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Understanding the impact of workplace ostracism on instigated workplace incivility with effects of narcissism and perceived organizational support

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Abstract

The present scholarly investigation, in the purview of theoretical underpinnings of Social Exchange Theory, explains the connection between workplace ostracism and workplace incivility with mediation of negative emotions and moderation of narcissism and perceived organizational support (POS) among Higher Education Faculty. Using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) facilitated by Smart PLS-4 software; the study examined 515 responses from academic professionals within higher education sector of Pakistan while collecting responses in two waves with a two-month gap. Findings substantiate a positive link between workplace ostracism and incivility with mediation of negative emotions on the highlighted relationship. Moreover, the relationship is moderated by narcissism in way that it strengthens for individuals with higher levels of narcissism. Also, POS moderates the relationship between negative emotions and incivility in a way that the relationship gets weaker for higher level of POS. Interplay between workplace ostracism and incivility with mediation of negative emotions and moderating influences of narcissism and POS, has not been investigated in prior research. This study adds to the literature on Social Exchange Theory and provides significant insights to organizations, especially higher education sector, in formulating policies to manage the issues related to workplace ostracism and incivility. Furthermore, the study also highlights the importance of POS.

Keywords Workplace ostracism, Incivility, Narcissism, Perceived organizational support, Social exchange theory

1 Introduction

The intricate fabric of workplace dynamics is significantly woven by interpersonal relationships, which occupy a substantial segment of individuals' daily lives, accounting for approximately six to eight hours. Consequently, the quality of workplace relationships profoundly influences organizational prosperity. Nevertheless, certain behavioral manifestations, such as anti-social tendencies and aggressive conduct, can compromise



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these relationships. A salient concern in organizational behavior literature is workplace ostracism (WO), defined as the perception of exclusion or neglect by the others at the workplace [49]. Ostracism precipitates a multitude of adverse consequences, notably instigating negative conduct such as workplace incivility—an area of focus in contemporary organizational behavior research [51, 53]. Existing scholarly works not only highlight the ubiquitous character of incivility but also underscore its deleterious implications for the well-being of both individuals and organizations [36]. Furthermore, these studies emphasize the widespread prevalence and significance of workplace incivility, warranting scholarly scrutiny and investigation.

Interestingly, an individual's response to workplace stressors is significantly shaped by inherent personality characteristics [34]. Narcissistic individuals, characterized by egoism, exhibit heightened sensitivity to ego-threats, leading to intensified sentiments [32]. Consequently, they are inclined to behave uncivilly in contrast to their counterparts [34]. Despite the scholarly attention accorded to narcissism across societal contexts, its exploration within organizational behavior remains relatively nascent [33].

Current literature has scarce literature that empirically explores the impact of workplace ostracism on instigated workplace incivility and negative emotions as a consequence of ostracism leading to incivility also demands exploration. Lastly, role of personality trait such as narcissism and perceived support at organizational level as moderators would also aid in understanding the organizational dynamics. Given the adverse ramifications of workplace ostracism (WO) and incivility, it becomes imperative to scrutinize variables that can potentially mitigate these consequences. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is counted for as a pivotal moderator relating to workplace stressors and negative emotions (Kao, Cho, and Kao [29]), and also serves as a healing resource against detrimental impacts of workplace stressors [50]. POS nurtures reciprocal obligations among employees [14, 45], hence reduces the strength of negative emotional consequences of workplace stressors. As POS provokes positive feelings about the organizational conduct with the employees [31], they reciprocate it by showing care and affection with the organization which ultimately results in fostering civility at the workplace. On the other hand, reduced POS aggravates negative emotions, which may lead employees towards enhanced workplace deviant behaviors [44].

The work environment in the higher education is different from the corporate work environment, and mainly characterized by collaboration among faculty members, inclusiveness, and commitment to social justice (Koon and Pun [30]). As faculty of a higher education institute is given diverse job responsibilities encompassing teaching, research, administrative duties, and duties related to extra-curricular activities, hence interpersonal relationships play a pivotal role in fostering a congenial work environment [25]. Thus, the role of WO is critical in this type of work environment which may badly affect workplace relationships and may ultimately disrupt the overall institutional environment [16]. Impact of WO varies across sectors, with academia exhibiting distinct dynamics due to its emphasis on collegiality (Bilal, Fatima, and Imran [3]), inclusiveness (Koon and Pun [30]), and multi-dimensional job responsibilities [25].

In collectivist cultures like the one in Pakistan, interpersonal relationships are highly valued wherein societal norms, greetings and acknowledgments are of great importance and hence the implications of WO are more serious as compared to individualistic cultures [16]. In the higher education work environment of such cultural settings,

there are more chances that the ostracized faculty will have enhanced negative emotions and hence will engage in uncivil behaviors [1]. In today's rapidly evolving higher education landscape with technological advancements and globalization, workplace inclusiveness and mutual respect is of great importance. Thus, by interrogating the relationship between ostracism and incivility with mediation of negative emotions and moderation of narcissism and POS, this research aims to offer suggestions for fostering conducive work environment in the higher education sector.

Current study contributes in multiple ways. It strives to add to literature available on Ostracism – incivility relationship in context of Asian culture which is currently limited. It also contributes to literature available on negative emotions as mediator and narcissism and perceived organizational support as moderators. While previous literature has been corporate sector focused, current study has taken academia to explore ostracism and its impact. The motivation for the current study is to contribute to literature available on social exchange theory and understand the interpersonal dynamics especially in academia in negative exchanges. Current research would aid academicians to comprehend the impact of ostracism and devise coping mechanisms to avoid negative impact on performance by minimizing negative emotions and making use of resources including organizational support. Lastly, the study strives to contribute to literature available on social exchange theory to understanding transactional dynamics at workplace.

1.1 Theoretical foundation

The theoretical basis of this study seek directions from Blau [4] Social Exchange Theory (SET). SET maintains that: “individuals behave in such a way that a fair balance or equity is maintained in the environment” [4], p. 89. Hence, it provides an analytical lens into the myriad ways that capability is traded off through those who are ostracized and the indulgence of their uncivil actions. In an organizational context, SET explains how socio-emotional outcomes develop when employees interact with one another (Jain, Giga, and Cooper [24]). Favorable treatment within an organizational context creates positive mood states and a resulting sense of obligation to repay renewed goodwill, whereas the opposite is true of negative treatment, which creates negative mood states that reduce the motivation to reciprocate. SET also assumes that employees and organizations have a common investment in their relationship and their mutual realization of investments, and that because of this mutuality, employees constantly weigh the potential for non-equivalent reciprocity against their employer's continued willingness to acknowledge contributions [4]. Consistent with the SET perspective, POS leads to a mutually beneficial relationship where employees display organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) since they are perceiving value from the organization [13]; Kao, Cho, and Kao [29]) (Fig. 1).

1.2 Literature review and hypotheses development

Figure 1 shows the research model developed for testing the identified relationships. Workplace ostracism (WO) attracted a great deal of consideration within the scholarly domain of organizational behavior precisely because of its potent implications for the behavior of employees and organizational dynamics [49]. WO acts as a critical stressor which brings out varied employee responses and emergence of antisocial, prosocial, or avoidant behaviors [49] and uncivil behaviors [41, 53] within the organizational milieu.

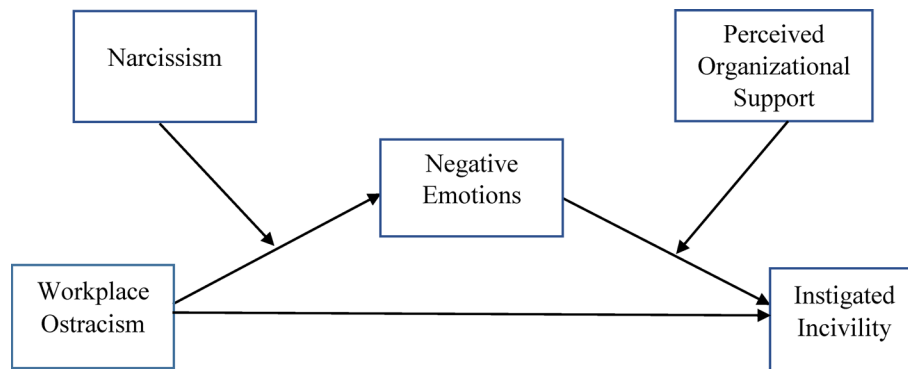


Fig. 1 Research model

Jahanzeb and Fatima [22] posit WO to be an uncontrollable stressor pushing the affected to compulsive interpersonal deviance as a symbolic control against perceived marginalization. Choi [7] demonstrates that WO and OCB were negatively related among Korean professionals, thus emphasizing that ostracism is something that has adverse consequences. Shafique et al. [47] in the Pakistani organizational context establish the significant relationship between WO and deviant or unethical behaviors, thereby reinforcing the theoretical construct of SET. Furthermore, ostracized employees have an emotional catch toward uncivil behavior, coworker conflict, and supervisor discord, showing that the effects of WO are multifaceted within the modern organizational setting [9]. Based on the current literature we propose that WO induces employees to show negative behavior at workplace as they may feel of being instigated to show adverse behavior and have no other options to behave uncivilly. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 1 There is a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and instigated incivility.

Ostracized employees have enhanced negative emotions and also a deep feeling related to ‘social death’ as described by Williams [52]. This experiential void gives rise to a spectrum of detrimental emotional states, encompassing sentiments from indignation and apprehension to emotional depletion and psychological turmoil [1]. Empirical examinations spanning diverse cultural and vocational domains validate the pervasive influence of WO on the emotional welfare of employees. It has been pointed out by Zeeshan et al. [44, 53] that a positive association is present in the context of ostracism with perceived stress in the public sector organizations and nursing professions, respectively. Accordingly, Fatima, Bilal, and Imran [15] are of the view that the ostracism leads to enhancement of negative emotions among employees of educational sector of Pakistan. Based on literature, we argue that WO creates unease in employees due to which they experience adverse emotions including NE. So, our next hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 2 There is a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and negative emotions.

Further, within the theoretical frontiers of SET, workplace incivility develops as an expression of perceived imbalances within social exchange relationships [4]. Whereas, consistent Roberts [43] findings, workplace stressors incite negative emotional states, which consequently lead to deviant actions and behavioral strains as adaptive coping

mechanisms. Maladaptive responses, as Jiang et al. [26] note, although compromising organizational functionality, help to readily mitigate the emotional instability resulting from perceived workplace inequities. The negative results identified by Chow, Tiedens, and Govan (2008) in relation to incivility and social behaviors are indicated by some negative emotions, such as anger and anxiety. Ferris et al. [17] contribute to this discussion by determining how anxiety enables the promotion of avoidant-oriented counterproductive work behaviors, and thus highlights multi-faced negative emotions in organizational atmospheres. Zeeshan et al. [53] substantiate positive correlations between negative emotions and incivility in public sector employees of Pakistan. Employees experiencing negative emotions may see no other way out and experience a sense of discomfort in the organization. Such employees might indulge in negative behavior with ambiguous or no intent to harm organization. Employees show such behaviors as safety mechanisms. Hence, the third hypothesis of this study is:

Hypothesis 3 There is a positive relationship between negative emotions and instigated incivility.

However, as noted by Koon and Pun [30], an evident gap does exist in terms of understanding the mediators' facilitating incivility instigated despite the scholarly promises of discourse on workplace incivility. There is this space, which will require an integrative analytic lens where the emotional dimensions are viewed to be instrumental mediators illuminating the nexus between WO and deviant behaviors. Jiang et al. [26] explains emotional exhaustion as central mediators interpreting the multifaceted interaction between WO and deviant behaviors. Further amplifying this discourse, Ferris et al. [17] delineate the mediating ramifications of negative emotions, notably anger and anxiety, in catalyzing avoidance oriented counterproductive behavior. Sarwar et al. [45] elucidate the mediating capacities of negative emotions in elucidating the WO and customer service sabotage nexus across nursing domains. Simultaneously, Jahanzeb and Fatima [22] validate emotional exhaustion as pivotal mediator in explicating the WO-interpersonal deviance linkage within service and academic sectors of Pakistan. Employees experiencing ostracism are prone to experience adverse feelings including NE. experiencing sense of neglect, ignore, and exclusion employees experience deprivation and may feel to be expendable for the organization. To channel these emotions, they feel that organization is instigating them to behave negatively. Consequently, employees that are ostracized at workplace due to negative emotions indulge in uncivil behaviors. Given the aforementioned arguments, the subsequent hypothesis posits:

Hypothesis 4 The relationship between workplace ostracism and instigated incivility is mediated by negative emotions.

The intrinsic coercive tendencies and self-aggrandizing proclivities of narcissistic individuals, as articulated by Judge, LePine, and Rich [28], explain their inclination toward antisocial behaviors when faced with challenges to their grandiose self-conceptions. Bushman and Baumeister [6] and Penney and Spector [39] highlight narcissists' emotional dysregulation and susceptibility to ego threats. Their augmented emotional reactivity amplifies aggressive tendencies, substantiating the nexus between narcissism, emotional imbalances, and antisocial conduct. Meier and Semmer [34] reinforce this by emphasizing narcissism's moderating impact on relationships between perceived

injustices, like reciprocity deficits, and ensuing negative emotions. In a corroborative vein, Lata and Chaudhary [32] expound on narcissists' heightened vulnerability to ego threats, instigating a cycle of negative emotions. Penney and Spector [38] further accentuate narcissists' heightened reactivity to insults and amplified negative emotions, predisposing them to aggressive and counterproductive actions. Moreover, within the Pakistani organizational milieu, Zeeshan et al. [53] elucidate narcissism's moderating role between WO and incivility among public sector employees of Pakistan, emphasizing the mediating role of negative emotions. Based on literature, we infer that ostracized employees harbor negative emotions and trait such as narcissism would further increase the intensity of negative emotions that employees experience. Moreover, due to this elevation in emotional intensity coupled with narcissism, in civil behaviors shown by employees may also be further be amplified. Thus:

Hypothesis 5 Narcissism moderates the relationship between ostracism and negative emotions, such that the association becomes more pronounced at higher levels of narcissism.

Hypothesis 6 Narcissism exerts a moderating influence on the indirect link between workplace ostracism and instigated incivility via negative emotions, wherein the strength of this relationship intensifies at higher levels of narcissism.

From the standpoint of SET, as employees sense the organization's assistance, they reciprocate with diligence, loyalty, or aiding colleagues in need. Perceived organizational support has great importance in the realm of organizational behavior [14], elucidating the views of employees about how much their contributions are esteemed by their organization and how well their welfare is considered at different organizational levels [13]; Rhoades & Eisenberger, [42]. Kurtessis et al. [31] meta-analysis from five hundred and fifty-eight studies mentioned that organizational support theory was commonly successful in its forecasts regarding the antecedents and consequences of POS. Choi [7] conducted research on Korean employees and their supervisors to analyze the moderation of POS between workplace ostracism and OCB and found stronger negative relationship for staff with low POS. In the context of Pakistan, Shakir and Siddiqui [48] found a higher level of OCB for employees having higher values of POS in banking and telecom sectors. In this way, it is clear that POS establishes to employees that they are taken care of and respected by their organization. we propose that employees that feel sense of support from organization would not indulge in uncivil behaviors as they may experience diminished psychological and emotional baggage. In view of these arguments, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 7 POS Moderates the relationship between negative emotions and instigated incivility, such that the association becomes less pronounced at higher levels of POS.

2 Methodology

2.1 Sampling and data collection

Considering the population of the study (faculty members of Pakistani Universities), multi-stage sampling was utilized. According to the details mentioned on the website of Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (www.hec.gov.pk), there were 248

universities in the country (as of 1st August 2023). Out of these, 54 public and 41 private universities are in Punjab making a total of 95 universities. 31 public sector and 43 private sector universities are in Sindh, adding up to a total of 74 universities. 17 public and 8 private sector universities are in the Islamabad capital territory, 32 public sector and 11 private sector universities are in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Lastly, 10 public sector and 1 private university are functioning in Balochistan as per HEC website.

As a first step, a list of all the universities was prepared according to the details provided at the website of HEC. Each province (Punjab, Sindh, KhyberPakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan) and Federal Capital (Islamabad) was treated as a stratum. Then, from the list, a total of twenty-five universities were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. Universities were randomly selected from each stratum according to its proportion. From Punjab, nine universities were selected, seven were selected from Sindh province, five from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, three from Islamabad and one from Balochistan. In this way, the entire population was given a fair chance of representation in the sample.

In the second stage, non-probability purposive sampling was utilized keeping in view all possible precautions to prevent sampling bias. The major reason behind using non-probability sampling was that the required details of the faculty members working in selected universities were not available, hence it was not possible to opt for probability sampling.

For data collection, assistants were recruited from respective universities based on a reasonable honorarium. The researcher engaged with university administration or faculty to enlist senior students capable of professional interactions. These assistants underwent rigorous online training sessions, familiarizing them with the questionnaire and ethical data collection norms. Data collection targeted faculty members with a minimum one-year tenure at their respective institutions. Initially, assistants personally approached these faculty members, briefing them on the study's objectives. Participants who consented received a questionnaire, cover letter, and sealed envelope, ensuring confidentiality. Respondents were assigned unique code numbers for anonymity. This code number system persisted across subsequent data collection wave, preventing the researcher from identifying participants.

Podsakoff et al. [40] in their study have mentioned that time lagged data can be used to deal with biases including common method and desirability. The technique is especially suitable for studies focusing on attitude – attitude or attitude – behavior relationships. Based on the recommendation, time lagged data were collected. Data were collected in two waves following the approach of Sarwar et al. [45]; Jahanzeb and Fatima [22]; Jahanzeb, Fatima, and Malik [23]; and Chung [9] wherein these researchers adopted a two-wave data collection strategy for their mediated models. During the first data collection wave, data regarding demographic variables, independent variable (WO) and moderators (narcissism and POS) were captured from 600 respondents. After a two-month interval, the second wave commenced, focusing on mediator (negative emotions) and the dependent variable (instigated incivility).

Each respondent was given a unique code to track their responses at different time intervals so that data collected from particular respondent at T1 can be matched with data collected at T2. Despite a reduction to 545 responses due to various factors like faculty absence or refusal, 515 responses were matched with initial data via unique codes

for comprehensive analysis, while 30 incomplete questionnaires were excluded. In this way 515 responses were finalized for data analysis. Demographic details (gender, designation, education, and experience) of the respondents are displayed in Table 1. The reason for high percentage of bachelor's is that the lecturers hired before the year 2017 in Pakistani universities were appointed on the basis of 16 years education as per higher education commission (HEC) policy which was later changed.

2.2 Measures

Workplace Ostracism was measured utilizing the ten item scale (e.g., “others refused to talk to you at work”) developed by Ferris et al. (2008) on a five-point likert scale (ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently)). Like previous studies (e.g., Chung [9, 45] the instrument retrieved good reliability (Cronbach's alpha value = 0.80). Negative emotions was measured utilizing the ten item scale (e.g., “how frequently you felt angry at work-place”) developed by Van katwyk et al. (2000) on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently)). Like previous studies (e.g., Abubakar, Yazdian and Behraves [2]) the instrument retrieved good reliability (Cronbach's alpha value = 0.90). Instigated incivility was measured using twelve item scale (e.g., “gave someone hostile looks, snare or sneer”) developed by Cortina et al. [11] on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently)). Like previous studies (e.g., Miranda and Welbourne [35]) the instrument showed good reliability (Cronbach's alpha value = 0.81). For measuring Narcissism, four item scale (e.g., “I tend to want others to pay attention to me”) developed by Jonason and webster [27] was used on a five-point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Like previous studies (e.g., Lata and Chaudhary [32]) the instrument showed good reliability (Cronbach's alpha value = 0.80). Lastly, POS was measured using Eisenberger et al. (2001) six items scale which included “my organization values my contribution to its wellbeing” on a five-point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Like previous studies (e.g., Choi [7] the instrument retrieved good reliability (Cronbach's alpha value = 0.91).

3 Results

The study used “*Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)*” to examine the “*measurement model*” and the “*structural model*”. Hence, Smart-PLS software was used for data analysis.

Table 1 Demographics

Features		Facts (N=515)	
Gender	Male	310	60.2%
	Female	205	39.8%
Designation	Lecturer	223	43.3%
	Assistant Professor	215	41.7%
	Associate Professor	49	9.5%
	Professor	28	5.4%
Education	Bachelors (or Equivalent)	145	28.2%
	Masters (or Equivalent)	228	44.3%
	Doctorate	142	27.6%
Experience (in years)	1 to 5	236	45.8%
	5 to 15	168	32.6%
	15 to 25	77	15.0%
	25 +	34	6.6%

3.1 Measurement model

The empirical findings delineated in Table 2 indicate that the loadings predominantly exceed the threshold of 0.7, substantiating the significant contribution of these items to their respective constructs. Additionally, the computed Cronbach's alpha coefficients surpass 0.7, whereas the composite reliability (CR) values similarly exceed this critical benchmark, thereby affirming the constructs' internal consistency and reliability, as articulated by Hair et al. [20]. Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) values

Table 2 Item loading, reliability and convergent validity

	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
Workplace Ostracism	OST1	0.660	0.577	0.803	0.800
	OST2	0.761			
	OST3	0.719			
	OST4	0.754			
	OST5	0.728			
	OST6	0.725			
	OST7	0.767			
	OST8	0.715			
	OST9	0.720			
	OST10	0.706			
Negative Emotions	NE1	0.783	0.581	0.903	0.902
	NE2	0.742			
	NE3	0.698			
	NE4	0.782			
	NE5	0.687			
	NE6	0.707			
	NE7	0.716			
	NE8	0.772			
	NE9	0.676			
	NE10	0.717			
Narcissism	NAR1	0.782	0.633	0.823	0.808
	NAR2	0.757			
	NAR3	0.849			
	NAR4	0.792			
Perceived Organizational Support	POS1	0.846	0.701	0.919	0.915
	POS2	0.857			
	POS3	0.827			
	POS4	0.835			
	POS5	0.81			
	POS6	0.847			
Instigated Incivility	II_1	0.745	0.619	0.819	0.815
	II_2	0.773			
	II_3	0.774			
	II_4	0.758			
	II_5	0.771			
	II_6	0.718			
	II_7	0.749			
	II_8	0.744			
	II_9	0.633			
	II_10	0.71			
	II_11	0.624			
	II_12	0.622			

AVE average variance extracted, CR Composite Reliability"

surpassing 0.5 corroborate the robust convergent validity, thereby fortifying its empirical integrity, consistent with the methodological guidelines delineated by Hair et al. [20].

To establish the discriminant validity, two mostly used practices i.e., Fornell-Larcker Criterion and HTMT Ratio (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio) were employed [18]. In the framework of the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, the Average Variance Extracted for each construct undergoes comparison with the squared inter-construct correlation pertaining to that identical construct, serving as an indicator of the cumulative variance shared among constructs. Table 3 features the presentation of the square root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) within the construct correlation matrix. This presentation reveals that the construct values surpass the corresponding inter-construct correlations. Consequently, discriminant validity is affirmed, providing empirical evidence that the constructs exhibit substantiated differences from each other.

The other way of analyzing the discriminant validity was HTMT Ratio (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio). The HTMT Ratio is characterized as the average correlation value among items across different constructs, normalized by the geometric mean of the average correlations pertaining to items measuring a singular construct. Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt [21] advocate for a benchmark threshold of 0.90 within structural models featuring constructs that exhibit high conceptual similarity. In contexts characterized by constructs possessing greater conceptual distinctiveness, a more stringent threshold, specifically 0.85, is recommended to ascertain the presence of discriminant validity, as delineated by Henseler et al. [21]. Table 3 shows that the values are well below the threshold of 0.85 i.e., the highest value in the table is 0.751 whereas the other values are significantly lower than that.

3.2 Structural model

For the purpose of hypothesis testing, path analysis served as the analytical technique employed to scrutinize the structural model. Methodological guidelines set forth by Hair et al. [18], were executed to rigorously assess the structural model. Specifically, this procedure involved generating 5,000 resamples to derive corresponding β (beta) coefficients and t -values, thereby ensuring robustness and reliability in the inferential process. Consistent with the methodological recommendations delineated by Hair et al. [19], the

Table 3 Discriminant validity

Fornell larcker criterion					
	Ost	Nar	NE	II	POS
Ost	0.759				
Nar	0.611	0.795			
N.E	0.522	0.670	0.762		
II	0.631	0.541	0.612	0.786	
POS	– 0.251	–0.375	– 0.338	– 0.383	0.837
	II	Nar	NE	OST	POS
II					
NAR	0.751				
N.E	0.353	0.565			
OST	0.419	0.302	0.399		
POS	0.411	0.432	0.368	0.276	

Ost Ostracism, Nar Narcissism, N.E Negative emotions, II Instigated Incivility, POS Perceived Organizational Support

Bold values square root of average variance extracted

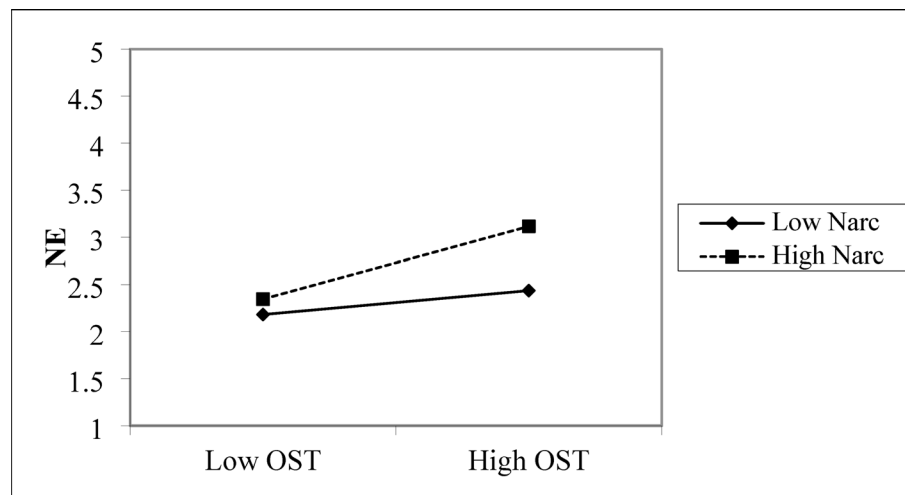
Heterotrait – monotrait matrix

Table 4 Results of hypothesis testing

Hypotheses	β	CI (5%, 95%)	t-value	p-value	Decision	f^2	R^2	Q^2
H1 OST $\rightarrow$ II	0.284**	0.201, 0.368	5.604	0.001	Supported	0.285	0.261	0.362
H2 OST $\rightarrow$ NE	0.256**	0.192, 0.315	6.803	0.001	Supported	0.372	0.323	0.391
H3 NE $\rightarrow$ II	0.112**	0.011, 0.210	1.861	0.031	Supported	0.201		
H5 Narc X OST $\rightarrow$ NE	0.129**	0.077, 0.183	3.931	0.001	Supported	0.266		
H6 Narc X OST $\rightarrow$ NE $\rightarrow$ II	0.114**	0.095, 0.189	1.657	0.011	Supported	0.312		
H7 POS X NE $\rightarrow$ II	-0.094**	-0.177, -0.002	1.766	0.039	Supported	0.226		

OST Ostracism, Narc Narcissism, NE Negative emotions, II Instigated Incivility, POS Perceived Organizational Support

**Significance $p < 0.05$ (1.96).

**Fig. 2** Interaction effect of Workplace ostracism and narcissism on negative emotions

present study incorporated the reporting of key statistical metrics, including the coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2) and effect sizes (f^2).

Table 4 delineates the outcomes of path coefficients. The findings reveal a positive and statistically significant association between ostracism and Instigated Incivility “ $\beta = 0.284$, $t = 5.604$, $p = 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.285$ ”, thereby substantiating the validity of the first hypothesis. Additionally, the second hypothesis is corroborated by the results “ $\beta = 0.256$, $t = 6.803$, $p = 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.372$ ”, demonstrating a positive and significant correlation between WO and negative emotions. In relation to the next hypothesis, the values “ $\beta = 0.112$, $t = 1.861$, $p = 0.031$, $f^2 = 0.201$ ” signify a positive and significant connection between negative emotions and instigated incivility, thereby providing support for the third hypothesis as well.

In evaluating the moderation, analysis underscores the significance of the interaction term between narcissism and ostracism concerning its impact on negative emotions “ $\beta = 0.129$, $t = 3.931$, $p = 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.266$ ”. In addition, as guided by Dawson [12] the interaction effect is also plotted in the form of a graph. Figure 2 shows stronger association between ostracism and negative emotions for higher values of narcissism, hence supporting hypothesis 5.

In examining the moderated mediation, the observed values i.e., “ $\beta = 0.114$, $t = 1.896$, $p = 0.011$, $f^2 = 0.312$ ” provide support for hypothesis 6. This implies that narcissism plays a moderating role in the indirect association between ostracism and instigated incivility through negative emotions, indicating a stronger relationship for high values of narcissism.

It is additionally delineated that the interaction term involving perceived organizational support and negative emotions regarding its impact on instigated incivility is statistically significant " $\beta = -0.094$, $t = 1.766$, $p = 0.039$, $f^2 = 0.226$ ". Furthermore, adherence to Dawson's [12] recommendations was once more observed in plotting the interaction effect. The graphical representation in Fig. 3 illustrates that, at elevated levels of perceived organizational support, the association between negative emotions and instigated incivility manifests a weakened strength. Which means that perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between negative emotions and instigated incivility in a way that the higher the POS the lower the effect of negative emotions on instigated incivility, hence, supporting *hypothesis 7*. Furthermore, R^2 value for the dependent variable i.e., instigated incivility was 0.261, which shows that WO and negative emotions explain 26.1% variance in instigated incivility. Whereas R^2 value for mediator variable i.e., negative emotions was 0.323 which shows that WO explains 32.3% variance in negative emotions. Finally, predictive relevance i.e., Q^2 value for the main dependent variable i.e., instigated incivility is 0.263 and the Q^2 value of negative emotions is 0.309, which are considered as medium [18].

3.3 Mediation analysis (Hypothesis 4)

The study hypothesised the indirect relationship of WO with instigated incivility through mediation of negative emotions. Table 5 summarizes the results of mediation analysis. The results showed a significant indirect effect of WO on instigated incivility through negative emotions ($\beta = 0.029$, $t = 1.841$, $p = 0.031$). The total effect of WO on instigated incivility was also significant ($\beta = 0.313$, $t = 6.268$, $p = 0.001$), with the inclusion of mediator, the effect of WO on instigated incivility was still significant ($\beta = 0.284$, $t = 5.604$, $p = 0.001$). It shows that there is partial mediation of negative emotions between the relationship of WO and instigated incivility. Hence *hypothesis 4* is also supported.

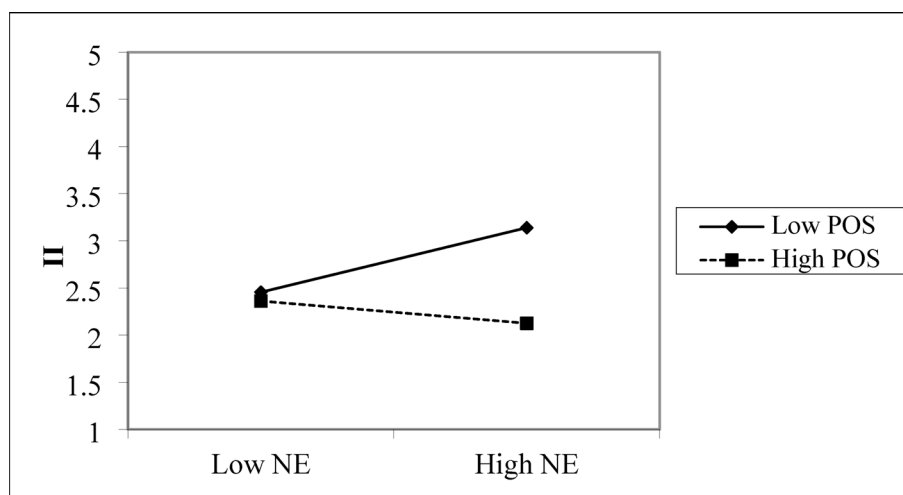


Fig. 3 Interaction effect of Negative emotions and perceived organizational support on instigated workplace incivility

Table 5 Mediation analysis

Paths	Measures	Values	Confidence intervals bias corrected	
			5%	95%
Direct effect (Ost to II)	Coefficient	0.284	0.201	0.368
	t value	5.604		
	p value	0.001		
Indirect effect (Ost to II through N.E)	Coefficient	0.029	0.004	0.056
	t value	1.841		
	p value	0.031		
Total effects (Ost to II)	Coefficient	0.313	0.229	0.394
	t value	6.268		
	p value	0.001		

Ost Ostracism, NE Negative emotions, II Instigated Incivility

4 Discussion

Aim of the current study was to examine the relationship between workplace ostracism and instigated incivility with mediation of negative emotions and moderation of narcissism and perceived organizational support. While previous studies have focused on empirical investigation of ostracism and incivility with different variables, for example [1, 3, 16, 53], research encompassing relationship between them is scarce. Moreover, negative emotion has not been tested as a mediator between incivility and ostracism. In addition, impact of narcissism and perceived organization support as moderators also lack empirical support. Model has been developed in the current study to comprehend the relationship among highlighted variables. Based on the theoretical grounds of SET, this research suggested that workplace ostracism is positively related to instigated incivility, delving into the mediating impact of negative emotions. Additionally, the research posited that narcissism serves as a moderator, enhancing the strength of the relationship, with higher levels of narcissism intensifying the connection. Furthermore, perceived organizational support (POS) was proposed to act as a moderator, with higher levels weakening the association between negative emotions and instigated incivility.

In alignment with the theoretical model, the findings of this research support the inference that workplace ostracism contributes to escalation of negative emotions among employees. Subsequently, employees reciprocate it by exhibiting uncivil behaviors. These results are similar to several relevant studies. The study conducted by Chow et al. [8] established a positive correlation between ostracism and the experience of anger. In the context of higher education sector of Pakistan, Anjum et al. [1] conducted a cross-sectional study in public sector universities and found that WO not only have positive impact on employees' emotional states but also impedes their work efforts. Similarly, Peng and Zeng [37] investigated the impact of WO on employees in North America and China, revealing its detrimental effect on self-esteem and subsequent promotion of interpersonal deviance. Likewise, Choi [7] found a negative association between WO and OCB among Korean employees. Furthermore, Chung's [10] study in Kenya indicated that WO escalates conflicts and fosters employee engagement in deviant behaviors. In the context of Pakistan, Shafique et al. [47] observed a positive association between ostracism and deviant behavior among public-sector nurses. Similarly, Jahanzeb and Fatima [32] identified WO as a catalyst for interpersonal deviant behaviors in service sector employees in Pakistan. Alike findings are presented by Zeeshan et al. [53] while they conducted research on the employees of public sector organizations in

Pakistan and concluded that WO results in instigation of incivility. Similarly, following the guidelines of SET, another study was conducted by Shafique et al. [47] to examine the connection between WO and workplace deviant behaviors, and they found a positive connection between these two constructs. On the other hand, research of Jiang et al. [26] in Chinese manufacturing enterprises, established a positive correlation of emotional exhaustion with workplace deviance. Another study by Sears and Humiston [46] found that negative emotions significantly predict uncivil behavior at the workplace.

Moreover, the findings from this investigation indicate that narcissism acts as a moderator in the association between ostracism and negative emotions, with a positive correlation where higher levels of narcissism intensify this relationship. Consequently, narcissism also moderates the mediated relation of ostracism with instigated incivility through negative emotions, suggesting that elevated narcissistic tendencies correspond to an increased likelihood of instigated incivility. Bushman and Baumeister [6] posited that narcissists display reduced emotional regulation, especially aggression when self-esteem is threatened. Similarly, Penney and Spector [38] highlighted that narcissist's heightened negative emotions result from inflated self-worth and sensitivity to ego threats, leading to detrimental outbursts. Judge et al. [28] emphasized narcissistic individuals' inclination towards counterproductive behavior, attributing it to their coercive tendencies and reaction to self-esteem challenges. Meier and Semmer [34] and Lata and Chaudhary [32] further corroborated these insights, indicating narcissist's amplified negative emotional responses and heightened sensitivity to ego threats. Few studies including Bachrach et al. [5] have established that narcissism may also have positive impact however, such studies have taken company CEO's who are not engaged in day-to-day interactions with employees. Moreover, narcissism does more harm than good for the organization which may hamper performance in long term.

Finally, POS, in the results of this research, was negatively related to instigated incivility and POS also moderated the relationship between negative emotions and instigated incivility. These results are also aligned with several research studies. For example, Jain et al. [24] identified that POS mitigates the impact of organizational stressors on OCB among Indian business process outsourcing operators. Likewise, Tian and Guo [50] investigated POS's moderating effect on deviant behaviors and job performance among Chinese professionals, finding that POS diminishes deviant behaviors' detrimental influence. Scholarly contributions from Kao et al. [29], and Kurtessis et al. [31] suggest that POS fosters employee obligation, thereby alleviating negative responses to stressors. In the context of Pakistan, several studies used POS in the similar sense. For instance, a study conducted by Shakir and Siddiqui [48] in the banking and telecom sectors, concluded that POS is positively related to organizational citizenship behavior. Furthermore, research by Sarwar et al. [44, 45] extended this understanding, revealing POS's role in mitigating WO and stress effects on detrimental workplace outcomes.

The current study adds to the literature available on ostracism, incivility, negative emotions, narcissism, and perceived organizational support by incorporating them into a single model and testing the hypothesized relationships. It also provides support to SET theory by understanding the dynamics and interplay of interpersonal relationship at workplace.

4.1 Theoretical contributions

The current theoretical contributions to academic discourse on SET are substantive. The current study elaborates on the relation between ostracism, negative emotions, and deviant workplace behaviors, underscoring the importance of reciprocity in organizational dynamics. For instance, the research highlights that WO arouses negative feelings among higher education faculty, which subsequently lead to deviant behavior, and thus the needs of organizational climates, which are underpinned with mutuality and respect, are portrayed. Furthermore, the empirical investigation is going to augment basic elements of SET, explaining the casual relationship, mediator variables, and moderator variables. Such empirical evidence supports the relevance and reliability of SET in modern organizational contexts. In general, results highlighted that organizational support mechanisms, inclusiveness, and inter-personal respect are indispensable in nullifying WO's adverse outcomes, hence indicating that organizations, especially higher education institutes, need to raise their mandate towards employees' well-being and scholarly developments further within management sciences.

4.2 Practical implications

This research therefore specifies some important managerial implications related to all organizational leaders, human resource experts, and managerial personnel. First, by ensuring the implementation of comprehensive and strong policies for addressing WO and its resultant consequences. New systems such as anonymous reporting tools, grievance redressal mechanisms, and periodic climate evaluations can help to detect and rectify these issues in a jiffy. Second, developing robust psychosocial support structures. Allocations towards initiatives for assistance, provisions of counseling, and workshops that help in the enhancement of resilience can ameliorate conditions for adverse emotions, nurturing a workspace that is conducive psychologically. Thirdly, therefore, leadership training endeavors should adopt a focus on raising leaders characterized by empathy, inclusivity, and emotional intelligence to mitigate against the cons of the narcissistic leadership inclinations and embrace a culture of collaborations. Fourthly, accentuating POS will remain indispensable. Fifth, this should be refined based on the hiring strategies for the evaluation of the emotional acumen, ethical orientations, and collaborative proclivities for inducting the less prone candidates towards the counterproductive tendencies. Other strategies include open communications, protocols for recognition, and avenues for career advancement, which elevate employee perceptions of organizational backing. Most importantly, investment in employees' training that covers conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills is key. Such efforts are in compliance with the development of an organizational culture characterized by openness, fairness, and respect for one another, which in turn leads to longer employee loyalty and organizational success. It is the responsibility of HR departments to develop policies that discourage ostracism at workplace and should also come up with techniques to highlight and address problems faced by employees at workplace due to ostracism.

4.3 Limitations and future research

There are some limitations of this research. First, there are inherent limitations because the study focused on counterproductive behavior, which led to reliance on anonymous self-report questions. Since counterproductive behavior is such a sensitive issue and

carries potential legal consequences, the use of anonymity is imposed. On the other side, this anonymity might generate underreporting, endangering the truthfulness of the response. Second, robustness of observed correlations should be questioned for the exclusive use of single-source, cross-sectional designs that are ideally prone to confounding variables and shared biases. Thirdly, the findings are not generalizable to the specific organizational contexts and the narrow sectors of the study, thus cautioning one to make extrapolations to the broader organizational landscapes. Fourthly, it denotes that the contextual and cultural dimensions of the research may limit its applicability across diverse settings. Future scholarly endeavors, therefore, ought to imitate varied organizational contexts, methodological diversification, and cross-cultural perspectives to improve the validity, generalizability, and contextuality of the research.

5 Conclusion

The current study shows that workplace ostracism if not addressed leads to workplace incivility. The study also shows that ostracized employees experience negative emotions which leads them towards uncivil behaviors. Narcissism is found to strengthen the impact of ostracism such that the negative toll becomes more pronounced due to which employees experience negative emotions ultimately leading towards incivility. Organizations can use perceived organizational support to lessen the impact of ostracism and negative emotions thereby diminishing probability of incivility shown by employees. Study shows that although higher education sector is different from corporate organizations, ostracism has negative effects on both alike which needs to be addressed.

Author contributions

MZ conceived the model and worked on introduction part, NB wrote the literature review, MAR completed the methodology and analysis part. MZ wrote the conclusion and discussion part. All authors contributed to refinement and development of the final draft.

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Data availability

Data are available from authors upon request.

Declarations

Ethics approval

Approval for the current study was taken from ethics committee for research COMSATS university, Islamabad, Pakistan. The study was performed according to the ethical guidelines laid out by the Helsinki declaration 1964.

Consent to participate

Informed consent was received from all the participants included in the study. The participation of the respondents was voluntary and anonymous.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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