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Article

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Pragmatic impact of workplace ostracism: toward a theoretical model

Pragmatic
impact of
workplace
ostracism

35

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to extend the ostracism literature by exploring the pragmatic impact of ostracism on performance.

Design/methodology/approach – Ostracism workplace, social relations and empowerment structures are discussed. The paper then develops a theoretical framework that explains why and under what conditions workplace ostracism undermines employees' performance. The author proposes that empowerment structures mediate the link between ostracism and in-role and extra-role performance. In addition, it was proposed that relational links buffer the negative relationship between ostracism and empowerment structures on performance and weaken the negative indirect effect of ostracism on performance.

Findings – The theoretical arguments provide support for the model showing that empowerment structures mediate the relationship between ostracism and performance, and the mediation effect only occurred when external links were high but not when external links were low.

Originality/value – The author has expanded the extant literature by answering recent calls for research exploring the pragmatic impact of workplace ostracism where past research has typically focused solely on the psychological impacts such as psychological needs.

Keywords Workplace ostracism, Structural empowerment, Social network, In-role performance, Extra-role performance

Paper type Research paper

In different social contexts, we see a pervasive phenomenon accompanied by social pain called ostracism (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). Being ostracized – marginalized, excluded or ignored by other individuals or groups – is a harsh and painful psychological experience that might threaten basic human needs (Williams, 1997, 2001). Compared with the large accumulation of knowledge in the literature of social sciences about the ostracism, little attention has been given to this phenomenon in the workplace by organizational psychologists (Xu, 2012; Wu *et al.*, 2011; Ferris *et al.*, 2008). Although there is initial empirical and theoretical support that workplace ostracism has a noticeable impact on a variety of outcomes, this support is limited in at least three aspects. First, in the past, most research on workplace ostracism has quite explicitly focused on the psychological impact (e.g. psychological needs and emotional outcomes), with less attention given to theorizing work examining the pragmatic impact. The pragmatic effect of ostracism does not occur because of the threat of psychological needs or emotions, instead being the result of an ostracized individual's loss of empowerment structures (i.e. task-related resources, power, and opportunity) that was obtained through his/her association with others. Robinson *et al.* (2013) have confirmed that the pragmatic impact should be given considerable attention by researchers because it has a negative impact on behavioral contributions to the organization in question.

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Second, although the negative performance outcomes of ostracism, such as less in-role behaviors and less extra-role behaviors, have been studied (Ferris *et al.*, 2008; O'Reilly and Robinson, 2009; Balliet and Ferris, 2013; Leung *et al.*, 2011), no published research that examines the lack of access to empowerment structures (pragmatic impact) as a potential mediator in the relationship between ostracism and negative performance outcomes has been published (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). Previous studies that have attempted to provide answers regarding how workplace ostracism undermines employees' performance have focused only on psychological mechanisms (e.g. thwarted belongingness) as a mediator between ostracism and negative performance outcomes (e.g. O'Reilly and Robinson, 2009; Leung *et al.*, 2011); therefore, in the present study we argue that empowerment structures are mediating mechanisms that can provide managers with a complementally picture of why ostracism can result in undermined employee performance.

Third, despite a wealth of literature exploring the consequences of what ostracized individuals experienced or lose, little attention has been paid to potential solutions that could help ostracized individuals reduce these effects. According to the structuralist network approach (Seibert *et al.*, 2001; Adler and Kwon, 2002; Oh and Labianca, 2004), individuals are embedded in social relationships within and outside groups and through these relationships resources are made available to them. Once an individual is being ostracized by in-group members, his/her external connections may become an alternative source for access to benefits (Oh and Labianca, 2004). Thus, when an individual with many valuable external links experiences ostracism, it is likely that he/she will have more opportunities to access empowerment structures compared with ostracized individuals with fewer external links (Seibert *et al.*, 2001; Cohen *et al.*, 2003). The present research focuses on relational links to individuals in others groups and/or in higher organizational levels (Seibert *et al.*, 2001; Oh and Labianca, 2004) in order to capture the types of links that are likely to buffer the negative pragmatic effects of ostracism.

In this study we propose two mechanisms that are theoretically significant and relevant to our goals: empowerment structures (access to opportunity and access to power through information, resources and support) (Robinson *et al.*, 2013) are suggested as a pragmatic impact mediating the ostracism-performance relationship, and external links (relational links to individuals in others groups and in higher organizational levels) (Seibert *et al.*, 2001; Oh and Labianca, 2004) are conceptualized as a condition buffering the negative link between ostracism and empowerment structures (see Figure 1).

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between ostracism and individual performance. We develop a theoretical framework that explains why and under what conditions workplace ostracism undermines employees' performance. In developing our conceptual framework, we have made three theoretical contributions to the extant literature. First, this paper answers recent calls for research exploring the pragmatic impact of workplace ostracism where past research has typically focused solely on psychological impacts such as psychological needs (e.g. Robinson *et al.*, 2013). Second, our study contributes to the understanding of how workplace ostracism relates to employee performance by extending the search to include the mediating mechanisms that underlie these relationships. The pragmatic impact or the lack of access to power and opportunity has been proposed as one of these mechanisms (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). Third, an explicit contribution has been made to merging the literature on the social network perspective and workplace ostracism; specifically, we assess how the external links of an employee's personal network moderate the relationship between workplace ostracism and empowerment structures.

Literature review and propositions development

Workplace ostracism

Drawing from common core features of related constructs (e.g. social exclusion, organizational shunning, social ostracism and rejection), Robinson *et al.* (2013) define

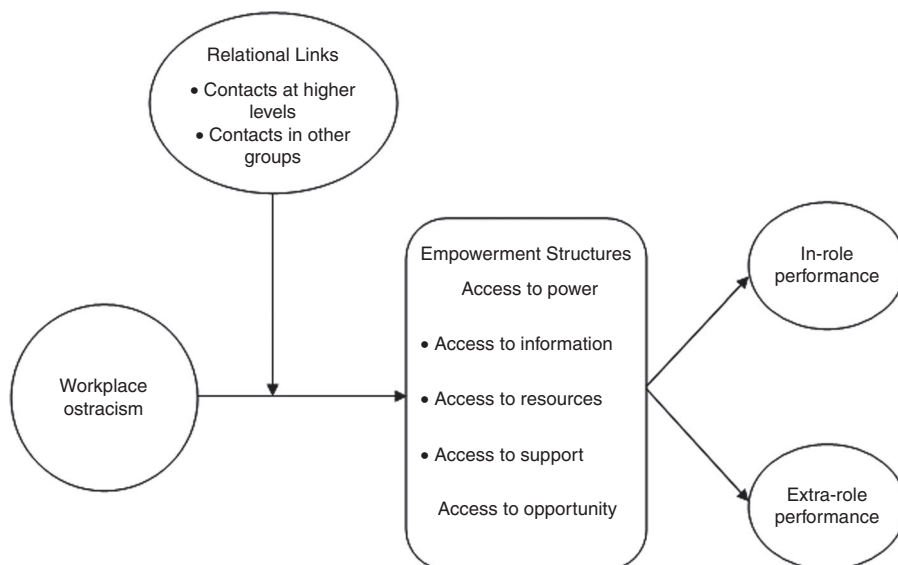


Figure 1.
Theoretical model

workplace ostracism as the extent to which an individual or group omits another organizational member from engaging in socially appropriate actions. This omission may vary in motives and intensity; for example, employees in the workplace can be intentionally or unintentionally ostracized by several foci such as supervisors, peers and subordinates (Ferris *et al.*, 2008). Intentional ostracism occurs when the source is aware that he or she deliberately omits another individual (target) when engaging in socially appropriate behaviors (Robinson *et al.*, 2013), such as refusing to converse with or avoiding eye contact with the target (Williams, 2001). In unintentional ostracism, which is more common, the source is not aware that his or her actions socially exclude another. For instance, when we do not respond to a greeting from our colleagues this does not mean that we have unrighteous intentions; in contrast, we may be preoccupied or engrossed in our own work (Williams and Zadro, 2001). Concerning intensity, ostracism can range from partial to complete. Partial ostracism can occur when an individual is excluded only by certain members of the group, while in complete ostracism the individual is excluded by all members (Williams and Sommer, 1997; Banki, 2012).

Previous literature has given much attention to the impacts generated by the occurrence of ostracism. These impacts can have negative results on employees and organizations and are mainly divided into two categories: psychological and pragmatic impacts (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). Both are caused by a rupture in the network of social interactions, threatening fundamental human needs and psychological health and preventing the exchange of various work-related resources. The psychological impact is related to the extent to which targets perceive that they are ignored, rejected or excluded by other employees in the workplace (Ferris *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, ostracism will have a psychological impact in the sense that the targeted individual perceives that he or she is being ostracized by others (Robinson *et al.*, 2013; Ferris *et al.*, 2008). Compared with pragmatic effects, these effects have been investigated extensively by researchers and include a variety of areas; for example, according to the model of ostracism developed by Williams and colleagues (Williams, 1997), previous studies have demonstrated that ostracism threatens four fundamental human needs: the need to belong, the need for

self-esteem, the need for a meaningful existence and the need for control (Ferris *et al.*, 2008; van Beest and Williams, 2015; Banki, 2012). In addition, ostracism is not associated only with the target's motivation but is also likely to result in increased psychological strain (Heaphy and Dutton, 2008; Wu *et al.*, 2012), negative moods (Gonsalkorale and Williams, 2007) and anger (Chow *et al.*, 2008).

Regardless of the significant progress that recent studies have made in investigating the psychological impacts of ostracism, the pragmatic effect has been largely neglected. In their integrated model of the antecedents and consequences of ostracism, Robinson *et al.* (2013) indicate that there are two reasons why researchers should give particular attention to the pragmatic effect. First, this effect costs the target in terms of work-related pragmatic resources (e.g. access to information and resources, getting advice, and the opportunity to have influence and power). Thus, the pragmatic effect likely results in reducing the target's behavioral contributions to the organization. Second, compared with other interpersonal mistreatments such as bullying and incivility, ostracism will generate direct and considerable pragmatic impacts. Moreover, unlike the psychological effects of ostracism, the pragmatic effects are independent of the target's perception of ostracism. Accordingly, ostracism will have a pragmatic impact to the extent that intentionally or unintentionally the source of the ostracism will ignore, reject or exclude other employees in the workplace.

Social relations and empowerment structures

The theoretical foundation underlying the link between social relations and empowerment structures is derived from social capital theory (Burt, 1992; Lin *et al.*, 1981a, b) and the theory of structural empowerment (Kanter, 1979, 1993). Both theories highlight the importance of the social relations an employee has in the workplace as a tool for accessing network benefits. According to social capital theory, most employees have different contacts with others individuals within or outside the group in which they belong (Burt, 2000); the strong and positive contacts which a group member has with other members within a group are called closed ties, while the contacts that are frequent with different people outside the group are called bridging ties (Oh *et al.*, 2006). Combined, these contacts constitute the member's personal network in which important benefits are embedded (Lin *et al.*, 1981a; Burt, 2000). These benefits include access to information, control over resources, power, support and mutual trust (Burt, 1992; Seibert *et al.*, 2001; Coleman, 1990).

Kanter's (1979, 1993) theory of structural empowerment assumes that the work conditions that provide access to structural benefits will make employees feel empowered to accomplish their tasks and duties. Kanter believes that access to structural benefits (e.g. resources, information and opportunities) is influenced by the degree of informal power an employee has in the workplace. Informal power comes when an employee has a network of interpersonal relationships inside the organization (sponsors, peers and subordinates). For an employee who has a lot of social relationships there is an increased likelihood of access to these benefits and vice versa.

In general, our study selected three important benefits of networks which can help individuals in achieving their tasks and goals, which are access to opportunity and access to power through information, resources and support (Burt, 1992; Kanter, 1993; Seibert *et al.*, 2001; Spreitzer, 1996). Power refers to the "ability to mobilize resources to get things done" (Kanter, 1979, p. 210) through access to information, resources and support. Access to information is described as the data, technical knowledge and expertise required for accomplishing the job effectively. Access to resources is having the ability to acquire the materials, money, rewards, time and personnel support needed to get the job done. Finally, access to support refers to feedback and guidance gained from superiors, peers and subordinates (Kanter, 1979; Chandler, 1986; Laschinger, 1996; Spreitzer, 1996). Opportunity refers to access to challenge, growth and advance in job/career (Sarmiento *et al.*, 2004).

Pragmatic impact of ostracism: the lack of access to empowerment structures

Our study begins with a basic notion indicating that one manifestation of the pragmatic impact of ostracism is the lack of access to empowerment structures. Once an employee is being ostracized by in-group members, her/his access to personal network benefits will be threatened (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). This is likely to happen because workplace ostracism reduces the target employee's opportunity to establish positive interpersonal relationships and cuts social ties which they have with other organizational members (Williams, 2001; Wu *et al.*, 2011; Ferris *et al.*, 2008). Task-related resources, power and information are embedded in these social ties and employees use them as conduits for transferring or exchanging with others at work (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Podolny and Baron, 1997; Wu *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, ostracism may be one of the reasons why an individual loses part of their informal power within the organization, which in turn threatens their access to empowerment structures (access to opportunity and access to power through information, resources and support) (Kanter, 1993). Given that they have few social ties, ostracized employees face greater difficulty in accessing to work-related network benefits (Wu *et al.*, 2011). According to Robinson *et al.* (2013), the pragmatic impact of ostracism obstructs the ability of an employee to access the task-related resources, power and opportunity that comes from being connected to others. In addition, Jones *et al.* (2009) indicate that being excluded from the informational and resource loop at work is a specific form of ostracism.

Overall, workplace ostracism includes pragmatic or practical consequences that threaten an employee's ability to access empowerment structures (access to opportunity and access to power through information, resources and support). Following above discussion, we propose that:

- P1.* Workplace ostracism is negatively related to access to (a) opportunity, (b) resources, (c) information, and (d) support.

The mediating role of access to empowerment structures

Our study proposes that the lack of access to empowerment structures is a potential mediator within the relationship between ostracism and performance outcomes (extra-role and in-role performance). Our prediction is that employees in a workplace are embedded in social networks, these networks can provide opportunity for them to the sharing of various kinds of resources (Sparrowe *et al.*, 2001; Gulati *et al.*, 2002). Pragmatic benefits (e.g. access to opportunity and access to power through information, resources and support) shared through these networks are important for completing work effectively (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). These benefits are based on the positive social relationships and alliances employees possess with others (e.g. superiors, peers and subordinates) (Baldwin *et al.*, 1997). Ostracism in the workplace removes many signs of social ties with other organizational members, meaning that employees lose the network benefits that are often embedded in these ties (Williams, 2001; Wu *et al.*, 2011). The benefits that are lost because of ostracism, in turn, lead to lower job performance levels (Wu *et al.*, 2011; Robinson *et al.*, 2013). Consequently, it can be expected that a positive working relationship between an employee and his or her others organizational members increases the likelihood that the other members will be more willing to offer resources such as materials, feedback and information to facilitate his or her duties. Many studies have found that work performed by individuals is undermined due to the lack of network benefits provided by others in the workplace (Baldwin *et al.*, 1997; Beehr *et al.*, 2000; Castilla, 2005). For example, Sparrowe *et al.* (2001) have shown that individuals who lack accessed to advice in their work network have lower levels of in-role and extra-role performance than individuals who have access to advice in that network.

The lack of access to has a negative impact on self-efficacy, feelings of autonomy and employee commitment to the organization (Laschinger and Wong, 1999). In contrast,

individuals with access to empowerment structures perceive themselves as having more power and having control over conditions that facilitate their duties (Laschinger, 1996).

Because ostracism causes employee to perceive that pragmatic resources (e.g. information and opportunity), that are directly derived from interacting with other members in the workplace, are depleted, they would attempt to conserve these resources in order to deal with threatening conditions (Wu *et al.*, 2012). But conserving against further losses may be harmful in itself because energy is expended (Hobfoll, 1989). The cost of expended resources adds negative outcome to individuals efforts (Wright and Hobfoll, 2004), thus leading in a lower level of performance (Wu *et al.*, 2011). This means that workplace ostracism reduces employees' ability to access to pragmatic resources, which in turn, negatively influence employee's job performance. In short, this indicates that access to (a) opportunity, (b) resources, (c) information, and (d) support can examine the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee job performance.

Based on the previous discussion, we propose that:

- P2. Access to (a) opportunity, (b) resources, (c) information, and (d) support is positively related to in-role performance.
- P3. Access to (a) opportunity, (b) resources, (c) information, and (d) support is positively related to extra-role performance.
- P4. Access to (a) opportunity, (b) resources, (c) information, and (d) support will mediate a negative relationship between ostracism and in-role performance.
- P5. Access to (a) opportunity, (b) resources, (c) information, and (d) support will mediate a negative relationship between ostracism and extra-role performance.

The moderating role of relational links

Our study suggests that the relationship between workplace ostracism and access to empowerment structures (access to opportunity and access to power through information, resources and support) will be dependent on how ostracized individuals have alternative sources to offset their need for pragmatic resources. According to the social network approach, most employees have different contacts with others individuals within or outside the group in which they belong (Burt, 2000); the strong and positive contacts a group member has with other members within a group are called closed ties, while the contacts that are frequent with different people outside the group are called bridging ties (Oh *et al.*, 2006). The total sum of these contacts constitutes the member's personal network in which social resources are embedded (Lin *et al.*, 1981a; Burt, 2000).

As previously mentioned, when targets are deprived of social interaction because of ostracism, they are likely to lack access to pragmatic resources which would lead in future to reduced performance outcomes (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). Scholars suggest that in work settings a group member is not fully ostracized by all others individuals in an organization (Chen and Williams, 2007); therefore, sometimes this member maintains relational ties with individuals in others groups or organizational levels. We suggest that these relational ties may become alternative sources to offset the depleted network benefits (such as opportunity, resources, information and support). Specifically, the present research argues that relational ties with individuals in others groups and relational ties in higher organizational levels are links that are likely to act as buffers to the adverse pragmatic effects of ostracism. Our suggestion is consistent with Seibert *et al.* (2001) who tested the influence of social capital on career outcomes by gathering ego-network data from a sample of 2,781 alumni randomly selected from a large private Midwestern university. The researchers found that contacts in others functions and in higher levels in the organization were positively related with three benefits of network: access to information,

access to resources and career sponsorship. In the same vein, Oh *et al.* (2006) suggest that a group member can access a broader range of social capital resources in outside groups through two types of relationships: horizontal relationships and vertical relationships. Horizontal relationships refer to frequent communications with different people in other functional groups (e.g. contacts in other groups). These communications with other group members over time occasionally become positive social relationships and friendships. The existence of these interpersonal ties gives members who are enmeshed in them a greater opportunity for the exchange of information and access to advice and psychological support (Baldwin *et al.*, 1997; Ibarra, 1992). Therefore, we expect that horizontal contacts with members of other functional groups are alternative sources of access to the information and support that is lost due to ostracism. In contrast, those ostracized individuals with fewer links with members of other groups will have less opportunities to gain alternative sources of information and support base, thus facing a more significant pragmatic impact. Our expectation is also consistent with Seibert *et al.* (2001) in that horizontal contacts with members of other functional groups will not provide access to resources and opportunity to advance in job/career because resources and opportunity to advance in job/career are less likely to be both available for transfer and of use across functional boundaries." This argument allows the following hypothesis to be proposed:

- P6.* The number of contacts in other functional groups moderates the negative relationship between workplace ostracism and access to (a) information and (b) support such that the relationship is stronger when the number of contacts is fewer.

In contrast, vertical relationships (e.g. contacts at higher organizational levels) refer to specific external communications with people who possess relative control over valued resources, information and opportunity to advancement (Coleman, 1990; Lin, 2004). According to the premises of social resources theory, people at higher levels can be considered as a valuable social resource for three reasons: first, they have greater access to information pertaining various issues, especially information about the locations of valued resources in organization; second, people in higher positions authorize or control the allocation of resources to a greater extent than lower-level occupants; and third, they have informal bases of power and control due to affiliations in dominant coalitions within the organization (Seibert *et al.*, 2001; Lin, 2004). Thus, greater connections at higher levels should therefore provide a group member with access to valuable resources, information and opportunity to advancement, replacing resources that have been lacking due to the ostracism practiced by other group members. In contrast, those ostracized individuals with fewer links to people in higher levels will have fewer opportunities to replenish or reinforce network benefits reduced by workplace ostracism. Furthermore, while support from individuals of equal level is often familiar, receiving support from higher level occupants is unexpected and infrequent (Marcelissen *et al.*, 1988; Lin, 2004). Thus, we expect that access to support through higher level contacts will have much less to be gain by ostracized individuals at the lower levels. Based on the above, we hypothesize the following:

- P7.* The number of contacts at higher organizational levels moderates the negative relationship between workplace ostracism and access to (a) information, (b) resources, and (c) opportunity such that the relationship is stronger when the number of contacts is fewer.

So far, we have proposed that relational links moderate the negative relationship between ostracism and empowerment structures (*P6* and *P7*), and that empowerment structures mediate the relationship between ostracism and performance (*P4* and *P5*). It is therefore likely that relational links (i.e. contacts in other functional groups and contacts at higher organizational levels) also moderate the strength of the mediator function of empowerment

structures for the relationship between ostracism and performance outcomes. As we predict a weaker relationship between ostracism and empowerment structures among employees who have high-relational links than among employees who have low-relational links, the negative and indirect effect of ostracism on performance via network benefits should be weaker among employees who have high-relational links than among employees with low-relational links. Based on the above, we hypothesize the following:

- P8. The number of contacts in other functional groups moderates the negative and indirect effect of ostracism on in-role performance (through access to information and support). Specifically, access to (a) information and (b) support mediates the indirect effect only when the number of contacts in other functional groups is low and not when it is high.
- P9. The number of contacts in other functional groups moderates the negative and indirect effect of ostracism on extra-role performance (through access to information and support). Specifically, access to (a) information and (b) support mediates the indirect effect only when the number of contacts in other functional groups is low and not when it is high.
- P10. The number of contacts at higher organizational levels moderates the negative and indirect effect of ostracism on in-role performance (through access to information, resources and opportunity). Specifically, access to (a) information, (b) resources, and (c) opportunity mediates the indirect effect only when the number of contacts at higher organizational levels is low and not when it is high.
- P11. The number of contacts at higher organizational levels moderates the negative and indirect effect of ostracism on extra-role performance (through access to information, resources and opportunity). Specifically, access to (a) information, (b) resources, and (c) opportunity mediates the indirect effect only when the number of contacts at higher organizational levels is low and not when it is high.

Discussion

In this study, we develop a conceptual framework that explores the relationships between workplace ostracism, empowerment structures and performance outcomes. Specifically, we investigated whether high contacts at external links buffer the negative effect of ostracism on empowerment structures and weaken the negative and indirect effect of ostracism on performance outcomes through empowerment structures. Specifically, we proposed that higher levels of workplace ostracism were negatively related to lower levels of empowerment structures, which in turn negatively affected employee performance (in-role and extra-role performance). We also proposed that contacts in others groups moderated the relationship between workplace ostracism and access to information, and we found that contacts in higher organizational levels moderated the relationship between workplace ostracism and access to information, resources and opportunity. In addition, our results demonstrated that empowerment structures acted as a mediator of the relationship between ostracism and both in-role and extra-role performance. We showed that high levels of contacts in others groups weakened the negative and indirect effect of ostracism on both in-role and extra-role performance (through access to information and support), while high levels of contacts at higher organizational levels weakened the negative and indirect effect of ostracism on both in-role and extra-role performance (through access to information, resources and opportunity).

Theoretical implications

This study enriches the current workplace ostracism literature in several ways. First, in exploring the pragmatic impact of workplace ostracism; our study contributes to an overlooked

area as more research has focused on the effects of ostracism that emanate when the target perceives that he or she is being ostracized by others (psychological effects) (Xu, 2012; Wu *et al.*, 2011; Ferris *et al.*, 2008) than the effects that emerge when the target loses out on task-related network benefits that are the result of being connected to others (pragmatic effects) (Robinson *et al.*, 2013). Although prior research has successfully examined the psychological effects of ostracism (e.g. Xu, 2012; Wu *et al.*, 2011; Ferris *et al.*, 2008), our proposed relationships extend these studies by factoring the pragmatic effects into the equation. We expect that this extension will help in developing a model of ostracism consequences to better reflect the organizational reality in which employees experience ostracism.

Second, previous research has demonstrated direct relations between workplace ostracism and performance outcomes (Ferris *et al.*, 2008); and it has investigated which psychological intervening variables are able to explain the aforementioned relationship (O'Reilly and Robinson, 2009; Leung *et al.*, 2011; Wu *et al.*, 2011). In the present study, we have addressed a need for researchers to move their efforts beyond the main effects of workplace ostracism and also include the non-psychological mechanisms such as empowerment structures. Our model can serve as a next step toward imparting more precise understanding about why workplace ostracism affects performance outcomes by incorporating access to information, resources, support and opportunity as important mediating variables into the model of ostracism consequences.

Third, the theoretical model also suggests that access a group member has to the social capital resources of outside groups through horizontal relationships and vertical relationships can buffer the negative effects of ostracism on network benefits and weakened the negative and indirect effect of ostracism on employee performance (through empowerment structures). This means that the present study appears to be a promising first step in merging insights from the literature on social networks perspective and workplace ostracism in two ways: it has attempted to move beyond the research that focuses intensively on the links between positive relationships and social capital benefits (Seibert *et al.*, 2001; Brass and Burkhardt, 1993; Baldwin *et al.*, 1997) to a consideration of the negative aspects of network relationships; and although some of the previous network studies have successfully demonstrated the significant effect of intragroup social relationships on social capital benefits for employees, we have extended these studies by adding the intragroup social relationships into the equation. This idea enhances our understanding of considerations leading to strengthened or minimized network benefits by considering the significance of relationships both within and outside the group.

Practical implications

Our theoretical model has a number of important practical implications for managers and organizations. First, our study aims to enhance managers' understanding about the nature of ostracism in terms of its impacts in the workplace by inform them that they should not only focus on the psychological effects of ostracism but also the pragmatic effects. Managers cannot just focus on negative psychological signs in diagnosing the presence of ostracized individuals in a workplace; they need to note the ability of individuals to access to empowerment structures (e.g. power and opportunity) as another indicator. Second, another important implication suggests that pragmatic impacts such as the lack of access to resources and information can contribute to the negative performance outcomes. Unfortunately, managers might consider employee-related issues such as self-efficiency and motivation to be reasons that undermine performance and may have less understanding of pragmatic issues such as cutting social ties with others and thus losing resources and information. Therefore, organizations can conduct seminars to increase managerial awareness that cutting social ties with in-group members may weaken employee performance. Third, our model advises managers to invest efforts in managing ostracism in

teams through several means. Within the team, managers need to eliminate ostracism by creating practices encouraging trust and transparency and discouraging the use of ostracism as a punishment. Furthermore, organizations should establish specific rules to guide social relationships among employees and reject any behaviors that fail to create positive interactions. In terms of the outside team, managers should encourage employees to develop bridging ties (horizontal and/or vertical) as an alternative conduit to access network benefits. Organizations can enhance bridging relationships by supporting formal and informal social activities and computer-based social networking (Oh and Labianca, 2004). In short, managerial and organizational practices should help the employees to invest their time and efforts in building balanced social relationships within and outside their group; they should help employees equally in terms of closure and bridging relationships.

Fourth, the presence and source of negative ties at workplace may be difficult to identify. Therefore, our study advises managers to map these ties by using network analysis tools. Network analysis can help managers to identify patterns of relationships and understand the dynamic web of relationships that have an impact on employees work. According to our theoretical model, network analysis perspective not only identify an employee who makes it difficult for other employees to complete their work by withholding information or resources, but also provide a rich picture of how work actually happens. Fifth, our model advises HRM managers that their programs and practices should not focus only on increasing the ability and willingness of their employees. But they should take in consideration some variables that affect the employee's opportunity to perform, such as social influences (workplace ostracism) (Blumberg and Pringle, 1982). In our theoretical model, we indicate that ostracized employees face greater difficulty in accessing to work-related network benefits such as information and resources. To reach high levels of performance, therefore, HRM managers should design opportunity-enhancing HR practices such as work teams, employee involvement and information sharing (Jiang *et al.*, 2012).

Measuring ostracism and testing propositions

A scale developed by Ferris *et al.* (2008) to measure the awareness of ostracism in the workplace was the starting point for progress in the study of ostracism in organizational psychology (Wu *et al.*, 2011, 2012; Leung *et al.*, 2011; Zhao *et al.*, 2013; Liu *et al.*, 2013). Although this scale has significance in the study of the psychological effects of ostracism in the workplace, it is not appropriate for pragmatic effects. This is because Ferris *et al.*'s (2008) scale is designed to measure the extent to which targets perceive that they are being ostracized by others, while the pragmatic effects do not necessarily require awareness from the target. Therefore, our study suggests another measurement that can determine the extent that individuals (source) actually ostracize another employee (target) in the workplace even when the target may be unaware of it. In response to this limitation, it is highly suitable that the focus of the future research would be on the sources of ostracism and not the targets. Therefore, we suggest to use a round robin design (Warner *et al.*, 1979) in order to get a more realistic picture of the situation and also to reduce the common method bias that may arise from the use of self-reporting measurement instruments. In round robin design, a researcher asked every team member to rate the extent to which he or she ostracized each other member of their team (Warner *et al.*, 1979). Testing our propositions requires collecting data from teams working in diversity organizations to test a moderated-mediation model to account for the relationship between ostracism and performance outcomes (in-role and extra-role performance).

Future qualitative studies can also be beneficial. These can complete quantitative investigations by capturing the rich descriptions employees provide about their work environment experiences. For example, qualitative interview data can examine how employees describe the social relationships that potentially hinder their ability to achieve

the required tasks. By doing so, a rich and valid conclusion can be complemented with the proposed relationships in our model.

Our theoretical model is proposed to analyze at the individual level without taking nested nature into account. Therefore, multilevel analysis can also be appropriate as future research. According to our model, the multilevel approach will include two levels: group and individual levels. The group level regards ostracism, relations links and empowerment structures. The group level requires averaging each group member's perceptions about ostracism, relations links, and empowerment structures and assigning to each member the group rating. Job performance (in-role and extra role) measures at the individual level.

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