The relationship between subjective well-being and workplace ostracism

The moderating role of emotional intelligence

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of subjective well-being (SWB) on workplace ostracism, by focusing on the moderating role of emotional intelligence (EI). SWB is taken here as a construct of three components: life satisfaction, positive affect (PA), and negative affect (NA).

Design/methodology/approach – The theoretical model was tested using data collected from employees in different firms from different provinces in China. Analyses of multisource and lagged data from 677 employees indicate that as predicted, EI moderates the relationship between SWB (life satisfaction, PA, and NA) and workplace ostracism.

Findings – The findings show that when employees demonstrate high levels of EI, the negative relationships between life satisfaction, PA and workplace ostracism were strengthened, and the positive relationship between NA and workplace ostracism was weakened.

Originality/value – First, the results empirically demonstrate that EI is one moderator of the relationship between SWB and workplace ostracism. Second, the study contributes to the field of workplace ostracism by indicating some critical antecedents. Third, the present study examines the moderating role of EI in the relationship between SWB and workplace ostracism among Chinese employees.

Keywords Emotional intelligence, Subjective well-being, Workplace ostracism, Organization behaviour

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

A considerable amount of research shows that workplace ostracism is a pervasive phenomenon at workplace (Ferris *et al.*, 2008). Workplace ostracism is defined as "the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is excluded and ignored by others at work" (Williams, 2001). Considerable research in ostracism demonstrates that being excluded and ignored in workplace is an unpleasant, even painful experience (Smith and Williams, 2004). What is more, not only are such experiences painful, but under some circumstances they can have an even greater negative impact than other harmful workplace behaviors such as aggression and harassment (O'Reilly *et al.*, 2011). There is a large body of literature about workplace ostracism. Most researchers focus on the detrimental consequences of ostracism in the workplace. For example, reducing the resources an individual holds causes an employee to experience emotional exhaustion (Lee and Ashforth, 1996), increasing job stress and decreasing job performance (Haq, 2014). However, there is little research about the factors that result in this phenomenon (Scott *et al.*, 2013). Only when the antecedents are known, can efficacious measures be taken to minimize the occurrence of workplace ostracism.

Given ostracism's frequency and impact, understanding how to cope with ostracism is also critical because effective coping strategies may mitigate the relationship between ostracism and its negative outcomes (Williams, 2007). Recent research on positive

organizational behavior focused on employee well-being in the workplace. Luthans and Youssef (2007) proposed that employee well-being is an important variable in coping with workplace ostracism. Bandura (1986), for example, claimed that employee well-being decreases with averse experiences (i.e. depression, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and job tension) in workplace. Employees with high subjective well-being (SWB) are happier and more satisfied with their lives, are more likely to be effective workers, and more likely to have successful careers (Tay *et al.*, 2015). SWB is defined as a person's evaluation of his or her life (Diener *et al.*, 1999). The study of SWB is a new area in the behavioral sciences, and it has been empirically shown that a happy worker is more likely to be successful in many aspects of life (Wu *et al.*, 2011).

As previous organizational and social-psychological research shows, there are some identifiable factors that influence SWB augmenting or diminishing the effects of workplace ostracism. Hitlan *et al.* (2006), for example, studied the effects of gender in perceived exclusion. However, it is well known that workplaces require interpersonal interactions, working together, and coordinating with colleagues. An employee with low SWB may become worse off still in a dysfunctional workplace. Ferris *et al.* (2007) showed that strong emotional intelligence (EI) augmented interpersonal effectiveness, influence, and control. Various scholars point out that strong EI is an advantage in interpersonal communication (e.g. Kelly and Barsade, 2001). Williams (2009) explained that reactions to ostracism can be robust and surprisingly independent of individual traits, but on the other hand, there are conflicting results on whether certain individual traits affect reactions to ostracism (e.g. self-esteem, depression). In particular, if EI affects individuals' reactions to workplace ostracism at managerial levels, it may have significant consequences for subordinates' ability to work successfully within the organization. For this reason, we argue that EI may act as a moderator in the relationship between SWB and workplace ostracism. That is, the relationship between SWB and workplace ostracism may differ with different levels of EI.

2. Literature and hypotheses
2.1 SWB and its effects
Diener *et al.* (2015) defined SWB as individuals' evaluations of their lives – the degree to which their thoughtful appraisals and affective reactions indicate that their lives are desirable and proceeding well. It is a multidimensional construct that has cognitive and affective components. The most recent model of SWB (Diener, 1984) includes three components: life satisfaction, positive affect (PA), and negative affect (NA). Subsequent empirical studies support this tripartite structure of SWB (e.g. Arthaud-Day *et al.*, 2005; Lucas *et al.*, 1995). Further, these three components are separable but related constructs (Diener, 1984). Since the study of SWB concludes that employees with high levels of SWB are more likely to be effective workers and to be successful in workplace (Tay *et al.*, 2015), it is reasonable to conclude that SWB is an issue in most modern organizations in today's workplace.

Up to now scholars have undertaken considerable research into the effects of three components of SWB: life satisfaction, PA, and NA (e.g. Baumeister and Tice, 1990; Twenge *et al.*, 2001). Their research concentrates on outcomes such as personal concerns, personal interactions, and workplace ostracism. As we have seen, workplace ostracism is the degree to which individuals perceive that they are ignored or excluded by other employees at workplace (Williams, 2001; Ferris *et al.*, 2008). Thau *et al.* (2007) discusses several behaviors in workplace ostracism, for example, withholding needed information and assistance, giving the silent treatment, avoiding conversation or eye contact, giving the cold shoulder, rudeness, mocking and argumentativeness. Finally, workplace ostracism is demonstrated to be associated with anxiety, depression, and stress (Ferris *et al.*, 2008).

2.1.1 Life satisfaction and workplace ostracism. The effect of life satisfaction on workplace ostracism is discussed in career literature. There are many studies affirming that

life satisfaction is negatively correlated with depression, anxiety, emotional distress, anger, loneliness, and symptoms of psychological disorders (e.g. Hitlan *et al.*, 2006; Huebner, 1991; Ferris *et al.*, 2008). As a consequence, individuals with lower life satisfaction are at risk of various psychological and social problems such as poorly adapted relationships with others. In a similar vein, the present study concludes that lower life satisfaction result in increased reportage of workplace ostracism (Furr and Funder, 1998), and others find that lower life satisfaction produces various psychological outcomes associated with workplace ostracism (e.g. Baumeister and Tice, 1990). Further, Wu *et al.* (2011) showed that the person with lower life satisfaction is particularly at higher risk of being ostracized.

2.1.2 PA, NA, and workplace ostracism. The links between the affective components of SWB and workplace ostracism also are well established. PA and NA are the affective components of SWB. Watson *et al.* (1988) stated that PA reflects the extent to which a person feels enthusiastic, active, and alert; NA reflects the unpleasant side of our emotional life. Costa and McCrae (1995) argued that extroversion was one dimension of personality which can lead to PA. Indeed, extroversion was found to co-vary with PA (Tolor, 1978). Further, an examination of the research conducted by Wu *et al.* (2011) revealed that extroversion was negatively related to workplace ostracism.

On the other hand, there is some empirical support for the notion that NA is positively relate to workplace ostracism. NA covers a variety of unpleasant mood states, such as anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear, and nervousness. These mood states accompany workplace ostracism behaviors such as rudeness, mocking, argumentativeness, and withholding assistance (Thau *et al.*, 2007). George (1992) reported that employees with high NA are more likely to undermine worse relationships with coworkers, a factor associated with ostracism at workplace.

2.2 Moderating role of EI

EI has been specifically defined only since the beginning of the 1990s. According to Salovey and Mayer (1990), EI refers to " the subset of social intelligence that contains the ability to manage one's own or others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (p. 189). This definition seems to produce workable empirical constructs of EI.

Our propositions are based on the idea that individuals who have high levels of EI will be able to ameliorate the effect of life satisfaction, PA and NA on workplace ostracism. We argue that EI has a moderating influence in our model. This is because employees high in EI prove to be effective in dealing with the perceptions that emerge from workplace ostracism. In workplace ostracism, an employee may experience a range of emotions, including anger, distress, fear, frustration, or depression. EI enables the employee to focus on important information that explains why such feelings are being experienced. In other words, the employee is able to determine whether these emotions are reasonable in the situation. Finally, by adopting multiple perspectives, an employee can determine the appropriate emotional state to facilitate the solution of the problem, or they can resolve the conflicting emotions they may be feeling. In consequence individuals with higher levels of EI experience lower levels of distress and stress-related emotions which are associated with workplace ostracism (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). This may provide a key process that enables employees to keep away from the cycle of negativity initiated by perceptions of workplace ostracism.

Alternatively, employees with high ability to manage their emotions will be more likely than their low ability counterparts to be able to control their initial emotional reaction to perceptions of workplace ostracism. This is especially true if they consider these reactions to be unproductive. Some preliminary findings state that lower EI is related to involvement in self-destructive behaviors such as deviant behavior which is associated with workplace

ostracism (Brackett and Mayer, 2003), whereas employees with high ability to manage their emotions are more likely to attain success in the workplace. In this case, employees high in their ability to manage emotions may decide that it is in their personal interest to suppress their feelings of workplace ostracism. However, it is not to say that employees whose EI is high do not face states such as job stress, changes in their job and career, but they have better capabilities than their low EI colleagues to cope with it, and thus lead them to be more likely to develop lower withdrawal intentions which are proved to be associated with workplace ostracism at workplace. On this basis, we propose the following:

H1. EI moderates the direct negative relationship between life satisfaction and workplace ostracism such that the relationship is stronger when the employees exhibit high (vs low) level of EI.

H2. EI moderates the direct negative relationship between PA and workplace ostracism such that the relationship is stronger when the employees exhibit high (vs low) level of EI.

H3. EI moderates the direct positive relationship between NA and workplace ostracism such that the relationship is weaker when the employees exhibit high (vs low) level of EI.

3. Methods

3.1 Sample and procedures

Participants in this study are employees from different enterprises in different provinces in China, such as Beijing, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Guangdong, Fujian, and Shanxi.

Survey data were collected twice, three months apart, so as to reduce the common method bias. In the first survey (T_1), the employees' information on their own demographics, SWB and EI were provided. Three months later, in the second survey (T_2), the employees reported their perceptions of workplace ostracism.

Data were collected based on the following procedures. With the assistance of the human resource managers, questionnaires were distributed to 1,300 randomly selected employees. Survey questionnaires were coded before distribution. The scales were converted into Chinese following the commonly used back-translation procedure.

In T_1, 810 questionnaires were returned, with a response rate of 62.3 percent. In T_2, 684 questionnaires were returned, with a response rate of 84.4 percent. After questionnaires with missing data were eliminated, there were 667 usable responses. A total of 363 were females (54.4 percent); 329 were in the age range of 25-34 (49.3 percent); 330 were in the tenure range of 3-5 years (49.5 percent). In educational level, 82.2 percent were above college level. The jobs of these employees involve relatively high levels of social interactions. Thus, it appears that this sample is relevant and suitable for testing our theoretical model.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 SWB. The SWB scales are designed to measure global evaluations of affect and life quality. As we have seen, SWB has three major components, life satisfaction, PA, and NA. Life satisfaction is assessed with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener *et al.*, 1985). The most widely used SWLS is a five-item self-report measure of overall satisfaction with life, with responses measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale measures life satisfaction by asking a person to provide an overall judgment of their quality of life. Cronbach's α for this measure is 0.80 (mean = 16.52, SD = 3.40).

Affect dimension is assessed using the positive and negative affect schedule (Watson *et al.*, 1988). The PA scale consists of active, alert, attentive, determined,

enthusiastic, excited, inspired, interested, proud, and strong (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$). The NA scale is comprised of afraid, ashamed, distressed, guilty, hostile, irritable, jittery, nervous, scared, and upset (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$). Participants rated the extent to which they had felt each of the affects "during the past few days."

3.2.2 Workplace ostracism. Employees completed the ten-item workplace ostracism scale developed by Ferris *et al.* (2008) which assesses exclusionary behavior. Sample items included: "Others avoided you at work," "Others at work shut you out of the conversation," and "Others refused to talk to you at work." The scale's reliability is 0.93 (mean = 20.56, SD = 7.63).

3.2.3 EI. EI is measured with the 16 items constructed by Wong and Law (2002) with each item rated on a five-point Likert-type scale. Sample items included: "I have a good sense of why I have certain feelings most of the time," "I have good understanding of the emotions of people around me," and "I really understand what I feel." The scale's reliability is 0.91 (mean = 56.52, SD = 10.36).

4. Results

4.1 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

CFA is conducted to ensure sufficient convergent and discriminant validity among all variables in our model. We first test a model that consists of five factors: life satisfaction, PA, NA, workplace ostracism, and EI. Results show the five-factor model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 733.03$, df = 179, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92). We further compare the five-factor model to an alternative three-factor model, which include SWB (life satisfaction, PA and NA) as a single factor, the variables EI and workplace ostracism as separate factors ($\chi^2 = 436.85$, df = 41, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.12, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.87). Finally, we compare five-factor model to a one-factor model, in which all items loaded onto a single factor ($\chi^2 = 251.07$, df = 5, $p < 0.001$, RMSEA = 0.27, CFI = 0.68, TLI = 0.36). Model comparison results reveal that the five-factor model fit the data considerably better than any of the alternative models. Given these results, all five constructs are applied in subsequent analyses.

4.2 Descriptive statistics

Table I presents the means, standard deviations, and zero-order Pearson correlations of all key variables. As shown, life satisfaction ($r = -0.02$, $p < 0.05$) and PA ($r = -0.03$, $p < 0.05$)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender										
2. Age	0.08*									
3. Education	−0.11**	−0.11**								
4. Income	0.07	0.15**	−0.07							
5. Tenure	0.02	0.28**	−0.28**	0.21**						
6. Life satisfaction	−0.10**	0.15**	−0.03	−0.01	0.17**	(0.80)				
7. Positive affect	−0.04	0.10*	0.04	−0.01	0.01	0.42**	(0.80)			
8. Negative affect	0.04	−0.06	0.02	−0.05	−0.19**	−0.13**	0.09*	(0.89)		
9. Emotional intelligence	−0.08	0.18**	0.01	0.04	0.10*	0.43**	0.65**	−0.04*	(0.91)	
10. Workplace ostracism	0.08*	−0.05	0.03	−0.08*	−0.10**	−0.02*	−0.03*	0.51**	−0.12**	(0.93)
Mean	0.46	2.22	1.95	1.66	2.66	3.30	3.18	2.53	3.53	2.06
SD	0.50	1.43	0.56	0.76	1.03	0.68	0.76	0.73	0.65	0.76

Table I.
Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Notes: $n = 667$. Values in parentheses on the diagonal are the Cronbach's α value of each scale. Coding: gender: female = 0, male = 1; age: 17-24 = 1, 25-34 = 2, 35-44 = 3, 45-54 = 4, ⩾55 = 5; education: diploma and lower = 1, undergraduate = 2, postgraduate and higher = 3; income: ⩽36,000 = 1, 36-60,000 = 2, 60-120,000 = 3, ⩾120,000 = 4; tenure: ⩽1 year = 1, 1-3 years = 2, 3-6 years = 3, 5-10 years = 4, ⩾10 years = 5. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$, two-tailed

are negatively correlated with workplace ostracism; NA ($r = 0.5$, $p < 0.01$) is positively correlated with workplace ostracism. And EI ($r = -0.12$, $p < 0.01$) is negatively correlated with workplace ostracism.

4.3 Hypothesis testing
We follow Cohen *et al.*'s (2003) procedures by conducting a four-step hierarchical multiple regression analysis to test our hypotheses. The control variables (employee age, gender, education, income, and tenure) are entered first, followed by three components of SWB: life satisfaction, PA, and NA in the second step. EI is entered in the third step. Finally, three two-way interaction terms (life satisfaction × EI; PA × EI; NA × EI) are entered in the fourth step. The variables used in the interaction terms are centered to reduce any multicollinearity.

Table II presents the results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The results demonstrate that life satisfaction ($\beta = -0.11$, $p \leqslant 0.01$, Model 2) and PA ($\beta = -0.12$, $p \leqslant 0.01$, Model 2) are negatively related to workplace ostracism; NA ($\beta = 0.53$, $p \leqslant 0.001$, Model 2) is positively related to workplace ostracism.
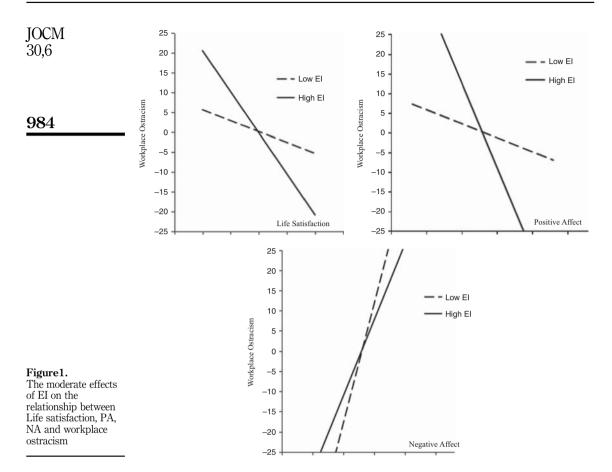
H1-H3 propose that EI moderates the relationship between SWB (life satisfaction, PA and NA) and workplace ostracism. As shown in Table II, the two-way interaction terms proved to be significantly related to workplace ostracism. Life satisfaction×EI ($\beta = -0.08$, $p \leqslant 0.1$, Model 4) and PA × EI ($\beta = -0.18$, $p \leqslant 0.001$, Model 4) are positively related to workplace ostracism, and NA × EI ($\beta = 0.11$, $p \leqslant 0.01$, Model 4) is negatively related to workplace ostracism, supporting *H1-H3*.

Figure 1 clearly illustrates the interactive effects of SWB (life satisfaction, PA and NA) and EI on workplace ostracism. When employees perform high levels of EI, life satisfaction ($\beta = -0.21$, $p \leqslant 0.1$) and PA ($\beta = -0.23$, $p \leqslant 0.001$) are more negatively related to workplace ostracism, and NA ($\beta = 0.59$, $p \leqslant 0.01$) is less positively related to workplace ostracism.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
		Workplace ostracism		
Control variables				
Gender	0.09*	0.08*	0.08*	0.10**
Age	−0.03	−0.03	−0.02	−0.01
Education	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.03
Income	−0.07	−0.05	−0.05	−0.06****
Tenure	−0.08****	0.01	0.01	0.01
Independent variables				
LS		−0.11**	−0.13**	−0.13**
PA		−0.12**	−0.25****	−0.25****
NA		0.53***	0.52***	0.48***
Moderator				
EI			−0.12**	−0.15**
Two-way interactions				
LS×EI				−0.08****
PA×EI				−0.18***
NA×EI				0.11**
R^2	0.02	0.28	0.29	0.31
Adjusted R^2	0.02	0.28	0.28	0.30
F	3.10**	32.55***	29.94***	24.19***

Table II. Results of hypotheses testing

Notes: $n = 667$. LS, life satisfaction; PA, positive affect; NA, negative affect; EI, emotional intelligence. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$; ****$p < 0.10$ (two-tailed)

In contrast, when employees demonstrate low levels of EI, life satisfaction ($\beta = -0.06$, $p \leqslant 0.1$) and PA ($\beta = -0.13$, $p \leqslant 0.001$) are less negatively related to workplace ostracism, and NA ($\beta = 0.38$, $p \leqslant 0.01$) is more positively related to workplace ostracism. These patterns provide additional support for hypotheses.

5. Discussion

In this paper, we advance a model of the effect of employee perceptions of SWB on workplace ostracism. Although similar to prior findings regarding the relationships between the three components of SWB and workplace ostracism, our findings indicate that these relationships are moderated by EI. In particular, we present three propositions stating that EI, a relatively recently developed individual-difference variable, moderates the links between life satisfaction, PA, NA and workplace ostracism. The findings of this study supported our hypotheses.

The current research suggests that EI moderates the relationship between life satisfaction and workplace ostracism. This finding is consistent with the previous research (Wong and Law, 2002), which concludes that people with high levels of EI experience more success, and build stronger meaningful personal relationships with peers. Further, EI competency has the potential to improve performance on both personal and organizational levels (Carmeli, 2003). For instance, if employees perform well at work,

they will be welcomed by their coworkers and they will have less chance to be ostracized. Our result is also in line with the finding of Abraham (1999), who reported that high EI employees are more likely to be engaged in assistant behaviors which are likable behaviors in workplace. In the case of an employee's perceptions of workplace ostracism, he or she may experience a range of hurt feelings (Smith and Williams, 2004). By adopting multiple perspectives, employees with high levels of EI can determine the appropriate emotional state to resolve the hurt feelings. Eisenberger *et al.* (2003) noted that it is a basic feature of human experience to feel soothed in the close presence of others and to feel distressed when left behind. According to our daily work life, high EI individuals are more careful of their emotions and also are able to regulate them, so they should experience lower levels of distress and stress-related emotions, and concomitantly, decrease the reportage of workplace ostracism. Additionally, EI may strengthen the employees' perception of life satisfaction and many researchers demonstrate that EI associates robustly with life satisfaction. It makes sense that if an employee demonstrates higher EI, his or her perception of life satisfaction is strengthened. In sum, individuals with a strong ability to manage and express their emotions are less likely to experience perceived workplace ostracism.

In addition, the present research demonstrates that EI strengthens the negative relationship between PA and workplace ostracism and weakens the positive relationship between NA and workplace ostracism. Perhaps it is because employees high in their ability to manage emotions may decide that it is in their personal interest to suppress their feelings of NA and to increase their feelings of PA. Consistent with previous study, the results indicate that people are usually motivated to look for pleasant feelings and avoid unpleasant emotions. Someone in a good mood is more attractive to others, so it is more likely for individuals with high levels of EI to build success EI relationships with coworkers because of the stronger ability to manage their emotions (Salovey and Mayer, 1990). Finally, EI employees may regulate, tolerate, manage, and control emotions in order to prevent workplace ostracism.

6. Implications and limitation
Our research makes some distinct contributions. First, our results empirically demonstrate that EI is one moderator of the relationship between SWB and workplace ostracism. Second, in focusing on the effects of ostracism, our results contribute to the field of workplace ostracism by indicating some previously neglected but critical antecedents. Since workplace ostracism leaves an employee who is perceived as a "negative social element" in an even worse state, and erodes the social landscape of the workplace, our study on the antecedents of workplace ostracism is crucial.

Our research also has some important theoretical and managerial implications.

6.1 Theoretical implications
Going beyond previous correlation analysis of the emotional antecedents of workplace ostracism, we apply the analysis to the relationships between the three components of SWB and workplace ostracism, our findings emphasize the role of EI in the relationship between SWB and workplace ostracism. In addition, most studies on workplace ostracism have been conducted in western countries and the USA; little has been done in China. The present study attempts to bridge this gap by examining the moderating role of EI in the relationship between SWB and workplace ostracism among Chinese employees.

6.2 Managerial implications
Previous research shows that there can be high costs to organizations where employees experience workplace ostracism (Wu *et al.*, 2011). According to the findings of our study,

there are several ways to reduce workplace ostracism. First, managers or leaders in various organizations can strengthen employees' perception of SWB by offering programs and office events that encourage interaction and communication. Additionally, training events that focus on communication may enhance SWB at all levels of the organization (Matthew and Terry, 2014).

Second, our findings suggest that steps should be taken to prevent workplace ostracism, such as holding formal and informal gatherings that facilitate interpersonal understanding and interaction. Managers can also nurture positive organizational resources to help mitigate the potentially negative impact of workplace ostracism, such as fostering a work climate with a strong work orientation (e.g. Liao *et al.*, 2009) and a strong culture of trust. Furthermore, our findings suggest that steps should be taken to quickly end workplace ostracism when it first surfaces. When workplace ostracism has been observed, managers should determine who ostracizes others and why. Moreover, the targets and their immediate supervisors can work together to replenish the affected individuals' organizational resources (e.g. professional development training) to help strengthen inclusion or cope with ostracisms' negative effects. These organizational attributes can not only increase cooperation among individuals and their contributions to their work unit, but also foster interdependence among employees.

Third, managers should consider the impact of EI, as suggested by the moderating effect that we identified. Managers and organizations that want to reduce workplace ostracism should recruit employees with high levels of EI and promote EI through training, counseling, and mentoring. As Goleman (1998) suggested that EI may be enhanced through six leadership themes: full commitment (the managers identified passion and 100 percent commitment as important to success); employees orientation (appealing to and getting the most from their surrounding people); education (seeing everything as an opportunity to contribute to life-long learning); difficult challenges (taking on difficult assignments); communication (the importance of honest, face-to-face contact with employees); and ethics (maintaining one's morals and acting with integrity). What is more, EI may be enhanced through the training methodologies of teambuilding and developmental relationships (Golnaz, 2012). Teambuilding involves employees working cooperatively together to analyze the task aspect of their work as well as the interpersonal processes occurring within the group. Developmental relationships may be formal or informal and help provide the target individual with information, support and challenge. And then employees can use emotional training to understand and analyze the emotions of their coworkers and employees, thus, manage those emotions to improve performance and help themselves avoid workplace ostracism and decrease its negative effects.

6.3 Limitations and future direction

The study has limitations that should be noted. Self-reporting measures may lead participants to answer the questions in ways that they believe depict them more positively, or that are more socially acceptable. Future research should consider using a complementing survey data with other methods to decrease the subjectivity of the findings. Additionally, the reversed causality – that ostracism causes PA, NA and life satisfaction – is extremely likely and that this causal relationship should in turn also be moderated by EI. This is a most important weakness of the study, as well as an important suggestion for future studies. Despite these limitations, this study has addressed crucial issues regarding workplace ostracism. It has revealed that EI is the key moderator. Apart from EI, there are many other factors that also influence workplace satisfaction and also either augment or diminish the effects of ostracism, for instance, the power distance or reward fairness. We hope that our study offers a springboard for future research on workplace ostracism and its relevant variables.

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