

The Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence in the Relationship between Workplace Ostracism and Job Performance: A Study of Sri Lanka's Telecommunication Industry

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Abstract

Sri Lanka's telecommunication industry plays a critical role in advancing national connectivity and economic development, with its continued success heavily dependent on the consistent job performance of employees to deliver reliable services and meet evolving consumer demands. However, negative workplace dynamics, particularly workplace ostracism, may undermine employees' ability and motivation to perform effectively. Drawing on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, this study investigates the impact of perceived workplace ostracism on employee job performance, with emotional intelligence examined as a moderating factor. Using a time-lagged dyadic design, data were collected in two phases from 225 employee-supervisor pairs across five major telecommunication firms in Sri Lanka. In the first phase, employees reported their experiences of workplace ostracism and emotional intelligence. In the second phase, their immediate supervisors provided ratings of the employees' job performance. This dyadic approach mitigated common method variance by separating the sources of the independent and dependent variables while ensuring data alignment through matched employee-supervisor pairs. Correlation and regression analyses using SPSS version 25.0 revealed a significant negative relationship between workplace ostracism and job performance ($r = -0.33$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that employees who feel excluded are less likely to perform well. Furthermore, hierarchical regression analysis confirmed that emotional intelligence significantly moderated this relationship (interaction term $\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that employees with higher emotional intelligence were better able to cope with ostracism and maintain job performance. Based on the findings, telecom HR professionals should incorporate emotional intelligence assessments and training into recruitment and development initiatives to strengthen employee resilience and job performance. However, since this study relied on self-reported and supervisor-rated measures, it may be subject to source-specific biases. Future research should adopt longitudinal, multi-wave designs and incorporate additional data sources.

Keywords: conservation of resources (COR) theory, dyadic method, emotional intelligence, job performance, workplace ostracism