

# Exploring the Relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Innovative Work Behavior: Mediating Role of Creative Self-Efficacy

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose-**Relying on the conservation of resources theory, this study has been designed to demonstrate the role of cognitive control strategies in reducing workplace ostracism. Specifically, this study focuses on the intervening role of creative self-efficacy to explicate the relationship between workplace ostracism and innovative work behavior.

**Design/Methodology/Approach-**Data were collected via questionnaires from 430 employees working in the public sector of Pakistan. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed with Amos 23.0 and the hypothesized relationships were tested using the PROCESS macro for SPSS.

**Findings-** It was found that ostracism and innovative work behavior of employees were negatively related to each other. Thus, ostracized individuals are less likely to exhibit innovative work behavior in the workplace. Furthermore, the findings of the study supported our hypotheses and confirmed the intervening role of creative self-efficacy.

**Practical Implications-** This study provided practical guidelines for managers and organizations to focus on building cognitive abilities in their employees because they can provide a better source of coping from ostracism.

**Originality/Value-** This study stands out as the first to investigate the relationship between workplace ostracism and innovative work behavior using creative self-efficacy as a mediating factor. By doing so, it not only enriches the existing literature on workplace ostracism, offering fresh insights into the role of creative self-efficacy in this context but is also valuable for organizations seeking to foster a more inclusive and productive work environment.

**Keywords:** Workplace ostracism, innovative work behavior, creative self-efficacy, conservation of resources theory

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the fabric of daily existence, the workplace is a cornerstone, where individuals

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fulfill professional duties and seek vital social connections. As time spent at work grows, so does the significance of these bonds, contributing significantly to emotional well-being. Workplace ostracism is often referred to as 'cold violence' in which individuals perceive that they are being neglected and frozen out by others. This phenomenon is pervasive in all organizations around the globe. Ostracism is a form of social rejection in which a person being ostracized feels social pain. Moreover, it is often hard to get rid of these feelings of being excluded or ignored. Although ostracism does not involve any physical aggression, still it hurts. Extant research has revealed the ruinous effect of ostracism on individual attitudes and behaviors which includes burnout, emotional exhaustion (Aliza et al., 2022), unsafe behaviors (Chen & Li, 2020), and a terroristic mindset (Pfundmair, 2019) among others. Workplace ostracism is associated with many negative outcomes, for example, employee turnover, unethical and sabotage behaviors at the workplace (Sharma & Dhar, 2021), etc. Ostracism is an aversive form of mistreatment that is noninteractive. Thus, ostracism is distinctly different from harassment such as; incivility, and bullying. Workplace ostracism has been found more detrimental to the well-being of employees as ostracized individuals are unable to convey their concerns via any sort of social interaction (Zhang, Kang, Jiang, & Niu, 2023). When an individual experiences resource loss or feels a potential threat to resources, such experiences undermine psychological and emotional well-being (Legate, Weinstein, & Ryan, 2021; Wu et al., 2019).

As there is a rapid and continuous change in the business environment, organizations are more focused on enhancing the innovative behavior of their employees to sustain in turbulent market conditions (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014; Liu, Kwan, & Zhang, 2020). IWB refers to the intentional creation and implementation of new ideas by the employees while staying in the realm of their work role in an organization. These ideas are developed to benefit the performance of individuals, groups, or the organization. The two most important cognitive constructs are self-efficacy and perceived control which are considered to be the coping strategies for pain reduction. In recent years, researchers have increasingly focused on creative self-beliefs, emphasizing that creativity alone is not sufficient to achieve creative outcomes rather positive self-beliefs are quite necessary for

creative achievements (He & Wong, 2021). CSE is quite necessary for problem-solving, to interact with individuals, motivation, and encouragement. CSE is one's ability and confidence to alter the situation to produce a favorable outcome. Theorists believe that emotional or physiological arousal can influence someone's self-efficacy beliefs which can affect someone's behavioral performance. Furthermore, the research on workplace mistreatment has grown exponentially in the past couple of decades. Therefore, it has enhanced the interest and scope of scholarly attention to dig out more insights into this crucial phenomenon of ostracism.

This study uses the lens of the conservation of resources (COR) theory, which is a motivational theory. This theory posits that employees try to protect their resources. Upon encountering workplace stressors such as workplace ostracism, employees experience resource loss which negatively affects their need to belong. As, when individuals encounter ostracism; it is pretty evident that resource loss will occur. So, the COR theory has the potential to explain ostracism and its related consequences clearly. The COR theory helps researchers to integrate the emotional and pragmatic impact of ostracism. More specifically, ostracism directly influences the needs, wants, and desires of individuals, which negatively affects individual performance outcomes. Ostracism shuts doors for individuals to interact with one another and hinders meaningful collaborations at the workplace which ultimately impairs human functioning at the workplace. The effect of ostracism starts seeping into the psychological and pragmatic behavioral functioning of individuals ( Akbari, M., Bagheri, A., Imani, S., & Asadnezhad, 2021).

The research question of this study is to analyze how ostracism depletes personal resources, i.e., creative self-efficacy, which ultimately affects the innovative behavior of employees. We do so by empirically examining the ostracism-IWB association. Moreover, we also analyzed the mediating role of CSE in the relationship between workplace ostracism and IWB. The current study has been designed to achieve the following objectives:

- To analyze the relationship between workplace ostracism and innovative work behavior.

- To find out the effect of workplace ostracism on CSE.
- To find out the effect of CSE on innovative work behavior in employees.
- To analyze the mediating role of CSE in the association of workplace ostracism and innovative work behavior.

To this end, the current study is aimed at filling the gap in workplace ostracism literature by explicating how WPO affects the IWB of the employees serving in public sector organizations in Pakistan. However, a growing body of literature has given considerable attention to finding remedies to mitigate the harmful effects of ostracism in the private sector. To date, literature on workplace mistreatment has neglected public sector organizations (Izkovich & Dolev, 2021). A major chunk of literature on workplace ostracism comes from private sector employees, and in the case of the public sector, few studies can be found in the settings of educational institutions and hospitals (Shafique, Qammar, Kalyar, Ahmad, & Mushtaq, 2020). However, the rest of the public sector was neglected and there was no comprehensive framework available for public sector employees to cope with workplace ostracism. Moreover, how workplace ostracism affects the IWB of employees through the path of CSE has not been explored previously in a developing country like Pakistan. To completely understand the ruinous effects of ostracism, and how to enhance the productivity of employees it is quite necessary to fully explore the mechanism through which the harmful effects of workplace ostracism are channeled.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Innovative Work Behavior

Human beings are inherently interdependent upon others. Human beings are designed in such a way that their inner self vows if they are ignored or rejected by others. Although it is quite normal practice in our societies and at our workplace that we exclude individuals; these aching experiences shake the core of an individual's well-being (Mielniczuk & Laguna, 2020). COR is a broad stress and motivation theory that posits that people protect their resources not only to deal; with stressful events but also as a reservoir to perform better (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018). It also

affects an individual's cognitive ability and decreases the desire to focus on long-term goals. Ostracism has been found to have adverse impacts on individuals, which have psychological as well as pragmatic outcomes. Multiple studies have been designed to understand the impact of ostracism on motivational, emotional, psychological, and behavioral variables. However, most of these studies have been experimental and conducted in a laboratory environment via induced and manipulated ostracism. In these experimental studies, targets were ostracized by unknown individuals for a few moments. But, in real life, individuals more often are ostracized by their peers, friends, family members, and even by their romantic partners. This ostracism can take episodic form as well as it can be long-term. The workplace provides individuals with a place where they encounter a competing and stressful environment. Most often, obnoxious and active aggressive behavior at the workplace is inadmissible. Therefore, sometimes individuals ostracize others so that they may conform to social norms (Choi, 2020). Individual innovative behavior is an important organizational asset and it is a source of improved performance and competitive advantage for organizations. IWB implies that individuals are not only focusing on their work roles but are going beyond their job requirements and innovating something with their free will. IWB construct is not limited to creativity and it's also broader than the concept of proactive behavior (Becuwe, 2021). It is comprised of four connected facets which include acknowledging the problem, idea generation, promotion, and recognition. These all attributes are helpful to gain a competitive advantage through innovation (Strobl, Matzler, Nketia, & Veider, 2020). Employees, upon falling victim to workplace ostracism, experience resource loss which negatively affects their needs for belongingness and affiliation (Becuwe, 2021). Previous studies have given much importance to deteriorated psychological and emotional well-being in the face of ostracism (Legate et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2019), which damages the innovative behavior of employees.

Thus, it can be hypothesized that:

**H1:** *Workplace ostracism is negatively associated with innovative work behavior.*

## **2.2. Relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Creative Self-efficacy**

It is widely accepted that human functioning is mainly affected by the judgments made by other people about competency and the ability of an individual to perform a certain task (Choi, 2020). COR theory considers everything as a resource that is valuable to individuals such as; personal attributes, environmental conditions, and internal or external stimuli. Resources help individuals to get desired outcomes; as well as they are crucial for psychological well-being and balanced functioning of emotions. Resources can be categorized into personal, motivational, financial, and social resources. Personal resources include physical health as well as psychological well-being. Motivational resources include goal/purpose orientation, commitment, etc., while financial resources include income and assets. Social resources include social support and help from supervisors and colleagues (Hobfoll, 2002). Relying on the COR theory Self-efficacy beliefs are the individual resource that motivates individuals to accomplish tasks. Individuals having high self-efficacy beliefs will work harder and persevere longer than other individuals. The workplace environment provides a source of relational bonding that is an important resource that helps to improve individual cognitive functioning. When individuals are ostracized by their fellow beings, the absence of this relational resource negatively influences the self-efficacy beliefs of individuals. Self-efficacy beliefs are valuable in their own right and enable individuals in the workplace to cope with adverse situations more effectively. Workplace mistreatment affects the self-determination of employees and thus hampers creativity (Mielniczuk & Laguna, 2020). Ostracism has also been studied with other forms of relational constructs such as abusive supervision, harassment and incivility, interpersonal deviance, bullying, and social undermining. But ostracism differs from all these forms of mistreatment e.g., abusive supervision is different from ostracism in a way that mostly ostracism is an act of omission rather than commission. Researchers have found that abusive supervision, which is a form of workplace mistreatment, hampers the employees' self-efficacy beliefs. When employees' self-efficacy is threatened due to abusive supervision, they are less willing to engage in creative activities. The relational environment is a source of

employee mindfulness and ostracism deprives individuals of this relational source. If employees are deprived of relational resources at the workplace, it also affects their social efficacy. As, ostracism deprives individuals of their right to socialize with others, their right to be listened to at the workplace, and their right to build strong and healthy relationships at the workplace, it diminishes their positive self-evaluation (Mielniczuk & Laguna, 2020). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

**H2:** *Workplace ostracism is negatively associated with creative self-efficacy.*

### **2.3. Relationship between Creative Self-efficacy and Innovative Work Behavior**

CSE is self-efficacy in which individuals have a belief that they can accomplish creative outcomes. Employees having a high level of self-efficacy are more willing to perform tasks that are creative and challenging. Empirical findings have documented direct and reciprocal associations between efficacy beliefs and creative outputs. Empirical findings also postulate that self-efficacy promotes innovative work behavior in employees and enhances creative performance. It is also evident from research that self-efficacy in entrepreneurs helps to promote risk-taking, and improves creativity and performance (Mielniczuk & Laguna, 2020). The COR theory posits that individuals need to conserve resources for their survival. Thus, people tend to retain and conserve resources not only to cope with stressful situations but also to meet future demands and perform better. CSE as an individual resource is a motivator for creative tasks. For example, it is found that CSE enhances creative performance and creativity. Moreover, it is found that CSE enhances the confidence of individuals in their abilities, so such individuals are more willing to invest themselves in innovative tasks. They spend more time on creative cognitive processing and generate more novel ideas. Such individuals, because of their creative cognitive abilities are better respondents in the face of challenges and uncertainties. Conversely, employees low in CSE will be more likely to face setbacks in challenging and uncertain situations. To date, most of the studies have focused on self-efficacy beliefs and creativity; but there is a lack of empirical evidence that focuses on examining the direct effect of CSE on IWB. So, it is worth examining to empirically investigate the direct association between CSE and IWB. Thus, we hypothesize that:

**H3:** *Creative self-efficacy is positively associated with innovative work behavior.*

#### **2.4. Mediating Effect of Creative Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is associated with many constructive behaviors, and the COR theory postulates that when efficacious employees encounter any stressful situation, they try to conserve their resources to lessen the effect of resource loss. Moreover, it is stated that stressors consume individual resources; and individuals then try to protect and replenish these resources otherwise they suffer from exhaustion or strain reaction. Theorists believe that emotional or physiological arousal can influence someone's self-efficacy beliefs which can affect someone's behavioral performance. It is also evident that positive emotions invoke thought processes in employees. Positive emotions provide an energy source to employees. Also, positive emotions help employees to cope with the stress caused by challenging situations (Kundu, 2020). Perceived self-efficacy is considered a personal resource to deal with critical job demands. It is also defined as a critical self-belief and optimistic viewpoint regarding one's self which is helpful to deal with stress. CSE is one's self-evaluation of their potential to create. Individuals with high CSE have more confidence in themselves that they can accomplish a task creatively (Hodges, Gale, & Meng, 2016; Kundu, 2020). Kong, Yang, Pan, and Chen, (2021) found that if employees do not have social relationships at the workplace, it will negatively affect their social self-efficacy. They will prefer to stay alone rather than to be with people at the workplace and are more prone to use smartphones to engage themselves which might adversely affect their abilities and develop social anxiety in them. In organizational settings, creative self-efficacy provides an important motivational factor in individual creative actions. To perform creative endeavors, it requires an internal force that helps them to continually work to face the challenges of creative work. Creative self-efficacy is the perception of an individual performing his work-related task effectively. When individuals encounter challenging situations, creative self-efficacy provides such momentum in self-efficacy beliefs to cope with challenging and stressful situations (Bandura, 1982, 1999, 2001). In this study, we argue that employees' creative self-efficacy will facilitate conserving and protecting resources to avoid the negative consequences of workplace ostracism. This is consistent with other studies which state

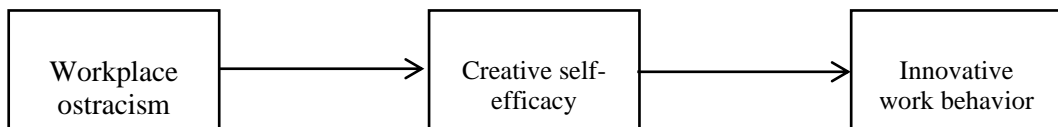


that social efficacy can be used as a mediated mechanism between the positive relationship between social ostracism and problematic smartphone usage (Brand et al., 2019; Jian, Yiran, Chen, & Kan, 2018; Sun et al., 2021). To date, this is one of the first studies that examine the mediating role of CSE in association with ostracism and IWB. Therefore:

**H4:** *The relationship between workplace ostracism and innovative work behavior is mediated by creative self-efficacy.*

**Figure 1**

*Proposed Research Framework*



### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study has been designed to understand the psychological mechanisms underlying ostracism and innovative work behavior relationships using the COR theory; the deductive approach was best suited for this study. A research strategy is used in line with the research philosophy and approach by using different tools and techniques. It provides a link between the chosen philosophy and data collection techniques. Survey strategy is considered to be the most appropriate strategy to answer the questions of what, how many, and how much. Questionnaires are the most commonly used tool in survey research. The data collection was made using a survey approach (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

#### 3.1. Participants and Procedure

Data collection was performed by employing public sector employees in Pakistan. Public sector organizations are always criticized for miserable performance and service

delivery in Pakistan, and inefficiency is prevalent in the public sector. Moreover, a thorough study of the literature on workplace mistreatment indicates that the public sector has been neglected by researchers and practitioners (Itzkovich & Dolev, 2021). Moreover, there is a dire need to take measures that improve the quality of public services and enhance productivity. Due to the paucity of empirical evidence available on the IWB of employees in public sector organizations (Nam, 2019). The employees from the public sector organizations were chosen as the unit of analysis for this study. The data were collected from the employees of the following departments; planning and development (P&D), labor and human resource, local government, and community development (LG&CD), and services and general administration (S&GAD). Data collection was conducted from the four cities of Pakistan Faisalabad, Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad. The questionnaires were administered in English language. Time-lagged research design (3 waves) was used to avoid the common method bias (CMB) problem. The data collection procedure deployed a time interval of 4 weeks between each wave. The time-lagged design was used because our study involved causal mediation analyses. At time 1 (T1) respondents rated workplace ostracism, at time 2 (T2) respondents rated creative self-efficacy, at time 3 (T3) respondents rated IWB. In the first wave at T1, 600 questionnaires were distributed but we received 520 questionnaires. In the next wave after one month at T2, those 520 respondents were again contacted; and we received 480 responses. In the third wave at T3, after one month, the same 480 respondents were again contacted, and we received 450 responses; 20 responses were disposed of because they contained incomplete information. Thus, we had a final sample of 430 questionnaires and the response rate was 71.6%. Demographics are given in Table 1.

**Table 1***Sample Characteristics*

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Ostracism		
Female	144	33.5%
Male	286	66.5%
Age		
Less than 30 years	158	36.7%
31-40 years	270	62.8%
41-50 years	2	0.5%
Education <sup>†</sup>		
Masters	204	47.4%
MPhil/MS	226	52.6%
Work experience		
Less than 5 years	195	45.3%
5-10 years	188	43.7%
11-15 years	47	10.9%
Job level		
BPS-16	77	17.9%
BPS-17	283	65.8%
BPS-18	70	16.3%

<sup>†</sup>*Master's degree depicts 16 years of education. MPhil/MS (Master of Science) degree*

**3.2. Measures**

For all the variables, the participants were asked to respond on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.”

**Workplace Ostracism**

Workplace Ostracism was measured using a 10-item scale developed by Ferris, Brown, Berry, and Lian (2008). A sample item is “others ignored me at work.” The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for scale was 0.85.

**Innovative Work Behavior**

Innovative work behavior was measured by using a 10-item scale from De Jong and Den Hartog (2010). A sample item is “I find new approaches to execute tasks.” The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for scale was 0.83.

### **Creative Self-efficacy**

Creative self-efficacy was measured by using a 3-item scale from Tierney and Farmer (2002). The sample item was “I have confidence in my ability to solve problems creatively.” The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  for scale was 0.72.

### **3.3. Control variables**

We controlled for the following demographic characteristics of respondents in the analysis: gender, age, education, and experience. As previous studies found that when ostracized females mostly experienced more harmful effects and psychological distress than males (Brown & Battle, 2020). Moreover, other variables i.e., age, education, and experience were also controlled for because they generally influence employee workplace behaviors (Choi, 2020). Age was found to be negatively related to ostracism in such a way that individuals whose ages were more than 17 years old reported ostracism less frequently. Rajchert, Konopka, Oręziak, and Dziechciarska (2023) found in their study that gender differences significantly affect the way individuals behave after being ostracized.

## **4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

First, to assess the psychometric properties of variables confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using Amos 23. After analyzing the psychometric properties of the variables, descriptive statistics and correlations were calculated before testing the hypothesized relationships. Lastly, the PROCESS macro for SPSS was used to test the hypotheses of this study.

### **4.1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

CFA was performed to check the validity of measures i.e., convergent and discriminant validity. Due to the large number of items per construct, the item parceling technique was used. The benefit of this technique is that it helps the researcher to simplify the model (Matsunaga, 2008). Both psychometric and Modeling benefits are offered by item parceling. Item parceling is a method that is useful to get a parsimonious SEM model. Moreover, the contents of the constructs are not at all compromised (Bandalos & Finney, 2001; Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). For item

parceling, we have used a random algorithm, in which every item was randomly assigned to a parcel. Following this procedure, three parcels were made each for workplace ostracism and IWB. Creative self-efficacy had only three items, therefore, it was not parcelled and was measured by its items. To evaluate the reliability and convergent validity of the constructs, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) values were examined. Table 2 presents factor loadings, Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , CR, and AVE for all the variables. These results established the convergent validity of the constructs. The AVE for CSE was slightly less than the threshold; however, Malhotra, Mukhopadhyay, Liu, and Dash (2012) stated that a value above 0.40 is acceptable.

**Table 2**

*Factor Loadings, Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ), Composite Reliability, and AVE*

Variables	Loadin	Cronbach'	Composit	AVE
Ostracism				
Ostracism parcel 1	0.84**	0.85	0.79	0.56
Ostracism parcel 2	0.68**			
Ostracism parcel 3	0.71**			
Creative self-efficacy				
Creative self-efficacy Parcel 1	0.70**	0.72	0.73	0.48
Creative self-efficacy parcel 2	0.79**			
Creative self-efficacy parcel 3	0.58**			
Innovative work behavior				
Innovative Work Behavior Parcel 1	0.85**	0.83	0.76	0.53
Innovative work behavior parcel 2	0.80**			
Innovative work behavior parcel 3	0.47**			

Furthermore, multiple fit indices were analyzed to check the model fit. The model fit indices are given in Table 3, which shows that our hypothesized model had an excellent fit to the data.

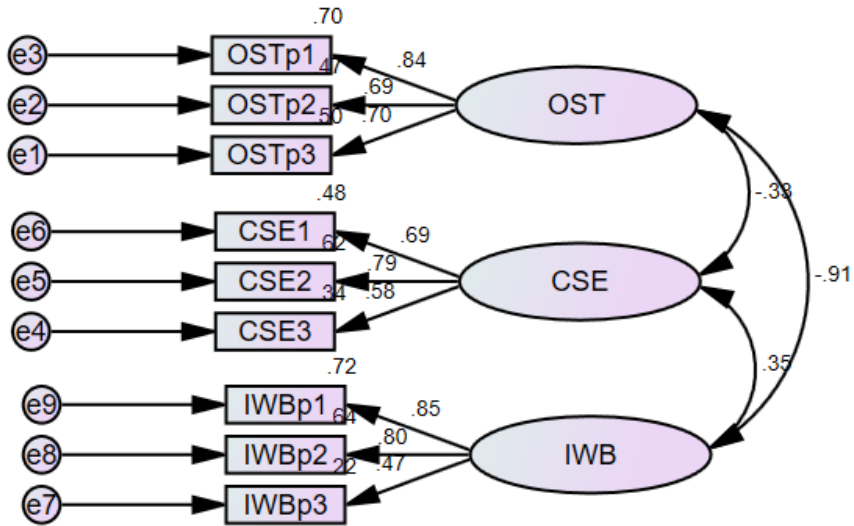
**Table 3**

*Details of Model Fit Indices*

Model	$\chi^2$ (df)	$\chi^2$ /df	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	NFI	TLI	CFI
Hypothesized model	414.18** (188)	2.20	.048	.0462	.93	.94	.96	.97

**Figure 2.**

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis for the hypothesized model*



**4.2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations**

Table 4 shows the bivariate correlations between the variables of the study and the primary support for the hypothesized relationships. Ostracism was found to have a negative correlation with creative self-efficacy (-.26,  $p < .01$ ), and IWB (-.71,  $p < .01$ ). Creative self-efficacy had a positive correlation with IWB (.29,  $p < .01$ ). Moreover, Table 4 also represents the mean and SD values for all the variables. Moreover, Table 4 also represents the mean values of responses for all the variables. Higher mean values show that respondents were more inclined towards agreeing while low mean values indicate that respondents were more inclined towards disagreeing in responding. We have used the Fornell-Larcker criterion to establish discriminant validity. Therefore, the values at the diagonals in Table 4 represent the square root of the AVE of the constructs. it can be found that the values of the squared root of AVE are greater than the correlation of constructs. Thus, it establishes the discriminant validity of constructs.

**Table 4**  
*Descriptive Statistics and Observed Correlations*

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Gender	.665	.472	-							
2 Age	1.637	.491	-.023	-						
3 Education	2.526	.500	.007	-						
4 Experience	1.656	.667	-.071	.436**	-					
5 Job level	1.984	.585	-.020	.377**	-					
6 Ostracism	2.560	.870	.077	.030	.024	.096*	-.032	(0.748)		
7 Creative self-efficacy	3.905	.934	-.057	.007	.041	.027	.041	-.269**	(0.693)	
8 Innovative work behavior	3.560	.763	-.034	-.009	-.020	-.077	.000	-.711**	.297**	(0.728)

*Note.* N = 430. Diagonals represent the square root of average variance extracted (AVE); while below the diagonals the estimated correlations are represented. \*p < .05 \*\*p < .01

### 4.3. Hypotheses Testing

We have used the PROCESS macro for SPSS to test the hypotheses. To test the mediation, PROCESS macro model 4 was used. The results obtained from PROCESS macro model 4 presented in Table 5 showed that workplace ostracism showed a negative relationship with IWB (-.59,  $p < .01$ ); thus, H1 was supported. Moreover, workplace ostracism depicted a negative relationship with creative self-efficacy (-.29,  $p < .01$ ); thus, H2 was also supported. Creative self-efficacy showed a positive relationship with IWB (.09,  $p < .01$ ); thus, H3 was also supported.

**Table 5**  
*Parameter Estimates*

Independent Variable	Outcome	
	M: Creative self-efficacy	Y: Innovative work behavior
Main effects		
X: Ostracism	-.29**(.05)	-.59**(.03)
M: Creative self-efficacy	-	.09** (.02)

*Note.* N = 430 \*\*p<.01

#### 4.4. Mediation Analysis

Table 6 presents the results regarding the mediation of creative self-efficacy between ostracism – IWB relationship. Mediation results show direct effect (c'), total effect (c), and indirect effect via the product of the coefficients (a\*b). Results reported in Table 6 ascertain the mediation of creative self-efficacy. Employing the bootstrapping procedure supplied in the PROCESS macro, the results revealed that the indirect effect of workplace ostracism on IWB through the mediation of CSE was found to be significant (indirect effect = -.026,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, H4 was supported.

**Table 6**  
*Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of Ostracism on Innovative Work Behavior*

Effect	Product of Coefficients	SE	BC 95% CI <sup>1</sup>	
			Lower	Upper
<i>Indirect effect</i>				
Ab				
Ostracism --> Creative self-efficacy --> Innovative work behavior	-.29*.09 = -.026**	.01	-.05	.01
<i>Direct effect</i>				
<b>Direct effect of</b> ostracism on innovative work behavior (c')	-.59**	.03	-.65	-.53
<i>Total effect</i>				
<b>Total effect of</b> ostracism on innovative work behavior (c)	-.62**	.03	-.65	-.53
<i>R-Square</i>				
Creative Self-efficacy				.26**
Innovative work behavior				.71**
<i>Note.</i> N = 430 ** $p < .01$				
1 This 95% confidence interval does not include zero; therefore, the mediating effect is significant at $p < .05$				

## 5. DISCUSSION

This research aimed at demystifying the relationship between workplace ostracism-IWB relationship through CSE by employing individuals from the public sector organizations of Pakistan. The relationship between ostracism and IWB was empirically tested, and it was found that workplace ostracism attenuates the IWB in employees. It is a well-documented fact that humans are a social species; due to which humans have an immutable and deeply ingrained need to socialize and belong with each other. Social



resources not only provide social and emotional support in times of stress, but social resources also provide opportunities at the workplace to interact with one another. Ostracized individuals experience innumerable tormented consequences including severe depression, feelings of alienation, worthlessness, and atrocious performance. These social interactions are also a source of knowledge sharing (Islam, Irfan, Jamshed, Anjum, & Nawaz, 2021; Takhsha, Barahimi, Adelpannah, & Salehzadeh, 2020; Zhao, Wang, Chen, & Shi, 2020) as well as well as new ideas are generated during these interactions which are a precursor to IWB. Ostracized individuals, therefore, are less likely to exhibit IWB in the workplace. These findings supported the first hypothesis of this study. The COR theory implies that individuals have an urge and desire to protect their resources. When individuals encounter workplace stressors such as ostracism, it depletes their resources. It is known that cognitive resources are one of the most important components needed for creativity and tackling challenging situations (Sun et al., 2021). Cognitive evaluations by individuals directly affect the attitudes and formation of behavior. This study summarized the effect of ostracism on CSE, which is termed as one of the cognitive resources of individuals that they strive to retain and protect to engage in IWB. The empirical results of this study confirmed the hypothesized relationships that ostracism as a workplace stressor threatens the cognitive resources of individuals, i.e., CSE. Thus, the second hypothesis of this study was also supported.

Self-efficacy theorists believe that self-efficacy expectations play an important role and provide a therapeutic intervention in times of emotional and behavioral stress. When individuals are high at creative self-efficacy, they willingly engage in those behaviors that they feel are vital for personal development as well as recognition. In organizational settings, CSE provides an important motivational push for individual creative actions. To perform creative endeavors requires an internal force that helps individuals work continually to face the challenges of creative work. Creative self-efficacy is the perception of an individual performing work-related tasks effectively. When individuals encounter challenging situations, CSE provides momentum in self-efficacy beliefs that help them cope with challenging and stressful situations. Knowledge in the workplace and creative self-efficacy are directly associated with each other. Knowledge acquisition

provides a source of creative performance and enhanced creative self-efficacy. Moreover, knowledge acquired at the workplace is a source of cognitive enhancement that can help individuals to improve their innovative behavior. Thus, the third hypothesis of this study was also supported as CSE and IWB were found to be related positively.

This study explains an important underlying mechanism via CSE that mediates workplace ostracism and the IWB relationship. Self-efficacy predicts a wide range of behaviors and the COR theory postulates that when efficacious employees encounter any stressful situation, they try to conserve their resources to neutralize the effects of resource loss (Hodges et al., 2016; Kundu, 2020). Individuals can regulate their emotions more comfortably and easily when they are around people with whom they have strong relational ties (Sun et al., 2021). When individuals encounter any negative social experience, such as ostracism, it becomes more burdensome for them to effectively regulate themselves, and it causes psychological damage. Self-efficacy, thus, provides a coping mechanism to deal with the stress of ostracism (Sun et al., 2021). Thus, the fourth hypothesis of this study was also supported.

### **5.1. Theoretical Implications**

This research provided empirical evidence for the hypothesized research model which studied CSE as an underlying mechanism to overcome the stress caused by ostracism. This study is one of the first studies that explores the role of CSE as a mediating mechanism between ostracism and IWB. Despite the existence of a large body of work available on coping with ostracism at the workplace, it is noteworthy that if we thoroughly study the literature on ostracism, it indicates that the work on ostracism comes from the studies formatted in laboratory settings via experimental manipulations of ostracism. Moreover, past studies mostly focused on the short-term responses of ostracism on targets (Bernstein, 2016). Albeit, this study employs real-time victims of ostracism to empirically examine the effects of ostracism on IWB. Moreover, none of the studies has examined the role of CSE to assess how the effect of ostracism on IWB is channeled through IWB. Therefore, this study fills the gaps in ostracism and innovation literature by empirically analyzing CSE as a mediating mechanism to demonstrate the ostracism – IWB link. Furthermore, this study has empirically proven that the CSE is the

proximal antecedent of IWB which illustrates the relationship between WPO and IWB.

### **5.2. Practical Implications**

This study enables managers with a practical mechanism to bring positive change in the organizations. By establishing CSE as a potent intervening mechanism, this study will help managers train employees to enhance their creative self-efficacy. This is an important managerial implication of this study, as workplace stress cannot be eliminated, rather it can be mitigated by strengthening personal resources. This research also provides insights for managers to focus on people management. This study urges organizational managers to focus on building cognitive and affective abilities in their employees because they can provide a better source of coping from ostracism stress.

### **5.3. Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Despite having many strengths, this study falls short of a few limitations too. Due to the time limitations, the response rate we received was a bit lower than we expected. Therefore, the sample used for analysis was small. Future studies may be conducted by getting a larger sample; so that the generalizability of the results can be enhanced. Furthermore, this study focused on the individual level, which falls short of sufficiency and provides only a narrow view of a larger frame. Future research may use multilevel and multisource approaches to get a broader picture of workplace ostracism scenarios and their underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions. Future studies should be conducted across various public as well as private entities to get more generalized results. Moreover, this study studied only one resource i.e., CSE; future studies should be conducted by exploring more cognitive and affective mechanisms to understand the ostracism – IWB association.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Ostracism disallows individuals to build positive perceptions about cognitive evaluations and effects, thus resulting in impaired IWB. Drawing on the COR theory, this study examined creative self-efficacy as an individual resource to elucidate the association between ostracism and IWB. When individuals are ostracized at their workplace, employees feel disassociation from other organizational members and the

organization. Ostracism negatively influences creativity; by reducing the task resources available to ostracized individuals. Moreover, when individuals feel that they are not given value; they are less likely to engage in creative process engagement. Thus, ostracized individuals lose their energy to be creative and involved in any innovative behavior. Conversely, when individuals are satisfied and comfortable at the workplace; they are more involved and engaged in their work which provides them the energy to be more creative and innovative at the workplace. This study explained an important underlying mechanism of CSE, which mediated workplace ostracism and the IWB relationship. These findings broaden the domain of coping mechanisms against the backdrop of workplace ostracism.

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