*Original Article*

# Workplace Ostracism and Emotional Exhaustion Among Private and Public Sector Female Bank Employees

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## ABSTRACT

**Background**: Workplace ostracism is a prevalent issue in organizational environments, impacting employees' mental health and job performance. Previous studies have established a link between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion, particularly in gender-influenced contexts. This study aims to explore this relationship among female bank employees in the private and public sectors, considering various demographic variables.

**Objective**: The primary objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion among female bank employees. It also sought to examine how demographic factors such as age, education, marital status, employment sector, and job experience correlate with these variables.

**Methods**: A cross-sectional and correlational design was adopted. The study sample comprised 180 female bank employees from Islamabad and Rawalpindi, aged 25-64 years with at least one year of work experience. Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants from both private and public sectors. The Workplace Ostracism Scale and the Emotional Exhaustion Scale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory were employed for data collection. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and t-tests were conducted using SPSS software.

**Results**: The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion ($r = .62$, $p < .01$). Public sector employees reported higher emotional exhaustion (M = 23.73, SD = 17.45) compared to private sector employees (M = 17.58, SD = 12.77). Graduates reported higher levels of both workplace ostracism (M = 25.63, SD = 15.14) and emotional exhaustion (M = 22.20, SD = 16.49) than undergraduates. Married participants experienced more workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion than unmarried ones.

**Conclusion**: The study confirms a positive relationship between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion among female bank employees, influenced by educational level, marital status, and employment sector. The findings highlight the need for tailored organizational strategies to address these issues, particularly in the public banking sector.

**Keywords**: Workplace Ostracism, Emotional Exhaustion, Female Bank Employees, Organizational Psychology, Mental Health, Public Sector, Private Sector.

## INTRODUCTION

Workplace ostracism, characterized by the acts of exclusion and disregard, has long been recognized as a prevalent phenomenon, not only among humans but also in the animal kingdom, and its existence spans from early tribal groups to contemporary societies (1). It entails a pattern of neglect and exclusion, which differs from overt rejection or bullying, marked by minimal or absent attention to certain individuals or groups. The implications of such ostracism in the workplace, particularly on emotional exhaustion, are profound and multifaceted (2).

Emotional exhaustion in the workplace often originates from prolonged stress, excessive workloads, and unfavorable interpersonal dynamics. This phenomenon signifies a state of being emotionally drained, where job demands deplete an individual's emotional resources. Recent scholarly inquiries have explored the nexus between emotional exhaustion and workplace ostracism (3). The latter,

a form of social exclusion where individuals are marginalized by their peers or superiors, can lead to a series of emotional reactions such as diminished belonging, reduced self-esteem, and increased stress. These responses can cumulatively lead to emotional exhaustion, impacting job performance, commitment, and possibly leading to job resignation contemplations (4).

Ostracism's impact on employees' emotional well-being and job satisfaction cannot be overstated. Short-term ostracism encounters may prompt individuals to restore their compromised self-worth and fundamental psychological needs. However, prolonged exposure can result in sustained deprivation of these needs, leading to isolation and significant distress. This emotional impact is as profound as physical pain, sharing similar neural pathways. The Need Threat Model underscores this by suggesting that ostracism affects essential needs like belonging, self-esteem, control, and purpose, leading to emotional distress and, ultimately, exhaustion (5).

In the specific context of female bank employees in both private and public sectors, this dynamic takes on additional layers of complexity. Given the gender dynamics within the banking sector, women might be more vulnerable to the challenges posed by workplace ostracism. The violation of their basic psychological needs due to ostracism could amplify their emotional exhaustion, affecting their well-being and job performance (6).

Studies have consistently shown a correlation between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion, indicating that when employees feel ignored or excluded, they are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion (7). This is particularly evident in the banking sector, where hierarchical structures in public institutions may exacerbate the levels of ostracism and exhaustion. Age and job positions also influence the experience of emotional exhaustion, with managerial roles showing higher susceptibility (8).

The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory offers a lens to understand the effects of workplace ostracism (9). This theory posits that social stressors like ostracism diminish motivation and hinder personal and professional goals (10-12). Individuals equipped with psychological resources are better able to manage such stressors. In this context, emotional exhaustion links to perceptions of workload and concerns about preserving reputation, both of which can lead to resource depletion and increased exhaustion (13).

In Pakistan, where collectivist cultural values and hierarchical organizational structures are prevalent, workplace ostracism may be influenced by adherence to social norms and respect for authority figures, leading to the exclusion of those who deviate from these norms (14). Studies have shown higher incidents of workplace ostracism in Pakistan compared to cultures that emphasize individualism (15).

This study primarily focused on investigating the relationship between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion among female bank employees in both the private and public sectors in Pakistan. It aimed to delve into how factors such as cultural differences, power dynamics, organizational climate, job demands, and interpersonal interactions contribute to workplace ostracism and its subsequent link to emotional exhaustion (16, 17). The study was guided by two central hypotheses derived from an extensive literature review. The first hypothesis posited a positive correlation between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion within this demographic. In contrast, the second hypothesis suggested that female bank employees in the private sector might experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion compared to those in the public sector. Additionally, the research explored the influence of demographic variables, including age and education, on these study variables, underlining the need for a multifaceted approach to foster an inclusive work culture and establish robust support mechanisms to mitigate the negative impact of ostracism on employee well-being.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

A cross-sectional and correlational research design was employed for this investigation. In defining the key variables, workplace ostracism was conceptualized as a phenomenon characterized by exclusion, social isolation, and deliberate acts of ignoring or excluding individuals within the workplace (18). Emotional exhaustion, on the other hand, was defined as a state of chronic emotional depletion resulting from excessive job demands or prolonged exposure to stressful work conditions (15, 19).

The instruments used in the study included an informed consent and demographic sheet, the Workplace Ostracism Scale developed by Ferris et al. (2008) (20), and the Emotional Exhaustion Scale from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI; Maslach & Jackson, 1981) (21). The demographic sheet gathered data on age, marital status, education level, socioeconomic status, employment sector, overall work experience, and relationship with colleagues. The Workplace Ostracism Scale, a 10-item tool rated on a five-point Likert scale, measured the extent of perceived exclusion or ignorance by colleagues or superiors (22). The Emotional Exhaustion Scale, a subscale of the MBI, included 9 items rated on a 6-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater emotional exhaustion (17).

The study sample consisted of 180 female employees from various public and private banks in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, including National Bank of Pakistan, Soneri Bank, Habib Bank Limited, JS Bank, Dubai Islamic Bank, Allied Bank, Askari Bank, State Bank, United Bank Limited, Meezan Bank, and Muslim Commercial Bank. The age range of participants was approximately 25-64 years, including employees working in positions like bank teller, financial advisor, manager, cashier, universal teller, bank operational manager, and

senior bank officer. Participants with at least one year of experience in these banks were included in the sample. Informed consent was obtained from all participants (23, 24).

Regarding the procedure, participants were provided with verbal and written instructions before filling out the questionnaires. Clarifications were offered as needed. The importance of confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time was emphasized to all participants. They were then given the demographic sheet, the Workplace Ostracism Questionnaire, and the Emotional Exhaustion Scale to complete. Assistance was provided individually to ensure accurate and independent responses (9, 11, 21, 22, 25).

Data collection involved administering the questionnaires to the participants, who were instructed to complete them independently. The collected data were then analyzed using statistical methods. For the data analysis, the SPSS software (version 25) was employed. Various statistical tests, appropriate for the study's design and hypotheses, were applied to the data gathered from the selected population. These tests were aimed at examining the relationships between the study variables and assessing the influence of demographic factors on workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion among the participants.

## RESULTS

In the present study, a sample of 180 female bank employees was analyzed to investigate the relationship between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion. The majority of participants fell within the age group of 25-34 years, constituting 60.6% of the sample, followed by the 35-44 years age group at 27.8%. Those in the 45-54 years and 55-64 years age groups represented smaller portions, 7.2% and 4.4% respectively (Table 1). Regarding educational qualifications, graduates formed the larger group, comprising 58.9% of the sample, while undergraduates accounted for 41.1%. In terms of marital status, 56.7% of the participants were married and 43.3% were single. The sample was almost evenly divided between the public (55.6%) and private (44.4%) employment sectors. A significant majority of the participants (72.8%) had 1-10 years of overall job experience, with only a small fraction (0.6%) having 30-40 years of experience. Notably, 96.1% of the participants had been in their current job for 1-10 years, and only 3.9% had job durations of 11-20 years (Table 1).

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 180)

| Demographics | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Age: 25-34 years | 109 | 60.6 |
| Age: 35-44 years | 50 | 27.8 |
| Age: 45-54 years | 13 | 7.2 |
| Age: 55-64 years | 8 | 4.4 |
| Education: Undergraduates | 74 | 41.1 |
| Education: Graduates | 106 | 58.9 |
| Marital Status: Single | 78 | 43.3 |
| Marital Status: Married | 102 | 56.7 |
| Employment Sector: Public | 100 | 55.6 |
| Employment Sector: Private | 80 | 44.4 |
| Overall Experience: 1-10 years | 131 | 72.8 |
| Overall Experience: 11-20 years | 38 | 21.1 |
| Overall Experience: 20-30 years | 10 | 5.6 |
| Overall Experience: 30-40 years | 1 | 0.6 |
| Duration of Job: 1-10 years | 173 | 96.1 |
| Duration of Job: 11-20 years | 7 | 3.9 |

Table 2 Alpha Coefficient Reliabilities, Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables, and Correlations (N = 180)

| Scales | Items (k) | Alpha (α) | Mean (M) | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis | Range (Potential) | Range (Actual) | Correlation with EE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Workplace Ostracism (WOS) | 13 | .82 | 25.02 | 13.89 | 1.11 | .20 | 0-78 | 6-58 | .62** |
| Emotional Exhaustion (EE) | 9 | .93 | 21.00 | 15.81 | .55 | -.94 | 0-54 | 0-52 | - |

*Note: *p < .01.

Table 3 Mean Differences Across Study Variables by Education, Marital Status, and Employment Sector (N = 180)

| Variable | Group | Mean (M) - WOS | SD - WOS | Mean (M)- EE | SD - EE | 95% CI - WOS | 95% CI - EE | Cohen's d - WOS | Cohen's d- EE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Education | Undergraduates | 24.15 | 11.94 | 19.27 | 14.71 | -5.84 to 2.67 | -7.65 to 1.78 | .10 | .18 |
| Education | Graduates | 25.63 | 15.14 | 22.20 | 16.49 | - | - | - | - |
| Marital Status | Married | 27.87 | 15.69 | 23.59 | 16.40 | -10.68 to -2.45 | -10.26 to -.70 | .49 | .33 |
| Marital Status | Unmarried | 21.25 | 10.26 | 18.11 | 16.70 | - | - | - | - |
| Employment Sector | Public | 28.30 | 16.21 | 23.73 | 17.45 | 3.38 to 11.34 | 1.53 to 10.74 | .56 | .40 |
| Employment Sector | Private | 20.93 | 8.81 | 17.58 | 12.77 | - | - | - | - |

Note: WOS = Workplace Ostracism Scale; EE = Emotional Exhaustion; p < .05.

The reliability and descriptive statistics of the study variables revealed that the Workplace Ostracism Scale (WOS) had an alpha coefficient of .82, with a mean score of 25.02 and a standard deviation of 13.89. The Emotional Exhaustion (EE) scale showed a higher alpha coefficient of .93, with a mean score of 21.00 and a standard deviation of 15.81. The skewness and kurtosis for WOS were 1.11 and .20 respectively, and for EE, these values were .55 and -.94. The range for WOS was 6-58 out of a potential 0-78, and for EE, it was 0-52 out of a potential 0-54. A significant positive correlation was found between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion (r = .62, p < .01) (Table 2).

When examining mean differences across study variables by education, marital status, and employment sector, certain trends emerged. Undergraduate participants scored lower on both the WOS (M = 24.15, SD = 11.94) and EE (M = 19.27, SD = 14.71) compared to graduates (WOS: M = 25.63, SD = 15.14; EE: M = 22.20, SD = 16.49). The effect size for these differences was small (Cohen's d for WOS = .10; EE = .18). Married participants scored higher on both scales (WOS: M = 27.87, SD = 15.69; EE: M = 23.59, SD = 16.40) compared to unmarried participants (WOS: M = 21.25, SD = 10.26; EE: M = 18.11, SD = 16.70), with medium effect sizes (Cohen's d for WOS = .49; EE = .33). Employees in the public sector reported higher levels of workplace ostracism (M = 28.30, SD = 16.21) and emotional exhaustion (M = 23.73, SD = 17.45) compared to those in the private sector (WOS: M = 20.93, SD = 8.81; EE: M = 17.58, SD = 12.77), with medium effect sizes (Cohen's d for WOS = .56; EE = .40) (Table 3).

These results suggest that workplace ostracism is positively correlated with emotional exhaustion among female bank employees and is influenced by factors such as educational background, marital status, and employment sector.

## DISCUSSION

The research aimed to elucidate the relationship between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion among female bank employees in the private and public sectors. The study also sought to assess how these variables interact with demographic factors such as age, education, marital status, employment sector, job designation, and overall job experience. Data were collected from a purposive sample of female bank employees in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, with respondents ranging in age from 25 to 64 years and having a minimum of one year of work experience. The instruments used demonstrated satisfactory reliability.

Consistent with previous findings, the study revealed a significant positive correlation between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion. This aligns with the notion that societal pressures, work-family conflict, and gender-based discrimination contribute to

higher emotional exhaustion in females (26). Notably, the study diverged from the initial hypothesis regarding sector-based differences in emotional exhaustion. Contrary to expectations, public sector employees reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion compared to their private sector counterparts (27, 28). This finding which suggested that bureaucratic stressors and increased scrutiny in the public sector might exacerbate emotional exhaustion (29).

The study also uncovered that graduate participants experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion and workplace ostracism than undergraduates. This could be attributed to increased job demands and responsibilities associated with higher educational qualifications. Furthermore, married participants reported higher workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion levels than unmarried ones (30, 31). This could be due to the additional social and familial responsibilities shouldered by married employees.

The research was not without limitations. The use of self-reported measures might have introduced response biases. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences, suggesting that a longitudinal approach could more accurately depict the dynamic interplay between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion. The sample, drawn exclusively from Islamabad and Rawalpindi, may not be representative of the entire country, necessitating caution in generalizing the findings (32, 33).

Future research could benefit from exploring the relationship between workplace ostracism, emotional exhaustion, and other constructs such as turnover intention, job satisfaction, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being. Employing qualitative or mixed-method approaches could offer deeper insights. Additionally, expanding the sample size and geographic scope would enhance the generalizability of the findings (34).

The study has several implications. Firstly, it contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion among female bank employees. The findings underscore the importance of creating a positive and supportive work environment, offering training and development opportunities, and emphasizing personal growth (10, 17, 20). These measures could enhance job performance and mental well-being. Organizational psychologists can play a crucial role in devising intervention strategies to improve the mental health of female bank employees. Training in resilience, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and communication skills could be particularly beneficial (18).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study, conducted among female bank workers in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, substantiated a significant positive relationship between workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion. Graduates exhibited higher levels of both workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion compared to undergraduates. Additionally, marital status and employment sector influenced the extent of workplace ostracism and emotional exhaustion experienced, with public sector employees facing more significant challenges in these areas.

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