How Can We Make a Sustainable Workplace? Workplace Ostracism, Employees' Well-Being via Need Satisfaction and Moderated Mediation Role of Authentic Leadership

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Abstract: Ostracism in the workplace is a common phenomenon in modern society that impairs employees' well-being. This study suggests that workplace ostracism reduces subjective well-being by examining the effect of workplace ostracism on subjective well-being. Based on self-determination theory and resource conservation theory, this study explores the underlying processes and their contingent factors in the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee well-being. Specifically, this study hypothesizes that workplace ostracism decreases employees' well-being by enhancing employees' need satisfaction. Furthermore, the perception of a direct supervisor's authentic leadership positively moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and employees' need satisfaction. This study used moderated mediation analysis to evaluate our predictions using a two-time online survey of 485 Korean employees. The findings revealed that workplace ostracism has a detrimental impact on employee well-being via need satisfaction. However, perceptions of a direct supervisor's authentic leadership positively moderate the association between workplace ostracism and need satisfaction. Our results have important practical and theoretical implications in the workplace ostracism literature.

Keywords: workplace ostracism; need satisfaction; well-being; authentic leadership; moderated mediation model

1. Introduction

Suddenly, a team meeting is called. When I try to join the session, I sense an awkward subject change. I am sitting in a chair in the conference room, but no one asks me questions. I dare to offer my opinion, but everyone ignores me and refuses to interact with me. I feel as if I have become invisible. After the meeting, I sit quietly at my desk and think. I do not remember having lunch with my teammates in the past month.

In October 2021, there was a symbolic incident in which a new employee at an organization in South Korea made an extreme choice while experiencing workplace ostracism three months after being assigned to a new location [1]. It has already been two years since the "prohibition on workplace harassment" was legally enforced, yet it is still emerging as a significant social problem. Workplace ostracism is when a group or an individual refuses to allow a colleague to join in any participatory activity, by rejecting, excluding, ignoring, or shunning other members of the workplace [2]. Workplace ostracism is a widespread phenomenon within an organization [3] and is a problematic behavior that is widespread enough to be called ubiquitous [4]. According to the findings of a study of 1300 people conducted by O'Reilly et al. [5], more than 900 participants (71%) reported having experienced workplace ostracism. A five-year follow-up study by Fox and Stallworth [6] found that 66 percent of respondents felt ignored by their colleagues. The workplace ostracism that many people experience reduces opportunities for social interaction [7] and constitutes an obstacle in satisfying basic needs.

There is increasing teamwork in the modern workplace, and in this situation, members need more communication and social interaction with their colleagues [8]. However, workplace ostracism prevents positive interactions and potentially negatively impacts the mental and physical health of employees [9]. For example, a previous study showed that workplace ostracism is significant in terms of a thwarted sense of belonging and decreased contribution at work [10]. Despite the growing need for research on workplace ostracism, surprisingly few studies have investigated the effect of this phenomenon [3].

Mainly, research into the importance of employee well-being for organizational outcomes, such as employee performance and organizational effectiveness, is currently increasing (e.g., [11]). Members who perceive their well-being at a high-level show high purpose, growth, autonomy, self-acceptance in their lives, high satisfaction with organizational life, and increased job performance [12–14]. However, ostracism negatively impacts employees' work-related outcomes and well-being. Although well-being, essential in the organization, should be viewed as a more important work-related outcome, it is generally excluded; this exclusion negatively impacts employee well-being [15]. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the negative influence of workplace ostracism on employee well-being to create a sustainable workplace.

This study examines the mediating role of employees' need satisfaction in the relationship between workplace ostracism and well-being. Earlier studies found that ostracism threatens the sense of belonging [15], self-esteem, purposeful existence, and control because it limits interaction with others [3,16]. Satisfying these psychological needs is important for personal health and happiness [3]. O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, and Doerr [15] explained that workplace ostracism affects well-being when employees perceive that they lack a sense of belonging. Sharma and Dhar [17] conducted a meta-analysis of workplace ostracism and recommended exploring the factors that threaten members' desires and the underlying mechanism. Therefore, this study intends to demonstrate the mediating effect of basic need satisfaction, comprising three factors: autonomy, competence, and the relationship between workplace ostracism and the subjective well-being of members.

Many earlier studies have shown that ostracism is prevalent in organizations. Therefore, understanding the underlying factors is very important in studying workplace ostracism. These efforts would help to alleviate the relationship between workplace ostracism and outcome variables, allowing for the development of effective coping strategies [18]. Based on the resource conservation theory, this study explains that those who have suffered workplace ostracism have their resources damaged due to psychological pain and try to supplement the resources needed in another aspect of work. Furthermore, this study focuses on authentic leadership as a positive resource. Specifically, when employees perceive a high level of authentic leadership from a direct supervisor, it neutralizes the effect of workplace ostracism prevalent in the organization on well-being through the need satisfaction of employees. Conversely, when an employee perceives a low level of authentic leadership in their direct supervisor, this relationship will deteriorate. Understanding these boundary conditions and mediating effects will enhance our understanding by demonstrating how employee behaviors recognizing workplace ostracism can influence processes and shape well-being.

This study contributes to the literature on workplace ostracism, need satisfaction, and subjective well-being in three ways. Firstly, it examines the negative effect of workplace ostracism on subjective well-being. Secondly, it examines the mediating effect of need satisfaction on workplace ostracism and subjective well-being. Thirdly, this study examines the hypothesis that the direct supervisor's authentic leadership moderates the buffering mechanism between workplace ostracism and need satisfaction and explores whether the mediating effect of authentic leadership moderates the indirect effect of need satisfaction. This review aims to make a theoretical and practical contribution to workplace ostracism research by identifying the gaps in previous studies through a literature review and conducting additional studies.

The hypotheses were tested with a moderated mediation analysis using two sets of online survey data from 485 employees of Korean companies. Methodologically, we sought to address the limitations of previous research based on a cross-sectional study design with a longitudinal (i.e., one-month time delay) approach. Figure 1 shows the research model adopted.
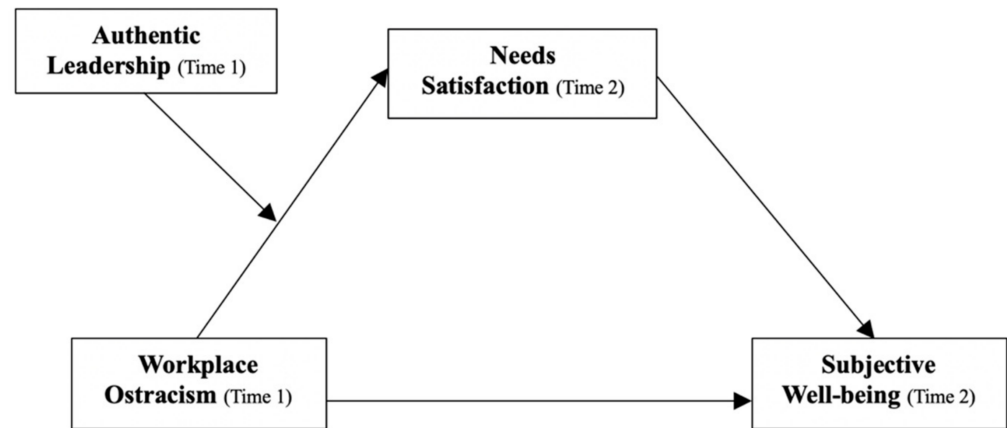

Figure 1. The theoretical model of this study.

2. Theory and Hypotheses

2.1. Workplace Ostracism

Workplace ostracism refers to omitting behaviors directed toward members of an organization by defining an individual or group as socially appropriate [2]. For example, overlooking behaviors of ambiguity, such as treating only certain members as invisible within the organization, not making eye contact, and not inviting them to meetings. These behaviors are highly undesirable in the workplace, where members seek social connections, friendships, and inclusion with others [2]. In studying organizational behavior, it is important to study workplace ostracism as a separate new construct that has not been studied extensively to date [2]. Indeed, workplace ostracism has not been studied much relative to the field of organizational behavior [3]. Robinson, O'Reilly, and Wang [2] emphasized the importance of ostracism in organizational behavior research and added the classificatory phrase "in the workplace" to promote theoretical development by defining workplace ostracism. This study established the degree to which the perpetrator perceives intentional ostracism with a clear purpose in workplace ostracism. Furthermore, among the similar variables, social exclusion [19], abandonment [20], and rejection [21] are considered to be included in workplace ostracism.

Workplace ostracism is a highly undesirable behavior, considered as adverse interactions among an organization's members. However, it is distinct from the dysfunctional behaviors within organizations in a broader sense. Among the dysfunctional behaviors within the organization, acts of exclusion include incivility, workplace harassment, deviance, social undermining, and bullying. They are included as interactions [2] and can be mainly observed. In contrast, workplace ostracism is non-interactional and is characterized by not being blunt or overt. In other words, openly hostile words or actions are not included in the category of workplace ostracism [2]. Such ambiguity has become a serious problem that can be understood by comparing similar variables. For example, workplace harassment [22] and incivility [23] include offensive or rude comments, whereas workplace ostracism does not, which instead entails the pure neglect of the member in question [2,3]. Similarly, workplace ostracism is abusive and repetitive and involves an intention to harm [24], whereas it does not include verbal or physical abuse [2,25]. Additionally, workplace deviance entails violating organizational norms regarding public and institutional property [26]. Compared to these behaviors, workplace ostracism is more ambiguous [27] and challenging than incivility, harassment, or bullying. Thus, previous

studies have found that ostracism is more damaging than other forms of abuse in the workplace [15]. As workplace ostracism might have a potentially adverse effect on members, it should be further explored as a distinct construct due to its uniqueness [17].

2.2. Workplace Ostracism and Employees' Subjective Well-Being

According to Aristotle's proposition that happiness is the meaning, purpose, and ultimate life goal, individuals pursue a happy life. In other words, happiness is the core of life and its ultimate purpose [28]. Happiness has been studied extensively in positive organizational behavior [29] and has been developed as a concept of well-being. Csikszent-mihalyi and Seligman [30], representative researchers of positive organizational behavior, have stated that subjective well-being is a scientific term that examines what happiness means. It can be divided into cognitive and emotional factors [31,32]. The cognitive element helps evaluate life based on one's criteria and is expressed as life satisfaction. The emotional aspect is a continuous emotional state, meaning that one may experience positive emotions or, conversely, experience fewer negative emotions, such as sadness. Here, the individual's subjective well-being is higher. Therefore, subjective well-being should be pursued to create a sustainable and healthy organization.

Williams [33] developed "Ostracism: A Temporal Need-Threat Model" predicting outcome variables related to ostracism. The premise of this model is that because ostracism can deplete social resources, it can eventually be regarded as a stressor [4]. In a situation where teamwork is increasing within an organization, an environment in which colleagues support each other's work is important—the well-being of members increases in this relationship. However, the victims of workplace ostracism cannot receive work support from their colleagues, which constitutes a form of resource loss as a stress factor [7]. Workplace ostracism causes resource loss of target employees [34]. Similar studies in organizational behavior on workplace ostracism, where there is still a lack of research, reported that perceived workplace ostracism induces unproductive work behavior by avoiding conversations with the employee or maintaining distance in behavior. Ferris et al. [35] found that social ostracism includes variables such as anger [36] and negative mood [37], which induce an aversive psychological reaction.

Additionally, ostracism at work is associated with high depression, anxiety, and poor psychological health [3,38]. Although the negative effect of workplace ostracism on subjective well-being has yet to be demonstrated, as it is a variable related to psychological distress, members who perceive that they are experiencing ostracism within the organization experience loss of psychological resources. It can be inferred that well-being will be impaired. This study thus suggests the following:

Hypothesis 1. *Workplace ostracism is negatively related to employees' subjective well-being.*

2.3. The Mediating Role of Need Satisfaction

According to the theory of self-determination (henceforth "SDT"), the behavior of individuals reflects three fundamental psychological needs—autonomy, relationships, and competence [39–42]. It is universally applicable to all humans [43]. SDT assumes that it is necessary to understand the individual psychological needs, the relationships between environmental and social conditions, and these factors [44] to understand the development of individuals. In other words, individuals meet these three basic psychological needs using social interaction and self-awareness, and intrinsic behavior helps internalize individual values and foster self-growth and self-realization [45].

Among the basic needs presented by SDT in an organization's members, the first is competence. This means responding to different challenges and getting desired results [46,47]. When a member feels alienated at work, it can negatively impact performance through a loss of concentration. They may even come to doubt their job values [48,49]. These negative factors hinder employee competence [38]. The second is autonomy, referring to an individual's ability to make self-determining choices [40,41]. Autonomy implies being the subject of a given task and having comprehensive responsibility and authority for the

plans, progress, and results [50]. However, workplace ostracism puts pressure and anxiety on employees, reducing their control and self-regulation abilities in their work [51,52]. Therefore, it becomes difficult for members to make independent choices in their work, threatening their autonomy. The third is relationships. Relationships mean that members within the organization have harmonious relationships with others in the workgroup [42]. Workplace ostracism signals that the organization does not recognize the employee [53], reducing the desire for a relationship [18]. Therefore, workplace ostracism negatively affects the psychological needs of members. In this study, need satisfaction is regarded as one construct, consisting of competence, autonomy, and relationship sub-dimensions.

According to the SDT, if an organization does not satisfy the basic psychological needs of its employees, it is deprived of the employees' intrinsic motivation to benefit the organization through their actions [54]. Hobfoll [55] also highlighted that when an employee's psychological needs are not met, spending resources and time on self-regulating activities instead of work can reduce out-of-role behavior [56]. It has been noted that to redress this imbalance in unmet psychological needs based on multiple events, employees engage in self-protection [57,58]. Therefore, workplace ostracism reduces their desire for satisfaction, undermining their subjective well-being. Accordingly, this study asserts that workplace ostracism reduces competence, autonomy, and relationships, decreasing subjective well-being. This study thus proposes the following:

Hypothesis 2. *Need satisfaction mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and employees' subjective well-being.*

2.4. The Moderating Role of Authentic Leadership

Over the last few years, research interest in the topic of workplace ostracism has exploded [17]. However, thus far, extensive research has only been conducted on the concepts of the respective variables. Williams [4] presented the ostracism model, an empirical study of the moderating effect between workplace ostracism and outcome variables. Therefore, our study demonstrates this moderating effect. Primarily, the present study examines interventions that can mitigate the detrimental effects of workplace exclusion on target employees overlooked in previous studies. In other words, highlighting the mechanisms for buffering negative effects can provide insights for scholars interested in the study.

Authentic leadership was propounded in 2004 by the Nebraska–Lincoln Institute for the Gallup Leadership at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Scholars, such as Avolio and Gardner [59], have highlighted that existing leadership research focused excessively on leadership skills and styles. Therefore, it is suggested that leaders who value the mission of individuals and organizations should study the authentic character of leaders and related attributes [60–62]. Authentic leadership holds a core value of authenticity and comprises four sub-dimensions: self-awareness, relationship transparency, balanced information processing, and internalized moral perspective [63].

Authentic leadership values authenticity and can exert a sustainable impact on its members [60–62]. Its importance is further emphasized because it has an essential bottom-line impact anywhere [64]. Given the dominant role of leadership in the workplace [65], it is argued that authentic leadership can be a resource for members. Mainly, when employees recognize a high level of authentic leadership in their direct supervisor, the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee need satisfaction may be softened.

According to the conservation of resources theory [55], individuals acquire and maintain various resources. Most buffering mechanisms of workplace ostracism are important resources that individuals strive to preserve or acquire, which means they can help restore employees' threat resources [17].

This means that it is difficult for a member to recognize ostracism in the workplace. Therefore, resources to instill confidence and help overcome them are needed in this situation. Consequently, to avert the loss of available resources, people would focus on new resources [66]. As authentic leaders continue to be transparent with members based on self-awareness and self-regulation, members can express themselves honestly, helping them

share their thoughts and feelings [67]. Additionally, an authentic leader considers the ethical problems from a broad perspective [68], considers positive and negative aspects of the problem-solving method, and makes them attractive resources for objective thinking and role models. Authentic leaders are role models, leading employees to perform effectively with desirable behaviors [69,70], and become role models of resilience and overcoming difficulties [71]. Thus, the influence of an authentic leader becomes a driving force in increasing employee motivation [72]. When individuals recognize workplace ostracism, and their desire satisfaction is reduced, they recover scarce resources from their immediate superiors. Therefore, identifying the influence of authentic leadership in the direct supervisor can help alleviate the negative impact of workplace ostracism—a negative context reduces their need satisfaction. This study thus proposes the following:

Hypothesis 3. *Authentic leadership moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and need satisfaction. When authentic leadership is high, the influence of workplace ostracism on need satisfaction is weak.*

2.5. Moderated Mediation Effect

Given the hypotheses presented in previous studies, the pattern of the moderating effect proposed above indicates a moderating mediation, in which the impact of the mediating variable is a function of the third variable [73]. Specifically, the higher the level of authentic leadership of direct supervisors, the more positive the effect, whereby workplace ostracism alleviates the negative influence on the decrease in employees' subjective well-being. In this relationship, a decline in need satisfaction—the mediating factor in the relationship between workplace ostracism and subjective well-being—strengthens the negative effect of workplace ostracism and subjective well-being.

However, the lower the level of authentic leadership of direct supervisors, the greater the negative effect of workplace ostracism, and the lesser its negative impact on need satisfaction is alleviated. Therefore, the impact of workplace ostracism on subjective well-being may be determined, to some extent, based on the mediator of need satisfaction. This study thus proposes the following:

Hypothesis 4. *The indirect relationship between workplace ostracism and employees' subjective well-being through need satisfaction is conditionally dependent on levels of authentic leadership, with a high degree of authentic leadership strengthening the indirect relationship.*

3. Method
3.1. Study Design and Sampling Procedure

An online survey was conducted with 485 employees currently working in various Korean companies to test the hypotheses in this study. A highly reliable survey was conducted through Macromil Embrain, the best online data collection platform in Korea. Data were collected twice, between December 2020 and January 2021, to prevent common method bias (CMB). Among the respondents registered in Macromil Embrain (participants working in large-, medium-, and small-sized firms), an e-mail requesting participation was sent to all private-sector workers (employees ~ executives). Among the workers who responded to the first survey (688 workers), 490 responses in the second round, held 1 month later, were analyzed. Data from 485 responses were used for the final analysis, except for five responses with missing data. Through these efforts, we tried to solve the limitations of cross-sectional studies. The characteristics of the samples are given in Table 1.

3.2. Measures

For the measurement items for the survey, English items developed in the previous research were used. For Korean translation, the standard translation and reverse translation procedures were performed according to Brislin's [74] suggestions, in order to increase the reliability and validity of the measurement items. The questionnaire response choices ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Table 1. Descriptive features of the sample (*n* = 485).

Characteristic	Percent
Gender	
Female	49.1%
Male	50.9%
Age (year)	
20–29	18.9%
30–39	44.3%
40–49	27.9%
50–59	8.9%
Job level	
Staff~Assistant	52.3%
Manager or deputy general manager	22.5%
Department Manager	20.6%
Executive	4.5%
Tenure (year)	
1–4	51.4%
5–9	26.4%
10–14	13.5%
Over 15	8.7%

Workplace Ostracism (Time 1). A ten-item scale developed by Ferris, Brown, Berry, and Lian [3] was used to measure workplace ostracism. Samples of items include: "Your greetings have gone unanswered at work" and "Others at work treated you as if you weren't there". The Cronbach alpha value was = 0.95.

Need Satisfaction (Time 2). Nine items from Sheldon et al. [75] were used to measure the need satisfaction of employees. Samples of items include: "I feel my choices express my true self" and "I feel capable at what I do". The Cronbach alpha value was = 0.90.

Subjective Well-Being (Time 2). We used three items from Lim et al. [76] to measure subjective well-being. The Korean version was composed of 14 items of the MHC-SF (Mental Health Continuum Short Form) [77]. The Korean version was administered to 1000 participants (495 males, 505 females). The validity of the Mental Well-Being Scale (K-MHC-SF) was authenticated. A sample item is as follows: "I have felt euphoric over the past month". The Cronbach alpha value was = 0.93.

Authentic Leadership (Time 1). Authentic leadership measures the degree to which employees perceive the supervisor's authentic leadership. We used 16 items from the ALQ (Authentic Leadership Questionnaire; [63]). Samples of items include: "My Leader encourages everyone to speak their mind" and "My Leader makes decisions based on their core values". The Cronbach alpha value was = 0.96.

Control Variables. Based on prior studies, the demographic characteristics assumed to affect the measurement variables, including age, position, years of service, educational background, and gender, were considered control variables and surveyed in Time 2. Age and position affect members' behavior regarding task progress as their position advances over time. Furthermore, the knowledge and experiences relevant to the task accumulate [78]. Therefore, education was considered an effect due to differences in knowledge level. Moreover, gender was added as a control variable, given that Woolley et al. [79] confirmed it as a situational variable between authentic leadership and positive organizational climate.

For all variables, the following efforts were made to reduce common method bias. Harman's single factor test was performed following Podsakoff et al. [80], in order to reduce the common method bias in this study. As for the procedure, exploratory factor analysis was performed for all items used in the analysis. As a result of the research, it was confirmed that one factor could not explain more than 31% of the covariance between variables. Therefore, this study demonstrated that the likelihood of CMB was very low.

3.3. Statistical Analysis Strategy

We used the bias-correction (BC) bootstrapping approach strongly advocated by Preacher and Hayes [81] and MacKinnon, Lockwood, and Williams [82] for testing a multi-mediator model to evaluate the moderated mediation of Hypothesis 4. It directly tests for indirect effects, has higher power, better type I error control, and does not rely on normal distribution assumptions like the Sobel test or causal step approach, a strategy well suited for this investigation [83].

4. Results

4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Chi-Square Difference Test

The comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker Lewis index (TLI) (cut-off values ≥ 0.95), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (cut-off value ≤ 0.05) were used to assess the model fit [84]. As shown in Table 2, the fit of the model presented in this study (four-factor model) was 1612.24, *df* = 458, *p* < 0.01, RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90, and SRMR (standardized root mean square residual) = 0.05. This is the best fit to indicate that all fitted indices were acceptable.

Table 2. Chi-square difference tests and fit statistics for alternative measurement models.

Measurement Model	χ^2	*df*	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR	Δdf	$\Delta \chi^2$
4-Factor model	1612.24 ***	458	0.07	0.91	0.90	0.05	-	-
3-Factor model	3564.63 ***	461	0.11	0.75	0.73	0.18	1952.39	3.00
2-Factor model	4775.02 ***	463	0.13	0.65	0.62	0.20	1210.39	2.00
1-Factor model	6453.52 ***	464	0.16	0.52	0.49	0.16	1678.50	1.00

Notes: 4-factor model (hypothesized model), 3-factor model (workplace ostracism and need satisfaction merged), 2-factor model (workplace ostracism, need satisfaction, and well-being merged), 1-factor model (all variables merged). *** *p* < 0.001. Source: Stata software analysis.

For further examination of the hypothesized measurement model, this study set alternative models and conducted the chi-square model difference test. Based on Table 2, it could be confirmed that all alternative models were significantly different from the hypothesized model. Moreover, the hypothesized model (four-factor model) represented the best fit index.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 3 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables in the study. Workplace ostracism was negatively related to well-being ($\beta = -0.10$, $p < 0.05$) and need satisfaction ($\beta = -0.28$, $p < 0.01$). Finally, authentic leadership was positively related to need satisfaction ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$) and well-being ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$). The correlations were lower than 0.75 of the multicollinearity thresholds [85].

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, correlations, and consistency coefficients for each variable.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	0.49	0.50	1								
2. Age	37.46	8.37	−0.35 **	1							
3. Education	2.91	0.73	−0.15 **	0.07	1						
4. Job level	2.64	1.46	−0.41 **	0.66 **	0.17 **	1					
5. Tenure	2.73	1.17	−0.21 **	0.45 **	0.05	0.41 **	1				
6. AL	3.28	0.78	−0.01	0.09	0.08	0.10 *	0.05	(0.96)			
7. NS	3.42	0.63	0.01	0.10 *	0.09 *	0.13 *	0.04	0.39 **	(0.90)		
8. WB	3.17	0.91	0.06	0.01	0.08	-0.02	0.03	0.30 **	0.49 **	(0.93)	
9. WO	1.97	0.99	−0.10 *	−0.05	−0.06	−0.03	−0.05	−0.05	−0.28 **	−0.10 *	(0.95)

Notes: *n* = 485, list-wise deletion. Gender: male = 0, female = 1, AL = authentic leadership, NS = need satisfaction, WB = well-being, WO = workplace ostracism. Cronbach alpha coefficients for multi-item scales are listed in the diagonal. * *p* < 0.05, ** *p* < 0.01, two-tailed tests.

4.3. Test of Hypotheses

We tested the main effect, namely, Hypothesis 1. Based on the null hypothesis model, we added control variables and workplace ostracism, as shown in Table 4. The results showed that workplace ostracism was negatively related to well-being (b = −0.09, $p < 0.05$; Model 5). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Table 4. Results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis of the effects of the study variables on need satisfaction and well-being; standardized coefficients (n = 485).

1	Dependent Variables					
	Need Satisfaction				Well-Being	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Control variables						
Gender	0.09	0.05	0.03	0.04	0.06	0.03
Age	0.05	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.01
Education	0.08	0.07	0.04	0.04	0.09	0.05
Job level	0.13 *	0.12 *	0.09	0.09	−0.05	−0.12 *
Tenure	−0.02	−0.03	−0.03	−0.04	0.05	0.06
Independent variable						
Workplace Ostracism		−0.27 ***	−0.25 ***	−0.27 ***	−0.09 *	0.04
Authentic Leadership			0.37 ***	0.38 ***		
Interactions						
Workplace Ostracism x Authentic Leadership				0.10 *		
Mediator						
Need satisfaction						0.51 ***
F	0.01 **	8.90 ***	20.92 ***	19.23 ***	1.92	25.91 ***
R^2	0.03	0.10	0.23	0.24	0.02	0.26
R^2 change		0.07	0.13	0.01		
VIF	1.50	1.43	1.37	1.34	1.43	1.40

Notes: n = 485, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$, two-tailed tests.

We tested Hypothesis 2 based on the procedure suggested by Baron and Kenny [84]: (1) the independent variable (workplace ostracism) was related to the dependent variable (well-being), as supported by Hypothesis 1; (2) the independent variable (workplace ostracism) was related to the mediator (need satisfaction) (b = −0.27, $p < 0.01$; Model 2); and (3) the effect of the independent variable (workplace ostracism) must be reduced or should disappear after controlling the mediator (need satisfaction). As shown in Table 4 (b = 0.51, $p < 0.01$; Model 6), the significant coefficient of workplace ostracism's influence on well-being increased from b= −0.09 ($p < 0.05$) (see Model 6) to b= 0.04 ($p <$ n.s.), indicating that need satisfaction played a mediating role on the relationship between workplace ostracism and well-being. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Next, we examined Hypothesis 3, which stated that authentic leadership moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and need satisfaction. As shown in Table 3 (Model 4), the interaction terms of workplace ostracism and authentic leadership were significant and positive (b = 0.10, $p < 0.05$). Following Aiken et al.'s [86] approach, we have plotted the relationship between workplace ostracism and authentic leadership under the mean plus one standard deviation (M + 1SD) and minus one standard deviation (M − 1SD) of authentic leadership to clarify the moderating effect of authentic leadership, as shown in Figure 2. This interaction exhibited a stronger relationship between workplace ostracism and need satisfaction (simple slope = 0.03, t = 0.37) when authentic leadership was low. However, the relationship between workplace ostracism and need satisfaction was high when authentic leadership was low (simple slope = 0.15, t = 1.17), and the slope difference was significant (simple slope = 0.12, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported.
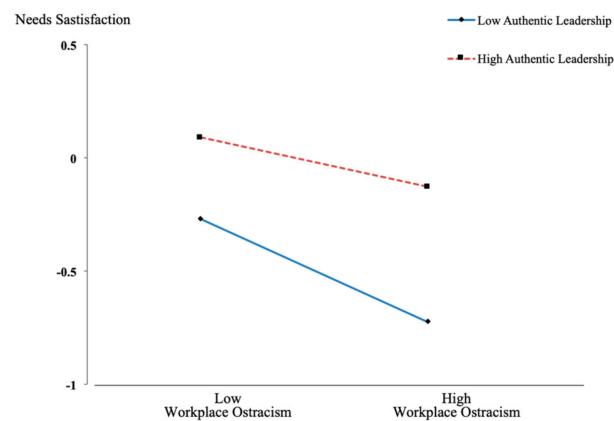
Figure 2. Moderating effect of authentic leadership on the relationship between workplace ostracism on well-being.

Finally, we tested Hypothesis 4, that authentic leadership moderates the indirect effect of workplace ostracism on well-being through need satisfaction, using Stata 16.0. The results in Table 5 showed that when authentic leadership was high, the indirect effect of need satisfaction between workplace ostracism and well-being was −0.08 (95% LLCI (LLCI = the lower limit in the 95% confidence section of the boot indirect effect) = −0.14, ULCI (ULCI = the upper limit within 95% confidence section of boot indirect effect) = −0.03), and the confidence intervals did not include 0. However, when authentic leadership was low, the indirect effect of need satisfaction was −0.15 (95% LLCI= −0.22, UL CI = −0.09), and the confidence intervals did not include 0. This indicated that the moderated mediation did exist—the indirect effect of workplace ostracism on need satisfaction was moderated by authentic leadership. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 5. Results of bootstrapped indirect effect tests.

Variables	Coefficient	SE	CI Lower Limit	CI Upper Limit
The conditional indirect effect of Authentic leadership (H4)				
Low	−0.15	0.03	−0.22	−0.09
High	−0.08	0.02	−0.14	−0.03

Notes: 10,000 times bootstrapped results are presented; SE = standard error; BC = bias-corrected percentile method; CI = 95% confidence interval.

5. Discussion

Based on SDT [87], this study examined how workplace ostracism affects employees' subjective well-being. We could gain obvious insights and theoretical and managerial implications by evaluating the survey data for one month. Furthermore, this study found that employees who positively perceived their direct supervisor's authentic leadership experienced less workplace ostracism, which reduced psychological need satisfaction.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

This study examined the mediation of need satisfaction in the relationship between workplace ostracism and subjective well-being [30], where workplace ostracism as perceived by employees within the organization can confirm the meaning of employees' subjective well-being that must be pursued to ensure a sustainable organization. Based on employees' perception of direct superiors, the moderating role of authentic leadership was investigated. The following are the theoretical and practical implications of the study's findings.

Firstly, it was found that workplace ostracism perceived by employees within an organization is a factor that impairs subjective well-being. Workplace ostracism is being increas-

ingly studied in organizational behavior due to the development of a reliable measurement tool for the construct [3], and the dependent variables studied from the perspective of resource loss are job outcomes, social relations, and well-being [88]. Accordingly, the existing literature is expanded by empirically demonstrating the negative impact of workplace ostracism on employees' subjective well-being to create this sustainable organization.

Secondly, this study identified a key mediating mechanism explaining how workplace ostracism inhibits employees' subjective well-being. Previous studies have found that workplace ostracism threatens the need to belong [15], meaningful existence, self-esteem, and control by limiting interactions with others [3,16]. Additionally, O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, and Doerr [15] stated that workplace ostracism could affect the well-being of target employees through a lack of a sense of belonging. In response, this study provides valuable insights into the core mechanism of how workplace ostracism impedes employees' subjective well-being by confirming the fundamental mediating role of employees' basic needs.

Thirdly, this study suggests that an employee's perception of a direct supervisor's authentic leadership is an important mediator in the relationship between workplace ostracism and need satisfaction. In other words, this study contributes to existing studies by identifying authentic leadership as an important situational variable that can reduce the negative effects of workplace ostracism. The demonstration weakened the positive influence within the organization's moderating variables, such as political skills [7], intrinsic motivation [89], self-monitoring disposition [90], psychological capital [91], family support [92], and spousal support [93]. Therefore, this study widened the scope of workplace ostracism by studying the impact on subjective well-being regarding the degree of authentic leadership recognition toward direct superiors. Furthermore, the findings of this study demonstrate that satisfaction of employees' needs is a significant element in the indirect relationship between workplace ostracism and subjective well-being. Consequently, these findings provide a more integrated view of the role of workplace ostracism in employee well-being.

5.2. Practical Implications

This study demonstrates that workplace ostracism can inhibit well-being by reducing the basic psychological needs of employees and provides valuable insights into authentic leadership management, a potential moderating factor.

Firstly, given the empirical results that workplace ostracism reduces the psychological resources of an organization's members and ultimately negatively affects the subjective well-being of employees, managers in the Korean organization should carefully review situations in which employees report rejection. Based on this information, the manager can develop a customized employee support program that accurately identifies the cause and helps the ostracized employees cope with workplace ostracism. It is also important to acknowledge that employees can feel rejected even by their colleagues' unintentional actions. Therefore, it is important to provide an employee support program to promote effective communication to reduce misunderstandings. For example, employees may be trained to use appropriate body language and take different perspectives when communicating to eliminate the risk of being perceived as practicing exclusionary behavior.

Secondly, by verifying the mechanism by which workplace ostracism can inhibit well-being through the need satisfaction of employees, it can act as a "mechanism of change" that can further promote subjective well-being in the organization by increasing recognized need satisfaction [94]. Therefore, the results of this study suggest that it would be advantageous to create or strengthen a culture that positively promotes psychological desire satisfaction. For example, designing, structuring, and organizing work environments to enhance interdependence, promote relationship building and technology development and consider levels of autonomy can help individuals grow and enhance their well-being, the growth of their organization, and innovation and efficiency.

Finally, this study suggests that an employee's awareness level of the authentic leadership of a direct supervisor can mitigate the negative effects of workplace ostracism on need satisfaction. Therefore, organizations should recognize the importance of authentic leadership throughout the company so that more managers can learn and practice authentic leadership [60,62,63].

5.3. Study Limitations and Future Research

Despite the theoretical and practical consequences discussed above, this study has several limitations that should be considered in future research.

Firstly, this study demonstrates the mediating effect of need satisfaction on the relationship between workplace ostracism and well-being. However, previous studies have reported that there may be different desires that are threatened according to the characteristics of the ostracism experience [95] and argued that these might make a significant difference. Through these efforts, it is necessary to examine the effects of the three sub-dimensions of need satisfaction in the future, providing a foundation for a clearer examination of the mechanism of workplace ostracism. However, some limitations should be considered when interpreting this result. One potential problem arises from using completed measures from the same source. Further, dependence on the same source data is a limitation because it introduces potential common method bias [80].

In this study, we conducted a time difference study to minimize the distribution of common methods. However, future studies should include multiple data sources to evaluate these relationships. Finally, the sample size of this study limits the statistical power required for specific estimation procedures and the identification of significant effects. For example, alternative models could not be tested and compared using multilevel structural equation modeling because of the limited sample size. This is due to the fact that estimates of multilevel structural equation measurement models are parameter-intensive, and sample sizes cannot handle this complexity (see [96]). Nevertheless, despite the limitation of sample size, the results of this study confirm all the hypothesized relationships and present strong results.

6. Conclusions

Workplace ostracism causes staff to suffer and impedes an organization's sustainability. Although this study has limitations, it contributes to deepening the workplace ostracism and subjective well-being literature by investigating a mediating factor between workplace ostracism and subjective well-being and a contingent factor. This study reveals three important findings. Firstly, workplace ostracism reduces employees' subjective well-being. Secondly, employees' need satisfaction mediates the relationship between workplace ostracism and employees' subjective well-being. Third, workplace ostracism through need satisfaction decreases employees' subjective well-being. However, authentic leadership is considered important because it mediates the effect of workplace ostracism on employees' subjective well-being through need satisfaction. Therefore, this study identified the mechanism of workplace ostracism and explored the mitigation effect that can contribute to establishing an anti-ostracism policy. Furthermore, we believe that the insights presented will encourage further research to examine the unexplored aspects of workplace ostracism in organizational behavior.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

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