employees with strong initiative and employees have a weaker negative relationship between workplace ostracism and organizational citizenship behavior in the workplace. Organizational citizenship behavior affects the work efficiency of employees in the enterprise, and also determines the development prospects of employees in a company. Enterprises with good development prospects have a very important role in retaining high-quality talents of enterprises. Whether employees have strong mental toughness and decide whether they have active personality, and organizational self-esteem is positively affecting employees’ organizational citizenship behavior. From the above research and analysis, it is known that employees with higher mental toughness have less influence on organizational self-esteem than perceived workplace ostracism. Therefore, this paper proposes the following assumptions:

H3: The mental toughness of employees plays a negative moderating role in the relationship between workplace ostracism and organizational self-esteem.

In summary, the research model of this paper is shown below:

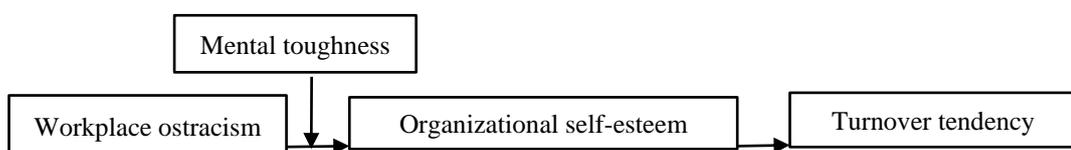


Fig.1 Theoretical research model

## Methods

### Data Sample

The data collection of this study was mainly carried out through the “Questionnaire Star” platform, which was distributed to employees of a large equipment manufacturing enterprise. All questionnaires were filled in anonymously to ensure the authenticity and reliability of the data collection. A total of 360 electronic questionnaires were distributed in this study, and a total of 327 were collected, with a recovery rate of 90.8%. The invalid questionnaires with the convergence of the answers and the contradictions of the positive direction questions were first screened and eliminated. A total of 8 invalid questionnaires were deleted, and 319 valid questionnaires, the effective rate was 95.5%.

### Variable Measurement

(1) Workplace ostracism: The ten-item scale compiled by Ferris et al. (2008). Using the 7-level Likert scale for scoring, 1 means never, 2 means almost no, 3 means rarely, 4 means sometimes, 5 means a bit more frequent, 6 means more frequent, 7 means always. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  coefficient is 0.91.

(2) Organizational self-esteem: Adopt the self-esteem scale (SES) compiled by Rosenberg et al. in 1965. A self-assessment of each question using a 7-level Likert scale. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  coefficient is 0.74.

(3) Turnover tendency: The turnover bias scale compiled by Mobley et al. (1978). Respondents used a 7-level Likert scale to self-assess each question. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  coefficient is 0.96.

(4) Mental toughness: The mental toughness scale of employees was measured by Connor and Davidson (2003). The scale has 25 items. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  coefficient is 0.81.

(5) Control variables: This article uses gender, age, education, and job position as control variables.

## Results

### Correlation and Reliability Analysis

The Person correlation coefficient is used to judge the correlation between employee’s perceived workplace ostracism, organizational self-esteem, mental toughness, and turnover tendency in order to verify the hypothesis. The results of the analysis showed that there was a significant positive correlation between workplace ostracism and turnover tendency, a negative correlation with organizational self-esteem, and a negative correlation between organizational self-esteem and turnover tendency. The research hypotheses of H1, H2, and H3 were preliminarily verified, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities of major variables

| Variable                   | Mean(M) | Standard deviation(SD) | Workplace ostracism | Mental toughness | Turnover tendency | Organizational self-esteem |
|----------------------------|---------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Workplace ostracism        | 2.32    | 0.63                   | (0.91)              |                  |                   |                            |
| Mental toughness           | 4.06    | 0.57                   | -0.406              | (0.81)           |                   |                            |
| Turnover tendency          | 2.12    | 1.00                   | 0.317**             | -0.282*          | (0.96)            |                            |
| Organizational self-esteem | 4.08    | 0.64                   | -0.434**            | 0.424*           | -0.163*           | (0.74)                     |

Note: \* is  $P < 0.05$ , \*\* is  $P < 0.01$ , and the number in diagonal brackets is the internal consistency coefficient  $\alpha$ .

### Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses were tested by HTM. In Table 2, M2 showed that workplace ostracism had a significant positive predictive effect on turnover tendency ( $r=0.631$ ,  $P<0.05$ ), assuming H1 was validated. Workplace ostracism has a negative predictive effect on organizational self-esteem after controlling demographic variables such as age and gender ( $r=-0.441$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). Workplace ostracism will reduce employee organizational self-esteem, assuming H2a is verified. In Table 3, M3 showed that organizational self-esteem was negatively correlated with turnover tendency ( $r=-0.64$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). After adding organizational self-esteem variables, M4 showed that workplace ostracism had no significant predictive effect on turnover tendency, indicating that organizational identity is in the workplace. Workplace ostracism and turnover tendency play a full intermediary role, assuming H2b is verified.

Table 2. Workplace ostracism and turnover tendency: the mediating role of organizational self-esteem

|                            | Dependent variable: turnover tendency |        |         |         |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|
|                            | M1                                    | M2     | M3      | M4      |
| Control variable           |                                       |        |         |         |
| gender                     | -0.08                                 | -0.09  | -0.03   | -0.05   |
| age                        | -0.09                                 | -0.6   | -0.02   | -0.06   |
| education                  | 0.10                                  | 0.13   | 0.14    | 0.18    |
| job position               | -0.07                                 | -0.03  | -0.03   | -0.07   |
| Independent variable       |                                       |        |         |         |
| workplace ostracism        |                                       | 0.631* |         | 0.41    |
| Mediating variable         |                                       |        |         |         |
| organizational self-esteem |                                       |        | -0.64** | -0.46** |
| R <sup>2</sup>             | 0.12                                  | 0.20   | 0.21    | 0.24    |
| F                          | 2.95                                  | 5.77** | 7.21**  | 9.54**  |
| Δ R <sup>2</sup>           | 0.12                                  | 0.08   | 0.09    | 0.04    |
| Δ F                        | 2.95                                  | 2.82** | 4.62**  | 3.74**  |

Note: \*\* is  $P<0.01$ , \* is  $P<0.05$ .

About the moderating role of mental toughness in Table 3, with workplace ostracism and turnover tendency interaction significantly negative effect ( $r=-0.341$ ,  $P<0.05$ ). This indicates that the higher mental toughness, the weaker negative relationship between workplace ostracism and turnover tendency, assuming H3 is verified. According to Cohen's suggestion, the data were grouped according to the mean plus or minus one standard deviation, and then the differences in the impact of workplace ostracism on turnover tendency among employees with different mental toughness tendencies were plotted.

Table 3. Workplace ostracism and turnover tendency: the moderating role of mental toughness

|                                      | Dependent variable: turnover tendency |        |        |         |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|---------|
|                                      | M1                                    | M2     | M3     | M4      |
| Control variable                     |                                       |        |        |         |
| gender                               | -0.08                                 | -0.09  | -0.07  | -0.10   |
| age                                  | -0.09                                 | -0.6   | -0.02  | -0.04   |
| education                            | 0.10                                  | 0.13   | 0.19   | 0.17    |
| job position                         | -0.07                                 | -0.03  | 0.04   | 0.05    |
| Independent variable                 |                                       |        |        |         |
| workplace ostracism                  |                                       | 0.631* | 0.69*  | -0.73*  |
| Moderating variable                  |                                       |        |        |         |
| mental toughness                     |                                       |        | -0.18  | -0.27   |
| Interaction effect                   |                                       |        |        |         |
| Workplace ostracism*Mental toughness |                                       |        |        | -0.326* |
| R <sup>2</sup>                       | 0.12                                  | 0.20   | 0.21   | 0.23    |
| F                                    | 2.95                                  | 5.77** | 6.89** | 10.64** |
| Δ R <sup>2</sup>                     | 0.12                                  | 0.08   | 0.01   | 0.02    |
| Δ F                                  | 2.95                                  | 2.82** | 1.12** | 0.375** |

Note: \*\* is P<0.01, \* is P<0.05.

## Conclusion and Implication

### Conclusion

The empirical results of this paper show that there is a significant positive correlation between workplace ostracism and turnover tendency. There is a significant negative correlation between workplace ostracism and employee organizational self-esteem. The employee's organizational self-esteem and turnover tendency are significantly negatively correlated. The employee's organizational self-esteem plays a full mediating role between workplace ostracism and turnover tendency. Employee mental toughness plays a negative moderating role in workplace ostracism and organizational self-esteem.

### Implication

#### *Enterprises Should Pay Attention to the Ostracism that Employees Encounter in the Workplace.*

Managers need to pay close attention to ostracism in the workplace of employees, and actively communicate with employees in different positions in different departments, which can be perceived in the workplace of employees. Workplace ostracism in this regard to make corresponding effective requirements and supervision. The development of corresponding targeted measures and systems to help companies establish an effective mechanism to attract and retain people, improve the status of frequent employee turnover, and actively guide employees.

#### *Enterprises Should Improve Employees' Organizational Self-esteem and Mental Toughness.*

In terms of enhancing employee self-esteem, managers must give enough respect to every employee of the company. Employees perceive the respect of managers has a significant positive impact on their organizational self-esteem. Managers can improve the mental toughness of employees through job support. Managers need appropriately decentralize employees when they arrange their work, give them a relatively free working environment, and create a positive and optimistic corporate culture environment.

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