

Impact of Organizational Cronyism on Workplace Ostracism among the Academic Staff in State Universities of Sri Lanka: The Moderating Role of Workplace Incivility

S. Sreepriya¹, T. Thasika^{2,*}, and L. Mayuran³

*School of Business, Computing and Social Sciences, University of Gloucestershire¹
Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Management Studies,
University of Jaffna, Jaffna, Sri Lanka^{1,2,3}*

*Corresponding author: ythasika@univ.jfn.ac.lk

Abstract

Academics in Sri Lankan state universities play a pivotal role in advancing research, teaching, and national development. However, internal organisational challenges, particularly favouritism in leadership and disrespectful peer interactions, can undermine collegiality, morale, and institutional effectiveness. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET), this study aims to investigate the impact of organisational cronyism on workplace ostracism, and workplace incivility was examined as a moderating factor. Adopting a quantitative approach, data were collected from 215 academic staff members in state universities using convenience sampling method. Respondents completed validated scales measuring organisational cronyism, workplace incivility, and perceived ostracism. Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between organisational cronyism and workplace ostracism ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$). Hierarchical regression analysis further showed that workplace incivility significantly moderated the impact (interaction term $\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that cronyism's effect on ostracism is intensified in environments where incivility is more frequent. These findings imply that both leader favouritism and peer disrespect can jointly contribute to exclusionary experiences among academics. University administrators are urged to uphold transparent, merit-based practices and to actively address workplace incivility to foster inclusive, collegial environments. While this study offers valuable empirical insights, it is limited by its cross-sectional design and non-random sampling method. Future research could employ longitudinal methods or extend the analysis to include comparative studies across university types or regions.

Keywords: academic staff, organisational cronyism, social exchange theory, workplace incivility, workplace ostracism